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Stalin Monument Erected in Russian Town

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Activists in the Siberian town of Surgut have erected a monument to Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

Local civic group, "Russkiy Dukh" (The Russian Soul), spearheaded the project, having bought the bust of Stalin in an antique shop in Yekaterinburg. Some 150,000 rubles ($2,300)
were raised to cover the cost of installing the monument.

An unveiling ceremony was held on Thursday, but town authorities have since announced that the statue was erected illegally.
Catherine Shvidk
y, a spokesperson for the
Surgut authorities,

said that while a commission had been formed to consider the project, a decision had not yet been made.

"Stalin's bust was installed on Thursday illegally," she said. "The proposal was sent to a commission, which had not yet reached a consensus."

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> Новый бюст Сталина в Сургуте стал кровавым. «Историю надо помнить». ФОТО https://t.co/GFSxM3yT7Z pic.twitter.com/pmWesDkmvD
>
> — Ura.ru (@ura_ru) September 16, 2016

Spokesperson for Russkiy Dukh, Denis Hanzhin, said that no complaints had been received.

"The monument was erected on municipal land, on the new promenade," Hanzhin told the Interfax news agency. "We've received no complaints, it's been quiet."

"If the court decides that the statue is illegal, we will go to a higher authority," he said, the Monavista news site reported.

Past residents of Surgut saw the effects of Stalin's regime first hand, with the town serving as a stop on the Salekhard–Igarka Railway: a transport link constructed by Gulag prisoners in unspeakable conditions.

Other activists in the town petitioned to construct a memorial to the victim's of Stalin's regime in 2005: but local authorities have only now agreed to formally consider the project.

Stalin's regime is thought to have killed some 6 million people in the Soviet Union, although estimates vary widely. He still enjoys some support in Russia, with one controversial poll in 2006 claiming that 35 percent of Russians would vote for Stalin if he were still alive.

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