

LATVIA BEGINS REMOVAL OF SOVIET WWII MONUMENT

Posted on August 24, 2022



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Less than a week after its Baltic neighbor Estonia began executing plans to [demolish](#) a Soviet-era WWII monument in the primarily Russia-speaking city of Narva, Latvian authorities on Tuesday also began dismantling a memorial erected in central Riga which commemorates the Red Army's victory over Nazi Germany.

The move comes several months after the country's parliament, which presently has a liberal-conservative majority, and the Riga City Council voted to clear the way for the monument's demolition, the Latvian broadcaster *TVNET* [reports](#).

https://twitter.com/nexta_tv/status/1561974535662014465

The removal of the monument, originally erected in 1985, just five years before Latvia reclaimed its independence from the Soviet Union, has inevitably angered a portion of the country's ethnic Russian minority, a group that comprises more than a quarter (25.6%) of country's 1.9 million inhabitants.

Before the demolition, some ethnic Russians living in Latvia gathered nearby the monument in protest. Several were arrested by Latvian authorities.

<https://twitter.com/reznikWSWS/status/1561784421765840898>

Latvian politicians have defended the monument's demolition by suggesting that it glorifies the Red Army, which previously occupied the country, and Russia's alleged war

crimes.

Others like Ieva Berzina, a senior researcher at Latvia's National Defense Academy, have suggested that the monument, for the ethnic Latvian majority, is viewed as a symbol of the harsh, decades-long Soviet rule.

"For Latvians, it's a symbol of occupation and all the pain associated with that," Berzina said "For Russian speakers, it's a commemoration of their ancestors that fought against Nazi Germany."

Riga Mayor Martins Stakis, for his part, emphasized that "it will be necessary to demolish the monument to the era of occupation in the hearts" of Latvians as well. Last week, while speaking to Latvian state media, he noted that once dismantled, the monument will be "sent for recycling," adding that the "Museum of the Occupation of Latvia has not recognized any part of the monument as artistically valuable."

In Estonia, the removed Soviet-era monument is set to be relocated to the Estonian War Museum.