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Gorbachev, Opposition Figures Announce Formation of New Political Movements

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Former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev announced plans Wednesday to revive the Social-Democratic Party that he led in the early 2000s, while opposition leaders said they will create parties or organizations of their own, with the State Duma expected to pass legislation easing the rules for creating political parties by May.

Gorbachev, a vocal critic of the policies of president-elect Vladimir Putin, said he was prepared to take an active role in the formation of a new social-democratic party that could bring together competing political factions.

"There is currently a lot of confusion in the party structure, and a social-democratic party can unite enormous groups," Gorbachev said, Interfax reported.

"I don't plan to be at the head of that new party myself, but I'm ready to participate very actively in its creation, and I call on those who were in the former team of social-democrats also to get involved in this process," he said.

Gorbachev led the Social-Democratic Party from 2001 to 2004, then formed the unregistered Independent Democratic Party with businessman Alexander Lebedev in 2008. Lebedev told Interfax on Wednesday that he is ready to collaborate with Gorbachev in his new efforts.

The former Soviet leader is currently the head of a foundation that bears his name.

Also on Wednesday, outspoken former Moscow prefect and federal environmental inspector Oleg Mitvol said he would create a party on the base of his Green Alternative movement, Interfax reported.

Earlier this week, Left Front leader Sergei Udaltsov and Just Russia Duma deputies Ilya Ponomaryov and Gennady Gudkov announced plans to create a "Social-Democratic Union," a political movement with a central goal of fighting corruption and poverty in Russia.

"The Social-Democratic Union will take up the task of defending the interests of everyone who works honestly for the good of himself, his family, and society as a whole," said a declaration on Ponomaryov's LiveJournal page. "We will conquer corruption, return to people everything that has been stolen from them over the last 20 years, and eradicate for good the poverty inflicted by capitalism!"

Udaltsov, Ponomaryov and Gudkov have scheduled a press conference for Thursday regarding the creation of the movement.

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