

Russia: Stalinist and far-right candidates win with backing from Navalny

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In Sunday's elections to the Moscow City Council and the Khabarovsk regional Duma, opposition candidates from the far-right Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), and the Stalinist Communist Party of Russia (KPRF) could win a significant share of the vote. In all other elections, the ruling United Russia party could dominate. In the 16 gubernatorial elections that were held, the candidates of the ruling United Russia party won the first round.

With 41.2 percent, the overall turnout was slightly higher than in the regional elections last year, when United Russia suffered significant losses in several regions.

In Moscow, the center of the activities of the US-backed liberal opposition, 20 out of the 45 candidates recommended by opposition leader Alexei Navalny won. Among the United Russia deputies that were voted out of the city duma was the city's leader of the party. Navalny himself called the election result "fantastic".

Western media have celebrated the results in Moscow as a blow to the Kremlin and as a confirmation of Navalny's "smart vote" strategy. In line with the entire anti-Russia campaign of propaganda and misinformation, almost none of the reports in the leading Western media have explained to their readers the programs or even the names of the "opposition" parties whose victory they celebrated.

Thus, a supposed "news" article in the *New York Times* managed to report on the result of the Moscow City Council election without naming the parties associated with any of the supposedly "antigovernment candidates" that were elected. The fact that just 21.69 percent of the city's population bothered to vote—almost half the average turnout in the country—was buried in most articles, if it was

mentioned at all.

As a matter of fact, the main beneficiary of the "smart vote" call by Navalny for the elections in Moscow was the Stalinist KPRF, a party which to this day glorifies Stalin and was founded in the 1990s by functionaries from the defunct Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In his recommendations for the vote, Navalny and his team had backed 30 KPRF candidates out of a total of 45. Overall, candidates that were backed by United Russia will occupy 25 of the 45 seats; the KPRF received 14 and the Yabloko and Just Russia parties received 3 seats respectively.

In Khabarovsk, a region in Russia's Far East which is populated by roughly 1.3 million people, it was the "oppositionist" fascistic Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) which won an overwhelming majority in the Duma (regional parliament) after Navalny's team called for a vote for them. The LDPR will occupy 32 of the 36 seats of the Khabarovsk Duma; United Russia and the KPRF each won 2 seats.

Apart from demagogic social demands aimed at appealing to the widespread social anger over the restoration of capitalism, the LDPR's program focuses on the whipping up of Russian chauvinism, anti-immigrant sentiments and calls for the strengthening of the state and the army. Among its main programmatic demands are a limitation of the number of immigrants allowed to enter the country; the "defense of Christians all over the world"; the "propagation of the family cult in society" and defense of "traditional values"; "to not allow more than 10% of negative information onto the television screen", "to strengthen the army and organs of state security", and to "resurrect the grandness of Russia. To return all lost territories under the Russian flag."

The LDPR's head and long-time leader Vladimir

Zhirinovskiy is notorious for his anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant outbursts. He has called, among other things, for the “preservation of the white race” on US television in the early 1990s, and endorsed Donald Trump in 2016.

To describe either of these parties as “antigovernment” or “oppositionist” is ludicrous. Both the LDPR and the KPRF have for two decades functioned as a “loyal” opposition to the Putin regime, working to channel social discontent in a right-wing and nationalist direction, while supporting every major policy and assault by the government on the working class. Navalny’s open support for these forces and attempt to strike an alliance with them exposes his anti-democratic and right-wing political orientation, which his backers in the bourgeois media desperately try to conceal.

Most Russian commentators acknowledged that it was the “protest electorate” which could be mobilized by Navalny’s “smart vote” strategy in Moscow, following weeks of protests which were dominated by layers of the upper middle class and met with a violent crackdown by the authorities .

In a commentary on Navalny’s “smart vote” strategy, the WWSWS has explained that the pivot by Navalny toward an alliance with the Stalinist KPRF was a conscious move by sections of the oligarchy and layers of the upper middle class aimed at the establishment of an alliance of right-wing political forces directed against a coming movement by the working class.

This analysis is being confirmed by the reactions to the Moscow City Council elections. With his “smart vote” strategy, Navalny was not appealing to broader layers of the population. Rather, it was a strategy aimed at mobilizing privileged layers of the middle class, which, whatever their grievances about the foreign policy orientation of the Putin regime and the wealth distribution at the top of society, fear nothing more than a movement by the working class.

The thoroughly anti-democratic orientation of these layers was expressed in a commentary for the Russian newspaper *Gazeta.Ru* by the influential Russian political scientist Valery Solovey, who has been working as an expert for the Gorbachev Fund since 1993, a think tank for the Russian oligarchy founded by the last general secretary of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev, who paved the way for the destruction of

the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Gorbachev Fund has in the past often been the site of “consultations” and negotiations of various political forces with Gorbachev and other leading bourgeois politicians.

Solovey openly stated in reference to the low voter turnout, “Of course, people may not believe in the miraculous power of elections (and it is by no means necessary that 70 percent of the people believe in it): it is sufficient for a minority to be mobilized. And this mobilization is now happening.”

The commentary continued: “A unique situation is now emerging ... in which the parties within the system can support forces outside the system. And I can say that consultations on this level are already underway. For understandable reasons, the opposition within the system is very cowardly. But, nevertheless, the possibility of collaboration is no longer excluded.”

The Pabloites of the Russian Socialist Movement (RSM) are involved in establishing these alliances and provide them with a “left” veneer. Having fully backed Navalny’s “smart vote” strategy, the RSM celebrated the outcome of the Moscow City Council elections in a triumphalist statement as “our victory”, and called for the formation of a “general democratic and social coalition in the Moscow City Council” by all “opposition” candidates.



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