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# Moscow Planning to Abolish Non-Russian Republics, Pavlova Says

By Paul Goble

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Fairfax, March 30 — Under the cover of the international effort against Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, the leaders of the ruling United Russia Party are planning to abolish the non-Russian republics within the Russian Federation and to create a unitary state far more severe in its constraints than even the one Joseph Stalin established in the Soviet Union, according to Irina Pavlova.

But this effort, which is explicitly intended to prevent the disintegration of the Russian Federation, the Grani.ru commentator continues, will put in place a delayed action political "mine" even more powerful and dangerous than the one that Joseph Stalin put in place that led to the end of the Soviet Union in 1991.

And consequently, unless the security services maintain their current all-powerful position, she argues, the country is likely not only to disintegrate at some point in the future but to do so not in a peaceful manner, as was the case with the , but rather accompanied by a violent

"civil war."

That risk will undoubtedly be invoked by the security agencies and their political supporters as yet another reason why the regime cannot afford to loosen up or liberalize in any way, but the policies that will flow from that argument will have negative political and economic consequences for the Russian population even before the entire system ultimately collapses.

"It is now already clear," Pavlova begins, "that the military operation of the Western coalition forces against Libyan dictator Gadhafi will have tragic consequences for Russian liberalism and democracy" and that Moscow will now seek "further centralization and popular subordination in the name of the greatness of power and defense against a foreign enemy."

And "all this is taking place," the Grani-ru commentator suggests, "under noise about differences in the tandem, about the reformation of the Right Task Party, and about expert reports concerning the democratization of the Russian political system. And under the sound of public approval.,

At the beginning of March, she points out, Abudl-Khakim Sultygov, United Russia's coordinator for nationality policy, said in an interview what he and other United Russia people had three years earlier outlined in a document posted on the Kreml.org portal.

According to Sultygov, Russia needs to be "a unitary state," a notion that politicians like Vladimir Zhirinovsky have long promoted. But "in this case, this idea is being offered by a functionary of the party of power, responsible in its leadership for nationality policy," and thus carries far more weight.

Sultygov suggested, Pavlova recalls, that the non-Russian republics within the Russian Federation should "think about giving up their republic status, since "any discussion about doing away with national republics from above" would be viewed as "provocative" or worse. The only way it could work, Sultygov argued, is thus "from below."

And even last August hints at this. On August 12, 2010, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov declared that "in a single state there must be only one president, and in the subjects, the first persons could be called the heads of the republics" or something else, an idea that has now become a Russian law.

"The ideological predecessor of Mr. Sultygov," Pavlova continues, "is Comrade Stalin, who is respected by the [current] Russian elite. Stalin's project of unifying the Soviet republics" had them becoming autonomies within the Russian Federation rather than a union of republics, "as Lenin had insisted."

"As a result of the political and personal clashes of 1922-1923, Stalin formally agreed with Lenin's criticism and replaced the Russian Federation with the Soviet Union, but the essence [of Stalin's ideas] remained unchanged." As a result, the Soviet Union "was not a federation ... but a unitary state formation, albeit with the formal right of republics to separate."

"Hoping to prevent the scenario of the disintegration of the Soviet Union from coming true

in contemporary Russia," Pavlova argues, "Sultygov [in fact] goes further than Stalin. He proposes that the republics refuse even formal autonomous status and be considered only as territorial units of a single state, the Russian Federation."

To that end, fearful of a repetition of the Manezh Square events, Sultygov also copies Stalin in the way he proceeds by offering extraordinary praise to the [ethnic] Russian people. He says that "Russia is the Russian Republic and the Constitution of the country is the [ethnic] Russian Constitution."

(On the APN.ru site this week, there is a remarkable survey of Stalin's and the Soviet elite's development of the idea of ethnic Russian supremacy in a nominally multi-ethnic class-based state.)

In sum, Pavlova writes, "if Stalin proclaimed the [ethnic] Russian people the synonym of the Soviet ... then today the [ethnic] Russian people is proclaimed the synonym of the [non-ethnic] Russian people."

Sultygov, the Grani commentator continues, "has presented to society a model of Russia of the not distant future, a unitary state more severe than the Soviet Union." Creation of such a state "in order to prevent its disintegration will inevitably require from the current power elite still more centralization."

One of the consequences of this, Pavlova says, is that "real inter-ethnic problems that exist in the country will be driven into the underground." And in response to that, Moscow will make the terms of the anti-extremist article in the Russian legal code even more sweeping and play up the role of the [ethnic] Russian nation still further.

Clearly, Sultygov's beau ideal of state construction is what Ramzan Kadyrov has achieved in Chechnya. "He is certain," Pavlova writes, "that abroad, present-day Chechnya is seen as 'a Russian miracle,'" thus repeating some of the arguments commentator Yulia Latynina has made in this regard.

Pavlova concludes by recalling that at the dawn of the Soviet period, with a powerful party apparatus already in place, "Stalin laid a delayed action mine [under his system,] a mine that exploded in 1991" when the Soviet Union "fell apart into 15 independent countries" in what was a "relatively peaceful" way and "strictly according to their [Soviet] borders."

The current leadership in Moscow is burying "an even more powerful mine" under the political system with this policy. "If the power vertical of the security services disappears ... the consequence will be a large-scale civil war." And consequently, those who are taking these steps clearly believe that they will be in power "forever."

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