

Medvedev's New Search For Enemies

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Dmitry Medvedev with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Medvedev's recent comments about the possibility of “outside forces” plotting against Russia echo comments made years earlier by Putin.

Vladimir Filonov

President Dmitry Medvedev’s ominous comments on Tuesday in Vladikavkaz that there are outside forces plotting a revolution against Russia sound eerily like the comments made by then-President Vladimir Putin after the Beslan hostage tragedy in 2004. In a televised address to the nation, Putin said there were certain forces — clearly hinting at the United States — that wanted to emasculate Russia as a nuclear power and “seize its juiciest parts.”

Putin accused certain groups — presumably nongovernmental organizations and opposition groups — in December 2007 of “scavenging like jackals at foreign embassies.”

“They’ve learned a lot from Western specialists about provoking revolutions in neighboring republics, and now they want to create incidents here as well,” Putin told cheering youth activists at the Luzhniki stadium. “We won’t let this happen.”

Putin and Medvedev have good company. During Iran's unsuccessful Green Revolution last year, top Iranian officials blamed the United States and other Western powers for organizing and funding the protesters. Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi said the same thing after thousands of protesters took to the streets to protest his brutal 40-year tyranny this month.

Unlike Gadhafi and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Medvedev and Putin's modus operandi is to only hint at a Western plot against Russia. Perhaps we can take comfort in the fact that Putin and Medvedev are somewhat subtler in expressing their conspiracy theories. Still, there are plenty of pro-Kremlin political analysts who explain in detail what the West is really up to in the North Caucasus — supporting separatist forces both politically and financially as part of a long-term strategy to split Russia up into six parts. If the West could orchestrate the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, the argument goes, why not try it again now on Russia proper?

Unidentified subversive foreign forces have long been a favorite boogeyman for hawkish Russian officials, but what is most noteworthy about Medvedev's conspiracy comments on Tuesday is how un-Medvedev they sounded.

Perhaps the president is tired of playing the role of good cop in the tandem with Putin. Nice guys finish last, after all. In the end, there is nothing like a fresh conspiracy theory to boost a Russian leader's popularity among the masses. It always worked for Putin.

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