

Rogozin's Rodina Party Reinstated

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Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin led the Rodina party prior to its merger to form A Just Russia in 2006. **Denis Grishkin**

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin did not attend Saturday's reunification of his nationalist Rodina party, but the re-emergent bloc is likely to become his political vehicle, pundits and party insiders said.

Alexei Zhuravlyov, a longtime Rogozin ally, was elected chairman of the party at a congress Saturday. He aims to restore the political vitality of the party, which was once seen as a Kremlin-supported alternative to both Communist and liberal forces.

Zhuravlyov, who was elected to the State Duma via the pro-Kremlin People's Front, a loose union of forces loyal to President Vladimir Putin, made it clear that the new Rodina is a continuation of the party of the same name founded in 2004.

"We are saying clearly that we are the successors of the same Rodina that we established together," Zhuravlyov said in opening remarks at the congress, RIA-Novosti reported.

Rodina, formed in 2003 as a pro-Kremlin bloc of moderate nationalists, became a party a year later and secured seats in the parliament.

In 2006, however, the Kremlin forced the party's charismatic leader, Rogozin, to surrender his leadership role to low-profile businessman Alexander Babakov.

The party was later incorporated into the now-opposition A Just Russia party, which had initially been backed by the Kremlin.

Pundits said at that time that the Kremlin was wary of Rogozin's nationalist rhetoric and his rising popularity among radicals who openly challenged Putin.

Rogozin, who as deputy prime minister oversees the military-industrial complex, declared on Twitter on Saturday that he was "not a member of any political party or a movement."

But Rogozin attended an assembly Saturday to found the Don movement to support the military-industrial complex. Zhuravlyov is a senior member of that movement.

A Rodina insider, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject, told The Moscow Times that the new party would be de facto under Rogozin's control, with Zhuravlyov acting as a "technical chairman."

According to a study by the independent Minchenko Group think tank in August, the Kremlin would likely position Rogozin as the head of a nationalist force in the event of political instability.

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