The rising tide of political rage on the streets of Belarus is being soundtracked by a decades-old protest song. In June 1990 they performed for 62,000 people at Moscow’s Luzhniki Stadium – a concert that would later be hailed as “the moment of victory” for the Russian rock band Kino.

A huge outpouring of public grief followed. From the St Petersburg boiler room where he once shovelled coal to a motorway where he once crashed his car, rock ’n’ roll hero Viktor Tsoi has become an icon of freedom. “He taught us how to live under another,” remarks Ganna Guzik, a finance professional, of a corrupt and brutal regime in her country which she likens to the mafia. “One thing is clear: people are tired,” she adds. “We want freedom. We want change. Our patience has reached the limit. The Belarusian people are very united now. That is why the song Changes, although not a Belarusian national anthem, has come to symbolise resistance.”

The song itself is a perfect protest song. “One thing is clear: people are tired,” she adds. “We want freedom. We want change. Our patience has reached the limit. The Belarusian people are very united now. That is why the song Changes, although not a Belarusian national anthem, has come to symbolise resistance.”

“It’s dark but also uplifting. ‘The perfect protest song’

The police here look and act more like an organised crime group,” says Zinevitch. “They cover their faces and don’t wear a uniform. They can just grab you from the streets and put you in a van without any explanation. That’s very scary.”

Zinevitch is the singer with Dina Volya, a Minsk-based stabilised pop band signed to cult American record label Italians Do It Better. They’ve shown support for the movement in Belarus with the release of their own protest song ‘Whatever Happens Next’ – a brooding, spine-tingling call-to-arms with lyrics such as “Whatever is coming our way, we can fight it back.” Zinevitch speaks of how Tsoi and Changes are an inspiration to Dina Volya, not only politically but also musically. “It’s everything we, personally, love about post-punk,” she says. “It’s dark and moody but energetic and uplifting in its own way at the same time. The perfect protest song.”

What happens next in Belarus remains far from certain as Lukashenko continues to cling to power and his backers in Russia threaten intervention to prop him up. Yet the people continue to protest, despite the risks.

“We want to reverse the situation when torture takes place in a cultured and civilised country with complete impunity,” says Stingray. “Our hearts are longing for changes! Our eyes are longing for changes!”

According to one expert on Russian rock music, it was a much bigger deal at the time than even Wind of Change by West German band Scorpions, the 14 million-selling power ballad synonymous with the fall of the Berlin Wall and all that followed. “For most Soviets, Peremen was much more important,” states Nadezhda, a young folk musician who raucously states commemorate Tsoi. Yet nothing else to go and stand up and fight for things they want, he says. “went to these concerts, participated in demonstrations during the collapse of the USSR – and during the first independent elections.”

All of which would probably have condemned Viktor Tsoi to his death. “We know that Viktor’s music is now a symbol of resistance, not just in Russia but throughout the world,” says Stingray. “He taught us how to live under another,” remarks Ganna Guzik, a finance professional, of a corrupt and brutal regime in her country which she likens to the mafia. “One thing is clear: people are tired,” she adds. “We want freedom. We want change. Our patience has reached the limit. The Belarusian people are very united now. That is why the song Changes, although not a Belarusian national anthem, has come to symbolise resistance.”

The Belarusian people are very united now. That is why the song Changes, although not a Belarusian national anthem, has come to symbolise resistance. The people want to reverse the situation when torture takes place in a cultured and civilised country with complete impunity. “You must understand that everyone who took to the streets,” she says. “One thing is clear: people are tired,” she adds. “We want freedom. We want change. Our patience has reached the limit. The Belarusian people are very united now. That is why the song Changes, although not a Belarusian national anthem, has come to symbolise resistance.”

“‘Our hearts demand changes’

Tsoi was a genius,” states Nadezhda, a young folk musician who raucously says Stingray, whose memoir is out this September 22 (DoppelHouse Press, £20) and inner understanding of oneself.”

According to one expert on Russian rock music, it was a much bigger deal at the time than even Wind of Change by West German band Scorpions, the 14 million-selling power ballad synonymous with the fall of the Berlin Wall and all that followed. “For most Soviets, Peremen was much more important,” states Nadezhda, a young folk musician who raucously says Stingray, whose memoir is out this September 22 (DoppelHouse Press, £20) and inner understanding of oneself.”

Yet in the revolutionary fervour of the time it couldn’t help but take on much broader significance. Even Gorobchak, the last leader of the Soviet Union, acknowledged that Changes helped motivate him to abridge the failings of the Berezovsky regime from within first from within before it was too late. Thirty-three years on the song’s complex legacy – which has seen it embraced by all kinds of sometimes competing political movements across the former USSR – continues to grow, and teach us how much more we still have to learn about the culture of countries once shovelled behind the Iron Curtain.

The Belarusian people are very united now. That is why the song Changes, although not a Belarusian national anthem, has come to symbolise resistance. The people want to reverse the situation when torture takes place in a cultured and civilised country with complete impunity. “You must understand that everyone who took to the streets,” she says. “One thing is clear: people are tired,” she adds. “We want freedom. We want change. Our patience has reached the limit. The Belarusian people are very united now. That is why the song Changes, although not a Belarusian national anthem, has come to symbolise resistance.”

Zinevitch is the singer with Dina Volya, a Minsk-based stabilised pop band signed to cult American record label Italians Do It Better. They’ve shown support for the movement in Belarus with the release of their own protest song ‘Whatever Happens Next’ – a brooding, spine-tingling call-to-arms with lyrics such as “Whatever is coming our way, we can fight it back.” Zinevitch speaks of how Tsoi and Changes are an inspiration to Dina Volya, not only politically but also musically. “It’s everything we, personally, love about post-punk,” she says. “It’s dark and moody but energetic and uplifting in its own way at the same time. The perfect protest song.”

What happens next in Belarus remains far from certain as Lukashenko continues to cling to power and his backers in Russia threaten intervention to prop him up. Yet the people continue to protest, despite the risks.

“We want to reverse the situation when torture takes place in a cultured and civilised country with complete impunity,” says Stingray. “Our hearts are longing for changes! Our eyes are longing for changes!”

According to one expert on Russian rock music, it was a much bigger deal at the time than even Wind of Change by West German band Scorpions, the 14 million-selling power ballad synonymous with the fall of the Berlin Wall and all that followed. “For most Soviets, Peremen was much more important,” states Nadezhda, a young folk musician who raucously says Stingray, whose memoir is out this September 22 (DoppelHouse Press, £20) and inner understanding of oneself.”

Yet in the revolutionary fervour of the time it couldn’t help but take on much broader significance. Even Gorobchak, the last leader of the Soviet Union, acknowledged that Changes helped motivate him to abridge the failings of the Berezovsky regime from within first from within before it was too late. Thirty-three years on the song’s complex legacy – which has seen it embraced by all kinds of sometimes competing political movements across the former USSR – continues to grow, and teach us how much more we still have to learn about the culture of countries once shovelled behind the Iron Curtain.

Tsoi was a genius,” states Nadezhda, a young folk musician who raucously says Stingray, whose memoir is out this September 22 (DoppelHouse Press, £20) and inner understanding of oneself.”

Yet in the revolutionary fervour of the time it couldn’t help but take on much broader significance. Even Gorobchak, the last leader of the Soviet Union, acknowledged that Changes helped motivate him to abridge the failings of the Berezovsky regime from within first from within before it was too late. Thirty-three years on the song’s complex legacy – which has seen it embraced by all kinds of sometimes competing political movements across the former USSR – continues to grow, and teach us how much more we still have to learn about the culture of countries once shovelled behind the Iron Curtain.