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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

What Do Russians Think of Moscow's New Kalashnikov Statue?

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Zykov Kirill / Moskva News Agency

Moscow has a new seven-meter statue to the inventor of the AK-47 assault rifle, Mikhail Kalashnikov.

The 35 million-ruble ($538,000) monument was inaugurated by Russia's Culture Minister and representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church near the Mayakovskaya metro station on Tuesday morning.

We asked passersby what they think of the tribute.

Rashid Kustanov, lawyer and politician, from Izhevsk, Kalashnikov's hometown.

"In Izhevsk, we've also heard about this statue. It's a big event for all of Russia, including the regions.

"We remember Mikhail Timofeyevich. There are a lot of people in our city who knew him

personally. Everyone knew where he lived. He had a family here. He was a legend who you could run into in everyday life."

Alla Georgiyevna, pensioner

"I like this monument. This rifle was his brainchild, and think of all the victories it brought us."

Galina, pensioner

"It's great that they've put up a monument. Abroad, everyone jokes: No matter what weapon you pick up, it's always a Kalashnikov.

Asked whether it wouldn't be better to set up a statue to a cultural figure, she said: "There aren't enough squares to put up monuments to all the great Russian writers."

Vladimir [Last name withheld]

"Before putting up this monument, they should have asked what ordinary Muscovites thought. Maybe they would have wanted a statue to the Soviet Union Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky, instead."

"Look at the Zaradye Park, for example. They made it without consulting the people who live here, changing one of the oldest locations in Moscow with a foreign idea in an attempt to create something modern."

"There's a very tense atmosphere at the moment, and our adversaries could use [such monuments] as part of their propaganda efforts."

[Identity withheld] 26 years old, male

"I think this is just a money-laundering attempt, setting up another monument that has nothing to do with this place."

Sveta Agayan, 26

"What's not to like? The size is good. And people should know their heroes."

Maxim Vorontsov, 34

"The authorities are trying to revive our culture, to show the youth our past. It's time for us to put Russian weaponry in the spotlight. I think this is great."

Nadezhda Yermakova, 46

"We don't know whether he would have appreciated it, but I like that my city has a monument like this."

"I would want my children to know what he's done for the motherland."

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