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# Yavlinsky Says He Will Beat Putin in 2018 Presidential Elections

By The Moscow Times

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Yabloko party co-founder Grigory Yavlinsky

Grigory Yavlinsky, co-founder of the Yabloko Russian liberal opposition party, said in an interview with the Interfax news agency Friday that he expects to beat current President Vladimir Putin in the presidential race in 2018.

The fact that Putin's approval rating currently exceeds 80 percent "plays no role," Yavlinsky said.

The Yabloko founder's best result in presidential elections to date was in 1996 when the politician received 7.4 percent of votes, according to Interfax. In 2008, Yavlinsky stepped down as party leader.

Yavlinsky also said Russia may face early elections in 2017.

"The economic situation, from my point of view, looks so bad that after a year, early elections

may become a reality: Putin will want to hold them ahead of time to take advantage of the current level of support," Yavlinsky told Interfax.

He rejected the possibility that the situation in Russia may improve by 2018, as Putin is not ready to return the Crimean peninsula to Ukraine and stop Russia's involvement in eastern Ukraine.

Yavlinsky did not support Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014.

The politician believes Moscow must admit that it violated international norms, hold a conference with the participation of Ukraine and the UN on the status of the peninsula and hold another referendum in Crimea, Interfax reported.

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