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Russian Senator Introduces Bill Criminalizing Pro-Stalin Propoganda

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A high-ranking Russian senator has sought to combat the increasing promotion of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin in the country by introducing a bill that would criminalize attempts to justify the dictator's totalitarian regime and political purges, state-run TASS news agency reported Tuesday.

The bill introduced in the State Duma would equate advocacy of Stalin's purges with "extremism," making it illegal in Russia, the report said. The bill was presented by a deputy chief of the constitutional law committee at the Federation Council, the upper chamber of parliament, Konstantin Dobrynin, a senator from the northern Arkhangelsk region.

"Recent years have brought increasing propaganda among the population of an idealized, one-sided [and] removed from historic reality image of Stalin's era" — propaganda that "inflicts tremendous harm on the Russian state and society," Dobrynin said, TASS reported.

The bill would also ban Russian authorities from naming streets, metro stations or other places in honor of people who had been "involved in the crimes of Stalin's totalitarian regime," the bill was quoted by TASS as saying.

Dobrynin argued that Russia needed to curtail attempts to "rewrite history," independent Ekho Moskvy radio reported Monday.

The bill comes on the heels of several monuments to Stalin being unveiled in regions throughout Russia. The nation's response to the monuments has revealed a growing rift over the dictator's role, with liberal politicians and activists harshly denouncing commemorations of Stalin, while Communist Party members and their allies applaud his increased popularity.

A number of former Moscow allies — including Ukraine, the Baltic nations and countries in eastern Europe — have passed laws banning the public display of Soviet and Nazi symbols.

Russia adopted a law last year criminalizing attempts to "rehabilitate Nazism," but Moscow officials have been presenting an increasingly white-washed, glorified version of the country's own totalitarian past.

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