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Modern Holiday Calendar of the Russians*

Abstract: Holiday is an indispensable condition for social existence of mankind, who have a unique ability to embrace in their lives other people's joy and cultural experiences of previous generations. Numerous forms of festivities, which are a necessary component of social life of mankind, are one of the manifestations of its social force. Out of a great variety of holidays the article dwells on the most popular much loved Russian festivities, existing in Russia at the beginning of XXI century. It should be noted that the author adheres to the names and classifications of holidays existing in ethnography¹ and conditionally divides into two groups: 1. *civil* holidays, among which attention is devoted to *public, professional, literary and folk* holidays, and 2. *orthodox and calendar* holidays.

Key words: holiday calendar, civil holidays, orthodox holidays, Russia

Introduction

The holiday phenomenon plays a specific role in the human history. All societies and cultures had holidays starting with the high antiquity, and it is not a mere coincidence that M.M. Bakhtin affirmed that "festivity is an important initial form of the human culture" (Bakhtin 1965, 11).

Holiday is an indispensable condition for social existence of mankind, who have a unique ability to embrace in their lives other people's joy and cultural experiences of previous generations. Numerous forms of festivities, which are a necessary component of social life of mankind, are one of the manifestations of its social force (Belousov 1974, 8).

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Out of a great variety of holidays the article dwells on the most popular much loved Russian festivities, existing in Russia at the beginning of XXI century. It should be noted that the author adheres to the names and classifications of holidays existing in ethnography and conditionally divides into two groups: 1. *civil* holidays, among which attention is devoted to *public, professional, literary and folk* holidays, and 2. *orthodox and calendar* holidays.

Historical Development of Civil Holidays

Civil or secular holidays are closely connected with the development of national identity. Secular holidays start to evolve, when the religion starts separating from other spheres of life, especially from the state. In Russia the first civil holidays appear during the epoch of Peter the Great, for instance, the Civil New Year is celebrated on the night from December 31 to January 1, according to the European tradition. In the same period, the first celebrations were devoted to military victories of Russia, and later on, they turned into celebration of their anniversaries.

For the first time parades of guard regiments were incorporated into these events. The birth of marine holidays was also devoted to victories at seas and they included putting afloat new vessels. (Polishchuk 1999, 578).

The process of creating new civil holidays and new holiday rituals and traditions, which was very rapid during the epoch of Peter the Great, evolved gradually in XVIII c. and throughout the XIX, and XX centuries. One of the most important aspects of the holiday protectionist policy of the ruling circles is the common practice of dedication of non-working days to them (Маркарьян и др. 1990, 196). The choice of the dates of such *public holidays* reflects the distinguishing features of the social system, political and social structure of the society, and emphasizes the role of state authority. Thus public holidays, as a rule, inherit ancient customs of creating atmosphere of consent and solidarity. Holiday ceremonies take place in capitals and administrative centers and repeat one and the same scheme which is secular by nature. The aesthetically accentuated elements of public holidays such as demonstration, parade, spectacle, illumination, theatrical actions and concerts is also based on the secular art.

Professional holidays that are often called by modern researches labor, or production holidays (Polishchuk 1963, 44; Saburova 1996, 174), or holidays of blue-collar jobs (Rudnev 1979, 78; Rudnev 1984, 54), expanded especially in the Soviet period. They are connected first of all with the living conditions of people, with the way people earn their living, with new industries, and they have existed for a few centuries. We still have professional holidays due to the remaining value of labour for people.

Often, modern civil holidays have elements of traditional and orthodox holidays. We can refer *folk holidays* and folk-crafts holidays to such modern holidays (Polishchuk 1999, 599) that carry out an important cognitive and constructive function and give a powerful impulse for the development of artistic creation.

Present-Day Civil Holidays

The modern holiday calendar of the Russian Federation comprises most civil holidays, different by nature (social-political, military and patriotic, professional, folk and literary etc.) and status (celebrated, internationally or nationally, local). In the post-Soviet period the holiday calendar underwent significant changes: new holidays appeared, some of them disappeared, and other holidays that gained a footing in the daily living of people changed their names. For instance, the International Workers' Solidarity Day (May 1) became a holiday of Spring and Labour, the day of the Soviet Army and Air Force (February 23) was renamed into the Defenders of the Motherland Day, the Anniversary Day of the Great October Socialist Revolution (November 7) at first turned into the Day of Accord and Reconciliation, and then lost the status of a public holiday and became a memorable date and a working day.

As of today there are the following public holidays: New Year – January 1, Christmas – January 7, Defender of the Motherland Day – February 23, International Women's Day – March 8, Labour Day – May 1, Victory Day – May 9, The Independence Day of Russia – June 12, People's Unity Day – November 4.

The **New Year holidays** remain the most favourite holiday for the city and rural dwellers from all over Russia. The indispensable feature of the New Year celebration even in the pre-War period was the congratulation of the coming New Year to the Soviet people over the radio (and on TV in the post-War period in the name of the state leaders. It was broadcasted during the last minutes of the departing year, when everybody was sitting at the festive table, and culminated with the beat of the Kremlin Carillion that announced the beginning of the New Year (Lipinskaya 1989, 117). Starting December 1991, the President of the Russian Federation began to address citizens with a New Year's speech. The Tradition to celebrate the New Year according to the Old Calendar is still followed by church-going and strictly observant believers. So they set and decorate the Christmas tree in time for Christmas, not the New Year. No wonder that in Russia many families have a tradition to celebrate the New Year twice: first time as a public holiday (on the night of December 31 to January 1), and a second time (on the night of January 13 to 14) as a traditional "folk" holiday.

Tradition says that the New Year should be celebrated in the family circle with a festive table that goes hand in hand with watching the favourite TV-

shows. If people celebrate New Year with friends, they arrange different games and amusing competitions, they joke and trick people, depending on the age, mentality, interests and social demands of the party. After the celebration of New Year at the festive table, many people go outside to meet their friends, and to slide from an ice slide. The celebration continues on January 1. Palaces of Culture (DK), Cultural Municipal Institutions (MUK) and city night clubs prepare entertainment programs on a large scale.

The New Year celebration is accompanied by costume balls that take place in all kindergartens, schools, higher educational establishments, Palaces of Culture (DK) and Cultural Municipal Institutions (MUK) all over the country. Along with traditional Soviet animal costumes (hare, fox, wolf, squirrel, bear, rooster) and fictitious character costumes (snowflake, The Snow Queen, princess, Cinderella, etc) there are also entirely new characters. The modern age influences the choice of costumes and preferences in them: economic, scientific and sports achievements, political environment, fashion, cinema and especially television. Although new costumes in the folk style still appear nowadays, under the influence of western cartoons, the costumes of the Darkwing Duck, Aladdin, Superman, dwarfs and Snow White and so on, gain more popularity.

In each small town and big city, snow cities with illuminated ice-slides are built in time for the New Year holidays. Festivals of animal ice figures and fairy tale characters are held.

Nowadays, Soviet holidays are actively supported by some people, while the others have a very negative attitude to them. But we can hardly say that they are extinct in people's lives. Many of them have been transformed and lost their primary ideological meaning. An interesting change happened to the holidays of the 8th of March and the 23rd of February that during the Soviet period became **All Women's and All Men's Days**. Nowadays, all women and, accordingly, all men regardless of their age feel as a "holiday person" during these two days. In cities and in villages on the 8th March girls and women of all ages receive congratulations, while the men receive them on the 23rd of February. There is a tradition to present gifts on these days, so men put special effort into this on the 8th of March; both young and grown-up men buy flowers on that day. It also became a tradition to arrange festive celebrations at the tableful not only at home but also at work on the eve of the 8th of March or in the few days right after it. Children's matinees are held in kindergartens: on the 23rd in honor of dads, brothers and grandfathers, and on the 8th of March in honour of moms, sisters and grandmothers. Such competitions as "Dads, let's show what we can do", "Grannies, let's show what we can do", "Miss Charm", student's Club of the Cheerful and Sharp-witted shows (KVN) and parties, etc. became traditional. (AM 2004, 2007)

The holiday of the **1st of May** is deep-rooted in the hearts of people, who have lived in the Soviet Union for a long time. However, the modern **Holiday of**

Spring and Labour, established instead of the International Workers' Solidarity Day, still preserves its original political roots: trade unions arrange events in defense of the workers' rights. On this day, in many cities in the country protests and demonstrations are held. Realities of the present time are the following: the concerts devoted to the First of May often fall on the Palm Sunday or coincide with the Easter, therefore city dwellers after visiting church and cemetery go to an entertainment show at night devoted to this public holiday.

For residents from all over the country the **Victory Day** is a very special holiday that unites happiness and sorrow, the triumph of the victors and mourning for the war casualties. According to the long-term observations of people on the 8th and 9th of May it usually rains, and people believe that the nature mourns for the dead soldiers too. During the post-war period an unofficial ritual of celebrating the Victory Day has been established that also includes traditional folk performances on worshiping the deceased. During these days many people try to visit the cemetery. The burials of the soldiers are brought in order in time for the 9th of May. People disperse grits (grains) and crumble up cookies for birds, leave candies on their graves according to the ancient folk tradition. In many settlements widows gather together for a common commemoration dinner, and in cities the families who lost their nearest to the War arrange funeral feasts on the 9th of May.

Marches of the veterans, public rallies near obelisks, monuments to the deceased soldiers, laying of wreath, a treatment to "soldiers porridge" at the field kitchen take place everywhere. Traditionally in all regions of the country such events as memory watch, motor rallies "The Young People for the Veterans", sports events, May field-and-track relay races, football matches and volleyball tournaments devoted to the Victory Day are held. Since 1965 the Victory holiday has been culminated with a moment of silence and at 18:55 Moscow time the metronome counting is aired over the radio and on TV. And when it is over, folk festivals and holiday fireworks start in Moscow, as well as in the hero cities and other cities and towns of the country (Анохина и др. 1977, 338; Тултсева 1992, 315).

Over the last few years the number of the non-working days in May has increased, some establishments give their employees a small vacation. Thanks to this, during the May holidays a popular folk tradition of holiday interaction between the members of the family and relatives visiting friends and relatives and hosting them becomes customary.

The older generation reacted negatively to the elimination of the **7th of November** – the main holiday from the Soviet holiday calendar. In 2005, the **Anniversary Day of the Great October Socialist Revolution** ceased to be a public holiday and remained just a memorable date, but many people are true to it even nowadays. In regional centers and villages, veterans still hold protests devoted to the October events (of the Russian Revolution). Most pensioners,

veterans, and some middle-aged people believe that it is still important to celebrate this date, because it is a true national holiday, "a red-letter day". They say: "We have a tradition to meet on the 7th of November; we would get together in the evening. What a pity, we don't have demonstrations nowadays". (AM 2004, 2005, 2007) These days many people consider it a political holiday of workers' solidarity, fighting for their rights and a better life for themselves, their children and grandchildren.

During the Soviet period a certain **cycle of civil labour holidays** appeared, devoted to the major and socially most relevant professions and sectors of the national economy. What was thought to be a public, i.e. nationwide, holiday devoted to a certain profession and sector of a national economy in real life became a corporate party or corporate celebration. And only in cities and smaller settlements where the majority of the population engaged in one and the same profession, they turned into national or at least district-wide or citywide holidays. Here are the following examples of such holidays: The Metallurgists' Day in Nizhny Tagil, Novolipetsk and Cherepovets; The Chemists' Day in Efremov, the Tula region; the Mechanicians' Day in Vladimir; the Day of the Worker's of Light Industry in Ivanov, Kineshma, and Orekhovo-Zuevo town; the Day of the Forest Worker (Ranger's day) in forest and tundra regions of the Russian North and Siberia. They are mainly corporate holidays nowadays. The ritual of awarding a certificate of honour to the best employees remains a specific feature of professional holidays.

Holidays devoted to branches of the armed forces and military professions have gained popularity in Russia. The two of them, namely, the day of the **Air Fleet of the USSR and the Day of the Naval Forces of the USSR**, were established in 1933 and 1939. The other military holidays appeared in the post-War period. The first two holidays devoted to the branches of armed forces are still being celebrated in a most wide and festive way, probably because they were the first and were accompanied with colourful entertainment events: the parade of warships during the first one, and the aircraft parade during the second one. In Arkhangelsk the Air Fleet Day is permeated with romanticism. Any woman in Arkhangelsk looks forward to this day. "You would go out to the embankment on this holiday and see crowds of handsome men in uniforms. Certainly, that would be a parade of naval mariners. Many warships would enter the port; they would line up in a harbor and you can get on the deck!" (AM 2004) The modern day celebrations of the Naval Forces Day are a peculiar symbiosis of the revived Orthodox and Soviet holiday traditions. In 2005 the Naval Forces Day fell on the same day as the 70th anniversary of the Red Banner Northern Fleet, therefore was celebrated on a large scale in the Arkhangelsk region (as Arkhangelsk continues to occupy important strategic position as a naval outpost in the north of Russia). Its official part consisted of the prayer service and religious procession, followed by the review of the tro-

ops of the Arkhangelsk garrison. War veterans, the ministry of internal affairs task forces and academy men took part in it. A large number of spectators were attracted by a theatrical performance "At the Waterhead of the Victories at Sea" where naval radars took part. From the assault ship St. George the Victorious (Gregory Popedonosets) armored troop carriers with sea-soldiers went down to the shore and took the city beach with a storm and, while demonstrating to the public a spectacular hand-to-hand fight. (*Los Angelsk* 2006, 62).

The **Fisherman's Day** is very popular in any small town and big city in Russia that have rivers. The celebration of the Fisherman's Day in the rural area is different than in urban areas. Families go to the green areas and arrange family and corporate picnics with a cultural and entertainment program. One of the participants explained: "The Fisherman's Day! Eh, everybody is going to the green areas. We arrive, make a fire, and cook fish. In summer fish is a must. Some people catch it, some bring it with them. If the weather permits, we swim, play ballgames, badminton with relatives and friends; we relax, talk, and sing songs. A good conversation, food and wine are the keys to a great picnic. And in the evening – to the village club. In the morning we go to the green areas and then we go to the club. Everybody visits the village club, congratulates the seaman, fisherman and then comes the concert." (AM 2005).

In provincial towns even the **Day of Post** is widely celebrated. In some districts the communication with the "continent" is only possible via mail. Often such competitions as "Miss Post" are held in time for the holiday, where they choose the best employee of the Post.

Starting from 1990 the established calendar of secular holidays includes countrywide celebration of the anniversary of certain settlements and cities. Local authorities take into account the remaining tradition of **Patron Saint's Day** celebration, thus they choose the most appropriate date for a new holiday and try to time it with a traditional Patron Saint's Day. The fact that these holidays fall on the same day unites the natives, as up until the present moment the Patron Saint's day has been perceived by the rural dwellers as the "Saint Day of the village". Thus, in Arkhangelsk region in Leshukonskoe settlement the day of the settlement is Ivanov den', in village Zherd it is Petrov den' (Zvezda 2001, 3) (AM 2005). Thus, on the 22nd of June, Velsk (the Arkhangelsk region) celebrated the commemoration date devoted to its celestial patron – Righteous Cyril of Velsk and in 2003 the Cyril Day was established as an official birthday of Velsk.

The anniversary day of the city in Vyazma (the Smolensk region) coincides with the Trinity Sunday (Troitsa). In the celebration in 2009 we could observe the typical feature of modern holidays: the combination of religious and secular traditions. Thus, the religious procession from the Trinity Cathedral and civil demonstrations joined together at the central square. The Mayor of the city congratulated the holiday to all Vyazma residents and all Orthodox

believers of the city. The unity of church and secular components of the holiday was emphasized by the rock concert which took place near the Trinity Cathedral (Listova 2011, 197). One of the obstacles to such unity is that religious holidays often do not coincide with the days-off of the state calendar. As a result in some places religious celebrations are transferred to the nearest weekend. (Listova 2011, 194) (AM 2006) In western regions of Russia the anniversary days of cities and settlements are often timed with one of the memorable dates, such as the date of liberation from the Germans of a certain settlement or region.

Nowadays, the celebration of city holidays depends more and more on the tendencies to development of global entertainment and show industries. Carnival processions, pop musical shows and concerts with the use of powerful speaker system take place during these holidays. Special attention is devoted to the holiday decoration of the streets with specific decorative strings and panel pictures: buildings and trees in the city are illuminated.

The growth of the national identity, which led to the increase in interest in the history of the country typical of the 1980s for a certain part of the city dwellers, mainly the young people, gave rise to a number of different holidays of historical and memorial type, Russia-wide and local. The most famous of them is the **Borodino Day**, which has been celebrated regularly since the beginning of 80-ies on the first Sunday in September with a colourful theatrical performance on the Borodino battlefield that recreates the historical battle. (*The Sovetskaya Rossia* 1989, 1-3)

The introduction of the **Holiday (the Days) of the Slavonic Writing and Culture** was also due to the growth of the national identity. For the first time that holiday was celebrated in 1986 in Murmansk. By 1990 it acquired an All-Union status and in the after Soviet period it became a public holiday. Its prototype was a Bulgarian holiday of the Slavonic Alphabet, Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture, celebrated on the 24th of May on the commemoration day of the creators of the Slavonic Alphabet Sts. Cyril and Methodius. In Russia the Day of the Slavonic Writing and Culture takes place during the last week of May. The center of celebrations is transferred each year from one ancient city to another. Over the last years such centers were Vologda, Novgorod, Kiev (1989), Minsk (1990), Smolensk, Moscow, Yaroslavl, Belgorod, Kostroma... Starting with the 90-ies the celebration was opened with the ceremonial service in churches and cathedrals of every eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church. The official program of the holiday is very versatile. It includes: seminars and panel discussions on the problems of history and culture of the Slavs, the meetings with the writers and cultural workers, thematic exhibitions in libraries and museums, theatrical performances, church music concerts, folk and ethnographic actions. (*The Sovetskaya Rossia* 1995, 3; *The Sovetskaya Rossia* 1996, 2)

Many literary holidays appeared in Russia over the last years. The initiators, organizers and main participants of such holidays, which are quite numerous in Russia (Tultseva 1992, 324-325; *the Sovetskaya Rossia* 1997) are, as a rule, the local residents – the admirers of their famous fellow-countrymen. Some of these holidays that once used to be only local have become famous all over Russia.

The festival of Pushkin's poetry (used to be All-Union) takes place during the last week of May through the beginning of June. The centers of the holiday are the places somehow connected with the life and work of the poet. Yearly festival of Lermontov's poetry is held in the state open-air museum Tarkhany (Penzensky region), the festival of Fatianov's poetry and songs "On the Sunny Meadow" received an All-Russian Status. (*The Sovetskaya Rossia* 1998; *the Pravda* 1995) It takes place in Vyazniki, the Vladimir region, which is the birth-place of A.I. Fatianov, one of the most favourite lyricists of the Soviet Period. The Shukshin's Days became traditional at his motherland in s. Srostki in the Altai territory (*The Soviet Culture* 1989, 2), Sholokhov's springs on the Don river in Cossack village Veshenskaya (*The Literary Russia* 1989, 5), the festival devoted to Tolstoy in s. Nikolskoe-Vyazemskoe, not far from Tula, which used to be the family estate of the Tolstoys, (*The Pravda* 1989, 3) the festival devoted to Turgenev on the Bezhin Lea in the Chernsk district, the Tula region, and many others (*The Sovetskaya Rossia* 1988, 6).

New Holidays

At the beginning of the 1990s new holidays, which have been imported from other cultures appeared in Russia. Cultural workers in city town-halls, the heads of MUK and DK take an active part in their popularization.

October 1st is the **Senior's Day**, a comparatively new holiday (has been celebrated since 1992), has gained popularity in the rural areas. All pensioners and veterans are the prime celebrants, and they are surrounded with warmth and care. On the Senior's Day all through Russia, concerts, recreational evenings and more chambered events, such as joint tea-parties and small dinner parties take place in Culture Centers and village halls. Pensioners and veterans in a warm and relaxed atmosphere with the tableful tell about their life, watch amateur performances, sing and dance.

However, the **Mother's Day**, a popular holiday in the USA did not find a response in Russia, despite an active propaganda in mass media and the activities of the cultural workers. Imported holidays started to come into fashion in the last decade in cities in Russia. The most famous among them are Halloween, St. Valentine's Day (the Lover's Day).

I would like to give a more detailed description of Saint Valentine's Day, which is an example of the holiday of a foreign origin, which entered into the

lives of the Russians and "the Orthodox love it and celebrate it with great pleasure." (*Pravda Severa* 2004, 6).

Saint Valentine's Day is an example of an imported holiday, which "found appreciation among the Orthodox and is celebrated with great pleasure." (*Pravda Severa* 2004, 6) "Exciting, reverent, unusually romantic and at the same time very folk holiday is the Lover's Day", as it is described in many regional newspapers, such as (*Znamya Truda* 2001, 4; *Dvinskaya Pravda* 2003, 3; *Ustiansky krai* 2003, 4), which keep repeating from one year to another: "Although the holiday is not originally Russian, it caught on in our territory" (AM 2004).

The young people look forward to this holiday the most, and those who are in love look for special presents for their partners. Besides the heart-shaped Valentine's Cards, they give funny fussy toy puppies, cats, bears, angel figures to each other. It is considered a special treat to find a toy that resembles the beloved one in its appearance. And of course, they give flowers. Young and grown-up men are unanimous in their choice of the flower: they prefer to give roses. They could be heard saying: "I brought the most beautiful roses to the one I love the most", "The roses I give to you are as ardent as my love" (AM 2004, 2007).

Over the last few years, in many regional centers the 14th of February became the traditional festival of humour, held by the employees of the Civil Registry Office, where sooner or later many couples in romantic relationships end up. "Let the boys congratulate the girls, and the girls congratulate the boys, we are looking forward to seeing you here" (Mayak 2002, 3; Vazhskiy krai 2002, 4).

Just as the all favourite congratulations of boys and girls on the 23rd of February and the 8th of March in schools, the Valentine's card mail became traditional as well. On the 14th of February the feelings, emotions, expectations and apprehensions are boiling at schools. In the morning in every school a mail box for Valentine's cards – love and friendship messages is established. They are opened at the end of the school day, and then a competition for the best Valentine's card is held. The walls are decorated with big sheets of paper, where anyone can write a lyric message for the one he/she has his/her heart set on, and where the most courageous sign their names under the massage. The senior students arrange a game show Love at First Sight and choose the best Valentine and Valentina. And of course everybody looks forward to culmination of the day – the disco party. The same kind of events takes place in all Higher Educational Establishments (VUZ) of the country. The Lovers' Day is more popular with the city dwellers. In the rural area its celebration is limited to concerts, or more often disco parties.

Halloween is popular in big cities among the studying young people. The favourite place to celebrate this holiday is a night club. Night masked shows

with an entertainment program are held and everybody wearing costumes is invited. However some young people consider that this holiday does not belong to "our culture", i.e. to national culture. Moreover, the representatives of Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) appeal not to celebrate it.

Present-Day Orthodox Calendar Holidays

Orthodox holidays associated with the most significant events of the sacred history, the most worshipped Christian Saints, wonderworking icons, appeared in Russia at the end of the X c. It took several hundred years for the Orthodox holidays after absorbing different elements of the Old Russian pre-Christian holidays reconsidered by the Orthodox Church, to get a new ethnic shade and to start dominating in the festive culture of the Russians.

Orthodox holidays are divided into several categories according to their reference to time, i.e. *fixed* that fall on specific dates of the church calendar and *flexible*, of which dates differ depending on the Easter, which is the main, the most worshipped common for all Christians holiday that does not have a set date. According to the solemnity (types of church services) there are *grand*, *middle* and *minor* holidays.

There are the following grand holidays: *The Twelve Great Feasts* (12 holidays) and five that are not a part of The Twelve Great Feasts. Among *The Twelve Great Feasts* three are flexible: the Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem which is a week before the Easter (*Palm Sunday*), the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ (*the Ascension*) the 40-ieth day after the Easter and *the Pentecost* or the Trinity Sunday which is on the 50-ieth day after the Easter. The fixed holidays are the following: the Epiphany on the 6th (19th) of January; Presentation of Christ in the Temple on 2nd (15th) of February; Annunciation on the 25th of March (the 7th of April); the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ (*the Transfiguration Day, the Apple Savior*) on the 6th (19th) of August; Dormition of the Theotocos on the 15th (28th) of August; Nativity of the Theotokos on the 8th (21st) of September; Exaltation of the Holy Cross on the 14th (27th) of September; Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple (*Presentation of the Theotokos*) on the 21st of November (the 4th of December) and the Nativity of Christ (*Christmas*) on the 25th of December (7th of January).

The five grand holidays which are not among The Twelve Great Feasts are the following: the Circumcision of Christ on the 1st (14th) of January; the Nativity of St John the Baptist (*Midsummer Day, Ivanov den'*) on the 24th of June (the 7th of July); the day of Apostles Peter and Paul, (*Petrov den'*) on the 29th of June (12th of July); Beheading of St. John the Baptist on the 29th of August (September 11), and Protection of the Holy Virgin (*Pokrov den'*) on October 1 (14).

The Orthodox holiday calendar made its return to the lives of the Russians. The social events of the XX century did not break the tradition of celebrating the Saints' Days or the agricultural holidays, such as Svyatki and Maslenitsa. Holidays, whether it is a Saint's Day or a Dedication Day, is one of the social and ethnocultural phenomena in the lives of people of Orthodox confession. All the Saints' Days of a certain ethnical territory embraced the main milestones of the calendar cycle; therefore villages took turns in celebrating holidays with open air celebrations in the neighboring villages². It's important that judging by the nature of the exultation, that gathered in the family the whole patronymic nest, and in villages/settlements people from all the surrounding areas, the Saints' Days got the following names: *sbornye* (from Russian to gather), *s'ezjyi* (from Russian to arrive) and *gulevye* (from Russian to have an open-air celebration).

Nowadays, local authorities in both urban and rural settlements, and cultural workers of the Departments for Education and Culture that replaced the Soviet Culture Departments, take an active part in reviving the Orthodox holidays. The most typical form of interaction between church and secular establishments is their joint organization of festive events. Moreover, the active participation of authorities in reviving of the Orthodox folk festive culture is especially typical of regions that suffered the most from the militant atheist policy. The work on reviving these religious holidays is delivered differently, depending on the creative initiative of the cultural and educational workers.

A striking example of the willingness of the state to return church to the spiritual lives of people is engagement of the ecclesiastics in blessing of the civil holidays. Requiem services in all churches in the country, and prayer services on the mass graves commonly take place on the Victory Day. Nowadays the same practice is applied to the new secular holidays as well. A special service is held in church on the Senior's Day (Vitebsky district) (Listova 2011, 184). Following the spirit of the age, cultural workers are thinking about timing the professional holidays with the days of certain Saints. Thus, the cultural workers of the Lipetsk Region organized a professional holiday for the poultry-men, employees of the biggest and the most famous in the region poultry farm, "The Chicken Kingdom," on the Day of Saints Cosmas and Damian, who are considered to be the patrons of chicken (Listova 2011, 185).

Many folk holidays, festivals, concerts of the choral groups and amateur talent groups are held on the days of the Orthodox holidays. Thus, for several years in a row in the Arkhangelsk region in Plesetsk "Kenozerskaya Durakovina" – a festival of humor and jokes in Karpagory is held on Petrov den', while – "The Petrovskaya Fair" – a regional holiday of craftsmen of decorati-

² The folks from the neighboring villages come over to a village on one saint's day and to a different village on another day.

ve, applied and folk art, is celebrated on Ivanov Den' (Midsummer Day in the catholic tradition).

Maslenitsa (the Pancake week) is an ancient Slavic holiday that the Russians inherited from the pagan culture. According to the Canonice of the Orthodox Church, the Pancake week as the last week before the Lent, was intended for the preparation of the believers for the long fasting period before the Easter. At this time everyone prepares for abstention, catharsis and penitence. In the traditional Russian life, this week has become the most colourful and joyous holiday that symbolizes the farewell to winter and the welcoming of spring. Neither Christianization, nor the transfer of the New Year's date made the Russians to abandon a favourite hospitable holiday, where the nature of the Russians that sometimes does not know the limits found its expression. Every day of the Pancake week had certain customs. The celebration culminated with a Shrove Sunday, the last Sunday before the Lent. Many ceremonial actions which were unrelated to the Orthodox tradition took place on that day. Thus, ritual farewell ceremony of Maslenitsa, during which the Maslenitsa was burned in fire, there were carnivals, and everyone went sledding and sliding from the ice-slides.

Nowadays, Maslenitsa is celebrated on a large scale especially on the Shrove Sunday. In a present day Maslenitsa we can distinctly see the influence of the common Russian ritualism. In many regions the local traditions of Maslenitsa are forgotten and the organizers of celebrations often try to account for the common Russian (typical of the central Russia) names of the Pancake week by using local folk materials. Thus in the Arkhangelsk region in the rural settlement Berezniki during the Pancake week on Monday called the *meeting of the Maslenitsa*, ice-slides and snow figures on the stadium of the rural settlement are built; Tuesday is the *Game Day (Zaigryshi)*, DK and the village hall extend invitations for playing games typical of Maslenitsa; Wednesday is "Sweet Lover's day" (*Lakomka*) when the trade fair is held at which the sweets are sold; Thursday is the *Revelry Day (razgul)*, starting on "the broad Thursday" the celebrations are in full swing, highlighted by the sports, athletics games, and the hockey match of the local teams; Friday and Saturday are Gatherings (*vecherki*), when gatherings with grannies participating in Bereznikovsky folk chorus are held, where they sing, dance and play games, show performances on the S.G. Pisakov works; and finally, Sunday is the Farewell of the Maslenitsa. (Dvinovazhie 2001, 4)

We can single out the common things in the celebrations of the last day of the Maslenitsa in cities and rural settlements in Russia. The celebration, usually takes place at the central city square or near the village hall and consists of three parts: carnival procession, which is a train or parade devoted to Maslenitsa, performances, and open-door celebrations including the entertainment program. Buffoons, ofeni (a petty salesman, who used to carry his goods

from village to village) amuse the audience. A theatrical performance is devoted as a rule to a fairytale topic. Entertainment includes, according to the ancient tradition, kissing competitions near the beer barrel. A significant part of entertainment is devoted to the beloved competitions among the male and female youth. The most amusing is climbing the pole, which is often made wet in order to allow sliding. There are also such amusements and competitions as play fight with sacks "fist-to-fist", pillow fight on the log, tug-of-war, and a traditional lifting weights competition of the athletes and so on.

In Moscow the most spectacular theatrical performances are held in memorial estates Tsaritsino and Kolomenskoe. The culmination of the holiday is the same everywhere; it is the burning of the scarecrow, the doll representing Maslenitsa. The people reel (*khorovod*) around the fire, whereby chanting in a friendly manner: "Burn, burn brightly, so that it does not go out!" To make a fire they usually bring from home all the unnecessary stuff, so that afterwards they can burn it together with the scarecrow. People believe that everything bad burns down. Moreover, Maslenitsa is now traditionally celebrated corporately, not only in small and big professional groups, but also in informal youth associations, for instance bikers' clubs. Recently new traditions of the Pancake week have evolved. One should hide notes that say what you want to get rid of inside the Maslenitsa doll or else throw in fire "hoodoo" pieces of cloth or paper. (*The Arkhangelsk 2009, 8*) (AM 2004).

Recently new traditions of the Pancake week have evolved, which are directly related to the Maslenitsa doll. Those who attend the celebrations try to hide notes, saying what they want to get rid of, inside the doll. For instance: "to give up smoking", "to get rid of a disease" and so on. They also try to throw in the Maslenitsa fire "hoodoo" pieces of cloth or paper or pieces of paper with wishes on them.

Concluding Remarks

Russian holidays, or holidays of any other nation are an indispensable part of social life that changes under the influence of political, social, economic and cultural transformations. Their number, public functions, content, structure, and decorative elements are determined by the needs of the society.

The old holidays that remain and the new holidays that appear, meet the demands of the specific times. Most of them are ephemeral. And only some of them secure position in the holiday calendar for a longer or medium term period.

With the course of time, the lifestyle, social situation, and the outlook of people changes. The number and type of holidays vary too. The changes in holidays are a part of overall transformations that take place in culture of a

certain ethnical group: the change in the political system they live in, the change of the social and economic structure and regime; the changes in public conscience as a reflexion of the change in the system of values. All these factors cause both the changes in the choice of holidays and the way they are celebrated, as well as the disappearance of some and introduction of other holidays. Some of them become an integral part of the contemporary culture, the others become extinct. In the meantime new holidays appear due to introduction of new industries, different demands of the society or due to the social mandate of the ruling circles of the country. Ideological meaning of holidays, i.e. the public relations that they express, significantly determines the sustainability of various holidays. Holidays have always been within the sight of the ruling circles of the country that used them to their own advantage.

The studies of the modern holidays show that the state, after legalizing and publicly declaring the separation of church from the state, started to pay considerable attention to the church events. Starting with 1990s we can see different ways in which church participates in public holidays, whereby steps are taken to combine public holidays and Holy Tides.

The lift of the ban on religion, activation of church operations, the desire of our contemporaries to return to their Orthodox traditions often perceived as ethnical, loyal politics of the government in regard to church, all of those led to the revival and even creation of new social- and state-church holiday culture. This culture does not have a finalized structure; it is evolving, showing common tendencies and specific religious features.

A considerable number of innovations that can be seen in the collective forms of people's Devoutness are typical of the modern religious situation. New types of praying outside church appear that didn't exist before the revolution of 1917. Krestnyy hod, or the sacred procession is the most widely-spread of them (Kirichenko 2011, 80). Krestnyy hod³ as the most accessible and simple expression of the popular ecclesiastic art is nowadays the basis for different forms of folk festive culture. This phenomenon is steadily developing, asserting itself as a tradition.

New holidays and memorable days are still evolving at the present time. At the present, we are the witnesses of the emerging of new official ritual accompanying and supporting the new modern power structures, as well as the combining of new memorable dates with the old church calendar, which testifies to the fact that new festivities are well-thought and historically analyzed. The national Unity Day celebrated on the 4th of November, and the Day of Family, Love and Fidelity – on the 8th of July, are good examples of that process. S.A. Tokarev called this process "binding "of some of the newest *civil, national*

³ Krestnyy hod – Sacred Procession. A group of believers moving along in an orderly and ceremonial way after the carriers of ritual objects and priests.

and revolutionary holidays with folk traditions, timed with calendar dates" (Tokarev 1999, 105).

The distinguishing feature of modern Russian holidays is the strong processes of ethnocultural consolidation, which facilitates the generation of the general all-Russian holiday symbols. "The old" holiday is reconsidered and filled with new ritualism that draws its inspiration in folk art and more ancient sources. The 23rd of February and the 8th of March permanently entered into the lives of the Russians, which can probably be explained by their somewhat limited connection with the flexible calendar of the Pancake Week cycle and Maslenitsa, known as the holiday of the married youth (Propp 1963). This, probably, explains the metamorphosis that made them the gender holidays: Male and Female days. St. Valentine's Day, an imported holiday, the Lover's day, the day of young people who have experienced love, or married young people and their romantic matrimonial moods, adjoined that cycle rather easily. The fact that nowadays on St. Valentine's day young women who didn't find "their other halves" are teased, speaks in favour of its Russification, because on Maslenitsa people used to make fun of young men and women who were not asked to get married yet.

Abbreviations

- AM – author's field materials
- c. – century
- cc. – centuries
- VUZ – Higher Educational Establishment
- ZAGS – Civil Registry Office
- DK – Palaces of Culture
- MUK – Cultural Municipal Institutions
- c. – city
- r/s. – rural settlement
- v. – village
- s.– settlement
- ROC – Russian Orthodox Church
- d. – district
- obl. – region

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Savremeni ruski kalendar praznika

Praznici su nužan uslov socijalne egzistencije ljudskih bića, koja imaju jedinstvenu sposobnost da prihvate radost drugih ljudi i kulturna iskustva prethodnih generacija. Različite vrste proslava, koje su neophodna komponenta društvenog života su i jedna od manifestacija društvene snage. Ovaj članak se bavi najpopularnijim praznicima koji u Rusiji postoje početkom XXI veka. Valja istaći da se autor pridržava imena i klasifikacije praznika koji postoje u etnografskim zapisima, i uslovno deli praznike na dve grupe: 1. *Gradanski* praznici, među kojima je pažnja posvećena *javnim, profesionalnim, književnim i folklornim* svetkovinama, i 2. *Pravoslavni i kalendarski* praznici.

Ključne reči: praznični kalendar, građanski praznici, pravoslavni praznici, Rusija

Calendrier des fêtes modernes des Russes

La fête est une condition indispensable pour l'existence sociale de l'humanité, qui a la capacité unique d'englober dans leurs vies la joie des autres gens et les expériences culturelles des générations précédentes. De nombreuses formes de festivités, qui sont une composante nécessaire de la vie sociale de

l'humanité, sont une des manifestations de sa force sociale. Dans la grande variété des jours fériés, l'article s'arrête sur les fêtes russes les plus populaires, existant en Russie au début du XXI^e siècle. Il est nécessaire de noter que l'auteur adhère aux noms et aux classifications des fêtes existant en ethnographie qui les divise conditionnellement en deux groupes: 1. Les fêtes *civiles*, parmi lesquelles l'attention est tournée vers des fêtes *publiques, professionnelles, littéraires et folkloriques*, et 2. *Les fêtes orthodoxes et jours fériés du calendrier*.

Mots clés: calendrier des fêtes, fêtes civiles, fêtes orthodoxes, Russie

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