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Putin Says German Was Rusty as KGB Agent

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Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on Thursday conceded that his German language skills weren't perfect at the start of his spy career in East Germany in the mid-1980s.

He raised the issue during a videoconference with businesspeople, saying professional education standards must be good enough for a graduate to feel comfortable at a future workplace.

As an example of the opposite, he recalled his time as a student at a college and, later, in the KGB.

"I kind of studied German in school, then at the university, then at special courses at the KGB office, and then in an intelligence school," Putin told about 200 businesspeople in Yekaterinburg.

The result wasn't impeccable, he admitted.

"I went abroad afterward and thought that I was an idiot — I couldn't speak the language properly after studying it for so many years, and I felt like I had to get out of there," Putin said. "Yes, two, three or four months went by, and I felt confident and realized I belonged there."

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