

Observers doubt Russian elections fair

by UPI

MOSCOW -- Russia's presidential elections may have reflected the will of the voters but European observers said they questioned its fairness. Dmitry Medvedev, backed by outgoing Russian President Vladimir Putin, overwhelmed the other candidates in Sunday's election, the Russian information agency Novosti reported Monday. With 99 percent of precincts counted, the Central Election Commission reported Medvedev received 70 percent of the vote in which 69 percent of the country's 109 million eligible voters went to the polls. Andreas Gross, who led the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe team observing the elections, said the vote was a "reflection of the will of the electorate whose democratic potential unfortunately has not been tapped." The election "repeats most of the flaws seen in the parliamentary elections last December," Gross said. He noted "insurmountable" difficulties one candidate faced when registering to run as well as unfair access to the media. As results came in, Gennady Zyuganov and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy hinted they would contest the results in courts. Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, received nearly 18 percent of the vote, while Zhirinovskiy, head of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, garnered about 9 percent, ITAR-TASS reported.

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