Putin Hails Soviet Army's Role in Auschwitz Liberation on 80th Anniversary

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Vladimir Putin. **kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday [praised](#) Soviet soldiers for ending the "total evil" of Auschwitz, 80 years after the Red Army liberated the Nazi death camp.

Auschwitz, the largest Nazi extermination camp, has become a symbol of the Holocaust, during which Nazi Germany murdered 6 million European Jews. One million Jews perished at Auschwitz between 1940 and 1945, along with more than 100,000 non-Jewish victims.

Soviet troops found 7,000 survivors when they arrived on Jan. 27, 1945. The UN recognizes Auschwitz's liberation as Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"We will always remember that it was the Soviet soldier who crushed this terrible, total evil and won the victory [of World War II], the greatness of which will forever remain in world history," Putin said in a statement released by the Kremlin.

This year's commemoration event in Poland excluded Russia, which has been [barred](#) from participating since it launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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Putin described Russian citizens as the "direct descendants and successors" of the Soviet triumph, pledging to "firmly oppose attempts to rewrite the legal and moral verdict" against Nazi perpetrators and collaborators.

"We'll do everything we can to... prevent the spread of anti-Semitism, Russophobia and other racist ideologies," Putin added in the statement on Monday, echoing the Kremlin's frequent [claims](#) of "hostility toward Russian citizens, language and culture" in the West.

Putin ordered troops into neighboring Ukraine almost three years ago with the stated purpose of "denazifying and demilitarizing" the country.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, attending the Auschwitz commemoration alongside other European leaders on Monday, issued a call for unity against "evil" in his anniversary statement.

"We must overcome the hatred that gives rise to abuse and murder. We must prevent forgetfulness. And it is everyone's mission to do everything possible to prevent evil from winning," said Zelensky, who is Jewish.

AFP contributed reporting.

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