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Putin Renames FSB Academy After Red Terror Architect Felix Dzerzhinsky

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A monument to Felix Dzerzhinsky at Muzeon Park in Moscow. **Yuri Kochetkov / EPA / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree renaming the FSB security service's academy after Felix Dzerzhinsky, the ruthless founder of the Soviet secret police.

Known as "Iron Felix," the Polish-born Dzerzhinsky established the Cheka, the precursor to the KGB, and led it in the decade following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. The Cheka was notorious for carrying out mass executions during the Russian Civil War and the Red Terror.

Putin's decree, published on Wednesday, cites Dzerzhinsky's "outstanding contribution to ensuring state security."

Dzerzhinsky's name was stripped from the academy, formerly the Higher School of the KGB, in 1992 during the wave of de-Sovietization that followed the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

Independent Russian journalists called the move to return his name to the FSB academy "symbolic," adding that it marks Putin's first formal state evaluation of Dzerzhinsky's

legacy.

Putin, a former KGB and FSB officer who once called the collapse of the U.S.S.R. the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century, has presided over the gradual rehabilitation of Soviet-era symbols.

In 2023, a monument to Dzerzhinsky was unveiled at the headquarters of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).

That statue is a replica of the massive bronze monument that stood in front of KGB headquarters on Lubyanka Square until it was toppled by protesters during the Soviet Coup attempt in August 1991.

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