

Russia is Becoming an Empire Again

In the 90s of the 20th century, when the central government in Russia was weak, for the sake of preserving the state, it made many concessions to the population and national leaders of the “republics” and “autonomies”, generously “bestowing” them with imaginary “sovereignty” in order to preserve its power over them. Moreover, the collapse of the USSR took place the day before, and the country split into 15 independent states. Moreover, formally, in order to retain at least some influence over the rest of the states that separated from the USSR, the so-called CIS was invented - a union of independent states.

On this wave of the collapse of the Soviet empire, the peoples of Russia, the part that was called the RSFSR during the Soviet Union, also wished independence. And in order to somehow save the RSFSR from a complete collapse (which after 1991 was called simply the Russian Federation, and became a separate independent state), Moscow gave all the “autonomies” and “republics” in Russia “as much sovereignty as they could take away”. This, of course, was a deception and its essence was that no matter how much “sovereignty” and “autonomy” there was, they all did not have a separate statehood, but were part of one state - Russia. And the deprivation of all these “autonomies”, “special positions”, was a matter of time, and depended only on the strength and capabilities of the center. At that time, it was easy to deceive both the population and activists and leaders of national movements striving for independence and secession by promising various kinds of benefits, “autonomy”, the status of “presidents of the republics”, and allowing the creation of local Constitutions, legislative bodies, courts, and to keep them, thereby from the requirement of complete independence, separation and the creation of a separate independent state. After all, otherwise all Muslim regions would have split off from Russia - Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea, and they would have been followed by all those Muslims whose territories ended up in the so-called “Russian” regions, more precisely, artificially populated by the Russian population after the occupation - Chelyabinsk, Sverdlovsk, Orenburg, Saratov, Krasnodar Territories, etc.

Then, as Moscow grew stronger, the central government became strong, slowly placing loyal people in key places in the “autonomies”, or bribing them with various kinds of privileges, feeding them the opportunity to “cut” the local budget, blackmailing them in various ways, making, thereby making them dependent on themselves, Moscow began to slowly take away all these “autonomies” from them, forcing them to sell these “independence”, in exchange for their seats and positions and the opportunity to be at the trough of local budgets and rob their peoples.

All of the above applies to both Bashkortostan and Tatarstan.

It is important to note that in the 90s, all Muslims had a real opportunity to get out of the colonization of Moscow, completely separating from Russia. But time was lost, and as national feelings subsided, due to the population's disappointment in national movements, as the massive pro-Russian propaganda in the media grew and all independent politicians and journalists were neutralized and eliminated, Moscow began to deprive Bashkortostan and Tatarstan of all the above benefits and statuses, “autonomies” and “sovereignties”. National banks and post offices were liquidated, the laws of national “republics” were completely leveled, bringing them into full compliance with the laws of the Russian Federation, then Moscow began to decide which part of the budget these “republics” would keep and which

part would be given to Moscow.

Then the policy became more and more imperial: the elimination of, even decorative, but signs of imaginary sovereignty began: the governors in the so-called "republics" were deprived of the "president" status, the last of which the head of Tatarstan is deprived of this status at the present time. They began to be called "the head of the republic". The issue of renaming the "republics" in the province began to be considered, as it was during the times of the Russian Empire, when a military regime headed by a governor-general ruled in the conquered territories. For a long time, plenipotentiaries of the President of the Russian Federation have been operating in the localities in parallel with the heads of regions, territories, autonomies. If before that the heads of the "republics" were "elected", or rather appointed representatives of the titular nation of these "republics", now Moscow does not hesitate to appoint Russians to these posts. Now the language of the national republics has gradually ceased to be "state". Its study in general education schools has become optional, and no more than 2 hours a week. Thus, there is a gradual "tightening of the screws", the vertical of power is being strengthened.

Recently, this deception with alleged sovereignty has become more and more clear and obvious, and some of the active intelligentsia openly declare this. For example, the founder of the Tatar party of national independence "Ittifak" Fauzia Bayramova criticized the assertion that the Tatars have their own state. "This is not a state, but a colonial administration," she said in 2019 at a memorial event. She thought that all this "sovereignty" was self-deception and demanded the decolonization of Tatarstan. Unfortunately, the insight of the Tatar national intelligentsia came too late.

Today, the level of colonial pressure on Muslims in the region has peaked in the past 30 years. Moscow is pursuing a purposeful policy of rewriting history, presenting its occupation in a good light, keeping silent or hiding the violent nature of Christianization, and sometimes the very fact of colonization, erasing all historical traces. Historical materials that reveal the true story of this are recognized by the courts as "extremist" and are prohibited. This is confirmed by the ban on Vakhit Imamov's book "The Hidden History of the Tatars". The capture of Kazan is presented as "protection and defense", and the day of the fall of Kazan is called "the day of the unification of peoples", and Ivan the Terrible, supposedly, should be thanked for the work and education that he brought to the Kazan Khanate and other lands of the future Russian Empire. This, for example, is already the opinion of the parishioners of the churches of Kazan.

In Bashkortostan, in October 2021, the play "The Tale of Kisyabika" was suddenly canceled and banned from showing. This performance tells about the real story of the Bashkir Muslim woman Kisyabika Bayrasova, who was forcibly christened and given to serfs in Yekaterinburg. Three times she fled back to Bashkiria and returned to Islam, but she was searched for and returned back. In the end, the Russian general Simonov ordered the execution of a 60-year-old woman by burning, with the wording indicated in the verdict of February 8, 1739, that she "left the Christian Law and made herself Muslim." The execution took place on the central square of Yekaterinburg. Thus, the history of the violent Christianization of the Bashkirs under Russian occupation is erased.

For a long time and under any pretext, Islamic organizations and even parishes of mosques belonging to the official clergy have been liquidated, not to mention the total repression against Islamic organizations that do not belong to the official clergy. That is, if the so-called "traditional Islam" was promoted as opposed to the so-called "radical", but now,

after the almost complete physical liquidation or arrest of the so-called “radical” Muslims, the turn has come to the so-called “moderate”.

Summing up all of the above, it is necessary to emphasize that the vector of policy towards Muslims has changed: if earlier this policy was to divide Muslims into “traditional” and “radicals”, eliminating or imprisoning the latter, and then the authorities needed to rely on the official clergy, so that they justify this repression and reassure the Muslim population. Now, when the entire field has been “cleared” of radicals, and the Muslims are very frightened, the security forces can already act more impudently and arrogantly, without particularly hiding their attitude towards Islam. The authorities will not stop until there is nothing Islamic in the Muslims, until they are completely assimilated. The turn has already reached the Tatar and Bashkir languages, not to mention the culture, values and religion of these Muslim peoples. At the same time, the proxies of the authorities to control Muslims in the person of imams, teachers of religious universities and scientists will not stand aside, those who cooperate with the special services will have to curry favor even more, because they cannot go against, since they relied on the authorities in their activities, and not to Muslims.

This situation is another historical lesson for Muslims, who must understand that every time they turn away from the dictates of Islam, giving weakness or finding a compromise with the invaders, they will certainly be defeated. The most important matter today for the peoples of the region in the conditions of the impossibility of freeing themselves from the colonialist is to comprehend their colonial status, to stop any collaboration with the occupier and to concentrate on the return and preservation of the most important thing - religion and life according to its laws. Praise be to Allah, in recent years we can observe among all the Muslim peoples occupied by Russia a tendency towards the revival of religious and political consciousness, and the more the Russian colonialist tries to extinguish this wave, the stronger it becomes.

Allah Almighty said in the Quran:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَسَيُنفِقُونَهَا ثُمَّ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُونَ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُونَ﴾

“Indeed, those who disbelieve spend their wealth to avert people from the way of Allah. So they will spend it; then it will be for them a source of regret; then they will be overcome. And those who have disbelieved - unto Hell they will be gathered” [8:36].

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Shaikhetdin Abdullah**