

Bill Seeks to Criminalize Criticism of WWII Allied Forces

By [The Moscow Times](#)

June 24, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

A prominent United Russia lawmaker on Monday submitted a bill proposing criminal punishment for "justification of Naziism" and distribution of false information about the Allied armies during World War II.

The bill stipulates fines of up to 3,000 rubles (\$91) or imprisonment of up to three years for publicly denying the outcome of the Nuremberg Trials, as well as denying the role of the coalition that included the Soviet Red Army in maintaining international peace and security during the war, RIA Novosti reported. Using one's official position or the mass media in committing such actions would be punishable by a fine of 100,000 to 500,000 rubles or up to five years in prison.

The bill also seeks to punish those guilty of distributing derogatory information about the Allied forces, which may include accusations of war crimes and providing proof for such allegations.

State Duma Deputy Irina Yarovaya, who introduced the bill Monday, floated the idea for it last month, amid a government push led by President Vladimir Putin to instill patriotic feelings in Russians.

Last week, the Duma was presented with an outline of a state history textbook currently under development that Putin has said should present a "canonical" version of Russia's past. Critics have expressed concerns that such a textbook would omit or play down certain ugly historical episodes, such as the violent purges of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

Yarovaya voiced support for a bill banning criticism of the WWII Allies last month in response to comments by liberal politician Leonid Gozman, who slammed a Soviet security agency that worked during the war called Death to Spies, or SMERSH by its Russian abbreviation.

"The word SMERSH must fall into the same category as such words as the SS, NKVD and Gestapo, and cause horror and disgust," Gozman said on a radio show.

At the time, Gozman called Yarovaya's idea for such a bill "buffoonery" and said he hoped he would be prosecuted for his comments "because it would be the trial against Stalin, which is long awaited by all." It is unclear whether Gozman's statements would be punishable under the bill introduced Monday.

Given ruling party United Russia's support of the legislation, it is likely to pass. In a statement attached to the bill, the Supreme Court also gave its backing to the initiative.

Kremlin human rights council member Nikolai Svanidze criticized the bill, saying it would become an obstacle to research into the history of World War II.

"It will be impossible to have a critical approach to any issue: Stalin's crimes, the GULAG, ethnic deportations, horrible mistakes on the fronts, which led to the tragedies of 1941 and 1942, and later on [in the war]," Svanidze said, RIA Novosti reported.

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