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Dreaming of a Great Russia in A Deep Sleep

By Boris Kagarlitsky

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United Russia is proposing education reforms that will divide the high school curriculum into two parts: educational and "instructional." In an attempt to improve morality and patriotism, the educational portion of the curriculum will be cut almost in half.

Part of the mandatory curriculum will include visits to old World War II battle sites. I wonder where and with what money school students in Sakha or Norilsk — where, fortunately, no fighting ever took place — will be taken. The government claims that it cannot find money to repair school buildings or pay a decent wage to teachers, but it is more than ready to allocate the necessary funds for expensive "patriotic" excursions.

There are no institutions in Russia that prepare teachers to provide instruction in morality and patriotism. Perhaps those specialists will be taken from among the ranks of officials whom President Dmitry Medvedev is planning to fire from various government ministries because of a lack of money. Plans also call for deep cuts to school funding, but obviously not at

the expense of morality training.

United Russia claims that these reforms will be implemented when the next school year begins in the fall. As a result, the country's young people will be subjected to long hours of daily brainwashing instead of learning the basic subjects that are staples for any basic high school education and are needed to prepare students for further study in universities.

There is no doubt that the United Russia deputies who supported these reforms struggled through school and were forced by their parents to study subjects they considered useless. They understood and learned nothing during their school years and remain obtuse today. Nevertheless, they are the ones who are in the highest positions of power. They are undoubtedly content with their lives and social status, in contrast to the scientists, professors and other intellectuals who watch in horror as fields to which they have dedicated their whole lives come crumbling down.

According to an old Russian proverb, "The less you know, the better you sleep." Duma deputies apparently want us all to experience a protracted period of slumber and degradation.

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