The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Bears, Robots and Zhirinovsky: The Best and Weirdest of Russia's Election Campaign Ads

By Katharine Khamhaengwong

February 27, 2024



Billboards promoting the presidential election in Moscow. **Yaroslav Chingaev / Moskva News Agency**

With Russia's presidential election weeks away and early voting already underway in parts of Russia and occupied Ukraine, campaign season is in full swing.

While President Vladimir Putin is all but certain to win in the March 17 vote, his political organization and the three candidates allowed to run against him are nonetheless blanketing television and the internet with their campaign ads.

Communist Party candidate Nikolai Kharitonov released a video that starts with him surrounded by televisions broadcasting discussions on inflation and markets.

He promises to turn off this "chatter" forever before heading out to Red Square, imagining scenes of combines rolling through golden fields of grain, pumping oil wells and the Soviet

flag flying above the Kremlin.

The clip ends with the slogan "We played at capitalism and that's enough!"

Some social media users described the ad as "cringey."

Embed:

Meanwhile, an ad for the far-right nationalist Liberal Democratic Party's (LDPR) Leonid Slutsky presents him as the heir to his predecessor, the late Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

The ad offers no other indication of Slutsky's platform apart from the slogan "Zhirinovsky's work lives on!"

Slutsky has previously said "A vote for Slutsky and LDPR is absolutely not a vote against Putin" and that he "won't take away votes from the president of Russia."

One popular Russian blogger, who writes that he was once an LDPR fan, noted that if one were to remove all mention of Zhirinovsky from the video, there would be nothing left.

Embed:

The centrist New People party, which has been described as a Kremlin-backed spoiler, released an upbeat and forward-looking clip depicting its candidate Vladislav Davankov riding a modern train through a snowy forest, speaking to constituents and touring high-tech factories.

Among other lukewarm political proclamations, Davankov calls on voters to vote for him "so we can all live with dignity and freedom in a modern and peaceful country."

Opposition leaders say the Kremlin seeks to rally strong voter turnout so it can send a propaganda message to the world that Putin has the support of the vast majority of Russians — and thus that "Putin cannot be defeated unless all of Russia is defeated."

As such, some campaigns encourage Russians to vote in general rather than for a specific candidate.

Embed:

A homophobic video clip recently released on YouTube threatens citizens that not voting could lead to a dystopian future in which traditional family values have been replaced by a system organized by "rainbow tribunals" and "gender harmony" re-education.

Meanwhile, Putin's campaign appears confident enough in his victory that he does not even appear in some of his ads.

One shows footage of bears with an overlay of Putin's speeches referencing the "Russian bear," "our symbol" which "doesn't leave" and "won't give up the taiga."

The phrases are an apparent signal of Russia’s determination to continue fighting alleged Nazis in Ukraine and whatever other enemies a bear might have.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/02/27/bears-robots-and-zhirinovsky-the-best-and-weirdest-of-russias-election-campaign-ads-a84263