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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia's Local and Gubernatorial Elections, the Reactions

September 11, 2017

Kiselev Sergei / Moskva News Agency

On Sunday, 82 Russian regions held elections for different levels of government.

The elections traditionally attract little interest. But this year the vote was widely seen as a bell-weather for mayoral elections in Moscow and presidential elections next year.

In the sixteen regions which held gubernatorial elections, United Russia won every seat.

In Moscow's municipal elections, roughly 15 percent showed up to vote — about half the turnout during parliamentary elections last year. And yet, the outcome was seen as a victory for the opposition.

Candidates for opposition politician Dmitry Gudkov's "United Democrats," secured seats in ten districts, including all seats in the Gagarinsky district, where President Vladimir Putin himself cast his vote. In total, the opposition won 141 seats in 37 Moscow districts.

Here are some of the reactions:

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, former Yukos CEO and activist

"Congratulations to the Gudkov team! It wasn't for nothing. In defiance of United Russia's tactics Muscovites have supported this new force."

Embed:

> Поздравляю команду Гудкова! Все было не зря. Вопреки махинациям ЕР москвичи поддержали новую силу. https://t.co/LzTNv2txCv
>
> — Ходорковский Михаил (@mich261213) September 10, 2017

Sergei Sobyanin, Moscow Mayor

"We've tried to make the elections as fair as possible. Clearly not everyone likes it."

Embed:

> Стараемся проводить максимально честные выборы. Но, видимо, не всем это нравится
>
> — Сергей Собянин (@MosSobyanin) September 9, 2017

Referencing allegations of vote-rigging, including the scandal in Moscow's Novo-Peredelkino district, he then said: "These municipal elections were fair and competitive. Up to five candidates competed for every seat."

Embed:

> Прошедшие муниципальные выборы были конкурентными и честными. На одно место претендовало по 5 кандидатов https://t.co/R8udEXIwoZ
>
> — Сергей Собянин (@MosSobyanin) September 11, 2017

Vladimir Ryzhkov, former State Duma deputy and opposition politician

"We showed again that elections can and should be won.There's a point to showing up to vote!"

Embed:

> Ещё раз показали - побеждать на выборах можно и нужно. И есть смысл приходить и голосовать! https://t.co/hQ1JPhmVC0
>
> — Владимир Рыжков (@Respublicanez) September 11, 2017

Oleg Kozlovsky, civic activist

Embed:

> It seems the opposition won an unprecedented number of seats in Moscow's local councils today. Data still fragmentary, but it looks big.
>
> — Oleg Kozlovsky (@kozlovsky_en) September 10, 2017

Alexei Kudrin, former Finance Minister

"I congratulate the new governors and deputies with their victory. May they do justice to the trust placed in them by citizens who care."

Embed:

> Поздравляю новых губернаторов и депутатов с победой. Желаю оправдать доверие неравнодушных граждан
>
> — Алексей Кудрин (@Aleksei_Kudrin) September 11, 2017

Yekaterina Schulmann, political analyst

"It seems there were two categories of voters: so-called domestic voters and activists, other than that no one showed up. A low turnout is a double-edged sword. Just as a high turnout is a double-edged sword too, haha. Actually, if you generalize, elections in and of themselves are a big sword, the sword of Damocles, and they can't be neutralized completely. An election can only be canceled, like in the Soviet days," she wrote on Facebook.

Alexander Baunov, Senior Fellow at Carnegie Russia

The▣ principle of 'protest, and you'll be heard,' that emerged when entire ▣unsatisfied districts were excluded from the home renovation▣

bill has been confirmed once again,”
he wrote on Facebook, referring to a massive urban renewal project planned by City Hall.

“Notably, it wasn't the Communists who emerged as the alternative, but the very liberals who, as it is widely believed, do not stand a chance."

Grigory Melkonyants, of election monitoring NGO Golos

"The municipal councils are gaining independence," he wrote on Facebook.

Alexei Navalny, opposition leader:

"Any political action brings results and contributes to the cause. A Like, a Share, a leaflet, showing up at a rally or taking part in an election. Do something, and it changes the atmosphere. Nothing is predetermined and there should be no despair. People see clearly that the Kremlin's emperor has no clothes," he wrote on his blog.

Vladimir Milov, former deputy Energy Minister

"In essence, I believe that this result is very positive, because it has burst out against very low expectations, has shown that it's possible to run and win even through heavy administrative pressure and fraud, and even win the majority — or, in some cases, totality — of seats in very important districts. It's a great contribution to the build-up of momentum for the presidential election," he wrote in an English-language post on Facebook.

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https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/09/11/russias-local-and-gubernatorial-elections-reactions-a58909