

**NATION-BUILDING IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA:
DEBATES ON RUSSIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM AND
DAY OF PEOPLE'S UNITY**

By

Yulia Likhacheva

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Advisor: Professor Alexei Miller

Second Advisor: Professor Anton Pelinka

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INTRODUCTION

As nowadays ‘most states around the world have aspired to be ‘nation-states’¹, the technologies of nation-building are consequently gaining more and more importance. In every country in the world policy-makers and the state are involved into the complex process of providing the nation with the appropriate contemporary framework of the legitimacy of this nation’s existence. The usage of the system of myths of the emergence of a given nation, of its “golden past”, of its heroes and achievements is in the core of keeping the people together, but apart from that, certain modern technologies and methods that are able to adapt to the reality and appeal to different groups of the society, providing their loyalty to the state, should constantly appear. Thus the role of the policy-makers of every given state is rising rapidly.

Anthony D. Smith suggests the following explanation of this phenomenon:

... [they] have a vital role to play in the construction of nations, not as culinary artists or social engineers, but as political archaeologists rediscovering and reinterpreting the communal past in order to regenerate the community. Their task is indeed selective - they forget as well as remember the past - but to succeed in their task they must meet certain criteria. Their interpretations must be consonant not only with the ideological demands of nationalism, but also with the scientific evidence, popular resonance and patterning of particular ethnohistories².

Therefore the given study focuses on the contemporary technologies of nation-building in Russia, analyzing, in particular, two different cases that were specially chosen because of a certain amount of controversy which accompanied their introduction. Both of these cases deal with the symbolic representation of the contemporary Russian state – the first is connected with the national anthem, the second – with the national holiday. Adopted during the Putin’s incumbency and by his initiative, these national symbols incorporate several layers of

¹ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys*, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 61.

² Anthony D. Smith, "Gastronomy or geology? The role of nationalism in the reconstruction of nations", *Nations and Nationalism* 1, no. 1 (1994), 18-19.

meaning and content as they consist of components of other symbols of different epochs. This complex nature of new symbols became at some point a vexed issue and provoked a large debate about the implications of using such symbols in the mass media. This work seeks to contribute to these debates by reconstructing the narrative of each one of them, enumerating and organizing the arguments of every part involved, and therefore aiming to the understanding of the reasons behind the antagonistic positions of the debaters.

The study will argue that though the symbols were indeed very controversial and easy to criticize, the state, in order to support its position, develops the strong argumentation in support of these symbols, which allowed building coalitions with the different political forces. Simultaneously, this coalition-building helped to marginalize and isolate the dissenting voices. For the two cases under consideration, the coalition-building was specific each time, as it included those who were in opposition to the anthem as allies in the case of holiday and vice versa.

Besides, the analysis of the argumentation of the state will serve as a perfect example of the nation-building techniques; thus it will be possible to get an insight into the genuine operation of these techniques as one of the phenomena under consideration – the national anthem - is already an established and successful symbol that works; the other one – national holiday Day of People's Unity – is still in the process of development, as each year some new meanings are added to the concept of the holiday.

The other task of the study is to show that the contemporary state authorities have chosen the method of incorporating the segments of different epochs to the state symbolic, and that this method seems appealing to the majority of Russians as the main quality it possesses is the inclusiveness. As the new image of Russia as the democratic multicultural and multireligious state is promoted, the links to the past – different pasts, in fact, be it a tsarist or communist

one, gain new important meanings as it clearly shows the participation of people of different ethnic origins and different religions in the life of Russia throughout the history. Moreover, this technology also attempts at incorporating people with different ideological and political beliefs into the system. Thus, the study will investigate whether this technology works successfully or not.

In the attempt to accomplish the tasks mentioned, the study is divided into several parts. The introductory part will give a theoretical overview of the role and functions of the symbols in the society, particularly focusing on the national anthems and state holidays. Besides, the first part will attempt at explanation of the capacity of the symbols to giving legitimacy to the nation which uses them.

The second chapter will deal with the debates on the adoption of the national anthem in Russia in 2000, presenting first the argumentations of President Putin and his supporters, such as the Communist Party, Russian Orthodox Church, and some public figures. Second, the dissenting opinions of the liberal parties, some human right groups and others will be presented, and the study will analyze the reasons of the failure of their argumentation.

The third chapter will focus on the Day of People's Unity – a holiday that substituted the day of Great October Socialist Revolution, the main communist holiday of the Soviet era. It will be shown how the holiday, the meaning of which was totally unclear to the majority of the society, acquired the necessary content and sense, due to the work of the state authorities and policy-makers. The dissenting opinions will also be presented in order to reconstruct the narrative of the debates and analyze why the state position turned out to be more advantageous.

Symbols of the Nation: Their Role and Functions

It is agreed in the theory of nationalism that the national symbols provide the strongest, clearest statement of national identity, or even constitute a nation's identity, as well as the image of the nation projected by national leaders both to their constituents and to the world at large³. The symbols serve as modern totem signs that bear a special relationship to the nations they represent, distinguishing them from one another and reaffirming their identity boundaries⁴. That is why since the inception of nations, national leaders have embraced and adopted national flags and anthems, using them to create bonds, motivate patriotic action, honor the efforts of citizens, and legitimate formal authority⁵.

Will Kymlicka, elaborating on the question of nation-building policies, includes the symbolic policies into his list of the most popular ways of nation-building nowadays, marking that “the adoption of state symbols, celebrating the dominant group’s history, heroes, and culture, and the choice of national holidays are used to construct the ideal of a nation-state”⁶.

Michael Billig’s approach to dealing with nationalism issues is applicable to the case as well, as he, highlighting the necessity to study the everyday, or banal nationalism in rather peaceful societies as well, looks at the ways it is always present in the modern societies, being constantly “flagged” in the media through symbols like flags and language⁷. Thus, national symbols became one of the most important tools of nation-building via which the nationhood

³ Karen A. Cerulo, “Symbols and the World System: National Anthems and Flags”, *Sociological Forum* 8: 2 (1993) ,243.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁶ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys*, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 63.

⁷ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), 8.

is being reproduced, and this is conducted gradually and always in all the established nation-states.

M.E.Geisler interprets the task of national symbol as the one of preservation of the shared mythic past for the nation, either through direct textual reference (national holiday, celebrating an accomplishment, or commemorating a disaster), or connotation (doubled nostalgia of listening to the national anthem, which consists of the joy of recognition the tune and the glorious or idyllic past it conjures up), or education (as by monument or museum)⁸.

M.E.Geisler designates another function of the national symbols in his book *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative*, explaining that national symbols take on a particularly crucial importance in “fusing a nation to a state”. He maintains that in those cases when the territorial boundaries of the state do not correspond to the geographical outline of the ancestral “homeland” claimed by a nation, or where a state is created without the ideological support structure of a nation, national symbols are charged with the difficult task of creating a nation⁹. M.E.Geisler illustrates his point by giving the example of the United States of America, where the Star-Spangled Banner, the Fourth of July holiday, the dollar, Lincoln Memorial, the Constitution, etc., being national symbols, have created, though ex post facto, a collective memory, which now makes it difficult not to consider the United States a nation¹⁰. The construction of the nation out of the state is a challenging business, and not always successful (e.g. M.E.Geisler gives an example of Yugoslavia as a non-successful one), but it is not impossible. In some cases and in the

⁸ M.E.Geisler, *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative*, (Middlebury College Press, 2005), XVI

⁹ Ibid., XV

¹⁰ M.E.Geisler, *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative*, (Middlebury College Press, 2005), p. XV

Russian case in particular, when a new State was created, national symbols, serving as markers for the collective memory of the nation helped to unite the nation and the state... or attempted to do so. Russian case is more complicated in a sense that the debates about what Russian nation is and who Russian people are, is still going on¹¹, and as these notions of people – *Russkie* and nation – *Rossiyanе* are separated, the national symbols, being a part of the whole national narrative, should have also been adjusted to the situation. However, as Valery Tishkov highlights, in Russia the shift from the ethnic nation to the civic one is accompanied by certain difficulties¹². For instance, the national symbols should have been designed not as symbols of a Russian nation, but as symbols of a multinational and multicultural Russia, which makes rather different demands to the symbols. Later on the paper will estimate if this task was fulfilled by the State or not.

Anthony D. Smith, who sticks to the ethno-symbolic approach, explains how the national symbols give legitimacy to the nation which uses them: “[National symbols] give concrete meaning and visibility to the abstractions of nationalism. The representation and images of the nation exert a profound influence over large numbers of people, exactly because they can be very widely disseminated by the media”¹³. What he means is that national symbols, especially flags and anthems are very instrumental tools of nation-building, as they can act as the audiovisual aids in the process of acquiring, or “learning” the identity, as national identity is not an innate quality in human beings, neither is it acquired naturally as one grows up. Like

¹¹ See e.g. Tishkov, Valery, “What is Russia? Who are the Russian people?”, *Pro et contra* 11:3 (May-June 2007), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

¹² *Ibid.*, 27.

¹³ A. D. Smith, *The Nation in the History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*, (Brandeis University Press/ Historical Society of Israel, 2000), 73.

any other identity, national identity has to be learnt¹⁴. National symbols are “interactive aids through which students can participate themselves”¹⁵, for instance, drawing the national flags on the faces or even wrapping oneself up in it, and singing national anthem the lyrics of which one knows by heart and never questions.

National holidays are also advantageous in this sense as usually the rituals and ceremonies attached to them allow different modes of participation. For example, when children take part in parades, fairs, concerts, even though they may not understand the main message of the holiday, they still get used to national symbolic and patriotic images, and therefore start perceiving it as something natural. For the adults, it is the annual revision of their belonging to the nation.

Speaking of the power of the national symbols and their communication strategy, Karen A. Cerulo, a scholar, who in her studies examines the syntactic structures of the national symbols and the relationships between each symbol’s parts, argues that the syntactic structure of the symbols or the design and configuration of the symbol, and not much its semantic structure or the content of each component of the symbol, is vital to the symbol’s message.¹⁶ On this, Nettl writes:”The full patriotic appeal of an anthem is determined by the association and the relationship of its parts”¹⁷. Karen A. Cerulo explains that syntactic structures of anthems differ greatly from nation to nation, embodying variations in communication strategies and thus conveying national identity in different ways. Providing social explanations for

¹⁴ Pal Kolsto, “National symbols as signs of unity and division”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29: 4 (July 2006), 678.

¹⁵ Ibid., 683.

¹⁶ Karen A. Cerulo, “Symbols and the World System: National Anthems and Flags”, *Sociological Forum* 8: 2 (1993), 246.

¹⁷ Paul Nettl, *National Anthems*, 2nd edition, trans. A.Gode, (New York:Frederick Ungar, 1967), 30.

variations of the syntactic structures of anthems in different countries, Karen A. Cerulo argues that the factors, surrounding the adoption of the symbols, like wars, revolutions, independent movements, nation's form of government, as well as the world-system position can provide the basis for the understanding of the symbols' syntactic structure.¹⁸

Applying this theory to the case of Russian anthem, it can be concluded that rather basic syntax of the anthem presupposes its perception of the one which is used by the core nation, as peripheral and semi-peripheral nations usually prefer to adopt embellished musical syntax. As basic musical syntax is characterized as stable, constant, and fixed musical structure, the music of the anthem, which employs this syntax, creates the sense of stability and constancy¹⁹.

This fact can partially explain an incentive of the Russian government in 2002 to restore the old Soviet anthem, the music of which is solemn and proud, and moreover, it was well-known. The population poll approves of the choice, and though the public opinion was very fragmented, the majority of answers were positive about the adoption of the anthem: the biggest group of the population (22%), answering the question "What thoughts and images come to your mind when you hear the Russian national anthem?", came up with the answer: "Pride, patriotic feelings"; and here Pavlov's 'law of association' works properly, being a powerful psychological mechanism that can boost the prestige of national symbols. Other answers were the following: "Recollections, images from the past" (19%), "Other

¹⁸ Karen A. Cerulo, "Symbols and the World System: National Anthems and Flags", *Sociological Forum* 8: 2 (1993), 244.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

positive feelings” (13%), “General positive appraisals” (5%)²⁰. However, 34% of the respondents did not manage to come up with an answer.

As the research given was conducted in 2002, and there has not been an updated version, thus one should assume the change in the figures, for example, in 2002 the answer to the question above “Associations with sport achievements” was given by only 1% of the respondents.

Nowadays, as Russia successfully participates in the variety of international contests where the national anthem is usually played, it is predictable that much more people would choose this very answer, because if the state symbols can be linked to the events and situations that the citizens psychologically associate with pride, joy, and high spirits, these good feelings may rub off on the national symbols and enhance their emotional value²¹.

Considering the symbolic representation of the continuity, the group of Russian population that treats the Soviet past with respect, is able to find in the new anthem the links to the past. Martin J. Daughtry, in his article “Russia's New Anthem and the Negotiation of National Identity” analyzes the issue of continuity comparing the Soviet and the current anthem. He argues that “the fusion of musical and textual gestures in the Soviet anthem is so powerful, that it remains to the minds of many of those who perform or listen to the new Russian anthem, regardless of their ideological leanings”. In this case, the sensation which a Russian speaker experiences when listening to the new anthem, is the fleeting sense of “virtual fluency”, which Russians consider to be the echo of its predecessor²².

²⁰ “The Russian Anthem”, The Public Opinion Foundation Database (17 January, 2002), http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/map/221_12271/ed020208, (accessed 18 March 2009).

²¹ Paol Kolsto, “National symbols as signs of unity and division”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29: 4 (July 2006), 698.

²² J. Martin Daughtry, Multimedia Examples For: “Russia's New Anthem and the Negotiation of National Identity”, *Ethnomusicology* 47(1), 42-67,

However, this article explains the positive feelings of contemporary Russians only through the emotional association of the Alexandrov's tune to the glorious past. In the next chapter it will be shown that though this association remains strong for some people, it is definitely not a determinative factor for other people favoring the anthem, and there are other explanations for this phenomenon. The second chapter of the thesis will look at it in detail.

Chapter 1: Debates on Russian Anthem

1.1 Old-New Russian Anthem

In summer 2008, during UEFA EURO Football Tournament, thousands of Russian fans gathered in Austria and Switzerland, willing to support emotionally Russian national team. Contrary to the public's expectations, the team with its highly qualified coach Guus Hiddink confidently made its way out of the group to the quarter-final, to be beaten only in the semi-final, and thus ending up on the third place of the tournament. Russian team did not manage to go all the way at UEFA EURO 2008, but that did not stop them receiving a heroes' welcome, as the team had not reached such results for a very long time. Indeed, the emotional response of the football supporters was overwhelming, and the whole country was soon enveloped in the football fever. The national anthem, being an integral part of the football ritual, was sung everywhere: the fans who were lucky to witness the games live in the stadiums, sang the national anthem proudly together with the team; in Russia fans with the flags drawn on their faces stood up to mark the beginning of each game singing the anthem in front of the TV sets in the thousands of sport bars, cafes and clubs. It seemed that all Russian people knew the words of the anthem and had always enjoyed singing it during all the prominent moments of their lives. That is the reason why it would be rather difficult to imagine for a wingside spectator that the current Russian national anthem had served its purpose for only eight years, and that its adoption was accompanied by the heated debates about the ethical implications of accepting the tune which was used during the Soviet Union times. For example, liberal democratic parties and representatives of Russian intelligentsia

stated that it was “categorically unacceptable to restore the anthem that was approved by Josef Stalin and other great criminals of the 20th century”.²³

However, as the results of the population polls conducted in 2000 showed, the majority of people (77%) approved of the re-adoption of the old anthem²⁴, and this example can be illustrated by the success of this controversial national symbol during the recent football tournament. It can be argued that in the Russian case the national anthem, being on the one hand, emotionally connected with the Soviet past, and on the other hand, renewed with the appropriate lyrics, perfectly answers to its purpose of creating bonds and coherence between people, and motivate patriotic actions.

Thus this chapter will focus on the Russian anthem case, first analyzing this national symbol from the angle of its relevance and functions in the nation-building process, and then focusing on the specific Russian case, aiming at understanding the inner motives of the state elite to adopt this very anthem, and reconstructing the narrative of the debates which accompanied the adoption, trying to assess the incentives behind the dissenting opinions of other political actors. The analysis of one of the most controversial symbols of the contemporary Russia can serve as the perfect example to demonstrate and examine the use of the symbolic power by the State. Besides, in this chapter it will be argued that in contemporary Russia, the national symbols can be successfully exploited if only they incorporate the peculiar combination of the old and new concept

²³ Andrei Shukshin, “Parliament Opens Debate on State Symbols”, *Yabloko official website* (8 December 2000), http://www.eng.yabloko.ru/Publ/2000/Papers/gimn_mt_1.html, (accessed 26 February 2008).

²⁴ “On the New National Anthem of Russia”, The Public Opinion Foundation Database (December 13, 2000), http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/map/221_12271/1977_12302/etb003411, (accessed 26 February 2008).

1.2 The Adoption of the New Anthem in Russia: Historical Background

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a pivotal point in a new Russian history. The creation of a new state – Russian Federation was accompanied by a shift in a political organization of the state, from the rule of soviets, state socialism, and Communist Party dominance to a multi-party state system with a market-based economy. Restructuring the society was another task, and for that perestroika and glasnost were implemented as the means of resolving serious economic and political problems which had put the Soviet Union into a long-term stagnation. The issue of national symbols was also discussed in 1991 by the Yeltsin administration as the symbols of the Soviet Russia should have been replaced by the new ones, which would signal the change in the political organization of the State and represent ‘the new Russia’. Therefore, three new state symbols were suggested: the first was the white-blue-red tricolor meant to replace the Soviet red flag with the hammer and sickle. Secondly, the pre-revolutionary double-headed eagle was to be used as a coat of arms instead of the traditional Soviet emblem which showed the hammer and sickle and the Red Star over a globe, and two wreaths of wheat covered by the USSR State motto ("Workers of the World, Unite!"). Finally, Glinka’s “Patriotic Song” from the opera *A life for the tsar* (in the Soviet period known as *Ivan Susanin*, after its main hero) was suggested to replace the Soviet Anthem. However, it appeared that the music did not seem to be successful, as the tune was little-known and very difficult for people to hum. Moreover, there were no words to sing, that is why the music failed to stir national passions and political in-fighting between Yeltsin and a recalcitrant parliament dominated by leftists left Russia without any words for its "first song."²⁵ Thus, although the new symbols had not been explicitly adopted as such by the parliament, they

²⁵ Russia at a loss for words“, *Reuters news report* (November 23, 2000), <http://www.angelfire.com/ma3/alla/en/Press/anthem1.html>.

started to function but without any formal sanction. An attempt to secure such sanction in January 1998 ended in utter failure. The Duma was asked to pass into law the new state symbols currently in use: flag, state coat of arms, and national anthem. Less than one-fourth of the 450 members of the Duma voted in favor of each of these symbols, while the majority wished to retain the symbols of the Soviet era²⁶. Finally, Yeltsin decided to take the questions of state symbols off the political agenda and authorized their use by a presidential decree. For the duration of his incumbency Russia remained a state without unifying, generally recognized national symbols. Only when Vladimir Putin, Yeltsin's successor came to power in 2000, the question of the national symbols was finally resolved.

The President decided to reopen the vexed issue of state symbols, because reigning soccer champions Spartak Moscow complained to Putin over the summer that the current anthem had led to a loss of morale and dip in the team's form. The embarrassment reached new heights during the Sydney Olympics when Russian gold medalists complained they had to stand in silence during medal ceremonies²⁷. At the Olympic games in the autumn of 2000 the Russian medalists stood awkwardly while their national anthem was played because they just did not have the lyrics to sing (which was even more embarrassing, considering the fact that Russia took no less than eighty-eight medals, including thirty-two gold medals). Therefore, it appears that it was the athletes' need for usable national symbols that forced the issue to the top of the political agenda. However, it can be argued that Putin had been well aware of the problem with the national symbols long before the athletes' complaint, and he skillfully used

²⁶ Paol Kolsto, "National symbols as signs of unity and division", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29: 4 (July 2006), 686.

²⁷ Russia at a loss for words", *Reuters news report* (November 23, 2000), <http://www.angelfire.com/ma3/alla/en/Press/anthem1.html>.

this complaint as a good pretext to reopen the issue. In this situation, a special commission was appointed to select a new national anthem²⁸.

The commission examined eight different tunes, including one promoted and performed by the famous pop star Alla Pugacheva. In the end it decided to re-adopt the Soviet anthem that had been composed by Aleksandr Aleksandrov in 1936 and approved personally by Soviet dictator Josef Stalin as the Soviet state anthem in 1944, symbolizing the might of the Soviet Union and its World War II glory. This anthem was voted over in the Duma on 8 December 2000. An overwhelming majority of the deputies supported the motion²⁹. President Vladimir Putin, in his turn, signed into effect federal constitutional bills on state symbols on the 26th of December 2000, ensuring the Soviet-era national anthem as Russia's state song. Putin insists on his own political stand, stressing that the Soviet history should not be negated completely. The package of bills proposed by Putin, including a coat of arms and a flag as well, was approved by the State Duma, the lower house of parliament, and by the Federation Council, the upper chamber.

The old lyrics of the Alexandrov's song praising the USSR should have been substituted for the new one, appropriate for the contemporary case, and for this Putin decided to create a commission to study collected lyrics and submit them in a draft law to the parliament. The commission members came from the presidential administration, the State Duma, the Federal Council and the Culture Ministry and were instructed to choose a final lyric as soon as

²⁸ “What Should Russia’s National Anthem Express?” ,*The St. Petersburg Times* #609 (October6, 2001), http://www.sptimesrussia.com/archive/times/609/opinion/o_409.htm

²⁹ “Russia proposes bill to protect anthem”, *Johnson’s Russia list* #6 (November27,2001), <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/5566-6.cfm>.

possible³⁰. On March 7, 2001 the Russian State Duma passed a bill submitted by President Vladimir Putin, adopting the words penned by famous poet Sergei Mikhalkov as the lyric of the national anthem. The bill was passed by an overwhelming majority with 345 votes "for", 19 "against" and one abstention³¹. It should be noted that Sergei Mikhalkov was also the author of the lyrics of the old Soviet anthem, and for this competition he just rewrote his own lyrics. Indeed, the similarities of the structure and content between the old and the new anthem are easily observed.

This event was highly controversial and it caused a lot of argument over the ethical implications of using the tune approved by the Soviet leaders. As the paper will attempt to reconstruct the debates on the national anthem issue, it will be evident that the decision of the President Putin was thoroughly based upon balanced arguments capable of coping with all the criticisms. The President and his administration were very well prepared to deal with the dissenting voices well in advance before these voices even appear. It will be evident in the next section that all the arguments raised by Putin in his justification of the choice of the anthem were able to withstand the critics of the representatives of liberal parties and affiliated with them public figures. Analyzing Putin's speech, it is possible to figure out how.

³⁰ Putin endorses Soviet national anthem as Russia's state symbol, *People's daily* (December 27, 2000), http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/200012/27/eng20001227_58895.html.

³¹ "Russian Duma Agrees On New Words for National Anthem", *People's Daily* (March 8, 2001), http://english.people.com.cn/english/200103/08/eng20010308_64415.html.

1.3. Putin's Arguments for the New System of National Symbols, Including the Soviet Anthem

In order to get the overview of the debates on the national anthem, it seems logical to start with the official statement made by Putin on December 4, 2000, which was concerned with the problem of the national symbols. This statement proved to be very powerful due to certain linguistic and extra-linguistic devices, and therefore it has a great persuasive impact. In it, Putin elaborates on the legitimacy and correctness of the decision which he has taken, implying that this decision is the only right one. He starts with the general description and analysis of the problem, saying:

The questions of the national symbols have been discussed in our country during the last decade. Sometimes the debates fade; sometimes the questions are again discussed very actively. It seems that these problems have already fallen to the category where they cannot be just simply solved, and thus we need to put an end to that.

From the very beginning, Putin chooses a rather informal tone. The impression which is created is that the President is speaking directly to the person reading the statement. He addresses his audience, and doing this, he appears very calm and self-confident; he simply says that he knows what to do with the problem which had not been solved for about 10 years. This impression can also be projected to all the other problems which need solving, which creates a very positive background to the whole speech. Putin continues, elaborating on the difficulties which the adoption of the state symbols has faced:

Usually, according to the Constitution, the national symbols – the coat of arms, the flag and the national anthem should be sanctioned by the law. Unfortunately, in our country for a long time the national symbols have not been adopted officially and they have been operating only according to the presidential decree. The interesting question is why the laws have not been passed. The answer to the question is well-known and rather simple: because in the society as well in the Russian State Duma there still exist two different attitudes, and these attitudes are polar and completely opposite.

From the very beginning of the speech, Putin uses the arguments given by the representatives of the dissenting opinions with a good effect, skillfully playing on those arguments. He thoroughly explains why any of these arguments do not have legitimacy; moreover, he implies that these views are even injurious for the peace in the society. Here he outlines the essence of the dissenting opinions on the problem:

One view of the problem argues that we should not use the symbols of pre-revolutionary tsarist Russia as national symbols. The other position states that it is not appropriate to use the symbols of the Soviet period. The people who adhere to the first position argue that former tricolor, or the traditional three-color Russian banner should not be used now, as during the Great Patriotic War it was dishonorably used against our own people. Moreover, the coat of arms of the Russian Empire [...] should not be used as it was the coat of arms of the empire which was, and not ungroundlessly, called ‘prison of nations’, and where there also were repressed and dissident people... It is enough just to recall the fate of the Decembrists, who were deported to Siberia or hanged. The situation concerning the symbols of the Stalinist era is even more complicated. It is so complicated because the people who themselves experienced the horrors of Stalin’s camps are still alive.

In this extract, Putin highlights the fact that he is well aware of all the arguments of the opposition. He shows that his decision was not spontaneous, that he took all the opinions into consideration, that this decision was not easy for him too. However, he tries to find the logic behind the dissenting opinions and then to explain to the general audience why this logic is wrong, what are the drawbacks of this way of thinking. He states that:

That is why it is impossible for us not to take all this into consideration. But I would like to point out that the representatives of both points of view are guided by one and the same logic. To put it simply, they ideologize these symbols of the state at most. They connect the gloomy periods in the history of our state with these symbols. However, these gloomy times always existed. There always were the times when the state power treated the people unreasonably cruelly and the actions of this power could not be called fair ones. However, if we are guided by only this logic, than we should also forget about all the achievements of our people during the centuries.

After the analysis of the opposite views on the issue, Putin proceeds to his main argument in order to dwell upon it fully. He states that the rejection of the historical

symbols is a dangerous mistake and a delusion, which leads to the simultaneous rejection of the entire national and cultural heritage. This is the emotional climax of his speech, and to reinforce the impact of this point, Putin uses rhetorical questions and strong visual images of the well-known Russian cultural workers and scientists. He argues that the rejection of the state symbols of the past entails the oblivion of the cultural symbols connected to them, which is inadmissible.

In this case, we are obliged to forget all the achievements of Russian culture. Should we forget about Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoi and Chaikovsky? Should we forget about the progress of Russian science, Mendeleev, Lobachevsky, and many, many others? There are a lot of things which we are proud of, what should we do with them? Because these names and all of these achievements are also connected with the symbols we are talking about! And can it really be true that the Soviet period can be remembered only due to the Stalin's camp and repressions? In this case, where should we put Dunaevsky, Sholohov, Shostakovich, Korolev and the achievements in astronautics? Where should we put the Gagarin's flight? And what about the brilliant victories of Russian weapons – from the times of Rumyantsev, Suvorov, Kutuzov? ...And what about the victory in the spring of 1945?

After this emotional appeal, Putin eventually switches to his own view of the matter – the concept of the combination of symbols of the different epochs in order to incorporate all the periods of Russian history in national symbolism, but to connect them not with the sad and gloomy historical events but with all the good things of the past which need not to be forgotten and neglected.

If we only come to thoroughly think of it, we will admit that today we not simply can, but should use all the main symbols of our state. The other question is that they all should be accordingly systematized and put into the proper shape. And in this case, the red banner will occupy a prominent place in this system of symbols, as the flag of our victory in the Great Patriotic War was of this very color.

Therefore, Putin presents his system of national symbols, 'systematized and put into the proper shape':

tricolor as a state flag, a traditional Russian flag which dates back over 300 years, the music of the Soviet anthem for the national anthem, and the traditional Russian two-headed eagle which dates back over 500 years as a coat of arms.

He is well aware of the heated debates and protests concerning the adoption of the music of the Soviet anthem, thus anticipating the critic, he devotes the last part of his speech to this very question. Firstly, he approves of his choice, mentioning the population polls, favoring the decision; besides, he stresses this fact by a logical chain: “symbols for the people”- “people should choose themselves”. He highlights his own role as a “servant of the people”, who is obliged to listen to the vast majority, saying:

Recently there has been a lot of controversy about the anthem – the former Soviet anthem with the Alexandrov’s music. However, we know the results of the population polls. The overwhelming majority of the Russian citizens gave their preference to this very tune. It is difficult to ignore the fact that not all the questions can be solved simply according to the vast majority. But we should not forget that in this case we are talking about the majority of our people. Eventually, the national symbols are suggested just for these very people.

After that, he continues to identify himself with the people, and in this case it is the opposition that Putin addresses. He gently hints that the other ways of resolving the questions of national symbols can cause a schism of the society, and he acts in order to prevent it:

I am willing to concede that the people and I are making a mistake. But I would like to address those not favoring this decision. I kindly ask you not to dramatize the situation, not to create insuperable obstacles, not to give up the ships, and not to split the society one more time.

In the end of his speech, Putin uses two very bright images, which automatically cause certain negative concepts to appear. Firstly, he warns his audience against the oblivion of their history and their ancestry, using the phrase ‘Ivan, ne pomnyaschii rodstva’ or “Ivans, not remembering their kinship”:

If we agree to the fact that it is not appropriate to use the symbols of the former eras, including the Soviet one, we will be forced to admit that the whole generations of our fellow citizens, that our mothers and fathers lived useless and

meaningless lives, that they lived their lives in vain. I can admit it neither with my head nor with my heart. In our history there has already been such a period when we rewrote everything. Today, we can also go this way. We can adopt a new flag, a new anthem, a new coat of arms. However, in this case we can be rightly called 'Ivans, not remembering their kinship'.

This trope is very powerful, as in the age of nationalism it is generally believed that the historical, scientific and cultural heritage, as well as the myths of the golden age, of the former power and might of the country, of the feats of arms of the ancestors are the building blocks of the contemporary nation, its essence and glory, and to forget and neglect it is the biggest mistake. Thus, here Putin conjures up the patriotic feelings of the audience. He also alludes to the times when the nation did neglect its heritage – the Soviet times, showing the negative consequences of that:

Do you remember, how cheerfully and loud we sang once, that we “would destroy everything, and then we will build our own, our new world, and the one who was nothing will become everything”? You are all well aware how did that period end.

To sum up his speech, Putin once again stresses his total conviction in the correctness of his approach, giving positive predictions for the future of the state:

Let us all aim our exuberant energy and all our talent not at the destruction, but to the creation. And then, I am absolutely sure, - the majority of our ideas, the majority of our desires, and the vast majority of our tasks will be fulfilled. I am sure, we will be a success³².

As it was shown, this speech was very skillfully made, and being a representative account of the state administration's position, it summarizes all the crucial points of the state power official position: “creation, not destruction”, “remembering the past, ancestors and kinship”, “preservation of the heritage” etc. Putin promotes his position, easily beating the arguments of the opposition, giving his own irrefutable ones and encouraging the simple state nationalism

³² Heraldry.ru, Zaiavlenie Prezidenta Rossii V.V.Putina po probleme gosudarstvennoi simvoliki, [Statement, made by Russian President Putin on the problem of the national symbols], <http://geraldika.ru/symbols/1606>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

which at that time had long been on the decline. He alludes to the most prominent figures in Russian history, and besides, he alludes to the Great Patriotic War which is considered one of the most glorious events of the Russian history and still has a great impact on the Russian people. What is more, he also clearly states that he answers to the society demands, that the taken decision upon the national symbols was based on the people's opinion, on the vast majority. However, it should be noted that though we have already looked at the results of the population polls, it is impossible to figure out the reasons behind the answers of the population, as they are rather fragmented. It is evident that when people gave a negative answer to the question whether they want a restoration of the old anthem or not, they were clearly guided by the anti-communist feelings. In the other case, in the case of positive answers, it is rather difficult to formulate a clear pattern of the people's reasons. However, it should be noted that all available opinion polls clearly showed that Alexandrov's music was not favored by more than 50% of all the respondents; therefore the prominent website POLIT.RU concludes that President Putin should not use people's opinion as a cover³³.

What can be hypothesized is that with Putin an era of hope began in Russia, a new narrative of the country which is arising from the debris and starting to gain its former might and glory. The patriotic feelings and general agitation, caused by the new regime, went well in line with the new system of symbols and general Putin's policy. It can be even better shown by the continuation of the debates which were clearly won by the President Putin.

³³ "Po oprosam vedushih sociologicheskikh sluzhb, gimn Alexandrova ne imel podderzhki dazhe polovini rossiayan" [According to the population polls of prominent public opinion foundations, Alexandrov's hymn was disapproved by more than a half of Russians], Polit.ru, <http://old.polit.ru/documents/382455.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

1.4. Dissenting Opinions

Ex-President Boris Yeltsin

Ex-president Boris Yeltsin was the first President of the Russian Federation. He made his career within the Communist Party system, but eventually it was he to whom it fell in early 1990, and it was he who destroyed the system with his own hand and create a new state, though rather painfully for the Russian public. A whole epoch in Russian history is inseparably linked with his name. It was the time when Russia was changing drastically³⁴. It is not surprising that Yeltsin had a special opinion concerning the national symbols of the state, because his own presidential decree once abolished flag and coat of arms with the traditional Soviet hammer and sickle on them, as well as the anthem on Alexandrov's music. As Putin, especially in the beginning of his career was perceived by the public as Yeltsin's protégé, mass media sources used this issue of disagreement to their own advantage, highlighting the fact that Putin began to change the course of the country contrary to Yeltsin's will. And Yeltsin did say indeed that he was "categorically against" bringing back the hymn to serve as Russia's anthem. That was "Yeltsin's first public criticism of his successor"³⁵.

However, ex-President did understand that something was to be done to solve the questions of national symbols. He strongly opposes Putin's argument that "he just executes the will of the people, who want the old music back", saying that "the president must not simply and blindly follow the mood of the people, but must actively influence them".

³⁴ The Yeltsin Years, *Russia Today* (21.04.2008), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t98Eq0c9Gus&feature=user>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

³⁵ "Yeltsin Opposes Using Soviet Anthem", *People's Daily* (December 08, 2000), http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/200012/08/eng20001208_57283.html, (accessed April 15, 2009).

Another Putin's argument that Yeltsin was against was the argument that the Soviet anthem's music was good, easy to remember and associated with Soviet-era sports victories and other achievements. Yeltsin explains that his only association with the old anthem is "party congresses and conferences that consolidated the power of the party's bureaucrats". For him, the music of the old anthem only invokes the memory of totalitarian rule and political repression. He also warns against treating such things as the symbols of the nation not seriously. Outlining the history of the Soviet Anthem, Yeltsin says:

Khrushchev removed the lyrics praising the "father of nations", but kept the tune itself. During the Brezhnev times, the lyric was once again changed, and now, it appears, a new text will be suggested? No, one should not trifle with this³⁶.

However, he did not have any suggestions for replacing the symbols. Yeltsin only joked in one interview that "[...] the situation with the anthem is difficult. Maybe I myself should sit down and write the verses and the music"³⁷.

All that disagreement, as it was mentioned earlier, caused a boom in mass media. For example, *Segodnia* (Today) newspaper called the disagreement between the ex-president and his successor "Requiem on Alexandrov's music", implying that adopting the Alexandrov's music, Putin says farewell to Yeltsin's epoch. The newspaper argues that "Yeltsin had hoped to create a successor, but created a liquidator. Putin could not come up with a better way to musically-politically take final leave of his benefactor. [...] and the symbolic rupture of the bond which connected Putin to his 'parent' and his 'parent's family' was one of the most

³⁶ Tema Dnia [Topic of the Day] 08 December 2000, *NEWSru.com*, <http://temadnya.ru/hrono/08dec2000/index.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

³⁷ "Yeltsin Opposes Using Soviet Anthem", *People's Daily* (December 08, 2000), http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/english/200012/08/eng20001208_57283.html, (accessed April 15, 2009).

serious reasons for adoption of Alexandrov's anthem, a challenge for Yeltsin and his epoch"³⁸.

Liberal Opposition

The liberal parties Yabloko and the Union of Rightist Forces also took part in the discussion of the matter. The liberals pointed out that in the mind of many Russian citizens "the Stalin anthem' was closely associated with bloody crimes against the nation"³⁹. The joint statement of two parties starts with the following: "*We consider such attempts as a test before the restoration of the elements of a totalitarian system that are far from symbolic*". This is exactly the argument that Vladimir Putin addresses in his speech, advancing the counterargument: "that there are people who attach too much importance to the symbols, who "ideologize them at most".

Another argument the liberal parties are using is the ethical one. The statement continues with the following words:

In view of the tribute to symbols and great achievements of the past era, we believe that it would be unethical to adopt the anthem of a state that has ceased its historic existence. We should not forget that "Stalin's" anthem is closely connected to bloody crimes against the nation.

³⁸ "Rekviem na muziku Alexandrova"[Requiem on Alexandrov's music], *Segodnia* (8 December 2000), http://www.7days.ru/w3s.nsf/Archive/2000_275_polit_text_radzihovskii.html, (accessed April 15, 2009).

³⁹ 'Yabloko and the SPS oppose restoration of the symbols of the Soviet Union', 2000. *Yabloko home page*, (November 20, 2000), <http://www.eng.yabloko.ru/Press/2000/001122.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

However, it is rather difficult to understand the meaning of this argument due to the fact that it is not fully developed. Speaking about the achievements of the past era, liberals state that it is unethical to adopt the anthem of the state which no longer exists. The logical connection between two parts of this idea should have been better elaborated in order to achieve the adequate understanding. Putin disposes of this argument in his statement, saying that it is better to connect the symbols of the past with the bright pages of Russian history, not only to the gloomy ones, which sounds more appealing to the general public. Yabloko chairman Grigorii Yavlinsky develops this argument in his own speech, saying that his party

respects the history of our country and great achievements of our people, but the anthem of the Soviet Union is the symbol of supremacy of the Communist Party and totalitarian state, that ascribed the achievements of the people to themselves⁴⁰.

However, negative attitude of the liberals was not perceived seriously in that moment, as the society at this moment rather positively perceived the changes and favored Putin. What is more, liberals were discredited firstly due to the failure of their program of the reforms, and secondly due to their constant usage of anti-Stalinist rhetoric in every context. As they abused this rhetoric, when, for example, they connected the adoption of the anthem with the repressions which would supposedly follow the adoption, they discredited all the other their argumentation, even though some of the arguments were very strong.

Grigorii Yavlinsky, the leader of Yabloko, signed the party's own statement concerning the anthem, where the party calls Putin to stop the consideration of the bill on national anthem. The statement says: "It is better to admit and avert the mistake, than to bear the historical responsibilities for its consequences". Yavlinsky also makes another prominent point,

⁴⁰ Yabloko and the SPS oppose restoration of the symbols of the Soviet Union', 2000. *Yabloko home page*, (November 20, 2000), <http://www.eng.yabloko.ru/Press/2000/001122.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

highlighting the fact that statement of the question about the anthem is rather inopportune, when a lot of more serious economic and political problems of the country have not been solved⁴¹. Yavlinsky continues, advancing the logic of the liberal opposition:

We consider the entry into the new century with the national anthem which is not just connected with the past, but connected with the only one – Communist – past of our country. Doing that, Russian President takes the side of the political forces, which seek to reverse the course of the Russian history⁴².

Analyzing the real meaning of the symbols under consideration, Grigorii Yavlinsky states that

[...] the new anthem is indeed a prominent symbol, but it is a symbol of the collapse. This is the symbol of the ideology that has collapsed. This is the symbol of the ideology that has led to the collapse of the state which was based on this ideology. This is the symbol of the ideology that physically destroyed the best representatives of our people: military men, scientists, workers, peasants, the ideology which committed the genocide of the Russian people. It is not the symbol of the victory over fascism, because other songs were sung at the front, other songs helped us to win the war, and nobody thought of the anthem⁴³.

This telling argument, which cuts across Putin's argumentation, was not heard in the State Duma, as Yavlinskii did not deliver his speech there, but only published it on the official Yabloko website.

Another argument which is put forward by both liberal parties in support of the different national symbols in their joint statement is the following:

⁴¹ "Fraktsiya Yabloko prizivaet Putina ostanovit rassmotrenie zakonopropekta o gimne, [Yabloko appeals to Putin to stop the consideration of the law concerning the anthem], Novosti Newsru.com (December 8, 2000), <http://palm.newsru.com/russia/08dec2000/yabloko.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "Vistuplenie Grigoriya Yavlinskogo, kotoroe poboyalas uslishat Gosduma , [Speech of Grigorii Yavlinskii that the State Duma was afraid to hear] ,(December 8, 2008), Yabloko official website, <http://www.yabloko.ru/Press/Docs/2000/1208Yavl-gimn.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

In our opinion, the anthem of Russia may not be imposed onto society from the top, by decision of the State Council or the State Duma. It should consolidate Russian society, rather than split it into opposing groups⁴⁴.

This argument seems rather unconvincing, taking into consideration the population polls, cited by Putin, which clearly show that generally the decision of adoption of the symbols of the Soviet era will not be opposed by the population at large. However, taking into account the big population of Russia, the following statement of Yavlinsky seems very logical:

“Millions of people will never be able to accept the anthem, the music of which cannot be separated from the lyric, celebrating the party of Lenin and Stalin”⁴⁵.

Therefore, it is seen in general, that the argumentation of the liberal parties, being rather legitimately based on the vexed ethical questions and telling and forcible arguments, are not always fully elaborated, besides, the liberals failed to suggest any viable alternative. It has been shown that the argumentation which President Putin advances is weighty and better pre-planned, comparing to the liberal's one, what is more, it is more appealing to the society, which was rather tired of gloomy predictions and wanted peace and stability.

Cultural and Public Figures

As the debates went forward at a steady gate, Russian cultural figures also took part in it.

Moscow Writers Union commented on Putin's decision with a harsh critique, saying that:

⁴⁴ ‘Yabloko and the SPS oppose restoration of the symbols of the Soviet Union’, 2000. *Yabloko home page*, (November 20, 2000), <http://www.eng.yabloko.ru/Press/2000/001122.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

⁴⁵ “Fraktsiya Yabloko prizivaet Putina ustanovit rassmotrenie zakonopropekta o gimne, [Yabloko appeals to Putin to stop the consideration of the law concerning the anthem], *Novosti Newsru.com* (December 8, 2000), <http://palm.newsru.com/russia/08dec2000/yabloko.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

Something improbable, wild is happening: we, the free people are now being made to sing Stalin's praises again. [...] President Putin has agreed to readopt Stalin's national anthem – adjusting it to the double-headed eagle. Supporters of the Bolshevism could not but dream of such a present. Not a single country of the post-communist world can even think about something like this.

According to the writers' opinion, the restoration of the anthem of the Soviet Union as an official symbol of Russian Federation for the country that lost billions of citizens because of the Bolshevism is blasphemy. They also state that

The restoration of the Stalin's anthem will not unite the society, but shake the youth's faith in the older generations. During ten years of democracy, there appeared a new generation of free people for whom Stalin's regime is the gloomiest, cruelest and shameful period of our state's one-hundred-year history.

They finish their appeal to the President by the following words:

Together with the Russian Patriarch, together with such people who influence the perception of Russia all over the world – Solzhenitizin, Plisetskaya, Rastropovich, Vishnevskaya, Yakovlev, Iskander – we appeal to Kremlin and the Parliament not to make such a big and shameful error⁴⁶.

The editors-in-chief of prominent journals, pertaining for the humanities, made their own appeal to the President through the website Polit.ru. They also consider the questions of the adoption of the anthem to be of great symbolic importance. Hence, they state that

The choice of Alexandrov's music will mean only one thing – that those ten years after the collapse of the communist regime were just an accidental episode in the Russian history.

The editors elaborate on this point, saying that these ten years were the beginning of the new life of a free and democratic country. For them, these issues are of great importance, because, as the authors of the appeal highlight, only during these years they got the chance to do their job without the censorship and the iron curtain. That is the reason why for these people

⁴⁶ "Pisateli Moskvi vistupili protiv gimna, predlozhenogo Prezidentom", [Moscow writers opposed the anthem suggested by the President], Novosti Newsru.com (December 6, 2000), <http://www.newsru.com/russia/06Dec2000/againsthymn1.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

Alexandrov's music symbolizes the ugly Soviet epoch and points at such direction of the development of our country, which we are choosing. We will never agree to make such a choice.

Addressing the possible negation of the country's former achievements in case of the adoption of completely new symbols, the editors explain that they are not approve of the negation of the Russian history. On the contrary, they state that the horrible years of bloody repressions, battles with the dissent and all the manifestations of freedom should never be forgotten. What they argue is that the adoption of the anthem with Alexandrov's music will be the first, but very significant step to the oblivion of our past⁴⁷.

Another group of prominent representatives of cultural and scientific sphere appealed to the President through the newspaper *Izvestiya*, and their appeal starts with the following words:

The idea to readopt the music of the Soviet anthem causes our aversion and protest. Before Stalin chose this music for the national anthem, it was the anthem of Bolsheviks. And it stays so now⁴⁸.

This appeal was signed by such famous people as O. Basilashvili, V.Gaft, K.Lavrov, G.Volchek, B.Strugatsky, M.Plisetskaya, G.Rozhdestvensky, Y.Shevchuk and many others.

Human Rights Groups

Meanwhile, two of Russia's veteran human rights groups, Memorial and the Moscow Helsinki Group, issued a joint statement condemning Putin's anthem initiative.

⁴⁷ “Vozzvanie redaktorov gymanitarnih zhurnalov k Presidenty I deputatam Gosudarstvennoi Dumi, [Appeal of the editors of journals to the President and the deputies of the State Duma], Polit.ru, <http://old.polit.ru/documents/381478.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

⁴⁸ “Zateya vozvratit v gosudarstvennii obihod muziky bivshego sovetskogo gimna vizivaet u nas otvrashenie i protest”, [The venture to return the music of the former Soviet anthem causes disgust and protest], Polit.ru, <http://old.polit.ru/documents/379540.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

They announced that they consider it is "categorically unacceptable" to restore the Soviet-era anthem, given that Aleksandrov's music and Mikhalkov's words were approved by Josef Stalin, NKVD chief Lavrenti Beria, Andrei Zhdanov "and other great criminals of the 20th century."

They also argue that

the anthem of the Soviet Union fully corresponded to the spirit of the Stalin's empire, built on the bones of billions of people. The revival of the communist anthem today is not a simple nostalgia about the past; it is an attempt to assume the obsolete stereotypes as the basis of the new state policy. This is a step towards the revanche.

This is a counterargument to all argumentation Putin advances as a legitimacy of the re-adoption of the anthem. Human rights groups highlight the direct link of the Communist anthem with the totalitarian pattern of state ruling, and not with all the cultural, scientific and military achievements. They declare that the adoption of the anthem will be insulting for the post-communist countries, which is a prominent point.

The revival of the old anthem is the violent outrage of our history which rejected Stalin's way of development. Therefore this anthem will fill with indignation all those who do not accept totalitarian ideology. It will abase our neighbors, and the performance of the anthem will be insulting for all killed guiltlessly, numerous graves of whom have not been found yet. Should Russia pay such a high price for a few musical lines?⁴⁹

Elaborating on the connection of the anthem with all the horrors of Stalin's era, the joint statement of Moscow Helsinki Group and Memorial adds to the whole picture of the outrage of some representatives of liberals and intelligentsia concerning the re-adoption of the old anthem.

⁴⁹ Zayavlenie obshestva "Memorial" I Moskovskoi Helsinskoi Gruppi, [Statement of the human rights groups "Memorial" and "Moscow Helsinki Group"], Polit.ru, <http://old.polit.ru/documents/380635.html>, (accessed April 15, 2009).

1.5. Supporting Opinions

It is logical that there were people who favored the re-adoption of the Alexandrov's music. For example, another fourteen cultural figures signed an open letter in defense of Putin and Alexandrov's music. They state that they consider the decision of Russian president not only the most optimal of all, but also very timely. Such well-known public figures as G. Zhzhenov, Z.Tzereteli, G.Hazanov, A.Kalyagin, S.Druzhinina, K.Shahnazarov and others declare in their letter that

It is naïve to think that there is a decision which will be satisfactory for everyone without exceptions. However, the “package” variant proposed by the President has at least one prominent advantage. Uniting in the symbolic system of the state three symbols of different epochs, the President re-establishes the continuity of the Russian history. This historical compromise can become a basis for the consolidation of the civil accord, which is needed very badly nowadays⁵⁰.

This argumentation is based on the complex analysis of the symbolic system proposed by Putin. This letter treats the anthem not as just the one controversial symbol proposed, but as constituent part of the whole symbolic system, which includes also pre-revolutionary, Tsarist symbols.

Besides, the Communist party of the Parliament was also positive about the adoption of the anthem. The leader of the party, Gennadii Zyuganov, in his interview to the radio station “Ekho Moskvi”, shared his own view on the issue:

I consider the adoption [of the national symbols] as a necessity, [...] as this situation needed to be resolved. [...] The combination of different symbols is an arrangement, a compromise.

⁵⁰ “Tchetirnadtzat deyatelei kulturi, v tom chisel Georgii Zhzhenov, Zurab Tzereteli I Vyacheslav Tihonov, podpisali otkritoe pismo...”, [Fourteen cultural figures, including Georgii Zhzhenov, Zurab Tzereteli and Vyacheslav Tihonov, signed the open letter], Polit.ru, <http://old.polit.ru/documents/380599.html>, (accessed April 16, 2009).

Answering the question of the interviewer “Why the anthem for you is more important than any other symbol?”, Zyuganov explains that

All of us were born and brought up in the Soviet era, and the Soviet era is not just brilliant and legendary, but it also showed to the whole world how much a country can achieve if it is guided by the sacred ideals of good, justice and respect to the men of labor, and by the proud music and the red banner⁵¹.

This seems to be usual ideological underpinnings of the Communist party. The explanations are pretty predictable.

Russian Orthodox Church also passed its opinion, however, a quite surprising one. The Patriarch of Russia critically treats Russian intelligentsia in his statement “On the Russian Anthem”, saying that

The intelligentsia states that the Alexandrov’s music reminds them of “Stalinshchina”. But for many other people this music symbolizes very different things: the victory in the Great Patriotic War, and the first astronauts, and the achievements of our sportsmen, and that Soviet Russia was a great power. Intelligentsia has forgotten that the current anthem – Glinka’s song – can also remind about the times when everything was “plundered, betrayed, sold”. Alexandrov’s anthem is the Empire’s anthem. The current anthem is the anthem of disorder, breakdown, scattering.

Therefore, the Russian Church considers the Alexandrov’s anthem more appropriate for the state. It viewed this anthem as an anthem of an empire, therefore seeing a continuity between tsarist, communist and contemporary Russia. Patriarch also praises Alexandrov’s anthem for the high quality of the music.

Alexandrov’s anthem is not only “the Soviet Union Anthem”, but “an anthem as it should be”, “an ideal anthem”, as in many countries the anthems do not really sound as the anthems. Anthem of the Soviet Union’s music is ideal and inimitable. It has absorbed the history of the USSR, but there are also repercussions of Orthodox psalms in it. There is the history of the Russian Empire in it, and the

⁵¹ Rassmotrenie v Gosdume RF proekta o gossivolike, [Consideration of the project on national symbolic in the State Duma RF]. (December 8, 2000), Radio station “Ekho Moskvi”, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/beseda/12603/>, (accessed April 16, 2009).

Great Patriotic War. So, if we take “the ideal Russia” which has taken the best from the three Russias: the tsarist, the Soviet and the one which lives to see the time it has been waiting for; the anthem of this “ideal Russia” will definitely not be the current anthem (Glinka’s Patriotic song) and not “God, save the Tsar!”, but the music of the Soviet Union times, and it is very unlikely that Russia would ever have a better musically expressed “official face”⁵².

That is the opinion of the leader of the Orthodox Church, and this opinion clearly denotes the fact of conciliation and peace between the State and the Church. Backing the Alexandrov’s anthem, the Orthodox Church clearly backs up the contemporary policy as well.

1.6 The Results

After these extensive debates, the account of which was presented above, the “package” state symbols suggested by Putin were adopted by the State Duma, and has now been operating for more than eight years. Despite all the controversy behind the symbols, it seems that they have been accepted by the society at large. As it was described in the beginning, the national anthem performed in sport events is sung by billions of supporters, as well as it sounds solemn and proud during all the official events. Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the fact that the debates were mainly conducted in the level of state elite, every group of which presented its view on the issue according to the official ideological stance. Thus, every argument advanced by different groups can also be seen as a part of the ideological narrative.

However, by his decision Putin managed to give the society exactly what it wanted: a well-known beautiful music, which is rather easy to sing. It is rather unlikely that common people, who sing the anthem supporting the national team during the intense tournament, are thinking about their past at the moment. Therefore, it can be concluded that in this case, Putin’s technology of nation-building was rather successful, and this conclusion can also be

⁵² “O Rossiiskom Gimne”, [On the Russian Anthem], *Russkoe Voskresenie*, <http://www.voskres.ru/articles/hymn.htm>, (accessed April 16, 2009).

supported by the analysis of Putin's argumentation on the issue, which was well-planned and logical. The "package" of symbols, combining symbols from different epochs, seems also a rather felicitous solution.

Putin's opponents, having serious arguments against restoration of the anthem, failed to win the public opinion due to the factors mentioned above, like, for instance, the general discredit of the liberal parties or the fact that they and some public figures abused with the alarmist rhetoric in the inappropriate situations.

In view of all this, the paper proceeds to analyze the more recent debates on the state holiday.

Chapter 2: Debates on People's Unity Day

2.1 The Nature of New Holiday

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a lot of Soviet traditions and rituals, including the official holidays, were abolished. The most important day of the calendar – the 7th of November or The Day of Great October Socialist Revolution, a commemoration of the Bolshevik Revolution, was replaced by The Day of Accord and Reconciliation, still celebrated on November 7. However, this holiday did not gain much popularity as generally the meaning of it was not clearly seen by the society. Thus, in 2005 a new holiday was introduced by Putin to celebrate on the 4th of November - Day of People's Unity or National Unity Day.

This holiday commemorates the popular uprising of 1612, which brought an end to the Times of Troubles and foreign occupation of Russia in the course of Polish-Muscovite War of 1605-1618. Its name alludes to the idea that for the single time in history all the classes of Russian society united in order to protect the motherland and the statehood when the threat seemed mortal, even though there was no leader – neither Tsar nor Patriarch to guide them. This great event in Russian history had been celebrated as Day of Moscow's Liberation from Polish Invaders since 1613 until the October Revolution of 1917, when it was abandoned by the Bolsheviks, which means that in fact in 2005 the holiday was re-invented.

Thus, the re-establishment of the holiday by President Putin aimed at the restoration of the old holiday of Tsarist Russia; however, the date November 4 is strongly connected to another feast – it is a feast day of the holy icon Our Lady of Kazan, one of the most precious symbols of Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, the People's Unity Day seemed to be a good replacement for the Soviet holiday, which not only dates back over four centuries, but also combines both a

precious memory of the unique event of popular solidarity and a prominent Orthodox feast. However, when Vladimir Putin introduced this holiday as an official national one and abolished the Day of Great October Socialist Revolution, there appeared a lot of controversy, for example, from the Communist Party that boycotted the motion. Another point of controversy was connected with the ultranationalist activity which annually takes place on People's Unity Day.

Thus, this chapter will focus on the newly-adopted holiday – the Day of People's Unity, analyzing its planned and potential role in the nation-building, reconstructing the debates concerning the adoption of the holiday and thus figuring out the incentives of the government to replace the former Soviet holiday with the commemoration of the uprising of 1612.

2.2 Putin's Argument for the Adoption of the Holiday

To understand the decision of Putin to introduce a new holiday in 2005, it is useful to look at his speech made on November 4, 2005 at the ceremonial reception devoted to the first celebration of Day of People's Unity in Russia. In the speech, Putin puts the historical event of 1612 in the broader framework of the contemporary reality, showing the contemporary meaning of the popular uprising, its significance, and its potential impact on the Russian society.

It should be noted that for a rather long period of time the Day of October Socialist Revolution had projected a very strong message to the people, and was always celebrated with special grandeur, as it commemorated perhaps the most important event in the Soviet

history – the day when the Bolsheviks came to power. Thus, President Putin needed strong argumentation for the new holiday, and he needed to explain that the new holiday would be also strong in the historical meaning and emotional charge. Thus, Putin starts with the general outline of historical events which became the foundation of the Day of People's Unity.

It is the first time today that we celebrate the Day of People's Unity. This new state holiday has just appeared in Russia, but its purport and meaning have deep spiritual and historical roots. About four centuries ago, in the beginning of November 1612, the volunteer corps of Minin and Pozharsky liberated Moscow from the foreign invaders. The Times of Trouble in Russia was brought to an end, together with the long-lasting feuds and wrangles in the society, disunity and resulting in all that decline.

Putin elaborates on the meaning of this historical event, pointing out the fact that the popular uprising of 1612 is a unique example in the Russian history when the people driven by the patriotic feelings united in order to save the statehood without any political or spiritual leader. During Soviet times such civic initiative was not appreciated much due to the totalitarian pattern of state organization, and Putin makes a special point readopting this holiday from the Tsarist era and filling it with the new meaning of civic responsibility which he says he hopes to develop.

That was a victory of the patriotic forces, the victory of the policy of the consolidation of the state with the help of unification, centralization and joining of efforts. These historical events were the basis for the spiritual rebirth of our Motherland and for its establishment as great and sovereign.

Another prominent point of Putin's speech is his stress on the participation of people of different ethnic origins and religions in the movement. He stresses the fact that Russia is a multicultural and multireligious state, and that people belonging to different groups should take equal parts in the development of the state.

Without any doubts, that was a moment when the people themselves upheld the Russian statehood. The people displayed veritable patriotism and high level of responsibility. The people of different nationalities and religions united not because

they were put under compulsion, but because they responded to the call of their hearts, in order to seal the fate of the motherland together and independently.

Here Putin shows the link between past and present, alluding to the concept of the Russian national character. He highlights the prominent qualities of the Russian people and states that nowadays these qualities can be even more useful. He makes use of this concept, as this mentioning provides the basis for his further point.

The slogan of the headman of Nizhny Novgorod Kuzma Minin “Vmeste za odno!” (“Together for the common!”) perfectly reflects the best qualities and traits of Russian national character. Our people have always been able to unite for peaceful and military deeds, to keep the traditions of mutual aid, to empathize and respond to someone’s anguish and hardship.

This abstract logically leads to Putin’s main idea – the encouragement of the philanthropic activity in Russia.

I am convinced that it is not by accident that Russia has become famous for its prominent philanthropists and outstanding examples of voluntary, disinterested service to the society and nation.

What is especially interesting here is the fact that this speech brightly shows how the technologies of nation-building on the highest level are being introduced and how they can possibly work. It is an illustrative example of the ‘invented tradition’ in the full sense of Hobsbawm, who argues that “invented traditions occurred more frequently at times of rapid social transformation when 'old' traditions were disappearing”. He also mentions “not only adaptations and new uses of old traditions for new purposes, but also the re-use of ancient elements in new contexts. 'Extinct' traditions too can become '(re-)invented traditions', when they are revived”⁵³.

⁵³ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 5-8.

This case shows that in the times of transformation of the society the Day of People's Unity serves its purpose of creating the new patterns of social organization very well. It is clear that the traditions of how to celebrate the new holidays are being invented by Putin, though he tries to stress the link between the past and present, showing that the history of philanthropy has deep roots in Russian history.

Today here there are a lot of representatives of different confessions of faith, public organizations and philanthropic foundations. And I am glad that by real deeds you are reviving the traditions of philanthropy, of which Russia has always been famous for.

Putin appeals to the well-known Russian benefactors, and to the well-known historical examples of pre-revolutionary Russia, where prosperous merchants and entrepreneurs donated their money in order to develop Russian culture and education and enrich cultural heritage. These examples possess strong emotional charge, as people indeed remember the devotion and generosity of the great philanthropist of the past.

In 1856 a historian Michail Pogodin wrote about Russian Maecenas: "If we calculated all their donations done in this century, we would get a number, to which Europe should have made a low bow". We all are familiar with such names as Eliseev, Schukin, Bahrushin, we know the dynasties of Morozov, Tretyakov, Mamontov. These people, founding theatres, colleges, hospitals and museums, were not lavish for good deeds; they consciously supported the development of our culture and education. For the contemporaries they were the examples for imitation, and the descendants remember their selfless devotion with gratitude.

Besides, here in this abstract President Putin encourages the business owners to participate in various philanthropic projects.

Already in the modern history of Russia there are a lot of examples of philanthropic projects. They are aimed at consolidation of the physical and spiritual health of the nation, at the preservation of the priceless treasures of our culture. Without any doubts, the active and concerned participation of Russian business in these programs is the striking illustration of its growing civic and social responsibility, and of the rebirth of the best principles and traditions of business ethics.

The next abstract again attracts the attention of the audience to the representatives of different religious confessions. The role of religion in the Russian state is reinforced after the Soviet negation of such an institution.

And I should also mention the merciful and educational activity of all without exceptions Russian confessions of faith. We know how sincerely you fulfill your selfless task, giving moral support to the people, giving them strength and hope.

Concluding his speech, President Putin promises fame to all those who are involved in the philanthropic activity. This serves as a further encouragement to all those who are able to assist in the progressive development of the Russian state and society.

Nothing can unite people better than the good works done together. I expect the mass media to devote more attention to the people who are involved in the philanthropic activity, sacrificing their time and labor to the benefit of our society. I am convinced that the concerned partnership of the state and the philanthropic organizations will start developing rapidly since now on⁵⁴.

As it was shown, Putin tries to use the invented holiday to the benefit of the society. As the holiday is brand-new, and there are no traditions or practices attached to it, Putin, giving his speech during the first official reception devoted to the holiday, outlines his suggestions which, if they are a success in the future, can later become naturally associated with the Day of People's Unity. Thus, the new holiday represents metaphorically an empty reservoir which can be filled up with any meaning. Its historical base acts as a framework – a framework composed of ideas of popular solidarity and civic initiative, the phenomena which are rather rare for Russia. It was depicted how wisely and logically Putin introduces his arguments, creating a certain meaning of the holiday. Looking at his speeches on the same occasion next years, the continuity of Putin's ideas is clearly seen. However, as the aforementioned

⁵⁴ “Vistuplenie na torzhestvennom prieme, posvyaschennom Dnyu Narodnogo Edinstva”, [Speech on the official reception devoted to the Day of People's Unity on November 4, 2005], President Of Russia official website, November 4, 2005, <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2005/11/96690.shtml>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

reservoir is rather flexible, each year the President adds some novelty in the set of practices already attached to the Day of People's Unity. For example, on the reception devoted to the second celebration of the holiday, Putin emphasizes the great role of Russians living abroad in the development of the country.

It does not matter where the sons and daughters of Russia live, they are still united with all the society by the historical memory of ancient traditions of patriotism, accord and consolidation of the people. I am very glad to see our compatriots from various countries of the world here at the reception. I would like to stress that we highly appreciate your aspiration to consolidation around your historical motherland, appreciate your desire to be of benefit to it and to strengthen its authority⁵⁵.

Another Putin's point in his second speech on Day of People's Unity is the importance of the Russian language. Therefore the teachers of the Russian language and Russian literature, art historians, publishers of the media printed in Russian were invited to the official reception. To all of them Putin addresses his words of gratitude.

Your hearts are filled with the admiration to the Russian Language, which is not only our common heritage, but also a solid basis for friendship and collaboration. [...] Besides, the significance of the Russian language for the development of our civilization is obvious, because a lot of books are written in Russian, including books on history, culture, scientific discoveries of different peoples. That is why I am glad to announce that the year 2007 will be carried out as the Year of the Russian Language⁵⁶.

In 2007, President Putin, taking into consideration the growing authority of Russia as an actor in the world political arena, adds to all the previous shades of the meaning of the holiday a new one – the power of Russia based on its unity.

⁵⁵ “Vistuplenie na torzhestvennom prieme, posvyaschennom Dnyu Narodnogo Edinstva”, [Speech on the official reception devoted to the Day of People's Unity on November 4, 2006], President Of Russia official website, November 4, 2006, <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2006/11/113418.shtml>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

⁵⁶ “Vistuplenie na torzhestvennom prieme, posvyaschennom Dnyu Narodnogo Edinstva”, [Speech on the official reception devoted to the Day of People's Unity on November 4, 2006], President Of Russia official website, November 4, 2006, <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2006/11/113418.shtml>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

Contemporary Russia is powerful not only because of its recent economic progress, not only because of its growing influence in the global politics – it is powerful because of the people’s unity, and because of the great intellectual and creative potential of our people. This is the best bridge to the bright future of our country, rebirth and consolidation of the historical role of our country⁵⁷.

In 2008, the speech of the President Dmitrii Medvedev also goes in line with all the Putin’s arguments. He also stresses the continuity of the holiday which dates back in the ancient times, and was just rediscovered in 2005⁵⁸.

Thus, having looked at the strategy and technology which the State power uses for the nation-building, one can easily backtrace the process of inventing the tradition, introducing it to the society at large, and then creating and naturalize the practices connected with the tradition.

The Day of People’s Unity seems to be a successful idea for using such technology of nation-building; but still the idea and concept of the holiday has faced arguments and controversy, which will be analyzed in the next sections. However, first the opinions of the supporting sides will be put under consideration.

⁵⁷ “Vistuplenie na torzhestvennom prieme, posvyaschennom Dnyu Narodnogo Edinstva”, [Speech on the official reception devoted to the Day of People’s Unity on November 4, 2007] President Of Russia official website, November 4, 2007, <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2007/11/150256.shtml>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

⁵⁸ “Vistuplenie na torzhestvennom prieme, posvyaschennom Dnyu Narodnogo Edinstva”, [Speech on the official reception devoted to the Day of People’s Unity on November 4, 2008], President Of Russia official website, November 4, 2008, <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/11/208738.shtml>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

2.3 Supporting Opinions

Orthodox Church

The Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Alexii II states his opinion on the official website of the Church. In his speech the Patriarch openly embraces the idea of the Day of People's Unity, explaining that this holiday possesses a great symbolic meaning. He says:

I am convinced that this holiday will assist in the recognition of the fact that Russia is our common motherland, and that Russian future depends on all of us. This holiday symbolizes the idea of national accord and consolidation of the society.

The Patriarch stresses multiethnic and multicultural character of the Russian society, the concept of which is well represented in the whole idea of the holiday.

It can remind us of the fact that we – citizens of Russia of different age and ethnic origins, world outlooks and confessions of faith, representatives of different social groups, are the one people with the common roots and the common future.

Actually it is clear that Alexii II has not come up with any new ideas to support the initiative of the State authorities, however he clearly states his position favoring the new holiday. This is not surprising as during the last decade the union of the State and the Church seems rather strong.

The fact that the new holiday has been introduced in the calendar a year ago is the evidence of the sincere desire of the citizens of our country to preserve the interethnic peace, to keep the traditions of ancient good-neighborliness⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ “Den Narodnogo Edinstva splotit rossiyan, ubezhden Patriarh Aleksii II”, [Day of People's Unity will unite the Russians, Patriarch Alexii II is certain], Lenta Novostei “RIA Novosti”, November 3, 2006, <http://www.rian.ru/religion/20061103/55359131.html>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

The positive attitude of the Orthodox Church towards the holiday can also be explained through the aforementioned importance of the feast day of the icon Our Lady of Kazan, which coincides with the Day of People's Unity. For example, the official website Pravoslavie.ru (Orthodoxy.ru), giving the account of the celebration of People's Unity day, covers both civil and religious events⁶⁰, which means that the Orthodox Church perceives the idea of the holiday as a blend of civic and religious traditions.

The leader of the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Russia Alexandr Boroda has also given his support to the holiday.

I am happy to say that the celebration of the Day of People's Unity has become a tradition in our society. And I am glad that the radical nationalist activity is minimal nowadays. Today each ethnic group and community should find a proper place in the family of the nations of Russia and build its ideology proceeding from the understanding of the multiethnic character of our state⁶¹.

Liberals

Liberal parties support the Day of People's Unity, but in their own way. They are much more preoccupied with the rise of the organized ultranationalist activity, thus they try to oppose the radical nationalism by the meetings against xenophobia and nationalism. They generally see the Day of People's Unity as a tool to struggle against such radical phenomena, which, unfortunately, are quite common in the Russian society. For example, Yabloko leader Sergei

⁶⁰ "Rossiia otprazdnovala Den Narodnogo Edinstva", [Russia has celebrated the Day of People's Unity], Pravoslavie.ru, November 4, 2005, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/news/15044.htm>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

⁶¹ "Neponimanie znachenija Dnia Narodnogo Edinstva – rezultat istoricheskogo nevezhestva", [Incomprehension of the meaning of the Day of People's Unity is a result of historical ignorance], Novosti NEWS.ru, <http://www.newsru.com/religy/06nov2007/edinstvo.html>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

Mitrohin stresses the need of the control of ultranationalist activity in his speech on November 4, 2008:

We believe that this very day it should be stated that in Russia there exists the power which can oppose national strife and all that contagion – skinheads, nationalists, xenophobes, who slowly but surely erode the country.

Liberal leaders are well aware that not all Russian people understand the meaning of the concept of national unity, mistakenly considering it to be the union of ethnically Russian people. Therefore their profound concern in the rise of nationalist activity is rather natural. Their meaning of the holiday is more connected with anti-xenophobia.

Today when in Moscow a lot of riffraff raises their heads, we gather here and tell them that we will prevent them from the destruction of Russia. When we are here there will be international peace in Russia, there will be friendship of the nations, and Russia will remain a great power of the 21st century⁶².

Therefore it can be stated that though the liberal parties generally support the motion in the State Duma when the new holiday was established, especially because of their opposition to the Communist party, their attitude towards its celebration has changed accordingly to the rise of the nationalist activity like the realization of the Russian March with the motto “Clean the city from the unwelcome guests!”.

Public Figures

Rather predictably, the mass media exploded with the publications on such a vexed issue first in 2005, and then each year on the eve of the holiday. The sources which viewed the Day of

⁶² “Aktziia Yabloka: Natziionalizm grozit Rossii rsapadom”, [Yabloko’s action: Nationalism threatens Russia with dissolution], Yabloko official website, http://www.yabloko.ru/Press/2008/081104_den_edinstva.html, (accessed April 27, 2009).

People's Unity rather positively, named the holiday The Day of Good Works, and cited well-known public figures adhering to the same opinion. It is worth mentioning the interviews for the political TV show Vremena (Times) on November 30, 2005, where politicians, TV presenters, writers, scientists and other prominent figures discussed the newly established holiday.

Lev Anninskii, a publicist and writer, gives his account of the holiday:

It was needed to shift the 7th of November, but not too far, so that people used to having a holiday in the beginning of November, still have it. That is why it was shifted to the 4th. People will like it when they get used to it. On the other hand, Russian people are unpredictable. You never know whether such initiative becomes a tradition or not. But why not doing good works?

This point of view was rather common for some people, and indeed, the fact that “people get used to having a holiday in the beginning of November” was considered by the State authority which came up with the new holiday.

Andrei Sakharov, corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Science and the ex-Director of the Institute of Russian History, advocates the uniqueness of the historical basis of the holiday in the Russian history.

We commemorate the day which is connected with the people's unity of 1612. This event is unique in our history. This case when all the people united, all the estates, all the nationalities, with the church as a leading force. And we should not forget which values were people driven by. Firstly, it was self-sacrificingness, self-denial. That was a great impulse. It seems to be the first step to the civil society in Russia. Today we worship the civil society, thus we should worship the same shrines which guided the people of that time.

Another issue which concerns the public figures is the opportunity of the development of the philanthropist activities. For instance, a famous TV presenter Svetlana Sorokina, elaborating the fact that the year 2006 was announced to be The Year of Philanthropy, says that:

We are adults and we know that the world is unjust and uneven. And in our country which has survived the sweeping changes and just recently the historical ones, this unjustness, this stratification, this disparity in opportunities is really monstrous. What is at issue - only compassion and the ability to offer the hand to the other⁶³.

There are a lot of similar opinions of other prominent public figures, but unfortunately, there is not enough space in this paper to cite all of them. However, the general picture has been already outlined, and it seems sufficient for the understanding of the various modes of explanation of the legitimacy of the new holiday, with rather different motives behind these explanations.

2.4 Dissenting Opinions

Communist Party

Not surprisingly, the Communists represented the biggest opposition to the introduction of the Day of People's Unity. It is rather obvious that for the representatives of the Communist Party the emphasis concerning the introduction of the holiday was shifted – they cared more about the abolition of the celebration of the Day of the October Socialist Revolution, the main Communist holiday, and therefore they saw the new holiday as an artificial and useless one.

⁶³ “Vremena”, 1 Kanal, Ofitsialnii sait Predsedatelya Gosudarstvennoi Dumi RF Morozova O.V., [Official website of O.V.Morozov], October 30, 2005, <http://www.morozov-ov.ru/press.php?id=53>, (accessed April 27, 2009).

For example, the leader of the Communist party Gennadii Zyuganov makes a protest against the introduction of the new holiday instead of the old one on the State Duma session.

This question is purely political; [...] and as for the Great October, this date cannot be abolished just by simple pushing the button. Today Russia is facing far more important questions, concerned with the future of the Russian statehood, and it is inadmissible that the State Duma is occupied with such provocative questions. All the holidays are gained through much suffering, therefore it is impossible to abolish them.

The main argument of the Communists is that though the new holiday is civic, it is still strongly connected with the feast day of the icon Our Lady of Kazan, and that this religious affiliation will prevent the representatives of other religions to unite in the celebration of the holiday. Thus, Zyuganov in his speech gives a warning about the possible schism in the society.

If the deputies support the abolition of the celebration of the 7th of November and introduce a new holiday – the Day of People’s Unity, the end of the Times of Troubles, they, whether voluntary or not, will cause a clash between the orthodox people and the representatives of other confessions, because on the 4th of November the feast of Our Lady of Kazan is celebrated. Such amendment to the Labor Code will bring nothing but a schism in the society⁶⁴.

One of the deputies of the Communist Party Anatolii Lokot, giving the interview to the newspaper *Trud*, states that the Communist Party is not going to change the long-lasting Soviet tradition: “Why should we celebrate this artificial holiday? We will celebrate the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution on the 7th of November”⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ “Gennadii Zyuganov: Smena prazdnikov stolkneta pravoslavnykh s veruyuschimi drugih religii”, [Gennadii Zyuganov: the shift of the holidays will cause a clash between the Orthodox with the believers of the other faiths], Rossiiskii Vneshnepoliticheskii Sait, November 24, 2004, http://www.rvps.ru/r_polit.php?id=286, (accessed April 26, 2009).

⁶⁵ “Prazdnik neponimaniya”, [The holiday of incomprehension], Official website of the newspaper *Trud*, *Trud.ru*, November 1, 2008, <http://www.trud.ru/issue/article.php?id=200811012070101>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

Therefore the communists unanimously ignore the celebration of the Day of People's Unity. However, it should be noted that the military parade on the 7th of November has not been abolished, as the day is still categorized as one of the Days of Military Glory. This can be considered as the compromise from the State authority side.

However the time has shown that the Communists were partially wrong in their predictions about the schism in the society. Instead of the religious controversy, the society faced the problems with the ultranationalist activists, who, for the last four years, have organized radical pro-Russian and anti-immigrant parades on the November 4.

Mass-Media, Covering the Event. Public Figures

This ultranationalist activity is one of the points raised by some of the well-known public figures. All the famous newspapers also focus on the activities of the nationalist organizations even more than on the official agenda of the celebration. Alexei Chadaev, a member of the lower Chamber of the State Duma explains the rise of the pro-Russian nationalist activity, saying that:

I think that the main problem with it is that the holiday was introduced, but not filled up with the sense load. That is why it turned out to be a vacant platform, which is now misappropriated by some marginal powers. Thus we have got this tangle of Russian Marches⁶⁶.

Another criticism is concerned with the date of November 4th itself, as some historians do not agree that this is exactly the day when the Times of Troubles ended. There are endless

⁶⁶ "Den Narodnogo Edinstva – chto dlia vas etot prazdnik?", [Day of People's Unity – what does this holiday mean for you?], Kreml.org, <http://www.kreml.org/interview/196050195>, (accessed April 27, 2009).

publications on this topic in the printed press and in the Internet. It seems logical to cite one of the representative publications, made by a prominent political scientist Valerii Elmanov.

In the beginning there was nothing else attached to the Day of People's Unity, and it was fair to name the 7th of November the Day of Military Glory (liberation of Moscow from the Polish intervention). But today it appears that the popular corps liberated the capital on the 4th of November. I can understand the desire of the State authority to attach most importance to this day, in order it seems more solid and important. What I cannot understand is why lying? In fact, Russian troops liberated only one of the districts of the medieval capital, although quite big, and merchants mainly lived there. And also there were huge markets. In other words, only contemporary hucksters, including the oligarchs should celebrate the 4th of November as the liberation of their predecessors. Why did they lie in public to all of the country – I cannot understand. In my opinion, it shows the lack of respect to our history⁶⁷.

Such criticism is rather common, however, being an invented tradition, the Day of People's Unity may have some drawbacks in the historical filling, but this is not the most important issue for the creators of this tradition. Historical basis just creates the framework for the concept of the holiday, prompting some similar ideas and meanings which can be attached to it. It seems that for the policy-makers the exact date of the liberation of Moscow was not the determining factor for the establishment of the holiday.

Another point of criticism is the marginalizing effect of the Day of People's Unity, which actually unites only those who want to be united, leaving aside those who disagree with this option. Professor Andrei Makarichev elaborates on this issue in his article devoted to the celebration of the holiday in Nizhnii Novgorod.

Any unity presupposes marginalization or the exclusion from the constructed symbolic space some social groups which do not fit into the ideology of the new majority, or do not want to be fitted in. It is interesting that in this very case this exclusion has a technological character: the State proposed to find a substitution for the 7th of November but so that the new day will be very close to the old one,

⁶⁷ Valerii Elmanov, "Den narodnogo edinstva ili Pravda o velikoi lzhi", [Day of People's Unity or the truth about the great lies], Mezhhregionalnaya Liga zhurnalistsov Liga-press.ru, <http://www.liga-press.ru/comments/1225818904/>, (accessed April 27, 2009).

to which every Russian family have got used. From the point of view of socio-cultural engineering, the choice of November 4th is very successful as this day overshadows the day of the October Revolution, levels its status. In fact, the same State that a few years ago received so much criticism for the restoration of the Soviet tune by Alexandrov, has now abolished from the space of official symbolism one of the main “calendar” relicts of the Soviet era. However the exclusion of Communist minority from the formatted mainstream did not mean and cannot mean the emergence of the coherent and consistent set of symbols for the so-called majority⁶⁸.

However, it was shown that these criticisms, despite being legitimate and reasonable, have been taken into consideration by the policy-makers. It is clear that an invented (or even re-invented) tradition needs some proper time to become a natural one. Perhaps, in 2005 it did not have much meaning for the general public, but it was analyzed how this meaning is being attached gradually to the holiday by the State authorities.

2.5 Ultrationalist Activity

For the last four years the celebration of this holiday was accompanied by the manifestations of ultrationalism, at which demonstrators held placards with swastikas, anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant slogans, shouted “Russia for Russians” and made Neo-Nazi Salutes. The press release of Amnesty International concerning The Day of Unity states that “while President Putin and the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, have condemned such slogans and sentiments, according to Russian anti-racism activists, the rhetoric of xenophobic

⁶⁸ Andrei Makarichev, “Nizhegorodskoe posleslovie k Dnyu Edinstva”, [Nizhnii Novgorod’s afterword to the Day of Unity], Eurasian Home Analytical Resource, <http://www.eurasianhome.org/xml/t/expert.xml?lang=en&nic=expert&pid=253>, (accessed April 27, 2009).

organizations is increasingly being adopted and manipulated by politicians and officials”⁶⁹.

These phenomena also preoccupied a lot of public figures who could not tolerate open manifestation of radical nationalism and saw the core of it in the essence of the holiday.

It is notable that the leaders of ultranationalist groups also use the holiday to their own advantage, attaching to it suitable for them xenophobic meanings. These meanings appeal to the certain category of Russian society which can be characterized by the lack of tolerance towards ethnically non-Russians and desire for mononational Russian state.

For the purpose of understanding of these possible meanings of the Day of People’s Unity, the speeches of organizers of Russian March will be presented. Among the organizers there can be named Eurasian Youth Union (a political organization, striving for the creation of a new Eurasian empire centered around Russia, and sometimes branded an extremist one); the Movement Against Illegal Immigration, such movements and political parties as “National Patriots of Russia”, “National Sovereignty Party of Russia”, “People’s National-Patriotic Orthodox Christian Movement”, “Russian Order”, “Slavic Union”; and also fan clubs of some famous Russian football teams such as Spartak and CSKA Moscow participated in the meeting unofficially.

Russian March took place on the 4th of November 2005 for the first time, and as this event, as well as the official holiday, was also new for the society, the organizers explained their view on that. It should be noted also that the Orange Revolution in Ukraine was taking place around that time, which was another issue for the organizers. Valery Korovin, leader of Eurasian Youth Union, started the meeting with the following words:

⁶⁹ “Russian Federation: Day of National Unity - a day to challenge racism”, Amnesty International Press Release, November 1, 2007, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR46/049/2007/en/c1cb5ae8-d35a-11dd-a329-2f46302a8cc6/eur460492007en.html>, (accessed April 26, 2009).

This meeting is devoted to the commemoration of the end of Polish-Lithuanian occupation of Russian land. That situation had a lot in common with the contemporary one. Russia was torn by internal discords. From every direction, Russia was circled with Western Atlantic riffraff. But now we are also able to drive “Orange power” away from Russia.

Pavel Zarifulin started his speech with a motto “Russia is everything, the rest is nothing”, and called the participants to urgent actions:

We, like Minin and Pozharskiy, can unite and withstand this scum, both in Russia, and in the Ukraine. For how long can we tolerate these riffraff, all these “Latvias”, “Polands”, “Georgias”? For how long can we tolerate these American jackals! We name this day “Day of People’s Anger”! Russian – stand up!

It is seen here that the leaders of ultranationalist organizations use the same rhetoric they use during any other meetings or publications, and the link to the holiday is rather vague.

However, some organizers use the historical basis of the holiday to the full extent, like, for instance, Egor Holmogorov, a publicist:

Russians! Today is your day! Today is your holiday! This is a holiday of our past, our present and our future! Four centuries ago our ancestors routed the enemy.[...] Russia won and routed them, because we are Russians, and God is with us. Today our state is weakened, it is shaken by internal and external revolts. But we will live up. Russia is everything, the rest is nothing!⁷⁰”

These are the general topics of the speeches during such meetings. In spite of the ban of the authorities, this event was more or less successfully conducted for four times in Moscow, Saint-Petersburg and other big cities. Official mass media generally did not pay a lot of attention to Russian March, concentrating on the Day of People’s Unity events. To conclude, it can be said that nationalist activists had their time to attach their own meaning “Russia is for Russians”, but it can be argued that their influence on the certain groups of the society was

⁷⁰ Dmitrii Efremov “Praviy March”, [March of the rightists], Evraziya – informatzionno-analiticheskiy portal, <http://www.evrazia.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2735>, (accessed May 7, 2009).

and is very strong and without the Day of People's Unity. In 2009 Russian March was also conducted on the 1st of May, but no violence was reported. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that even though quite a big group of Russian population shares these ultranationalist patriotic views, these people stay on the level of talks, but not actions.

2.6 The Results

In fact, considering that the positive meaning and ideas of tolerance, unity and civil initiative are strongly connected with the holiday Day of People's Unity one day, it will represent a solid platform for the national solidarity based on the understanding of the concept of 'unity of the different'. However, nowadays the national symbol Day of People's Unity is just in the process of becoming firmly established on the level of society, and the results of such establishment can be only speculated. However, according to the results of the population polls conducted by The Public Opinion Foundation, each year the number of people who are going to celebrate the holiday increases, and now about 50% of the respondents admit that this holiday is useful and important for the country⁷¹. This awareness is increasing along with the graduate steps of policy-makers, a good example here can be a movie 1612 which was released in 2007 and devoted to the events which are commemorated by People's Unity Day. As the pattern of graduate filling of the holiday with new meanings of state authorities was analyzed, it can be predicted that this pattern will be used in the future as well. As for the attempts of ultranationalists to change the essence of the holiday and pervert its message, it

⁷¹ "FOM: Populyarnost Dnia Narodnogo Edinenija rastet", Public Opinion Foundation FOM: the popularity of the Day of People's Unity], Polit.ru, <http://www.polit.ru/news/2008/11/01/4nov1.html>, (accessed April 27, 2009).

seems that it will be possibly appealing to a certain category of people as long as such actions are conducted steadily.

CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed two cases of the debates concerned with the usage of symbolic power in nation building. Looking on these two cases in comparison, it can be said that despite the hot debates presented above, the issue with the national anthem with the Aleksandrov's music is already a settled one, while the issue of Day of People's Unity is still under much discussion. However, the task of this study was not to estimate those state initiatives, but to analyze the argumentation of each side involved in the debate and to figure out the implications of using the arguments. The concomitant task of looking at the technologies of nation-building was also fulfilled, and especially the case of the introduction and promotion of the Day of People's Unity was very demonstrative in this sense.

It was shown in both cases that the contemporary state power in Russia has chosen a path of incorporating different epochs of history into the modern narrative of a new Russia. The message that is transmitted generally appeals to the Russian society, as it promotes the concept of inclusiveness, and thus, for example, the Soviet period is presented as the period of great achievements of the nation, such as the victory in the Great Patriotic War, industrialization, advances in cosmonautics, etc., in spite of the recognition of the "tragic pages" of this period (purges, GULag, collectivization, etc.). Therefore, such approach promotes the respect to the entire history of the state and the nation.

This message generally corresponds to the concept of a modern Russia, which states that the new state is now developing rapidly and that it will soon gain its former might, glory and respect back. Such ideas are very popular with the majority of people who had experienced the opposite situation and the lack of credibility towards the country for a long time after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Therefore, the state symbolic represents a mixture of tsarist, communist and new symbols, thus being a compromise for all the parties. A new holiday Day of People's Unity which is based on the events of the 17th century is enriched with new layers of meaning, but is still focused on one main idea of the civic initiative which is necessary for the development of the multinational and multireligious country. The mixture of symbols of different epochs in the Russian case projects the idea of continuity, which is vital for nationalist narrative.

The other issue is that the symbolic power as the power to denote things in certain ways can be used only by those who possess symbolic resources and this power is distributed very unequally. In the Russian case this power is concentrated within the state authority, besides, the state builds coalition with the other political forces in order to achieve its goals of promotion of the new state symbols. Thus, the criticism to the state initiative more often fails, and not because of the drawbacks of the argumentation of the dissenting sides, but because they usually represent the minority. For example, in the case of the anthem, the Communist party unanimously approved of the choice of the Alexandrov's music, providing great support to the state initiative (besides, the role of the Communist party in 2000 was more important than nowadays, which was presumably taken into account). Therefore, the liberal forces and human rights groups were not able to oppose to such a coalition. In the case of the Day of People's Unity, on the contrary, the communists were the minority, as the state relies mainly upon the support of the liberal forces, which welcomed the introduction of the holiday. Thus, the approach of the state to build the coalitions with the political forces has proven to be the guarantee of the success of the introduction of national symbols.

Finally, the study has proved the fact that the national symbolic is the issue of high importance in the nation-building policies, as it possesses strong potential which can be used to provide the cohesion and solidarity of the society.

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