

UNITED RUSSIA IS THE PARTY OF THE CONSERVATIVE VOICE

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United Russia has been targeted and mislabeled in as many ways as possible! “A party of bureaucrats”, “Berezovsky’s project”, “Surkov’s pocket-party”, “an appendage to the Presidential Administration”, etc. All of these contradicting labels easily exist alongside each other inside the heads of the party’s critics.

All of these critics are absolutely sure that United Russia is an artificial entity that is totally subordinated to the Kremlin. A difference from previous experience is that the modern Kremlin does not have the same notoriety as its previous incarnation. These critics don’t seem to know what “political power” is in Russia. Most people, whether they are in the opposition or more pro-government, do not consider the basic essence of power in Russia. There are no huge misunderstandings about the constitutional base of political and judicial institutions. Everybody is aware of how they work. It is also generally understood that Russia has its own specific power structure and that “western” theories do not quite match the reality on the ground.

It wouldn’t be a bad thing for all of us to forget about such actors as

“the Kremlin”, “the Presidential Administration”, or “favourite oligarchs” or other clichés and instead focus on the mundane constitutional structure. Political power is derived from a set of definite national institutions, which provide the process of ruling the country. The president is responsible for overall management, the government fulfills the executive functions, the parliament is responsible for legislation, etc. Believe it or not, we live in accordance with these rules.

The State Duma includes several parliamentary parties, with the largest among them being United Russia. To be the largest parliamentary bloc, United Russia won the majority of votes during the last election. We can deduce that the majority of voters liked the slogans, ideas and actions put forward by the party. Vladimir Putin’s high approval rating cannot be solely responsible for United Russia’s success. In earlier elections, people voted for “Putin and the Communists”, “Putin and Rodina”, “Putin and Liberal-Democratic Party”, “Putin and Spravedlivaya Rossia”. It is clear that people preferred Putin and voted for other parties to provide a check and balance. **During the last election, people clearly expressed their wishes. They voted for “Putin’s successor and United Russia”. That is to say, they voted in favour of keeping the course.**

What is the current political situation? Vladimir Putin has distanced himself from ideological problems and has focused on performing the responsibilities of the prime minister. The “siloviki” have moved away from debating about the country’s future. Dmitry Medvedev is searching for his own ideology and rejects the conservative ideology of previous years. Meanwhile, Russia’s conservatives have found themselves abandoned by the leaders who had previously served as major sources of hope for the continuation of “Putin’s policy”.

The only force that can unite those people holding conservative views is the United Russia party. Russian conserva-

tives previously preferred to work “directly” with power structures, namely the Presidential Administration, while viewing political parties as secondary and irrelevant. But then a new president came to power and the Presidential Administration, of course, oriented itself towards him. Now, United Russia has managed to preserve its position. **The party’s membership is not made up of “android bureaucrats” but of real live people**, who, during all these years, have been working to create a new Russia that they know as “Putin’s Russia”. Nobody willingly agrees to give up the results of their effort. It goes without saying that we are speaking not about one person, but about the largest party in the country.

In future, United Russia is capable of claiming the status as the natural governing party. The party must proceed to achieve this position, having attracted the top leadership of the country to its ranks.

Under such conditions, those conservatives who have previously kept independent should turn to United Russia and effectively make it the most powerful and independent political voice in the country. It is namely through a united conservative voice that we will be able to overcome our limitations and build on past achievements.

United Russia is coming into its own and finding itself to be a force of its own. We would like to believe that, in the near future, **this voice will reflect the party members own views and will have to be taken into account. For an analogy, it is worth considering that adult bears do not appear in the circus ring** (a bear is a symbol of UR party. — *Editor’s note*). Rather, it is only the bear cubs that are forced to ride bicycles, walk on their hind legs or do other tricks.

It seems that United Russia has reached this very point of maturity. **The bear is getting ready to roar and to stand out.** The day when the party’s Secretary-General will become a person listened to by all the personalities in power, is very near. ■

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