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Artists Who Doused Lenin's Mausoleum With Holy Water Sent to Jail

By The Moscow Times

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Vladimir Lenin's mausoleum on Red Square in Moscow.

A Moscow court has handed down 10-day jail sentences to two activists who splashed holy water on Vladimir Lenin's mausoleum on Red Square in an artistic attempt to exorcise the Soviet founder's specter from today's Russian politics.

The Tverskoi district court found Oleg Basov and Yevgeny Avilov guilty of petty hooliganism, police monitoring news portal OVD-Info reported Tuesday, citing a spokeswoman for artistic movement Blue Horseman.

During their stunt titled "The Exorcist: Desecration of the Mausoleum" on Monday — the day when Orthodox Christians celebrated Epiphany and two days before the anniversary of Lenin's death — the two artists bypassed a security gate before flinging holy water at the walls of the mausoleum while chanting "Arise and go away!"

The stunt was intended to symbolize an "attempt to get rid of the Soviet past, which is beginning to reappear in modern times because it has not been fully buried," opposition-minded Grani.ru news portal reported Tuesday, citing the two activists.

Members of Blue Horseman — the artistic movement behind the latest stunt — have been credited with an array of politically tinted performances lately, including a protest action titled "Unwashed Russia" in St. Petersburg last summer.

During the performance, which took place at the city's Hermitage Museum, an activist stripped to his underpants and climbed into a bathtub-shaped ancient Roman sarcophagus. He then proceeded to scrub off the name of the ruling United Russia party, which he had written on his chest.

Other actions carried out by the artistic group include "The Devouring of the Ruble" in front of the Central Bank in Moscow, and an action of support for Ukraine held near the Kremlin, Grani.ru reported.

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