

# United Russia Eyes Opposition

By [Nikolaus von Twickel](#)

December 13, 2010

**The**  **Moscow Times**

United Russia should attract more opposition members while maintaining its ideological path of "Russian Conservatism," party leaders said Monday.

"It's extremely important to attract opposition-minded groups to our projects," Andrei Isayev, a deputy party secretary and senior State Duma deputy, [told](#) a party congress in Moscow.

As an example, Isayev pointed to the activists protesting a planned highway through the Khimki forest outside the capital.

"We have seen the attempts to use them for our opponents' political goals," he said, adding that many people ended up in the opposition solely "because they lack information about what the party of power does."

Headed by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, United Russia controls a comfortable two-thirds majority in the State Duma and has similar strength in the country's 83 regions.

But the party has faced allegations of unfair campaigning and vote rigging and has seen its election results sag slightly in regional elections.

Isayev, head of the Duma's Labor and Social Policy Committee, also said the party should stick to its ideology, which was dubbed "Russian Conservatism" at a November 2009 congress.

"Medvedev's task to form a new patriotic generation can only be solved with conservative values," he said.

Isayev spoke at a joint congress of the party's supreme and general councils devoted to President Dmitry Medvedev's state-of-the-nation address last month.

Even though Medvedev is not a party member, party officials were adamant that United Russia should take his address as a strategy document for the upcoming election season, which includes Duma elections in December 2011 and a presidential vote in March 2012.

Duma Deputy Vladimir Pligin, a member of the party's liberal faction, said United Russia should act as an institute of trust. "Citizens should be enabled to take their problems to the state, knowing that their interests will be protected," he said.

Pligin, who heads the Duma's Constitutional Affairs Committee, [said](#) that widening cooperation with legal pressure groups could be a way to reduce corruption.

The party's No. 2 official, Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov, promised to step up the fight against corruption by holding senior officials responsible for corrupt practices in their bureaucracies. "We need to increase discipline in the state apparatus as a whole," he said.

In a sign that United Russia is more than just a party of bureaucrats, as often described, delegates humiliated Kaliningrad Governor Nikolai Tsukanov by openly showing boredom with his [speech](#) .

Tsukanov read a lengthy monologue about a maternity program while the chatter in the hall grew constantly louder until Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov, who chaired the congress together with Gryzlov, decided to cut him short.

"Tell us something personal," he said, interrupting the governor.

The visibly irritated governor then scrambled to change the topic but soon stopped and stepped down from the stage amid delegates' laughter.

Tsukanov has governed Kaliningrad since September after taking over from Georgy Boos, who was ousted amid growing public discontent.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/12/13/united-russia-eyes-opposition-a3707>