

Putin's Big Inauguration Is Immersed in Big Lies

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The regal inauguration of President Vladimir Putin last Monday offered a creepy scene: Putin's motorcade traveled along dead-quiet, deserted streets from the White House to the Kremlin, while on nearby Moscow streets ordinary citizens were being beaten by police truncheons. The scene was distinctly Orwellian.

With their ridiculous repeated "castlings" and lame explanations to cover up what may be a conspiracy to perpetuate one man's rule, Putin and Medvedev are taking this country into George Orwell's "1984."

It is Orwellian for Putin to pledge in his inauguration address that Russia should be a democracy while heavily armed police are roughing up people for merely taking a walk with a white ribbon or drinking coffee in a cafe.

It is Orwellian to nominate as the country's next prime minister the man who has just failed

as president and rush his nomination through parliament, disregarding the due deliberation process that underpins the real separation of powers.

It is Orwellian chutzpah to send Medvedev as your stand-in to the Group of Eight summit at Camp David, saying you are too busy forming Medvedev's government.

It is Orwellian to fire off a flurry of executive orders on your first day on the job by giving your own former government the task of wishing away the nation's problems while shedding any personal political responsibility for failure.

This haste and arrogance only underscore another Orwellian feature of the emerging landscape — the lack of any transparent and competitive process for public policy development. There is just one man with a fountain pen.

This new Orwellian reality brings back the Big Lie, a return to Soviet-style manipulative slogans to cover up the rulers' desire to perpetuate their rule with phony professions of seeking the public good. This is genuine Orwellian terrain where "a lie is the truth and the truth is a lie, peace is war and war is peace."

Medvedev's farewell television interview exposed him as someone who does not really believe in what he is saying but prefers to stick to the Big Lie to guarantee himself a place in power, although not in history. He cringes at the thought of having to be insincere on camera but plows on with one implausible explanation after another.

Orwellian politics are turning Russia into an object of international ridicule. This is not how most Russians see their nation's future.

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