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Medvedev Takes Page From Stalin

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Medvedev holding polar bears pictures at a United Russia meeting Friday. **Yekaterina Shtukina**

KRASNODAR — President Dmitry Medvedev dipped into Soviet leader Josef Stalin's lexicon to tell the ruling United Russia party on Saturday that it should not take success for granted in the State Duma elections in December.

Medvedev, a critic of Stalin's deadly excesses, was trying to encourage United Russia to work hard to win Duma seats amid flagging popular support from Russians tired of its entrenched position.

"It is important for a party not to feel superior," Medvedev told United Russia activists in Krasnodar. "As soon as one feels superior, you get what is classically called 'dizzy with success.'"

In an article titled "Dizzy With Success" in the Soviet Communist Party newspaper Pravda in 1930, Stalin criticized party officials for perceived errors in implementing his agricultural collectivization campaign.

Opinion polls and regional vote results suggest United Russia could have trouble maintaining

its constitutional two-thirds majority in the Duma, despite the administrative support that rivals say makes elections grossly unfair.

Medvedev is to lead the party's candidate list for the Dec. 4 vote under a plan revealed last month for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to return to the presidency in a March 2012 election and make Medvedev prime minister.

Putin and Medvedev had kept Russians guessing for years about which of them would run for president, and for many the announcement of the decision last month deepened feelings of disenfranchisement and powerlessness in a top-down system.

Medvedev has been defending the decision by saying Russians are free to vote as they wish.

The president, who is not a United Russia member and has often urged it to reform, said it must win votes through action.

"A party should only concentrate on practical things. ... We were well fed with slogans in the Soviet period," he said. "I was a member of the ... Communist Party, too, and I remember it clearly: There was no faith and quite often no results."

Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and other critics have likened United Russia to the Soviet Communist Party, which was the only legal party in the country and propagated slogans that increasingly became empty rhetoric for many citizens.

True to his new task of leading the party into the Duma vote, however, Medvedev said: "No matter who says what, United Russia is the party that allows people to improve their lives."

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