

Putin regime works to rehabilitate Joseph Stalin, as memorials to victims of the Terror are vandalized

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In late September, a concrete cross erected in memory of Polish prisoners of the Gulag in 1997, which had fallen down about a month ago, was discovered in the abandoned village of Rudnik, not far from the city of Vorkuta.

The news site “Nastoiashchee vremia” [Current Times] said that, according to the Interior Ministry’s Vorkuta department, the cross fell “due to weather factors that exclude human involvement.” However, the photos show the rebar is evenly cut, which means that someone deliberately cut it down.

In other words, it was an act of vandalism, targeting a memorial for victims of the Stalinist Terror.

During the Stalinist repressions, a large number of political prisoners were held in and around Vorkuta. The Vorkuta camp itself was founded in 1936, its construction was mainly done by prisoners of the local camp. Among those who served their sentences in the Vorkuta camps were many members of the socialist Left Opposition to Stalinism, most of whom were killed there during the Great Terror of 1937-1938. The massacre at Vorkuta on March 1, 1938, which targeted leaders of the Soviet Trotskyist movement who had led a months-long hunger strike in the camp, gained particular notoriety and ranks among the largest acts of mass murder of Trotskyists in history.

Here are the names of some of the victims of this and subsequent massacres in Vorkuta:

- Viktor Borisovich Eltsin, son of Boris Mikhailovich Eltsin, one of the leaders of the Left Opposition. Victor Borisovich himself was also a member of the Opposition and was Trotsky’s closest collaborator and chief editor of his collected works. He was shot in Vorkuta on March 1, 1938.

- Grigory Yakovlevich Yakovin (1899-1938), also a leading member of the Left Opposition and author of a history of the German revolutionary movement. He was imprisoned in Vorkuta from August 1936, co-led the hunger strike and was then shot on March 1, 1938.

- Vladislav Vikentyevich Kosior (1891-1938), a member of the Left Opposition and signatory of the Declaration of 46. In 1936 he was sentenced to five years in correctional labor camps, served his sentence in Vorkuta’s Ukhtpechlag, and in 1938 was shot and buried at the Vorkuta mine.

- Raisa Rodionovna Vasilyeva (1902-1938), a supporter of the

Left Opposition. From May 1936 she was kept in Ukhtpechlag, and on March 30, 1938 she was shot in the vicinity of Vorkuta.

- Roza Mikhailovna Smirnov (1882-1938), first wife of Ivan Smirnov, one of the leaders of the Left Opposition in the 1920s. Roza Mikhailovna was also a member of the Opposition. In 1936 she was sent to Vorkuta, where she was shot on May 9, 1938.

Other prisoners of Vorkuta and former Oppositionists included:

- Leonid Moiseevich Gorodin (1907-1994), a member of the Left Opposition in Ukraine. He served his second term in Vorkuta. He was one of the few former Oppositionists who managed to survive the terror.

- Georgy Ilkovich Andreychin (1894-1950), a supporter of the Left Opposition. In 1938 he was sent to Vorkuta, where he was held in the central detention center. Later in 1941 he was released, but in 1950 he was shot, on charges of espionage activities.

- Georgy Ivanovich Safarov (1891-1942), member of the United Left Opposition. From January 15, 1937, he served his sentence in Vorkuta, then was shot in 1942.

The incident in Vorkuta is not the only such case that has occurred in Russia recently. For example, in Yakutsk a monument to Polish and Lithuanian exiled prisoners, which was erected in 2002, was dismantled. The monument was dedicated to Polish citizens who were exiled in the 17th-19th centuries and repressed in the 20th century.

In Moscow and St. Petersburg, plaques dedicated to the victims of political repression (who lived in these houses) began to be removed from the facades of buildings. These plaques were part of the “Last Address” project, which aims to immortalize the memory of those who were victims of Stalin’s Terror.

These acts of vandalism of several of the few memorials that exist for victims of the Terror are encouraged by a climate in which the Putin regime is systematically rehabilitating Stalinism and Joseph Stalin himself. In a particularly provocative move, a bust of Stalin and Kalinin was erected at one of the memorial complexes for victims of repression. According to director Alexander Chunosov, this step was quite “logical”: “It was the same era. Did they have nothing to do with repressions? Why do you see any inconsistency here? Everything is logical, everything is clear.” It looks as ridiculous as if a bust of Hitler were installed in museums dedicated to the political victims of fascism. At the same time, statues of Lenin, Dzerzhinsky and Sverdlov appeared

in the same complex. Thus the leadership tried to equate Stalinism and Bolshevism, which cannot but be regarded as historical falsification.

In addition to that bust, a sculpture of Stalin was installed at the headquarters of the Alabuga Polytechnic College in Tatarstan, and on October 6, a monument to Stalin, made in the 1940s, was unveiled in the village of Pervomaysk in the Republic of Mordovia. Also, on August 15 in the city of Velikie Luki in the Pskov region, on the territory of the plant “Mikron,” with the support of the director of the plant, an eight-meter monument to Stalin was erected. And on February 1 of this year, on the eve of the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Red Army in the Battle of Stalingrad, a bust of Stalin was put up 120 meters from the monument to the victims of political repression. Let us recall that it was the Stalinist bureaucracy and its leader Stalin who were responsible for the execution of a significant part of the army leadership in the Terror, which played a significant role in the defeats and staggering losses of the Red Army in the first days after the invasion by Nazi Germany.

Stalinism exterminated entire generations of Bolsheviks who fought for the Soviet state and built it in the first years of its existence. The Stalinist regime destroyed the most advanced part of the working class, hiding under the banner of October and Leninism. During the years of the Great Terror, at least 700,000 people were killed, of whom, according to historian Vadim Rogovin, who studied in detail the political genocide in the USSR, “communists made up, according to the most conservative calculations, more than half of the victims of the Great Terror.” Therefore, Lev Davidovich Trotsky was absolutely right when he said: “To establish the regime which is correctly called Stalinist, what was needed was not the Bolshevik Party, but the extermination of the Bolshevik Party.” (Quotes from Vadim Rogovin, *Stalin’s Terror of 1937-1938. Political Genocide in the USSR*, Oak Park, MI: Mehring Books, 449)

The Moscow Trials of 1936-1938, in which the main leaders of the October Revolution were put on trial and accused of “counter-revolutionary” activities, were also aimed at physically destroying the link of the Bolshevik Party, which together with Lenin and Trotsky, had led the revolution of 1917. The ultimate aim was to undermine the socialist consciousness of the working class of the Soviet Union and the world. The main defendant in the Moscow Trials was Trotsky, who, for the Stalinist caste of officials and the international bourgeoisie, was the leader of the world proletariat and the leader of the future world revolution. Thus, that is why they needed to liquidate Trotsky; that is why Stalin’s agent Ramon Mercader killed him on August 21, 1940.

Having emerged out of the Soviet bureaucracy’s restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, the current Russian bourgeoisie continues its work of falsifying the history of the October Revolution, the revolutionary movement, the role of Trotsky and the Left Opposition and the history of Stalin’s Terror in the USSR. Thus, in 2017, with state support, an antisemitic TV series about Leon Trotsky was released, and at the end of December 2021, the Russian Supreme Court liquidated the organization Memorial, which was engaged in researching political repression in the Soviet Union and helping citizens find information about their repressed

relatives.

Although the Soviet bureaucracy, during the “perestroika” period before the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991, had to admit for a time the crimes of the Stalinist regime, it did so only on an extremely limited basis and in an effort to discredit socialism. Now the present reactionary oligarchic regime of Putin, against the background of the growing international class struggle and the worsening crisis of the oligarchy caused by the war in Ukraine, is trying to undermine the historical and political consciousness of the proletariat by rehabilitating the Stalinist regime, thus poisoning and disorienting it.

Stalinism, which exploits the prestige of the October Revolution, has already discredited Marxism in the eyes of millions of workers by its actions of betrayal of the international proletariat (first of all, the betrayal of the Chinese Revolution of 1927 and Hitler’s rise to power, caused by the policy of Stalin’s Comintern). The current Russian bourgeoisie is trying to distort the history of the October Revolution and, in general, the history of the USSR, so that new generations of workers and young people will not be interested in the history of the struggle of Lenin, Trotsky and the Left Opposition, or if they are interested, only in a distorted version, showing the leaders of the revolution in an inhuman way. Otherwise, if the youth and the proletariat become aware of the truth, they will become adherents of the revolutionary ideas of Marxism.

The Russian oligarchy, in order to prevent this from happening, is turning to the help of various forces, including the now defunct Stalinist bureaucracy and Stalinism itself, which have already saved the capitalist world from revolutionary danger. The Stalinist Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), under the guise of its communist name and phrases, supports the Putin regime, including its reactionary invasion of Ukraine, while defending the worst crimes of Stalin.

The Russian ruling class will not stop there: It will continue with even greater force to falsify history and glorify Stalinism and Stalin, thus trying to cut off the masses from Marxism. The working class must fight to defend the historical truth about the political genocide in the USSR (and historical truth in general) and to build on the territory of the former Soviet Union a truly revolutionary party and a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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