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Controversial St. Petersburg Memorial Removed

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A memorial plaque dedicated to Finnish Marshal Karl Gustav Mannerheim in St. Petersburg has been taken down after suffering numerous acts of vandalism, the newspaper Kommersant reported on Friday.

The plaque, which was installed on the facade of the Khrulev Military Logistics Academy last summer, will be relocated to the Museum of the First World War in Tsarskoe Selo.

The Russian Military Historical Society, which both installed and removed the plaque, published a statement on its website explaining the reason for its removal.

"The multi-faceted figure of Karl Mannerheim is a subject for study and an opportunity for debate by historians. Illegal acts and monument wars are not methods of discussion."

The statement went on to state that the plaque would be kept without restoration to serve as "a symbol of historical controversies in contemporary Russian society."

Karl Gustav Emil Mannerheim began his military career as an officer in the Tsarist Russian army. When his native Finland won independence from Russia in 1918 he returned home to fight against pro-Bolshevik Finns.

Mannerheim was in command of Finland's armed forces during the Winter War of 1939, inflicting heavy losses on the ill-prepared Soviet invaders. Finland would later join the Axis states in their invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, but in 1944 it concluded a separate peace with the Soviets. Mannerheim served as Finland's sixth president from 1944 to 1946.

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