The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Poland Answers Kremlin Anger Over Soviet General's Statue

September 20, 2015



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WARSAW — Poland said on Sunday it had offered to commemorate 800,000 captured Soviet soldiers killed by German troops, in a gesture to quell Kremlin anger over demolition of the statue of a Soviet general linked to the purging of Polish underground fighters.

The Foreign Ministry, addressing a highly sensitive matter in relations between Moscow and its western neighbor, said since the 1989 fall of communism Poland had not removed a single cemetery devoted to Soviet soldiers killed fighting Nazi troops in World War II.

"At the same time we are sorry to notice that neither the Soviet nor the Russian side has so far shown interest in a worthy commemoration of the 800,000 Red Army soldiers murdered by German Nazis during the Second World War as captives," the ministry said.

"Poland declares itself ready to jointly observe such an event, which could have a positive

effect in bringing closer Polish and Russian stances toward commemorations."

Russia said last week demolition of a statue of Soviet General Ivan Chernyakhovsky in the town of Pieniezno would have "the most serious consequences for Russian-Polish relations."

Chernyakhovsky was among those responsible for disarming and arresting thousands of Polish underground army soldiers toward the end of the war, many of whom were sent to Soviet prisons or labor camps and died there.

This earned Chernyakhovsky the nickname "executioner" in some parts of Poland.

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