

Leather Coats for Secret Service Stir Memories of 1930s Purges

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Coat to be worn by federal guards

A state tender by the Federal Guard Service for 60 long black leather coats has created a storm in cyberspace, with bloggers complaining that the clothing stirs up bad memories of Stalinist henchmen.

The order, which also includes 60 short black leather jackets, was placed last week and has a price tag of 2.9 million rubles (\$104,000), according to Zakupki.gov.ru, the web site for state tenders.

The order description does not specify who or what the coats are intended for. But bloggers pointed out Thursday that they are a dead ringer for the attire of the NKVD secret service in the 1920s and 1930s. The observation was made by commenters on a LiveJournal blog that tracks state tenders, Zakupki-news, which is run by the first deputy editor of Forbes Russia, Alexander Malyutin.

The NKVD, which later transformed into the KGB, was a prime force in carrying out Stalinist

purges in which more than 1 million "enemies of the people" died. An NKVD officer in a long black coat is a staple image of that era.

A Federal Guard Service spokesman said Thursday that the coats were in line with a 2010 Kremlin decree on law enforcement uniforms, Interfax reported.

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