

Medvedev escalates anti-Ukrainian rhetoric

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On 5 April, Dmitri Medvedev, Vice-Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, posted a post on his Telegram channel entitled "On Fakes and True History". The text included the following phrases:

- reports of Russian war crimes are "fake cynical Ukrainian propaganda" prepared for "huge money" by "troll factories" under the supervision of Western governments and NGOs at their service;
- to dehumanise and denigrate Russia, "the crazed beasts of the nationalist and territorial defense battalions are ready to kill Ukrainian civilians"; all because "the very essence of Ukrainianness, fed by anti-Russian venom and lies about its identity, is one big sham". Ukrainian identity does not exist and never has;
- the comparison of Ukrainianness to Prussian militarism, which was "bred in schools" and later developed into National Socialism; the latter unleashed World War II and was defeated only by the Red Army; today's Ukrainian radicals were also formed in schools in the spirit of hatred towards everything Russian; "a pseudo-history of Ukrainian statehood was hastily written" after 1991; the historical ties of Kievan Rus' with today's Russian territories were broken; the idea of one nation was destroyed; "Ukrainian historical figures of the 20th century are exclusively Nazis and collaborators";
- some Ukrainians have been "literally worshipping the Third Reich" for the last 30 years; photographs of "Nazi symbols found in every military unit captured by the Russian army" are supposed to bear witness to this;
- "Ukraine has mentally become a second Third Reich and will suffer the same fate"; "this also applies to the monsters who usurp the right to represent Ukraine"; the current "special operation" should teach them a lesson, as should one episode of the "glorious past". In this context, Medvedev mentions the NKVD officer, Pavel Sudoplatov, who killed the head of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, Yevhen Konovalets, with a bomb planted in a box of chocolates [Sudoplatov also organised the assassination of Lev Trotsky]; "There will be many more such gifts for Nazi criminals";
- President Putin has clearly defined the "special operation's" aim: the demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine; these tasks will be carried out not only on the battlefield. The most important objective is to change the consciousness of some Ukrainians, which is "bloody and full of false myths"; it will serve to "ensure peace for future generations of Ukrainians and build an open Eurasia – from Lisbon to Vladivostok".

Commentary

- Since the beginning of the war, Medvedev has been heavily involved in the propaganda field, which contrasts with his previous low level of activity in public life (following his resignation as prime minister in January 2020). This engagement may indicate an ambition to strengthen his position within the ruling elite. He may also be fulfilling a task assigned to him by the Kremlin to set a highly aggressive tone for the official narrative and thus set specific 'standards' for the entire state administration.
- In addition to the repudiation of Ukrainian national identity and statehood, which became common in Russian propaganda, the text contains openly totalitarian slogans. Medvedev in fact calls for the forced re-education of Ukrainians and dehumanises the Ukrainian people, thus justifying mass war crimes. Furthermore, he makes thinly-veiled allusions to the need to assassinate top representatives of the Ukrainian government.
- The phrase referring to "building an open Eurasia" through "denazification" suggests that Russia has more far-reaching plans, encompassing the "denazification" and "demilitarisation" of all of Europe. The aim would be to neutralise it in the global conflict over the future world order between Washington and the Beijing-Moscow tandem.
- The language of the text – saturated with invectives, hate speech and extreme aggression – is probably an expression of the Kremlin's growing frustration, both at the failure of its initial plan to conquer Ukraine and the West's resilience to Russian war propaganda. One of the purposes of stirring anti-Ukrainian hysteria is to fan Russian society's 'rally-around-the-flag' sentiment. Medvedev's text is in keeping with the tone of an article published on 3 April on the main page of the RIA Novosti state news agency. It called for the extermination of Ukraine's elite, the "de-Ukrainisation" of society, and a long occupation of Ukrainian territory.