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Putin Opens Leningrad Siege Memorial in Jerusalem

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During the ceremony, Putin said that the Siege of Leningrad, like the Holocaust, could not be compared to any other tragedies. **gov.spb.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin inaugurated a new monument in Jerusalem dedicated to the defenders and victims of the Siege of Leningrad on Thursday.

More than 800,000 people died during the Nazi encirclement of Leningrad — now called St. Petersburg — from starvation, disease and bombardment, making it one of the most devastating episodes of World War II. An estimated 1,300 survivors of the 872-day siege currently live in Israel.

"The monument we opened today is a symbol of our deep and mutual memory," Putin said at the opening ceremony of the Memorial Candle monument in Jerusalem's Sacher Park.

Joined by other Russian and Israeli leaders, the Russian president thanked Israel for honoring the Soviet role in defeating Nazism and said that the Siege of Leningrad, like the Holocaust, could not be compared to any other tragedies.

“Here, as in Russia, people are concerned, troubled and outraged by attempts to deny the Holocaust, revise the results of World War II and whitewash murderers and criminals,” he added.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had earlier said that the role of the Soviet Union in defeating the “Nazi killing machine” should never be downplayed.

The new 8.5-meter Memorial Candle monument contains an urn of soil from St. Petersburg’s Piskaryovskoye Cemetery, a mass grave in which nearly half a million victims of the siege are believed to be buried.

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The monument was designed by Russian and Israeli architects and sculptors and features symbols of St. Petersburg and Israel.

Putin was joined at Thursday’s ceremony by a Russian delegation that included Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, St. Petersburg Governor Alexander Beglov and businessman Viktor Vekselberg, as well as World War II veterans, cultural figures and philanthropists.

He is later scheduled to attend an event in Jerusalem dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

The Russian president’s participation in Israel’s World Holocaust Forum events this week was criticized by Polish President Andrzej Duda, who skipped the ceremonies.

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