

Failure to Recognize Stalin was Insane Opens the Way for His Rehabilitation, Eidman Says

Opinion

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Unfortunately, the Russian analyst says, Stalin is hardly the only Russian leader infected by paranoia. "Putin's actions, including his maniacal striving to destroy the independence of Ukraine are also something that people try to give some logical explanation for." But in fact, Putin "like his predecessor Stalin is simply ill with a serious case of paranoia."

By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia": July 13 – "The creeping rehabilitation of Stalin has turned out to be successful largely because from the times of Solzhenitsyn, Stalinist crimes were explained by ideological or even rationalist reasons," Igor Eidman says. Had people recognized and declared that he was insane, that alone "would have made the rehabilitation of Stalin impossible." On the Kasparov portal today, the Russian commentator for Deutsche Welle argues that both those who believe Stalin was a committed communist and those who view him as a harsh emperor are making it easier for Russians to accept him either for one reason or the other (kasparov.ru/material.php?id=5966874447437). "But Stalin was simply a madman" with power whose "clinical paranoia transformed him into one of the most horrific serial maniac killers in the history of the world," Eidman continues. That can be easily seen if one imagines something like the following scenario: "A paranoid tells the chief doctor of a psychiatric hospital that "all the patients in my ward are Chinese spies." The doctor won't argue but will simply have his aides ensure that the paranoid is kept under better control. "But now imagine," Eidman continues, "that an armed paranoid seized the hospital, takes its staff hostage and proclaims himself the chief doctor. In this situation, the personnel will be forced to agree with any of his ravings. The doctors and nurses will acknowledge that they and each other are Chinese or even Martian spies if only to calm the maniac" and save themselves. That is exactly what happened "during Stalin's Great Terror." The Soviet leader "sincerely believed in the most fantastic conspiracies and spy stores and so on involving people he knew well." He came up with these notions in his diseased brain and then demanded the secret police beat and kill people until they confessed that his notions were true. According to Eidman, "it is impossible to find any other somewhat rational explanation for the bloody bacchanalia of 1937-38," a set of actions that destroyed many who were in no way a threat to the Soviet Union or Stalin personally and that left the USSR far weaker than it had been as war approached. Unfortunately, the Russian analyst says, Stalin is hardly the only Russian leader infected by paranoia. "Putin's actions, including his maniacal striving to destroy the independence of Ukraine are also something that people try to give some logical explanation for." But in fact, Putin "like his predecessor Stalin is simply ill with a serious case of paranoia." Like the late Soviet dictator, "Putin lives in the power of absurd fantasies, the chief of which is a conspiracy of the West against Russia and him personally." As a result of this "paranoid picture of the world," he explains "all real and imaginary misfortunes" that happen around him. Also like Stalin, Putin constantly lies, something that

deceives himself above all but that spread his fantastic notions more broadly and give them life because of the power of the Russian special services and the media, the first of which provides "evidence" that what Putin says is true and the second spreads this across the population of Russia and the world. And again like Stalin – and this is the saddest thing of all, Eidman concludes – Putin not only suffers himself but via total propaganda infects the entire society with his paranoia." Curing that will be a difficult task indeed. But the first step is to recognize the disease rather than try to explain it away "rationally."

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The commentary above is from Paul Goble's "Window on Eurasia" series and appears here with the author's permission. Contact Goble at: paul.goble@gmail.com