

Just Russia, Rot Front Leaders Debate

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

November 07, 2011



Police officers detaining an activist during an “Occupy Old Square” protest on Staraya Ploshchad on Monday. **Mikhail Voskresensky**

Election debates kicked off this weekend when A Just Russia leader Sergei Mironov and Rot Front head Sergei Udaltsov squared off in a heated but friendly [exchange](#) on Dozhd television.

But the event can only pay dividends to one side in the State Duma vote in December because Rot Front — though highly active in the streets — has been banned by the Justice Ministry from running.

A highlight of the debate, aired during prime time Sunday night, came when Mironov explicitly announced that he would not support Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in his bid to return to the presidency because Putin is backed by the ruling United Russia.

Mironov said before Putin announced his return in September that his party would back no United Russia candidate. But Mironov never named any names at the time and continued to profess loyalty to Putin.

He also stressed Sunday that A Just Russia would not have backed President Dmitry Medvedev if he had chosen to run for re-election.

“This is a historical moment,” Udaltsov said in response.

Udaltsov, for his part, said the Kremlin had earlier tried and failed to get him to join a legally registered party.

He said unidentified Kremlin officials contacted him and asked for “more loyalty ... and then certain perspectives would appear.” The communication ceased around 2009, after the Kremlin wrote him off as a lost cause, he said.

Udaltsov made a name for himself with relentless street campaigning against corruption. He has served more than 100 short jail terms over his activism and was detained again on Monday when he led his supporters into an unsanctioned “Occupy Old Square” rally on Moscow’s Staraya Ploshchad (“Old Square”), which houses the presidential administration office.

All seven registered parties running for the Duma will engage in televised debates starting Wednesday, when Mironov’s A Just Russia faces the Communists on Channel One. Notably, United Russia will debate the second-biggest party, the Communists, on Nov. 16 and 23.

United Russia avoided televised debates during the last Duma vote in 2007. But this year it brought out its best public speakers to face off against its rivals.

A complete schedule of debates was [published](#) by Rossiiskaya Gazeta on Oct. 31.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/11/07/just-russia-rot-front-leaders-debate-a10635>