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Dalai Lama Blasts Putin's Self-Centeredness

By The Moscow Times

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Since his recognition as the Dalai Lama in 1950, Tenzin Gyatso has visited Russia three times — in 1991, 1992 and 2004.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's self-centeredness is leading his country into ruin, the Dalai Lama said in an interview with a German newspaper on Sunday.

Speaking with Welt am Sonntag, the 14th Dalai Lama and Nobel Peace Prize laureate was unusually outspoken in his criticism of Putin — once nominated for the same prize for his alleged peacemaking efforts in war-torn Syria.

"Mr. Putin was first a president, then a prime minister, then a president again. It's a bit too much," said the 79-year-old Buddhist leader, also known by his religious name Tenzin Gyatso.

"His attitude is: I, I, I. This is the root of the problem," the Dalai Lama said, according to the

German version of the interview.

He was also unimpressed with what he called Russia's reluctance to accept international rules, saying it was a dangerous throwback to Cold War times.

"We're used to the fact that the Berlin Wall fell. Now it looks like president Putin wants to rebuild it," the Dalai Lama said.

"But he harms his own country by this. Isolation is suicide for Russia," he was cited as saying.

The outspoken interview comes shortly after the Kremlin expressed its continuing unwillingness to let the Dalai Lama visit Russia to cater to the country's 700,000 Buddhists.

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Russia has been reluctant to host the spiritual leader, fearing it will spoil relations with geopolitical partner China, which conquered Dalai Lama's native Tibet in the 1950s, forcing him into exile.

But in the Dalai Lama's eyes, China is still doing a better job than Russia.

"China wants to be part of the global political system and will be ready to accept the international rules in the long run."

"I don't have the impression that this accounts for Russia and President Putin, as well, at the moment," he added.

The antagonism, it appears, is mutual.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in August the Dalai Lama would be allowed to visit Russia again "only if he gives up entirely on political activity."

"This, sadly, has yet to fully materialize," Lavrov added at the time.

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