

Surkov and Prokhorov Spin Election

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Kremlin spinmaster Vladislav Surkov has weighed in on the Duma elections in a rare interview, denying reports of widespread fraud but also proposing a new party for "angry urban communities."

Meanwhile, his on-again, off-again nemesis, tycoon and political-dabbler Mikhail Prokhorov — who was on track to create such a party until stopped by the Kremlin — predicted the collapse of the regime within five years.

The country needs a "mass liberal party" to give urban dwellers parliamentary representation, Surkov said in an interview with entertainer Sergei Minayev, which appeared on Minayev's LiveJournal [blog](#) late Monday.

Surkov also lamented the general lack of political choice, saying the "power vertical" needs to be opened up to new players in order to maintain stability in the country.

But he still praised the results of Sunday's State Duma elections and congratulated United

Russia on its victory.

United Russia has dominated the country's political scene for a decade, a feat largely credited to Surkov's spin doctoring — including longstanding charges of abusing administrative resources — enabled by the same power vertical he criticized in the interview.

The party won 49.3 percent of the vote on Sunday — enough for a simple majority, but a far cry from its 64.1 percent electoral walk away in 2007. Still, the elections were plagued by widespread allegations of fraud.

But Surkov said the violations were "not industrial-sized" and wildly exaggerated by people who were either "legal nihilists" or "illiterate."

Prokhorov cautiously welcomed the results in a [post](#) late Monday on his own LiveJournal, saying the results will force United Russia to negotiate with other parties and manage the political system better.

But he said "simple math" showed that about 60 percent of voters would not be represented in the new Duma.

"About 8 percent of protest votes went to the Communists, 7 percent to A Just Russia, and 5 percent to the three nonparliamentary parties. About 40 percent of voters simply didn't vote because they had nobody to vote for," he said.

Prokhorov also reiterated that Right Cause could have finished second if he had remained its leader. The tycoon topped the party last summer with the Kremlin's alleged blessing, but was removed in a party coup in September. At the time, the businessman blamed Surkov for orchestrating his ouster, saying the Kremlin's political mastermind was unhappy with his independent stance.

Right Cause finished in last place in Sunday's elections, pulling a dismal 0.6 percent of the vote. It said Monday that it would not nominate a candidate to run in the presidential election in March.

Prokhorov noted that there is still no pro-business liberal party in the parliament, and predicted an urgent move for change.

"If nothing is changed, the system will collapse," Prokhorov wrote. "It won't last five more years."

His view was not shared by Surkov, who was cited as saying the country's political system is healthy and that "everything's under control."

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