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Charging Chaika Would Be Return to Stalinism - Medvedev

By Eva Hartog

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Medvedev ended the interview on a positive note, wishing Russians a happy holiday season and saying "Everything is going to be alright."

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in a televised interview with journalists on Wednesday compared Alexei Navalny's charges against the country's General Prosecutor Yury Chaika with practices associated with Stalin-era repression.

"You said a certain person [Chaika] had been charged. If we're going to operate in such a way, we'll be going back a long way — back to the 1930s. Only law enforcement can lodge accusations [against someone]," he said, referring to the encouraged practice of having Soviet citizens tell on each other, often with severe repercussions.

Medvedev made the statement when asked how Russians could be sure whether the authorities were objectively investigating charges made by Navalny's Anti-Corruption Fund incriminating Chaika's sons and colleagues in a spate of dirty dealings with criminal

ties.

Medvedev also said such investigations were often financed by external parties, echoing Chaika's own allegations that Navalny had been ordered by a third party to blacken his name.

The interview with journalists from Channel One, Rossia 1, NTV and the independent Dozhd TV and RBC television channels was broadcast live on Wednesday morning.

Much of the broadcast centered around economic issues — Medvedev said he thought it unlikely Ukraine would repay a $3 billion debt to Russia, calling Ukrainian officials "crooks" and the blackout in Crimea comparable to "genocide."

The prime minister was also asked about Platon — a new levy on 12-ton vehicles for using federal highways, which has led to fierce resistance from Russian truckers. Medvedev said "mistakes" had been made with the system but that they had since been fixed.

The prime minister also said Russia would not cut its defense budget. "If we don't have decent Armed Forces, we won't have a country," he said.

Medvedev ended the interview on a positive note, wishing Russians a happy holiday season and saying "Everything is going to be alright."

"Regarding difficulties, some will remain, but we will overcome them," he said.

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