

Moscow Furious Over Italy's 'Third Reich' Comparison

By [AFP](#)

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The Russian Foreign Ministry building in Moscow **Yaroslav Chingae** / **Moskva News Agency**

Russia has responded furiously after Italy's president equated its war in Ukraine to the aggression of Nazi Germany, fueling existing tensions between Rome and Moscow over the conflict.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova late on Sunday warned that the comments by President Sergio Mattarella "cannot and will never be left without consequences."

Mattarella, Italy's ceremonial head of state, had given a speech defending multilateral institutions at the University of Aix-Marseille in France earlier this month.

Speaking about the conditions that gave rise to World War II, he warned of "authoritarian drifts" where "the criterion of domination prevailed over cooperation. And wars of conquest

followed."

"That was the Third Reich's [Nazi Germany's] project in Europe. Russia's current aggression against Ukraine is of this very nature," he continued.

Zakharova initially hit back on Friday, accusing Mattarella of "outrageous, blatantly false historical parallels."

She accused Italy — which along with other NATO countries has sent weapons and money to help Ukraine defend itself against Moscow — of "pumping the terrorist Kyiv neo-Nazi regime in Ukraine with modern lethal weaponry."

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She launched another verbal attack on Sunday, criticizing "the president of a country that historically has been among those who attacked our country."

"Unfortunately, Italy was the country where fascism originated," she added, referring to Benito Mussolini's regime that allied with Nazi Germany during World War II.

Russia, then the Soviet Union, was allied with Britain and the United States against Nazi Germany during the war.

Politicians in Italy jumped to Mattarella's defense, including Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who said that Moscow's comments "offend the entire Italian nation."

Italy once had the largest Communist party in the West and has traditionally had warm relations with Russia.

Former premier Silvio Berlusconi was personally close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, with the two men even taking a holiday together.

But since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Italy — first under former premier Mario Draghi and then Meloni — has firmly backed Kyiv.

However, it has so far refused to allow Kyiv to use its weapons outside Ukrainian territory.

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