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Volgograd Residents Oppose Renaming City to Stalingrad – Russian State Poll

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Dmitry Rogulin / TASS

Two-thirds of residents in the Russian city of Volgograd oppose permanently renaming their city to Stalingrad, according to state polling released ahead of the 80th anniversary of a key World War II battle there.

Volgograd had carried the name Stalingrad in honor of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin starting in 1925. The site of the Battle of Stalingrad, where the Soviet army beat back Nazi soldiers on Feb. 2, 1943, its name was changed to Volgograd in 1961 as part of the de-Stalinization process.

Today, 26% of Volgograd's population of nearly 1 million back the idea of reverting to Stalingrad, according to state pollster VTsIOM.

Respondents who back the name change argued that Stalingrad holds historical value (14% of all respondents) and carries the memory of what Russians call the Great Patriotic War (12%).

Three-quarters of those who supported the return to Stalingrad were unable to provide reasons behind their thinking.

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The 67% of residents who oppose the name change said it would be expensive (21% of all respondents), pointless (12%) and too focused on the past (11%).

Just 7% of Volgograd's respondents voiced a negative attitude toward Stalin himself, VTsIOM said.

President Vladimir Putin has suggested that he would not oppose renaming Volgograd to Stalingrad if its residents supported the move.

Putin is expected to visit Volgograd this week to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad.

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Signs marking entrances and exits to the city have been switched to signs reading "Stalingrad" ahead of the anniversary, a regular practice on major military holidays.

Russian media reported recently that ruling party leaders have urged members to compare the Battle of Stalingrad with Russia's nearly year-long war in Ukraine.

VTsIOM carried out the survey among 600 Volgograd residents by phone on Jan. 31.

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