

Moscow Mayor Scraps Vote on Soviet Secret Police Chief Statue

By [AFP](#)

February 26, 2021



Archive picture of the Dzerzhinsky statue where it once stood on Lubyanka Square. It now stands in a park with a host of other toppled statues. [RIA Novosti archive](#) / [Wikicommons](#)

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin halted a vote Friday on whether to restore a statue of Soviet secret police founder Felix Dzerzhinsky outside the domestic intelligence headquarters in the Russian capital.

The vote, which kicked off Thursday and was set to last a week, offered Muscovites a choice between a statue of Dzerzhinsky, who is seen as a symbol of the KGB's control over society in the Soviet Union, and Alexander Nevsky, a 13th century prince and Orthodox saint.

But with nearly 320,000 ballots cast two days later, with Nevsky leading Dzerzhinsky by 55% to 45%, Sobyenin decided to scrap the vote — and the new statue — altogether.

Writing on his official blog, the Moscow mayor said that the vote was "increasingly turning

into a confrontation between people holding different views."

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"Different points of view on history are inevitable. But the monuments that stand on the streets and squares should not split, but unite, society," he added.

The mayor said that the square in front of the headquarters of the Federal Security Service (FSB), the successor agency to the KGB, would remain statueless — for now.

"We will probably come back to this question and together we will make a correct and reasonable decision," Sobyenin wrote.

Three decades ago, Russians toppled the original statue of Dzerzhinsky in August 1991 as 100,000 people celebrated a failed putsch against Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union's final leader who brought about its dissolution.

The 11-ton bronze statue, which is considered part of Russia's cultural heritage, is now held in a park of Soviet monuments in central Moscow.

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