

SMART RUSSIA

*Medvedev's vision of Russia's future
is about brains, not the power of oil, bombs,
or the Kremlin.*

BY OWEN MATTHEWS AND ANNA NEMTSOVA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVIDE MONTELEONE

WHEN VLADIMIR PUTIN TALKED ABOUT restoring Russia's greatness, he evoked a deeply 20th-century vision of using state muscle, military might, and oil wealth to command respect. When his president, Dmitry Medvedev, speaks to the same point, he talks about building an "innovation city" in the Moscow suburb of Skolkovo, where the state will leave the nation's best minds free to pursue the scientific and technological breakthroughs that are the bedrock of a 21st-century "knowledge economy." Medvedev's vision is designed to liberate Russia from what he calls a "humiliating" reliance on oil and gas exports, and to revive the greatness of a nation once known for scientific and technological achievement. "The success of the 'Smart Russia' movement is a question of life and death for Russia," says Zhores Alferov, the only Nobel Prize winner still living in Russia, who

was chosen by Medvedev last month as overall head of the Skolkovo project. "The idea of Skolkovo is like Noah's ark—all our ideas of hope and survival are pinned on it."

Whether Russia reemerges as a great power may well be determined by Medvedev's campaign to revive its smart side. For all its inefficiencies, the Soviet state was a generous supporter of science and technology, building the world's first artificial satellite and the capsule that put the first man in space. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, state support for the sciences collapsed, scientists fled for posts overseas, and the state itself evolved into a predator—committed in theory to the free market, but too often in practice to plundering private enterprise for profit. In the generation that separated Yuri Gagarin's spaceflight from Putin's election in 2000, Russia's GDP and industrial production

