

The Great Terror of the 1930's- The Suppressors and the Suppressed

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Individual Website

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Last year, I participated in Academic Pentathlon which introduced me to Russian history. I was fascinated, so I delved deeper in an effort to stumble upon an enthralling topic that suited this year's theme. I narrowed down my interests to the Eastern Orthodox Church conversion and the Great Terror. I ultimately decided on the Great Terror because I thought that the various rights and responsibilities, both of the citizens and the government, that were associated with this national terror provided a pivotal learning experience in politics, not only to the Soviet Union but to the world.

Since I already had a general understanding of the Great Terror, I commenced my research by scouring for books in the public library that focused on specific events. I found letters, books, pictures, and many other useful sources. After exhausting the resources in the public library, I began to research online. I found and analyzed revealing and controversial primary and secondary sources: videos, letters, editorial cartoons, and documentaries, which furthered my comprehension of the Great Terror. A few weeks into my research, I even acquired Joseph Stalin's autobiography, which provided unparalleled insight to Stalin's motives, actions, and conversations. But, even after all of this research, I still had several questions, so I emailed Robert Conquest, an author of several books that analyze the Great Terror, and various professors. Several professors replied to my inquiries, and their responses elicited thoughts that had not crossed my mind before. All of the primary and secondary sources that I obtained provided a myriad of perspectives over the different events that occurred during the Great Terror, and they helped me generate a thorough conclusion.

I decided to create a website because it appealed to my technological interests. With a website as my presentation format, I could create an interactive project that combined different aspects of each presentation category while still incorporating the originality and information

necessary to present an effective website. The first decision that I made regarding my website was the color scheme, which is white, black, red, and yellow. White represents the innocence of the Soviet citizens who became victims to the Great Terror. Black symbolizes death and corruption. Red and yellow stand for the Soviet flag.

My project reflects the theme “Rights and Responsibilities”. During the Great Terror, Soviet citizens were denied many rights by the government, including ones stated in the 1936 Constitution of the U.S.S.R. and some that were morally expected. Throughout the Great Terror, citizens were showered with propaganda that kept them oblivious to the orchestration of the terror. Despite the acts of the government, Soviet citizens were still required to abide by the 1936 Constitution, which outlined their responsibilities as citizens of the U.S.S.R. Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, and the secret police held public offices, which entitled them to more power than the average citizen, but many people, including myself, argue that they took advantage of them because they failed to handle their responsibilities.