

Stalin's Purges 'a Big Minus,' Says Russian Education Minister

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AP/Ivan Sekretarev

Soviet dictator Josef Stalin was a “great politician,” but his brutal political repressions were “a big, big minus,” according to Russia's new education minister.

Appointed in August, Education Minister Olga Vasilyeva has faced accusations that she praised the "efficiency" of the Stalin regime and claimed that the Stalinist purges were "necessary," but "exaggerated" by historians and journalists. However, in a Nov. 7 [interview](#) with the Interfax news agency, Vasilyeva took the opportunity to deny that she is a Stalin supporter.

"How can I support Stalin, whose tyranny is so obvious?" she said. "But we have to agree that the man was a statesman."

Russian-Jewish leaders first called on Vasilyeva to [“clarify” her comments](#) on the Soviet

dictator back in August.

“It’s a very important issue not just for education in Russia but for the future of the country as a whole,” said Borukh Gorin, the head of the Cultural Relations Department of The Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia. “[During the Stalinist terrors] an entire class of people was eliminated along with freedom of expression, and post-revolutionary enthusiasm was replaced with fear,” he said.

Vasilyeva's commitment to her comments would be “a bad sign,” he said.

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