

Russian Car Rally Honors Soviet Soldiers Fallen in Poland

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A view of Warsaw

About 50 members of the Russian "Road of Glory" car rally marking the Soviet victory over the Nazis 70 years ago honored Soviet soldiers on Wednesday who fell in combat in Warsaw in 1945.

Flying national flags, some wearing dark uniforms, the Russian and Belarussian drivers were passing through Poland on a journey from Moscow to Torgau, Germany, where Soviet, British and U.S. troops met in April 1945, shortly before the surrender of Nazi Germany.

The group stopped Wednesday morning at the Red Army cemetery and memorial, in a park in Warsaw. An Orthodox priest traveling with them, Father Alexander Pashkov, led prayers, and then they laid wreaths and red carnations and resumed their journey.

There were no Poles at the ceremony, which was monitored by a small group of police officers. "On the occasion of Victory Day, May 9, we want to honor soldiers fallen and injured in the war, and all those who fought for peace," said Katerina Griniyenko, traveling with her

daughter Diana and husband Igor.

The couple was especially honoring their grandfathers — one was a pilot, another was a sailor in the war. The Soviet Union's contribution to the victory over Nazi Germany remains a source of great national pride for Russians.

The car rally will be followed next week by a group of about two dozen Russian bikers, including the pro-Kremlin Night Wolves, whose ride is seen by some Poles as a provocation, coming at a time when relations with Moscow are strained over its role in the conflict in Ukraine.

Polish bikers, who have met and driven with the Russians in Poland and in Russia, will greet them at the border and will accompany them on their ride to Warsaw, Wroclaw and the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial, to make sure that no bad emotions mar it.

Polish bikers haven't been disturbed on any of the 14 organized annual rides they have made to a Polish POWs cemetery in the forest of Katyn, in Russia, where in 1940 Soviet security agents shot thousands of Polish officers and dumped them in mass graves.

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