

Dmitri Medvedev attacks Poland

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On 21 March, Dmitri Medvedev, former president (2008–12) and currently deputy chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, published an aggressive and derisive commentary on his Telegram messenger account attacking the Polish government, the ruling Law and Justice party, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński personally, and the Polish political elite for their policy towards Russia and its aggression against Ukraine. The text starts with a criticism of the ideas of 'de-Russifying' the economy and stopping imports of gas, oil and coal from Russia, dismissing such ideas as senseless and costly for Poles. It also accuses "Polish propaganda" of "the most malicious, vulgar and shrill" criticism of the Russian Federation.

Medvedev accuses the Polish elite of being guided in their policy towards Russia not by the welfare of their citizens but by the interests of their American "sovereign" and by their "pathological Russophobia" and hatred of Russia. He ascribes such behaviour to Poland's alleged "phantom pains" after the loss of the "great empire of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth" and the expulsion of the "Polish occupiers from the Kremlin". He charges the Polish elite with ingratitude towards Russia for liberating Poland from fascist occupation. The former president describes Poland as a "community of political imbeciles" and its politicians as "inept vassals" of Washington with "obvious signs of senile dementia", who are carrying out the orders of an American elite "suffering from dementia".

At the same time, the text claims that there are no obstacles on Russia's side to improving relations with Poland or developing beneficial economic cooperation. It evaluates the human ties between the two nations as "indispensable" and their cultural and scientific cooperation as "vital". He also argues that there are no anti-Polish sentiments in Russia, and the friendly attitude of Russians towards the Polish people was reflected in their sympathy after the Smolensk air crash. Medvedev believes that ordinary Poles will "sooner or later" understand that hatred towards Russia will not consolidate their society, and is not conducive to prosperity and peace.

Commentary

- The anti-Polish diatribe/screed by the former President of Russia is an unusual action, and can only be compared with earlier anti-Ukrainian texts published both by Medvedev himself and by Vladimir Putin. No other country has been so sharply, virulently and brutally attacked by an active politician who is (at least formally) a member of the Russian Federation's top political leadership.

- The text is a clear expression of the Kremlin's concern at the proposals recently put forward by Poland to counter Russian aggression against Ukraine. In particular, these include the explicitly mentioned idea of an embargo on imports of energy resources from Russia, which would be the greatest blow that the West would be able to inflict on that country's economy. There is also clear concern and irritation about the aforementioned idea of a 'peace mission' to Ukraine, which Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov tried to discredit on 19 March, suggesting that it was based on a desire to restore Polish control over western Ukraine.
- Medvedev's text is most likely intended to achieve the following: 1) to arouse anti-Polish sentiment in Russia itself, which is intended to help government propaganda strengthen the 'besieged fortress' sentiment and bolster patriotic mobilisation among its citizens; 2) to further discredit Poland in the EU and NATO as a 'Russophobic' state acting under US dictates; and 3) to possibly try and create divisions in Polish society (and between elites and 'ordinary Poles') against the background of the socio-economic costs of anti-Russian sanctions, and also to foster distrust of the United States.