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Russia

For a Social and Democratic Coalition in the Moscow City Parliament

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We are celebrating the victory of the opposition in the Moscow City Parliament. This is our victory! [1]

Thanks to all those Muscovites, who spent countless hours collecting signatures or coming out to rallies, the most odious of the government's or big business's appointees were blocked. Among them—the real-estate magnate Metelsky or the university boss Kasamara, whose name has become synonymous with careerism and hypocrisy.

The opposition candidates, alas, don't have a majority in the Moscow City Council. There are districts where some of them lost by a handful of votes, painfully highlighting the mistakenness of the boycott of the election or the spoiling of the ballot. Nevertheless, the result is significant.

We are especially elated by Natalia Pochinok's defeat. In the spring, we chose this district so that we could support the candidacy of an independent leftist, Sergey Tsukasov, and oppose Pochinok's, with whom we had scores to settle. She had been one of the more outspoken propagandists of the pension reform. Since then, this district, traditionally inconvenient for the authorities, became a site of major struggle. In the first place, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation suddenly pulled out of an agreement to second Tsukasov's nomination, limiting itself to informal support. That meant that together with local activists, we had to quickly gather the 5,600 necessary for Sergey. Then upon the application of one of his competitors, the Electoral Commission took Tsukasov's name from the list of candidates ostensibly because of a technical mistake in his documents (he had left one of the fields of his application—about debts owed to foreign entities—unfilled instead of writing “n/a”).

Then Tsukasov proposed: “The Communist Party supported me, an independent leftist candidate. I ask Communist supporters in my district to vote for Maxim Kruglov. Unlike many other members of the (liberal) Yabloko party, Maxim is sympathetic to leftist ideas and willing to collaborate with us to defend citizens' interest. Only through a united left-democratic front can we block Pochinok's victory.”

In the last weeks, Sergey and Maxim conducted the campaign together. Sergey sought to persuade his supporters to vote for Kruglov. In the end, Navalny's system of Smart Voting [umnoe golosovanie] also supported Kruglov. The latter's victory over Pochinok is one of the sensations of these elections.

What will happen next? Can the newly installed opposition members of the Moscow City Parliament—people with different histories, political views and relationships with the authorities (from the liberal Daria Besedina to the left-conservatives such as the actor Nikolay Gubenko)—resist the pro-government majority determined to rubber-stamp Mayor Sobianin's agenda and divest the City Parliament of any real decision-making powers. Will the authorities resort to intrigue and provocations to compensate their failure at the elections?

We think that the only possibility to succeed lies in the creation of a democratic and socialist coalition in the Moscow City Parliament.

It should be based on common democratic demands: freedom for the political prisoners [whose numbers increased over the course of the July-August protests with sentences up to five years given for literally nothing], unconditional acknowledgement of the Muscovites' right to protest the arrests and sentences had taken place because the city authorities refused to give permission to the protests and sent police against those who dared come out], the end of the police and legal tyranny over the city. And social demands: immediate end to the “optimization” and

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commercialization of medicine and education, a ban on cutting down forests and on destroying the city to make way for new building projects solely in the interests of the real estate business, social support for the most vulnerable sections of the population, from single mothers to the casualties of the pension reform.

We have not fought against Pochinok so that the Moscow City Parliament could host adepts of neoliberalism and decommunisation. We did not spend our days as polling station observers so that we could see there abortion opponents or fighters with “the orange plague.” We—and all those who voted for them—should keep demanding of these deputies adherence to the democratic and social agenda on the basis of which they were elected. We would consider any attempt to sideline these conversations as splintering of the Muscovites civic unity, as a provocation in favor of the authorities.

We now have the possibility to work towards transforming Moscow, from a hated monster sucking the wealth of the rest of the country, into a place of self-governance and justice.

Congratulations with the victory: the struggle is just beginning!

[LeftEast](#)

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[1] Note from the editors of LeftEast: The problem with Russian elections is the same as the problem with elections in most advanced capitalist countries, but simply more extreme: there is nobody on the ballot to vote for. The authorities are prepared to go to great lengths—set up fake opposition parties controlled out of the Presidential administration, disqualify the real opposition candidates, beat up and imprison the people who come out to protest these measures—to make sure this is the case. The regional elections of September 8th were no different in this respect. What was different, however, was the extreme unpopularity of the governing party—in some regions such as Moscow and Petersburg, its candidates ran nominally as extremely well-funded independents to avoid the stigma of carrying United Russia’s name in their campaign—and a willingness—unseen since the protests of 2011-2012—of sections of the opposition to work together to depose it. Even if these sentiments were strongest in Moscow—where they regularly brought out tens of thousands of people to unauthorized demonstrations in July and August and bore electoral fruits,—alarm bells that United Russia’s time may be up rang in the whole country. Here we publish the assessment of the outcome of the elections by the Moscow branch of the Russian Socialist Movement (RSD). [Russian original here.](#)