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Russia's Top Communist Demands Volgograd Be Renamed Stalingrad

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AP Photo / Alexander Zemlianichenko

The head of Russia's Communist Party on Thursday called on President Vladimir Putin to officially rename the southern city of Volgograd to Stalingrad in honor of its World War II legacy.

"We've been pushing for this for a long time," party leader Gennady Zyuganov told the state-run TASS news agency. "In my opinion, it's long overdue. If I were [the president], I would've signed the decree already, in time for May 9."

Victory Day, celebrated on May 9, marks the Soviet Union's defeat of Nazi Germany. To commemorate the holiday, Russia's Communist Party sent drones, motorcycles and off-road vehicles to Russian troops fighting in Ukraine as part of a "humanitarian aid" convoy.

"I was in Stalingrad yesterday. I called it Stalingrad and will always do so," Zyuganov said at the aid-sending ceremony on Wednesday.

“There are still 10 days until May 9, enough time to restore Stalingrad’s true name,” he added. “The whole nation is calling for it. Soldiers fighting in the special military operation are calling for it. Our veterans are calling for it.”

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Putin, who visited Volgograd this week, ordered the city’s airport to be renamed “Stalingrad International Airport.” He said a full name change could be possible if residents supported the idea.

“I absolutely see the logic in this,” Putin told young people at a patriotic education forum in Moscow on Wednesday. “If we take ideology out of it, the name is clearly associated with victory.”

Still, he said authorities would “need to find out the majority’s opinion” and that he would “think about it.”

Zyuganov claimed “the locals are ready,” but state polls in recent years have shown most Volgograd residents oppose reverting to the Stalin-era name.

The city was renamed Stalingrad in 1925 and became a symbol of Soviet resistance during the 1942-43 battle that helped turn the tide of World War II. It was renamed Volgograd in 1961 as part of the U.S.S.R.’s de-Stalinization campaign.

In recent years, the name “Stalingrad” has been temporarily revived in the city during major holidays and wartime anniversaries.

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