

**Project on Emerging Actors**

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**The « opposition » youth  
movements in Russia  
...in search of political alternatives...**

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**In partnership with the Thomas More Institute (Brussels-Paris)  
and Multipol.org**

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<p>This study is based on informal talks in Moscow from July 10 to August 10 2007, with several young journalists, researchers, Duma deputies and the majority of the leaders of the youth movements presented in this paper. The analyses refer primarily to confirmed and reported facts expressed during various meetings. General interpretation by the author can not be overlooked however, after having followed for more than ten years the political, economic and social events in Russia and in this post-Soviet region.</p>
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## Introduction

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The colourful revolutions which shook Russia's neighbouring countries during the first half of the decade 2000 have had a profound effect on the Kremlin. The strategic role of the movements led by young political activists, who were at the heart of the protests especially in Ukraine and Georgia, but also to a certain extent in Kyrgyzstan, has aroused similar fears in Moscow as to the potential mobilization of a Russian educated youth movement from urban areas and which are close to the liberal and democratic opposition parties Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS).

The first youth movements emerged at the beginning of 2005. SMENA was founded in January by young activists returning from Ukraine where they had participated in the demonstrations on Independence Square and had lived among the orange tents. Then in the spring the most dynamic organizations "Oborona" (Defense), "My" (Us) and "Da!" (Yes!) were rapidly established. They attracted many militant young people and sympathizers of the democratic opposition parties. "Oborona" for example is made up of as many young SPS militants as young people from "Yabloko" whose leader, Ilya Iachine, exerts a significant influence within the youth movement. In the same way, "Da!" directed by Maria Gaïdar, member of the SPS, and daughter of the former liberal Prime Minister Egor Gaïdar, is apparently a wing of the SPS party. As for "My", founded by Roman Dobrokhotoy, student at the MGIMO<sup>1</sup>, attracts the offspring of the social and intellectual elite, in search of adventure. In 2005, the democratic and liberal opposition in Russia was in a state of turmoil. The young generations reinforced their political commitment by multiplying their affiliations to different groups. Each structure, whether it was civil or political, new or "classical", grew and supported each other.

The federal authorities in Moscow and their regional allies did not take long in organising their own groups, mass movements capable of mobilizing thousands (even tens of thousands) of young adults and teenagers, for example Nashi (Our Own) and Molodaia Guardia (Young Guard). These youth groups, with the financial support from the regional and federal administrations, grew considerably at the end of 2005 and especially during the year 2006. Their numbers tripled and their operations and objectives matured. Their programmes produced results. These youth movements rapidly established themselves on the civil and political scene in Russia. They became the real gateway to the Kremlin network, the obligatory path for those in Moscow or the regions wishing to embark upon a public career

Within a few years the Russian youth groups in all their diversity, or at least those most aware, have found themselves integrated into the political game and used by either the opposition or the government. The former are supposed to be a critical force, dynamic and radical who can increase the ranks for future demonstrations; the latter are organised into defence strongholds who can ensure, if need be in the streets too, the continuity of the current system.

In the summer of 2007, only a few months away from parliamentary elections in December and less than a year from presidential elections, Vladimir Putin does not seem

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<sup>1</sup> State University in Moscow for Studies in International Relations. A prestigious university institution which prepares the future political and diplomatic elite of Russia.

disposed to change the Constitution to allow him to serve a third term. Thus this simplistic dichotomy of the Russian political scene has lost all its relevance. What could have been valid at the beginning of 2006 does not seem to reflect the situation twelve months on. An alternative to Vladimir Putin's regime is, to say the least, uncertain. The traditional liberal and democratic opposition is no longer capable of taking on this role. Therefore a rebalancing of the Russian political scene can hardly be expected in the near future against the all-powerful system of the Kremlin.

This study endorses the excellent analysis expounded by Françoise Daucé<sup>2</sup> in 2004, who shows that Russia has chosen its own particular method of politics, certainly democratic but not liberal. It is a question of delving deeper, by examining where ideas stand on the Russian political scene. It is not so much a question of what sort of eventual emerging opposition there is but rather on the possibilities of an opening or a fracture of the Putin regime.

- Which ideas still have critical potential?
  
- Which ideas could be the basis for a future opposition, likely to embody an alternative or to reintroduce the conditions of a political choice?

After an introduction illustrating the state of activities of all the main youth movements - invaluable indicators of the ideological dynamism of a country - this study will attempt to evaluate the political reality of the tide of ideas prevalent in Russia today. It will then be of interest to present a number of purely opportunist positions and the conditions for breaking the locks of the system.

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<sup>2</sup> Françoise Daucé, « Yabloko or the failure of political liberalism in Russia », *Critique internationale*, CERi, n°22, January 2004.

## Youth Movements in Russia: current status

The study of youth movements is a useful exercise in analyzing the political situation of a country. By their diversity and ideological flexibility, their popular ambition and natural radicalism, they reveal the state of partisan forces, the present prevailing ideas, the actors and future personalities with potential perspectives. They are excellent indicators of deeper tendencies, which are not necessarily detectable or directly accessible. The political youth movements are witness to the strength of confrontations and political regroupings in the country. They are a sign of predispositions susceptible to be in the front line in the short term. So what has become of these 2005 groups in Russia? Which groups have endured?

The following tables illustrate in detail the principle youth movements in Russia today.

### Loyalist movements

#### Kremlin movements

	Nashi	Molodaïa Guardia	Mestnie (locals)
Founded	April 2005	Spring 2005	Spring 2005
Leadership	Vassili Iakomenko, at the head of a federal council of 5 persons.	Alexandre Borissov. The leadership is divided between the central committee, the coordination council and the political council. <sup>3</sup>	?
Activists	10000 active members. Other personality : Nikita Borovikov.	15000 declared members in April 2007 against the Disagreement March.	5 active members, but 30000 young adults, ready to be mobilized in exchange for a financial incentive.
Type of activities	Street actions. Summer camps, training institute. Social modernisation programs.	Street actions. Political campaigns.	Street actions in support of Nashi.
Partisan affiliation	None. The movement is only accountable to Vladislav Sourkov <sup>4</sup> .	United Russia.	None. The movement only comes under the authority of the Moscow governor, M. Grobov.
Financial sponsors	Federal administration. Large companies excluding energy sector.	Federal administration.	Moscow regional administration.

Only Nashi and Molodaïa Guardia are included in our study.

<sup>3</sup> The most influential persons of the movement sit in on at least two out of these three councils. <http://www.molgvardia.ru/> Notably Alexandre Borissov, Andreï Safronov and Andreï Tourchak.

<sup>4</sup> Deputy chief of the presidential administration in charge of conceptualizing Vladimir Putin's policies. Furthermore he is responsible for all parliamentary affairs

### « Social-democratic » movements

	Hourra	Pobeda (Victory)
Founded	Spring 2007	April 2007
Leadership	Sergueï Chargounov, writer & journalist	Dmitri Goudkov, journalist, son of deputy Guenadi Goudkov.
Activists	10000 active members officially. Base: young adults from the old party Rodina (group Za Rodina).	50000 registered members officially, in fact very few active members. Base: young adults from the old party The Life and from the social-democratic party. Essentially the leaders of these groups : Iouri Lopussov. Alexis Karpienko.
Type of activities	Street actions. Media campaigns. Summer camps. The group exists thanks to its famous leader.	Participation in different forums and discussion groups organized by the civil society. Mainly fictive activities.
Partisan affiliation	Fair Russia	Fair Russia
Financial sponsors	Fair Russia party Hourra seems to be relatively isolated and hardly supported.	Fair Russia party + business men from Moscow from Guenadi Goudkov network

The two movements are included in our study.

## Opposition Movements

### Communists, Extreme-Left

	Levie Front (Left Front )	Avant-Guardia Krasnaïa Molodaïa (Red Avant-garde Youth)	Union of Young Communists
Founded	/	? – active organization only really since 2005.	/
Leadership	Ilya Panamarev	Sergueï Oudaltsov	?
Activists	International communists, also from minority movements (Union of Young Communists of Russia ) <sup>5</sup>	1500 active members. Reinforced by the 5000 active members of the national bolchevik Party.	2500 active members out of an official total of 35000 registered.
Type of activities	Political debates in the communist Party, strong influence in the regions.	Street actions. Member of the collective « Another Russia ».	Struggle for influence in the regions against the « Levie Front »
Partisan affiliation	Against the majority nationalist tendency in the communist Party of Russia (KPRF). Close to Ivan Melnikov.	National Bolshevik Party of Eduard Limonov.	Support from Guenadi Ziouganov of the KPRF.
Financial sponsors	?	Eduard Limonov network.	?

Only the l'Avant-Guardia Krasnaïa Molodaïa (AKM) is studied here.

<sup>5</sup> Directed by Dacha Mitina, communist deputy elected in 2003. Not to be mistaken with the Union of Young Communists, loyal to Guenadi Ziouganov.

### Nationalists

	DPNI Movement against illegal immigration	Narod (People)
Founded	Spring 2002	Summer 2007
Leadership	Alexandre Belov.	Alexis Navalnie (journalist), Sergueï Gouliaev, Piotr Miloserdov (politician), Zahar Prilepen (writer).
Activists	Between 3000 et 4000 active members.	The movement only exists because of its leaders. The objective is to become a unification pool.
Types d'activités	Street actions. Monitoring and denunciation of illegal immigrants. Media campaign against offences committed by illegal foreigners in Russia. Free services in social aid : legal protection and personal security services.	Campaign for primaries with « Another Russia ». Street demonstrations: members will participate, in a personal capacity, in the Russian March and the Disagreement March in the autumn of 2007. Partisan commitment in municipal elections in Moscow in March 2008.
Partisan affiliation	Velika Russia, new party founded by Dmitri Rogozine. <sup>6</sup>	Yabloko, but politically close to Velika Russia propositions.
Financial sponsors	Probably business men supportive of the nationalist themes.	Few means.

The two movements are included in the study.

### Liberals

	Young SPS	Oborona	Narodno-demokratichnie Soyouz, Molodioje <sup>7</sup>
Founded	/	Spring 2005	Summer 2006
Leadership	There is no federal leadership. In Moscow, influence of Oleg Kozlovsky.	Oleg Kozlovsky, Ioulia Malachova, Nastia Karimova, Alexandre Khomoukaev, Micha Mourachov.	Ioulia Malachova
Activists	Movement divided between partisans in favour of negotiation with the Kremlin (SPS party line) and those who refuse all contact with the authorities.  Few active members.	About 100 active members for all Russia.	About a 1000 active members. The majority are very young.  Numbers probably exaggerated.
Type of activities	Movement paralysed. Project for reorganization at federal level of the Young SPS who remained loyal to the party. Initiator : Natalia Chavchoukova.  Electoral observation. Demonstrations against the succession process.	Loss of momentum in the movement.  Street actions for the collective « Another Russia ».	Few activities programmed eclipsed by the actions of « Another Russia », movement no longer member since July 2007.  Campaign for the presidential elections of March 2008, in favour of Mikhaïl Kassianov.
Partisan affiliation	SPS. Young SPS dissidents are divide between Mikhaïl Kassianov and the collective « The Other Russia ».	None. Refuses to take sides in the primaries of « The Other Russia ».	Narodno-demokratichnie Soyouz, party directed by Mikhaïl Kassianov.

<sup>6</sup> Russian politician. One of the nationalist leaders.

<sup>7</sup> The Youth of the democratic and popular Union. The party of the democratic and popular Union is the electoral platform of Mikhaïl Kassianov, ex-Prime Minister of Russia and (still) non-official candidate to the presidential election of March 2008.



Financial sponsors	SPS, especially Anatoli Tchoubaïs <sup>8</sup>	Almost non-existent finances, probably from foreign sources.	Support network for Mikhaïl Kassianov, notably oligarch Oleg Deripaska, magnate of Russian aluminium.
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The three movements are included in the study.

### Democrats

	Young Yabloko	SMENA	Da	My
Founded	1995. Federal council formed in 2005.	Winter 2005	Spring 2005	Spring 2005
Leadership	Ilya Iachine, Alexandre Chouchev, Olga Vlassova <sup>9</sup>	Horizontal movement without directive organ. Influential person : Stanislav Iakovlev.	Maria Gaïdar	Roman Dobrokhotov
Activists	Few active members, weak capacity for mobilization.	Few active members (about 50)	Few active members. The movement depends entirely on the commitment and network of Maria Gaïdar.	Movement has almost disappeared.
Type of activities	Electoral campaign for Yabloko.  Active members associated personally to collective « The Other Russia ».	Street demonstrations, occasional - against abusive actions of the government <sup>10</sup>  Member of collective « The Other Russia ».	Campaign for municipal elections in Moscow in March 2008.  Student debates.	
Partisan affiliation	Yabloko	United civil front of Garri Kasparov. Support for Viktor Gueratchenko <sup>11</sup> or the primaries of the collective.	Yabloko.	
Financial sponsors	Network of Grigori Iavlinski, leader of Yabloko party.	Network of Garri Kasparov, among certain businessmen of Moscow.	Companies connected to network of Egor Gaïdar.	

Only the movements « Young Yabloko », SMENA and Da are included in the study.

<sup>8</sup> Very influential politician in the Nineties, he led the main economic reforms of the new capitalist Russia, especially the privatisation of industries. Very unpopular with the public who suffered from this uncontrolled liberalism, he keeps out of the limelight on the political scene. Today he directs the monopoly of electricity distribution. Nevertheless, he still has considerable influence in the SPS party via his right-hand man Leonis Gozman, one of the party directors.

<sup>9</sup> These three persons make up the Federal Council of the Young Yabloko. Each one represents a regional delegation: Iachine for Moscow, Chouchev for Saint-Petersburg and Vlassova for Ekaterinburg.

<sup>10</sup> This means helping certain people, threatened by the administration, in the defence of their civil rights.

<sup>11</sup> Ex-director of the Central Bank of Russia, only candidate in September 2007 for the collective "Other Russia" in opposition to Vladimir Putin.

In Russia, as elsewhere, youth movements are at the service of men and parties whose capacity for decisions and initiatives reflect directly on the political scene. They are only the instruments in a game of influence often reduced to a mere function of communication if not propaganda. Their strength and their resources (human and financial), as well as their modus operandi, are invaluable indicators of the situation of the political forces within the country.

- The pro-Kremlin movements dominate the streets and the "civil" society in Russia. They are the effective instruments of political propaganda and mobilization, capable of guaranteeing continuity after March 2008.
- The few independent youth organisations more or less affiliated to the democratic and liberal opposition parties have rapidly lost their impetus. It must be said that since 2002, the Kremlin has not encouraged free speech and the formation of independent structures. But the latter have not been able either to propose credible political alternatives.

Personified today by the group « The Other Russia »<sup>12</sup> led by the paradoxical pair Garri Kasparov and Eduard Limonov of the National Bolshevik Party – this opposition formed as a result of the orange agitation, can only play a minor role in the future parliamentary ( December 2007) and presidential (March 2008) campaigns.

- The political restructuring on the left, especially among the nationalist and socialist mix, have brought about new political forces and not the least the (Youth) Movement against Illegal Immigration (DPNI). Some of them have proved to be very dependent on the Kremlin; others however could gain in autonomy and greatly influence the course of Russian politics.

The following analyses, each one devoted to a major political tendency of the current Russian political scene do not exclusively deal with the youth movements. The latter only illustrate or reveal the Russian political reality examined in this study.

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<sup>12</sup> This informal collective founded in July 2006 on the fringe of the G8 summit in Saint-Petersburg, assembles representatives from different political movements and the defence of human rights. It targets putting an end to the "anti-constitutional turnaround rampant in Russia" and the " decrease in citizens' constitutional rights".

## The loss of momentum of liberal democracy

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Since the Eltsine era, the idea of democracy for the Russian population is associated with political disorder, governmental instability, abuse of power and the defence of the interests of a minority. The liberal idea is only understood in the economic sense of the word and identified with the uncontrollable capitalism of the beginning of the Nineties, which Anatoli Tchoubais still embodies. However, the voters hardly appear hostile to a Russian democracy, which is more authoritarian, orderly, and summed up by Vladislav Sourkov<sup>13</sup> as "sovereign democracy". Indeed, the majority of the electorate, in supporting Vladimir Putin, are convinced they are voting for a certain form of democracy, which, in fact, does exist. The minimum electoral mechanisms, the vote for all and electoral regularity, are actually upheld. This sort of democracy is enough for the people. To go back to the "traditional" liberal democratic parties in Russia, such as Yabloko and the SPS, would be to take the risk of returning to the anarchy of the Nineties, which would bring into question the slow but constant improvement of living conditions of the last several years.

### Internal divisions

The parties themselves including certain youth groups which appeared in 2005 are not however blameless with regard to the liberal democratic collapse. Internal divisions within the democratic camp have damaged the vitality and the credibility of the movement. In the party Oborona for example, the mix of SPS militants and Yabloko ended in a crisis which excluded Ilya Iachine, leader of the Young Yabloko. Since then, the group has almost become quite simply a small wing of the SPS and the Young SPS. The Yabloko party has in fact always been split between a rather radical tendency on the one hand, which supports a frontal and systematic opposition to the Kremlin and, on the other hand, a more moderate approach, in favour of negotiating with the authorities the beginning of a rehabilitation into the political system. This fight for influence between the radicals, Sergueï Mitrokhine and Ilya Iachine, on one side and Sergueï Ivanenko (vice-president of Yabloko) and Sergueï Papov (Yabloko deputy in the Duma) on the other, is still ongoing and hinders the strategic coherence within the democratic structure.

The second group currently has the upper hand. With parliamentary elections in December and taking into account the failure<sup>14</sup> of 2003, it has been necessary to choose between political survival and ideological resolution. So Sergueï Ivanenko for Yabloko is trying to obtain from Vladislav Sourkov the possibility of sending a few deputies to the next Duma. As for the SPS, it is engaged in a similar negotiation, which is the cause of the dissidence of the Young Moscow SPS and the resignation of Oleg Kozlovsky, their leader. But it is difficult in Russia to proceed differently. The elections generally are regulated by the Kremlin: certain parties are supposed to sit in the Duma, others are not. The ideological speech necessarily passes after elementary political considerations, in the name of the party's survival. The directorate of Yabloko and SPS are actually no longer looking for a way to propose a new policy but to reintegrate the political arena.

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<sup>13</sup> He is the principle mediator for relations between the parties and those in power in Russia.

<sup>14</sup> Yabloko and the SPS did not pass the 7% mark to enter the Duma. The two parties only sent a handful of deputies elected by majority vote.

## Marginalized structures

So it could be said that the liberal democracy movement in Russia hardly appears promising, just before major elections which will have an unquestionable impact on the life of the parties and movements which embody it:

- The Yabloko and SPS parties await the results of their respective negotiations with the authorities. They are keeping their distance from the collective "The Other Russia" and did not participate at all in the primary elections organized in September which is supposed to result in the appointment of a single candidate for the opposition to run for the presidential elections of March 2008.

They will probably only be active again as an opposition force at the beginning of 2008. However, if they are excluded yet again from the Duma, it will be difficult to gain political credibility with the electorate.

- The Young Yabloko of Ilya Iachine are also forced to a certain reserve. The movement has not a priori envisaged any street demonstrations for the autumn. Its members are supposed to take part, only on an individual basis, in the demonstrations of the collective "The Other Russia"; they will not associate themselves in the political process undertaken by this group. According to Ilya Iachine, it is necessary to await "the handover of Vladimir Putin to his heir and hope that the system will then start to crack".<sup>15</sup>
- Oborona, annex to the Young SPS, is paralysed by the double affiliation of its leaders. It seems that they are hesitating to break completely with the party. Oleg Kozlovsky, influential personality of Oborona and the Young SPS, does not hide contacts made with certain members of the federal structure. Their dormant activities coincide with those of the collective "The Other Russia". They have no possibility of initiative and carry no weight. Their troops are reduced, in Moscow, to about a dozen members. In the same way, their political position within "The Other Russia" doesn't allow any influence. Oborona has decided not to select their own candidate for the primaries but rather support the chosen candidate.
- The liberal democratic participation in the collective "The Other Russia" does not therefore suggest that it is a significant force. Yabloko and the SPS follow their own strategy. Oborona no longer counts. SMENA, another youth movement, can only muster about fifty people. As for the three personalities who are supposed to guarantee the democratic and liberal expression of the group<sup>16</sup>, only Garri Kasparov remains. Mikhaïl Kassianov left the collective at the beginning of July and is preparing to stand for the presidential election, whatever the results of the primaries of the collective "The Other Russia". As for Vladimir Ryzhkov, independent deputy in the Duma, he seems to be closer to the SPS; it would seem he is to make up the new directive troika of the party with Boris Nemtsov and Nikita Belykh,
- The group "The Other Russia" is really only still alive thanks to the mobilization of the extreme left, in particular the National Bolshevik Party (NBP) of Eduard Limonov and the Avant-Guardia Krasnaïa Molodaïa (AKM) of Sergueï Oudaltsov. These groups organize and mobilize the collective. Last April for example, the request for permission for the Disagreement March in Moscow was made by three personalities of these movements among whom Sergueï Oudaltsov. In the same way, it is rather significant to note that Ilya Iachine regularly associates himself

<sup>15</sup> Interview of the author, Moscow, 20 July 2007

<sup>16</sup> Garri Kasparov, Mikhaïl Kassianov, Vladimir Ryzhkov.

personally to the actions of the AKM and the NBP, their initiatives being the only means of effective opposition.

Without these impressive movements capable of mobilizing several thousands in the streets, the collective "The Other Russia" would obviously be a marginal liberal-democratic splinter group. Garri Kasparov is a general without troops. It is not his victory at the special Congress of the collective, on September 30 2007, intended to designate a single candidate for the opposition to run for President in March 2008 that will make a huge difference. Elected by 400 regional representatives out of 500, running against Mikhaïl Kassianov, Viktor Guerachtchenko, Vladimir Ryzhkov and the virtually unheard of Boris Vinogradov and Sergueï Gouliaev, his success is mainly due to his international fame, his national popularity and above all his political neutrality, as opposed to Kassianov or Ryzhkov who appear to be influenced by the SPS. He was really the only candidate able to draw together the different tendencies of the collective "The Other Russia", ranging from the liberals to the Bolshevik nationalists of Eduard Limonov. He will not however be able to unite the whole opposition under his name. He will be a candidate among those who have already declared themselves to be in the running, namely Mikhaïl Kassianov, Grigori Iavlinski and Guenadi Ziouganov of the KPRF (Communist Party).

## **Confusion on the left: communist and socialist illusions**

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The main extreme left, primarily the NBP and the AKM, is not an option for a credible ideological alternative. In spite of their undeniable popular success and their capacity for mobilization, their political program is outdated and does not correspond to the general needs of the population. Moreover it would be catastrophic for the country's good economic health, which, on the basis of the high price of oil, is expecting a private industrial and banking development, capable of ensuring a share of the productive investments essential for economic growth. The extreme left has a place within the group "The Other Russia" only because of their critical position as the opposition to the Putin system. This alliance aims at countering the regime, to destroy it if necessary, in order to re-establish the conditions for a free political contest. The current stake is not the political debate in itself but the conditions for the debate. Consequently, the extreme left would become an unavoidable player. It will be different once this has happened.

As for the Communists of the KPRF, they no longer represent, nor have they for a long time, an alternative political model, which could not, in any event, take into account the new global economy. The KPRF adheres to a populist discourse, intended to preserve its electoral bastions, so as to continue to weigh on the Russian political scene. Its only concern is to maintain a few elected officials in the Duma. This requires a balanced act between a populist opposition to the official party, United Russia, and demonstrations of loyalty. The KPRF is therefore engaged in a semi opposition. It collaborates with the authorities not on the basis of recommended political ideas but in order to preserve assets and revenues of influence. The ideology is still there but has been forsaken for political survival. The party seems to have given up the idea of gaining power.

### **The new Russian social democracy**

There remains the socialist or social-democratic idea, which since 1991 has been appropriated by a number of small parties, from the social-democratic party of Mikhaïl Gorbatchev, taken over by Vladimir Kichenine, deputy of the Duma and ex-KGB, right up to the Party of Life founded at the beginning of the decade 2000 by Sergueï Mironov<sup>17</sup>. A number of other structures have equally combined patriotic, even nationalist, discourse with socialist programs, following the example of the Popular Party of Guenadi Goudkov or of Rodina (first version) of Dmitri Rogozine and Sergueï Glazeev<sup>18</sup>.

The new party Fair Russia, created in the second half of 2006 with Rodina, the Party of Life and the Pensioners' Party, must organize this merger and embody a renewed Russian social democracy. Its general program or the political platform of the party, published in April 2007, appears particularly eloquent in its priorities:

- social justice: ensure a future for all;
- freedom and equal rights: protection for all and freedom of choice;
- solidarity between generations;
- social security: ensure work for all, and education for all;
- development of patriotism;
- State responsibility with respect to its citizens;
- promotion of democracy.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> President of the Federal Council, upper Chamber of the two-house parliamentary system in Russia

<sup>18</sup> Brilliant economist, he was close to the Communist party in the Nineties. Comprehensive of the patriotic discourse today he tends to represent an original path between the social-democrats and the nationalists.

<sup>19</sup> Summary of main points of program presented on page 2 of the political platform 2007 of the party Fair Russia

This party, backed by Vladimir Putin, was created in opposition to the party United Russia, which was considered by Russian and foreign observers to be the party of the President. So it does not mean that the social-democratic idea creates antagonism.

### **The shams of Fair Russia**

It is interesting to try to describe the ideological vacuity of the party Fair Russia.

- To begin with it simply refers to the initiatives and projects of the new youth movements affiliated to the party, especially Pobeda directed by Dmitri Goudkov.

The project "young city" which consists in uniting several thousand couples into a cooperation to bear pressure on the local authorities in order to obtain building land, is not politically decisive. It does correspond to the social need for housing, but it is far from being a major stake in Russian society today. Furthermore, it doesn't appear very realistic. In order to really exist and be significant, Dmitri Goudkov believes that the co-operative should amass nearly 5000 young couples...

Another of the actions for the summer was to make a comparison of the holidays of the richest and the poorest Russians.

Furthermore, Dmitri Goudkov, whose father, Guenadi Goudkov is an influential personality of the party, is responsible for many other projects which do not have any practical or political reality. He was one of the principal founders in 2005 of the Civil Chamber of Youth<sup>20</sup>, which doubles in fact the Civil Chamber established by Vladimir Putin in September 2005. This twin chamber has only an advisory role and has not even been officially registered at the Ministry of Justice. Likewise significant political tone are not advantageous to the party. It stands out more for the original position taken by its leader and will be covered in the last part of this study.

- The party Fair Russia cannot claim any socialist or social-democratic guarantee. None of its members, especially those standing for the leadership, have the authority and the popular recognition necessary to give credence to such an ideological commitment. The only political personality of Russia, respected for his "leftist" convictions, corresponding to the social-democratic profile, is Sergueï Glazeev, and he is not included in the project. He has indeed been invited to join the party but the Kremlin is opposed. He does however enjoy an excellent reputation with the electorate. He is appreciated for his honesty and his intellectual rigour, which have saved him from many compromising situations. He would undoubtedly have given the party a truly political substance.

Fair Russia, likewise in search of its own independence, tried to recruit Vladimir Ryzhkov. It is not easy to know who, the Kremlin or the interested party, refused.

Hence Fair Russia suffers from a lack of authority, in other words reliability. Its leaders represent nothing but themselves and so it is difficult to believe in the new prospects they promise.

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<sup>20</sup> It assembles the main leaders of the youth movements and parties in Russia as well as young professionals from all sectors (journalists, businessmen, scientists, doctors...). There are in all 37 or 39 members. Half have already joined Pobeda.



## The "social-democratic" reality in Russia

The reality of Fair Russia is obviously not ideological, nor even political. Its essential purpose seems more related to rivalry of influence between groups or networks with their own agenda acting in and around the Kremlin.

It is a well-known fact, that this new party was, at least partially, formed against Vladislav Sourkov who had no word in the process and who saw Sergueï Mironov named leader, whom he does not really appreciate. Furthermore Fair Russia was supposed to embody an opposition to the party United Russia; the project was also aiming at Boris Gryzlov<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, taking into account the privileged relations between Sergueï Mironov and Igor Setchine<sup>22</sup>, of the association between Viktor Ivanov<sup>23</sup> and Boris Gryzlov, and of the relative isolation of Vladislav Sourkov<sup>24</sup>, it appears that this political project has above all served in the race for the presidential succession, by developing the strategy of the Setchine/Mironov duo in order to defy the others.

In the light of crossed information, three strategies or three groups stand out, each one presenting its own option for March 2008.

- Option of Viktor Ivanov, associated with Nikolai Patrouchev, director of the Russian internal security services (FSB).

They would like Boris Gryzlov, who is easily manipulated, to hold the presidency. Vladimir Putin would act in the shadows within the Security Council.

- A group around Dmitri Medvedev<sup>25</sup>, who includes the two liberal ministers, Alexis Koudrine (finances) and German Gref (economic development and trade), Anatoli Tchoubaïs and the principal oligarchs. Vladislav Sourkov is also one of the groups.  
With the weakening of the candidate Medvedev, Sergueï Narichkine has been picked out. He is Deputy Prime Minister in charge of foreign trade.

- Option of Igor Setchine, who supports Sergueï Mironov for the presidency.

The idea would be to initiate a constitutional reform in Russia, establishing a real parliamentary system which would make it possible for Vladimir Putin to occupy the all-powerful post of Prime Minister.

This last possibility is currently under discussion within the party Fair Russia, Sergueï Mironov having already apparently declared his support for reinforcing parliamentary control.

Vladimir Putin's recent declaration on October 1 2007 declaring that he will lead the United Russia list for the next parliamentary elections tends to confirm the third strategic option. Vladimir Putin does not obviously intend to take a back seat in politics after 2008. Will he become Prime Minister or will he lead Russia's most important political party? What relationship will he have with the next President of Russia whose function could be devoid of all substance? Options 1 and 2 cannot be excluded; nothing is known as yet of the personality or the political scope of the next president.

<sup>21</sup> President of United Russia and by extension of the Duma

<sup>22</sup> Deputy Chief to the presidential administration

<sup>23</sup> Advisor to Vladimir Putin, he is one of his closest allies.

<sup>24</sup> Supposedly close to the legal and liberal personalities of Saint-Petersburg who supported Dmitri Medvedev's option, today on the way out.

<sup>25</sup> Vice-Prime Minister of the Russian government, possible candidate to succeed Vladimir Putin



## **The deep-rooted political weakness of the nationalist idea**

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Nationalism in Russia is an idea in vogue, largely widespread in all social strata and in all regions of the Federation. But, politically, it does not enjoy the success one would expect.

### **Two leaders with ambiguous strategies**

On the political scene nationalism is personified by two strong charismatic personalities: Dmitri Rogozine and Sergueï Babourine. Their popularity is undoubtedly due to their talent in public speaking but especially to the constancy of their political commitment dating back to 1991<sup>26</sup>. Nevertheless, these two leaders are somewhat ambiguous in their discourse and this hinders an effective political stand for a coordinated nationalist tendency.

Since the 1995 elections when Sergueï Babourine stood for the first time, he has always kept his distance from any party or electoral nationalist alliance which has explicitly opposed the Kremlin. At the time, he remained outside the electoral bloc made up by the Congress of the Russian Communities led by General Lebed. In 2003, he joined Rodina which had lost its position as an opposition force with the arrival of Dmitri Rogozine who had the support of the Kremlin. Finally in 2005 he was excluded from Rodina following an obscure plot<sup>27</sup> against Rogozine who was increasingly taking his distance from the Kremlin. It was at this time that Rogozine started a hunger strike in favour of the Pensioner movement. Since then, Sergueï Babourine directs his own officially registered small party, Narodnie Soyuz (Popular Union), which can only claim to have 1 or 2% of the votes. His loyalty to the State and his patriotic feelings have always won over the temptation to build a real nationalist movement of opposition.

Likewise, Dmitri Rogozine cannot be considered to be a real opponent to the Kremlin, on the basis of nationalism. He is a man who belongs to the system, to the nomenklatura; his father was an important soviet civil servant. His only ambition is to gain power. In the Nineties the nationalist option seemed to be the practical and popular way to achieve this and he tried very hard. Over the years he has negotiated untiringly with the authorities; Vladimir Putin's Russia understands the nationalist leanings better than Boris Eltsine's time. Dmitri Rogozine has finally obtained a deputy mandate in the Duma, together with the presidency of the International Affairs Commission, the direction of the Russian Delegation to the European Council and the Representation of the Russian President to the Baltic States. In the summer of 2004 after the re-election of Vladimir Putin, he expected a ministerial post in exchange for his loyalty but to no avail. Since, he has tried to play his own nationalist card by raising the stakes with the Kremlin via the Pensioner movement. At the beginning of 2006 he was prepared to engage in a head-on opposition. But he did not dare to challenge the threats from above and was forced to announce in April 2006, his momentary withdrawal from political life. With the imminent elections of 2007 he has taken the initiative to found a new party with radical nationalist undertones, Velika Russia, with the notorious Russian fascist Andreï Sovolev and the Civil Movement against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) of Alexandre Belov. This radical option would seem to be tactical; Rogozine's negotiations with the Kremlin are under way once more. He has not lost his contacts within the presidential administration, far from it, especially with

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<sup>26</sup> Both men have made the fall of the Soviet Union the basis for a new political debate on the return of Russian compatriots, in other words, of all citizens of the CEI states whose national roots are imbedded in the Russian Federation. The Congress of Russian Communities, founded in 1992 by Rogozine was set up precisely for this reason.

<sup>27</sup> They mutually accused each other of being involved with the Kremlin.

Igor Setchine and Viktor Ivanov, to whom he is supposedly close, and from whom he awaits some sort of sign or proposition.<sup>28</sup> So this recent positioning, which depends on determined protest movements especially from the DPNI, is not dangerous or even definitive. But Dmitri Rogozine should not keep up this stand forever. This partisan formation is only another means to support his strategy. If the DPNI itself remains, with or without Rogozine, it is entirely capable of mobilizing several thousands, and a force to be reckoned with in the future.

### **The ideological dilemmas of nationalism**

The nationalist ideology encounters two conceptual dilemmas which harm its coherence and its effectiveness in electoral terms. Russian nationalism, on the one hand, has a vision of a powerful confident Russia which can command international respect. On the other hand, it is increasingly embracing the dangerous subject of uncontrolled immigration from Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus, South-East Asia but also from China.

The first nationalist dilemma is thus very clear: how can this determination for international influence be reconciled with the regulation of escalating immigration? Indeed, Russia can only assert itself with regard to the states and entities on the world scene, namely the United States and to a lesser extent the European Union; and it is precisely they who would be Russia's real allies in the case of threats from states in the South and China in particular. So Russia is led to oppose its future partners. This is an ideological paradox which the DPNI has not yet confronted, even if its leaders are conscious of it and have already declared to opt for an alliance with the countries of the North. Alexandre Belov indeed, considers that Russia should not react to the installation of American missiles in Poland and the Czech Republic, but on the contrary, strengthen accords with NATO. He even believes that, in the long term, the Federation should join the European Union<sup>29</sup>. His supporters, however, and the majority feeling in Russia, are far from sharing such proposals.

The second dilemma is a question of interethnic relations within the Federation. In the context of the Chechen wars, the traditional nationalist discourse, which privileges Russian citizens, in the civic or territorial sense of the word, as opposed to foreign migrants, has become more specific. It also includes ethnic Russians in certain areas of conflict. Therefore, this more restrictive Russian dimension is never entirely absent from the nationalist position and seemingly with citizen compliance. So there is only one step to take for the nationalist movement to demand the promotion of the dominant ethnic group. Recurring mistrust with regard to Chechens (who are citizens of the Russian Federation), stirred up by the clashes and problems of crime in certain provincial towns, strengthens the supposition that this deviant process is already under way. Consequently, in addition to the effects of racism, it is the whole federal construction which is called into question: the definition of Russian citizenship and the place of the non-ethnic Russian republics within the Federation would have to be re-examined. Thus behind these nationalist tendencies, significant issues are at stake which cannot constitute a simple electoral platform.

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<sup>28</sup> This concerns information (non-confirmed) that he will run for the parliamentary elections on the Russian Patriots Party list (leader Guenadi Semiguine) which would not pass the 7% mark.

<sup>29</sup> Interview given to the author, 6 August 2007.

## The political breakdown of nationalism

Under these conditions, the absence of real leadership and major ideological dilemmas, the nationalist movement is finding it difficult to define a real political effectiveness.

- The nationalist current as a whole presents three key measures, which cannot apparently meet expectations.

The first and main measure aims at restoring a visa system for all CEI nationals. As in the case of Georgia, this relates primarily to the Republics of Central Asia and Azerbaïdjan. It is not certain, taking into account the widespread corruption on both sides, that this formality would reduce the flow of migrants. Moreover, nothing is said about the tens of thousands of Chinese who illegally cross the border every day to work in Siberia.

The second measure requires a law facilitating the return of Russian citizens from abroad. This debate dates from the beginning of the Nineties and it is not certain today that the Russians from abroad wish to return. Hence this is a false problem.

Lastly, the third key measure plans to organize a selection of immigrants in Russia, according to the level of studies, social origin and knowledge of the Russian language. This is a detail far from the average Russian's concerns who believes in the threat of a massive surge in migrants from the Caucasus, in particular from Northern Caucasus and Central Asia.

- Nationalism is only significant from the civil point of view. It proves to be an excellent instrument for mobilizing crowds but it does not seem adequate for the conquest of power.

This is why the DPNI movement will be much more effective outside of any political engagement. Besides, Alexandre Belov is careful not to form a political party from the movement. He is not even a candidate for the Duma. The nationalist influence is only important because it is not politicized.

However, a "politicization" of a certain nationalist influence cannot be excluded, even in an opportunist way, under the banner of an emerging opposition.

## **Opportunism, source of a changeover of power in Russia?**

It seems difficult today, if not impossible, in Russia, to base an opposition on the force of an idea. The ideological cause, for different reasons, has lost too much or is not sufficiently structured to form an effective critical movement. However, with the collapse of this political idea, the opposition seems to be emerging on a new and different ground, certainly more opportunist and more pragmatic.

### **Narod, a national democratic attempt**

This recent movement appeared in the summer of 2007 and presents itself as a combination of Yabloko and Rodina (nationalist version): it would like to unite the supporters of Grigori Iavlinski and Dmitri Rogozine. This movement is really taking advantage of the nationalist upsurge by stamping out its racist and xenophobic rabble. The acknowledged idea is to build a civilized nationalism, respecting the fundamental freedom of the individual, and which would be presentable abroad. In comparison to some of the former considerations analysed, this project appears to be quite astute. The Russian electorate, without being hostile to democratic practices, is wary of liberalism and recognizes the value of citizen mobilization in the name of Russian grandeur. The second edition of the Russian March in 2006, recently organized on November 4 every year, has mobilized thousands of people all over Russia, including Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Novossibirsk, Stavropol, Irkutsk, Briansk, Vladivostok and Cheliabinsk.

Narod is running a great ideological variation. Its two leaders come from influential democratic circles. Sergueï Gouliaev, the central figure of the movement, ex-spetsnaz and war journalist, was elected to the Duma of Saint-Petersburg for Yabloko<sup>30</sup>. Alexis Navalnie, journalist and co-founder of the group, is member of Grigori Iavlinski's party. However, Narod also recruits on the left, from the communist and extreme-left circles. The two other principal organizers of the movement, Zahar Prilepen and Piotr Miloserdov, have collaborated closely with the NBP and the Communist Party. Politically, the program is similar to the DPNI: visa restoration for nationals of the CEI countries, a law on the return of Russians from abroad, support for the Russian March, an opening towards the West. This has not prevented Sergueï Gouliaev from running for the primaries for the collective "The Other Russia" and all the members from taking part, on a purely individual basis, in the group's past and future actions, especially in the Disagreement March. Indeed, there is no obvious contradiction between the demand for democracy in Russia and the protection of Russians' interests, in the territorial sense of the word (citizens of the Federation of Russia) which could, none the less, rapidly adopt an ethnic connotation.

Narod is not intended to become a political party, which would be too restrictive. The movement is supposed to function as a democratic national catalyst, attracting all the nationalist and democratic movements and structures. With the strength of its mobilizing potential of nationalist groups and the liberal demands of the democratic circles, it would then represent, if not an opposition to the regime, at least a powerful vector of influence which would not be hostile to European interests. It has been seen that under no circumstances do the Russian nationalist leaders reject relationships with the West.

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<sup>30</sup> The Yabloko list was not allowed to run for the last regional elections of March 2007 and so Sergueï Gouliaev finds himself currently with no mandate.

However, under which conditions is this possible? How can Narod exist politically in Russia over the next few months?

- Sergueï Gouliaev will have to be able to run as single candidate for "The Other Russia". In spite of his weak score in the primaries, he can still hope for good media publicity if he remains a crucial spokesman for the collective and a reliable and ardent supporter of Garri Kasparov. In order to continue to survive and promote Narod, he will need to recover and build a political visibility, which for example a deputy mandate could offer. This could be complicated.
- It could also be relevant, in the long term, to form an alliance with the DPNI. It is certain that Narod, which enjoys no real popular support, would have everything to gain from such a move. As for the DPNI, it could benefit from this democratic guarantee. It would then be for Dmitri Rogozine to join and head this new formation. The members of Narod who were interviewed, and Alexandre Belov, did not exclude this possibility.

However, there is the great risk that the DPNI, more effective, better structured and more powerful, could absorb Narod. It is not the first time that a democratic national alliance has been attempted. However, the nationalist tendency has always ended up dominating the liberal and democratic positions. It is difficult to imagine the DPNI allowing itself to be influenced. The news bulletins which the movement publishes are for this reason very eloquent and quite radical in their views<sup>31</sup>. The Chechens are systematically criticized, stigmatized or ridiculed; the interethnic rivalry in Russia (Kondopoga, Stavropol<sup>32</sup>) has increased; even a special page has been reserved for violent ways in self-defence (participation in a group of citizen self-defence, methods for acquiring a fire weapon); practices, to say the least, far from the moderate and liberal positions of a democratic movement.

So the political survival of the Narod movement, as such, is not certain. All will depend on the personal success of its leader, in particular within the collective "The Other Russia" and the alliances the group will build which must not, above all, be precipitated. If it manages to survive beyond the presidential election of March 2008, then it could play a significant role in rebuilding an opposition.

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<sup>31</sup> Information bulletin *Dozor* ; beginning of publication in January 2007.

<sup>32</sup> These two towns have been the scenes of tragic clashes during the last months between members of the Caucasian communities (Chechens and Georgians) and Russian xenophobic groups.

## **Sergueï Chargounov, a promising opportunist**

Young leader of the youth movement Hourrah, affiliated to the party Fair Russia, he does not really have his place within this structure. With no mobilized troops, without decisive support within the party leadership, he is not able to assert himself. Moreover, there is the competition from Pobeda, another youth movement of the party, directed by Dmitri Goudkov who benefits, via his father, from the necessary support of the party's steering committee. Sergueï Chargounov is not an actor who counts for Fair Russia. However, he continues, maintains his position and pursues his activities. His only objective, at the moment, is to obtain a mandate as federal deputy. Joining the party appeared to be the best way to achieve this short-term goal<sup>33</sup>. Besides he does admit to have committed himself by political calculation, believing that it is necessary to be part of the system with the hope of being able to change it. He had previously supported the NBP and had also been seduced by Yabloko. This opportunist indecision has brought discredit upon him in the eyes of a party made up of journalistic and political circles of Moscow.

Nevertheless, he undoubtedly has personal qualities which open significant political prospects for him. Most significantly, and besides being a talented writer, he has a certain charisma and an ease in public speaking, and probably leadership skills. At the age of 25, he led the powerful youth movement of the Rodina party, Za Rodina, under the supervision of Dmitri Rogozine. For this reason, he was an active observer of the constant struggle between Rodina and the Kremlin during the year 2005. On several occasions that year he stood out in his protests against the youth movements loyal to Vladimir Putin, the Nashi and Molodaïa Guardia movements, which were the principal targets of Za Rodina's actions. In December also, when Rodina had been banned from the legislative poll in the Moscow Duma, he tried to initiate the gatherings of young people, copying the Orange revolution but seems to have been prevented and then deterred by the security services.

Currently, it is interesting to note that within Fair Russia, Sergueï Chargounov has not abandoned his hostility to the movements loyal to Putin. In May 2007 for example, violent clashes opposed members of Hourra and a group of Molodaïa Guardia. His political priorities have not seemingly changed in spite of his partisan hesitations. He was and remains wary of nationalism and xenophobic movements such as Nashi, DPNI and now even Velika Russia;e already found the position of Za Rodina excessive on this point. He has never ceased to remark on how the United Russia party and the Kremlin have got rid of all political room for manoeuvre and have ruled out any debate; since the beginning he has fought for guarantees to do politics in Russia on the basis of European, liberal and democratic practices.

Today it is an opposition stand within a loyalist party. But how can this be avoided, when, since 2000, opposition parties in Russia have disappeared (Yabloko) or are too radical to the point of refusing power (NBP)? Sergueï Chargounov admits he considered joining "The Other Russia" in 2007, but he didn't believe in its success.

This young leader from Moscow appears to represent an average and balanced path in Russian politics. It is quite obvious that he currently holds no strategic role. His only activities consist in criticizing the Nashi and Molodaïa Guardia movements. It cannot be excluded however that political success may eventually come his way.

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<sup>33</sup> According to some observers, such a goal seems impossible for December 2007, taking into account the circumscription and his placing on the list. He ran in third position at Belgorod, which would not be viable. Unfortunately he missed the third position on the list "Russia of Moscow" for which he stood; this would have ensured his election.

## The SPS, in wait of a liberal revival in the Kremlin

The SPS will play its political future at the next legislative election. With a minimal parliamentary representation during the past four years, the liberal party is finding it difficult to hang on to its credibility as a major actor on the Russian political scene. Many in the SPS believe that a second exclusion from the Duma could be fatal<sup>34</sup>. For the leaders of the party, there is no alternative but negotiation with the Kremlin, in order to reintegrate the system. They are actively seeking to convince the Russian authorities to authorize them to exceed, if the electorate wishes it, the threshold of 7% and thus become once again dependent on the regime. Anatoli Tchoubaïs plays a major role in this scenario. His declarations and contacts are worth more than the talks between Nikita Belykh and Vladislav Sourkov or other influential figures in the Kremlin.

The strategy of the party as a whole seemingly consists of opening up channels of co-operation if the opportunity arises. It is in any case how the double games and double declarations of the SPS leaders should be understood. On the one hand, it seems that it is not planned to move closer to Mikhaïl Kassianov, on the other hand, it has never been officially ruled out that in January 2008 Kassianov could in fact become the party candidate if the Kremlin permits it<sup>35</sup>. In the same way, with regard to Vladimir Putin's succession, Nikita Belykh has implied<sup>36</sup> that the party could support the designated heir, while hoping in fact that the president chooses Dmitri Medvedev or Sergueï Narichkine, considered close to the group known as the liberal economists (German Gref, Alexis Koudrine, Anatoli Tchoubaïs and the majority of the oligarchs). All things considered, the SPS is preparing itself for political action, no matter who the successor will be. In the two scenarios considered here, the standpoints never appear contrary to the Kremlin's interests or choice.

These preparations however are only worth something if the party is able to prove that it still carries significant electoral weight on the political scene. The SPS has therefore requested the services of Anton Bakov, Duma deputy<sup>37</sup>, who initiated a new form of political campaigning with the door-to-door approach. The heart of the project, financed by Anatoli Tchoubaïs, is to target the grass-root electorate directly and to present face-to-face the broad outline of the SPS program. Newspapers are published and leaflets distributed. The operation, which started at the beginning of 2007, had already had some interesting results in the regions: the SPS has reached 16% of the votes in Perm and exceeded 7% in the majority of the regional polls in the spring of 2007.

The SPS, at present, is not engaged in direct opposition to the Kremlin, at least the current strategy does not seem to indicate this. It is more a question of preparatory actions for future political roles within the system of Russian power such as it will be transferred in March 2008. However after this date, the situation remains completely open, since nobody is yet able to imagine what Russia will become.

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<sup>34</sup> This information was confirmed by several young leaders interviewed. Interviews with the author July 2007.

<sup>35</sup> There are rumours in Moscow that the Kremlin has accepted in principle the candidacy of Mikhaïl Kassianov financed by Oleg Deripaska, on the condition that the former Prime Minister retires from the collective « The Other Russia », which he did, for unknown reasons at the beginning of July 2007

<sup>36</sup> Remarks made by Ilya Iachine, who asked him directly during a meeting held at the beginning of the summer 2007. However, in a long interview with the *Moskovskie Novosti*, Nikita Belykh took care not to mention the subject. *Moskovskie Novosti*, n°30 (1397) 03-09.08.2007, p10-11.

<sup>37</sup> Popular in the Oural for his social actions during the Nineties.



## Summary and recommendations

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It is obvious that an emerging substantial and credible opposition to the Putin system, even if it is opportunist, is not only due to the mobilization of Russian young people, whether they are liberal, democratic, social-democratic and/or nationalist. These youth movements, mainly from civilian society, reveal major tendencies of Russian political life. Furthermore, the present study has considered as many different groups covered in the introduction as "adult" parties to which they are affiliated, namely Fair Russia, Velika Russia, Rodina, Yabloko and the SPS. And the potential future opposition of the latter party must be considered.

Hence, it would be inappropriate to neglect the role of youth movements in Russia. They present two major assets for any political strategy. First of all they are natural breeding grounds, full of resources and support. They are in addition one of the most favourable sites where future leaders can be found, those who, for the next legislature at the end of 2011 in Russia, could be brought to exert a crucial influence (excluding the youth) on the Russian political scene.

So seen from the outside, from the European Union in particular, it can be important to take into account these groups in the organization of political relations with Russia; all the more as these movements do not have the reservations, sometimes excessive, that the other well-established parties hold. In other words, it could be in the interest of the European Union:

- To manifest political support for Sergueï Gouliaev, leader of the Narod movement and candidate in September 2007 for the collective "The Other Russia".

It is important to help him to maintain a sense of balance between democracy and nationalism. A small European audience, by way of meetings and conferences, would undoubtedly give credibility to this democratic component.

- To monitor Sergueï Chergounov's activities. If he is able to break through, he would doubtless be an ideal partner, reliable and open, for the European authorities in charge of relations with Russia.  
It would be good for example if he were to participate in the development of international relations of the "Fair Russia" party under the direction of Boris Guseletov, deputy of the Duma and person in charge of this sector for the party since June 2007. Boris Guseletov especially has excellent contacts with the European socialist party.





Europe, our frontier

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