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Blog

The real reason why Stalin's body was exhumed on Halloween

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Most people in the world who have any interest in Russian culture and history probably know that Lenin's embalmed body is still on display in Kremlin Mausoleum today. This is absolutely true - any visitor to Moscow can go and see the body of the first leader of the Soviet Union almost 100 years after his death. But did you know that for a time the bodies of both Stalin and Lenin were in the Mausoleum? While after Stalin's death his body was embalmed and put on display at the Mausoleum, he was later exhumed and moved to a grave near the Kremlin Wall. Stalin was exhumed on 31 October, 1961, which is the day of Halloween. Was this done on purpose or is this just a simple coincidence? While some people would love to hear that this caused the Soviet leader to come back to life, become a zombie, vampire or a ghost, the truth is much simpler. Indeed, the date was just a coincidence. In fact, Halloween used to be a purely Western holiday and people in the Soviet union didn't even know of its existence. Even though there's no ghost of Stalin roaming the Kremlin at night, the reason why his body was moved is still worth exploring.

What happened after the death of Stalin?

When Stalin passed away on the 5th March, 1953, the whole country mourned this loss on a grand scale, some in the nation truly grieved, while others simply followed the protocol set by the Communist Party. After Stalin's death many high ranking officials of the party fought ruthlessly to take Stalin's place. Nikita Khrushchev became the leader of the party. He

quickly showed that his goal was to be an opposite of his authoritarian predecessor and his reign is widely known for its much more liberal policies.

Khrushchev's Secret Speech

Khrushchev showed adamant disapproval of Stalin's reign as the leader. On 24 February, 1956 he gave his famous Secret Speech, where he talked about how Stalin's carefully maintained image and "cult of personality" hid the leader's many crimes against fellow party members, army officials and citizens of the Soviet Union. The new leader emphasized the superiority of Leninism over Stalinism, which gave people something to rally behind. As a result of this new ideology, Stalin's body was soon moved to a grave near the Kremlin wall, where he lies today together with lesser-known officials.

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