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3,000 Rally on Pushkin Square

By Igor Tabakov

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Artemy Troitsky, a rock critic and personality, talking to a few of the thousands of people gathered at the rally. Troitsky was the host of the rally. **Igor Tabakov**

In a rare gesture, City Hall allowed a rally on Pushkin Square in central Moscow in support of the Khimki forest. Protesters, activists, concertgoers — whatever you want to call them, more than 3,000 crowded onto the square on a Sunday evening to oppose the destruction of the centuries-old oak forest just north of the capital. Many also said they came to voice their opposition to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

"The Khimki forest is the occasion, but if oil prices drop, there will be more people to protest here," a 41-year-old man at the rally told The Moscow Times.

City Hall had turned down a request by rally organizers to hold a concert. But in spite of the ban, rock musician Yury Shevchuk — the frontman for group DDT and a frequent critic of Putin — performed on a truck-turned-stage.

The Aug. 22 protest was the largest so far this summer to denounce the decision, condoned by

federal and local authorities, to raze part of the Khimki forest to make way for an $8 billion highway to St. Petersburg. View the images by staff photographer Igor Tabakov of the headline-making rally.

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