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‘Poland Started WWII’: Russia Reacts to 80th Commemoration Snub

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Petr David Josek / AP / TASS

World leaders including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence on Sunday marked 80 years since the start of World War II in Poland.

Russia, however, was not invited to Sunday’s commemorations because of its 2014 annexation of Crimea and actions in eastern Ukraine, a decision that Moscow had called baffling.

This is how Russian officials and commentators reacted to the snub:

Officials’ reactions

Franz Klintsevich, senior senator:

— “Of course Poland itself is to blame... The events of 1939 and Poland’s behavior provoked Germany to attack it.”

Related article: Russia 'Bewildered' by Poland's World War II Commemoration Snub

Sergei Naryshkin**, chief of the SVR foreign intelligence agency:**

— "Ukraine and the Baltic states now have laws rehabilitating Nazi collaborators. Periodically, attempts are made to sabotage Immortal Regiment marches overseas, and according to our information, the coordination of these allegedly 'grassroots' efforts is handled from a single center across the Atlantic."

— "All these 'ripples' only confirm that the Western elites are looking to overhaul the existing system of global governance or, simply put, take control over it."

Vladimir Zhirinovsky**, veteran lawmaker:**

— "All textbooks need to specify once and for all: Poland is the main culprit of the start of World War II."

— "It was Europe that nurtured Hitler against the U.S.S.R. and Poland was among those who applauded Hitler. It shot itself in the foot."

State-run media reactions

Perviy Kanal (Channel One):

— "Everything in the Polish capital [Sunday] was basically geared toward the U.S. president and statements about U.S. assistance in the fight against the eastern threat — in other words, the fight against Russia."

— "Russia was not invited. ... But the president of Belarus and the prime minister of Armenia were invited... This selective approach irritated the Poles, who remember who it was that defeated Nazi Germany."

Sputnik:

— "Belarus' Foreign Ministry said 'the liberation of eastern and central Europe and the defeat of Nazism became possible thanks to the heroic efforts of the multinational Red Army,' hinting that Poland shouldn't make it all about itself."

TASS**:**

— "Despite the courage of the Polish units, the Wehrmacht defeated the Polish army within five weeks. It became clear in the early days of the war that the campaign was lost. On Sept. 6, 1939, the Polish government left Warsaw and then left the country altogether."

Political talk show host Olga Skabeyeva, the host of "60 Minutes" on Channel One:

— "Poland has probably heard that rewriting history is bad. But being proud of it, folks, is utter nonsense."

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