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Poland Has Right to Dismantle Soviet-Era Monuments — Ambassador

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A monument to Red Army soldiers stands next to a Greek Catholic church in Warsaw, Poland.

Poland has the right to take down Soviet-era monuments, with the exception of burial sites, the Polish Ambassador to Russia Katarzyna Pelczynska-Nalecz said after the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a formal protest against the dismantling of a Red Army memorial in the Polish city of Mielec, the Interfax news agency reported on Tuesday.

The Foreign Ministry deemed the action to be a breach of bilateral accords. In a note published on the ministry's website on Nov. 30, the ministry accused Poland of enabling what it referred to as an "orgy" of vandalism against Soviet-era memorials, some of which are protected by a 1994 agreement on the preservation of burial sites and memorials to victims of war and repression.

"In our view, the existing Russian-Polish agreement applies to cemeteries and burial sites," Pelczynska-Nalecz was quoted as saying by Interfax.

"So-called symbolic memorials, where no one is buried, are the responsibility of local

authorities, and can be dismantled in accordance with certain procedures," she added.

According to Poland's public service broadcaster Polish Radio, the Gratitude to the Red Army Memorial dismantled in Mielec may be transferred to a history museum.

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