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Russian Lawmakers Seek to Recognize Soviet Fall as 'Greatest 20th Century Catastrophe'

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LDPR party leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky. **Moskva News Agency**

Russian lawmakers seek to declare the fall of the Soviet Union three decades ago "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century."

The proposal submitted Monday by the right-wing nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) to the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, borrows from President Vladimir Putin's famous 2005 remark about the Soviet collapse. It comes ahead of the 30th anniversary of the U.S.S.R.'s disintegration.

"The State Duma... considers the collapse of the U.S.S.R. the main geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century, which led to disintegration in various areas of society," LDPR says in its declaration.

It adds that Soviet disintegration also led to the "exacerbation of the economic and political

crisis and the emergence of conflicts on national grounds."

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The lawmakers accuse former Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Ukrainian leader Leonid Kravchuk and Belarusian leader Stanislav Shushkevich of the "unauthorized" and "deliberate" disintegration of the Soviet Union.

LDPR wants a vote on its declaration as early as Tuesday.

Once they adopt it, the lawmakers plan to submit their declaration to Putin, federal and regional authorities, as well as international intergovernmental organizations.

Russia's second-largest opposition faction the Communist Party accused LDPR, a nationalist party in the legislature controlled by the pro-Putin United Russia party, of seizing its agenda.

Last week, Putin said the collapse of the Soviet Union spelled the end of "historical Russia" and remained a "tragedy" for "most citizens."

The comments and declaration come on the heels of U.S. concerns that Putin is seeking to revive the Soviet Union, a claim that the Kremlin dismissed as unfeasible.

Putin has been accused by critics of downplaying Stalin-era political repressions and promoting a vision of a heroic Soviet past in order to boost his own popularity at home.

Later this month, Russia's Supreme Court is set to rule on a request to liquidate Memorial, the human rights group founded in the twilight of the Soviet Union that has played a critical role in documenting Soviet repressions.

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