

'Historians couldn't believe such documents still exist'

Russian man tracks down the secret police who executed his great-grandfather 80 years ago

By [Kevin Rothrock](#)

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The site in Tomsk where Stepan Karagodin was executed by an NKVD firing squad.
[@StepanKARAGODIN / Twitter](#)

A 34-year-old Tomsk resident says he's tracked down the names of the men who helped kill his great-grandfather — a peasant who was executed in 1938 on charges of spying for the Japanese. According to a [new report](#) by Radio Liberty, Denis Karagodin managed to convince initially reluctant security-services archivists to show him documents that helped him reconstruct the chain of events that led to his relative's execution almost 80 years ago.

Karagodin says he's found the names of the people involved at every stage of his great-grandfather's death, from the NKVD leadership in Moscow to the officers in Tomsk charged

— Ді Ні́муді́Д°Д½ ДДД ДДДДДДДДДД (@StepanKARAGODIN) [May 25, 2013](#)

Translation: “We got as close as we could to the killers (literally): Stalin's grave and the resting place of other killers, Red Square, Moscow.

According to the website TJournal, Karagodin’s story has attracted significant attention on Facebook, where many Russians have welcomed the theme of reconciliation between “victims” and “executioners,” arguing that “repentance” is less practical, given the moral chaos that prevailed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 40s.

Shot on Jan. 21, 1938

Karagodin’s great-grandfather, Stepan, was arrested on Dec. 1, 1937, by members of the Tomsk NKVD — the predecessor to the KGB. He was charged with conducting espionage for the Empire of Japan, and sentenced to death by firing squad. The verdict was carried out on Jan. 21, 1938, and Stepan Karagodin’s relatives were told merely that he’d died while in police custody.

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pic.twitter.com/RHTmreMKw9

— Ді Ні́муді́Д°Д½ ДДД ДДДДДДДДДД (@StepanKARAGODIN) [September 29, 2013](#)

Translation: “A trench outside a church: construction on a memorial Russian Orthodox church at Kashtachnoi Hill, Tomsk's firing pit.”

According to Denis Karagodin’s [website](#), his family never believed the charges against Stepan, and it spent decades trying to clear his name. Denis began his investigation in 2012, collecting information about NKVD employees at departmental and political archives. He says he also got help from the relatives of other people executed at the same time as his great-grandfather.

In June this year, Karagodin said he hopes to bring a criminal suit against the people responsible for his relative’s death, posthumously charging the individuals whose names he’s uncovered with conspiracy to commit murder.

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