

One in Three Russians Think Stalin Was a 'Wise' Leader — Poll

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While Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to enjoy sky-high ratings, support for Josef Stalin and his legacy has increased in recent years, a new poll shows.

One fifth, or 20 percent, of those questioned in December by the Levada Center pollster said that Stalin was a “wise leader, who brought power and prosperity to the U.S.S.R.,” the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

In 2007, the number of respondents who agreed with that statement was 14 percent.

Even more people, 34 percent, said that “whatever the mistakes and flaws” attributed to Stalin, his main achievement had been to secure victory for the Soviet Union in World War II — which is six percent more respondents than in 2007.

The number of people who considered that “only a hard-handed leader could have maintained order” during the class struggle, chaos and “external threat” that existed 50 to 70 years ago remained unchanged — at 15 percent.

Roughly one in five respondents (21 percent) had a solely negative view of the dictator, describing him as a “harsh, inhumane tyrant, responsible for the destruction of millions of innocent people.”

Stalin, who ruled the Soviet Union for more than two decades, is most widely known in the West for his bloody regime of mass deportation, imprisonment and purges.

A more popular view among those questioned in the poll was that Stalin's rule brought “good and bad, in equal measure,” with 45 percent of respondents saying so, compared to 44 percent in 2007.

For 12 percent of those questioned, past experience provides a recipe for the future, saying Russians need a leader like Stalin to “put things into order.” In 2007, only nine percent thought so.

Amid a continued standoff with the West, president Putin's popularity ratings reached a historic high in October, at almost 90 percent, the state-run pollster VTsIOM reported at the time.

The Levada survey was conducted in December last year, among 1,600 people across 48 Russian regions, Interfax said. The report did not provide a margin of error.

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