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Russian Children's Rights Official Has a Stalin Portrait Hanging in His Office

February 03, 2017



Elena Bogdanova / Facebook

A photograph appeared on Facebook this Thursday revealing that Yaroslavl's children's rights commissioner, Mikhail Krupin, has hanging in his office a portrait of Joseph Stalin with a young child. The picture was shared online by Elena Bogdanova, an aide for Alexander Goncharov, a deputy in the regional parliament.

"I walked into the lobby of [Krupin's] office and was a bit shocked by the picture hanging on the wall behind his secretary's chair. I had to photograph it," Bogdanova wrote online.

Speaking to local media, Krupin said he sees nothing strange about displaying the Stalinist image. "In my offices, I've got lots of portraits of state leaders with children — both with Lenin and with Putin. So there's nothing wrong about having Stalin's portrait, too," he said.

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The picture hanging on the wall is a sketch based on a famous photograph from 1936, known as “Stalin and Mamlakat.” In the original photo, which was often used in Soviet propaganda as a demonstration of “happy childhood” in the U.S.S.R., Stalin is holding Engelsina Markizova, whose father served as people's commissar for agriculture of the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Province.

Two years after the photo was taken, Engelsina’s father was executed on the false charge that he was a Japanese spy, a Trotskyite, a terrorist, and a subversive plotting against Stalin.

After Markizov’s death and his family’s fall from grace, Soviet officials decided to rename the girl in the photo, rather than remove it from circulation. As a result, her identity was deliberately misattributed to “Mamlakat Nakhangova,” a Tajik girl who had won a state award working as a cotton picker.

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