

Russian Communist Party Leader Denies Resignation Rumors

April 15, 2021



Russian Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov has disputed reports of his impending retirement and changes in the party's leadership **State Duma / Moskva News Agency**

Russian Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov has disputed reports of his impending retirement and changes in the party's leadership, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency [reported](#) Thursday.

A day earlier, far-right LDPR party leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky had [said](#) that Zyuganov, 76, would recuse himself at the next Communist Party congress. Zhirinovsky added that Yuri Afonin, the deputy chairman of the party's Central Committee, would likely take the helm.

"Elections of new party leadership will be held in secret," RIA Novosti quoted Zyuganov as saying. "I will be obliged to fulfill the will of the party: They will elect the new composition of the Central Committee. ... I will faithfully serve my country and the ideals of justice, humanism and friendship."

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Along with the LDPR and the center-left A Just Russia, the Communist Party is one of Russia's three opposition parties with significant representation in the lower-house State Duma. The three parties are in long-term decline and helmed by aging, veteran leaders.

The Communist Party in particular is currently undergoing an [identity crisis](#), with a rift between the party's pro-Kremlin leadership and more opposition-minded grassroots factions.

The communists could have an advantage against the ruling United Russia party in this fall's State Duma elections, however, thanks to opposition figure Alexei Navalny's "Smart Voting" strategy that urges supporters to vote for the candidate most likely to unseat the United Russia incumbent.

The next Communist Party congress will take place on April 23-24.

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