

Dmitry Medvedev's interview with the Luxemburger Wort newspaper

The Prime Minister spoke with Luxemburger Wort correspondent Stefan Scholl ahead of his visit to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

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Question: Mr Medvedev, tiny Luxembourg is a financial capital of Europe, and most politicians in Luxembourg are not overly enthusiastic about the sanctions against Russia. Are you going to our country to propose a new Moscow-Luxembourg strategic axis?

Dmitry Medvedev: You know, speaking about a "strategic axis"... it is not spoken about nowadays but way back in the early 2000s Russia came out with a proposal to establish a common space of cooperation from Lisbon to Vladivostok. And if contacts between Moscow and Luxembourg can contribute to its formation, Russia would welcome that by all means.

The fact that Luxembourg is unenthusiastic about anti-Russia sanctions is explained, as we see it, by the fact that your country keeps faith with its foreign policy traditions. We are impressed by your national motto "We want to remain what we are." It is so important in today's world – preserving one's identity and taking pride in one's country.

But to be honest, I don't see any particular enthusiasm across the European Union for anti-Russia sanctions. You remember that they were imposed in the context of deteriorating relations between Russia and the West when the US and some European nations supported the armed coup in Kiev in February 2014.

Question: To be sure, there are very few who are enthusiastic about the sanctions. However, all the EU nations still support them including Luxembourg. They are considered detrimental and bothersome here yet still a necessary response to Russia's actions in Crimea and the violent "Russian Spring" in Donbass. Do you think it is a total misapprehension?

Dmitry Medvedev: Look, everyone is entitled to their misapprehensions. But I can never agree that the sanctions are a "necessary response." Necessary for whom? For Crimeans who made their free and conscious choice in a referendum, one of the most democratic processes? Or for the Russians in eastern Ukraine? I am sure they have a totally different view of the so-called peaceful Ukrainian "winter, summer and autumn" if we follow the logical succession of your "Russian Spring in Donbass." The situation there is very difficult despite Russian humanitarian aid. Tens of thousands of people are living in virtually the centre of Europe in the 21st century under an energy and transport blockade. In fact, it is a humanitarian disaster. And

unfortunately, there is still a long way to go to a complete settlement. This is mainly due to the unconstructive stance of the Kiev authorities which apparently are not going to implement the Minsk Agreements, and yet sanctions are imposed against Russia. Strange logic.

What was the principle objective of the sanctions? To undermine our economy. The attempt has failed, as you can see. Today, the sanctions only impede relations with European partners, to say nothing about the losses incurred by everyone. Because we also had to impose sanctions in response. But we immediately said that we did not start the sanctions war. And we are ready to lift our sanctions as soon as the other side takes the first step. Yet the European Union, as if spell-bound, follows the US and keeps extending its sanctions year after year.

Let's be frank, nobody needs this or benefits from it. And its "corrective effect" is zero. Many of our partners realise the futility of this approach. And it matters greatly that Luxembourg is among them.

Question: How do you assess the level of Russia-Luxembourg cooperation against the backdrop of sanctions?

Dmitry Medvedev: The sanctions definitely do not help the cause of mutually beneficial trade and investment. It is a classic example of missed opportunities, both for Russia, Luxembourg, and the European Union in general. And it does not make the world economy any better either.

However, even in such unfavourable conditions our cooperation is progressing. Two-way trade has been growing for several consecutive years. The Grand Duchy remains an important investor in the Russian economy. The numbers speak for themselves: by the middle of 2018 the FDI total had reached \$19.6 billion. Another promising area is cooperation in the sphere of innovation. Let me note that in 2017 your Prime Minister Xavier Bettel took part in the Open Innovations forum that we hold in Moscow every year. And last year Luxembourg was represented by one of the largest delegations of around 40 companies! I am sure there would have been more without the sanctions-based restrictions.

We value our good relations with all nations. This is why we advocate moving forward in our relations with Luxembourg, on the principles of equality and mutual respect, of course. This is the sentiment I come bearing to the Grand Duchy. And I expect it will be reciprocated by our Luxembourgian friends.

Question: Luxembourg is not a nuclear state but several NATO bases with nuclear weapons are deployed around it. Should we be concerned that your new hypersonic nuclear missiles might land in our gardens?

Dmitry Medvedev: Our hypersonic missiles are of high precision and reliability. So your gardens are absolutely safe. On a serious note, we never threaten anyone, and we are even less likely to attack someone or wage a war. In our view, any attempts at nuclear blackmail lead to greater international tensions. It is in our interest to see Europe living in peace and stability. And we certainly engage in dialogue with NATO member-countries. We cooperate with them on a number of issues, and we do so constructively. And we expect

the same approach from our partners.

Everyone will be more at ease when all US nuclear arms return to US territory and the infrastructure in Europe to store, maintain and promptly deploy those weapons is eliminated. This also applies to the military exercises to prepare for the use of nuclear weapons which are held by NATO countries on a regular basis. These drills add nothing but unwanted stress, primarily to the NATO countries themselves.

Question: But we are also worried about Russia, which keeps unveiling and testing new nuclear weapons. By deploying strategic 20 to 27 Mach missiles your country does not look like a bastion of peace.

Dmitry Medvedev: Missile speed is a technical characteristic, not a sign of peacefulness. We naturally strive for the most cutting-edge and effective weaponry. But let me reiterate – not for attacking. We have a genetic aversion to war, if you will. We regard our nuclear arsenal exclusively as a means of deterrence, a guarantee of Russia's national security. This is stated in our Military Doctrine which is purely defensive in nature. By the way, it is an open document and anyone can read it.

And, by the way, it is the United States of America, not Russia, that is withdrawing from the INF Treaty, a cornerstone treaty in global security. This is why the Russian President signed an executive order suspending the INF Treaty as a symmetrical response until the US remedies its violations under it.

Question: Nord Stream 2 is now being vigorously debated in Europe. Opponents of the project point out that there is already a transport system via Ukraine, there are politically more reliable suppliers and that the demand for natural gas in Europe will drop in the coming decades. What motives is Russia guided by in the implementation of such large projects as Nord Stream 2?

Dmitry Medvedev: Our motives are quite obvious. I have repeatedly said this. First, economic feasibility: indeed, in commercial terms, Nord Stream is a very interesting project, for all of its participants.

Secondly, it will reduce transit risks. Russia has been operating on the European gas market for several decades. We value our reputation as a reliable partner. And we want to be sure that we can continue to fulfill our obligations in full. So we are creating an additional transport corridor for the supply of our gas. Please note that I am saying additional, not alternative. The share of Russian gas in EU gas consumption is now around 30%. Nord Stream 2 will not fundamentally change this situation. It will only cover part of the imports required by the European Union, using a more stable and cheaper route compared to the existing one. This is a clear win for European consumers.

Question: But will Europe need Russian gas?

Dmitry Medvedev: We operate under the assumption that Europe will remain a

big consumer of Russian natural gas regardless of the rapid progress in green energy and the LNG segment. At any rate, as long as decisions are made that are economically sound. Or unless a really revolutionary breakthrough occurs in energy technologies.

Russian gas supplies to the European market have grown in recent years. And the prospects are generally good, for a number of objective reasons. In particular, due to the decline in European production at old fields in the North Sea and the partial abandonment of coal, and in some countries, of nuclear power generation. And of course, due to the need to back up renewable sources of energy, which, although attractive from the environmental point of view, are still not very reliable from the energy point of view.

So, I think, Russian gas will cover a substantial part of the European countries' energy needs for the foreseeable future.

Question: German Chancellor Angela Merkel keeps saying that the transit of Russian gas via Ukraine must be continued even when Nord Stream 2 is in place. What do you say to that?

Dmitry Medvedev: We have a similar view as Ms Merkel on the issue. But Russia, as a long-standing and large supplier of fuel, is trying to diversify gas delivery routes to the European market since the more transit routes, the more reliable the supplies

I would like to specially emphasise that we are not terminating transit through existing pipelines. Neither the Nord Stream 2 nor the TurkStream projects include such decisions – neither in relation to Ukraine, nor to other countries. In particular, we are ready to continue the transit of gas through the Ukrainian GTS after 2019 – under certain conditions, of course. We have laid them out more than once. In short, they include a settlement between stakeholder companies, favourable economic and commercial terms in contracts, and a stable political environment.

Question: In Europe, many are concerned not only about the fate of your polar bears, but also about climate change. In the face of global warming, many European countries are actively preparing to switch from traditional fuels such as oil and gas to alternative energy sources. Why are there so few such projects in Russia?

Dmitry Medvedev: To clarify up front, I support the development of alternative energy. But so far, its share is really small, not only in Russia, but also in other countries. And, although in the next two decades we are unlikely to be able to completely abandon hydrocarbons, we still need to develop renewable energy – solar, hydro, and wind generation.

Today, power stations that do not rely on hydrocarbons account for about 20% of the global energy balance. Their share is growing, although this process is not as rapid as we would like it to be. By the way, our country is one of the leaders in the field of hydropower generation. About 18% of electricity in Russia is produced by large hydroelectric power stations.

Owning a house fully powered by clean energy from the sun or wind certainly remains a cherished dream for many. This requires so-called microgeneration – units with a capacity below 15 kilowatts. This is especially relevant in Russia with its large expanses. So we are working on creating the conditions for its development. A draft federal law has been prepared; three weeks ago, it passed the first reading in the lower house of our parliament, the State Duma.

Question: Do you plan to expand the use of such energy sources?

Dmitry Medvedev: In Russia, renewable energy is developing briskly at an industrial scale. The amount of energy generated by such units has grown by 150% over the past year. A full cooperation chain has already been created in the Russian solar power industry, from research labs and manufacturing of solar modules to the construction and operation of solar power plants. In the wind energy sector, consortia are now being created between the leading players on the Russian market and major global manufacturers, including European companies. Work is underway to develop the production of equipment and components. Such enterprises are opening in the Rostov, Nizhny Novgorod, Ulyanovsk, and Leningrad regions. We are also creating the most favourable conditions possible for investors who work in this area.

Question: In recent years, many in Russia have harshly criticised Europe and its ways, often denying that Russia is part of the European cultural and political landscape, even though Russia has been one of the main pieces of Europe's political architecture and a major cultural component for several centuries. Do you think Russia is a European country or not?

Dmitry Medvedev: Russia is a democratic country; we can have different opinions and views on Europe and its values – including criticism. But they did not emerge in the last few years, as you say. Suffice it to recall the controversy between the Slavophiles and the Westernisers in the middle of the 19th century, which involved the outstanding minds of their time.

This debate still continues in some sense. We are definitely inseparable from Europe, from the political, economic, and civilisational processes taking place on this continent. And at all times, we have never been a closed space, never closed to international contacts.

A truly united Europe is unthinkable without Russia. Many European politicians at all times were aware of this. For example Charles de Gaulle, who, as you know, first proposed the concept of Greater Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals.

Historically, Russian civilisation is an integral part of global civilisation, and Russian culture is part of European culture. At the same time, Russia is a unique country. We have always sat at the crossroads of western and eastern civilisation. This is only natural given our geographical location and huge territory, much of which is located in Asia. We have learned to understand the culture of the East, which enriched us and had a significant impact on various spheres of our life. In this sense, we have come a long and difficult way, something few European countries can boast.

And we are definitely not going to forget about it. It is not our way to set the Western and Eastern elements against each other; quite on the contrary, we see this as our advantage. Lev Gumilyov, a remarkable scholar and historian, said Russia is a unique country that harmoniously combines elements of the East and the West.

Question: But ideological confrontation has become mainstream in Russia. Such as the word “Gay-Europe” heard on political talk shows on Russian television. And the officials believe that post-Christian values hold sway in Europe which radically differ from the traditional values of Russians.

Dmitry Medvedev: There is always heated rhetoric in the media of any country. They gin up controversy to generate interest. But it would be odd to equate talk show guests and the stance of officials. In this case each word spoken on TV would lead to a dozen diplomatic notes of protest.

As for the value system, it evolves over decades, and actually centuries. And it is by no means directed from the top down or by signals in the media. Obviously, each person chooses their own path and predilections. It is unacceptable to interfere in private, intimate matters. We are definitely not going to peek in the bedroom and condemn what goes on there. However, we are not going to promote something that runs counter to the beliefs of the majority of people in Russia. In this respect, Europe’s history differs from ours. You must respect other peoples’ traditions rather than impose your own standards on other nations.

I am confident that the main things for all of us is happiness, well-being, and the safety of the people residing in our countries. Our views totally coincide on that. We have a lot in common with Europe. Our peoples have always been in close contact. To be sure, there have been wars and periods of cooling. But all the same, interaction and cultural exchanges continued. We must not forget so-called popular diplomacy, which has always been there regardless of the political situation.

Question: What do you think is the most important element in relations between Russia and Europe in the 21st century?

Dmitry Medvedev: As for our current relations with European countries, I can say with confidence that the European Union has been and remains an important trade and economic partner for us. Despite the recent difficulties and persistent attempts by the United States to hinder the development of our relations, I am confident that there are no objective obstacles to constructive cooperation between Russia and the EU. We are so closely interconnected – historically, culturally, economically, geographically – that ultimately there is only one path for us to follow, the path of cooperation

Russia-Bulgaria talks

Dmitry Medvedev held talks with Prime Minister of Bulgaria Boyko Borissov.

Dmitry Medvedev's meeting with Prime Minister of Bulgaria Boyko Borissov

Documents signed following the talks:

The signing of joint documents

– Protocol on amending the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bulgaria on Social Security of 27 February 2009
Signed for Russia by Minister of Labour and Social Protection Maxim Topilin; for Bulgaria by Minister of Labour and Social Policy Biser Petkov;

– Protocol on amending the Agreement between the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation and the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria on the application of the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bulgaria on Social Security of 27 February 2009
Signed for Russia by Minister of Labour and Social Protection Maxim Topilin; for Bulgaria by Minister of Labour and Social Policy Biser Petkov;

– Programme of collaboration in the tourism sector between the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2019–2021
Signed for Russia by Minister of Economic Development Maxim Oreshkin; for Bulgaria by Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova;

– Plan of consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria
Signed for Russia by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Grushko; for Bulgaria by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yuri Sterk.

Dmitry Medvedev's meeting with President of Bulgaria Rumen Radev

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4 March 2019 20:00 Sofia, Bulgaria



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[Dmitry Medvedev lays a wreath at the Monument to the Unknown Soldier in Sofia](#)

Laying a wreath at the Monument to the Unknown Soldier in Sofia

The Monument to the Unknown Soldier was unveiled in 1981 on the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state. It is a symbol of national gratitude to those who died for the freedom of Bulgaria over its centuries-old history. The monument is located on the historical Alexander Nevsky Square, by the southern wall of the Saint Sofia Church that gave its name to the Bulgarian capital.

The monument was designed by architect Nikola Nikolov and sculptor Lyuben Dimitrov as a sarcophagus in which holy soil from all across the country with the remains of known and unknown heroes who sacrificed their lives for Bulgaria's freedom is stored. At the foot of the sarcophagus there is an eternal flame that was delivered from the Shipka Pass.

There is also a statue of a lion (the symbol of Bulgarian statehood) near the composition. It is the only remaining part of a 1936 monument that was never finished.

[Dmitry Medvedev's interview with Bulgarian newspaper Trud](#)

The Prime Minister spoke with Trud correspondent Petyo Blyskov ahead of his visit to Bulgaria.

Dmitry Medvedev's interview with Bulgarian newspaper Trud

Petyo Blyskov: Mr Medvedev, you are going to Bulgaria on March 4, a day after our country celebrates the 141st anniversary of its liberation from the Ottoman yoke. Last year's visit by Patriarch Kirill was also timed to

coincide with this date. He pointed out “in a sharp tone” that it was Russia that liberated Bulgaria. It created an impression that Sofia had offended Moscow. Is there tension between Russia and Bulgaria regarding the interpretation of historical events?

Dmitry Medvedev: In this case there is nothing and no one to feel offended at. Whereas there are very many wonderful moments in our common history. We will always remember them.

March 3 is a remarkable date. We honour the heroes – Russian soldiers and Bulgarian volunteers – on this day. They fought together for the independence of the Bulgarian people. The memory of that victory is cherished both in Russia and in Bulgaria. We have a shared history, shared memory, and shared gratitude for the heroes of the war of liberation. Grievances or tension are simply not possible.

Petyo Blyskov: Yet discussions keep on cropping up ...

Dmitry Medvedev: And that is a good sign. It is crucial that society preserves an animated interest in the history of Bulgaria’s liberation in the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War. The views in Moscow and Sofia generally overlap.

Russia’s decisive role in establishing the sovereignty of your country is beyond question. We profoundly appreciate that Bulgaria has immortalised the memory of such Russian statesmen and commanders as Emperor Alexander II, diplomat Nikolai Ignatyev, generals Mikhail Skobelev, Iosif Gurko, Eduard Totleben, and Mikhail Dragomirov, as well as thousands of Russian soldiers and officers who gave their lives for the freedom and independence of your republic. Let me remind you of what Bulgaria’s President Rumen Radev said a year ago speaking at Shipka Pass: “The backbone of Bulgarian freedom was built from Russian and Bulgarian bones, by Russian and Bulgarian military glory.”

Petyo Blyskov: Bulgarian and Russian officials always stress the close relationship between our countries during their visits. But are we really that close? Do you think our economic relations are stagnating?

Dmitry Medvedev: We are going through a fairly complicated period in relations between Russia and the European Union of which Bulgaria is a member. The economic sanctions and political pressure on Russia exerted by the EU, instigated by the US, represent the worst possible way to deal with other nations. It has not done anyone any good.

But it is important that even under such complicated conditions Russian-Bulgarian economic ties keep progressing, albeit not at full capacity. Last year bilateral trade reached about \$3.5 billion. Which means it remained almost unchanged even though it managed to grow by 24 percent in 2017. Meanwhile, our trade with the EU as a whole has been growing at a decent pace for the second year in a row.

We need to be more active and together seek opportunities for cooperation. We are doing that. The Russian-Bulgarian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade,

Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation resumed operation last year after a three year interruption. Its objective is to integrate and expand on our capabilities in the most diverse areas.

Petyo Blyskov: Which of them do you think are the most promising?

Dmitry Medvedev: We have been cooperating in energy for almost half a century. Much depends now on such large-scale projects as the Belene nuclear power plant, and the second line of the TurkStream gas pipeline. Also, there are a number of goods that fall outside the sanctions and counter-sanctions, so nothing stands in the way of trade there. There is good potential in tourism and transport. We are ready to support cooperation among our countries' small and medium-sized businesses, as well as some regions and cities. And, of course, joint projects in education, science, culture and the arts. People always show special interest in this both in Russia and Bulgaria.

Petyo Blyskov: Could you please go into more detail on TurkStream? When will the final decision be taken on its possible extension across Bulgaria?

Dmitry Medvedev: The option of extending the second line of TurkStream to Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary is currently being worked out. We are confident that cooperation on natural gas meets the interests of our economies – not only the Russian and Bulgarian economies, but the overall European economy, too.

But the final decision does not rest with us alone. Which extension option for TurkStream is ultimately chosen will largely depend on the availability of gas transport infrastructure. That, in turn, depends on the involvement and concrete actions of the governments in the respective countries.

Petyo Blyskov: Bulgaria has expressed its interest clearly enough, right?

Dmitry Medvedev: Yes, we are already seeing progress in Bulgaria. Bulgartransgaz has recently completed the open season procedure – the collection of binding bids to reserve future gas transmission capacities. Also, Bulgartransgaz has made the final investment decision on the project to develop and expand its gas transmission system. The road to beginning construction work is all clear. However, a large and expensive project like a gas pipeline requires additional guarantees. The new line should not suffer the fate of South Stream. So the decision to extend the TurkStream pipeline across Bulgaria depends on whether Sofia can get firm guarantees that the EU will not obstruct the plans for gas supplies via the new gas pipeline.

We are confident that the construction of another gas corridor will further enhance energy security in Europe. With the current policy of liberalising the gas market, it will be possible to use the existing infrastructure more flexibly depending on obligations, market conditions, transportation costs and other market factors.

Petyo Blyskov: The Venezuelan crisis has once again highlighted the global confrontation between Russia and the United States. What interests is Moscow

protecting in Caracas?

Dmitry Medvedev: Let's first define the terms. The tension around Venezuela is not about global confrontation between Russia and the United States. And, in fact, that global confrontation is long gone, even with all the current difficulties in our relations with the United States.

These Cold War clichés are deceptive. They just divert attention from the essence of what is happening in Venezuela and, naturally, from the role being played in these events by the US and a number of countries in Europe and South America following in its wake.

The information clamor around Venezuela is intended to veil the conflict between international law and the rule of law, on the one hand, and total lawlessness, on the other. Washington's efforts have led the discussion of the socioeconomic situation, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the presidential election in Venezuela, away from constructive dialogue to a completely different place. This, unfortunately, is often followed by chaos, unrest, and the complete destruction of the economy and trade. We have already seen this more than once in other countries. Such an increase in the intensity of political passions never does any good for people.

Russia opposes any and all interference in the internal affairs of other countries. In Venezuela, we support efforts – including those by representatives of the region – to foster dialogue between the government and the opposition. We continue to do so now.

Petyo Blyskov: What is the result you are trying to achieve?

Dmitry Medvedev: The result that Russia wants to achieve is peace in Venezuela. It can be achieved only through a respectful, inclusive, intra-national dialogue. And all those who care about the peaceful future of Venezuela and South America should help to bring it about.

To our deep regret, the so-called irreconcilable part of the Venezuelan opposition continues to be subjected to powerful external influence. It is actually this influence that makes this part of the opposition irreconcilable. Statements come out of Washington about the possibility of military intervention. There are provocations on the borders.

All this is very alarming and suggests that the policy of overthrowing any undesirable governments in the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine is once again becoming a priority for the United States. We urge all our South American friends to think seriously about this regardless of what position they take on Nicolas Maduro's government today.

Petyo Blyskov: Are any changes in relations between Moscow and Kiev possible after the presidential election in Ukraine?

Dmitry Medvedev: Russia is certainly eager to improve relations with Ukraine. We are neighbours. Many Russians have relatives there, just as Ukrainians have them in Russia. We have a common history and culture. Until recently, we had mutually beneficial economic relations. But now the situation is very

difficult. To change it, we both need to move toward the middle. However, Kiev behaves in such a way that it is difficult to make any predictions.

The government in Kiev regularly levels made-up accusations at us. Provocations are staged, such as the incident in the Kerch Strait in November 2018. Russia is openly used as an issue to distract voters from the government's failures in domestic policy and the economy, from civilian casualties in Donbass, and from economic ruin.

It seems that, without Russia, President Poroshenko, who is running for a second term, would have had nothing to talk to his people about. If he cannot sustain dialogue with his people, he is unlikely to be able to negotiate with the leadership of a neighbouring state.

Petyo Blyskov: Do you have any hope of improving relations with any of the presidential candidates in Ukraine?

Dmitry Medvedev: A fierce, dirty election campaign is underway in Ukraine. Observing this, we in Russia do not yet see with whom we could talk in Ukraine. But in any case, we will respect the choice of our neighbours, the choice of Ukrainians. And we will be open to dialogue with the new leadership – if it is interested in it.

However, it matters whether the victory is fair, whether the election is legitimate and not rigged. Recent events make one suspect the worst. The presidential campaign in that country has featured flagrant violations of generally accepted democratic norms, including those guiding European countries.

First, at the very outset of the pre-election marathon, Kiev, under flimsy pretexts, closed polling stations in its diplomatic and consular offices in Russia. About 3 million Ukrainians who live and work in Russia have lost their ability to vote. This is a clear violation of their electoral rights.

Second, the procedure for observing the voting process has been violated. Russian citizens were prohibited from participating in election monitoring, even as part of OSCE monitoring missions. This is a serious violation of Ukraine's own international obligations. And it is exceedingly rare in practice. Obviously, the ruling regime has something to hide.

Petyo Blyskov: Mr Medvedev, thank you for your detailed answers. Welcome to Bulgaria.

Dmitry Medvedev: Thank you for your kind words. I wish you success in your career, and I wish Bulgaria peace, happiness and prosperity.