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Kremlin Backs Culture Minister Who Labelled Soviet Revisionists 'Scum'

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Vladimir Medinsky **Maxim Stulov / Vedomosti**

The Kremlin has defended Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky for calling researchers who challenged official Soviet war-time history "washed-up scum."

Medinsky made the comments after attending the Oct. 4 premier of a Russian film based on the Soviet Union's heroic World War II battalion, “28 Panfilovtsy.” The minister called attempts by activists to debunk the official story of the soldiers' feats as “sacrilegious."

Presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov expressed his support for Medinsky on Wednesday, Interfax news service reported. Peskov acknowledged that there was “a lot of talk about different archival documents," but maintained that “in one form or another the story of the Panfilovtsy's heroism did take place.”

The "28 Panfilovtsy" or “Panfilov's men” were soldiers of the Red Army's 316th Rifle

division under the command of General Ivan Panfilov. They were posthumously awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union for their reported actions during the Battle of Moscow on 16 Nov. 1941. The official Soviet history claims that the 28 men managed to knock out 18 tanks and 70 soldiers of the German 11th Panzer division before they were all killed.

The story of the group's fight to the last man was popularized by the Red Army press, but was later called into question when a member of the team was apparently found to be alive after the war. An investigation in 1948 ultimately concluded that the story was "pure fantasy," and had been made up by journalists.

Despite the investigation's findings, which were delivered to Soviet leader Josef Stalin, the original version of the story continued to persist, with many monuments to the 28 Panfilovtsy being erected throughout the Soviet Union. The State Archive of the Russian Federation published the results of the 1948 investigation online in July of last year. Sergei Mironenko, the State Archive's director, was dismissed from his position shortly after the release of the report.

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