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Volgograd to Be 'Stalingrad' on Military Holidays

By Howard Amos

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The city of Volgograd will be temporarily renamed Stalingrad to commemorate the Soviet Union's victory in the bloody 1943 battle that broke the power of the Nazi invasion, thanks to a decision passed by the city administration.

The famous city on the Volga River is this year marking the 70th anniversary of the end of the definitive World War II battle of Stalingrad. Celebrations on Thursday included a re-enactment of the moment when General Paulus, who commanded the German forces, emerged from his bunker to surrender.

Volgograd will now be referred to as Stalingrad at official events on Feb. 2, the day on which the last of the Axis forces surrendered; on May 9, Victory Day; on June 22, Day of Mourning and Memory; Sept. 2, marking the end of World War II; on Aug. 23, which commemorates those killed in Nazi bombing raids in Stalingrad; and Nov. 19, the start of Operation Uranus, during which the Nazis in the city were encircled, according to a statement posted on the

Volgograd City Duma's website Wednesday.

Known as Tsaritsyn under the tsars, the city was re-named Stalingrad in 1925. It was changed again, to Volgograd, in 1961, eight years after Stalin's death.

Also taking part in the celebrations for the 70th anniversary of the city will be five "Stalin buses" — private vehicles with portraits of the totalitarian Soviet leader emblazoned on them. The buses will operate until May 9, the day when Russia commemorates the defeat of Nazi Germany.

The decision to occasionally revert to the name Stalingrad was made under pressure from veterans, City Duma Deputy Sergei Zabendov said, according to the statement.

The battle of Stalingrad, which lasted from August 1942 to February 1943, was one of the most bloody in world history, with up to 2 million killed or wounded.

The watershed struggle was also one of the first times in World War II when Nazi losses were similar to those suffered by the Soviets. Until fighting near Moscow in late 1941 and early 1942, almost 10 Soviet soldiers were killed for every one German.

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