

United Russia Wants to Restore Party Cells in Enterprises, Thus Becoming More like CPSU

Opinion

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Anyone who has any doubts about the road that Russia is on – and the one that Ukraine absolutely wants to avoid – has only to read the commentary below from Paul Goble as published on his “Window on Eurasia” site.

One of the most important steps away from communism at the end of Soviet times was the disbanding of communist party cells in the workplace, structures that played an important ideological even more control role. Now, the ruling United Russia Party appears set to restore those organizations, thus becoming more like the CPSU. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, party organizations have been prohibited from having cells in any workplace, including military units, factories, and local government agencies. Only territorial units are allowed. Consequently, if United Russia goes ahead with this idea, it will have to get the law changed. According to Moscow media reports (kommersant.ru/doc/3614825, polit.ru/article/2018/04/27/er/ and znak.com/2018-04-27/edinuyu_rossiyu_hotyat_prevratit_v_analog_kpss), there is a groundswell of support for such a change at the local and regional levels of the United Russia Party. Some advocates see it as strengthening the party as an organization, while others present this move as one that will give the party greater possibilities for supporting the implementation of Vladimir Putin’s programs and supporting party candidates in future elections. Some United Russia activists also want to set up party organizations in schools so as to boost the activity of the party’s Young Guard and to recreate the Soviet system of political information with full-time lecturers and agitators who could meet on a regular basis with workers and others to spread the party’s ideas. Many are skeptical of these ideas. Vadim Solovyev, head of the legal service of the KPRF, says that United Russia is trying to revive something for which there is no demand and in a situation completely different from Soviet times. If it goes ahead, he says, it will be committing “suicide” by becoming simply another administrative resource for the powers that be. And Aleksandr Kynyev, a prominent Moscow political analyst, says that everyone should remember that one of the reasons behind the decision of the Constitutional Court in 1992 to ban the CPSU was the existence of party cells in the workplace. Apparently, he suggests, “the United Russia activists have forgotten about this.” Kynyev tells *Kommersant* that instead, “the party is instinctively moving toward a semi-totalitarian system. This didn’t end well for the CPSU and it won’t end well for United Russia either.”

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The commentary above is from Paul Goble’s “Window on Eurasia” series and appears here with the author’s permission. Contact Goble at: paul.goble@gmail.com

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