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Russia

In the Struggle You'll Earn Your Rights

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Sunday 19 January 2020

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Russian Socialist Movement's Statement on the Proposed Constitutional Reforms and the Change of Russian Government

The presidential announcement and the change of government that immediately followed it on January 15th officially inaugurate the much-awaited succession operation, establishing the mechanisms whereby power will be preserved in the hands of the ruling elite. The key element in this operation is the "continuity" within the framework of personal power. That is, in one or another capacity, Putin will preserve the control over decision-making after the expiration of his fourth presidential term. The proposed constitutional amendments offer several possible scenarios of power for him: as the chairman of the State Council, the status of which will be seriously enhanced, as the head of the State Duma (the lower chamber of the Parliament) or the Council of the Federation (the upper chamber), both of which might also be empowered. Finally, given Putin's ambiguous statement about the possibility of a Constitutional amendment on presidential term limits, there is the possibility of a third consecutive term. Whatever the case, to accomplish its goal—changing the constitution to preserve its power—the ruling elite has to present it as enjoying popular support. This is why in the official discussions of "the package" of constitutional reforms to be presented to a plebiscite one hears items difficult to argue against such as a raise in minimal wage, the necessity for a "dignified pension," an increase in child benefits, and so on. It is clear that every one of these items does not represent a meaningful turn towards increasing welfare spending but rather, a maneuver meant to distract the voters for the larger purpose of the constitutional amendment. As a result, our main task is to expose the whole "succession" scheme and any attempt to represent it as a long-awaited reform towards some kind of "liberalization." The existing scheme—both anti-democratic and anti-social—could be changed only with the active participation of Russian society, with the struggle of workers and all oppressed people for their rights.

18 January 2020

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