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Russian Communists Pay Homage to Stalin in Moscow

By Anna Dolgov

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While Russian Communists paid homage to Soviet dictator Josef Stalin to mark the anniversary of his death this weekend, an opposing political team put up a poster at a Moscow bus shelter stressing the transience of even the most formidable of Russian rulers.

The poster, featuring an image of Stalin's death mask, read: "That one died. So will this one."

The poster reportedly appeared briefly near Paveletsky rail terminal, just outside Moscow's central Ring Road, before city authorities had it removed.

The head of Moscow's trade and services department, Alexei Nemeryuk, called the poster "unadulterated hooliganism," Govorit Moskva radio reported.

Meanwhile, the Russian Communist Party, or KPRF, praised Stalin as an "image of hope" in an online statement on Saturday marking the anniversary of the dictator's death on March 5, 1953.

Communist activists and sympathizers gathered on Red Square to lay flowers at his grave.

Stalin's rule included “positive things, and they are more important than the millions of people who were killed,” a 10th-grader named Kirill, was quoted as saying by a journalist from independent Ekho Moskvy radio, Alexei Naryshkin, on his Facebook page.

Among Stalin's achievements, Kirill named “industrialization, cultural revolution,” according to the journalist's account. “If that hadn't happened, the country would have collapsed and laid down underneath the West.”

A leader of Moscow's branch of Komsomol, or Young Communist League, said restoring Stalin's policies would revive Russia's sagging economy, Narushkin said on Facebook.

“There is a way out of the crisis — a switch to the system that was in place in the Soviet Union,” the activist was quoted as saying. “Stalin is very much needed today. Repressions should also take place.”

Stalin's popularity in Russia has grown during President Vladimir Putin's tenure, and has further risen in the past couple years, amid Moscow's deteriorating relations with the West over the Ukraine crisis. Kremlin loyalists frequently denounce its political opponents as “traitors” — a term that had also been used to designate dissidents during Stalin's regime.

More than half of Russians view Stalin positively, according to polls, and museums and monuments celebrating the dictator have opened in several regions. Human rights activists and some Russian Orthodox Church leaders urge citizens to learn more about Stalin's reign of terror and to stop eulogizing him.

But a lack of historical facts has not stopped some Stalin supporters. A middle-aged woman who showed up on Red Square to mark the anniversary of the dictator's death said she was there because “it was Stalin's birthday yesterday,” Ekho Moskvy's Naryshkin reported. Stalin was born on Dec. 18, 1878.

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