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Russia

# Not a single vote for United Russia! RSM statement on the Duma elections & Mikhail Lobanov's candidacy

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**On the eve of this fall's parliamentary elections, the room for political manoeuvre before our Russian comrades (and all other opposition forces) has shrunk to a bare minimum. In these circumstances, engagement with other opposition forces in a broad front against the party-state appears the only option. Mikhail Lobanov's parliamentary candidacy via the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) is one particular focal point of the Russian Socialist Movement's (RSD) electoral strategy. To this end, we publish RSD's statement on the elections (also available in [Russian](#)).**

The September 19 Russian State Duma elections will be very different from previous ones. On the one hand, they will take place against a background of a rapid decline in living standards, the dire consequences of the pandemic, and the extremely unpopular pension reform passed three years ago.

On the other hand, the elections will take place after the constitutional amendments, which have cemented Vladimir Putin's lifelong rule and have seriously shifted Russia's political system in the direction of open authoritarianism.

The referendum for last year's constitutional amendments has opened a window of opportunity for the ruling elite: opposition campaigning has been outlawed, and the dilution of voting standards has allowed the authorities to announce whatever election results they deem suitable.

The Duma elections will thus be held in the midst of a triple crisis: a socio-economic crisis, a domestic political crisis (associated with the final withdrawal from the "managed democracy"), and a foreign policy crisis: a deepening crisis in relations with the United States and the European Union, with no clear prospects of solution to any of them.

The current Duma elections are meant not only to provide the Kremlin with full control over the parliament but also to demonstrate the consolidation of the bureaucratic vertical and the strength of the system as a whole. The only way to accomplish this in the face of growing social discontent and distrust of the government is through repression.

Preparation for these elections began last year, with the attempted poisoning of Alexei Navalny, and continued with the brutal crackdown on winter protests, the criminal cases against a number of opposition candidates, and the passage of the law against Navalny's FBK (now labelled "an extremist organization"), which reduced immensely the ability of voters to cast a ballot to the candidate of their choice.

All of this shows clearly that even extremely unequal parliamentary elections, devoid of any real power, pose an extreme danger to the existing authorities, since they can expose the scale of the growing deafening protest from below.

If the ruling United Russia, making use of social apathy and enormous administrative resources, succeeds in maintaining its monopoly in the Duma, this will not amount merely to a preservation of the status quo. Instead, a victory for the ruling party would signal an attack on the last vestiges of social and democratic rights.

This is why the RSD calls for citizens to take an active part in the upcoming elections.

- It is necessary to support leftist progressive candidates running in single-mandate districts (such as our comrade

Mikhail Lobanov in the Kuntsevsky district of Moscow).

- It is necessary to sign up as election observers in order to prevent fraud, even in the current difficult conditions.

- Finally, it is necessary to agitate everywhere possible to vote against United Russia.

In these elections, the working majority, the millions of those who lost their jobs and their last savings in the pandemic, do not have a party ready to fight consistently for a democratic and socialist alternative. Yet the choice before us is not between programs or ideologies, but between a "yes" and "no" to an open dictatorship.

Therefore, in the current situation, we call for voting for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, as the only "system party", which in some places still maintains relative independence from the Kremlin, has the best chance of success, and for many continues to embody the ideas of social justice.

## Who is Mikhail Lobanov and why do we support him?

Mikhail Lobanov is an Associate Professor of mathematics at the Mechanico-Mathematical Faculty of Moscow State University (MSU) and one of the leaders of the MSU's Initiative Group and the University Solidarity trade union, which defends the rights of students and teachers. He is one of those independent politicians, who are not ready to be the left leg of the regime, but are fighting for a real alternative. An alternative linked to the real everyday interests of residents, workers, voters; to the values of self-government, labor and civil rights; to the agenda of democratic socialism. On June 24, the CPRF congress approved Mikhail Lobanov as a candidate for the State Duma elections in Moscow's Kuntsevsky District 197.

**A brief interview with Mikhail Lobanov. See the Russian original in [Moskvichmag](#).**

Many people do not believe in the fairness of these elections. Many candidates are not allowed to participate. Freedom of speech is not an easy thing. And the three-day vote is often perceived as a way to "get the count right in case the wrong votes are cast." Do you agree with this analysis? Do you believe that the people can realistically influence the composition of parliament this year? How do you protect the results of the vote?

The main bet of the authorities is not on repressions (which are real enough) and not even on falsifications during the counting. It is clear what to do with repressions: instead of the knocked out candidates, we should support the remaining candidates of the opposition. Even if they are a little less famous, it does not matter. As for the three-day-long vote, we must make sure that everyone hears the call to come to the polling stations on the last day of voting, so that the ballot will go straight to the ballot box, and will not be swapped at night. However, the authorities' main bet is on plunging society into a state of learned helplessness. To convince people that resistance is futile, and that the result is a foregone conclusion. This is a bet on depoliticization. And I really hope that this bet will not play out, and that the 2021 elections will not just be a ritual event, but a step toward real collective, grassroots politics.

**What would your three main promises to the voters be? What would you do if you get elected?**

1) The income, which will exceed my current salary from working at Moscow State University, will go not into my pocket but into the development of local and university self-government, into the development of the trade union movement. To help fund the work of lawyers and organizers.

2) I will be a constant presence in all areas of my electoral district, interacting with all active citizen groups and municipal deputies, regardless of what party they were elected from. We will be together all these five years. I will hold regular meetings with constituents throughout the district - now one of the few opportunities for citizens to get together and make their demands known.

3) I will be introducing bills aimed at reducing the glaring economic and political inequality: repealing the pension reform, proposing a progressive tax scale, and repealing the repressive laws of the last ten years.

### **What are the top three problems of the country and/or the city, from your point of view?**

Blatant inequality, poverty, and the precarious situation of most citizens, which, among other things, reduces domestic demand and hits our economy. Criminal urban planning policy, from which only real estate developers, bureaucrats and banks benefit. The city loses its parks and historic heritage and in exchange gets massive tracts of vacant, barely habitable housing. The so-called optimization and commercialization of education and medicine.

Source [Left East](#).

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