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Youth Group Calls for Government Reshuffling to Regain People's Trust

By Nikolaus von Twickel

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Yabloko co-founder Grigory Yavlinsky would become foreign minister, Moscow's hawkish NATO representative Dmitry Rogozin would become defense minister, and anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny would become prosecutor general if the youth wing of the Just Russia party gets its way.

The Young Socialists of Russia on Monday published its vision of a shadow cabinet, which it dubbed a "Government of People's Trust Without Putin."

The motley 18-member list, published on the LiveJournal blog of the group's leader, Dmitry Gudkov, unites opposition figures like Vladimir Ryzhkov (justice minister) and Khimki forest activist Yevgenia Chirikova (environment minister) with senior government officials like United Russia co-founder Sergei Shoigu (designated to keep his job as emergency situations minister) and Channel One television director Konstantin Ernst (culture minister).

"It's no secret that there is little trust left in Vladimir Putin's government," the group said in an e-mailed statement, warning that without a serious reshuffle after the Dec. 4 State Duma elections, the country will "tumble to a level [of democracy] seen in African states."

Gudkov, whose father, Gennady, is a senior Just Russia deputy in the Duma and the list's designated interior minister, said he hoped to unite the country's deeply fractured opposition.

"Our task is to show that there is an alternative to the existing powers that be," he said by telephone.

But he acknowledged that most candidates had not been asked whether they wanted to participate. "What we want is to promote discussion," he said.

Gudkov also noted that the list does not contain a prime minister, but promised to reveal a name at his group's Sept. 20 convention.

Originally seen as a Kremlin-sponsored party to steal votes from the Communists, A Just Russia has seen its fortunes sag after founder Sergei Mironov was ousted from his post of Federation Council speaker earlier this year.

The list comes after billionaire Right Cause leader Mikhail Prokhorov presented his own shadow cabinet Sunday.

The Right Cause list, which is incomplete, contains some of Prokhorov's business partners like pharmacy magnate Artyom Bektemirov (health minister) and veteran television host Alexander Lyubimov (press minister), Interfax reported.

Meanwhile, Kirov Governor Nikita Belykh has confirmed that Prokhorov asked him to team up with Right Cause for the Duma election campaign. Writing in his blog Monday, Belykh said he was thinking about the offer but was not planning to join Right Cause or give up his gubernatorial post.

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