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# Putin Reshapes Russia articles

Article 1: A Coercive History Lesson From Vladimir Putin

*Triumphalism Replaces Reckoning as Russia Remembers the Soviet Past*

By [Andrei Kolesnikov](#)

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To mark the first day back at school on September 1, Russian schoolchildren received an online lesson from none other than President Vladimir Putin. He chose the subject of history, which has in recent years become close to his heart. His specific focus was a topic he has been talking about obsessively for almost a year now: the rewriting of Russian history, in particular that of World War II.

Putin is primarily concerned with two issues. One is the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, which Western historians have long believed "[paved the way for the outbreak of the Second World War](#)." Putin holds that Stalin had no choice but to sign the pact with Germany. The other is the decisive role that the Soviet Union played in defeating the Nazis, which Putin believes other nations fail adequately to recognize.

If these were the views of a private individual, others could simply agree or disagree with them. But when a head of state [presses them repeatedly](#), they become national ideological dogma. So far as the security services of an authoritarian state are concerned, they are nothing short of a call for action.

“People who cooperate with the enemy during a war are called and have always and everywhere been called collaborationists. Those who agree with the rewriters of history can easily be called the collaborationists of today,” [Putin said](#) during the public lesson on September 1. And sure enough, Russia’s Investigative Committee, a federal body with far-reaching powers, took no time at all in establishing a new department to investigate crimes related to the rehabilitation of Nazism and the falsification of history. The hunt for historical “collaborationists” is on.

## HISTORY’S AVENGERS

Under Russian law, the rehabilitation of Nazism is a crime. But what criteria investigative bodies will use to assess the “rewriting of history,” and how they will punish those found guilty of it, remains unclear. [Alexander Bastrykin](#), the head of the Investigative Committee and a friend of Putin’s from his St. Petersburg days, has defined such infractions as “attempts to put equal responsibility for the outbreak of war on Nazi criminals and on the Allied countries,” such as the Soviet Union.

By criminalizing certain interpretations of history, Putin is taking aim less at the West than at domestic figures, who, faced with the threat of prosecution, will hesitate to digress from the official narrative of the pre–World War II Soviet Union, for example. Similarly, when the

committee opens criminal investigations into events abroad—as it did in the Czech Republic in April, when municipal authorities in Prague removed the city’s monument to the Soviet war hero Marshal Ivan Konev—the message to ordinary Russians is the real object. Look how little they like us in the West: they defile the memory of our victory and our heroes.

By creating a new department to avenge history in this manner, the Kremlin risks criminalizing the work of professional historians. There were already incidents shading in that direction: in 2018, the Ministry of Justice classified as extremist an article by the historian Kirill Alexandrov about the Ukrainian nationalist leader Stepan Bandera, despite the fact that the article made no attempt to justify Bandera’s actions during World War II. Alexandrov was to receive a doctoral degree in 2017, but the Ministry of Education and Science withheld it on political grounds: he had written his dissertation about soldiers who joined a collaborationist unit during World War II.

Anything and everything to do with the Great Patriotic War, as Russians refer to World War II, is extremely sensitive for the Russian leadership. The memory of victory in that war is one of the few remaining bonds to [hold the Russian nation together](#) and legitimize the Putin regime as the heir to great triumphant ancestors. Putin has gone so far as to enshrine his fight against the falsification of history in the constitution by passing amendments to that effect this summer (alongside his better-known move to reset the clock on presidential terms, allowing himself to stay in power beyond 2024).

## STALIN’S REVIVAL

The trouble with this new official historical discourse is that it implicitly

vindicates Stalin and Stalinism. To criticize Putin's version of history is to criticize the sacred memory of the war, and to criticize Stalin is to detract from public appreciation of Russia's victory in that war. This paradigm is precisely the one on which the Soviet regime under Leonid Brezhnev built its official propaganda. Stirring up unpleasantness around repression under Stalin was the dirty business of dissidents: Stalin was above all to be remembered as the leader who won the war.

The revival of this narrative has already begun to expunge important chapters of Russian history from public discussion. Scholars, writers, and the public no longer explore the Winter War that Stalin unleashed against Finland in 1939. They don't consider Stalin's shameless cooperation with Hitler, which included holding joint parades and handing over German antifascists to the Nazis. They can't talk about details of the occupation of the Baltic states or the invasion of Poland in accordance with the secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and under the pretext of liberating Ukrainian and Belarusian "brothers" there.

There will likely be little further scholarship on the Soviet secret police's shooting of more than 20,000 Polish officers in Katyn in 1940. Earlier propaganda had suggested that it was the Germans who executed the Poles in Katyn. Putin himself once debunked that notion. But now the idea has resurfaced in an [article](#) that the official state agency, RIA Novosti, published in March. Moreover, this spring, the prosecutor's office in Tver ordered the [removal](#) of memorial plaques from a building in whose basement Stalin's death squads had executed more than 6,000 Poles.

The atmosphere in today's Russia encourages the [vindication](#) of Stalinism and its atrocities. By simplifying and mythologizing history,

the Russian president is encouraging the deterioration of public knowledge of historical events. Historical discourse that was once marginal is becoming mainstream, with the state's endorsement. Those who commemorate the victims of repression face official persecution. The historian Yury Dmitriev, for example, discovered a mass grave of victims of political repression in Karelia, in northern Russia. This summer he was [sentenced](#) to three and a half years' imprisonment for pedophilia—a charge widely believed to be a vengeful fabrication. The prosecutor's office appealed the sentence as too lenient, and the Karelian Supreme Court added another nine and a half years. The Ministry of Justice has labeled [Memorial](#), a nongovernmental organization that for several decades has heroically and painstakingly pieced together Stalin-era crimes, as a "foreign agent," and one court after another has ravaged it with fines. Such is the context in which the Investigative Committee intends to punish people for "knowingly spreading false information about the deeds of the U.S.S.R."

While Russia's Investigative Committee was thinking up new ways to combat historical dissidence, parliamentarians in Spain began debate over a new draft law on "[democratic memory](#)." The Spanish law, which has come under fierce criticism, includes "a plan to recover the remains of victims of the civil war and setting up a special prosecutor to investigate human-rights abuses from 1936 to 1978."

If and when Russia transitions from Putin's authoritarianism to democracy, it should look to Spain's example. Russia needs to restore, rather than erase, the memory of the millions of victims of totalitarianism and cease putting it in competition with the memory of those who fell in battle in World War II. Promoting that false opposition is a deliberate tactic to deepen the national divide.

Article 2: Russia takes a new look at an old enemy

<https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2018/0817/Russia-takes-a-new-look-at-an-old-enemy-Genghis-Khan>

TWO WAYS TO READ THE STORY

By [Fred Weir](#) Correspondent; August 17, 2018

MUKHORSHIBIRSKY DISTRICT, RUSSIA

In the south of Buryatia, near the present-day border with Mongolia, there is a mountain-sized rock outcropping known locally as the Merkit Fortress, which looks out over the arid, rolling steppe that gradually fades into the Gobi Desert a few hundred miles away.

According to legend, this formidable natural fortification was stormed more than 800 years ago by the forces of a young Mongol warlord who claimed his bride had been stolen by the Merkit tribe, which had made its home base here. He seized the rock, and went on to unite most of the nomadic Mongol tribes of northeast Asia, including the ancestors of

today's Buryats. Taking the name Genghis Khan, which means "universal ruler," he flung his vast army of highly disciplined, horse-mounted shock troops to the south and west, conquering China, most of Central Asia and the Middle East, present-day Russia, and parts of Eastern Europe.

At its peak the Mongol Empire was the largest contiguous land empire in history, and it left its imprint everywhere. For the West its impact was mainly positive, because the Mongol-secured land passage to China – the fabled Silk Road – enabled travelers like Marco Polo to bring home Eastern wonders such as spices, silk, gunpowder, the compass, and the printing press.

But Russian historians have traditionally treated it as an unmitigated catastrophe. The first wave of Mongol invaders smashed the European-like Kievan Rus state in present-day Ukraine, sending the survivors fleeing into the northern forests, where they congregated around small statelets like Moscow. It took the Russians 200 years of hard struggle to unite themselves and throw off what they still refer to as the "Mongol yoke." To this day Russian schoolchildren learn that the Mongol occupiers, known as the "Golden Horde," brought nothing but pain, devastation, and humiliating subjugation.

But that view is being challenged by historians and other thinkers here in Buryatia, and even some in Moscow. They offer a more subtle interpretation that sees the Mongol occupation as the impetus that shaped the enduring Russian state, with its highly-centralized form of government dependent on an indisputable leader, its constant military-led expansionism, and its collective forms of social organization.

"Putin is a khan. What he says is done. This is in the Mongolian



tradition, and it's not a European one at all," says Alexei Gatapov, author of several books about Genghis Khan and Buryat history. "What I say may be controversial in Moscow, but we can see that quite clearly."

## Heirs of the empire

Russia and China are both products of centuries of Mongol rule, which took them in very different directions from Western development. In their 20th-century efforts to modernize, both adopted forms of communism that might not be recognizable to Karl Marx, but would probably get a nod of approval from Genghis Khan.

Despite the demise of communist ideology in the past quarter century and the wholesale adoption of capitalism by both Russia and China, geopolitical tensions with the West have not gone away, and may even be intensifying. Buryat scholars say they can understand why that is happening.

"Russia and China were both part of the great Mongol Empire, and we see the persistence of Mongol influence on the Russian state, military, and political culture to this day," says Timur Dugarzhapov, editor of *Novaya Buryatia*, an independent political journal. "When Vladimir Putin and Chinese leaders meet today and find common geopolitical language, and China talks of using its economic might to reestablish the old Silk Road, they are reaching back to that historical experience. It was totally different from the Western one, and it created societies that are very unlike the West right down to their political DNA."

Since the collapse of the USSR, Russia has embraced Western economic methods and also many other values, including a stated commitment to build democracy. But it remains founded upon a

political system that Western critics now call “autocracy” in the same tone of voice they used to say “communism.” Those differences are not imaginary. China recently amended its constitution to allow Xi Jinping to remain president for life. Mr. Putin, recently elected to his fourth term in the Kremlin, is under quite a bit of pressure from below [to do something similar](#).

## Hero of the Buryats

The Mongol influence is particularly resonant in Buryatia. Buryats are descendants of Genghis Khan’s hordes who developed a separate identity after the Russian Empire conquered this territory and drew a border between them and the rest of Mongolia in the 17th century. Their lands were conquered by Russian Cossacks – the militarized colonists who spearheaded czarist expansion – and was later settled by Old Believers, religious dissidents exiled from European Russia in the 18th century.

Unlike American settlers who pushed westward across North America, the Russians tended to coexist with the native peoples they conquered, often intermarrying with them. Early Russian settlers to Buryatia brought agriculture to the river valleys, and developed an economic symbiosis with the cattle-breeding, nomadic Buryat tribes around them. That doesn’t mean it was always peaceful.

“We were taught in [Soviet] school that we joined Russia voluntarily,” says Mr. Gatapov. “But in the 1990s, when we had more freedom, we were able to study more widely. We learned that Russia conquered the Buryats in a decades-long war. So, Russian education lied to us. On the other hand, all the civilization we have is due to Russia, and the Russian language is our window on the world. So we have this strange

ambivalence. But it does help to explain why you don't find any aggressive Buryat nationalism here."

The growing controversy about Genghis Khan and the Mongol heritage in Russia is equally vexed.

"Genghis Khan was always a folk hero among the Buryat people. But in Buryatia, even today, children learn the same history that's taught in all Russian schools," says Mr. Dugarzhapov. "I used to be a history teacher myself, and I would regale my pupils with tales of how terrible the 'Mongol yoke' was, how it set Russia back and was responsible for all sorts of historic ills. Now we can explore new views."

'It all leads back to Genghis Khan'

Scholars say the Mongol influence is still visible in Russian political culture and military organization, and also in the Russian language itself. Though not many Russian words can be traced to the Mongol and Turkic tribes who made up the Golden Horde, those that do relate to administration, trade, and military organization. They include the Russian words for money, horse, customs, tea, and treasury.

"In Soviet times, any mention of Genghis Khan was forbidden, even in Mongolia [then a Soviet satellite] itself," says Nikolai Kradin, acting director of the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of the Far-East, which is part of the Russian Academy of Sciences. "Today, Mongolia is independent, and Genghis Khan is their national hero. In Buryatia, it's a topic of discussion and even among Russian historians new interpretations are gradually being considered. We're coming to a more complex view of the Mongol conquest and its historical ramifications. Yes, they overran and destroyed civilizations, they were

ruthless, but they integrated Russia into a vast empire."

He says that many historians now believe the technological, military, and political transformations Russia underwent in the 16th century, which put it on the path to becoming a global power, can be traced to its two-century-long immersion in the Mongol Empire.

"Russia today is a greatly modernized place, and it has adapted a great deal from the West. You can't say that Russia is just the product of its Mongol heritage, because that's just one among many influences," says Dugarzhapov. "Here in Buryatia, we don't see any future separate from Russia, but we do understand that we have a somewhat different identity. We all speak Russian, but we have our own language, culture, and history. Tradition is very much in demand among young Buryats these days, and it all leads back to Genghis Khan."

### Article 3: What Putin Learned From Peter the Great

*Peter the Great knew the importance of naval power, and so does Vladimir Putin.*

By Maxwell C. McGrath-Horn

July 14, 2016

The Diplomat; available at <https://thediplomat.com/2016/07/what-putin-learned-from-peter-the-great/>

Ironically, though Russia has one of the longest coastlines of any nation on Earth, it has forever been limited by lack of access to the sea. Czar Peter the Great (1672-1725) knew that the Arctic, frozen solid for seven plus months of the year, could not be the coastline on which Russia would build its fleet.

That is changing, fast.

Rapidly disappearing sea ice, unparalleled investments in icebreaker technology, and President Vladimir Putin's keen understanding of historical trends have led him to build a fleet unique not only in Russian history, but in the world. Putin has learned a valuable lesson from his eminent predecessor, who devoted his life to making Russia a great maritime power. Through aggressive expansion toward the seas, Peter the Great inextricably linked Russian great-power status with maritime might. Now, as the region becomes ever more accessible, Putin is positioning his country to be the world leader on the Arctic Ocean.

During the 42 years of his czardom, Peter the Great led a transformation of the Russian Empire. He was a visionary modernizer, builder, and diplomat, but he is best known for the aggressive style of foreign policy that established the expansionist mind-set now resurgent in Vladimir Putin's Russia. In fact, the highlight reel of the first two decades of Putin's rule would closely resemble that of his predecessor.

Peter the Great made quite a splash with his first military victory, when in 1696 he seized the port city of Azov. This conquest gave the Russian

Empire maritime access to the Mediterranean, and launched three decades of Russian expansion toward the seas.

After the Azov campaign, Peter spent 18 months traveling to Western Europe's major maritime cities to learn everything he could about shipbuilding and naval tactics. For four months he lived in the Netherlands, roaming the shipyard of the Dutch East India Company, then the largest in the world. In England he watched a Royal Naval Fleet review at Deptford. Later he sent a delegation to Malta to learn the naval techniques of the famous crusader knights.

Peter was determined to build a new capital city for the empire on the Baltic, which would be a Window on the West, "to let in the light of Europe." At the time, the powerful Kingdom of Sweden controlled the Baltic, blocking Russia's access to the vital region. Peter orchestrated a complex and highly effective coalition of nations to drive the Swedes back into Scandinavia in a two-decade long struggle known as the Great Northern War. The newly built Imperial Navy was pivotal in gaining Russia a beachhead on the Baltic, the new capital of St. Petersburg, and proved decisively the value of a strong navy.

Much like Putin, Peter the Great tightened state control, invaded the Caucasus, secured Russian naval access to the Black Sea, and fought an unconventional war in the Ukraine. It is in Peter's last great gambit, however, that Putin seems to have found his ambition to build an Arctic fleet.

It was at the end of his reign that Peter turned his attention to Russia's longest coastline, the frozen Arctic, still inaccessible to his fleets. Though Peter had built a modern shipyard in the Arctic city of Arkhangelsk, it was too often icebound, making it useless for the better

part of the year. Peter harbored great hopes for the eastern Arctic, about which little was then known.

Peter the Great commissioned Vitus Bering, a Dane who had served the Russian Navy well in its wars against Sweden, to lead an exploration of the eastern Arctic. On Peter's orders, Bering and his lieutenant Aleksei Chirikov sailed from Kamchatka north through Arctic waters, becoming the first European to set foot in Alaska. Shortly afterwards, Peter died, and so too did the Russian Empire's ambition to build an Arctic fleet.

Two hundred and eighty two years later, Vitus Bering and Aleksei Chirikov set off north from Kamchatka once again. The two icebreakers, commissioned by Putin and named for the intrepid Arctic explorers, joined a fleet of Arctic capable ships unlike any the world has ever seen.

Though U.S. submarines frequently pass under the Arctic icecap, their invisible presence does not have the same effect as Putin's nuclear-powered vessels Fifty Years of Victory and Yamal. The snarling sharks teeth painted on Yamal's black bow convey a crude but carefully tailored message. Putin has recently commissioned three additional nuclear icebreakers to add to his already impressive fleet.

The icebreaking vessel is the most crucial tool of Arctic statesmanship. Given the sorry state of Russia's economy, and effective reduction in its military budget, Putin's dedication to investing in icebreakers is testament to the size of his Arctic ambitions. It is also evidence that Putin has learned a great deal from Peter the Great. And it heralds the beginning of Russia's long-awaited role as a world leader on the seas.

Scientists debate in what summer the Earth will first see an entirely ice-free Arctic Ocean, but few doubt that it will happen in this century. More likely it will be within the next two decades. The persistence of unpredictable seasonal sea ice retreat in the Northern Sea Route above Russia, and the still entirely blocked trans-polar shipping route, have not reduced Putin's commitment to investing in the capabilities to operate in the Arctic now and in the future.

Although in his lifetime the Ottoman Empire was still strong enough to keep Peter from reaching desirable ports on the Crimean Peninsula, the investments he made, and the policies he implemented, allowed the Empress Catherine II to become the first Russian leader to capture Crimea. The level of foresight displayed by Peter is mirrored today by Vladimir Putin. His Arctic agenda is rooted in a deep understanding of Russian historical trends. As such, he must be elated to finally be building a substantial Arctic fleet.

For more on Peter the Great, see Robert K. Massie's biography *Peter the Great: His Life and World*.

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## Article 4: Why Putin Won't Be Marking the Hundredth Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution

By [Masha Lipman](#)

November 3, 2017

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/why-putin-wont-be-marking-the-hundredth-anniversary-of-the-bolshevik-revolution>

On November 7th, the dwindling tribe of Communist Party loyalists and nostalgists will commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Vladimir Putin, however, has made it clear that the centenary is not an occasion for state celebration. While the foreign press has published countless perspectives on Lenin and Trotsky, Soviet Communism, and the global influence of those revolutionary days, as far as the Kremlin is concerned, November 7th in Russia should be an ordinary working day. Why that's so is at the very center of Putin's political outlook and his view of the history of the Russian state.

John Reed, the American journalist who is buried in the necropolis of the Kremlin wall, called his classic account of the Bolshevik Revolution "[Ten Days That Shook the World](#)." It was indeed a colossal upheaval. In 1917, the Romanov dynasty was overturned, and the Bolsheviks prevailed over less radical factions; by the following year, the three-

hundred-year-old Russian Empire was over. The Bolsheviks executed Nicholas II and his family. They set out to exterminate the peasantry, the nobility, and the clergy; they uprooted Russian traditional national identity and faith. The Bolsheviks enforced a new, "classless" society and a new ideological culture in place of imperial Russia.

In the Soviet Union, the Bolshevik revolution became a foundational myth complete with a founding father, Lenin, who, despite his mortal expiration in January, 1924, was officially declared "forever alive" and put on display in the mausoleum outside the Kremlin walls. The Revolution's formal name was the Great October Socialist Revolution, or *Veliky Oktyabr'* ("Great October"). In the first grade, a child became an *Oktyabrionok*, a descendant of *Oktyabr'*; as primary-schoolers, we all wore a star-shaped pin with an image of Lenin as a curly-headed little boy. Seven-year-olds across the eleven time zones of the Soviet state sang, "We are happy kids / October kids / We are given this name / in honor of the October victory."

Each year on November 7th, the Great October anniversary was commemorated all over the Soviet Union. (A calendar reform was one of many revolutionary transformations.) Even as late as the nineteen-seventies and eighties, as Communist ideology was fading, we celebrated the Revolution with parades and rallies. Streets and squares were renamed not just after the Revolution itself but after its anniversaries: in Moscow, we had Ten Years of October Street and Fifty Years of October Street; in 1977, a plaza near the Kremlin was renamed Sixty Years of October Square.

Most of these names are still around today. Lenin's embalmed body is still in the mausoleum, and countless statues of him remain standing. And yet the Bolshevik Revolution has been all but absent in the official

discourse. This process of disappearing began not long after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1996, Boris Yeltsin stripped the November 7th holiday of its origin, renaming it the Day of Accord and Reconciliation, but the new name sounded meaningless amid the discord and turmoil associated with his rule. In 2004, Putin cancelled the holiday altogether.

In this centenary year, discussion of "Great October" is limited almost entirely to academic conferences and small intellectual venues, and Russian officials avoid the subject. Last week, Dmitri Peskov, Putin's spokesman, said that the Kremlin is planning no Revolution-related events. "What's the point of celebrating, anyway?" he added.

The crucial political point here is that, while the Communist-era narrative and Soviet leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev hailed the revolutionary rupture—the abrupt destruction of the ancien régime and the advent of the brave new world— Putin is deeply averse to any abrupt political shifts. He is a distinctly anti-revolutionary conservative, deeply apprehensive of any grassroots challenge. To Putin, all signs of independent public activism and protest are a challenge to stability—specifically, the stability of his rule.

Too often in our national history, instead of an opposition to the government, we faced opposition to Russia itself," Putin [said in 2013](#). "And we know how that ends. It ends with the destruction of the state itself."

Back in 1989, as a K.G.B. officer stationed in Dresden, Putin experienced the decline of Soviet power with great alarm. Once in power himself, he watched unrest in Georgia, Ukraine, Central Asia, and the Middle East end in the overthrow of even the toughest-seeming

authoritarian governments. He saw these examples of political tumult as warnings. When protesters came out in force in 2011, demanding a "Russia Without Putin," Putin made it plain that he would show little tolerance. Putin's goals—to keep Russian society quiescent and demobilized; to make sure that Russian élites remain loyal to him—are at the root of his evasive stance on divisive issues of Soviet history and his near silence on the Bolshevik Revolution.

The history here is tricky. After 1991, as the Yeltsin government tried to build a post-Soviet Russian nation on anti-Communist grounds, the Revolution of 1917 was commonly referred to as a "tragedy" and a "catastrophe." Liberal intellectuals and journalists insisted that Russia come to terms with the past by exposing the evils of the Communist regime. This initiative, which was somewhat similar to "truth and reconciliation" efforts in post-apartheid South Africa, failed dramatically. Instead of reconciling Russian society, the process exacerbated political divisions, which ran deeper than many had imagined. These ideological divides, coupled with the many economic and political failures of the Yeltsin era, helped pave the way to the rise of Putin and stability as the ultimate political value.

In 1999, Putin inherited a Russia that was in a state of misery, exhaustion, and turmoil—[as Putin put it](#), "in a condition of division, internally separated." He opted for a different means of reconciliation: instead of taking a "let's talk about it" approach, he resorted to a remedy of obfuscation and oblivion. Public discussions about divisive and disquieting subjects—the roles of Lenin and Stalin in Soviet history, the Communist dictatorship, mass repressions—became increasingly marginalized in the official discourse of political life and in the media. The Kremlin's official stance on these issues grew blurred.

In particular, Putin played down the major upheavals of the twentieth century, from the collapse of Russian statehood, in 1917, to the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991. Instead, he tried to create a more expansive view of history, minimizing the turmoil of revolutionary Russia. "Russia," [he said](#), "did not begin either in 1917, or in 1991. We have a single, uninterrupted history spanning over a thousand years."

As the hundredth anniversary of Great October drew close, Putin, in his annual address to parliament, said, "The centennial is a reason . . . to turn to the causes and the very nature of revolutions in Russia." But, rather than elaborating on the causes of revolution, Putin [switched](#) to his perpetual theme: "We need history's lessons primarily for reconciliation and for strengthening the social, political and civil concord that we have managed to achieve."

In Putin's Russia, "reconciliation" means universal loyalty to the regime. As long as one pledges allegiance to the regime and shares its anti-Western and anti-liberal stance, one can be a Communist or a monarchist, an admirer of Stalin or Brezhnev or a worshipper of Nicholas II. Unlike Soviet Communism, Putin's regime draws on ideological evasiveness, not rigidity.

As a result, despite Putin's command of the regime, his control of the media, and his intolerance of political dissent, ideas and historical perceptions vary quite widely—and the centenary has made plain to what extent Russia is not an ideological monolith. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation, one of the four parliamentary parties, has just launched week-long celebrations of the revolution anniversary in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The events include "the 19th international meeting of communist and workers' parties," a wreath-laying ceremony at Lenin's Tomb, and a visit to the great man's old Kremlin offices. The

Party published a list of slogans for the centennial: "Long live the socialist revolution!"; "Lenin-Stalin-Victory"; "Glory to the achievements of Great October"; "Revolutions are the locomotives of history"; "Revolution has happened, Revolution is alive." The Kremlin, of course, will not join the Communist festivities, but neither does it interfere with the Party [extolling the revolution](#). Meanwhile, the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church refers to the revolution as a "spiritual catastrophe" and is [commemorating 1917](#) as "the beginning of an era of persecutions" and of the first assassinations of "new martyrs"—the countless clergy executed by the Bolsheviks. A reliquary of the new martyrs has been travelling around Russia in commemoration of the anniversary.

And yet, despite the profoundly different ways in which the Communist Party and the Russian Orthodox Church are treating this centenary moment, the leaders of both institutions are willing contributors to Putin's reconciliation project. They easily dismiss their past and present differences as minor, and cordially greet each other. Both are utterly loyal to one figure: Vladimir Putin.

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