

Medvedev Praises 'Revolutionary' Prokhorov

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President Medvedev speaking with Prokhorov during a meeting Monday at his Gorki residence outside Moscow. **Vladimir Rodionov**

In an indication that Right Cause is emerging as a powerful political force, President Dmitry Medvedev invited the party's new billionaire leader to his Gorki residence on Monday and praised his initiatives as "quite revolutionary."

Medvedev told Mikhail Prokhorov, who was elected leader of the pro-business party on Saturday, that he backed his proposal to return direct elections for the mayors of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

"Some of your ideas are quite revolutionary," Medvedev said in comments shown by state-owned Channel One television.

Echoing statements by Prokhorov on Saturday, Medvedev said that centralization of power orchestrated by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin shouldn't "last long." Medvedev has spoken about dismantling Putin's system several times in recent months.

"During some period of time it was important to tighten the screws, to force institutes to work," Medvedev told Prokhorov. "But we can't tighten the system any further."

Medvedev's decision to meet with the leader of a party not even represented in the State Duma was a clear attempt to boost the popularity of Right Cause ahead of the Duma elections in December.

Prokhorov said Saturday that he plans to make his party the second largest after United Russia, which is led by Putin.

Medvedev is linked to no party but said in an interview last week that it was only a matter of time before he created or headed a party.

Analysts have said Right Cause stands a good chance of getting into the Duma if it wins extensive coverage on state television. Right Cause, which a poll found had a mere 1 percent support among voters before Prokhorov took charge, saw its Saturday congress featured on state television. Prokhorov was a guest on Channel One host Vladimir Pozner's show on Sunday night.

On Pozner's show, Prokhorov took questions from a studio audience and promised not to use the government "to line pockets."

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