

The New Russian Revolutionary Language

Former President Dmitry Medvedev is the new king of insults.

[Michele A. Berdy's The Word's Worth](#)

November 11, 2022



Vladimir Gagarin / Roscongress Photobank

This text includes extremely crude language.

Прилипалы: hangers-on

This year, 2022, must be the most bizarre year in the Russian language since the [reforms](#) of the 1917 Revolution. A century ago during the Bolshevik reforms, four letters were eliminated from the alphabet, some words and common phrases were frowned upon — essentially eliminated — like *господин* (mister, sir), and *новояз* (NewSpeak) was coined to meet the needs of the new regime.

In this revolution, two letters have been added to the alphabet, a euphemistic *новый* [НОВОЯЗ](#)

(new NewSpeak) has been introduced in governmental statements and the press, while at the same time other state and public discourse is now a rather shocking free-for-all of gutter language, threats, and insults.

Crazily, the letters added to the alphabet — temporarily, one hopes — are the Latin alphabet letters V and Z, that is, letters used in the languages of the nations Russia is at war with, at least in official and unofficial rhetoric. Even more crazily, they are used in the most sacred Russian words and expressions, like *Za мир* (for peace) and *Вежливые люди* (polite people, i.e. what Russians called the Russian military that annexed Crimea). Or sometimes the Z, which doesn't really mean anything or stand for a word, is just plastered on buildings, cars, and tanks or formed by schoolchildren or soldiers in fields.

Using a meaningless foreign letter of your enemies as the symbol of your war against them? Weird, right?

And then, on the one hand, the government has learned to speak in a *новояз* that reduces dangers and bad news to the level of minor inconveniences. An explosion that destroyed a power station is called, in official news broadcasts, *хлопок* (a pop). A battlefield retreat after being routed by the defending army in Ukraine is *жест доброй воли* (a gesture of good will). When the Russian president, famous for keeping dignitaries and presidents waiting for hours, is televised being kept waiting in a bit of diplomatic tit-for-tat, it is called *президент пришёл пораньше* (the president arrived early). The result of all this euphemistic rosiness is a world where there is no war (just a *спецоперация* — special operation), no death and destruction, no humiliation. *Всё идёт по плану!* (Everything is going according to plan!) *Всё хорошо!* (Everything is fine) *За победу!* (To our Victory!)

But while one part of the government is speaking like over-medicated finishing school graduates, the other half is using outrageously foul, wildly inappropriate, borderline obscene language in public statements, conventional and social media. One “journalist” states on Russian television that the Russian army should simply *топить детей* (drown the children) in Ukraine. When a guest on a talk show says Russia shouldn't stop in Ukraine, the host says cheerfully: *Обязательно бахнем и не раз, весь мир в труху... но потом* (We will give it to them for sure, and not just once — we'll turn the whole world to dust... but not right now).

I'm old enough to remember when none of these words was ever allowed on Russian television.

Actually, I'm now so old — or have apparently lived such a sheltered life — that I have to look up half the words being used by high Russian officials and television personalities.

Weirdly — again — one of the most prolific Russian sh*tposts on Twitter and Telegram is the former Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev.

Dmitry Medvedev's social media posts are a dictionary of insults. In his view, most of the world is evil, but of course the worst of the very worst are Ukraine and Volodymyr Zelensky, America and Joe Biden, Europe in general and Poland and the U.K. in particular. Well, Finland, Sweden and the Baltic states may be as bad, too.

Medvedev has reduced each of his enemies to a demeaning caricature. America, for example,

is Пиндостан (a mix of a derogatory word for Americans, пиндос, and an ethnic slur about Central Asian countries). The country is led by престарелые руководители вашингтонского обкома (the ancient heads of the Washington regional party committee) headed by старый дурень (an old dolt). The old dolt is all about the money: Сейчас на Украине зарабатывает фирма Joseph Robinette Biden & Sons (The company of Joseph Robinette Biden & Sons is currently making money in Ukraine). However, sometimes Biden is overcome by a strange passion: американцы избрали своим президентом странного дедушку с деменцией, который, забыв про свои обязанности, любит другую страну куда больше своей (Americans elected president a strange old guy with dementia who has forgotten all about his duties and loves another country much more than his own).

But to be honest, in Medvedev's view it doesn't matter that the president is a senile old goat; Americans are just bad: Американцы ведь закоренелые эгоисты и работают только на себя (Americans are hard-core egoists and they only work for themselves).

In Medvedev's mind, if Biden is senile and/or demented, Zelensky is an insane, drug-addicted Nazi. And like Vladimir Putin, who usually does not utter the name of his chief opponent (and threat), Alexei Navalny, Medvedev rarely uses the name of the Ukrainian president. He is некто Зеленский (some guy named Zelensky). The former Russian president describes him as главный украинский клоун (the Ukrainian clown-in-chief) and one of the киевские отморозки (Kyivan thugs). But Medvedev mostly expands on his invented story about drug use. Zelensky has пострадавший от психотропных веществ мозг (a brain suffering from psychotropic drugs). He suggests: Этому идиоту вежливые психиатры должны сделать превентивную трепанацию черепа (Some polite [i.e. Russian military] psychiatrists ought to do a preventative trepanning of the skull of that idiot).

When Medvedev isn't calling for a hole to be cut in Zelensky's skull, he calls him a crime boss: Киевская камарилья родила проект «гарантий безопасности», которые по сути являются прологом к третьей мировой войне (The Kyivan camarilla [a group of nefarious advisors] came out with a project called "security guarantees" that is essentially a prologue to World War Three).

The Europeans? Medvedev's thumbnail descriptor is stupid; he calls them городские сумасшедшие, назвавшие себя руководством ЕС (the local nut cases who call themselves the leaders of the European Union). How stupid are they? Very. It's so easy to deceive them: Европейских дурачков цинично развели американцы, заставив принять на себя наиболее болезненные последствия санкционного удара (The Americans cynically took the European dummies for a ride, making them bear the most painful consequences of the hit from the sanctions).

Right now all they do is freeze in their heat-less houses, cancel Russian culture and say nasty things about their neighbor to the East: Вся нынешняя политика европейцев на российском направлении – отвратительный коктейль из высокомерного хамства, подростковой инфантильности и примитивной глупости (The entire policy of Europeans towards Russia today is a disgusting cocktail of snooty rudeness, adolescent infantilism and primitive stupidity).

And that's the relatively respectable commentary. I found a list with more of Medvedev's

insults. Russia's enemies are the прилипалы (hangers on); прихлебатели (toadies); трусливые предатели (cowardly traitors) and алчные перебежчики (greedy defectors) in the West.

But in a recent incendiary Telegram post he whacked the insult ball out of the park — actually, out of this world.

He asked, Кто воюет против нас? (Who is fighting against us?) And he answered his own question:

Против нас сегодня часть умирающего мира. (Part of the dying world is against us today). Это кучка безумных нацистов-наркоманов, одурманенный и запуганный ими народ и большая стая лающих собак из западной псарни (This is a band of crazy Nazi drug addicts, their stupefied and terrified subjects and a huge pack of barking dogs from the Western kennel).

С ними разномастная свора хрюкающих подсвинков и недалёких обывателей из распавшейся западной империи со стекающей по подбородку от вырождения слюной (With them is a motley mass of oinking piglets and dumb*ss, degenerate nobodies from the disintegrating Western empire, drooling spit down their chins).

У них нет веры и идеалов, кроме выдуманных ими же похабных привычек и насаждаемых ими стандартов двоемыслия, отрицающих дарованную нормальным людям мораль (They have no faith or ideals other than their own invented lewd habits and the standards of double-think they have implanted in their brains that negate the morality given to normal people.)

After reading these posts, you begin to wonder who he is talking about, don't you?

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/11/11/the-new-russian-revolutionary-language-a79343>