

Poland Sabotages Russian Coronavirus Relief Efforts for Italy

By [Paul Antonopoulos](#)

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Russia has encountered problems in delivering humanitarian aid to Italy, with assistance struggling to be reached quickly due to the hostilities of many European Union/NATO countries towards Russia. Yesterday it was revealed that Poland did not let Russian planes pass through its airspace to arrive in Italy, the hardest hit coronavirus country in the world with over 6,200 dead and still climbing. As seen on flightradar24.com, you can follow the trajectory of aircraft that departed from Moscow to Rome. The Russian Il-76 was forced to take an alternate course south over the Black Sea and over the airspace of Turkey, Greece and Albania before finally landing in Rome. This alternate route took 3,000 kilometers while flying over Belarus, Poland, Czechia and Austria would have been 1,000 kilometers shorter.

Russian Senator Alexei Pushkov described this as “meanness,” saying on Twitter

“Poland did not miss Russian aircraft with help for Italy through its airspace. This is meanness at the level of public policy.”

The revelation of Poland’s behaviour was met with intense scrutiny on social media, some even comparing the situation to 1938 when Poland prevented the Soviet Union from helping Czechoslovakia from Nazi aggression. The meanness that Pushkov described is not because Poland acted against Russia, but rather because it completely showed no solidarity to a fellow European Union member and so-called NATO ally. Every hour Italians are dying because of the coronavirus. This means that the 1,000-kilometer extra travel distance that the Russian plane had to make because of Poland’s action meant many Italians could have died before the delayed Russian aid arrived.

On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin in a telephone conversation with the head of the Italian government Giuseppe Conte confirmed his readiness to immediately support Italy in the fight against the coronavirus. The Russian Ministry of Defense announced that it will send eight mobile teams consisting of military virologists and doctors, vehicles for disinfection and medical equipment. Russia’s support for Italy in the fight against coronavirus is an act of Russian contribution in improving the situation in the hard-hit country and creating the conditions for friendlier relations with European Union states. Poland meanwhile was not able to withhold its issues with Russia to assist a fellow European Union and NATO ally.

Rome for weeks has been calling for assistance from the European Union, who have all but done nothing to help the struggling country. As [Matteo Salvini](#), leader of an Italian nationalist League party, said: “Italy needed help and it has been given a slap in the face,” in reference to the economic policies of the European Union. Every European Union country

has been left to fend for itself and rather it has been China and Russia who have mobilized their doctors, manufacturing and medical equipment to assist Italy. It is for this reason that across Italy, people have been begun removing the European Union flag from public display and replacing them with [Russian](#) and [Chinese](#) flags. Public sentiment towards Russia and China is significantly changing in Italy despite being a European Union and NATO member, organizations that are traditionally hostile towards these two countries.

This is becoming a common theme in Europe. The European Union's Lack of coronavirus solidarity has [only pushed Serbia further towards China](#) and even silenced pro-European Union liberal Serbians. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić proclaimed that European solidarity is just a "fairy tale on paper" in the face of President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announcing in a Twitter video message that the European Union is restricting the export of medical devices and stressed that the ban on exports of these goods applies throughout the entire Union. However, Serbia is not a European Union member state, which makes Poland's actions against Russia all the more shocking as it directly affects Italy. There is also a massive difference in showing a lack of solidarity as the European Union has done with Serbia and Italy, and blatantly sabotaging relief efforts for Italy when people are dying by the hour, as Poland has done.

[In an article last week](#), I argued that the liberal globalized order, epitomized especially by the European Union, is collapsing under pressure from the coronavirus. What has emerged from this pandemic is China taking a global leadership role for the first time in its history by sending aid and doctors across Asia, Europe, Africa and even the United States. As we live in an interconnected world, this is the first time in the 21st century that the globe is facing a common issue. The United States, as the world's other superpower to China, has increased sanctions against Iran and hoarded medical supplies for its own use. China however has expanded its aid and relief efforts across the globe. Although Russia has not done this across the globe, it has certainly assisted European states, who will remember that Russia assisted them when the European Union abandoned them.

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Paul Antonopoulos is a Research Fellow at the Center for Syncretic Studies.

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