

Why Gennady Zyuganov's Communist Party Finished First

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It must be said that the recent Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) victory in the Duma elections was not a surprise. All Russian sociologists predicted Gennady Zyuganov's victory four months before the elections on 17 December 1995. The KPRF, competing against forty-two other parties and movements, was expected to receive slightly more than 20 percent of the votes (it received 21.7 percent) and more than fifty deputy seats according to single-mandate districts (it received fifty-eight).

Before the elections, there were obvious signals that the vote would go to the KPRF. It was expected that the older generation would vote for the KPRF. The pensioners, who suffered the most damage from shock therapy, would most certainly vote for members representing the *ancien régime* (for social guarantees, work, and security; things the former social system gave them). Even before the elections, the image of the KPRF as a real party had been formed.

In my opinion, the victory of the KPRF in the elections is a critical event in Russia's post-Soviet history, which demands both more attention and clearer comprehension. The simplistic reason often given for the KPRF victory was the sudden introduction of the monetarist method of reform, which resulted in an inevitable leftward shift in the mood of society and a restoration of neo-communism. The heart of the problem is not so simple and orderly—it is found in Russian affairs and in Russian nature.

First of all, it is evident that the Duma election victory of KPRF leader Gennady Zyuganov has a completely different moral and political meaning than the victory of the neo-communist party of Aleksander Kwasniewski in the November 1995 Polish presidential elections. Those who voted for Kwasniewski voted for the national reconciliation of the supporters of socialism with those who opposed the Communists during their forty-year rule. In Russia, instead of the Polish slogan of reconciliation, both the KPRF and its leader Zyuganov emphasized the struggle with Yeltsin's unstoppable power, calling it a "plague of society," and vowed to continue the struggle with those who, according to his own words, "destroyed the country," such as "Gaidar, Chubais, and others who hate everything Russian, Soviet, national, who do not wish that we live according to the laws of beauty, truth, and good."

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Zyuganov's speech, "Twelve Lessons of History," delivered at a solemn meeting in Moscow in honor of the seventy-eighth anniversary of the October Revolution, had an almost Leninist character—denouncing perestroika and the "democrats."¹ Zyuganov's speeches prior to the Duma elections differed from the election speeches of Kwasniewski: Zyuganov questioned not only the shift of power, but the replacement of the system. He promoted the idea that Russia should abandon the building of a market economy and Western-style civil society, and its attempts to shift from communism to contemporary capitalism. Kwasniewski, on the other hand, urged a search for more "pragmatic decisions"—the most effective way of consolidating civil society in Poland.² Furthermore, Zyuganov actively opposes the eastward expansion of NATO, while Kwasniewski triumphed in

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part because he actively supports the idea of Poland's quick incorporation into the Western alliance. Zyuganov and the KPRF were successful because, in the eyes of the common people, Zyuganov is seen as a staunch anti-Westerner. Kwasniewski won largely because he is perceived by journalists both in Poland and the world as a more pro-Western and more cosmopolitan politician than

the traditionalist Lech Walesa. After the election of Kwasniewski, the danger of civil confrontations, purges based on ideological differences, and unrestricted lustration (which was being called at the time by some influential elements in Solidarity) vanished. Kwasniewski took serious steps towards a civil society and national consensus. In Russia, on the other hand, a "cold" civil war was provoked by Yeltsin's anti-constitutional coup with decree 1400, which abolished the Constitution on 21 September 1993. This gives the present victory of the KPRF another meaning. The victory inevitably strengthens the oppositionists who won in the armed struggle of 4 October 1993 and the players who, as part of the KPRF, gained revenge in the last Duma elections.

Thus, attempting to explain the KPRF victory with the so-called overall pattern of societal change due to the negative consequences of shock therapy does not go far in explaining the paradox. If Russia, following the countries of central Europe, is moving to the left, then why did no one in the elections vote for the numerous social-democratic parties? After all, the social-democratic program of former Moscow Mayor Gavriil Popov and Vassily Lipitsky is similar to the program of Kwasniewski's party.

This is Russia's paradox. Eighty percent of the population is poverty-stricken but not a single influential social party has adequately addressed social factors such as the problems of distribution of property and class distinction as main concerns. Nevertheless the KPRF does not appear to be a social party in the classical sense of the word; it is neither communist nor socialist.

Russia's "leftism" does not look very much like present Polish leftism. Even if we assume that the Russian voters were not interested in a social democratic society but in a pro-communist, vengeful one, this still cannot explain the election results. The hard-core Communist Workers' Party of

Tyulkin-Anpilov did not gain access to Parliament, winning only 4.5 percent of the votes.

It is evident that, for Russia, support for the communist idea has survived, making a vengeful communist comeback a real danger. But while some supporters do believe in a "bright communist future," popular support is not yet widespread. The issue that demands special attention is that an overwhelming majority of votes were for a communist party that is dedicated neither to social problems nor to the class struggle—not a party of the working class, but a national party, a party of "state patriotism."

The Party of Power, of Red Patriotism

It must be noted that the KPRF is unique and distinct in that it places the problems of Russian statehood at the forefront, addressing the problem of salvation and the survival of Russian statehood in its historical sense. Never has a communist party defined itself as a party of national salvation, as a "party of state patriotism." Usually, in twentieth century Europe, parties of "state patriotism" or national salvation called themselves conservative, right-wing, or bourgeois-democratic parties, often fighting for national independence. This corresponds with

the Marxist point of view that the pursuit of national interests that do not coincide with the interests of the proletariat is "desertion," and the "betrayal of the interests of the proletariat."

Zyuganov knows this because he studied Marxism-Leninism. He recognizes that

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understanding "state patriotism . . . is unusual for party consciousness." Therefore he urges a focus not on dogma but on the reality that "promotes this."³ "Precisely because we have no state in an emphasized meaning of the word," writes Zyuganov, "precisely because a real threat arose for Russian society, we therefore put forward the idea of state patriotism as key in the salvation of this multi-national people."⁴

What has been said is sufficient for proof that in the elections of 17 December, the victory went not simply to a communist or left party, but to a particular kind of communist party, a party of national salvation. A particular feature of this communist party is that it is subordinate to the idea of social justice and the idea of national prosperity, according to the Zyuganov platform.

Without an analysis and careful evaluation of the KPRF's neo-nationalist, neo-étatist tendencies, we will fail to understand in detail the so-called leftward shift of Russia's distinctive spiritual and ideological evolution—which in the end determines the future of the country.

The KPRF appeared at the end of 1990 as an opponent to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), then led by Gorbachev. At that time, the CPSU had been struggling to shift from traditional Bolshevism to a social-democratic orientation. One of Gorbachev's main unrealized goals was the transformation of the CPSU into a social-democratic party, conforming with an agenda that would hopefully have been confirmed by the twenty-ninth CPSU Congress scheduled to take place at the end of 1991. Gorbachev and Yakovlev tried to shift from Bolshevism to Menshevism,

from Lenin to Plekhanov. Gorbachev's attempt to change the image of the CPSU was probably to overcome the schism in Europe and construct a "common European home," in which the USSR would be an equal member.

A conservative, traditionalist part of the CPSU managed to create its own party. The KPRF offered a different platform—to convert the CPSU into a party of state power, into an organization whose main task would be not only to defend socialism, but to defend all the state and territorial conquests acquired during Russian and Soviet history. According to this, the CPSU should undergo a Stalinist transformation into a party of state victory and the achievements of the Soviet people. Immediately after its formation, the KPRF targeted Gorbachev's foreign policy. In an article by Alexander Krasnov and member of the KPRF Presidium, Yuri Nikolaev, the foreign policy of Gorbachev-Yakovlev-Shevardnadze was subject to sharp criticism.⁵ These authors, expressing the point of view of the leader of the KPRF, wrote that from the beginning of perestroika the USSR became a "second-rate country not only in the realm of domestic affairs but in international relations as well."

The recent elections in Russia were won not by a successor to the CPSU but by a different communist party that was born from the struggle

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against Gorbachev's liberalizing CPSU. Within the framework of the initial world concept of the KPRF, there was no place for either liberal values or political cooperation with the West.

Intentionally, the main outlet of the KPRF became not *Pravda* but the harder-line *Sovietskaya Rossiya*, a newspaper that distinguished itself by publishing Nina Andreeva's

anti-perestroika manifest "Not to Forego Principles" in March 1988. From the beginning, the KPRF underscored its anti-Westernism as opposed to its anti-capitalism. It also underscored its anti-Gorbachevism. A typical article from the times, "Party: Era of Schism," was published in the pages of *Pravda*, where it was unequivocally established "that the leadership of the KPR [the predecessor to the KPRF]—Zyuganov, Melnikov, and Belov—opposes the decisions of the CPSU."

The ideology of red patriotism, of red *pochvennichestvo*, was developed in the pages of the journals *Molodaya Gvardiya* and *Nash Sovremennik* in the late 1960s. It became the rising ideology in 1990 inside the CPSU and the KPRF. As a secretary once again, Zyuganov struggled against the liberal perestroika ideology of Gorbachev and Yakovlev from the very beginning. He enlisted "patriotic" writers such as Valentin Rasputin, Vassily Belov, and Viktor Balashov, and formed groups around the journals *Nash Sovremennik*, *Molodaya Gvardiya*, and *Moskva*.

Of course, the concept of combining communism with patriotism and a strong state took place before the August 1991 junta's brief struggle with Westernism, which reflected the ideas of their members and their prior struggles against Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. After the defeat of the junta, Zyuganov deliberately chose to blend Russian communism with traditional

Russian patriotism, creating a distinctive communist populism. Alexander Prokhanov describes this episode in the following way:

Zyuganov was depressed, confused, without an office at the Central Committee, without a phone, without a car, [there appeared] various patriots, such as writers, Cossacks, leaders of patriotic organizations. All this calmed Zyuganov. All these numerous, unruly people were talking about Russia, about Christ's sacrifice, about Minin and Pozharsky, about the ethic of rejection and sacrifice—these people were important to Zyuganov, he avidly communicated with them, learned something from them, looked at them closely, and maybe at that time, the idea of uniting two wrecked "democrat" forces—communists and national patriots—came to him.⁶

This episode from the political biography of the KPRF and its leader reveals much about the present ideology of the party and its political tactics, which have now guaranteed its victory.

In these elections, the KPRF presented itself not only as a communist party, but also as a slavophile, anti-Western, *étatist* party. In essence, it broke with the traditional internationalism of Marxism-Leninism, and with the ideas of communist messianism.

In these elections, the KPRF and its leader were perceived by many voters as a collective Susanin, which is destined to save Russia from "instigators" interested in the complete destruction of Russia. The notion of a group of hostile Western forces developing malicious plans against Russia "in dark cellars" was heard in many of Zyuganov's election speeches.

The KPRF victory did not lead to an increased influence of communism in the world, because Zyuganov is convinced that communism is possible only in Russia where there is a tradition of communality, insisting that the present goals of the KPRF have only a national character.

The victory of the KPRF does not connote a revenge of communism or Marxist ideology. Its ideas are a distinctive blend of Russian Bolshevism and traditional Russian conservatism, which is in general further from Marxism than the ideology of contemporary Western social democracy is. Everything that occurs in Russia today submits not to the logic of the struggle of the supporters of capitalism and those that would preserve the old socialist system, but to the logic of an old struggle for preserving the "Russian way" and "Russian distinctiveness." On this issue, the leader of the KPRF considers himself a promoter of classical Russian conservatism, of autocracy and serfdom. He talks about his solidarity with ideologues of the so-called conservative-protective camp of Konstantin Leontiev and Nikolai Danilevsky, "with the idea of a unique and distinctive Russian civilization." It is sufficient to read Zyuganov's book *Beyond the Horizon* in order to see that his beliefs are very far from Marxism and communism, as far as Russia and the Orthodox Church are concerned.

Naturally, the victory of the KPRF also reflects the disillusionment of a significant part of the population with the West. During perestroika, Gorbachev made overtures to the West. Today, many illusions connected with democracy that arose under the Iron Curtain and immediately after are being shattered. But the KPRF victory does not itself signify that Russia has preserved its Marxist-Leninist roots, and that communism has a chance at revival.

All those who voted for the KPRF followed the banner of struggle by the slavophiles, or the so-called patriots and advocates of "great power," against Westerners. In these elections, supporters of a Russian version of development and reform fought for power, advocating national traditions, and criticizing the current monetarist reforms of Gaidar and Jeffrey Sachs—who are perceived by many Russians as part of a plot by the International Monetary Fund to destroy the industrial power, independence, and strength of Russia.

The victory of the KPRF attests to the increase of anti-Western, and especially anti-American, sentiments in Russia. In fact, the KPRF gained the support of a significant part of the electorate by promoting itself as a party to save Russia from the "destructive influence of the West."

Of course, the West does not bear any responsibility for the cultural and ideological politics of Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin. But the West should understand that its support for harsh methods of financial stabilization aggravated the current moral and spiritual crisis in Russia. It led to an abrupt reduction of funds for education, libraries, and museums, among many other things. Ironically, a time of openness to the West and friendship with

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America became a time of unprecedented spiritual degradation and moral decay for Russia, fueling the growth of anti-Western sentiment and subsequently the victory of the KPRF as a slavophile party.

Apparently similar but actually opposite situations are found in central Europe. For example, in Poland the pink social-democratic communist Mechislaw Rakovski replaced

the Catholic fundamentalist Lech Walesa who defended Polish distinctiveness and Polish uniqueness. Then the white anti-communist Walesa was replaced by the pink social-democrat Kwasniewski.

For Russia, the social-democratic *shestidesyatniki* who were categorical opponents not only of Russian identity, slavophilism, and *pochvennichestvo*, but also of elementary patriotism, were replaced by the red-white patriots who organized the August junta. But the victory of the KPRF signifies that the time of pinks has ended, that the paling red-white patriots once again gain strength, becoming more and more white, approaching closer and closer the traditions of Russian-supported conservatism.

For Poles, the idea of foreign enemies and violators of the Polish nation was the stimulus for the breakup of socialism and state control. For Russia, on the other hand, the idea of foreign enemies and violators of the Russian nation, such as the United States, stimulated the return to the ideas of decisive state intervention in the economy, communization of land, and state ownership of property. The Bashkirs were the first in Russia to conduct a referendum, on 17 December 1995, on the issue of land ownership—and overwhelmingly voted against the free sale of land. This fact itself explains why the Bashkirs and the Chuvash enjoy an advantage inside the KPRF, which also actively opposes the free sale and purchase of land.

The election boiled down to two basic blocs. On one side was a group of unabashed anti-Westerners such as the KPRF, the Agrarians, the Congress of Russian Communities (KRO), Zhirinovskiy's LDPR, Women of Russia, and, of course, the Communist Workers' Party of Anpilov. On the other side were the pro-Westerners such as Yabloko and Russia's Democratic Choice-United Democrats. This time, the anti-Westerners won, headed by the KPRF. Together they received more than 50 percent of the votes against the twelve groups of pro-Western, pro-American orientation. The party of Russian capitalism, Our Home is Russia, headed by Chernomyrdin, also emphasized in its program the self-sufficiency of Russia and the necessity to protect the tradition of Russian spirituality. In many ways, Chernomyrdin's party appeared as a party of national capitalism and advocated the defense of the national market.

Thus, it is possible to say that the present electoral victory of the KPRF, the impressive victory of the slavophiles against the *zapadniki* or Westernizers, is a miniature repeat of the Iranian revolution of Khomeini. And, not by chance, the first victims of the elections were the most pro-Western ministers, Andrei Kozyrev and Anatoly Chubais.

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The victory of the KPRF is understandable only when compared to the totality of defeat for Russia's Democratic Choice-United Democrats, which did not even manage to overcome the 5 percent hurdle to enter Parliament. This party had been mocked as a group of capital cosmopolitans without influence beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg. Those who voted for the KPRF voted not as much for communism as against Yeltsin, with his shock therapy and his slavish, pro-American foreign policy.

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The irony is that the slavophile, anti-Western victory in the parliamentary elections became possible only after four years of rule in Russia by the pro-Western, cosmopolitan governments of Gennady Burbulis, Gaidar, Kozyrev, Chubais, and Chernomyrdin. When the KPRF's predecessor appeared in 1990, it had no influence in the population. Zyuganov, as the main ideologue of the Communist Party of Russia, was not only the initiator but one of the authors, along with writers Valentin Rasputin and Vassily Belov, of the infamous manifesto “Word to the People,” which was published in *Sovietskaya Rossiya* on 23 July 1991. At that time, this was perceived by the population as a reactionary document. Such a fate befell the “Appeal to the Soviet People,” the main ideological document of the August junta, the State Committee for the State of Emergency, or GKChP. This document discussed the same ideas that the KPRF then borrowed to win the Duma elections, such as “The country is submerged into ocean depths of lawlessness and violence,” and “The health and life of future generations [is] under threat.” For many a voter, the warnings of the GKChP were vindicated.

Zyuganov and his party proclaimed that no handouts from the West will solve Russia's problems, that only “irresponsible” people seek salvation

abroad, that the present democracy favors only extremists, corruption, shady economics, and limitless crime—echoes of the “Word to the Soviet People.”

In 1991, no one heeded either Zyuganov or the KPRF, nor the leaders of the GKChP. The nation instead listened to Yeltsin, Galina Starovoitova, Anatoly Sobchak, Yelena Bonner, and all the other leaders of radical democracy. At that time, Russia swung fully open to the West, and pro-Western intellectuals were respected. Now everything has been turned upside down.

Why the Anti-Western, Anti-Reform Mood in Russia?

Undoubtedly, the victory of the KPRF, the ongoing significant influence of Zhirinovskiy, the victory in the elections of many former figures of the CPSU, former members of the CPSU Central Committee, and opponents of Gorbachev's pro-Western perestroika—such as Nikolai Ryzhkov and Generals Gromov and Lebed—leaves little doubt that, compared to 1991, a qualitative mood change has occurred in Russia. The focus of the change appears as a sharp rise in anti-Western, anti-American feelings. Six months before the elections, polls conducted by the All-Russian Center for the Study of Social Opinion (VTsIOM), under the direction of Igor Klyamkin, showed that two-thirds of the population of Russia share Solzhenitsyn's belief that the West is not interested in the prosperity of Russia, and regards it as a potential adversary.

In my opinion, there is no foundation for the popular belief that these serious shifts in the national mood are evidence of the incompatibility of the

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Russian character with private property and Western civilization, or a sign of a basic hostility of “the Russian soul” to the West, about which Zyuganov often writes in his articles. The paradox, however, is that those Russians who support Western values, particularly the Western feeling of individuality, were those who voted against reform.

Because they consider themselves individuals, they are not able to have positive feelings toward the West. In Russia, the West has been associated with supporting only those policies and reformers who insisted on quicker—and therefore more destructive and painful—reforms.

In voting for the KPRF, it was neither world-view motives nor a desire to return to communism, but moral, psychological motives that played a decisive role. The Russian mood pendulum took a swing. The underlying causes of the population's political behavior are primarily psychological. They were not predicted by the movements of the enigmatic “Russian soul” but by logic, emerging from the deep crisis in which Russia found herself after the breakup of the USSR and collapse of the Soviet system. The understanding by the simple Russian man of the reasons for this crisis compels him to act the way he does.

There was a time when the simple, ingenuous Russian face of Gennady Zyuganov repelled the Russian voter, when voters preferred golden mouths, chatterboxes, scholars, writers, and journalists. Now everything is the

reverse. Present moods in Russia differ fundamentally from the moods that prevailed in 1991 on the eve of the disintegration of the USSR. At that time, there was a feeling of universal excitement evoked by desires for quick and radical change. At that time, such desires were necessary. They were the policies of prophets, who used messianistic language and spoke beautifully and earnestly. It was a blessed time for the political careers of scholars, journalists, for those whose specialty is the word and who were able to deliver ardent speeches against the party *nomenklatura* and the "rotted regime." This was the time of Yelena Bonner, Sergei Stankevich, Galina Starovoitova, Ilya Zaslavsky, and Yuri Chernichenko. It was a wonderful time for the intelligentsia. The unprecedented political success of a cripple, feeble man, Ilya Zaslavsky, is a confirmation that, in the critical point of the late 1980s and 1990s, Russia lived through a second, elite-replacing revolution. Heroes of this revolution had an urge to undermine and tear down all things stable and customary.

When it was apparent that radical changes and reforms created suffering for an overwhelming part of society, the destruction of the state, and the loss of basic social protection, personal safety, moral values, and certainty and faith in the future, the need arose in politics for a completely different style, another framework that embodies stability, order, and certainty. Among the victorious, Zyuganov and Chernomyrdin represent one type of stable, healthy Russian *muzhik* who firmly stands on his feet. They know their business well and speak as masters, knowing how to express their thoughts in an understandable and accessible language for the people. Prokhanov, in his essay about Zyuganov, emphasizes this national style of his hero:

Zyuganov's style is simple-hearted, slightly painted not in irony, but in humor. . . . When you speak with him, the feeling does not arise that he is more informed than you, but the opposite; he listens carefully to you, awaits your thoughts. . . . He is the exact opposite of the democratic "know-it-all" Gaidar or Yavlinsky who with pulpit obtrusiveness reproach, preach, and taunt you as dim or uninitiated.

The key to the KPRF's success is in the need for national, reproachable politicians. This need is strong among those who preserve a national identity. Intentionally, the KPRF is gaining support from poor Russia and provincial Russia.

Dissatisfied, angry, alienated, anti-cultural, xenophobic people voted for Zhirinovskiy. Dissatisfied Russians, nostalgic for Russian kinship, voted for Zyuganov. This exemplifies the deep drama of the present elections. Many Russian patriots were forced to cast their vote for the party that grew out of the Bolshevik CPSU. This challenges those to whom the provincial, red patriot Zyuganov is closer than the cosmopolitan liberal who was persuaded that patriotism in any form is a "refuge for scoundrels."

The egoist Yuri Skokov prevented General Lebed from gaining first place in the election. If Lebed had created his own bloc independently of Skokov, he then would have been among the victors with Zyuganov and Chernomyrdin. It is not an accident that Lebed won easily in the single-mandate elections in Tula. He is also a favorite in all the polls for Russian president.

Lebed has a solid physical presence with a bulldog-like face. He seems ready to leap at any minute. His thunderous general's voice does not repel and frighten, but attracts. Those who voted for Chernomyrdin believe their

candidate will lead Russia out of its crisis, and those who voted for Zyuganov and Lebed see them as representatives of a patriotic opposition. In any case, all of these figures are perceived by their supporters as trustworthy Russian *muzhiki*, who are able to do their business like *muzhiki*, and who, under all circumstances, will remain living in Russia.

For Zyuganov, it is a plus in the eyes of his voters that he was an *apparatchik* of the Central Committee of the CPSU, that he is part of the old *nomenklatura*. For many who voted for Zyuganov, it was very important that he was not a "chatterbox," he did not surrender to the victor, like Gorbachev, but remained faithful to his party. From the beginning, he stood by the KPRF, he defended it in the trial of the CPSU, and won. Many voted for Zyuganov, but not because they shared his worldview or his faith in the civilizational uniqueness of Russia. Not at all. They voted for him because he turned out to be the most stable contender with respect to morals. Unlike others, he did not burn his party card, he did not call for the removal of Lenin from the Kremlin. Zyuganov is dependable and sensible. Zyuganov's presence as a politician is another confirmation that he is not running away, that it is possible to trust him. Zyuganov and Lebed now win because they are politicians "with thick necks," personifying, in both their persona and their biographies, the people of provincial Russia who vote for them. Today, people give preference to politicians from simple families who have experienced childhood misfortune. This public disposition was actively exploited by Zhirinovskiy in the last elections, as he desperately tried to protect his previous popularity.

People voted for Zyuganov primarily because he is perceived as "theirs," distinguished from the democrats and intelligentsia, who are perceived in the Russian provinces as alien. In Moscow, they voted for the intellectual Yavlinsky as much as for Zyuganov. But in the Russian countryside, people voted for Yavlinsky ten times less than for Zyuganov. Even the provincial intelligentsia gave many more votes to their provincial physics teacher, Zyuganov, than to the capital's brilliant economist, Yavlinsky, for whom almost all Moscow newspapers urged them to vote.

The time of whirlwind political careers when, thanks to television, a simple research assistant became a political figure and statesman, is already ending. In these elections, the shift of the image of trust worked against everyone, without exception, including former laboratory chiefs, younger research assistants, young politicians of the first democratic class, and Sergei Shakhrai, Gaidar, Oleg Romyantsev, Zhirinovskiy, and Yavlinsky.

Zhirinovskiy plays a completely different political game than Yavlinsky. He relies on a completely different electorate. Today, the laws of Russian social psychology work against young politicians. Everything that is representative of Moscow is trusted less and less. This is why it is not an accident that Zhirinovskiy lost in these elections more than half of his previous 1993 electorate and Yavlinsky barely made the 5 percent threshold.

For many people it was important not only that Zyuganov actively opposed shock therapy and voucher privatization, but also that his words and actions sharply differed from Gaidar's, Chubais's, and all other politicians supporting radical methods of reform, and continually emphasizing their closeness to the West. Now any politician who has the reputation of a Westernizer, especially as a "friend of Harvard," has no chance to win support from the Russian provinces. Moscow, a special case anyway, confirms this rule regardless.

It should be apparent by now that the KPRF won as an anti-Western party, opposing not only the capitalization of Russia but also the drive to adopt a West-European civilization for the country. Zyuganov, in his books, articles, and speeches, persistently puts forward the thesis that Russia, from all points of view, including geopolitical interests, world view, ideology, and its communal traditions, differs fundamentally from the values, traditions, and political interests of the contemporary West.⁷

The Party of the Russian Provinces, of Russia's Soul

The change in Russia's mood results primarily from a change in the mood of Russia's provinces. Previously, particularly toward the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the provinces, by virtue of Russia's passivity and the Russian trusting nature, blindly looked up to the capital, voted for those whom the "democratic television" recommended, and considered heroes those whom television called heroes. Now, the provinces feel let down and view Moscow with more skepticism. A particular feature of the last Duma elections is that central television, not to mention the central press, did not play a substantial role in the electoral behavior of the provinces. It is also no accident that the victorious KPRF used almost no central television in their election campaign. Zyuganov's skill as a politician was evident when

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he managed to position his party as the party of the provinces. The political and cultural gulf between the capital and the provinces now works for him.

In essence, the KPRF today is primarily a party of the Russian provinces, the party that promises to defend the virtue of the simple Russian man. The KPRF will also defend the originality of Russia's national culture and the virtue of the older generation of Soviet people.

If Russia had been truly and irreversibly returning to the left, the winner in the elections would not have been the KPRF, which put the defense of Russia's statehood at the top of the list, but the Communist Workers' Party of Anpilov-Tyulkin. But this did not happen. The original faithful Leninist Anpilov did not lead his party into the Parliament.

The defense of Russia's originality and the defense of the provinces' interests from the "corrupting influence" of the capital, which became, according to Zyuganov, a "breeding ground of foreign values and foreign interests," became his battle cry. In Russia's provinces, anti-Western and anti-Moscow sentiments became one and the same. Today, success is guaranteed to the politician who links himself with the Russian provinces, who becomes an overt defender of its interests. Today, the idea of opposition to the capital, as a "whore" of democracy and a place of "stolen riches of the simple people" is very popular in Russia. The KPRF won not simply as a communist party, a patriotic party, but as a party that protects the interests of Russia's provinces—the original, real Russia. The KPRF celebrated the simple Russian man with his unimaginative, simple, and understandable Russian language; with his pain, interests, and his connection to the past

and the future. In his numerous election speeches in the Russian hinterland, Zyuganov continually returned to the image of Moscow as an “inside-the-beltway” whore, “getting fat, bundling herself up and engaging in corruption”—and possessing 80 percent of Russia’s financial capital.

Those voters who chose the KPRF harbor nostalgia for the “socialist paradise,” but this time they also harbor an unconcealed hatred of Moscow, considered a breeding ground for strife, pornography, banditry, and lawlessness. Only by portraying the KPRF as the party of Russia’s provinces, as a party that opposes the enrichment of Moscow at the expense of the rest of Russia, is it possible to understand why, first and foremost, voters chose the KPRF in the Russian countryside and in small cities, and certainly in the poorest oblasts.

Zyuganov marvelously understood that, today, the simple Russian man, robbed by the reforms, protests not simply against those who were enriched at his expense, not simply against those who organized and actively supported these exorbitant reforms, but against the “Madams of Moscow” who personify this evil. Incidentally, the “Madams of Moscow” were also condemned by the popular Lebed.

Taken from a simple, human, moral point of view, it is not hard to understand why a great part of the older and middle-aged generation voted

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for the KPRF. For the past three years, the KPRF was the only party that did not degrade the simple post-Soviet man, and even took Soviet history, values, and rites under its wing.

The parties calling themselves democratic seemed strikingly indifferent to the fates of those who were victims of shock therapy, and they lost the election. Fortunately, there is no social base that would permit the renaissance in Russia of

communist totalitarianism. In fact, a considerable number of those who voted for the KPRF in December 1995 also had voted for Yeltsin in June 1991. The reasons were similar: a wave of moral protest against the privileges of the ruling class. The perception was that the democrats entered the Kremlin and then began to allocate property among themselves, and forgot about those simple people from the street who brought them to victory. The democratic intelligentsia began to belittle the victims of reform, disdainfully calling them “sovkom”—a synonym of uncivilization, un-Europeaness. Worse, they began to attack sacred memories and symbols, including the victory of the USSR over fascist Germany, which cost thirty million lives. This seems to be the straw that broke the camel’s back. The simple people developed a hatred for both the democrats and their press. The KPRF, under these conditions, seemed to be a party of moral rescue. It took under its wing the toil and military achievements of the Soviet people. It justly recognized that the life of these aged people had meaning and that their survival was not without reason.

The Underlying Moral Cause of Today's Russian Patriotism

The patriotism of the simple Russian voter, which is causing some concern in the West, reflects less a desire for geopolitical revenge than a demand for simple human justice. When the breakup of the USSR brought so much pain and unhappiness to the simple person, it was natural that he sympathized with the politicians who also mourned the death of the USSR. Today, any politician who wishes to gain the trust of the voter must be a patriot. He should, as they say, ache for Russia, and believe in her strength and her ability to stand on her own two feet and follow her own path, to believe in her people, and defend her culture and historical memory. The politician who shies from uttering the words "motherland" and "patriotism" has no chance in contemporary Russia. This is the tragedy of many democrats and Westernizers—the inability to develop a national point of view, and the belief that for the intelligent person, the Motherland is first and foremost "freedom and human rights." The leader of the KPRF, a bibliophile, understands the sources of Russian discontent. He also writes and speaks simply, but formally. He speaks not of sophisticated economics, but of Russia as a special place, with a "social cosmos," collectivism, *sobornost'*, and a longing for higher ideals of goodness and justice. This is the new patriotic language in Russia, the language that defends the soul of the simple Russian man.

In today's Russia, the word patriotism conveys statehood; the effort to restore effective, strong government, able to fight crime; a strong, reliable army; a country that exerts its influence in the world and conducts an independent foreign policy. In no way is militarism or a craving for imperial revenge compelling active support of the so-called "great power" parties like KPRF and KRO. It is much simpler than that. If indeed there existed in Russia strong military and expansionist feelings, then the breakup of the USSR and the independence of the Baltic and Caucasian states would not have been possible. There is no moral or psychological foundation for geopolitical vengeance to take place in today's Russia. What the West often calls "neo-imperialist tendencies" is instead a deep desire for justice. Many voters ask why no one in Russia nor the West is protecting the rights of Russians in, say, Kazakhstan, where they became second-class people in their own home.

The breakup of the USSR revealed many injustices, many violations of elementary human rights. The rights of the Russian-speakers in the Baltics, for example, were not considered. Belarusians were thrown out of their national state against their will. The desire for a restoration of fairness in this situation is natural. And these feelings, of course, were useful to the parties heralding a patriotic banner.

The breakup of the military-industrial complex into unstable, elemental parts, as it occurred in 1992 and 1993, threatened not only to burden the country with one million unemployed, but to destroy Russia's high-technology industries, as well as her "patriotic" science. The elections produced a party that vowed to save the military-industrial complex, namely, the KPRF. Zyuganov understands well that the common man is proud of Soviet history and its scientific-technical conquests, and that he contributed to it through his daily labor. This is why the KPRF leader does not forget to proclaim, "Our technology, our brains, our hands—they remain dear."

People now see a strong state as the key to eradicating limitless crime. Therefore, Zyuganov's speeches portray the idea of the Russian government connected with order, with the power to halt the "limitlessness," with the power to end the moral and cultural degradation of youth and all of society.

An important motive that compels the simple Russian man to support the "great power" parties, the supporters of the revival of "great" and "mighty" Russia, is tied to the breakup of the USSR and to the Belovezhsky Forest agreements of December 1991. It seems that no one in the world properly assessed the impulse of Russians to relinquish the past, to build a new world. Russians who *en masse* actively supported the unification of Germany and the destruction of the Warsaw Pact suddenly found out that except for the "fools," no one is hurrying to disarm. NATO not only did not disintegrate after the USSR did, but on the contrary seems poised to broaden itself on former Warsaw Pact territory, and even to include former Soviet republics. Closer to home, Russians saw that in Central Asia, for example, the diaspora was suddenly deprived of the USSR, of the only government

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they knew—and became outcasts in their own land. After the breakup of the USSR, the simple Russian man saw that the world had not changed, and that in this world of rights, those with the stronger army have rights.

The common voter used a litmus test on the patriotic reliability of politicians by how they reacted to the breakup of the USSR. Those who justified the breakup of the USSR and participated actively in the Belovezhsky Forest agreements of December 1991 did not have any chance of winning these elections. The fate of Sergei Shakhrai, who entered Russian history as the author of the document dissolving the USSR, is a wonderful example. The KPRF aggressively portrayed itself as an opponent of the breakup of the USSR and of the Belovezhsky agreements—supporting instead the gradual reconstitution of the Soviet government. The election statement of the KPRF's ruling Presidium of 4 December 1995 is instructive. There, the KPRF wasted no time boasting its record of opposing the dismemberment of the Soviet Union.⁸ Now, the voter is on the side of the KPRF, even on the issue of organizing a referendum on the "voluntary" reunification of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and possibly Ukraine within the framework of a confederation.

Characteristically, in the recent elections Zyuganov did not advocate a patriotism of blood, a nationalist patriotism, but rather what can be called pure Russian patriotism. "From a national point of view," Zyuganov writes, "Russia has a complex ethnic community on the basis of which lies a powerful core of Great Russians, Little Russians, and Byelorussians."⁹

Importantly, many voters also perceived the KPRF as free of mafiosi, crooks, and benefactors of privatization. The leader of the KPRF is a politician "with clean hands," in a country where limitless crime prevails. Here it was important not only to have clean hands, but also a clean political conscience. Another litmus test for the voters in these elections was the reaction to the bombing of the Russian White House on 4 October 1993. These elections reflected the belated moral reaction to the bloodshed of that time. The paradox is that in the previous Duma elections in 1993,

Zhirinovskiy won because he did not touch the sore spot, and evaded the issue of Yeltsin's responsibility for the spilled blood of October 1993. Today the leaders of the KPRF stress their moral protest against the violent, illegal dissolution of the last Supreme Soviet and the resulting bloodshed.

Conclusion

In the last elections, the majority of voters were led in their preferences by simple moral feelings. Zyuganov is lucky that the moral convulsions resulting from shock therapy, crime, and nostalgia for Soviet stability translated into votes for him. But it is also necessary to realize that the free, democratic elections that he won confute the nature of the KPRF as a neo-communist, slavophile party. The very fact that the Russian people were able to protest against shock therapy and degradation of culture in a civilized way means that Russia is following a path to democracy, much like other post-communist countries. The fact that two-thirds of Russians believe that their country has taken the wrong path since 1991 does not mean that they are ready to return to the past, with no free elections or free speech—new and cherished rights.

The real issue is to find a path of reform that will not degrade human dignity, and that will ensure the creation of a new post-Soviet middle class. A huge role will be played by the West, and in particular the United States, which needs to formulate a new policy towards Russia in light of the crisis of its present policy. It is important for the West to understand that although it speaks today to a weak and impoverished Russia, it is still a Christian Russia, a Russia with a millennium of history, and it does not appreciate or forget missionaries who preach to her without wanting to understand her long history.

In the end, Zyuganov does not want to return to the past. He does not want a leftist Russia, since in a true leftist and communist Russia there would no longer be a place for the Russian slavophile and Orthodox Zyuganov. Zyuganov understands this very well. The struggle for a voice is one thing, and the construction of an independent and prospering Russia is quite another. Nothing is lost for either liberal reform in Russia, begun ten years ago by Gorbachev, or for the establishment of friendly, dignified relations with the West. For such a partnership to occur, it is necessary to see and to understand the logic and behavior of the simple Russian man, and recognize his right to be on his own and to defend his sacred human interests.

Notes

1. *Pravda*, 23 November 1995.
2. Interview with Aleksander Kwasniewski in *Pravda*, 18 November 1995.
3. Gennady Zyuganov, *Za Gorizontom* (Beyond the Horizon) (Moscow: Informpechat, 1995), 75.
4. *Ibid.* 76.
5. Krasnov and Nikolaev, "In the Swing of New Thinking" *Sovietskaya Rossiya*, 15 June 1991.
6. *Zavtra*, No. 38 (1995).
7. Zyuganov, *Russia and the Contemporary World* (Moscow: 1995), 20.
8. *Pravda*, 7 December 1995.
9. Zyuganov, *Za Gorizontom*, 71.