

Party Split Evident in Expulsion

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A Just Russia has expelled the leader of its faction in the Moscow region legislature, highlighting lingering disparity in a party that started out as Kremlin-friendly but now harbors some of the most high-profile opposition leaders.

Ivan Charyshkin was kicked out for publicly supporting the appointment of Sergei Shoigu as the Moscow region's new governor earlier this month, Interfax reported late last week, citing the party's press service.

Shoigu, who serves as emergency situations minister, was elected governor unanimously by the regional legislature on April 5. The 46 attending deputies included five Just Russia members.

Their vote contradicted an earlier decision by A Just Russia's presidium, which said the party's faction should not support Shoigu, a close ally of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and a founding father of his United Russia party.

Charyshkin said his faction voted for Shoigu because of his high ratings. "We communicate a lot with our voters and know that 53 percent of them would be ready to vote for [him]," he said in an April 5 [statement](#) on the legislature's website.

Shoigu's candidacy was also supported by the Communist and the Liberal Democrat factions.

The four other Just Russia lawmakers received warnings of varying degrees, according to the party's press service, which added that each person's case had been studied individually. A sixth member of the faction missed the vote.

Created in 2005 as a Kremlin-friendly leftist party, A Just Russia has gradually moved toward the opposition.

But while some of its members have become prominent oppositionists, like Duma Deputies Ilya Ponomarev and father and son Dmitry and Gennady Gudkov, many others are seen as Putin loyalists. This includes party leader Sergei Mironov, who infamously declared he wanted Putin to win when he ran against him for president in 2004.

Cracks within the party appeared last year when Mironov was ousted as Federation Council speaker in a coup inspired by United Russia. At the time, two Just Russia deputies supported the vote against Mironov in the St. Petersburg city legislature, and they were subsequently expelled from the party.

Mironov has pledged to support opposition protests, including one by fellow party member and Astrakhan mayoral candidate Oleg Shein, whose ongoing hunger strike has become a rallying cause for the non-systemic opposition.

But when Mironov flew to Astrakhan on Saturday to show public support for Shein, he was accompanied by just 14 of the party's 64 Duma deputies.

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