

RUSSIAN ELECTION WATCH



Editor: Henry E. Hale

Associate Editor: Danielle Lussier

Vol.3, No.4, January 2004

TOP NEWS

- Putin unchallenged as presidential frontrunner
- Pro-Putin United Russia wins Duma supermajority
- Pro-Western liberal parties lose nearly all Duma seats
- Communist Duma delegation cut by more than half
- Communists allege fraud hurt liberals, not selves
- Main parties skip presidential race or run unknowns
- Communists nominate Kharitonov, not Zyuganov
- Yabloko and SPS nominate no one for president; Khakamada launches independent bid
- UR leader Gryzlov tapped as Duma speaker

SEE INSIDE

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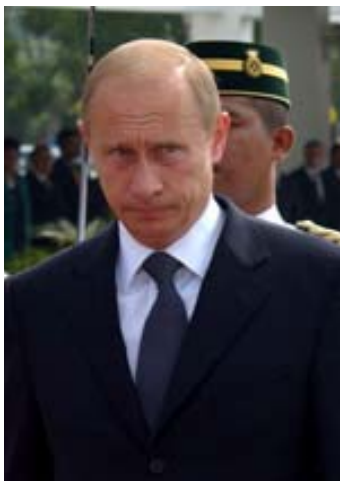
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On the Campaign Trail

RUSSIA: A ONE-MAN SHOW

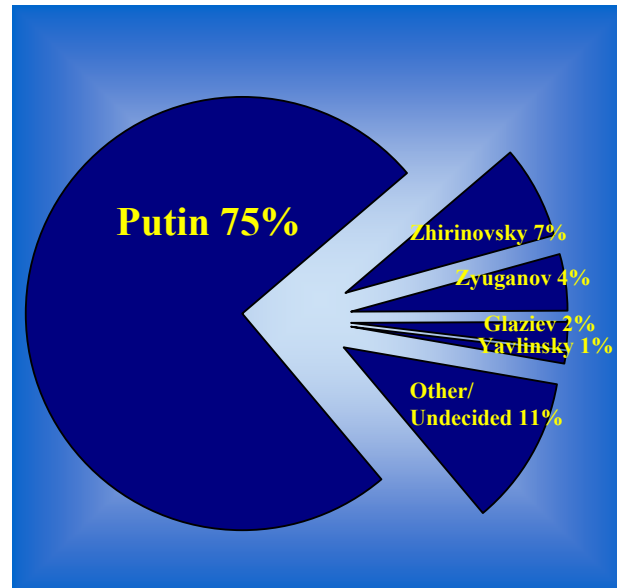
Russia's December 2003 parliamentary elections consolidated a political system more completely dominated by a single individual than any since Soviet times. This single individual, President Vladimir Putin (below), is now virtually unchallenged in the presidential race, with all major parties either declining to nominate anyone or tapping political Lilliputians for the race. The party defined by its unswerving loyalty to this single individual, United Russia, now controls over 300 seats in the Duma, more than enough to pass constitutional amendments. The most powerful regional leaders in Russia have almost all fallen into line, either joining United Russia or allying with it. The liberal opposition, Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces, have all but disappeared from the Duma. The leftist opposition, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation



(KPRF), was virtually decimated in the election, with its delegation cut by more than half. The only other political organizations with Duma representation to speak of, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and Motherland,

TRACKING THE POLLS:

How the Presidential Race Now Stands:



Figures were obtained from polling agency VTsIOM-A's survey of 3,200 adult citizens nationwide conducted between November 18 and December 23, 2003. The numbers represent the percentage who, given a list of names, say they would cast their ballot for a given candidate if the presidential election were held the following Sunday, counting only those who intend to vote.

DATES TO REMEMBER

January 28, 2004: Last day for presidential candidates to submit signatures

March 14, 2004: Presidential election

are, respectively, a nationalist and a populist cabal, generally supportive of, if not creatures of, Putin's administration. In short, what Putin says, goes.

The analogy with Soviet times is far from exact, however. For one thing, Putin's popularity is genuine, even enthusiastic. The fact that it is reinforced and cultivated by carefully controlled and biased television coverage makes it no less real. One of the most reputable independent survey agencies, VTsIOM-A, thus finds that Putin is currently polling an amazing 75% in the presidential race and that even his most promising rivals trail by nearly 60%; no wonder they pulled out of the contest in droves. Putin's endorsement of United Russia sent that party's ratings skyward during the Duma campaign. Other parties, even the liberally minded Yabloko and the hard-left Communists, foundered on the paradox that many of their own voters approved of Putin. Had Putin himself not been so appealing to the mass public, he would not have been able to dominate so completely.

PARTY-LIST RACE RESULTS (% of vote)

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| United Russia | 37.6 |
| KPRF | 12.6 |
| LDPR | 11.5 |
| Motherland | 9.0 |
| ----- | |
| Yabloko | 4.3 |
| SPS | 4.0 |
| Agrarian Party | 3.6 |
| Pensioners/Social Justice | 3.1 |
| Speakers' Bloc | 1.9 |
| People's Party | 1.2 |
| Unification | 1.1 |
| Other Parties | 3.8 |
| Against All | 4.7 |

*Bold = parties clearing 5% and thus winning official fraction in Duma.
Figures are from Russia's Central Election Commission.*

THE NEW DUMA

UNITED RUSSIA achieved a landslide victory on December 7, 2003. Whereas no party had previously garnered even a quarter of the ballots in the party-list voting since the modern Duma was founded in 1993, Putin's favorite netted 38%. Since many parties got a significant number of votes but failed to clear the critical 5% threshold (for examples, see pp.3-4), these "wasted" votes were redistributed to the parties that did reach 5%. As a result, United Russia wound up with 120 of the 225 seats that were allocated in the party-list competition. As impressive as this was, United Russia won an even more stunning victory in the districts, effectively capturing some 180 of the 225 seats available. While not all of these were UR nominees, many were members running as independents and others hitched themselves to the party's Duma delegation ("fraction") after the election. For example, pro-Kremlin **People's Party** members won over 20 seats, and most opted to join United Russia's fraction. Thus, at its first meeting in late December, the new Duma registered an impressive 300 deputies for United Russia, and party leaders claimed they were winning still more. The party easily got its leader, Boris **Gryzlov** (below), elected as Duma speaker.



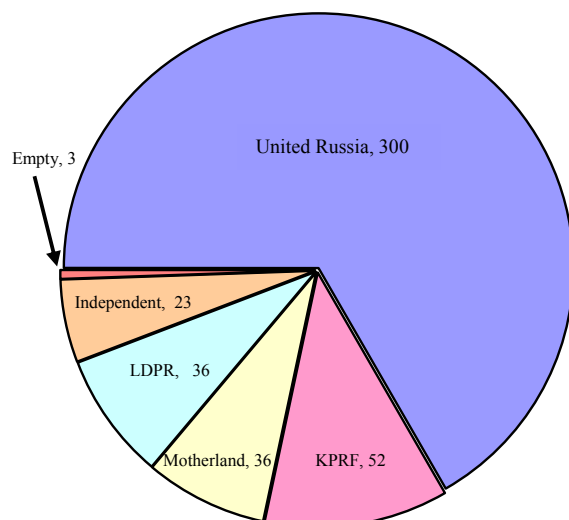
The most obvious reasons for United Russia's success were Putin's endorsement, biased state-controlled media, and the support of powerful governors. Putin generally avoided any public involvement in the Duma campaign, but when he did intervene, his words had powerful effects.

First, at the party's September 20 convention, he declared that he had voted for it in 1999 and had done the right thing. Pollsters estimated that this gave the party a 5% boost, helping put it ahead of the Communists for good. Second, in the final week of the campaign, when voters were paying the most at-

ention, he granted an interview to the three main television networks in which he waxed eloquent about his preference for the party and praised its work in the Duma. United Russia's ratings soared above 30% for the first time, paving the way to its final total of 38%. Slanted news programs, whose editorial motto could have been "all Putin, all the time," buttressed the party's position and ruled out virtually all criticism. Only in the officially allocated "debate" time did United Russia's opponents have a chance to attack it on major nationwide television. But United Russia simply skipped these debates, forcing opponents to squabble among themselves more than with Putin's favorite party. United Russia candidates in the districts had not only these advantages but, in most cases, the active backing of powerful regional political machines as well.

The United Russia deputies can be expected to back Putin in almost everything he does, but it may be a mistake to view them as a monolithic bloc that will back the President mindlessly. For one thing, since the Kremlin relied heavily on regional bosses to win the election, many of the new deputies are almost purely products of these very political machines and owe little to Putin himself. Therefore, should Putin policies infringe on the power of these machines, one can expect this "regional bloc" within United Russia to attempt to quietly alter legislation in ways that benefit them. On major issues for which the Kremlin is willing to apply intense pressure to regional leaders, however, the President is almost certain to get his way.

SEAT DISTRIBUTION IN THE NEW DUMA



THE COMMUNIST PARTY (KPRF) had not won less than 20% in any federal election since 1993, which makes its 2003 collapse to just 13% in the party-list Duma contest stunning indeed. Even more crushing was its performance in the district elections. Whereas its nominees had won 46 district seats in 1999, it netted only a dozen in 2003. Towering party figures fell in droves, even in districts long considered safely "red." Gone was Anatoly **Lukianov**, reputed mastermind of the August 1991 coup attempt and former head of the USSR's Supreme Soviet. Outside look-

ing in was Yegor **Ligachev**, the erstwhile number-two man in the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev. Defeated was the colorful “working man” Vasily **Shandybin** (below), long a favorite target of journalists’ humor. All three, along with many others, lost to United Russia challengers. Overall, the KPRF can claim only 52 of the 450 seats in the new Duma. This group is likely to oppose Putin vocally from the political left, but its numbers give it no power whatsoever to influence Duma outcomes whenever United Russia is truly united. (*Is the KPRF dead? See Nikonov on p.11.*)



The Communist defeat in part simply reaffirms the power of negative campaigning. Virtually every day, the main networks’ news programs battered the KPRF with accusations of incompetence and corruption. The most deadly attacks, broadcast day after day, pointed out that several “millionaires” or “oligarchs” had appeared on the Communists’ list of candidates and

implied that the party had betrayed its ideals and succumbed to corruption. While its ratings stayed above 20% into November, they plummeted in the last week of the campaign as voters made their final voting decisions.

While it was clearly victimized by unfair campaigning practices, the KPRF’s own strategy was also partly to blame. As one Russian political analyst put it, if the party were going to accept oligarchs’ money, it should have used it to run a well financed, energetic, and high-profile campaign, even if only at the grass-roots level. If it were not going to do the latter, it should have steered clear of putting people on its list who would obviously invite attacks. Instead, the KPRF got the worst of both worlds: it put millionaires on its party list but ran only a limp campaign. Reports from many districts testified that promising Communist candidates in historically red regions were taking their votes for granted, putting little energy into their campaigns. The central leadership also failed to take advantage of those few opportunities that were available for them to appear on nationwide television. Most surprisingly, the party declined to participate in the most visible debates of the election season, those shown every Friday during prime time on the NTV network. While such a strategy can work for a party like United Russia that is already getting massive free and positive coverage on the nightly news, the Communists just wound up yielding the floor to a rival leftist organization, Motherland, which then stole much of their thunder (see p.4).

THE “LIBERALS”, notably Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS), suffered the most bitter defeat, both failing to clear the 5% threshold necessary to win seats in the party-list contest (*Was this the result of Kremlin fraud? See Michaleva on p.9.*) The final count put Yabloko

WERE THE ELECTIONS FREE AND FAIR?

The OSCE, which deployed both long- and short-term observers throughout Russia for the Duma elections, found that they “failed to meet many OSCE and Council of Europe commitments for democratic elections” (see http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2003/12/1629_en.pdf). The main problem was found to be not in actual voting and counting procedures, where no large-scale fraud was detected, but in the way that the state created unfair campaigning conditions that favored United Russia. The two most reliable exit polls that were conducted concur. One was by the reputable Public Opinion Foundation (POF) and the other by ROMIR, working with American financier George Soros, the politically independent Moscow Times, and the firm Renaissance Capital with the express aim of detecting or preventing fraud. Both produced findings almost exactly in line with official vote counts. There was one exception, however. Both the POF and Soros polls put Yabloko between 5% and 6%, findings leading some to suggest Yabloko was essentially robbed of its Duma fraction. The Soros pollsters, however, admitted that they did not cover certain areas (such as remote rural precincts) where Yabloko and SPS get very few votes; thus they probably overestimated the liberal parties’ real votes, suggesting the official count was accurate. All of these exit polls, however, are ultimately inconclusive on whether the liberals were defrauded: the fraud is argued to be only the difference between 4 and 6% of the vote, well within both polls’ margin of error of about 3.5%. More worrying are the results of the Communist Party’s effort to collect the hand-counts of votes taken by observers at each precinct and to compare them with the official tallies. Remarkably, the KPRF admitted that its own miserable result (13%) was accurate but that the official count of its ideological opponents (Yabloko and SPS) had been artificially reduced, costing both of them their Duma fractions.

Why would the Kremlin want the liberals out of the Duma? One theory is that Putin simply did not like the liberals, but this does not explain why he would have given a tacit blessing to Yabloko on prime-time news in the final week of the campaign and why he keeps so many SPS allies in his government (such as the finance minister Aleksei Kudrin and economics minister German Gref). Another theory is that a decision to sink the liberals was made only on election night; as results were coming in, the theory goes, Kremlin analysts realized that United Russia could gain a coveted constitutional majority(300 seats) if the liberals failed to clear the 5% threshold since these liberal votes would then be redistributed to the parties that did hurdle 5%, with most going to United Russia. In the end, it is hard to know whether such calculated fraud took place, but we do know that the liberal parties performed poorly enough to make themselves vulnerable to such a strategy and that it would not have taken much (in numerical terms, at least) to sink their Duma hopes in 2003.

at 4.3% and SPS at 4.0%. In the districts, the two parties netted just four and three seats respectively. Moreover, all three elected SPS deputies (Pavel **Krashennnikov**, Aleksei **Likhachev**, and Arsen **Fadzaev**) and one of Yabloko’s (Mikhail **Yemeljanov**) promptly joined the United Russia

fraction. The three remaining Yabloko deputies (Mikhail **Zadornov**, Galina **Khovanskaia**, and Sergei **Popov**) became an extremely isolated group, joining just three or four well-known liberal allies outside of United Russia in the Duma (Vladimir **Ryzhkov**, Viktor **Pokhmelkin**, Oksana **Dmitrieva**, and perhaps Viktor **Cherepkov**). The liberals, then, are not even close to the 35 deputies required to officially register a “deputy group” in the Duma. As if to add insult to injury, almost immediately after the new Duma convened, United Russia raised this threshold to 55. United Russia has thus effectively become the most liberal fraction in Russia’s parliament.



To be sure, Putin’s Russia has made it difficult for the liberals: television dominated by Putin and United Russia, restrictive election laws stifling the campaign, a Kremlin grip on major sources of funding. But things are not so clear cut. Both SPS and Yabloko initially put their ability to work with Putin at the center of their campaigns. Both also got some positive media coverage on prime-time state-controlled television, especially SPS leader Anatoly **Chubais** in the first half of the campaign and Yabloko leader Grigory **Yavlinsky** (above) in its last week. Chubais himself, head of Russia’s partially state-owned electricity monopoly Unified Energy Systems, became a symbol of SPS’s cooperative stance on Putin when he was tapped for the number-three slot on its party list. Yavlinsky got an even more prized presidential blessing, appearing with the President on the most-watched news program just days before the vote. The core problem, then, was not that the liberals opposed Putin but that Putin’s power and popularity present them with a conundrum: to oppose the popular President completely would be to alienate many of their own voters and to risk financial and media suffocation at the hands of the Kremlin, but to show total support would lead people to wonder why they should not just go ahead and vote for United Russia.

Neither party navigated this tricky terrain well. The biggest blunder appears to have been SPS’s decision to devote a large share of its campaign to negative attacks not on United Russia but on Yabloko. Over the objections of many within SPS, the aim was essentially to weaken Yabloko so that SPS could take over the liberal wing of politics in Russia. But Yabloko was not a completely innocent victim, having made its opposition to SPS leader Chubais’ economic reforms a centerpiece of its own election effort. Both campaigns completely fell apart, however, after prosecutors dramatically arrested oil giant Yukos chief Mikhail **Khodorkovsky** (above). Since Khodorkovsky was Yabloko’s major sponsor, that party’s anti-oligarch stands were rendered vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy,



charges others were eager to make. SPS, on the other hand, had long staked its reputation on defending the privatization policies that had produced Yukos; it thus had no real choice but to oppose Putin on this issue. Thus when Chubais (left) lashed out at prosecutors, he provoked Putin’s reproach and effectively lost the favorable treatment he had been receiving from Kremlin structures, including the media. Since this Kremlin favor had



been one of the key reasons why SPS had gambled on putting the highly unpopular Chubais among its top candidates, Chubais was transformed into a major liability, drawing fire from all sides. While Chubais is a renowned debater and may well have been able to defend himself effectively, for some reason SPS rarely featured Chubais in televised debates, usually opting instead for party-list number-one Boris **Nemtsov** or party-list number-two Irina **Khakamada**. SPS thus got most of the negatives from nominating Chubais without the potential positives.

MOTHERLAND (or *Rodina*) far surpassed the 5% hurdle in what was probably the biggest surprise of this election season, netting an impressive 9% of the vote. When this combined with several district victories, the party wound up with a Duma delegation of 36 deputies. While completely marginal in the new Duma, the bloc has touched off a debate over what its success means for Russian politics. On one hand, it represents a minor influx of nationalist voices into the Duma. While Motherland’s number-two man Dmitry **Rogozin** (above, on right) has long represented a district in the parliament, other noted nationalists such as General Valentin **Varennikov** are Duma novices. On the other hand, while there was certainly a nationalist undertone to Motherland’s effort, its most prominent campaign themes stressed economic redistribution and revival, the issues most closely identified with bloc leader Sergei **Glaziev** (above, on left). In fact, its strategists saw that blatantly chauvinistic appeals would alienate voters, leading it to stress more moderate or economic themes. Strikingly, this strategy enabled it to gain large numbers of votes in major cities not usually regarded as bastions of nationalism; Motherland even came in second in Moscow.



Overall, Motherland resembled a bucket strategically placed under piñatas that might have been labeled “KPRF,” “Yabloko,” and “SPS.” When the Kremlin whacked the Communist piñata, some of its candy (notably pensioners) landed in this bucket. When liberal party leaders struck their own piñatas, Motherland also collected some of their candy, that is, voters who in 1999 had bought into SPS’s liberal nationalism or who earlier had voted for Yabloko as the closest thing to a moderate socialist alternative to the KPRF and the incumbent regime. (*Why was Motherland so effective in grabbing KPRF votes? See Peshkov on p.12.*)

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF RUSSIA (LDPR),



by winning 11% of the vote in the party-list competition, regained support that it had lost in 1999, when the party was disqualified and restored to the ballot only at the last moment. As in previous elections, however, it failed to win a single district seat. This put the party's new Duma delegation at 36 of the 450 seats. In part, the LDPR did well in the

party-list competition for many of the same reasons it cleared 10% in both 1993 and 1995: Party leader Vladimir **Zhirinovskiy's** (above) no-holds-barred campaign genius and a well-conceived electoral strategy to tap into a significant protest vote. He also enjoyed a great deal of television exposure, in part because he wasted no opportunity to appear and in part, many speculate, because despite his outrageous rhetoric his deputies almost always vote the Kremlin's way. The campaign involved one other significant strategic wrinkle in 2003. Anticipating that the Communists would attract the strongest Kremlin attacks, the LDPR aggressively courted the red electorate by stressing economic redistribution and support for the "poor" alongside its more traditional nationalistic rhetoric. Nevertheless, analysts expect the LDPR to back the Kremlin on all major issues where its votes are needed. But more than likely, United Russia's supermajority means the LDPR will simply be irrelevant.

THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE

With polls indicating that 75% of voters would choose Putin over his closest rivals, few observers expect any drama in the March 14 presidential election. Putin has declared that he will run as an independent so as to represent all the people rather than just one party. With the Kremlin's lock on mass media, regional political machines, and other means of influencing the elections, rivals understand perfectly well that they will not be allowed to run the kind of campaign that could put a dent in the Putin juggernaut.



As a result, Russia's most popular politicians have pulled the plug on their presidential ambitions for 2004. Communist leader Gennady **Zyuganov**, Yabloko chief Grigory Yavlinsky, SPS head Boris Nemtsov, and LDPR captain Vladimir Zhiri-

novskiy all declared that they would not run. While Yabloko and SPS resolved not to nominate anyone, the Communists nominated the lackluster and little-known agriculturalist Nikolai **Kharitonov** (above left) and the LDPR tapped Zhirinovskiy's chief bodyguard, Oleg **Malyshkin** (above right), best known for helping start a fistfight after a debate during the Duma campaign. One top Communist leader hinted that the rationale behind



running Kharitonov was that he could demonstratively withdraw from the race to protest its undemocratic character. Overall, only ten filed the necessary papers in time to become candidates, and this list is almost certain to shrink since they must collect two million signatures nationwide in order to get on the ballot (only Kharitonov and Malyshkin, nominated by parties with full-fledged Duma fractions, are exempt from this requirement).



Of the ten candidates, just three appear ready to run serious campaigns. Perhaps the most interesting is Motherland leader Glaziev, who is competing as an independent. Flush with his bloc's Duma success, he hopes to cement a reputation as the Left's rising star and eventually to outflank Zyuganov in the contest for Communist voters.

While many regard Glaziev as having sold out to the Kremlin, he has a strong independent streak, a great deal of ambition, and a better chance to appeal to moderate leftists than Zyuganov ever did. If the race gets interesting, it is likely to be due to Glaziev. The other candidates with serious campaigns are Irina **Khakamada** (above) and Ivan **Rybkin** (below). Khakamada was the number-two person on SPS's failed party list; after her party then declined to nominate anyone, she decided to launch a bid as an independent. Part of SPS's anti-Putin wing and the only pedigreed liberal in the race, she may have a chance to clear 10% of the vote, but few give her a chance at much



more. Rybkin has wended a bizarre path in life: once leader of the Communists in Russia's 1990-93 parliament, he was elected to the Duma in 1993 as an Agrarian, became Duma speaker, then joined the anticommunist Yeltsin Administration as Security Council chief, and, finally, became the most prominent political tool of self-exiled "oligarch" Boris **Berezovsky**, with whom he once worked on the Security Council. While few give Rybkin any chance to win more than a percentage point or two, he is likely to be well financed by Berezovsky's millions and could become the main source of anti-Putin campaigning come March if he makes it on the ballot.

The remaining candidates are a motley crew. Federation Council Speaker Sergei **Mironov** (right) effectively campaigns for Putin at the same time that he is throwing his own hat into the ring. In approving his candidacy, the Kremlin ensures that at least one "alternative"



to Putin is on paper (as required by Russian law) and that there is a "backup" in the race should something unfortunate happen to the President prior to voting day. Putin has another backup in Vladimir **Bryntsalov**, a pharmaceutical magnate-cum-Duma deputy who is in United Russia's parliamentary delegation. Viktor **Gerashchenko**, a Motherland leader and Russia's former Central Bank chairman, is running as a backup for Glaziev. Last, but not least, Anzori **Aksentev-Kikalishvili**, a businessman who has been linked

by some to organized crime and is barred from entry into the United States, has declared his candidacy.

REGIONAL ELECTIONS

Eleven regions held elections for their chief executives (usually called “governors”) on the same day as the Duma balloting, December 7. The Kremlin generally came out well here too. In Tver, the Putin Administration effectively installed its own man, defeating an incumbent governor whom it considered weak. In Kirov and Sakhalin, where the incumbents were not running, the presidentially sanctioned candidates also won. In most cases, such as Moscow and Bashkortostan, the Administration chose to co-opt rather than oppose powerful incumbents. Co-optation, however, is very risky since it



leaves powerful regional political machines in place that could one day turn against the Kremlin. Moscow sought to deal with this risk in part by making an example of one of the most powerful machine politicians of all, the “president” of Bashkortostan, Murtaza **Rakhimov** (left). Putin’s men thus publicly backed Rakhimov but also provided crucial support to a major challenger, banker Sergei **Veremeenko**. Along with a third major candidate, oil millionaire Ralif **Safin**, the two scraped together enough votes to keep Rakhimov from getting the 50% he needed to win in the first round. He then found himself in a humiliating runoff with Veremeenko. With Rakhimov now weakened, the Kremlin called off the proverbial dogs and Veremeenko actually shut down his campaign headquarters for the final week of the runoff campaign. Rakhimov won in the end, but his machine had been tamed. (*On how this was done in Bashkortostan, see Galliamov and Gabdratifov, p.7.*)

— Henry Hale, *Indiana University*

Russian Election Watch can be found online at <http://daviscenter.fas.harvard.edu/publications/rew.html>

Russian Election Watch is produced with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and is a joint publication of

The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University
Graham T. Allison, Director
The Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University
Timothy J. Colton, Director and Lisbeth Tarlow, Associate Director
Indiana University - Bloomington

The views expressed in *Russian Election Watch* are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of any sponsoring organization. The editors welcome feedback of all kinds. Please direct comments to

Henry E. Hale (Editor)
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
and Russian & East European Institute
Indiana University
hhale@indiana.edu

Danielle Lussier (Associate Editor)
Research Associate
Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
danielle_lussier@harvard.edu

Special thanks to Isabelle Kaplan for translation, layout, and editing and to Mara Zepeda for logistical support. The editor is also grateful to the Carnegie Moscow Center for Visiting Scholar status during the Duma campaign season.

SOURCES FOR IMAGES USED IN RUSSIAN ELECTION WATCH, Vol.3, No.4:

All accessed January 14, 2003: president.kremlin.ru (Putin); edinros.ru (Gryzlov); aif.ru (Shandybin); yabloko.ru (Yavlinsky); lenta.ru/russia-2003 (Khodorkovsky); chubais.ru (Chubais); gazeta.ru/elections2003 (Glaziev and Rogozin); ldpr.ru (Zhirinovskiy, Malyshkin); kprf.ru (Kharitonov); khakamada.ru (Khakamada); grani.ru (Rybkin); mironov.ru (Mironov); vbogomolov.ru (Rakhimov)

INSIDER INFORMATION: CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS BY LEADING RUSSIAN PRACTITIONERS

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN BASHKORTOSTAN:

A Regional Example of Managed Democracy in Russia

Rushan Galliamov, Chair, Philosophy and Sociology Department, Bashkir State Agrarian University

Ildar Gabdrafikov, Senior Researcher, Center for Ethnology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Ufa

SOME KEY POINTS:

- *Putin reforms create basis for political competition in one of Russia's most autocratic regions*
- *For first time in a decade, incumbent faces real challenge*
- *Kremlin candidate gets incumbent on the ropes, then quits just days before the vote*
- *What was the price that let the incumbent survive? Sell assets to major Moscow companies*

December 2003 saw elections for president of Bashkortostan, one of Russia's most economically powerful and politically influential ethnic regions (or republics). This event has the greatest significance not only on the regional level but also for the political process in the Russian Federation as a whole for at least three reasons.

First, throughout the 1990s, Bashkortostan's political elite, together with counterparts in Tatarstan and Sakha-Yakutia, helped lead a process of "sovereignization" that gained them a great deal of independence. Second, by the end of the decade, Bashkortostan's ruling political circle, headed by the republic's president, Murtaza Rakhimov, had created its own form of government, replete with the hallmarks of strict authoritarianism. Third, the 2003 presidential elections in Bashkortostan were the first to be held since wide-ranging reforms of the federal system began in 2000 and since Russian president Vladimir Putin rose to power.

Thus, elections for president of the republic, an office that gives its holder absolute control over the political process in Bashkortostan, have become a *sui generis* "regional component" of a completely new political

strategy developed and implemented by Putin's circle, a strategy that the Russian president himself very eloquently and volubly called "managed democracy." Putin brilliantly orchestrated the parliamentary version of this strategy during the campaign for Duma elections at the end of 2003.

However, if the campaign strategies of the Duma election were rather transparent and their results easily predictable (for example, the elimination of financial support for opposition candidates through the "battle with the oligarchs", the unprecedented mobilization of administrative resources, total and unconditional control over any and all electronic mass media, etc.), in Bashkortostan the regional version of "managed democracy" took a more intricate and, in the early stages, latent form.

At the start, when a special decision by Bashkortostan's legislature delayed the presidential election from July to December, the ruling political elite felt assured of victory. It did not bother to develop any effective campaign strategies, counting only on stepping up administrative methods and electoral fraud, which had served them so well in the past (stuffing ballot boxes, falsifying vote counts, etc.).

But Rakhimov's political advisers made a tactical and strategic mistake, stubbornly refusing to see that by the end of 2000 there were signs of "fatigue" with the authoritarian regime and a potential for pluralism in Bashkortostan for at least three reasons.

First, Putin's federal reforms spawned independent elements in the judiciary and in the legal system as a whole (including the power agencies).

Second, the market economy, "curbed" by local authorities but developing inevitably, allowed new financial-industrial groups that were independent of the government to infiltrate the republic. These included Gazprom, Mezhprombank, Alfa-group, Lukoil, and Wimm-Bill-Dann, among others.

Third, many years of authoritarianism spawned a number of negative social and administrative developments, including an exclusive administrative-economic elite, the absence of real freedom of expression with incessant praise for the government's accomplishments in its place, and the ethnocratization of the ruling elite and extremes in ethnic policy (including treatment of the Tatar ethnic group).

Rakhimov and his group also underestimated the emergence of two entirely new actors with significant financial and administrative resources on the republic's political stage: Sergei Veremeenko, a successful manager and co-owner of one of Russia's largest banks (Mezhprombank), and oil magnate Ralif Safin, one of the founders and a former first vice-president of Lukoil. Both these politicians were born, grew up, and began their rapidly rising careers in Bashkortostan and therefore had legal and moral legitimacy in the eyes of the republic's population to run in the elections.

Thus, unlike the largely fake rivalries in the 1993 and 1998 presidential elections, there was an atmosphere of real competition even before the official announcement of the 2003 presidential race.

At first, 20 challengers announced plans to run for president of the republic.

lic, but only eight emerged from the grueling registration process with official candidacies. The final candidate, Veremeenko, received validation only on November 26 — after two denials by Bashkortostan’s election commission, a ruling against him by the republic’s Supreme Court, and finally a favorable verdict by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

Right up to the end of the first round of elections on December 7, the three main candidates — Rakhimov, Veremeenko, and Safin — waged a literal “propaganda war” of the bitterest kind. Another three candidates (Communist Rasul Shugurov, well-known opposition figure Aleksandr Arinin, and Khasan Idiatullin, a farmer running as an independent) were practically invisible, while two more withdrew from the race two days before the vote.

Rakhimov’s campaign strategy amounted to, first, utter propaganda in the republic’s mass media; second, an unprecedented smear campaign against his main opponents (“evil is descending upon the republic” is one of Rakhimov’s traditional clichés); third, the strongest administrative (even physical) pressure applied to voters at all levels; fourth, a variety of ways to falsify election results. The height of the fraud was an event unprecedented in post-Soviet Russia: the discovery of 800,000 false election ballots in a printing house under the administration’s jurisdiction, prompting a criminal case. The ballots were reportedly printed by order of Radi Khabirov, the head of Rakhimov’s government.

This time, however, the famous republican maxim that “it is not important how they voted but how they counted” did not apply because election observers representing the other candidates showed up at nearly all of Bashkortostan’s 3,449 polling stations with sophisticated means of monitoring. The fact that the office of the republic’s general prosecutor came out on the side of the law played a key role in curtailing fraud. But even under these circumstances, Rakhimov’s strategists managed to pad the percentage of “their supporters” a bit, although they didn’t make the 50% plus one vote necessary to avoid a runoff. In the first round, Rakhimov got 42.8% of the vote, Veremeenko received 25.3%, Safin 23.3%, Arinin

2.98%, Shugurov 1.3%, and Idiatullin 0.54%. The top two — Rakhimov and Veremeenko — advanced to the second round.

Local voting patterns make clear the importance of two basic factors in the anti-Rakhimov vote. First, the youth and well-run campaigns of the alternative candidates attracted the support of many voters. The propaganda of other candidates (especially Veremeenko) was effective in exposing the misuse and corruption of power. At the same time, a significant portion of the population voted in “protest” — not *for* anyone but *against* Rakhimov.

Second, never before in Bashkortostan’s history has the ethnicity factor, which Veremeenko exploited very effectively through criticism of “Bashkir ethnocracy” and by resurrecting the so-called “Tatar question”, played such a large role. Comparison of voters’ choices in areas and cities populated predominantly by one or another ethnic group shows that, with a few nuances, Tatars and Tatar-speaking Bashkirs in agricultural areas voted for Safin, Russians and some urban Tatars for Veremeenko, and Bashkirs along with “loyal” Tatars and Russians for Rakhimov.

The first-round results literally stunned Rakhimov’s team. Immediately after the first round, his entire campaign staff was assembled, and the rank-and-file workers were told that without Moscow’s intervention, the probability of a Rakhimov victory in the second round was very low.

But here Moscow, in the form of Putin himself, actively joined the game. On December 11, while on campaign leave, Rakhimov urgently flew to Moscow, where he had a five-hour meeting with the Russian president. Putin’s spokespeople said practically nothing about the meeting, which has become the most mysterious development of the entire election campaign.

Right after Rakhimov’s return from Moscow, news emerged that management of two of Europe’s largest oil companies, which are headquartered in Ufa, would be transferred to Gazprom (a few months before the election, four of the republic’s largest oil-chemical and gas companies had been similarly transferred to Gazprom management “with a subsequent transfer into property”).

At almost the same time, the deputy head of the President’s administration, Vladislav Surkov, and the presidential envoy to the Volga region, Sergei Kirienko, arrived in Ufa, trumpeting “Bashkortostan’s distinguished accomplishments in social and economic development” under Rakhimov’s leadership. The federal mass media rushed to begin an intensive propaganda campaign about the successes of Bashkortostan’s current regime.

Amid all this, Veremeenko, Rakhimov’s fundamental and only legal competitor in the second round, entirely reversed all his campaign efforts, stopping his negative campaigning and publicly announcing his decision to halt his electoral campaign, although he did not officially withdraw his candidacy. The vain attempts of third-place candidate Safin to get Veremeenko to join forces with him in disputing the results of the first round of voting in the Supreme Court of Bashkortostan were unsuccessful (according to a vote count by his own team, Safin actually came in second with around 28%).

The runoff proceeded in complete accordance with the electoral traditions that have developed in Bashkortostan in recent years: 78% voted for Rakhimov, 14.8% for Veremeenko. So, oddly enough, in the second round the republic’s voters turned out in droves — more than 70% of eligible voters came to the polls. Naturally, this time around there was no talk of observers from the Veremeenko campaign, not one complaint or report of violation of the law was registered, while in the first round more than two hundred complaints were registered and around 700 violations recorded.

In this way, the regional practice of the political doctrine of “managed democracy” developed by Vladimir Putin was successfully proven in the Republic of Bashkortostan. Incumbent President Rakhimov couldn’t help but win. ■

ELECTION RESULTS 2003: Another Step Towards Autocracy

Galina Michaleva

Head of the Yabloko Party's Analytical Center



SOME KEY POINTS:

**Clear fraud in elections, but Kremlin did not mean for it to hurt the liberals*

**Lack of checks and balances worrisome for future of democracy in Russia*

**Kremlin set tone of campaign, including envy and xenophobia*

**Election determined by access to administrative resources*

**Winner of presidential race not in doubt but impact is*

The Bottom Line

The 2003 Duma elections yielded a parliament entirely under Kremlin control. This is the primary outcome of the election and brings into focus the essence of the current political regime as a corrupt police state in which democratic institutions and processes have been replaced by pale imitations. Because the winning parties are not institutions that foster cooperation between society and organs of power, they therefore cannot fulfill the basic functions of parties — to represent the interests of different social groups and formulate political alternatives.

United Russia is a bureaucratic organization, representing a self-proclaimed “executive vertical” solely for campaign purposes. Motherland — a Kremlin PR-project — successfully mobilized nationalistic sentiments. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) is a puppet organization that since 1991 has succeeded in tapping the radical nationalist and protest vote, impersonating a genuine opposition party. The Communist Party (KPRF) is the only exception, but its 12.65% of the vote — 52 parliamentary seats — is not enough to influence voting or to change the political picture.

With a constitutional majority, this parliament will not only permit the automatic passage of all legislation proposed by the President and his administration, but also — and more worryingly — allow changes to basic constitutional norms such as lengthening the presidential term or removing

the two-term limit on that office and curtailing federalism, local self-government, or even the rights and freedoms of citizens. The utter lack of a division of power through a system of checks and balances, the want of mechanisms for citizens’ control undermine the very institution of parliament.

Along with the absence of an independent judiciary and mass media, the absence of publicly discussed alternatives to the political course plotted by the power elite signifies one more step in the consolidation of authoritarianism. Political decision making has moved out of popular reach, and the opportunities for tyranny are widening.

The groups who strengthened their positions in the elections can now accomplish their main goals — the redistribution of property for their own benefit, the consolidation of power — at less expense and to greater effect.

The Specifics of the 2003 Campaign

The 2003 campaign bore little resemblance to a democratic or even semi-democratic election, a game whose unknown outcome is determined by voters in the course of the private, free, and honest expression of public will known as voting.

In comparison with previous elections, this one was distinguished by unprecedented use of administrative resources, a lack of free access to the mass media, and a large number of “PR projects” (Kremlin-created pseudo-parties). For the first time since the semi-democratic elections in 1989, the ruling elite has shied away from using democratic rhetoric in favor of leveling statist and nationalist slogans. LDPR leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy focused on Russia’s need for authoritarianism and the rejection of the idea of federalism (in other words, rejection of the fundamental constitutional principles of the Russian state) as the main themes of his party’s campaign.

Appeals by Motherland leaders Sergei Glaziev and Dmitry Rogozin were

perceived by the public as a call to take property from the rich and divide it, and their nationalistic sentiment differed from Zhirinovskiy’s open nationalism only in degree.

All remaining issues went unheard by the population. The underlying thematic orientation of this campaign was set not by its participants but by the Kremlin. The reprisals against Yukos and the arrest of Khodorkovskiy allowed the Kremlin to exploit the envy and xenophobia that have always existed in the mass consciousness but were never realized to the degree they were in this campaign. The president himself unleashed these sentiments.

For the first time, the party of power minced no words in plainly telling the candidates and the public that the rules apply to everyone except United Russia. The top names on the party’s list made no bones about the fact that most of them had no plans to actually serve in the Duma. United Russia’s refusal to participate in televised debates with other parties showed not just that the party of power had nothing to say but that it didn’t even consider it necessary to talk to citizens and engage in substantive discussion of the issues with other participants in the political process.

Zhirinovskiy used a strategy of open provocation and blatant violation of the law, offending his opponents and starting fights on live television or scattering ruble bills from train windows during trips.

The “innovations” — the Kremlin pseudo-parties — were not intended for meaningful conversation with voters.

A theatrical performance, a circus, a set of entertaining acts, aimed at confusing the voter while distracting him with increasingly primitive ploys — this was the atmosphere consistently and deliberately created by political strategists with the help of the media during these elections. All the media outlets played a role in this, but the two state channels contributed with particular success.

The two ways to get on nationwide TV, administrative resources and money, were used simultaneously. Thus, with the exception of Kremlin-backed parties, even unofficial payments by candidates did not guarantee coverage if they were not approved by the Putin Administration. The other branches of the media, including regional newspapers, used the elections as a chance to make money. Starting as far back as the summer, newspapers didn't carry a single story that was not paid for in advance.

These elections saw the proliferation of another media strategy known as "blocks" – the payment of large sums of money by a party so as to be spared negative coverage. However, even after paying a large sum, any "block" could still be removed. The blackmail of parties with threats of compromise from newspapers, television, and radio stations was indeed a widespread practice.

At the same time, United Russia appeared daily on all sorts of shows, including entertainment programming.

Such a formula for work by the mass media stimulated the widespread propagation of dirty strategies – a rotation of the same articles with material compromising parties and leaders appearing simultaneously in a large number of regions. These strategies were used most actively against Yabloko, the KPRF, and the Union of Right Forces (SPS). The rare references to the KPRF on nationwide stations were almost exclusively negative. In addition, Yabloko was the target of "special projects" such as specially created movements (Yabloko without Yavlinsky) and even parties (SLON – the Union of People for Science and Education), the sole aim of which was to discredit Yabloko.

The administrative vertical was significantly more active this time around than in previous elections in that now leaders were required not only to deliver the vote for United Russia but to deliver voter turnout itself. For example, during Soviet-style agitprop door-to-door campaigning in Chuvashia, there were threats of sanctions if people did not come out to vote and vote in the proper way. The detainment of Yabloko and KPRF campaigners and signature collectors by police was widely practiced.

The formal increase in the power of the Central Election Commission (CEC) had a result that is characteristic of the current political system: a false image of strength by ensuring fair elections. In a CEC initiative, this summer all the electoral participants, including both professional journalists' unions and well-known political consulting firms as well as the main television networks, signed an agreement obligating themselves to "play fair" and not use dirty campaign tactics. Yabloko refused to sign the agreement, while the KPRF signed only after stipulating certain conditions. During the campaign, after numerous complaints by the Communists about violation of the principle of equal access to the mass media with no reaction from either the journalistic community or the CEC to these obvious violations, the Communists withdrew from the agreement.

How the Votes Were Counted

The widespread notion that the election results do not entirely coincide with the actual voting is now corroborated by a parallel vote count conducted by the losing parties (Yabloko, SPS, KPRF) on the basis of the records of election observers. This coordination of efforts in concert with social organizations involved in election oversight to bring the dispute to the Supreme Court can set an important precedent. The parties have already taken the first steps towards collaboration.

In any event, vote counts by SPS and Yabloko (each party has already reviewed about 10,000 vote tallies from local election commissions) indicate that in approximately 20% of the cases the data from these tallies do not agree with the official data from the CEC. Among these, the most common discrepancy is the number of those participating in the voting. In other words, voter turnout was inflated (overstated), and because of this Yabloko's and SPS's results were lowered to under 5%. The data from the Communists (who reviewed over 94,000 local vote counts) also show that Yabloko should have received 5.09% and SPS 4.52% of the vote.

It is doubtful that the Kremlin had the particular goal of excluding Yabloko from the list of parties qualifying for the Duma, since the presence

of a liberal party in numbers too small to have any influence would be more useful than harmful to the Administration. However, from a technical point of view, a redistribution of votes to reflect the actual proportion is a technically unrealistic task in the short-term, especially considering the skill levels of the officials in local election commissions who actually "increased voter turnout."

The Start of the Presidential Campaign

The outcome of the parliamentary election has put Putin in a difficult position. By law, parties not represented in parliament must collect two million signatures by January 28. With the Russian Christmas and New Year's holiday season stretching to mid-January and with the cost of collecting so many signatures reaching \$1.5 million at minimum, a candidate without access to administrative resources has little chance of assembling the necessary support in time.

Moreover, given the current political alignment, these elections are turning into a referendum on confidence in Putin. The other candidates are playing the role of extras on the set. Not even "second string" politicians considered it necessary to run. The most honest move was that of Zhirinovskiy, who nominated his bodyguard Oleg Malyshkin, made famous by his fist fights during Duma campaign debates, to represent the LDPR.

The main mystery in the presidential elections will be voter turnout, although the experience of the Duma elections has taught us that it is not too hard to "add" 5-6% to this number.

No one has any doubts that Putin will emerge the absolute victor in one round, but an election with such challengers will hardly augment his legitimacy and popularity. ■

WITHOUT COMMUNISTS AND LIBERALS

Vyacheslav Nikonov

President, *POLITY Foundation*



SOME KEY POINTS:

**UR's variety will create some checks on its parliamentary power, but party is here to stay*

**KPRF defeat points to leadership problem*

**Motherland faces rocky future*

**Low turnout hurt liberals*

**Putin, West also to blame*

**Putin espoused liberal agenda, making liberal parties redundant*

There has been much commentary about how the Russian people would wake up in a different country after December 7th. I checked for myself by looking out the window, but found the same country. However, the political landscape has entered a new era.

Since the end of the 1980s, the main content of Russian politics was the confrontation between liberalism and Communism. The Duma elections delivered a triumphant victory to Putin, relative success to the nationalists from the LDPR and Motherland parties, and dramatic failure to the Communists and liberals from Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS). The liberals have virtually lost all parliamentary representation, while the Communists have only half of the votes they secured in 1999.

How can we explain the successes and failures of the different parties; furthermore, what are their long- and short-term prospects for success?

United Russia's victory can be explained by factors that have already been mentioned over the course of the past few months: the merger between the Fatherland-All-Russia party and United Russia's electorates from 1999; the tremendous support of Putin, who remains very popular; the refusal to have debates with weaker opponents; and finally, its mass media capabilities.

In a short-term perspective the Duma will be totally controlled by United Russia. This arrangement is positive for Putin's reform agenda. However, laws are not going to be passed automatically, since a considerable portion of United Russia mem-

bers are lobbyists for regional interests or financial and industrial groups. These interests have never passed a law without some changes.

As to the long-term situation, there is only one question: Will United Russia actually become the party of power and will it remain so after Putin's term is over after 2008? At this point, my answer to this question is positive. None of the previous so-called presidential parties have survived two election cycles. Now United Russia has survived through two elections while having greatly increased its electorate. Its great worth during the next election will derive from its being institutionalized as one of the influential forces in Russian politics. It is very likely that United Russia is here to stay.

A few months ago many political analysts believed that aggressive actions against the KPRF were not desirable because it would motivate the Communist electorate to become more active. In fact, nothing of the sort transpired. All the Kremlin-produced hybrids that worked against the Fatherland-All-Russia party in 1999 have also worked very well against the Communists – and with much less effort. The Communist Party simply fell apart; it turned out to be an easy target.

The defeat of the Communists is also a manifestation of a deep crisis in its leadership. The only hope lies in the younger activists within the party. Yes, they will likely fail in the presidential race, but at least they will create the impression that the party still has a future. However, the governing body of the KPRF is not ready for such drastic decisions. With Nikolai Kharitonov as its presidential candidate, the KPRF is doomed.

In the long run, the chase for the Communist electorate will be taken by the Motherland faction, led by Sergei Glaziev. Observers noticed that during and after this election Glaziev did not utter a single negative word about the Communist party, but he did criticize Zyuganov. I anticipate that the Kremlin will assist Glaziev in his efforts to

strengthen his control over the Communists. As to Communist "fundamentalists" and their electorate, they will turn into a very marginal political movement.

The success of the LDPR is a phenomenon of Zhirinovskiy's personality as well as yet another outstanding campaign. He was the only politician who actually carried out an election campaign, while all of the others participated in some sort of a talk-show. On the one hand, his speeches resonated with the emotions of disappointed, apathetic citizens and, on the other, with those who were anticipating some kind of entertainment from the debates. The LDPR has a future as long as Zhirinovskiy remains in top form and has access to the mass media sources; there are plenty of apathetic individuals in Russia, as well as those for whom politics is simply another form of amusement.

The Motherland party is a very successful PR bubble. This project of the Family, purporting to break up the KPRF electorate, was executed very well. But at one point another resource was also connected to this project – the security agencies. Because all of their initial projects, such as the Party of Life and the People's Party, were not successful, they opted for a transition into the much more promising Motherland.

The prospects for the Motherland party remain very unclear – they can either become spectacular or trivial. They will not be able to influence legislation any time soon – nobody will let them. Nevertheless, they will be one of the most vivacious Duma representatives, and they will be in the spotlight. Besides Zhirinovskiy, they are the most passionate legislative officials.

However, the Motherland party also has its problems, which are connected with its birth, not to mention its birth defects. Its relationship with the Kremlin will remain very difficult. This fact will manifest itself in the upcoming presidential election, where I do not foresee any favorable options for Motherland. They cannot partici-

pate in the election due to their support for Putin. At the same time, they cannot afford not to participate in the elections since that will guarantee them a place in the shadows.

Furthermore, there are many internal problems which plague this young and quickly-built political party. The party is very diverse and consists of both right- and left-wing supporters. The unity of this party will at some point become a source of contention – there are too many people who will want to play their own political games.

Finally, there is the defeat of the Union of Right Forces and Yabloko to consider. For convenience, I will label them both as liberal parties, although in reality the liberals are SPS, while Yabloko is more of a social-democratic party.

The immediate reason for the defeat of the liberal parties was low voter participation. All forecasts were based on the assumption that electoral turnout would be 62-65%; had this range been achieved, both parties would have reached the necessary 5% of the votes. But the turnout only reached 56%. The liberal supporters, as usual, decided to spend this snowy day at their country houses, or on the sunny beaches of the Canary Islands. Unfortunately, this is a problem with the young Russian democracy. The usual electorate of the liberals is 15%, but with a low turnout, it is around 10-11%. And in addition to the SPS and

Yabloko parties on the liberal front, there were five other political parties fighting for the vote. Each one finally received a small fraction of one percent of the votes: New Course-Automotive Russia (approximately 1%), SLON, the Constitutional Democrats, the Development of Entrepreneurship Party, and the Green Party. As it turned out, there simply were not enough voters to give 5% to either Yabloko (4.3%) or SPS (4%).

The deeper reasons for the failure of the liberals to attract more of the electorate are to be found in the social structure itself. People supporting SPS (well-to-do citizens) and Yabloko (liberal intelligentsia) make up an obvious minority. There are as many successful, liberal, well-educated individuals as liberal reformers of the 1990s were able to create, and in that they can only blame themselves.

An important cause for the failure of the liberal movement lies with Putin. He carried out many economic reforms that the liberals have suggested in the past, which made their ideological base somewhat redundant. This could satisfy neither the human rights activists, who are in opposition to the President, nor the economic liberals who support Putin.

Part of the blame for the defeat of the liberals should be shouldered by the West. My research shows that the liberal, pro-Western electorate (it had reached 30% in the beginning of the

1990s) has rapidly diminished after such events as NATO expansion, the bombing of Yugoslavia, the second wave of NATO expansion, and finally, the war in Iraq.

The Kremlin is not happy with the shortfall of the liberals in the election. It was not greeted well by the market, nor did it improve Russia's image abroad. Moreover, it is undesirable from the point of view of Putin's political maneuverability – he will continue to be held responsible for everything that happens in the country to a much greater degree. A significant part of the electorate – the part that is prosperous and educated – still remains without worthy representation. This may eventually cause them to challenge the *status quo*. I do not wish to overestimate this possibility, but it is there.

As for the future of Russian liberalism, it is clearly connected with these parties being able to work together. There are too many liberal parties in comparison with the size of their electorate. If they want to be a success they should find new leadership. I am certain that they can survive only by throwing away all of the old symbols of the 1990s: Chubais, Nemtsov, Yavlinsky and others. They need new faces that are not associated with the robbery-privatization of the past decade.

The Yeltsin era of parliamentary representation is over. ■

THE COMMUNISTS IN THE 2003 DUMA ELECTIONS

Viktor Peshkov

Secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee



SOME KEY POINTS:

**The Communist campaign was slow to start, ineffective*

**KPRF lost "party vote," kept only the "Zyuganov vote"*

** Motherland took most votes from KPRF by being "more Communist than the Communists," but also won some from United Russia and Yabloko*

** There are still a lot of reds out there, the movement is not dead*

The 2003 Duma elections have in a certain way drawn the so-called "post-Soviet" era of Russian social development to a close. A measure of socio-economic stability, the unprece-

dent use of media propaganda and political-psychological strategies, the ruling authorities' exploitation of the "leader factor" in a way far more skillful than previously seen — all these endowed Russia's socio-political situation with a qualitatively new character.

Media Counter-Strategies of the 2003 Kind

The 2003 election campaign was characterized by record exploitation of the media on behalf of United Russia (UR), as well as of Motherland and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), and in equal measure

against the Communist Party (KPRF). At certain stages of the campaign, the anti-Communist aspect openly dominated. Waves of media, whipping themselves up one after another, carried in dozens more stratagems, all with the same goals – the "extinction" of the KPRF's image, which had served as a moral and political compass for tens of millions of Communist Party voters, and the exaltation of United Russia.

The indicators of "quality" — that is, the emotional tone of reports virtually throughout the campaign period about the KPRF on the one hand and United Russia and Motherland on the

other — are laid completely bare here (see Table 1 and Graph 1 on p. 14).

It is obvious that not only United Russia but also Glaziev's bloc were given a green light with solely positive and increasingly large amounts of media coverage.

The mass media did not cast any positive light whatsoever on the Communist Party. On the contrary, the KPRF's "media oxygen" was literally cut off with an iron persistence both on TV and in print, reaching negative levels that turned the KPRF's image into a completely black and hideous inkblot.

The KPRF and United Russia: Two Campaign Strategies

Over the course of the campaign struggle, which continued for virtually all of 2003, the KPRF only partially and sporadically used the conceptual and programmatic positions that define its behavior in the elections. In contrast, United Russia's campaign was characterized by strict consistency and logic.

The KPRF started its campaign late despite the fact that United Russia had invested everything in a single political-propagandistic push. Instead of beginning a real electoral fight even six months before the election (and even earlier would have been better) as the Communist Party's campaign documents recommended, real campaigning did not even begin right after the formal opening of the campaign season on November 7. As the KPRF's campaign wore on, the more ground it lost to United Russia in terms of its vitality in campaigning in the regions. Thus, by the eve of the elections (December 3-4), only 10% of voters said that the Communist Party had run the most active campaign in this sphere, while 28% put United Russia in first place and 15% put Yabloko in the lead. In the end, the KPRF's 2-3 months of campaigning fell far short of what was necessary for electoral success.¹

The Communist Party could not master the "leader game." As a result, the KPRF's main opponents — United Russia, the LDPR, and Motherland —

erland — came to monopolize the use of the "leader factor" in the campaign. Therefore, instead of combining two KPRF electorates — the Party's electorate and the Party leader's electorate — they were effectively separated: by December 7 the KPRF's election result had been reduced virtually to the personal rating of its leader, Gennady Zyuganov. In other words, the leader-oriented segment of the Communist Party's voters were the last bastion of the KPRF's electoral strength, showing the greatest stability and keeping the Party from complete electoral disaster. It is significant that a rather weighty share of voters were aware of this — 47% to 38% of respondents — who, a week after the elections, said with more or less certainty that "without the active presence of Zyuganov on television in the last week of the campaign, the KPRF would have gotten even fewer votes." However, this was not enough for success. United Russia staked everything on the authority of Vladimir Putin. And although its practical result (37.6%) was approximately equivalent to half the President's rating, this strategy completely justified itself.

Unlike the "United Russians", the Communists did not uphold the principle of party loyalty. United Russia immediately and firmly adopted a path of touting itself and only itself. The slogans of "the party of the majority of Russians" and "the party of Putin" permeated its entire campaign. Strict party discipline was the backbone of all United Russia's campaign efforts. In contrast, from 2002 until the first half of 2003, the KPRF focused its electoral efforts on Sergei Glaziev, the co-chair of another party and a man with very controversial motives behind his alliance with the KPRF and its leader. Once the danger of dwindling support became clear, it was too late for the KPRF to fix the situation.

A significant part of the Communist Party's electorate voted for Motherland with full conviction that in so doing they had fulfilled one of the main goals of the KPRF. In this way, party loyalty in the mindset of KPRF followers ended up hurting the Party itself.

Glaziev's bloc, on the contrary, acted on the principle of "being more Catholic than the Pope" — he used much of the Communist Party's main

ideological "property" to "sell" himself politically. In a certain way, Motherland was able to present itself as a greater Communist than the Communist Party. It also actively utilized the principle of party loyalty. As a result, half of Motherland's electorate was created at the expense of KPRF voters from 1999. Another quarter was made up of those who until now did not have a clear party orientation or did not vote at all. Those pulled in from the Unity electorate gave Motherland only 13% of its votes, and defectors from Yabloko account for 8% of Motherland's supporters. In other words, Motherland was quite a powerful force in the destruction of the Communist movement's socio-political base.

The Communist Party missed the "oligarch" factor on the one hand and the Russian factor on the other. Even though as far back as January 2003 the KPRF realized the danger of falling into the wave of association with the oligarchs and of staying out of the Russian problem, the Party failed to take many serious steps required to address these risks. The KPRF almost demonstratively set itself up for accusations of ties to the oligarchs. At that point, Gennady Zyuganov remained the only one in the Communist Party who was developing the Russian issue. But the Party did not stress its leader, and so the Russian theme, which he so persistently raised, did not become a Party issue. As a result, the LDPR and Motherland forces dealt the KPRF a blow from precisely this direction.

United Russia also skirted the ethnic Russian question but was able to avoid the blow of pro-oligarch accusations. All of that stayed out of the United Russia campaign — the opposition didn't even come up with any indicting arguments. One could say that United Russia's decision, which seemed dubious at first, to skip the televised debates — with the party of power's complete control over the media — effectively protected its image from challengers' attacks. Under these circumstances, the Communist Party's attempts to conduct a sporadic dialogue with United Russia from a forced distance did not have any real success.

It's true that sociological measurements taken after the elections give reason to say that the situation de-

¹ This article uses electoral poll monitoring data collected by the Center for Research Into the Political Culture of Russia from January to December 2003 on the basis of a random representative sampling of 1500 respondents in 42 regions of the Russian Federation.

scribed here is not absolutely stable. Approximately half of voters emerged from the electoral campaign with both great and small doubts about their voting choices (see Graph 2). In turn, a relaxation of the media has relieved some of the pressure negative accusations have put on the KPRF. As a result, the electoral field that is theoretically accessible to the Communist Party – that is, its core electorate plus those who, in principle, are willing to vote for the Communists – has once again grown to approximately half the population. All this, despite the fact that up to two out of every three Russians is satisfied with the outcome of the elections, leaves an opportunity for further changes in Russia’s political and electoral situation and makes

the nascent presidential campaign less doomed to unequivocal predetermination. ■

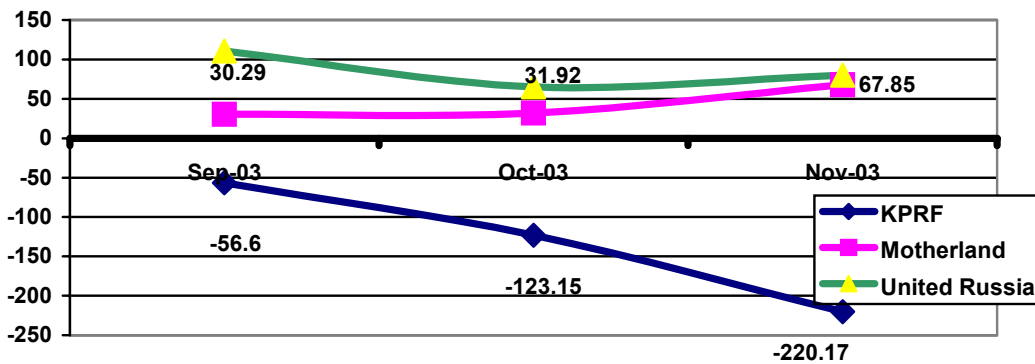
*Table 1
Positive Television Media Coverage of United Russia, KPRF, and Motherland Campaign Activities, September 1 - December 5, 2003*

| Party | Index of positive/negative TV coverage during campaign | Number of TV stories during campaign |
|---------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| KPRF | -3436.45 | 688 |
| United Russia | 2757.29 | 1039 |
| Motherland | 518.84 | 196 |

(Table prepared with the assistance of Medialogia’s analysis and monitoring of the mass media.)

Graph 1

Positive Media Coverage of United Russia, the KPRF, and Motherland Campaign Activities, September 1 - December 5, 2003



(prepared with the assistance of Medialogia’s analysis and monitoring of the mass media)

Graph 2

Are you absolutely sure that you support the party most able to improve people’s lives?

