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# Foreign Ministry Disapproves of Metro Station Name

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The Foreign Ministry has said that naming the new metro station “Bukharestskaya” would be inappropriate due to political tensions between Russia and Romania.

The Foreign Ministry has weighed in on a subject not typically within its purview: the naming of a metro station.

The ministry sent a letter to St. Petersburg City Hall recommending that the name of Bukharestskaya station, set to open in the city's south in December, be changed on the grounds that Russia has strained relations with Romania. Bucharest is the capital of Romania.

But the city's place-naming commission objected to the ministry's reasoning, saying the name simply serves to tell metro passengers where they are in the city: Bukharestskaya Ulitsa.

"The Foreign Ministry's letter provides a general political argument about relations between

the two countries that has nothing to do with city life and specifically with its underground system," said Valeria Kozlova, executive secretary of the Toponymy Commission, part of the city administration's Culture Committee.

"The subway is a practical thing and shouldn't have anything to do with the current political situation," Kozlova said.

The name Bukharestskaya was chosen for the station 10 years ago, when construction on it began, based on the fact that it has an exit onto a street of the same name, she said.

That street, Bukhrestskaya Ulitsa, was named in 1964. The city is not considering renaming it.

The Foreign Ministry sent its letter after State Duma deputy Andrei Isayev of United Russia told the ministry he was concerned about the name.

"I asked the Foreign Ministry whether relations between Russia and Romania were amicable enough to name a metro station in honor of [Romania's] capital," Isayev said by telephone.

He said he received a reply signed by First Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Denisov saying that relations with Romania were indeed very poor and that the decision to name a metro station Bukharestskaya therefore was "strange."

An official statement posted on City Hall's website says the Toponymy Commission was informed of the Foreign Ministry's stance on the issue at a meeting of the commission Monday chaired by Deputy Governor Vasily Kichedzhi.

The Toponymy Commission ruled not to change the name of the station, but the final decision rests with Governor Georgy Poltavchenko, who is set to announce his ruling next week, Kichedzhi told Ekho Moskvy radio.

Several metro stations in Moscow have the names of Eastern European capitals, including Bratislavskaya station on the Light Green Line, which took its name from Slovakia's capital, Bratislava, when it opened in 1996, and Prazhskaya station on the Dark Gray Line, opened in 1985 and named after Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic.

There was also a popular store called Bucharest in Moscow during Soviet times that sold goods from Romania such as leather bags and furniture. Relations with Romania were not particularly positive then either, particularly during the Romanian rule of Nicolae Ceaucescu.

Sergei Utkin, an expert on European politics at the Russian Academy of Sciences, said that while Russian-Romanian relations are troubled, the link between the political situation and the metro station name was "unclear."

"Relations between the two nations are not limited to current issues and have a long history, though it's hard to remember vivid positive moments in official relations between Russia and Romania in recent years," Utkin said.

He said bilateral relations would likely improve only after a new generation of politicians took the reins in each country, particularly in Romania.

Both the Foreign Ministry and the Romanian Embassy in Moscow declined to comment on the situation.

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