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**Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow,
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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with RT Arabic

Tomorrow, on May 26, at approximately 8 pm, the RT Arabic channel will air an interview with the Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during the weekly news and analysis programme, One Word.

The conversation took more than one word. It was long and interesting. Most topical issues were covered and upcoming foreign visits were announced.

The text and video of the interview will be available on the internet accounts of the Ministry.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's participation in the 38th meeting of the Council of Region Heads of the Russian Federation under the Foreign Ministry

On May 27, Sergey Lavrov will chair the 38th meeting of the Council of Region Heads of the Russian Federation under the Foreign Ministry in the Foreign Ministry house. Taking part in it will be governors sitting on the council, senior officials of the Presidential Executive Office and federal executive bodies.

The main topic on the agenda is the cooperation of Russian regions with civil society institutions in order to promote Russia's foreign policy interests.

In the context of globalisation, international ties between noncommercial organisations, especially networks, play an increasingly important role and serve as a soft power tool that effectively supplements and expands the possibilities of interstate channels of communication.

The event's goal is to discuss and outline measures to enhance the use of the domestic NPO community's potential, primarily its regional segment, to address foreign policy problems. First of all, we are talking about mobilising the resources of public diplomacy to support Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, in particular, to help solve humanitarian problems, as well as to overcome the challenges associated with the total pressure of the "collective West" on our country, our fellow citizens and compatriots abroad.

It is expected that recommendations aimed at achieving practical results will be developed following the meeting.

Presentation of the Vologda Region

On June 2, the Cultural Centre of the Foreign Ministry's Main Administration for Service to the Diplomatic Corps (GlavUpDK, 5 Olof Palme Street) will host a presentation of the economic, investment and tourism potential of the Vologda Region. An exhibition demonstrating the region's achievements in various areas of socioeconomic development, as well as its history, culture and nature, will be presented there.

The presentation will feature regional and federal officials, diplomats, businesspeople, and Russian and foreign journalists.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Governor of the Vologda Region Oleg Kuvshinnikov are to deliver speeches at the event.

Update on Ukraine

Yesterday, May 24, 2022, marked three months since the start of the special military operation in Ukraine. During this time, almost all territory of the LPR, a considerable part of the DPR, the entire Kherson Region and big parts of the Kharkov and Zaporozhye regions have been liberated. Peaceful life is being restored on the territories freed from the neo-Nazis. People are restoring the economy and industry, building infrastructure, launching enterprises, and opening schools, kindergartens, outpatient clinics and hospitals. On May 24, 2022, Russian sappers demined the port of Mariupol. Specialists from the Black Sea Fleet removed a Ukrainian border patrol ship sunk by the Azov battalion from the waterway, which allowed five foreign vessels to ship out.

The surrender of militants who were hiding at the Azovstal plant was completed on May 20. It lasted since May 16. After staying in the plant's underground for a month, 2,439 Ukrainian nationalists laid down arms and were taken prisoner. All of them are staying in the DPR. The wounded were put for in-patient treatment into a hospital in Novoazovsk. The rest are in the pre-trial detention centre of Yelenovka in the suburbs of Donetsk. Their crimes will not go unpunished. The DPR leaders are planning to establish in the republic an international tribunal for the trial of nationalists from Azovstal. At present, lawyers are drafting its charter. We welcome this initiative.

Russia continues paying close attention to the delivery of humanitarian aid to the LPR, the DPR and Ukraine's liberated areas, which have already received almost 22,000 tonnes of humanitarian cargoes. Every day, the Russian Defence Ministry announces the opening of safe corridors for safe evacuation of civilians both eastward and westward.

Although Kiev has de facto blocked evacuation to Russia, about 1.4 million people, including almost 240,000 children, arrived in our country. Another 2.7 million people expressed their desire to evacuate to Russia, the DPR and the LPR or the liberated Ukrainian areas.

Every day, we witness new examples of criminal activities by the Kiev regime. It was reported the other day that Ukrainian security services staged another provocation in the area of Mazanovka (DPR). They detonated a land mine with ammonium nitrate. The Investigative Committee of Russia intends to investigate the circumstances of this crime. Every day, the Armed Forces of Ukraine are shelling residential areas of the DPR and the LPR, killing and wounding civilians. Civilians are being used as a living shield, while imprisoned soldiers are subjected to cruel torture. This looks particularly savage given the medical aid rendered by Russian doctors to surrendered Ukrainian army personnel and mercenaries of nationalist units.

The political steps taken by the Kiev regime also reveal its neo-Nazi character. Several days ago, the Verkhovna Rada voted for the country's withdrawal from the Agreement on Perpetuating the Memory of the Courage and Heroism of the Peoples of the CIS Countries During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. On May 23, 2022, President of Ukraine Vladimir Zelensky signed a law on confiscating the assets of Ukrainian citizens that support the Russian military operation. A draft law on amendments to the Law on Government Cleansing was submitted to Ukrainian parliament. It provides for the screening of all deputies of the sixth and seventh convocations who voted for the 2010 Kharkov agreements allowing the Russian Black Sea Fleet to stay on Ukrainian territory until 2042 and for the "dictatorial laws" of January 16, 2014.

Statements by advisor to the Ukrainian Presidential Office Mikhail Podolyak, who took part in the talks on settling the situation in Ukraine, have made everything abundantly clear (if this is required at all). He directly threatens to deal with the population of the freed areas in the Kherson, Kharkov and Zaporozhye regions if the Kiev authorities return there. He promised to punish cruelly the "collaborationists" and the Russian military and demands that people in the Kharkov Region, the DPR and the LPR forget the word "Russians" altogether. We understand whose orders Podolyak and his ilk are carrying out. The former US President said that Ukraine's mission is to kill as many Russians as possible. This was a surprise only to those who did not understand what was happening in the last few years. The logic driving the actions of the Kiev regime and its curators was clear to those who followed the developments. This was a clear statement and we continue hearing similar pronouncements. They did not begin in February 2022 but were heard constantly. Some people did not want to hear them and take them seriously, considering it all a bluff. They thought something was unclear. But there was no misunderstanding. Everything is clear.

The United States and its NATO allies are doing all they can to drag out the special military operation and make the confrontation as bloody as possible. Fearing the complete rout of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, over 30 states – mostly the NATO countries – are supplying Ukraine with military aid worth tens of billions of dollars. They continue expanding the range of supplied weapons that already include large caliber artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems (this is apropos democracy and its whims). That said, the Westerners admit their inability to identify the end users of weapons and guarantee their exclusive use by the Armed Forces of Ukraine. There is a growing risk that these weapons may land in the black market and be acquired by criminal groups throughout the world. This was the case in Syria where military aid to the Syrian opposition (called “moderate”) wound up in the hands of ISIS or was sold on the black market. They spread not only in the Middle East but further to Europe.

The encouragement of Ukrainian nationalism by its western sponsors is further radicalising the militants fighting in Ukraine. The number of foreign mercenaries in their ranks is growing. Eventually, these mercenaries will return to their countries (if they are lucky) where they will use the military experience received on the field of battle. This has always been the case. History teaches us. We just have to remember it.

The special military operation will continue despite sanctions pressure and support for Ukraine from the West. All goals and tasks on protecting the DPR and the LPR, demilitarising and denazifying Ukraine and eliminating threats to Russia will be fulfilled.

Anti-Russia statements by Greek leaders

We are compelled to draw attention to new instances of provocative behaviour by official representatives of Athens, particularly the statements by the head of the Greek government, Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis, addressed to Russia and its leadership, which he made during his visit to Washington on May 16-17, 2022.

We noted a strange set of historical “analogies” used by the author. The national liberation struggle of the Greeks that took place 200 years ago was equated with the criminal actions of the Kiev regime, which fought against its own citizens in Donbass for eight years. It is hard to believe that the Nazis from the Azov battalion were placed alongside with heroic defenders of the Greek fortress of Messolonghi in 1825-1826, among which there were Russian philhellenes – a monument was erected to them in the city. Such remarks sound especially blasphemous against the backdrop of the selfless struggle of the Greek Resistance against the Nazi invaders during the Second World War.

In fact, this is just the latest attempt by Athens to justify its deeply erroneous decision to eagerly volunteer for the West’s anti-Russia front, and to be among the first to send weapons to Kiev, using which the Armed Forces of Ukraine daily shell the civilian population of Donbass and kill people in Donetsk, Rubezhnoye, Avdeyevka and other towns. The West is generally diligent about hushing up inconvenient truths. Therefore, democratic Greece, where, as we are assured, complete freedom of speech reigns and everyone can publish literally everything, banned the Russian media outlets Sputnik and Russia Today, and, just in case, is shamefully trying to “cancel” Russian culture.

The Greek leadership diligently repeats perverted interpretations of Russia’s actions, which, after unsuccessful attempts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the intra-Ukrainian conflict, is forced to stand up for the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine, including in the general context of security in the region and the world. We are groundlessly accused of neo-imperial ambitions, revisionism, and aggressive enforcement of certain territorial claims stemming from someone’s historical fantasies. A long list of groundless claims has once again been presented categorically and offhand, and an alternative view is excluded, since Russian media are excluded from the Greek information space.

It is obvious that such statements are designed to once again consolidate the Western public’s unified views on the events in Ukraine and around it and serve as a password to prove that Athens is faithful to US-NATO rules and guidelines. This explains the arguments about the “new meanings” acquired by NATO, the justification for continuing to spread along Russia’s borders, and the growth of US military infrastructure in Greece itself.

The emerging new challenges have met with adequate responses from the Russian side.

Presentation of a booklet titled Kiev Regime's War Crimes: Eyewitness Evidence

At 2.30 p.m. (approximately) on May 25, a news conference on eyewitness evidence of the Kiev regime's war crimes will be held at the Rossiya Segodnya press centre.

It will include a presentation of booklets prepared by Rossotrudnichestvo and the Democracy Research Foundation. They contain irrefutable proof of the manifestations and encouragement of Nazism at the government level in Ukraine, excerpts from interviews with the affected Mariupol and Volnovakha residents, and an assessment of events from the point of view of international law. These booklets are available in English, Russian and Spanish for informing the general public abroad about these facts.

Taking part in the news conference will be Head of Rossotrudnichestvo Yevgeny Primakov, Deputy Speaker of the State Duma Pyotr Tolstoy, war correspondent Dmitry Steshin, Executive Director of Rossiya Segodnya media group Kirill Vyshinsky, Director of the Democracy Research Foundation and member of Russia's Civic Chamber Maxim Grigoryev, and journalist, publicist and public figure Armen Gasparyan.

We invite everyone to watch the online news conference, which will be streamed in Russian and English on our internet resources.

The booklet on Churchill and Roosevelt's views on the Red Army's role in defeating Nazi Germany

We would like to tell you about a booklet titled Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt on the Red Army's Role in Defeating Nazi Germany. Monuments to Red Army soldiers are being demolished in the countries of the "collective West" and those siding with them. I would recommend that everyone reads what the leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition thought about the Red Army. The booklet has been prepared by the Foreign Ministry's Department of History and Records jointly with the Novosibirsk Publishers.

The goal of this booklet is to objectively demonstrate, without any bias and based on archival documents and official transcripts, what the leaders of two great powers thought about the key role of the Soviet Union in defeating Nazi Germany. The booklet has been published in Russian and English and covers the period from 1941 to 1945.

The focus is on correspondence between the Big Troika leaders during WWII, their radio addresses to their nations, and the statements they made during the Tehran and Crimea conferences. The booklet includes archival photographs, declarations, communiques and other legal acts.

The unbiased views of Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt on the Soviet Union's contribution to routing the Third Reich, which are provided in the booklet, differ dramatically from the politicised position of the current Western leaders.

There must be a reason for this position. How do they explain it? Do they refer to continuity or say that their policy is based on historical facts that were legally formalised during the Nuremberg Trials? No, they are acting contrary to historical facts and the statements made by their compatriots who directly supervised those events. The documents provided in the booklet offer a chronicle of the battles waged by the Soviet troops.

During a difficult stage early in the war, in April 1942, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in a radio address to the nation: "These Russian forces have destroyed and are destroying more armed power of our enemies – troops, planes, tanks and guns – than all the other United Nations put together."

On February 20, 1945, after the end of the Crimea Conference, Winston Churchill wrote to Stalin: "Future generations will acknowledge their debt to the Red Army as unreservedly as do we who have lived to witness these proud achievements."

The booklet is available online on the Ministry's website in the section of archival and documentary sources. It is designed for the general public interested in the history of World War II.

The detention of our compatriot Semyon Boikov in Australia

On May 16, 2022, Trans-Baikal Cossack Ataman [Chieftain] Semyon Boikov, who lives in Australia, was reportedly detained by Sydney police. He is charged with violating a court order on the non-disclosure of confidential information after he spoke at a pre-election rally, which was organised in support of independent politicians, about the local authorities imposing a symbolic sentence on a man accused of the sexual abuse of minors.

Our compatriot Semyon Boikov is a popular public figure in Australia, whose activities are drawing the attention of tens of thousands of followers on social media. He characteristically takes a principled approach to many burning issues relating to domestic developments in Australia and international politics, being invariably ready to speak out publicly about his civic position. The opinion of the descendant of Trans-Baikal Cossacks is weighty, and he has a large audience due to, among other things, his uncompromising position on a number of issues relating to traditional values. Considering his position, one can conclude that it represents a real problem in Australia. In particular, this is evidenced by the failure of the Scott Morrison-led Liberal-National Coalition, which is known for numerous scandals involving violence against women, at the parliamentary elections held on May 21.

It is noteworthy that the Australian court decided to postpone hearing the Boikov case until June 30, leaving Semyon Boikov in jail until that time. The refusal to grant his appeal for release on bail pending trial was obviously politically motivated, that is, he was denied a standard procedure in Anglo-Saxon law. This conspicuous severity is completely unjustified and is sending the wrong signal to the public because it is the people whom he censured – those who abuse minors – that should be sent to prison or forced to undergo treatment, and not those who denounce them. On the other hand, we regard this case as an obvious willingness to subject our proactive compatriot to additional punishment, which serves as yet another example of double standards and a biased attitude to those who exercise the right to freely express their views, which are not consonant with the Russophobic mainstream that prevails in Australia today. The more liberal statements are the more totalitarian trends the collective West countries demonstrate in practice.

People of good sense in Australian society and our compatriots living in that country are demanding that Semyon Boikov be released as soon as possible and that the Australian repressive agencies stop persecuting the man.

To be continued...



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