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Stalin Bust Beheaded With Sledgehammer in Russian Park

By AFP

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Telegram/@ostorozhno_novosti

An unknown man wielding a sledgehammer has decapitated a statue honoring Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in a city near Moscow, Russian state media reported.

Video taken in the city of Zvenigorod showed the suspect staggering around the statue before knocking its head off in what appeared to be one swoop and walking away.

"On Saturday, in one of Zvenigorod's parks, a man in an unwell state knocked the head off the bust of Joseph Stalin with a sledgehammer," a law enforcement source told the state-run RIA news agency.

The man also damaged a bust of Soviet founder Vladimir Lenin before immediately fleeing the scene of the crime, local media reported.

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He is now being sought by police, state-run news agencies said.

The statue of Stalin in Zvenigorod was erected by a group of pro-veteran activists in the summer of 2023.

It faced demolition after local officials accused the group of installing it without permission, but the decision was later reversed after the group complained on social media, local media reported.

Stalin, who ruled the Soviet Union from 1924 until his death in 1953, presided over a totalitarian regime that saw millions imprisoned in labor camps or executed.

Public images of the dictator are extremely controversial in Russia, where he is glorified by some for leading the U.S.S.R. to victory in World War II but abhorred by others for his brutal suppression of dissent.

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Most monuments to him in the former Soviet Union have been removed, but there has been a growing chorus of officials who have taken a positive view of the leader since President Vladimir Putin took power.

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