

Kyrgyzstan: is Moscow betting on Almazbek Atambayev?

On 2 September, the Prime Minister of Russia Vladimir Putin stated during his meeting with the visiting leader of the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan, Almazbek Atambayev, that the Russian government will give aid amounting to US\$10m to that country. Receiving, at such a high level, a politician who does not currently hold any government function, and announcing in his presence the decision to send aid for Kyrgyzstan, is of great political significance for Atambayev, especially on the eve of parliamentary elections. These gestures may also be a signal that Moscow would be glad to see Atambayev as a future political leader in Kyrgyzstan.

After the overthrow on 7 April 2010 of the then-president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, Atambayev (who had previously been prime minister, but then joined the opposition) was deputy prime minister in the interim government of Roza Otunbayeva. He was the first person from the new government to visit Moscow (as early as 8 April). In June he stepped down from the government in connection with his intention to stand in the parliamentary elections planned for 10 October.

Atambayev was received by Putin in the manner of a head of state. According to communiques, they discussed (among other matters) long-term plans for Russian/Kyrgyz co-operation and further Russian aid for Bishkek.

Kyrgyzstan's politicians are seeking support from Moscow, as this could be an important trump card during the elections. Also on 2 September, another former deputy prime minister of the interim government arrived in Moscow, the leader of the Akshumkar party, Temir Sariyev; however he was received at a lower level, by the head of the presidential administration Sergei Naryshkin. <Gor>