

It hurts not to be invited to a party. It hurts even more to be disinvited from a party, even one you never really wanted to go to. But I was sitting there on a June day New York before this email: "Good afternoon", she began politely. My tickets have just been canceled. Tickets for an evening including an after-show party with the stars of a scene in Manhattan that I had been following from a distance for months – canceled.

My breathing stopped for a few seconds and a dark, heavy feeling entered my stomach. I re-read the lines looking for an adult explanation. There wasn't one. "We will not assign you a seat and there is no appeal against this decision. Thank you, Passage Press". I had been disinvited. Like back in school. Except this wasn't Annette and her stupid birthday on the mini-golf course, this was a clique of new right-wingers And I understood that this wasn't just about the ticket: a whole

different party had been going on in this country for a while. And I had missed it.

Has been for more than five months Donald Trump now president again and waving around the USA Terms like *Vibe Shift* Or *Realignment.* In Washington, D. C. young Pilates women meet with radiant laughter, America *hot again* want to do and yourself one for cocktail hour *second term* order. Young crypto men wear MAGA-Kappies. "Trump is super cool", says black influencer Xaviaer DuRousseau, who is followed by over half a million people. Suddenly figures far to the right are spilling into the mainstream media, which were ignored with eye rolls before Trump's re-election. Just that Blogging provocateur and "royalist", as he calls himself, Curtis Yarvin: on CNN, in *New Yorker,* in the *New York Times*. The zeitgeist is changing. You blink and the parts are scattered again.



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And in New York, of all places, writers, artists and intellectuals with texts in their hands and cigarettes in their mouths are helping to push the boundaries. Here in New York, they screamed with joy at Donald Trump's victory. At least in a small spot in the middle of downtown Manhattan. Something that I always thought was a contradiction arose here: right-wing hipsters How had that happened? How did right get cool?

This story is not set in the Midwest or among young rural housewives. It takes place in the City of Promise, the center of the avant-garde that always promised to tell the better story. The people I met here listened to similar music to me, dressed similarly, it would have been absurd to call yourself by your last name. The faces I looked at here were not angry or disappointed, I looked into beautiful haughty faces And I wanted to understand what was going on behind them. So I went to Chinatown that moody late spring.

At the event from which I had been disinvited two days earlier, the central figures of a right-wing counterculture were supposed to come together in a still secret location, including the two provocative presenters of the podcast *The Red Scare:* It girls and queens of the so-called dimes square scene, which they co-founded.

Dimes Square geographically refers to about two blocks in Chinatown with hip restaurants such as the Dimes, where groups of men sit in the afternoon and drink orange natural wine or matcha maca with seaweed. Between sprayed shop gates and dumpling shops, from which the sour smell of muted cabbage flows, where a junkie clings to a lantern pole and isolated homeless people sleep between garbage bags, stand women wearing narrow sunglasses, short, manga-inspired braids and manicured fingernails. Trendy shops such as the Clandestino, a pub with three ceiling fans and a long counter, became established in this area. They went to the (currently closed) Sovereign House, where they celebrated Trump's victory on election night. Now also to The River, a wood-clad bar with jazz and fine cocktails.

Curtis Yarvin, the royalist and doom philosopher adored by many in this scene, was also supposed to sit on stage with the two podcasters. All of this is organized by Passage Press, an explicitly right-wing, rather niche publisher,

whose boss is still from the *New York Times* Was invited to a one-hour interview. He, Jonathan Keeperman, announced there: "The right has failed to attract young people for years. This is finally changing."

The event sold out in a few hours, although tickets cost more than 90 dollars. And whether they canceled my tickets because I was a journalist or wrote the wrong texts – I had to get there somehow. So from then on I hung around the scene, met Trump admirers who had converted to Catholicism, who wrote poems and smuggled canned beer into bars, saw readings and artists inspired by the fascist Italofuturists, and I came across people like Lydia Sviatoslavsky. She had started a PR agency for more outlandish and canceled artists And she too had ended up here in Dimes Square at some point, wandering around looking for what everyone was looking for in their twenties: ideas, opinions, attitudes – what you need to become a personality.

It was in 2020, before everything became "bizarre", as she says. Lydia had just moved to San Francisco, disillusioned and disappointed with her studies. She felt betrayed by "trendy political ideologies", that's what she calls it. Then her sister sent her a podcast.

We're sitting in the Little Canal, a small bar in Dimes Square. Outside, a dusty, cool wind sweeps trash and napkins across the sidewalks. "I paid so much money", she says of her college days, "and got watered-down postmodern theory for it." The canonical writers, the cultural foundation, Faulkner, Roth, Shakespeare – at their university they were called "dead white men". What did they read instead? "Judith Butler and stuff ..." Plus, she says, she has "these *Fuck*-the patriarchy thing" ruined their relationship with men for two years: men were "oppressors", the relationship with them was generally "toxic". Lydia wears

a cap with split seams, her hair short and dyed black, and a tight long sleeve – nothing that would distinguish her from hip theater people in Berlin. Her voice is deep and calm, her green, almond-shaped eyes flash when I ask my questions, she thinks carefully and answers carefully. Back on the West Coast, she clicked on the link her sister sent her and started *The Red Scare*to hear. Heard Anna Khachiyan and Dasha Nekrasova talking about the philosopher Camille Paglia, whom Lydia admired. Since the nineties, Camille Paglia has been one of the harshest critics of modern feminism and the young generation of women who deny femininity and erotic mysticism. "We focus on our identity to such a destructive extent that we are obsessed with categorizing ourselves", says Lydia, looking across her blood orange Margherita through the bar. "Instead of looking for a greater human experience, everything is so divisive." Lydia felt a connection with the two women on the podcast, who were sitting on the other side of the continent, somewhere in Manhattan. Two unsuccessful artists who spoke freely about everything,what came to mind. In a world where "everyone had read the same script", *The Red Scare* Questions asked. Questions that she wouldn't have dared to ask herself at university. Questions about MeToo. Questions about "gender madness". Later also questions about the corona measures. She became a paying subscriber to the podcast, listening to every episode. And soon, says Lydia, she felt "healthy again".

Whatever the big, abstract term *Vibe Shift* exactly means you can put it in *The Red Scare* hear. In a 2019 interview, co-host Anna Khyachian spoke of a "left-wing, feminist podcast", she said a few months ago: "I've never been a leftist or a Sanders Bro, I've always been a Trump supporter." *The Red Scare*It was created around 2018 as a cultural podcast, and a little later Khachiyan surprised himself in front of the microphone about this "accidentally successful company". Khachiyan, born in Moscow, an immigrant from a Russian-Jewish family, had

been living in New York for ten years and, as she says in the podcast, wrote "shitty art reviews and did advertising illustrations", while Dasha Nekrasova, born in Minsk, worked as a waitress in a karaoke bar – she says: as a "damn karaoke prostitute" –.

The appeal of the early years was *Red Scare,* as with the dimes square scene in general, in that with naive curiosity and shameless sound, topics were brought up on which there had supposedly long been consensus, such as gender roles. They had a crush on Michel Houellebecq (an episode is called *Houellebecq girls),*Expressed themselves incorrectly and invited pop philosophers like Slavoj Žiþek. But guests grew increasingly controversial, with former Trump aide Steve Bannon and right-wing conspiracy theorist Alex Jones dropping in. It was said that right-libertarian Silicon Valley billionaire Peter Thiel would finance the podcast. (The two moderators say no. Or to paraphrase Anna Khachiyan's recent tweet on the topic: "Another fake and gay meme that the left is spreading to say that 'the right is bad'.")

The more contentious, the more successful they became. According to the platform Patreon, the two earn over 40,000 dollars a month from the podcast Nekrasova received a role in the award-winning HBO series *Succession,* she inspired singer Charlie XCX to write the song *Mean Girls,* in which she sings about her "shaving knife-sharp tongue" and the uncomfortable fact "that she is New York City's darling". The podcast constantly contains words and sentences that would make you lose your job in the traditional cultural sector. They rave about anorexical beauty, defend Kanye West and his Hitler provocations ("an innovative artist"), moodily sketch ideals of masculinity ("straight men who don't hear Joe Rogan are a red flag"), in between you can hear lighters clicking and cigarette smoke breathed into the microphone. All of this flows along in an often indifferent, almost numb tone. With a *"whatever"* Dasha Nekrasova keeps wiping

away a thought. They sound calm, as if there is nothing out there for the world to teach them. And if it weren't so boring and Charlie XCX hadn't already sung it to you in advance, you would say well-behaved and enlightened: They are "problematic".



Mike Crumplar is an author and a critical chronicler of the Dimes Square scene. In one of his texts he describes how he was only allowed into a meeting on the

condition that he let himself be slapped first. The moment was also documented in a passionately shared video. © Dina Litovsky for ZEIT magazine

Im *Red Scare*Podcast probably first popped the label *Dimes Square* an ironic Times Square reference to caricature your own cultural significance. A place and at the same time a concept of an extremely online-savvy follower community that was disappointed by Bernie Sanders'''s defeat in the Democratic primary and rejected rigid forms of identity politics and corona rules. At first, "simply different groups of friends" were hanging around downtown, says playwright Matthew Gasda. Then he wrote a play called *Dimes Square,* in it he portrayed a disillusioned artist clique in which people complained about the "woke Inquisition", wanted to become successful quickly, but didn't believe in anything. "Could it be that we live in the stupidest time in human history?" is the second sentence in the piece. The premiere alone was an act of rebellion: despite the corona rules at the time, he performed the piece in friends' apartments without having to wear masks. Without the staging *Dimes Square,* Gasda says the scene as such would never have been found. People suddenly emulated the characters. "Perception creates reality", says Gasda. The piece held flying ideas together like a loose, ironic manifesto. You merged. You were finally part of a scene.

When other people talked to me about this time in Dimes Square between 2021 and 2023, what I heard most was a longing for fewer rules. Someone told me that people first said the N-word to each other – as a welding, rebellious experience. (The proportion of black people in the scene, as in Lower Manhattan, is small, but they do exist). At readings you can smell the "R-word" *("retarded")* saying out loud that something or someone was constantly "disabled". Literature was the medium of these rebels, with a reading or magazine publication taking place somewhere every evening. With the *Drunken Canal* the scene had its own local newspaper, which was only in print, with Gossip pages posting about Dimes

Square on Instagram, scene watcher Mike Crumplar becoming a critical chronicler on Substack. In one text he writes how he stood in front of the Sovereign House and was only allowed in on the condition that Dasha Nekrasova was allowed to slap him in the face. A typical Dimes Square moment: breaking boundaries, setting your own rules, ironizing power – documented in a passionately shared video. With all of this there was always the question: Are they serious? Which of these is irony? And if you want it all to be easy and playful – what's this game about?

Peter Thiel sponsored a festival nicknamed the Anti-Woke Film Festival. Beckett Rosset, a man with a wild heroin and prison past, started a literary salon of sorts. People there drank canned beer and cheap wine and smoked on upholstered armchairs. "In the audience you could see Curtis Yarvin sitting just like Michelle Goldberg from the *New York Times*",Gasda says of this time. “it was more liberal, people took all sorts of points of view.” When I saw photos of this salon and heard the stories, I was filled with sadness. Those "nights at Beckett's" exuded a touch of bohemianness, of chaos, of the desire for a future that was wonderfully unclear. These people wrote and read and talked and danced to Oasis, putting ideas and cigarette ends together night after night. The actors and writers I knew, on the other hand, clinically curated their dinner invitation lists, shopped Italian designer lamps, everyone was constantly tired or thought it was too much straight, and then you sighed because you longed for more community – only you were stuck apart the occasional desire for Aperol Spritz nothing together.Dimes Square was a little ahead of us: there was a spirit.



Matthew Gasda bundled the ideas of the scene of the same name in his play "Dimes Square". Today's America reminds him of France at the time of the Wars

of Religion. But today it is "a war of thoughts and souls. And he gets fought on the internet." © Dina Litovsky for ZEIT magazine

One evening I happened to meet a doctoral student from Russia in his early twenties in the KGB bar, where scene readings often took place. "The problem is", he said, "the right-wingers are just fucking funny." He had heard of Dimes Square in Russia, even in Saint Petersburg they heard *The Red Scare*. "What are the left doing so wrong?" I asked. "They're boring. That's all."

Didn't this boredom, the lack of spirit, I asked myself on the way home, come from a certain emptiness? How strong was the foundation of our strong opinions?

Someone who at least read Marx and Lenin and then resolutely turned away from communism is Adam Lehrer He is an editor at the Jewish magazine *Tablet,*has a podcast, writes essays, art and music reviews. Lydia described him to me as a friend who was good at "making enemies". And who only wanted to meet me if I didn't write an "incitement article". Adam was once a Bernie Sanders supporter, although he says he took this stance primarily in favor of his "dinner fitness" in liberal New York circles. When Adam realized that Sanders "didn't have the courage for this shit", he chose Trump. "Everyone in the art world was so afraid of this damn guy. And it sounded so absurd to me, "he says." "They rant and rage about something that boils down to a stylistic routine: they think he's vulgar." Isn't that Trump? "Yes, definitely.But so am I. So what?" Adam actually speaks crude, print-ready and entertaining He's a bit older than most I'm talking to here, 36, has light blue, serious eyes, an eyebrow piercing, mustache, trained and tattooed arms. The opposite of the pale right-wing loser that people who only know him from the Internet think he is.



Adam Lehrer is an author, podcaster and art critic. About his political opponents, he says: "They think Trump is vulgar. But so am I." © Dina Litovsky for ZEIT magazine

His path to Trump led to disappointment. Sanders' Failure, the corona rules, and above all the feeling that they are not allowed to criticize the measures publicly. And then he asked himself what the "progressives" actually wanted: Okay, the world should always develop, but where? "We had everything, and then we messed it up – that's what it feels like to live in America", says Adam. He has idyllic childhood memories of his home in Cape Cod, for example: beach, hot coffee, muffins, mussel shells. "That's what it felt like to grow up in America in the nineties", he says. Now Cape Cod is a nightmare with opioid crisis. "no one will claim America is an easier, safer, wealthier place than it was 25 or 30 years ago."

Like many in the scene, he believes in radical openness. He believes that art too often deals with the same identity-political issues, while there is political inequality in museums and major newspapers. "Imagine in places like the Metropolitan Museum or the *New York Times* would they hire someone from the right who is smart and talented." If he were to post to X now, "'Fuck Trump, he always lied to us', I guarantee you I'd get a job with them right away *New York Times* get. They love that." He smiles and says, "And to be fair: the right loves converted anti-Trumpers just as much."

What would happen, I wonder, if the *New York Times* would hire a real Trump sympathizer? I think of Lydia's longing for questions. To right-wing publisher Jonathan Keeperman, who conjures up "honest conversation", even on taboo topics such as racist theories. And he believes that free debates and conflicts arise

not from mediocre art, but from brilliant art. Then I remember my ticket. How does the high ideal of honest, argumentative debate fit my canceled ticket?

"The right won the debate. And now they think they were always right. And because they were always right, they no longer need to discuss", says Matthew Donovan, one of the few leftists who stayed in the scene out of a desire to debate the ideas other leftists stopped doing. I show him the cancellation email, he shakes his head. "That's because people are now switching to real politics. They're going to be DC guys. That's what they always wanted."


DIP! REAK!

Matthew Donovan is one of the few leftists who stayed in the scene out of a desire to debate. But arguing becomes more difficult: "The right has won the debate (as Trump has taken office)", he says. "And now they think they were always right and that they no longer need to discuss it." © Dina Litovsky for ZEIT magazine

The dimes square scene is like that *Red Scare*Podcast moved decisively to the right. Beckett Rosset's salon was followed by the Sovereign House, "DOGE parties" were celebrated and right-wing extremist thinkers were invited. The Sovereign House is now followed by the Club Reign, a kind of SoHo house for reactionaries. The membership fee is about 3,000 dollars a year, Nick Allen, founder of Sovereign House and Reign, tells me. "35,000 people", that's how many he counted at his events and therefore in the scene. "I think Dimes Square is only now really getting big", a young woman tells me at a party with her eyes wide open with excitement.

Dimes Square is dead, others say. "They're all voting for Trump now. It's not surprising, but it's very frustrating "a former scene-goer told meLydia also stopped recently, *The Red Scare* You can hear that the two presenters now seemed aloof. "The best thing about Dimes Square was the truly open dialogue. But he didn't stay so open", says playwright Matthew Gasda. When he thinks about the situation in the country, he says: "It's like France in 1580", America reminds him of the time of the Huguenot Wars, when Protestants and Catholics fought each other. Only now it's "a war of thoughts and souls. And he gets fought on the internet."

We're at an interesting point, says Adam. "Dimes Square started as an opposition. It worked better when we were the we-give-a-fuck-you rebels who support Trump and hate Democrats. But you know," he says, "now we've won." When I

talk about my canceled ticket, Adam raises his eyebrows. "That might be because of Yarvin. He is pretty good at controlling the narrative." This desire for control at least fits Yarvin's production as a rock star nerd in a leather jacket. And that none of them *Red Scare*Women responded to my inquiries by not allowing themselves to be photographed for the story.

And maybe it's true that a certain part of Dimes Square is dead. At the same time, the small scene seems to have long since spread. Designer Elena Valez threw one for New York Fashion Week last year *Gone with the wind*Party with plantation owner chique. Julia Fox was a guest. I'm told some Dimes Square people have moved to Washington. The two sat at the annual Young Republicans gala *Red-Scare*- presenters and screamed enthusiastically at Steve Bannon's performance, as I could see in a cellphone video of the event. By the way, there was also a certain Martin Kohler from the AfD hanging around there, who told a reporter: "You Americans are masters of the media."

On the day of *Red-Scare*-Event with Curtis Yarvin I put all my hope in a young, right-wing writer who calls himself Dan Baltic. A few hours before the start, and after comparing himself to Philip Roth, he tells me the location over his bloody steak. However, on the condition that it precedes, alone. Because there are people there "who could still be important" for him.

The discussion between the podcasters and Yarvin is scheduled to take place in a cinema in the basement of a hotel in Lower Manhattan. As I walk towards the hotel entrance, I see a guy from the Sovereign House out of the corner of my eye. "They won't let you in", he shouts, tearing his head back while laughing. The hall doors are closed, the three women at the entrance want to see my ticket. I shrug my shoulders and say there was a mistake when booking. The three put on their friendliest, most regretful, most American smiles: "*I'm so sorry dear.*"



Nicholas Dolinger has written as a business reporter for the platform "The Epoch Times" and published a volume of poetry. He is a fan of the self-proclaimed "monarchist" Curtis Yarvin and considers traditional European politicians such as Friedrich Merz to be boring and pseudo-democratic. © Dina Litovsky for ZEIT magazine

A jazz band is playing in the hotel foyer, I order a drink and wait. Mike Crumplar, the scene chronicler, also roams around the bar. He was curious, he says, what would happen tonight, at some point he might write a novel about that time. And for a moment time blurs, jazz, the saxophone whines, hectic drumming, two reporters with drinks in New York who, yes, who or what are actually lying in wait for here?

After two hours, young, fancy people stream up from the basement, most in their twenties. Some of the men wear jackets and leather shoes. A young couple I'm talking to rolls their eyes. "Yarvin monologued and spread his wicked theories", the man says. Others answer in monosyllables that it was "cool", "Curtis". A pale man in his early 20s who hasn't lost his childhood has come all the way from Michigan, the guy next to him from Ohio. "There's no such lively intellectual scene in Ohio", he says. I ask the pale boy where the afterparty is. He lowers his head. "I ... I don't know for sure", he says. "Something about Russian ..." Then he looks at me and says very quickly: "Russian Samovar.But you didn’t get that from me.” An employee of an online platform founded by Yarvin comes along, shirt with pocket square, white pants, and shouts: "Do you want to go with me?"

And so we race towards Midtown on cognac-colored leather seats. The driver's name is Christian, the three men talk on social media. "If someone apologizes, you know it's AI", says the Michigan boy in the passenger seat. I'm trying to find out whether they think the monarchy is a more appropriate form of government

than the current one. "It's not about starting a monarchy", says Christian as he accelerates and the passenger shouts to the back: "It's not the recipe. It's the diagnosis."

The lights of the high-rise buildings pass by until we reach Times Square, in the heart of the mainstream. Huge advertising banners shine, tourists push along the sidewalks, everything through the window looks like a gigantic aquarium, fish swimming through a different world than the creatures here in the car. I have to get the "red pill" from the movie *The Matrix* think of which the *Red Scare*Women talked more often, the pill of knowledge. The man from Ohio talks about how our system only simulates democracy and the "status quo" doesn't work. "And to hear that, did you fly here from Ohio?" I ask. "Yes, I guess so."

The private lounge on the first floor of the Russian Samovar is still empty, supposedly one floor down Curtis Yarvin hangs around, he is shy, one whispersI think of the poet and Yarvin fan I met recently at the Clandestino, Nic. According to him, most European democracies would be *"potato persons"* rules, that's what he calls politicians like Friedrich Merz, whom he considers boring and pseudo-democratic. All potato people

How the AfD wants to come to power

And then there are actually Dasha and Anna von, laughing in the middle of a group *The Red Scare.* Dasha wears plaid, schoolgirl-like knee socks. A little intimidated, I watch the queens of the scene, the way they throw their hair back when they laugh, the cool winner's smile on their lips. What will happen after their rebellion? They no longer believe what their parents believe. But parents' ideas also dissolve and beliefs become blurred into memories. The time for coherent, political mass movements is over. The time for broad alliances seems to be over. A lot seems to be over. But what's going on instead? The sentences of the

Red-Scare-women never grab it, their rebellion sounds indifferent. Words waft through the minds of this country like Yarvin's ideas, 16th century kings, CEOs to run the country. It can no longer be stuck on political maps. It's a vibe. It's – *whatever.*

Suddenly Anna is standing next to me on the balcony. She smiles, her big, dark eyes looking at me. And then I think that maybe we could still discuss it – but at that moment a high-pitched voice cuts through the warm evening air. "Don't say anything bad, Anna! She's a journalist, she'll write mean things!" Leaning against the balustrade is a bone-dry woman, hair dyed bright blonde, her black-make-up eyes wide open, with a bright red pout. "Are you going to write something mean about Dimes Square?" she asks. Someone laughs. Only now do I realize how narrow it is on the balcony, feel the looks all around me The woman sways forward, the corners of her mouth twitch. "We don't want you here", she shouts. A few party guests giggle. "Okay", I say,raise your hands apologetically and go inside, to the stairs. I push past the bouncer and choose the shortest route outside to the next street corner. The last thing I hear is a loud laugh coming from the balcony.