

Interview for „Iut De Asken“, 2009 – 2012, by Heiko U.

“Iut de Asken” was an influential and professional, but also controversial fanzine in the German Black Metal scene; with the “Blutvergießen” fanzine by the same editor being the immediate predecessor. It catered to a niche audience but was criticized for its content and affiliations. The final issue (No. 6) was published in 2012 and featured interviews with bands such as *Rotting Christ*, *Profane Prayer*, *Empty*, *Monstraat*, *Svarrogh*, *Eminenz*, *Paria*, and *Thorybos*. Another issue was in the making but remains unfinished and unpublished. Today, it remains a relic of the underground scene, valued by collectors but also cited as an example of the intersection of Black Metal and far-right ideology. The following interview was done between 2009 and 2012 and never published before.

Thanks for taking the time to chat. I know your past interviews have sometimes been used against you, so it takes guts to do this on a platform like Iut de Asken, which both friends and haters read. You’re probably aware that you and ABSURD are still surrounded by a cloud of lies, half-truths, and rumors. This convo will only come alive if you don’t just stick to my questions but also share some juicy details from your life. Some of my questions come from stuff I’ve heard about you over the years—not necessarily my own views, but what the average reader might think. You ready?

Yeah, I’ve been burned before—my words - among other things, of course - in some obscure, photocopied fanzine got me four years in prison. So, I’m not naive; I know even “friendly” interviews can be read by folks itching to twist my words into something they can use against me, especially in this so-called “freest state on German soil.” But I trust IDA readers are smart enough to read between the lines.

As for opinions about me, there’s a ton out there. Some call me a “dim-witted poser,” others a “vile criminal,” or an “intellectual lightweight.” Then there’s the crowd that admires or respects me (for what I’ve done). I don’t take any of it too personally. Most of these people don’t even know me! Their judgments are built on rumors, half-truths and hearsay, so I just tune out the noise. This interview won’t change that circus much—some will feel validated, others might rethink their views, but I’m not sweating it. Let’s do this!

Why did you agree to this interview? Last year, you weren’t keen on it, and I totally got why.

After getting out of prison, I wasn’t in the mood for interviews, even with scene mags. I spent nearly seven years locked up, no parole, no breaks. One day I’m “too dangerous” for even a supervised leave of absence, the next I’m kicked out the door as a free man, rebuilding my life from scratch. That kept me busy, and I didn’t want to be back in the public eye. I’ve never cared for that spotlight—count my non-scene interviews on one hand despite tons of requests. But when a cool guy like you asks smart questions, I’m game. That said, this is probably one of my last interviews. At some point, everything’s been said. I’m not *that* interesting!

Your name is tied to ABSURD, so let's start there. What made you decide to form the band? Were the events in Norway a spark? How did you even stumble across Black Metal in the early '90s? It wasn't exactly mainstream.

I can't speak for ABSURD as a band anymore—I haven't been an active member for nearly a decade, just contributing lyrics and concepts. The band's lineup today is totally different from back then. But back in '91/'92, Wolf, Dark Mark Doom, and I decided to start ABSURD. We were already jamming together, but we wanted to make it official, inspired by bands we loved, like old VENOM and BATHORY, not just the Norwegians. Their key albums only dropped in '92/'93.

Still, we kept tabs on Scandinavia as best we could in a pre-internet world—through music mags like RockHard's DARKTHRONE interview, letters, fanzines, and underground distros like Malicious Records. Our imaginations filled in the gaps, making it all seem mysterious and epic. Early demos from BEHERIT and BURZUM hit us hard emotionally—it was more than music, like an archaic, rebellious vibe that clashed with the world around us. ABSURD wasn't meant to be just a band but a manifestation of our own "counter-reality."

Counter-reality? Isn't that just romanticizing the past?

Nah, I'd say the real revisionism comes from those Scandinavian bands who now call their early beliefs "juvenile folly." We knew Black Metal was more than music back then. Check out interviews from '92/'93—it's barely about music, more about ideology and conjuring an alternate reality. We lived in a world we didn't choose, but in our heads, we were in a place where the Middle Ages never ended, Christianity never took over, and the world war was still raging. Dark Mark Doom once described to me his vision of a battle tank parked in front of a castle—pulled by horses. Absurd? Sure, but we meant it. The "criminal energy" in Black Metal's extreme acts was a declaration of war against a world we didn't want to live in.

What kind of person was the young Hendrik who found his way into the scene? A typical teen craving provocation? A brooding outsider frustrated with the world? Or just a guy into Metal?

I grew up in the DDR, a state obsessed with controlling every aspect of life. Things kids in West Germany took for granted—like music or travel—were impossible for us. That made every little freedom, like taping Western radio or snagging a record on the black market, feel huge. I can't pinpoint when I started feeling alienated from "real existing socialism." My Christian family probably played a role, though I never cared for Christianity or the state's ideology. I was more into my grandparents' stories about the pre-war era, which sparked my love for history and heritage. Punk and Metal became my way to voice that rejection of the present. When the DDR collapsed, I had the freedom to dive into Black Metal—it was the most radical counterpoint to reality, and it hit me on a deep emotional level.

Punk? What bands were you into? Did that come with an anarchist lifestyle, like panhandling on the streets?

The usual suspects—German punk, British punk, some American stuff. No panhandling or anything like that. I wasn't part of the local punk scene; they thought we were too weird, and we found their "hobo vibe" off-putting. There was some beef when we rehearsed at the local

youth center—rumors we stole gear from a punk band, which, honestly, might’ve happened, haha!

Sounds chaotic. How were those early rehearsals? A bunch of kids drinking beer and blasting Metal, or was there some real focus?

We were definitely rowdy teens, full of youthful energy and chaos. Early rehearsals were all over the place as we learned to play as a band. But we had clear goals: record a demo (which we did months after forming), get a record deal, play shows. Beyond that, ABSURD was about shaking up the status quo. We even dreamed of moving to Hammerfest, Norway, to join the “war against Christianity” or touring the Arctic Circle through remote Siberian villages. Sounds naive now, but we were dead serious. Music was just a tool to change the world.

What were the first songs you guys worked on?

If I remember right, classics like “Böse” and “Vampire” were among the first. Those tracks on the “God’s Death” promo from June ‘92 were ABSURD’s starting point.

How’d you come up with the name Jarl Flagg Nidhögg?

Kinda by chance! I started with “Randall Flagg,” the dark warlock from Stephen King’s “The Dark Tower” and “The Stand”. Later, I added “Jarl,” a Norse noble title, thinking if Varg Vikernes was planning to kidnap a Norwegian princess to join their royalty, I’d need a fancy title to present myself to the new “King of the North,” haha. “Nidhögg” is the dragon gnawing at Yggdrasil’s roots in Norse myth—I relate to that world-destroying vibe. As crazy pseudonyms fell out of fashion in Black Metal, I shortened it to initials, though that caused mix-ups, like when ABIGOR credited “JFK” for a lyric!

ABSURD stood out for its raw, almost cheeky simplicity compared to other early Black Metal bands. Some said it wasn’t “real” Black Metal, more like punk or even compared it to STÖRKRAFT. How do you see your early days now? A misstep by inexperienced kids?

Come on, saying there was a strict definition of “real” Black Metal in ‘92/’93 is rewriting history. You were Black Metal if you called yourself that! The “Nordic” sound wasn’t even dominant yet. Listen to MAYHEM’s “Deathcrush”, BEHERIT’s “The Oath of Black Blood”, or BLASPHEMY’s “Fallen Angel of Doom”—raw, amateurish, but undeniably Black Metal. ABSURD was always Black Metal too. Some German fans just didn’t like that we outshined bands like MYSTIC CIRCLE, who fit their “fake blood” aesthetic better. We spilled real blood, and that authenticity was too much for some. I’m proud of how ABSURD shaped the German scene, even if it made us “socially unacceptable.” The rough early recordings were due to our circumstances, but “Der fünfzehnjährige Krieg” shows the potential in those songs.

Your early lyrics had a dark, misanthropic, sometimes melancholic vibe, typical for Black Metal. But some try to pin songs like “Pesttanz” or “Werwolf” as “Nazi” due to certain buzzwords. Were those lyrics a reflection of a “right-wing” mindset, or just teenage rebellion to piss off the local priest?

If words like “Jew” or “Zyklon-B” make something “right-wing,” that says more about the hysteria of our critics than our politics. Back then, we didn’t have a clear worldview. The

collapse of the DDR killed our interest in politics—we were just anti-everything, wanting to carve out our own world, not fit in. The “priest in Sondershausen” was just a metaphor for Christianity, not a specific target.

Speaking of Christianity, where did your disdain for it come from? Growing up in the atheist, materialist DDR, why rebel against Christianity? Did the DDR’s anti-religious stance lay the groundwork?

I encountered Christianity early through church lessons, but it never clicked—philosophically or spiritually. Bible stories didn’t resonate, except maybe the Apocalypse for its dramatic imagery. The DDR didn’t push anti-Christian education; religion was just irrelevant, and the secret police had the churches under control. My rejection grew from learning about paganism and Europe’s forced Christianization. I saw the church as responsible for a historical misstep after the Roman Empire’s fall. Even if it played a minor role in the DDR, I developed a deep, historically rooted aversion to it.

Were you a Satanist back then in any meaningful way?

We dabbled in Satanism and occultism, but it was surface-level, more for shock value than deep belief. I was never a devout Satanist—to believe in the Devil, I’d have to believe in God, which I didn’t. If Satanism means rejecting the mundane world, I can still relate. I wouldn’t lose sleep if three-quarters of the world’s population vanished, but I’m not a misanthrope.

How’d you end up rehearsing in a church-run youth center? That’s pretty ironic.

You’re thinking of the “House of Youth” (HDJ), a community youth center set up in ‘91 in a place that once belonged to the youth organisation of the Socialist state party. We got a rehearsal room there, alongside punk and blues bands. The Christian Youth Association (CVJM) was also based there and soon caught wind we were “Satanists.” One time, Dark Mark Doom was alone and spun wild tales to CVJM folks about animal sacrifices and wanting human ones too. They ate it up! Then a mentally retarded kid who overheard it went home, threatened his parents with a knife, yelling, “Satan is my father!” That became the town gossip. The CVJM complained to the mayor, who sent the youth office to inspect our rehearsal room. They found “Satanist” signs but let us keep rehearsing, probably hoping social workers could “save” us. We got fed up with the drama and moved to my dad’s cabin outside town by summer ‘92.

How did ABSURD make early connections outside your small town? It’s not like you’d know to write to Varg Vikernes or MARDUK from rural Thuringia.

Even in ‘92/’93, there were fanzines like Daemonium Aeternus from Holland or Infernus from Thuringia, which had a MAYHEM interview answered by Varg himself. RockHard’s DARKTHRONE interview blew our minds. You could order Scandinavian records from places like Nuclear Blast or underground distros like Malicious Records. Demo inserts had contact addresses, asking for international reply coupons or to “send back the stamps”. That’s how connections formed—no hierarchy, just a tight-knit “us vs. the world” vibe. News, like Varg’s arrest for church burnings, was electrifying. We even rode mopeds one night to toss Molotovs at a village church—made of stone, so it’s still standing!

Were big mags like RockHard on top of early Scandinavian Black Metal?

There wasn't much coverage, which made them "on point" in a way. Black Metal wasn't meant for mainstream mags or festivals—it's not just another Heavy Metal subgenre. It was deliberately separate, and blurring those lines dilutes it. Look at RockHard's 2010 Black Metal Special—full of mainstream nonsense. Black Metal should boycott those outlets.

Some online sources claim your Scandinavian connections are made up. What's the truth?

I'm a firsthand witness to the '90s scene, unlike Wikipedia editors who weren't even born then. I've got stacks of letters from Norway, but I don't feel the need to "prove" anything. It's pathetic when old contacts like Christophe Szpajdel or Josef Klumb downplay their ties to us. I'm disappointed by those who know better but lie, not by clueless critics.

Your second prison stint—due to a Hitler salute and parole revocation for the "Satanic murder"—made you a martyr on some websites. Did you know about these "Free Hendrik M." campaigns?

Yeah, I knew about them. In the US, there were petitions to officials, even protests outside the German embassy in D.C. They were symbolic but meant a lot to me and sent a message to the system. I'm grateful for the support—letters, donations, protests.

Do you see yourself as a victim of ideological persecution or a political prisoner? Murder is a crime everywhere, not a political issue.

The 1993 killing had nothing to do with the "speech crimes" I was pursued for from 1998. I was back in prison for exercising rights supposedly guaranteed by the German "constitution". That's textbook ideological persecution. Murder wasn't the issue; it was about silencing me.

Wasn't it naive to expect those "rights" to protect you, knowing they don't apply to "extreme" views?

It's not naive to use your supposed rights—it's naive not to expect the system to twist them. Getting jailed for a Roman salute proves there's ideological justice here, not freedom. They admit it's about "speech crimes," which you'd expect in China, not Germany.

How did your family handle the fallout from your actions? It couldn't have been easy being the "Satanic murderer" or "Nazi" son's family.

My family suffered more than I did. I did 12 years in prison, but they faced social stigma, moved cities, and rebuilt their lives. They've asked "why" plenty, but our bond stays strong. Family sticks together, no matter what. I'm grateful for that. Ideologies that attack family reveal their true aim: destroying the nation.

There's a wild story about your US stay with the White Order of Thule, where someone tried to strangle you. What happened?

I lived with WOT folks for six months in Spokane and Richmond. A money dispute led to an attack while I slept—my stuff was stolen and sold on eBay. They knew I couldn't go to the

police as a fugitive. Later, the main guy, Nathan Pett, got badly injured in a revenge attack and ended up in a coma. He's since "reformed" and talked to the SPLC. The WOT leadership didn't know about his actions. The US scene has its share of crazies.

How was prison in Germany vs. the US?

Prison's prison—a closed-off world. Germany and Scandinavia are "humane" compared to other places. I don't dwell on it—not because it hurts, but because there's nothing left to say. Varg's probably the same; it's just old news.

Let's talk about the Black Metal scene back in the '90s. You mentioned it had a religious vibe, not just a musical one. Can you explain that?

Sure thing. Black Metal in the '90s wasn't just about riffs and screaming—it had this spiritual edge. The lyrics, the imagery, the whole vibe screamed something bigger, almost like a cult. It wasn't just a "youth scene" or some edgy subculture. It tapped into something primal, like a rebellion against the modern world that felt almost holy. You can't pin it down rationally—it's like trying to "science" your way through religion. It's not about that. Black Metal felt like the soundtrack to the end of the world, like Ragnarök in music form. That's why I roll my eyes at people calling it a "juvenile subculture infiltrated by extremists." That's just lazy academic nonsense. Black Metal was about tapping into something ancient and chaotic, not just being a punk kid with a guitar.

There's this huge book, Metalion: The Slayer Mag Diaries, a 720-page beast full of old interviews with Black Metal pioneers. Does it set the record straight on the scene's history, or is it just preaching to the choir?

It's not gonna fix the revisionism. The book's awesome for those of us who read Slayer back in the day—it's a treasure trove of raw, unfiltered history. You see the racism, antisemitism, and "fascist" vibes in those '90s interviews, no sugarcoating. But the kids who discover Black Metal through Metal Hammer or EMP catalogs? They're not picking this up. They're happy with Black Metal as the "naughty kid" of the Metal family, something they can enjoy at Wacken without getting called out for "fascism." They don't wanna know what their idols were really saying back then. So, no, it won't flip the narrative—it's for the old-school fans who already get it.

The term "NSBM" (National Socialist Black Metal) bugs me. I'm pretty sure it started as an Antifa slur before some bands, mostly in South America, Eastern Europe, and Greece, ran with it. Wikipedia claims it's a "scene term," but there's no proof. You mentioned it in the Night & Fog sampler foreword. What's the deal?

You're right to question it. NSBM, as "National Socialist Black Metal," was coined in the scene, specifically for the *Night & The Fog: A Tribute to National Socialist Black Metal* sampler in '98/'99. Before that, it didn't exist—maybe "Nazi Occult Metal" floated around, but that's it. Back in the early to mid-'90s, Black Metal didn't need a label like NSBM because tossing in NS or fascist imagery was just par for the course. Look at NÅSTROND's "Toteslaut" with an SS skull, sold by Napalm Records as straight-up Black Metal. It wasn't until the late '90s, when Black Metal started getting "respectable" in mags like RockHard, that some in the scene decided to double down. NSBM was a middle finger to the commercialization and

domestication of Black Metal—a way to keep it raw and untouchable by the music industry. The bands on that sampler weren't even overtly "political"—they were satanic or pagan, like most Black Metal acts. But by tying themselves to the ultimate taboo, National Socialism, they guaranteed no mainstream label would touch them. It wasn't about "Nazifying" Black Metal; it was about keeping it extreme and free from sellouts. Without that move, Black Metal might've turned into a cheesy vampire show like it already was at VENOM's heyday.

You run a distro and label, giving new bands a shot in a flooded scene. Is that still necessary?

Totally. The scene needs fresh blood, or it'll die out. I'm picky about new bands, but supporting the next generation is a no-brainer. It's part of what keeps my label going.

Why not just focus on reissuing old demos? There's tons of forgotten German and international stuff worth reviving. Some labels in Greece and the US are all about that.

I could, but who's it for? Just because I'm nostalgic for some old demo doesn't mean anyone else cares. Younger fans often hear a classic like SILEXATER's stuff and go, "Meh, I've heard better," not realizing those newer bands were inspired by the old ones! Reissues of obscure '90s stuff, unless it's MAYHEM or BURZUM, don't sell. SILEXATER's reissue, for example, just sits on shelves. I'll reissue some oldies, but my focus is on new recordings from active bands.

What about the "I only collect old cult stuff" mindset? You know, "new stuff sucks except my band"?

That's a dead end for a label. As a fan, sure, collect what you love. But running a label like that? You'd be stuck in a niche with no growth.

Any new bands you don't release that blew you away?

Not exactly "new," but SKUGGEHEIM and ETERNUM hit me hard. SKUGGEHEIM brings back that raw, feral Norwegian Black Metal vibe, and ETERNUM nails the old-school Polish sound from the TTF era. I'm not into "Post Black Metal" trying to reinvent the wheel—it's a done genre. Just keep reworking the classics, like MOTÖRHEAD's been doing since '75.

How's the Black Metal scene's buying habits now compared to your distro days in the '90s?

It's all about instant gratification now. Back then, you had a tight budget, bought a few CDs or LPs, and lived with them for weeks. Now, people download everything instantly, listen a couple times, then delete it for the next thing. Fans today are more consumers than connoisseurs. But there's also more collectors, especially for vinyl, some chasing limited editions for social media clout. You've got profiteers too, buying up rare releases to flip on eBay for big bucks. None of that existed in the '90s.

In your distro, what sells better—vinyl, CDs, or tapes? Are cassettes dead?

Merch like shirts and patches outsells everything, then vinyl, CDs, and tapes. Surprisingly, tapes still have a decent following, even though they were written off years ago. CDs are actually fading faster in this digital age—analog formats like vinyl and tapes have a collectible vibe that digital can't match.

When will Darker Than Black drop its last CD? Or is it still too profitable?

As long as there's demand, we'll keep making CDs. They're cheap to produce now, so even a flop won't bankrupt us. CDs will outnumber vinyl releases for a while.

How are magazines doing? Better or worse than 10-15 years ago?

They're still selling strong. People don't read much online beyond emails or forums. You can take a mag anywhere, unlike a computer. Print's not going anywhere in the scene.

Are fanzines and mags still relevant with all the online info out there?

They're less crucial for news—back in the '90s, you needed a fanzine to even hear about a new band. Now, you've got forums and Metal Archives. But mags are still key for shaping opinions. A good journalist can hype a band or tear them down, keeping the scene's quality in check—not through ideology policing like RockHard, but by focusing on the music.

Your distro's gotta be slick and professional now, right? Nobody's ordering from some dude with a photocopied list anymore.

Yeah, an online shop is a must. Printed catalogs are ancient history—stock changes too fast, and customers want instant updates. But I don't think underground labels should try to compete with giants like EMP. Find a niche, build a loyal customer base, and you're golden.

You offer legal, paid MP3s of your releases. How's that going? Would you recommend it to other labels?

It's a bust—MP3 sales bring in less than \$100 a month. I only offer them to counter the free downloads on sketchy blogs. It's not a money-maker, and I wouldn't push other labels to bother. Physical formats like vinyl or CDs are way more satisfying—you don't get that sensory thrill from a mouse click.

The remastered "Asgardsrei" dropped on April 20, 2012. I got a sneak listen, but my setup's crap, so I noticed more samples and a beefier bass. What changed, and why was a redo needed?

The original "Asgardsrei" was recorded in a few days in a backyard studio in '98. We had zero studio experience, and our sound guy, L'Hiver, bailed before mixing, so we fumbled through it ourselves. The result was rough—not the songs, but the sound. The master tapes (VHS, not ADAT, oops) got seized in a police raid and sat in evidence for years. When we got them back in the mid-2000s, no one cared to remix since the album was already out. But when it got banned two years ago, we saw a chance to fix it. Finding a studio to read those old tapes was a nightmare, but Thomas Tannenberger worked magic, remixing every track. It's still 100% the 1998 recordings, just way punchier and rawer. The drums were rearranged using the original tracks, we found buried guitar solos, and the bass finally shines. New samples and a fresh

layout rounded it out. "Asgardsrei" went from the weakest link in ABSURD's discography to a German Black Metal masterpiece.

Rumor has it you're such a mediocre drummer that "Asgardsrei's" drums had to be redone by someone else.

Haha, yeah, right. The drums were actually played by Hellhammer, vocals by Dead, and guitars by Euronymous. Oh, and Count Grishnackh handled bass. Gotta love how rumors work—anyone can make up whatever!

What about those hand-played double-bass drums?

Must've been the Devil's left and right fists, man!

You also organize gigs. Is that worth it, with all the hurdles and bans on certain bands?

Festivals over a weekend are way more cost-effective than one-off shows, but we're not in it for profit. If ticket sales cover costs, we're good. It's about giving a stage to bands you'd never see in Germany, like GOATMOON, DARK FURY, or DER STÜRMER. We've been the first to book them here. The scene's full of naysayers whining about why stuff won't work, but we prove it's doable with enough grit and know-how. We're the antidote to promoters who cave to Antifa's complaints and ditch "controversial" bands.

Is the vibe at concerts still like the old days? What's changed?

The energy's similar—booze-fueled chaos at the stage! But the logistics are trickier now. Back in '98/'99, we'd throw shows with NAGELFAR or NARGAROTH, no permits, no cops, no hassle. Now, you need a lawyer on speed dial because authorities can shut you down on a whim, often illegally.

I heard from the Gothic scene that their events are mostly 30s and 40s folks now, no young blood. Is that true for Black Metal gigs?

Nah, Black Metal's still a young crowd, probably 21 to 26 on average. It's a youth culture, and you see that at shows—plenty of new faces, not just old-timers.

Back to Black Metal as a "counter-reality." Can a 13- or 14-year-old today feel the same way we did back then? Kids often start with mainstream stuff like CRADLE OF FILTH or DIMMU BORGIR—can that still lead to the raw, underground roots?

No way a kid today can feel what we felt in '92. Back then, Black Metal was mysterious—hidden identities, cryptic lyrics, rare demos. It left room for your imagination to go wild. A BURZUM lyric like "Inn I Slottet Fra Drømmen" hit me deep, like it was speaking my own thoughts about a hidden world. Today's Black Metal is too exposed, too polished. CRADLE or DIMMU might hook a kid, but it's hard to imagine them finding that same primal, rebellious spark we did. Still, I hope some kid out there feels it, against all odds.

You keep mentioning this “counter-reality” concept. What does it mean, and is it still possible today?

Reality’s tricky—what’s real to me might not be to you. Our brains piece together what we see, hear, smell into a “reality,” but it’s just a slice of what’s out there. Animals sense stuff we can’t, so who’s to say our reality’s the only one? The idea that our world is the only way it can be is BS. Black Metal’s counter-reality is about rejecting that and imagining a world where ancient gods, dark sorcerers, or grim warriors exist. It’s like in “Apocalypse Now”—Colonel Kurtz’s jungle kingdom feels as real as the “civilized” world, but it’s the opposite. Black Metal opens a window to that other world, one you feel like you belong in, like this one’s just a temporary exile. That’s what the old Romantics were chasing, and Black Metal’s in that same vein. Without that drive to break free from “reality,” it wouldn’t exist.

Black Metal’s gotten kinda “soft” lately, with all the depressive/suicidal stuff. Bands like FORGOTTEN TOMB or XASTHUR lean into that emo vibe. Your take?

People mix up “Romantic” with “sappy.” Real Romantics, like the 18th/19th-century ones, were hardcore with wild ideas, not whiny teens. Black Metal shouldn’t be about self-pity, but society’s pushed this “it’s okay to cry” vibe, especially with all the gender-neutral nonsense. Kids today are raised to overshare emotions, so you get bands like SHINING milking that “lost soul” aesthetic. It’s gross. What’s so bad in these kids’ lives to justify this gloom? Nothing, usually—it’s just trendy to be depressed for attention. Bands like FORGOTTEN TOMB cash in on that, especially with female fans. Black Metal should be fierce, cruel, destructive—not a pity party. Kick the weak egos down; maybe that’ll spark some fight in them.

Why keep running your distro and label? You could just go off-grid in Mecklenburg or something.

I could also crown myself king of Andorra, haha. I’m a creature of habit—I do what feels right, what I’m good at, and what gives me purpose. The label’s my way of chipping away at the demiurges’ relentless fist holding our world together. If I can help make things a bit more chaotic and adverse for him, I’m happy. Farming can wait till after the apocalypse.

You’ve been traveling to East Europe a lot. What’s the draw? Scene stuff or just personal interest in the countries?

Mostly personal. I’ve been fascinated by this world region since I was a kid, from my grandpa’s war stories about the Eastern Front to the DDR’s “Soviet friendship” propaganda. It was abstract—Russian class in school, Red Army monuments—but it stuck with me. My first real contact was at a youth camp in Poland in ‘87 or ‘88. The former “East Bloc” feels closer to me culturally and emotionally than the US, even if the reality doesn’t match the hype.

Would you ever move there or anywhere else?

Not really. I don’t have a beef with Germany itself, just its political and legal BS. When I fled to the US in ‘99, it was to dodge jail, not because I hated Germany. I like my life here—other places, even neighboring countries, don’t match the vibe or comfort. I love traveling, though, and soaking up other cultures for a bit.

Ever just hop on a train to some random Russian village or city, like in those travel docs?

Nah, I'm too much of a planner for that. Randomly ending up in Siberia sounds less like an adventure and more like a survival test. Same with wandering a strange city. Some folks travel with this arrogant assumption they'll find "exotic" versions of home, or they're naive enough to think everyone's friendly. That's a recipe for a reality check.

You've mentioned your love for dogs. How'd you get into them? Berlin's all about urban beekeeping, not dog taxes, haha.

I've got a white German Boxer, an 8-year-old male. Met him in Russia, and while it wasn't love at first sight, he grew on me fast. Like Schopenhauer said, "The more I know people, the more I love animals." I don't baby him, but we've got a father-son thing going. Dogs need discipline and care, and they give back pure loyalty—something humans can't match. They're great for folks with social issues or anyone wanting to learn responsibility before kids. I've had him since '09, and when he's gone, it'll hit hard.

As a cat owner, I get the dog love. But dogs as kid prep? Feels like in Germany, dogs replace kids for some.

Yeah, for older folks whose kids moved out—or never had any—dogs fill that void. But younger people? If they're too self-absorbed for responsibility, a dog's as annoying as a kid. I grew up in a big family, helping with my four younger siblings, so I knew the drill. For only children, a dog's a better way to learn duty than jumping straight to parenting. Too many kids end up messed up because their parents weren't ready.

A musician once told me his dad got awards for animal rights, and it made him feel like his music obsession was pointless. You've spent your life on Black Metal, the scene, your distro, or in jail because of it. Looking back, any regrets? What's next?

I'll quote Rudolf H.: "Even if I could, I wouldn't erase this time from my life. I regret nothing. If I started over, I'd do it the same, even knowing a pyre awaits me." I don't do "what ifs." Life's about choices and their fallout. I hate people who dodge the consequences of their actions and blame others. Owning your path shows strength; whining about it shows weakness. Love your fate, you know? As for the future, I'll keep doing what I do—stirring the pot, pushing boundaries. Who knows where I'll be in ten years, but I'm not slowing down.