

Veterans at Putin's Side for Victory Parade Did Not Fight in WWII – Reports

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Russian President Vladimir Putin (C) attends the Victory Day parade on Red Square. **Grigory Sysoyev / POOL / TASS**

The two military veterans seated next to President Vladimir Putin at Tuesday's Victory Day parade on Red Square did not fight in World War II, the Agentsvo investigative outlet [reported](#).

Putin is traditionally flanked by World War II veterans on Victory Day, which celebrates the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in 1945 with a massive military procession aimed at rallying patriotic fervor.

This year, however, he was seated between former members of the Soviet secret police, Agentsvo reported.

Seated at Putin's right was former NKVD agent Yuri Dvoikin, 98, who was [deployed](#) to western Ukraine's Lviv region in 1944 to "carry out operations to liquidate" Ukrainian partisans.

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Dvoikin had “volunteered for the army in 1942, but never made it to the front,” Agentsvo wrote.

At Putin’s left was former KGB officer [Gennady Zaitsev](#), who was born in 1934 and helped put down the Prague Spring of 1968, Agentsvo reported.

“Zaitsev led the group of the 7th Directorate of the KGB of the U.S.S.R. in the ‘Danube’ operation, as the deployment in Czechoslovakia was called. Under his leadership, the interior ministry building in Prague was seized,” Agentsvo said.

During his speech on Red Square on Tuesday, Putin likened Russia’s present-day invasion of Ukraine to the Soviet Union’s fight in World War II, saying “a real war has again been launched against our motherland.”

This year’s military parade featured less equipment and fewer soldiers than in previous years, a reflection of the heavy losses of soldiers and materiel that Russia has suffered in nearly 15 months of war.

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