

Kremlin Supporters Call For Russia to Stand United Against 'National Traitors'

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The Kremlin's chief envoy in the Ural Mountains and western Siberia has called for Russians to unite against "national traitors," in a show of support for the Kremlin amid its increasingly tense standoff with the West.

In language reminiscent of the Bolshevik slogans of the early Soviet era, presidential envoy Igor Kholmanskikh to the Urals Federal District — a vast swath of land that includes the Ural Mountains and chunks of western Siberia — said that Russia is under siege by foreign foes, according to comments quoted by media reports.

"Under conditions of external pressure, our country must stand united and strong," Kholmanskikh said this weekend at a meeting of the "In Defense of the Laborer" movement, which he also heads, Kommersant reported Sunday.

"National traitors and the opposition are cheering on Western sanctions. Our movement must

give them a strong rebuff," he was quoted as saying by local Vecherniye Vedomosti news portal.

The meeting was attended by 86 delegates from around Russia, including Sevastopol — a port in the Russia-annexed peninsula of Crimea — according to figures cited by Kommersant.

The term "national traitor" has gained popularity among Kremlin supporters following its use by President Vladimir Putin in a speech last spring, employing it to denounce anyone critical of the government's policies.

Slogans calling for Russians to unite against domestic dissenters and foreign foes were popular during the reign of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin — whose popularity reached its highest recorded level in years this month, with 52 percent of Russians viewing him positively, according to a poll by independent Levada Center.

Kholmanskikh's appeal for national unity also echoed comments made by Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, who said at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Friday that the West was trying to topple Putin and claimed Russians were ready to endure substantial hardships to support their president.

"When a Russian feels any foreign pressure, he will never give up his leader," Shuvalov said. "Never."

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