

# Putin's Aide Raises Doubts on Ruling Tandem

By [Nikolaus von Twickel](#)

January 29, 2012



Putin with war veterans in St. Petersburg on Friday, 68 years after the battle that broke the Siege of Leningrad. **Alexei Nikolsky**

Vladimir Putin's election campaign manager has cast new doubt on the continuance of the ruling tandem by suggesting that President Dmitry Medvedev should do more to support the prime minister's bid to return to the Kremlin.

"I have a feeling that he is keeping mum," Stanislav Govorukhin [told](#) Izvestia in an interview published Friday.

Noting that it was Medvedev who first recommended Putin's return to the Kremlin at a United Russia convention in September, he said it would be "more appropriate if [Medvedev] took an active part in the campaign of the man whom he himself forwarded as presidential candidate."

The comments reinforce the impression that Medvedev and Putin are no longer working as one team since announcing in September that they would swap jobs after the March 4 vote.

In a strong signal that it is he and not Medvedev who calls the shots, Putin said last week that legislation Medvedev submitted to the State Duma on returning the direct election of governors remained open to change, contradicting earlier suggestions from Kremlin officials and United Russia.

Medvedev, who on Friday attended a Security Council session and a meeting with judges, did not comment on Govorukhin's criticism. But Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov rushed to defend Medvedev by saying he has done enough for the prime minister.

Medvedev "gave him a most powerful boost when he proposed Vladimir Vladimirovich's [Putin] as the party's presidential candidate at the United Russia convention," Peskov told Interfax.

He said Putin does not expect Medvedev to do any more. "The president and the prime minister are engaged in their daily work, the results of which also support Putin's candidacy," he said.

Some politicians noted that Govorukhin could hardly expect Medvedev to campaign for Putin. "As head of state, he has no legal and no moral right to campaign for one candidate," said Vladimir Kashin, a leading functionary for the Communist Party, on Russian News Service radio.

Analysts were divided over whether Govorukhin's suggestion was a slip of the tongue or a calculated attack on Medvedev.

Tatyana Stanovaya, an analyst with the Center of Political Technologies, said Peskov's reaction points to a mistake.

"There is growing doubt in Putin's camp about the campaign's success, and this creates nervousness ... that often focuses on Medvedev, who has distanced himself from Putin," she [wrote](#) in an essay on the website.

Govorukhin seemed to offer support for this notion, saying Friday that he had voiced his personal opinion. He told Interfax that he thought the campaign would be more dynamic and enthusiastic if Medvedev took part. "But I understand that the president has limitations connected to his work," he said.

A Soviet-era film director, Govorukhin, 75, has been a State Duma deputy for United Russia since 2005 (he won a by-election). He made few political headlines until September, when he delivered a fawning eulogy to Putin at the party convention where Medvedev announced that he was stepping aside for his mentor.

Putin presented him as his campaign manager in December.

In the Izvestia interview, Govorukhin also defended Putin's decision not to take part in debates with rival candidates.

He said Putin could not be expected to face Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the flamboyant nationalist leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, on television. "Zhirinovsky can't have a civilized conversation with anyone, whether it's a woman, [Yabloko leader Grigory] Yavlinsky or the prime minister," Govorukhin said.

He also said he doesn't think that the Kremlin played a role in barring Yavlinsky from the race. The Central Elections Commission officially excluded Yabloko's candidacy Friday.

"He is a good person, charming, civilized, intelligent, but he is not scary to anyone," Govorukhin said of Yavlinsky.

He said he does not view Prokhorov as a threat in the March 4 election because he got rich in the controversial privatizations of the 1990s. "In general, I do not consider him seriously. It would be completely shameful if our people gave their votes to a person who had robbed them," he said.

Ezekiel Pfeifer contributed to this report.

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