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DAY OF NATIONAL UNITY IN HISTORICAL POLITICS OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Abstrakt

W świadomości Rosjan nie istnieje jednolita Rosja, lecz jej wiele rodzajów. Zasadne wydaje się więc pytanie o to, z którym z nich Rosjanin powinien się utożsamić? Władze doskonale zdają sobie sprawę z „rozbicia” rosyjskiej świadomości i wyciągają „pomocną dłoń” w postaci kreowania jedynie słusznej wizji przeszłości, zlepiając wielowymiarową Rosję w całość. Fundamenty pamięci historycznej Rosjan stanowią państwowotwórcze postacie a w tym Dymitr Pożarski i Kuźma Minin. Symboliczne znaczenie w kształtowaniu tożsamości historycznej Rosjan mają też epokowe wydarzenia takie jak chociażby okres Wielkiej Smuty. Do niedawna jeszcze wydawać by się mogło, że współcześni Rosjanie swe nadzieje wiążą wciąż z potężnym państwem, a dusze ich wręcz chcą być „karmione” takimi wartościami, jak patriotyzm, bohaterstwo i walka za Ojczyznę. Podkreślając zjednoczenie narodu rosyjskiego w potrzebie oraz bohaterską walkę o wolność Dzień Jedności Narodowej miał wpisać się w potrzeby rosyjskiego społeczeństwa. Dlaczego jednak tak się nie stało? Wynikać może to zarówno z nostalgii za Związkiem Radzieckim (Rosjanie zapytani o to, jakie święto obchodzone jest 4 listopada nadal wskazują na Święto Rewolucji Październikowej), jak i z „przereklamowaniem” mitu Rosji jako potężnego, zjednoczonego mocarstwa zamieszkałego przez bohaterskich obywateli gotowych w każdej chwili oddać swoje życie za Ojczyznę. Być może święto to jest po prostu jeszcze zbyt młode, by stało się powszechnie kojarzone. Niemniej jednak, pamiętać należy o tym, że święto jest momentem aktywizacji oraz intensyfikacji życia społeczno-kulturalnego społeczeństwa: to wówczas bowiem – w czasie wolnym od obowiązków – aktualizują się oraz ujawniają ważne dla danej grupy wartości, które nadają sens życiu danego społeczeństwa. Z czasem Dzień Jedności Narodowej albo będzie coraz lepiej kojarzony i świętowany przez większą rzeszę obywateli, albo też zostanie całkowicie zmonopolizowany przez nacjonalistów. Wydaje się jednak, że obie opcje są wygodne dla rosyjskich elit rządzących. Społeczeństwo bowiem i tak będzie się koncentrowało wokół

władzy, która jako jedyna zapewnia bezpieczeństwo i porządek społeczny (konsolidacja wokół ośrodka władzy jedynie słusznym rozwiązaniem w walce z ekstremizmem) i kreuje Rosję jako silne mocarstwo zamieszkanе przez zjednoczony naród (symbolika wydarzeń roku 1612).

Słowa kluczowe: Federacja Rosyjska, Dzień Jedności Narodowej, polityka historyczna, obchody świąt

The inclusion of a holiday into the national calendar gives it periodical character of the event practised with certain regularity. It starts the process of constant repetition of content related to a particular event or figure of the past and influences their perception by society. In other words, holidays help people to absorb historical content with greater ease¹. What is more, holidays incorporate community's system of value as well as deal with matters most crucial to it². That is why it is so important to find the answer to the question: what role do holidays play in historical politics carried out by authorities government.

In this article, the author sees the national calendar as a major tool utilized to control historical politics in the Russian Federation (imposing on people – society the one and only version of the past is a common place in Russia). This work is an attempt to show in what way Russian authorities infiltrate selected information from the past eliminating those that do not correspond to widely accepted understanding perception of the present, while putting emphasis on past events beneficial to them. This issue shall be analyzed on the example of the National Day of unity – relatively recent holiday introduced by Federal Act from 2004.

Problems with defining – historical politics

Before the author proceeds to main part of article, it is necessary to make a few comments associated with comprehending the term *historical politics*. The assertion that the study of historical politics is a challenge not only for historian, but also representatives of other humanistic disciplines such as political scientist or sociologist, is a fact well known. Firstly, one may come across many concepts characterizing similar if not analogous definitions and so, in the discourse functions the concept of politics of memory, politics in relation to memory, historical politics of a given state and historical politics in a given state. Secondly, a problem may be in the question of scientific refinement of the

¹ D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *Rewolucja w pamięci historycznej. Porównawcze studia nad praktykami manipulacji zbiorową pamięcią Polaków w czasach stalinowskich*, Kraków 2011, s. 153–154.

² K. Żygulski, *Święto i kultura*, Warszawa 1981, s. 9.

term which generally functions as popular – science – and more – often than not brings about negative associations. Thirdly, the understanding of historical politics is reflected in an economic situation of a country. All those difficulties discussed by the author arise before any researcher analyzing historical politics, though they are on the other hand a strong spur to investigate the subject more thoroughly. It is understood that there is a strong need for historians to participate in shaping of the awareness of time past and settling a goal, which is transferring the discussion about political disposition of the past from popular discourse to a more scientific one. The author decided to examine the problem on the example of the calendar of public holidays which is seen as a tool for shaping and implementing historical politics in Russian Federation.

For the purposes of this article the author uses the definition of historical politics created by the Memorial society for the needs of *Monitoring of historical politics projects 2010–2012*. It ought to be mentioned that this definition is very broad and allows us to approach the subject in a very flexible manner.

Historical Politics is a set of actions that aim to create certain depiction of the past and its interpretation in a society³.

When analyzing historical politics in the Russian Federation in the context of the National Day of Unity, it is worth noting her two main functions – legitimizing and integrating. The first consist of validation of already existing social–political order. The State has a privileged position in passing the memory about people and events from the past (the less democratic the state, the higher the position) by means of introducing certain holidays into the calendar (e.g. National Day of Unity). The integrating function consist of consolidating the society around chosen events and values⁴ (National Day of Unity gives prominence to heroism of the insurgents and consolidation of the Russian people with the struggle for the freedom of their homeland). Every Authority wishes to have loyal citizens around and observing certain state holidays is a perfect tool that integrates the societies – simplifying – observing festivities legitimizes the actions of authorities.

³ Russian: *историческая политика – это совокупность действий (заявлений, инициатив) в сфере формирования и продвижения в общественном пространстве исторических сведений и их интерпретаций*. Уроки истории XX век, *Мониторинг исторической политики: о проекте*, <http://www.urokiistorii.ru/2589> [10.08.2014].

⁴ B. Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit*, Warszawa 2006, s. 48–50, 54–57.

The role of holidays in society

Established, modified and enriched by existing authority, the National Calendar is without doubt a major tool of historical politics of the state. Holidays which are included into the National Calendar shape the society's view of the past. They serve the purpose of specific figures or historical events – chosen and honoured in a way dictated by a state. What is interesting, the intention as well as politics are barely visible when observing the holiday. A holiday is above all a show, its main purpose – reconstruction of history, highlighting an events and important figures, from the point of view of the authorities and disguising those ones which are inconvenient⁵.

A holiday, however, meaning a social event with its ritualistic nature has its origins in events important for a given society. Under the layer of observing the holidays hides a certain value without which a festive day would lose its true meaning. Moreover, a holiday is almost always a day free of work, somehow special, taken out of mundane everyday life. Festive days are often associated with joy, feasting, dancing⁶. It strengthens their transmission. What's more, the positive axiological connotation of a holiday is often stretched also onto historical conveyance portrayed by it⁷.

The term "holiday" combines religious cult and dates crucial for the state, nation. It needs to be remembered that observed holidays have very precise forms shaped by the authorities of various levels⁸. Festive days are associated with the need for behaving in a specific way, use and understand the symbolism which is a part of the ceremonial: verbal formulas, gestures, appropriate decorations, dishes, gifts etc.⁹. Feasting means belonging to a certain group. Participating in rituals is in fact a kind of religious, patriotic, civil, political or professional obligation. A person who evades joint celebration could be exposed to moral, religious, legal sanctions. Holidays also provide an opportunity to manifest one's bond with a group, nation or an ideal¹⁰.

Repeated, regular holidays communicate and disseminate knowledge about the past which, in turn, creates and supports identity. Festive days serve to reproduce identity and give the past a live meaning in the present. Remembering

⁵ J. Duvignaud, *Dar z niczego. O antropologii święta*, trans. Ł. Jurasz-Dudzik, Warszawa 2011, s. 204.

⁶ K. Żygulski, *Święto i kultura...*, s. 16, 57.

⁷ D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *Rewolucja...*, s. 154–155.

⁸ K. Żygulski, *Święto i kultura...*, s. 16, 52.

⁹ J. Duvignaud, *Ceremonia społeczna i ceremonia teatralna*, [w:] *Antropologia widowsk. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, ed. L. Kolankiewicz, Warszawa 2005, s. 197.

¹⁰ K. Żygulski, *Święto i kultura...*, s. 150–151.

history by societies assures them of their identity and enhances it¹¹. Holiday becomes a sustainable element of culture – basic form of collective human behaviour. The dates of crucial events from the days past require appropriate commemoration, ceremonial, memory and renewal. The Calendar is a tool that makes it possible – puts in order, preserves and enumerates holidays¹².

A holiday that was included into the National Calendar gains a status of observed periodically and regularly practised. Constant, rhythmically repeated content is done by organizing various mass celebrations (sports competitions, marches, commemoration parades, laying wreaths at monuments) and by means of mass communication (reporting the celebration and connecting them often with ideologically historical interpretation). The message that a holiday carries reaches broad masses of society – not only for those active participants but also passive viewers taking part in festive days, as well as people who do not participate, but remain mass media receivers¹³.

The Day of National Unity in Russian National Calendar

Today we wish you all the best
in occasion of the National Day of Unity.
Let it strengthen our friendship
In the country and abroad!
Together, friends, we are a force
We will overcome all misfortunes
We are going to live in peace and harmony of all nations!¹⁴

The Day of National Unity is a relatively new (it was recently entered into the Russian National Calendar) constant and periodical Russian National Hol-

¹¹ J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, Warszawa 2008, s. 67–68, 72.

¹² K. Żygulski, *Święto i kultura...*, s. 42–43.

¹³ D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *Rewolucja...*, s. 153–155.

¹⁴ Russian:

*Поздравляем всех сегодня
С Днем народного единства,
Пусть крепчает наша дружба
И в стране, и за границей!
Вместе мы, друзья, ведь сила,
Победим мы все невзгоды,
Будем жить всегда мы в мире,
Ивсогласиинародов!*

Website with rhymes and invocations for the occasion of Unity's Day: <http://www.stihinasheylyubvi.ru/stihi-pozdravlenija/stihi-na-vse-prazdniki/200-stihi-ko-dnju-edinstva-pozdravlenija-s-dnem-narodnogo-edinstva.html> [8.08.2014].

iday¹⁵. The idea of its creation, or more precisely its transformation from Orthodox church's holiday into the national one had been established by the imperial Duma in December 2004. An initiative was supported by then Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia – Alexy II.

The Day of National Unity is observed on the 4th November (Gregorian Calendar, according to Julian Calendar - 22nd October); it commemorates liberation of Moscow Kremlin occupied by Poles¹⁶ by peasant insurgents led by Count Dmitry Pozharsky and a merchant from Nizhny Novgorod – Kuzma Minin in 1612. This event had contributed to the end of the period called the Time of Troubles in Russia, and started the long reign of Romanov's dynasty¹⁷. The Date of 4th November was not chosen accidentally, it was supposed to replace the anniversary of October Revolution which falls on 7th November. Replacement of a holiday observed then, the Day of Reconciliation and Agreement¹⁸, took place in December 2004 by the federal act *On making amendments to article 1 of the federal bill – “On the days of military glory (days of victory) of Russia”* (document from 29th December 2004)¹⁹. It was associated with changes in the already mentioned Federal Act as well as in the 112th article of the Russian Labour Code²⁰. Those amendments went into force on 1st January

¹⁵ Holidays can be divided into: periodical and non-periodical. The inauguration of a non-periodical is usually associated with an important event such as a won war, etc. Periodical holidays on the other hand are the basic form of holidays.

¹⁶ After the Poles were expelled from Moscow, Pozarski promised to build a Temple in Moscow to express gratitude to Our Lady of Kazan for victory. On Moscow's Red Square, the council of Our Blessed Lady of Kazan was built, the Saint icon was moved there. 4th November 1649 became The Day of Our Lady of Kazan and Moscow and Russia Liberation from Poles in 1612. See: *День народного единства*, РИА Новости, <http://ria.ru/spravka/20131104/974028252.html> [8.08.2014].

¹⁷ The centre of mass levy in uprising, the main aim of which was to defend orthodox religion and help Moscow under siege in autumn 1612, became Nizhny Novgorod. This is where merchant Kuzma Minin called people to fight the enemy. His appeal met with generous response and levy in mass was formed, led by Minin and count Dmitry Pozharsky. The uprising set off from Nizhny Novgorod at the beginning of 1612 to Kostroma and Yaroslavl, where they stopped for a while. Not until August that year, the levy in mass moved on to Moscow. In October 1612 Polish occupation forces were forced to capitulate. For more on Polish-Russian war, Kremlin's occupation by Poles, Troubled time and Dmitry Pozharsky and KuzmaMinin uprising, see: L. Bazyłow, P. Wiczorkiewicz, *Historia Rosji*, Wrocław 2005, s. 103–107.

¹⁸ Russian: День согласия и примирения.

¹⁹ Федеральный закон от 29.12.2004 N 200-ФЗ о внесении изменений в статью 1 Федерального закона «О днях воинской славы (победных днях) России», <http://zakonbase.ru/content/base/67601/> [8.08.2014].

²⁰ Российская Федерация Федеральный закон о внесении изменений в статью 112 Трудового кодекса Российской Федерации, принять Государственной

2005 and as a result free day off was moved from 7th to 4th November. The holiday was observed for the first time in 2005.

The Day of National unity is not a new feast day, it returned to tradition of observing ecclesiastical holiday from 1649 of Our Lady of Kazan (after 1917 the celebrating of that holiday ceased). This canonical holiday was established to commemorate miraculous intercession of Our Lady of Kazan in liberating Moscow's Kremlin from the invaders²¹. One could say that a "latent" canonical holiday becomes a secular one and using one of the most important icons for Russian people reinforces its meaning.

Celebrating holidays has an official character in many Russian cities and abroad, political parties as well as local organizations prepare rallies, marches, trade fair concerts, fireworks, sports and charity events etc.²². Through various concerts and workshops different nations and ethnic minorities living in the Russian Federation are presented, which seems to serve well the aim of the holiday: unification of Russians²³ around the authority²⁴ (integration function of historical politics). Celebrations are also a perfect example of official cultural ceremony²⁵, obliging Russian people in this very way which is by taking part in observing holidays acknowledges the existing authority and its actions (legitimizing function of historical politics). In justification of the federal act of 2004 it was pointed out that an uprising led by Pozharsky and Minin (Russian national heroes) served as a model of heroism and unity for all people regardless of their creed, religion, social status²⁶. The name Unity Day does not seem to be random. It clearly emphasises the nation's unity in heroic struggle for

Думой 24 декабря 2004 года, одобрен Советом Федерации 27 декабря 2004 года, Российская Газета, <http://www.rg.ru/2004/12/31/zakon-prazdniki.html> [8.08.2014].

²¹ Е.В.Пчелов, *Хронологический комментарий к «Дню народного единства»* <http://kogni.narod.ru/time4.htm> [9.08.2014].

²² День народного единства, РИА Новости, <http://ria.ru/spravka/20131104/974028252.html> [8.08.2014].

²³ Multinational nation – Russians: All inhabitants of Russia regardless of linguistic or ethnic affiliation belong to it. According to the national census of 2010; 80.9% of the Russian population are ethnical Russians, then Tatars (8.9%), Ukrainians (1.4%), Chechens (1%). In total, the territory of Russian Federation is inhabited by more than 100 nations. More – see: K. Jarzyńska, *Nacjonalizm w Rosji: uśpione zagrożenie?*, „Komentarze OSW”, 85/12, s. 1, http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/Komentarze_85.pdf [8.08.2014].

²⁴ See more: *Концерты, ярмарки, гуляния: в России отметили День народного единства*, <http://youreporter.ru/ugc/20111105/481475869.html> [8.08.2014].

²⁵ R. Schechner, *Przyszłość rytuału*, trans. T. Kubikowski, Warszawa 2000, s. 87.

²⁶ *День воинской славы России — День народного единства*, <http://www.calend.ru/holidays/0/0/94/> [8.08.2014].

freedom, victory, ending the period of anarchy and the beginning of the rise of an empire. It set an example the Russian nation should pay attention to in case of a danger or more.

The Day of National Unity in the light of historical politics of Vladimir Putin

The Day of National Unity fits the historical policy pursued by Vladimir Putin. Its main characteristics – next to rehabilitation and glorification of the power policy of Soviet Socialist Republic²⁷, is also the intensive reference to the idea of Strong Russia as well as the idea of restoring a sense of pride in Russian citizens for their country. The purpose of conscious shaping of vision of the past was and still is the consolidation of society towards the authority providing peace and safety. Moreover, one of the corner stones of Putin's rule is a myth about ending economic crisis and the reign of chaos during Yeltsin's era and recover and return to the Russian imperial ambitions. The Day of National Unity is the perfect complementation of this discourse, since the year 1612 was the moment of transition from the period of Times of Trouble anarchy to much stronger Romanov Empire.

When the National Day of Unity was entered into Russian calendar of public holidays, charges appeared for its anti-Polish character. It needs to be noted, however, to what extent it is directed against Poland and to what extent it is using it as the general category of outside enemy threatening Russia. During Putin's office (presidential office 2000–2008, 2012–present) has returned to the rhetoric of the Soviet Empire – *Russia as a fortress under siege*. In every aspect of life a motif of an outer enemy (most often from the west) as well as inner (Islamic terrorist, opposition) was present. One cannot ignore historical misinterpretations, erroneous interpretation of facts, however seeing the National Day of Unity exclusively as a blade aimed at Poland would be wrong.

As a reason to establish the National Day of Unity there was also a need for a replacement of the October Revolution Holiday (The Day of Agreement and Unity observed on 7th November). It is also given as a reason for establishing it as a public holiday. This argument also becomes a part of historical politics of Russian authorities - it can be perceived as a sign of oncoming changes which were most clearly visible during the presidential elections of Dmitry Medvedev (2008–2012). It was then when the destalinization of historical rhetoric man-

²⁷ Highlighted among others: The victory of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany. For more on the subject of Russian historical politics, see: A. Dubas, M. Menkiszak, *Rosyjska kampania historyczna*, „Tydzień na wschodzie”, 2009, No. 28(103), s. 2–3, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/tnw103.pdf> [9.08.2014].

ifesting itself in resignation of Stalin's apologia took place. Medvedev himself condemned Stalin's repressions when commemorating the Remembrance Day of Stalin's Victims on the 30th October 2009 - he recognized the actions of the authorities of the Empire to the Katyn Massacre as falsifying the history and the Soviet union a totalitarian state²⁸. It can be said that a resignation to observe a holiday which paid tribute to communism values was only a foretaste of historical politics (r)evolution of Medvedev (one should say historical politics of Putin's temporarily executed by Medvedev).

Russian march and the year 1612

A very controversial element somehow embedded into the National Day of Unity is the so called Russian march – the annual meeting of the representatives of the different nationalist organizations²⁹ both in Russia and other states of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The first Russian march took place on 4th November 2005 during first celebrations of the National Day of Unity in history. The level of organization is astonishing and its main goal is to build a national state of Russia. *Russian march* – according to the organizers – is not only a public, state holiday but also a parade of Russian nationalists³⁰. Why does it take place on the day of Unity Day? The lack of explicit meaning of it or used symbolism as well as the fact that Russians (in majority) do not know what events the holiday commemorates (about that - see few lines below) resulted in appropriation the holiday by nationalists. In this way a feast day that supposed to be a cry for Russians to become united around common values, became a clay of unity of nationalists trying to manifest their views (above all their protest against illegal immigration). When analyzing the Day of National Unity in terms of historical politics of Russian Federation it is hard to not mention a very popular film of Vladimir Chotinienko – *Year 1612 – the chronicle of troubled times*. The history intertwined with fantasy, creating a symbolical picture of the past which can be understood literally by a viewer who does not have the knowledge of history. It is worth pointing out that rules governing

²⁸ The element of old rhetoric which has not changed is undesigning the role of Soviet Union in the Second World War as a country which saved the European countries from Nazism.

²⁹ The list of organizations and nationalist movements, which took part in the first Russian march 4th of November 2005 can be found on the official website of “russkogomarsza” *Первый Русский марш – как это было*, Русский марш официальный сайт, <http://rmarsh.info/istoriya/pervyj-russkij-marsh-kak-eto-bylo.html> [9.08.2014].

³⁰ *Первый Русский марш — как это было*, Русский марш официальный сайт, <http://rmarsh.info/istoriya/pervyj-russkij-marsh-kak-eto-bylo.html> [9.08.2014].

the world of movie depend on the current political and social order, regardless whether this order is voluntary or imposed³¹. In the world where pluralism is limited or functions artificially, films become a tool to shape the views of the viewers (films persuasive functions).

Year 1612 premiere took place on the 1st November 2007 in Russia during Unity Day's commemoration (in Poland - in September 2008). The co-producer is Nikita Mihalkov, a person close to Kremlin, who is also a director of *Utomlyonnye solntsem* (*Burnt by the Sun*) and *The Barber of Siberia* (*Sibirskiy tsiryulnik*)³². The film portrays Russia during the trouble times - particularly the Polish–Russian war of 1609–1618 concerning the seizure of Moscow by Poles and fight for their expulsion in 1612³³. This production was commissioned with financial support of the Federal Russian authorities, which makes it a certain propaganda tool fitting into historical politics executed by it. The title itself - *1612 Chronicles of Troubled Times* - suggests the viewer the thoroughness of the historical facts depicted which in turn is blinded with wrong understanding of the past.

The film always depicts history in a form of a story, which sends a moral message influencing the perception of facts shown in it. It also gives a story a form of an experience –its saturates the past in emotions, often becoming suffering, joy, triumph, adventure, heroism etc. and because of that it reaches the viewers easier³⁴. Besides, a film summarises, generalizes, synthesises, symbolizes³⁵ and creates metaphorical discourse³⁶. It is a composition of various elements: facts, almost facts, forgotten facts and memories referring to the past. It stimulates not only memory but also imagination. In *Year 1612* mythical figures appear (a unicorn for instance)³⁷. A love story is also weaved into the story (film's symbolism and playing on emotions). The film's message is unambiguous, it is meant to cause present day Russians to be proud of Russian folk which got united in a struggle for freedom. *Year 1612*, however, is not exact

³¹ M. Mazur, *Jeszcze raz o filmie socrealistycznym*, [w:] *Świat z historią*, ed. P. Witek, M. Woźniak, Lublin 2010, s. 39.

³² N. Mihalkov Russian actor, director, screenwriter, film producer. Called Russian Spielberg.

³³ *Rok 1612*, Filmweb, <http://www.filmweb.pl/film/Rok+1612-2007-356399/descs#> [9.08.2014].

³⁴ P. Witek, *Historyczny film dokumentalny jako „kino stylu zerowego”*, [w:] *Świat z historią...*, s. 34.

³⁵ R.A. Rosenstone, *Oliver Stone jako historyk*, [w:] *Świat z historią...*, s. 21.

³⁶ P. Witek, *Historyczny film...*, s. 34.

³⁷ A Unicorn symbolizes wisdom, greatness, absolute monarchy, strength, courage, fearlessness, excellence. See: *Jednorożec*, [w:] *Słownik symboli*, W. Kopaliński, Warszawa 2001, s. 120.

reconstruction of 1612 events, but more of a artistic vision of what happened. At the same time it is a tool of the Russian Federation's historical politics in the sense that the authorities present in it a vision of the past, which is in accordance to its official interpretation.

Does Russian people know what holiday is observed on the 4th November?

In the public opinion survey, conducted in October 2009 by the Russian Public Opinion Research Centre, there was a question of what holiday is observed in Russia on 4th November. As much as 51 per cent of Russians surveyed did not know the right answer (similar survey in 2011 – 43 per cent)³⁸. Only sixteen per cent of people surveyed were able to give the correct name of the holiday (in 2011 – eight per cent). Thirty two per cent gave the incorrect name of the holiday. Names of the holiday that appeared: The Day of Unity and Harmony (3 per cent), The Day of Russia Independence (2 per cent), The Day of October Revolution (2 per cent), The Day of Russia (2 per cent), The Day of Harmony (2 per cent), The Day of Constitution (2 per cent), The Day of Unity (1 per cent), The Day of Liberation from Polish intervention (1 per cent), The Day of Our Lady of Kazan (1 per cent) or the Day of United Nation (1 per cent). Sixty six per cent of people surveyed responded positively to the question whether you observe The Day of National Unity³⁹. In conclusion, present day Russians do not associate 4th November with neither the icon of Our Lady of Kazan, the anti-polish context nor any other.

Summary

A holiday is a tool of shaping an identity of the society (through recalling and emphasising events/people from the past) and acknowledging the existing ideology and those means legitimizing current social and political order⁴⁰. A fusion of commemoration actions (mounting monuments, setting commemorative plaques, onomastic of streets, squares etc.) with actual observing a holiday leads to intensification of transmission of the past so desired by authorities as well as broadening its reach (social effects of a holiday). That

³⁸ The survey conducted between 24–25th October 2009 on 1.6 thousand people in 42 subject of Russia Federation. Statistical error– 3.4 percent. See: *Четвертое ноября: праздник под знаком вопроса*, ВЦИОМ, <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=112077> [8.08.2014].

³⁹ Россияне не знают, что за праздник отмечают 4 ноября, <http://newsland.com/news/detail/id/428324/> [8.08.2014].

⁴⁰ K. Żygulski, *Święto i kultura...*, s. 68–69.

is why the calendar of holidays and celebrations is one of the major tools of country's historical politics⁴¹, and observing public holidays is exercising power rather than area of social activities. This is evident in the Russian Federation, the Russian authorities attach great importance to holiday observing and state anniversaries clearly seen during spectacular nature parades, rallies and other forms of celebrations. The aim of such actions is to give the society a chance to express its support for Kremlin politics (the legitimizing function of historical politics)⁴². The scenario of such celebrations is carefully planned by authorities and the process is controlled by executors of their will. In Russian consciousness there is no one whole Russia but her many variations⁴³. The question is, with which version a Russian person should identify himself/herself?

The authorities are fully aware of the fact that Russian consciousness is a little disunited and "extending a helping hand" shapes the one and only just vision of the past putting multidimensional Russia together⁴⁴. The foundation of Russian historical memory are country-shaping figures, including Dymitri Pozharsky and Kuzma Minin. Symbolical meaning in shaping Russian historical identity have epoch-making events such as period of Time of Troubles. Until very recently it would appear that present-day Russians bind their hopes to still powerful country⁴⁵, souls wish to be fed with such values as patriotism, heroism and fight for the country. Underlining the unity of Russian nation in time of need and heroic struggle for freedom, the Day of National Unity was supposed to be fitting the needs of Russian Society. Why did that never happen? It could be the yearning for the Soviet Union (Russian asked what holiday is observed on 4th November still say it is the Day of October Revolution) as well as overrated myth of Russia – a powerful united country inhabited by heroic people ready to give their lives for their country. Perhaps the holiday is simply too young to be widely recognized.

Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that a holiday is a moment of activation and intensification of cultural and social society: it is then – in time free from duties – when values important to a certain group of the people

⁴¹ D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *Rewolucja...*, s. 155.

⁴² By the term *Kremlin*, the author understands the highest authority in Russia.

⁴³ For the Russian person, history consists of four different periods (division by Vladimir Kutiavin): – prerevolutionary period associated with tradition and orthodoxy; – Revolution, Stalin, terror, industrialisation, victory in the 1941–1945 war; – Leonid Brezhnev period, time of stagnation and gerontocracy; – Perestroika.

⁴⁴ W. Kutiawin, *Pamięć historyczna Rosjan. Między dziejopisarstwem akademickim a historiografią ludową*, [w:] *Pamięć historyczna i polityka. Doświadczenia Polski i jej sąsiadów*, ed. S.M. Nowinowski, J. Pomorski, R. Stobiecki, Łódź 2008, s. 36.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, s. 38–39.

give meaning to life of a society⁴⁶. With time the National Day of Unity will either be more widely recognized and widely observed or it will be completely engrossed by nationalists. It appears however that both options suit well the Russian ruling elite. The society will always gather around the authority as the one providing safety and social order (consolidation around authority is a sensible solution used against extremism) and it portrays Russia as a superpower inhabited by united people (the symbolism of the 1612 events).

⁴⁶ K. Żygulski, *Święto i kultura...*, s. 130–131.