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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Marks Nazi Invasion Anniversary Amid Ukraine War

June 22, 2022



Russian Defense Ministry

Russia is commemorating the 81st anniversary of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on Wednesday amid Moscow's assault on Ukraine that has killed thousands and triggered Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II.

June 22 — the date when Hitler's forces invaded the Soviet Union as part of Operation Barbarossa in 1941 — marks the start of what Russia calls the Great Patriotic War and is today known in the country as Day of Remembrance and Sorrow.

The Main Cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces kicked off commemorations after midnight with a Divine Liturgy and a memorial service for the estimated 27 million Soviet soldiers and civilians killed in the war.

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Afterward, 1,418 candles were lit up outside the cathedral for each day that the war lasted.

Activists across nine Russian time zones joined the so-called "Candle of Memory" procession by lighting candles shaped in the Russian flag or Soviet soldiers and singing patriotic World War II songs.

In southern Ukraine's occupied port city of Mariupol, which has been devastated by weeks of Russian shelling, pro-Moscow activists lit up 10,000 candles to spell out the phrase "Remember 22.06.1941."

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Russia's Defense Ministry published some of its archives glorifying Red Army soldiers who fought the Nazi invasion, refuted controversial claims that Soviet leader Josef Stalin had planned to invade Germany, and shed light on Nazi plans to seize food from the Soviet Union.

President Vladimir Putin, who ordered the invasion to "demilitarize and denazify" Ukraine on Feb. 24, laid a wreath in honor of the dead at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier beside the Kremlin walls.

Russia calls the invasion a "special military operation" and prosecutes those who refer to it as war.

In a statement marking the anniversary, Russia's Foreign Ministry accused Germany of anti-Russian sentiment as the war in Ukraine heightens historic tensions between the two countries.

"Russophobic hysteria is systematically fueled by almost daily public attacks against our country by members of the German government," the ministry said, adding that authorities in Berlin undermine the process of "historical reconciliation" between Russians and Germans after World War II.

AFP contributed reporting.

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