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Russia Peddles Putin's WWII Essay to German Historians – DW

June 25, 2020



Putin has increasingly sought to assert a different interpretation of World War II's causes than the dominant narrative in the West. **Kremlin.ru**

Russian diplomats have been accused of attempting to influence academic freedom by sending President Vladimir Putin's recent essay on World War II to German historians for future research, the Deutsche Welle broadcaster reported Wednesday.

Putin's 9,000-word screed, published last week in a U.S. magazine, defends the Soviet non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany and blames Western powers for appeasing the Nazis. Governments in Eastern Europe and historians have accused the Russian president of falsifying facts to advance a more favorable narrative over Stalin-era mass repressions and the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe.

Related article: Putin Publishes Essay on 'Real Lessons' of WWII

A number of German historians have reported receiving copies of Putin's essay in an email

sent by the Russian Embassy in Berlin, according to DW, which said it obtained a copy of the email. The email was sent on June 22, the date when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.

The embassy urged German historians to "'use the Vladimir Putin article for future writings on history' as there was sure to be 'great interest' in the article among academics," DW reported.

Julia Obertreis, a professor of East European history at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, bristled at "any unsolicited reading tips from diplomatic posts" in a Twitter post.

"There is no way to stop ruling governments from playing politics with history. But this attempt at influence by the Russian embassy is unacceptable in terms of scientific freedom," Obertreis told DW.

Embed:

> "...schlagen wir Ihnen vor, den Artikel von Wladimir Putin künftig bei der Vorbereitung von historischen Beiträgen zu nutzen". Bin irritiert von einer E-Mail der Pressestelle der Russ. Botschaft, die gerade kam. Kein wissenschaftlicher Text zum Thema ohne Putin-Zitat mehr...?!? pic.twitter.com/ye716DC1Fa
>
> — Julia Obertreis (@JuliaObertreis) June 22, 2020

Other professors described the Russian embassy's email as "bewildering" and "irritating."

Putin's article had already "caused big waves in German media and among politicians and society at large," the Russian Embassy in Berlin said in response to the outcry.

"In this context, the embassy thought it appropriate to provide the entire article for those in society and academia who may be interested in this subject," it said.

Putin has increasingly sought to assert a different interpretation of World War II's causes than the dominant narrative in the West. On Wednesday, he staged a massive military parade on Red Square marking the 75th anniversary of Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in a renewed effort to stir up patriotic fervor.

"It's impossible even to imagine what the world would be if the Red Army hadn't come to defend it," Putin said in an address to troops.

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