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'Death to Traitors': Russian Festival Stages Mock WWII Execution

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Screenshot Youtube / altapress.ru

A Russian World War II re-enactment that staged a mock execution of traitors over the weekend has drawn both condemnation and praise, highlighting the lingering divisions over Stalin's legacy.

The Soviet victory over Nazi Germany, during which millions of Soviet soldiers and civilians were killed, is among the most widely celebrated holidays in Russia. During the war, Stalin ordered commanders to shoot deserters in the battlefield and declared that all Soviet prisoners of war were "traitors."

Embed:

Realistic-looking footage filmed in the republic of Altai on Saturday shows three uniformed soldiers shooting blanks at a peasant. Several attendees initially react with fear as the loud shots ring out and the "traitor" falls to the ground.

“Death to traitors,” the event host’s voice can be heard saying over a PA system in the village of Shipunovo.

Online reactions to the widely spread video ranged from those who called the mock execution “sick” to others who maintained that “people should know [this happened] so that it doesn’t happen again.”

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“Those people served the enemy; they betrayed their people and their country,” one of the annual festival’s organizers, Alexander Georgiyev, told the U.S.-funded RFE/RL news website.

World War II re-enactments in Russia have raised eyebrows in the past, including one that paraded a man dressed in a Nazi uniform in a cage this year and another that featured Siberian child actors dressing up as Nazi concentration camp prisoners and officers in 2018.

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