

Culture Minister: Lenin Should Finally Be Buried

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Encased in glass and covered to the waist with a blanket, Lenin's body is still on display for members of the public, who shuffle through a dark underground chamber in the mausoleum illuminated by dim red-tinged lights. **Andrei Makhonin**

Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky told radio listeners over the weekend that Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin's body should be laid to rest and his mausoleum turned into a museum.

"I have always thought that his body should be returned to the earth. I would observe all the essential rituals," the minister told Ekho Moskvyy on Saturday.

"Since he was a senior public figure, if the decision were made, the burial should be accompanied by all the appropriate state rituals, distinctions and a military salute, in a worthy place."

But leaving Lenin's body in a state of "suspension" was "absurd," he said.

As a museum, the mausoleum would be a popular tourist destination, and the costs for tickets

could be high, he added.

Medinsky said that a decision had not been made on the matter earlier because the burial would have cost the authorities votes in elections.

Popular support for burying the founding Soviet leader has been on the rise, though it still stands at just over half the population.

A poll in mid-April by the Public Opinion Foundation, or FOM, found that 56 percent of Russians were in favor, compared with 46 percent six years ago. In the April poll, 28 percent of respondents said Lenin should remain in his mausoleum on Red Square.

Lenin's embalmed body, treated by highly trained specialists to prevent decomposition, was interred in a mausoleum in the center of Red Square shortly after his death in 1924.

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