The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

2 Parties Challenge Putin's New Front

By Alexandra Odynova

June 06, 2011



Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov at a rally in 2009. According to Zyuganov, the party's new People's Militia will unite interest groups around the party ahead of the December vote. **Igor Tabakov**

The Communist and Just Russia parties are creating organizations to counter Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's All-Russia People's Front ahead of State Duma elections.

The Communist Party's People's Militia will unite interest groups around the party ahead of the December vote, party leader Gennady Zyuganov said. Putin's organization, established last month, aims to do the same for the ruling United Russia.

The People's Militia will protect "labor, peace, justice and brotherhood of all peoples in the state," Zyuganov said Saturday, according to a transcript on his party's web site. He did not elaborate on the group's leadership or tactics.

The idea for the militia was introduced by two party branches in Altai and Nizhny Novgorod, Zyuganov said. In the Altai city of Rubtsovsk, a brigade of 50 members has been established, and more brigades will follow nationwide, the party said in a separate statement.

A Just Russia followed suit Saturday, declaring plans to form A Just Russia's Union of Supporters. Senior party official Gennady Gudkov also said Friday that his old groups, the People's Front Against Corruption and unregistered Go, Russia, would oppose Putin's All-Russia People's Front, Interfax reported.

Senior United Russia official Andrei Isayev said Monday that the rush of competitors implied that "Putin is right."

"Copycat products are always worse than the originals," Isayev said in a statement published on United Russia's web site.

Meanwhile, the All-Russia People's Front made an attempt to attract more supporters Monday, calling on individual supporters to join a group previously only open to organizations.

The front will now accept everyone who "shares [its] aims and landmarks," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a statement on the government's web site.

The online application form for the group has only two fields, one for the applicant's name and the other to explain the reasons for joining. Up to 5,000 words are allowed for the latter. It is also possible to apply through United Russia offices.

The first prominent individual to join the group was world-renowned chess master Anatoly Karpov, Gazeta.ru reported Monday.

Curiously, the opposition New Times magazine published a report shortly before Peskov's announcement about how its reporter had unsuccessfully tried to join the front as an individual.

United Russia will allot up to 150 of the 600 places on its party ticket for the Duma vote to nominees from the All-Russia People's Front, Boris Gryzlov, who heads the ruling party's Duma faction, said Saturday, RIA-Novosti reported.

Peskov said Monday that more than 400 public groups and organizations have joined the front since its inception.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/06/06/2-parties-challenge-putins-new-front-a7443