
Russia

Glazyev at Center of Duma Election Campaign

by Jonathan Tennenbaum

On Sept. 4, the Russian State Duma (lower house of Parliament) election campaign was officially launched, with publication of a Presidential decree fixing the date of the election as Dec. 7 of this year. Thanks to developments over the Summer, what had been expected to be a relatively uneventful campaign, leading to a continuation of the present political constellation in the Duma, now promises to become more turbulent. Of particular interest will be the fate of a new electoral grouping, launched by the well-known economist and Duma member Sergei Glazyev.

Glazyev is a long-standing, outspoken critic of the neo-liberal economic policies that have collapsed Russia's industrial production and plunged the majority of the population into abject poverty. He advocates a dirigist approach to rebuilding the Russian economy, including large-scale state investments, credit guarantees, and other measures to direct investment into the productive base of the economy. In June 2001, Glazyev, at that time Chairman of the Duma Economics Committee, invited Lyndon LaRouche to speak before an official hearing on the world financial crisis.

For some time, Glazyev—who was elected to the Duma on the slate of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), but is not himself a member of that party—has called for the formation of a broad coalition of patriotic forces in Russia, extending across what he describes as the increasingly meaningless categories of “left” and “right,” and capable of capturing the majority in the Duma for a political change in the country. A major component of such a coalition should naturally be the CPRF, the second-largest party in the present Duma, with about a quarter of the seats. Equally crucial, Glazyev argued, is to reach out to the layers of the population who orient toward the Russian Orthodox Church and the idea of defending moral values, to members of the military, police, and security forces, and to others, who are patriotically minded but do not share the communist ideology.

On Aug. 11, after repeated, unsuccessful efforts to secure the agreement of the Communist Party leadership to this project, Glazyev made a decisive political move: He unilaterally announced the formation of a new electoral coalition, centered on the Congress of Russian Communities (KRO) and the Party of Russian Regions, both of which he heads, and



Sergei Glazyev (left) hosts a Moscow press conference in 2001 at which Lyndon LaRouche also spoke. The actions of Glazyev's new electoral grouping in the December Duma elections will give an indication of how things are shaping up in Russia.

called on the CPRF to join it. Were the CPRF leadership to agree, that would effectively shift the leading role in Russia's political opposition forces, from CPRF head Gennadi Zyuganov to Glazyev. So far, Zyuganov has steadfastly rejected Glazyev's proposal, while the CPRF's press organs insinuate that Glazyev's project is a Kremlin-sponsored operation to divert votes from the CPRF, or to coopt the left or eliminate it as a significant political force.

In the meantime, Glazyev's initiative has been joined by a number of prominent personalities with different political backgrounds, including: longtime KRO leader and Chairman of the Duma Foreign Affairs Committee Dmitri Rogozin; former Russian Central Bank head Viktor Gerashchenko; retiring Commander of Airborne Forces Gen. Georgi Shpak; CPRF Duma member, retired Gen. Valentin Varennikov; CPRF figure and Duma defense expert Viktor Ilyukhin; the well-known actor Nikolai Burlayev; retired senior intelligence officer Nikolai Leonov; and the Orthodox Church-connected publicist and television personality Alexander Krutov. On Aug. 24, seventeen smaller parties and political organiza-

tions—including the Union of Students, the Association of Social Democrats, and the Eurasian Party of the shadowy Alexander Dugin—signed an agreement to join the coalition, which has unofficially been dubbed “Tovarishch” (“Comrade”). At an Aug. 25 press conference with Glazyev, Rogozin declared that 20 more Duma members from various parties would soon join the coalition. Oleg Shein’s Labor Party joined on Aug. 29.

Academician Dmitri Lvov is reportedly closely involved, albeit in the background. The coalition’s economic program will include some form of Lvov’s proposal: To drastically increase state revenues by imposing special taxes on raw-materials firms for the exploitation of natural resources, and shift to a science-driver mode of economic development. Viktor Gerashchenko said at the Aug. 25 press conference, that he intended to contribute to a greater competence in financial policies, drawing on his 43 years’ experience in national and international banking.

A Calculated Gamble

At present, even seasoned Russian observers are hard put to gauge the electoral prospects of the Glazyev bloc. Estimates range from under 5%—below the threshold for entry into the Duma as an official group—to 15% or more. There is no doubt, that Glazyev and his program have the potential to attract voters from a wide range of political backgrounds, if they were to gain sufficient prominence and if the present widespread inertia and apathy of the Russia electorate could be overcome. On the other hand, an election fiasco might spell the end of the political career of Glazyev, now widely viewed as a potential future Prime Minister or even President of Russia. Glazyev—who experienced such a setback in 1995, when the KRO slate he ran on received only 4.3%, and he was out of the Duma for several years—is apparently making a calculated gamble, counting on margins of support from various forces, including some that might not actually be friendly to his ultimate goals. Indeed, there are a variety of forces that might have an interest in only a *momentary* success of the new electoral bloc.

Here the plot thickens, and not surprisingly so. Some Russian patriots, who have placed hopes in Glazyev in the past, point with distress at the cast of dubious characters reported to be promoting Glazyev’s coalition. Among them is mentioned Marat Gelman, modern art collector, vice-director of the First Channel of Russian television, and a notoriously unprincipled political “image maker,” connected to the equally notorious Gleb Pavlovsky. Others named are members of the Presidential Administration, who are alleged to be manipulating the “Tovarishch” operation in order to split the left opposition to the Kremlin and coopt part of it. The involvement of aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska is a matter of rumor, but undeniable is the presence of the vocal Dugin. The latter is, among other things, a promoter in Russia of the synarchist ideas of Conservative Revolution ideologues Carl Schmitt and Armin

Möller, and has recently appeared in an Internet debate, staged with his ostensible opponent, Marat Gelman. Looking at Dugin’s recent, profuse praises of Glazyev and the new electoral project, one wonders whether they are not intended to produce the *opposite* effect.

All of this is not surprising, given the state of the world and of Russia in particular, where truly representative, mass-based political institutions have hardly had a chance to develop. Whoever decides to engage in parliamentary politics in Russia today, and to gain access to the resources needed for a major campaign, will inevitably be surrounded by a cast of wild and unsavory characters—especially if he starts out having something to offer that is genuinely in the national interest.

Glazyev and Putin

Any attempt at evaluating Glazyev’s electoral initiative and its prospects for success, ultimately depends upon an assessment of the intentions of Russia’s President, Vladimir Putin, and those of his immediate collaborators. It is generally acknowledged that Glazyev, while violently critical of the present government of Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, has remained consistently open to the possibility that the Russian Presidency, and Putin as its current occupant, will act in the national interest. With Academician Lvov and other Academy of Sciences economists, he has offered his advice to Putin directly, on more than one occasion.

At the same time, there are indications that a faction around Putin, both inside and outside the Kremlin—often identified as the *siloviki* (men from the uniformed, or “force” agencies) and typified by patriotically-minded persons of intelligence- and military-linked backgrounds—is attempting, step by step, to free the nation from control by the treasonous “oligarchs,” and to prepare a shift of policies in the direction of the kind of dirigistic economic mobilization advocated by Glazyev. Part of the *siloviki* strategy would be to drive a wedge between more national-oriented interests on the one side, and foreign-allied “oligarchs” such as Yukos Oil CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who is now under legal attack by Russian authorities, on the other. The same strategy would aim to orchestrate conditions for dumping the present Kasyanov government. These *siloviki*, however, are acting not overtly, but in a Byzantine, almost clandestine fashion, reflecting the political tradition and unfavorable constellation of forces in Russia, as well as the fact that Russia is *de facto* preparing for the eventuality of a military conflict with the United States, somewhere down the line.

If this be so, then there is no mystery and nothing properly scandalous in the alleged support for Glazyev by circles within the Kremlin—while the other, sometimes bizarre figures in and around his electoral initiative merely come with the territory. In any event, the December Duma election bears careful watching, as an indication of things to come.