

Gorbachev calls for swing to democracy

by UPI

MOSCOW -- Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader who presided over the end of the Soviet Union, said Tuesday that Russia needs a more democratic electoral system. In an article in Rossiiskaya Gazeta, Gorbachev urged the return of direct elections for governors, which President Vladimir Putin abolished in 2005. He said that Putin's efforts to consolidate power in the Kremlin could slow Russian efforts to grow and modernize. Gorbachev's comments came in the wake of Sunday's presidential election, won in a landslide by Dmitry Medvedev, handpicked by Putin. While several candidates were on the ballot, no serious opponents were allowed to run. "Strong power alone is ineffective, as popular support is also important," Gorbachev said. "Putin had sensed what the people wanted -- revival, stability and statehood -- and gave these things to them. Now more complex problems are in the offing, and a different level of feedback between state and society is needed."

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