

Five Signs of Less than Universal Russian Approval of Crimean Anschluss

Opinion

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By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia": March 18 – Today, on the third anniversary of Putin's Crimean Anschluss, the Russian government is orchestrating demonstrations across Russia in support of that action (

windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2017/03/russian-enthusiasm-for-crimea-is-ours.html). But there are five signs that popular support for "Crimea is Ours" is far from universal: First, in St. Petersburg, supporters of the rights of Crimean Tatars held their monthly meeting to denounce Russian mistreatment of that minority on the Ukrainian peninsula since the occupation (qha.com.ua/ru/obschestvo/segodnya-v-s-peterburge-pridut-piketi-v-podderjku-krimskih-tatar/172003/ andixtc.org/2017/03/strategiya-18-peterburgskaya-aktsiya-v-zaschitu-ukrainy-fotoreportazh/).

Second, students at Moscow State University organized a small protest against the Russian annexation and occupation of Crimea despite pressure on them to take part in pro-annexation meetings (graniru.org/Politics/Russia/activism/m.259562.html). Third, Kazan did not have a mass meeting in support of the annexation this year unlike in the last two because in the words of one Tatarstan official: "Crimea now is not part of the information agenda of Tatarstan" (kommersant.ru/doc/3246793; cf. confirmation of this in the comments of Kazan residents (idelreal.org/a/28374252.html)). Fourth, the leaders of numerous Cossack communities announced that they were refusing to take part in these celebrations just as they had earlier refused to take part in Russia's military annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula (nr2.lt/blogs/Alexander_Dzikovitsky/Mnogie-volnye-kazaki-otkazalis-uchastvovat-v-operacii-po-vossoedineniyu-Kryma-s-Rossiey-124977.html). And fifth, Vladimir Putin didn't appear at any of these festivities, an unusual absence given his earlier talk about the "sacred" meaning of Crimea for Russia and Russians (rosbalt.ru/russia/2017/03/17/1599789.html). His failure to appear casts doubt on the value of Crimea for his electoral chances (<https://republic.ru/posts/80827>).

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