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Estonia to Erect Monument to Victims of Communism

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View of Tallin, Estonia, where a monument is to be built.

A monument to Estonian victims of communism will be erected in Tallinn following a government decision to move forward with long-mulled plans, news agency Estonian Public Broadcasting reported Thursday.

A design for the monument, which will be erected in Tallinn's Maarjamae Memorial Complex, was selected at the culmination of a 2011 contest. The monument is expected to open by 2018, in time for the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Republic of Estonia.

The state property department has been tasked with conducting a tender to select an architect for the project, and also to create a working group comprised of government representatives, organizations involved in memorializing victims of repression, sculptors and architects, Russia's Interfax news agency reported.

A tender will be held to select an architect to design the area surrounding the monument.

Estonia's World War II memorials have previously proven controversial in Estonian-Russian relations. In 2007, a decision by Estonian authorities to relocate a famous Red Army monument sparked two nights of riots in Tallinn.

Many Russians viewed the relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument as an insult to Soviet troops, whom they saw as liberators of the Estonian people. Some Estonians, on the other hand, saw Soviet troops as occupiers and supported the monument's move. The resulting dispute culminated in cyber-attacks on Estonian organizations and a siege of the Estonian Embassy in Moscow.

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves has been a vocal critic of the Kremlin throughout his career, at one point saying Germany had done a better job of taking responsibility for Nazi atrocities than Moscow had for Soviet ones.

Russia has reacted strongly in the past to efforts by former Soviet states to equate Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. In 2010, the State Duma said any attempts to equate the two were "blasphemous towards all of the anti-fascist movement veterans, Holocaust victims, concentration camp prisoners and tens of millions of people ... who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the fight against the Nazis' anti-human racial theory," RT reported at the time.

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