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Trends. Red Blues: The Psychology of National Anthems

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A recent controversy in Russia revolves not around the broken health system, Chechnya, or the dire straits of economic policies but music. Should the Russian national anthem be a score by the 19th-century composer Mikhail Glinka--a score that has already been decreed as the anthem by then president Boris Yeltsin? Or should the Russian national anthem revert to that of the former Soviet Union--music composed by Aleksandr Aleksandrov--with new lyrics to replace those written by Sergei Mikhalkov? Before one concludes that this is but a tempest in a teapot, one might consult the psychological research on the effects of music.

Tolman (1943) has posited that common rituals such as the playing and singing of an anthem can create and reinforce national and even supranational identification. Jahoda (1963) has found that by age 11, children's psychological conceptions of the national anthem already are similar to those of adults. Taj and Rekha (1995) have found that national anthems contribute to national integration and the acceptance of value-oriented activities. In a broader context, Kincheloe (1985) has found that music per se arouses emotions and can control the behavior of targeted groups in political, religious, and educational contexts. Ruud (1997) has found that music can position people in relation to time and place, other persons, and various transcendental values. And Crozier (1997) has found that music can effect significant social influences including those on personal and social identity.

The controversy over music may actually be over the vital political, psychological, and even spiritual essence of who and what the Russian people are. (See Crozier, W. R. (1997). Music and social influence. In D.J. Hargreaves & A.C. North (Eds.). *The social psychology of music*. Oxford University Press; Kincheloe, J.L. (1985). The use of music to engender emotion and control behavior in church, politics, and school. *Creative Child and Adult Quarterly*, 10, 187-196; Jahoda, G. (1963). The development of children's ideas about country and nationality: II: National symbols and themes. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 33, 143-153; Ruud, E. (1997). Music and identity. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 6, 3-13; Taj, H., & Rekha, S. (1995). National integration through value-oriented activities. *Psycho-Lingua*, 25, 73-77; Tolman, E.C. (1943). Identification and the postwar world. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 38, 141-148; Tyler, P.E. (December 6, 2000). Soviet hymn is back, creating much discord. *The New York Times*, A1; A8). (Keywords: Music, National Anthem, Russia.)