

## Russian Orthodox Priest Denounces Image of Stalin as Patriotic Ruler

March 01, 2016



A Russian Orthodox priest has harshly denounced a car window sticker that cast Soviet dictator Josef Stalin and Russian President Vladimir Putin as the country's patriotic rulers, Orthodox news portal Blagovest-Info reported Monday.

The sticker, covering the rear windshield of a car spotted in the Siberian Kemerovo region, featured the likenesses of Tsar Alexander III, Stalin and Putin, and a quote from the Book of Psalms: "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory," according to a photo published by local news site VSE42.

The portraits floated above a black-and-orange St. George ribbon — Russia's traditional symbol of military valor that has emerged in recent years as a sign of Kremlin loyalists.

Russian Orthodox archpriest Artemy Kozin said the quote was particularly inapplicable to Stalin, "who destroyed half the Church," VSE42 reported.

"Only an ignorant person, who has poor knowledge of history and is looking for holiness where there has never been any, can justify him [Stalin]," Kozin was quoted as saying.

The archpriest used a couple of Russian slang terms to denounce the rising popularity of Stalin – which, he said, was due to the “orthodoxization of the brain,” suffered by many Russians, to “zombification” and to the “unwillingness to read serious books,” VSE42 reported.

Kozin declined to comment on Putin, saying the Russian president's priest would be in a better position to judge his spiritual state, the report said.

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