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# Cruiser That Played Role in Bolshevik Coup Decommissioned

By Alexander Bratersky

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The Aurora cruiser, which remains a symbol of the Bolshevik Revolution, has now been turned over to the Central Navy Museum. **Ivan Sheiko**

A legendary naval cruiser that played a symbolic role in the Bolshevik coup of 1917 was officially retired from military service Tuesday.

The cruiser Aurora, built during the reign of Russia's last tsar, Nicholas II, had become a symbol of the Bolshevik Revolution after it issued a blank shot signaling the start of the storming of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, the seat of the provisional government, in October 1917.

The Aurora was decommissioned from the Navy on Tuesday and turned over to the Central Naval Museum, the Rosbalt news agency reported Tuesday, citing unidentified military officials.

Naval officers who were serving on the ship, which had been functioning as a de facto museum, departed from the cruiser, leaving only a civilian crew on board, the news agency said.

The changing of personnel on the ship was the culmination of a long-standing conflict between the Navy and local legislators, who protested the decision by Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov to take the ship out of service and transfer it to the museum.

In September, local Communist Party lawmakers wrote a letter to President Vladimir Putin asking him to intervene in the situation to prevent the cruiser from being decommissioned. Putin forwarded the letter to Serdyukov, according to media reports.

Some former Aurora servicemen said the historic ship, which took part in battles against Japan in Russia's war with that country in 1905, won't survive without regular maintenance by a military crew. "Without a trained military personnel, the Aurora might fall into a state of disrepair in less than a year," said Denis Sherba, a former sailor on the ship, RIA-Novosti reported in August.

Putin has not spoken publicly about the case, but he is known to have a negative attitude toward the Bolshevik Revolution, having once called the Bolshevik peace with imperial Germany in 1917 a "betrayal" of national interests.

In June 2009, the Aurora hosted a party thrown by the magazine Russky Pioneer, owned by billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov, that was attended by prominent businessmen and government officials. The party touched off a scandal among State Duma deputies, who accused Prokhorov of tarnishing the symbolic ship.

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