The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Passions Flare Over Triumfalnaya Protest

October 27, 2010



Passions flared Wednesday over this weekend's opposition rally on Triumfalnaya Ploshchad following a report that human rights veteran Lyudmila Alexeyeva had met the Kremlin's controversial politics chief, Vladislav Surkov, to discuss the event.

Some 50 radical activists headed by Left Front leader Sergei Udaltsov briefly blocked a construction site near the venue, outside the Mayakovskaya metro station, Interfax reported. The former city government had cited the work as a reason to ban all public events on the square.

Udaltsov said construction paperwork contained numerous violations and only authorized the workers to take up 300 square meters, not the 1,500 they actually occupied. City authorities did not comment on the story Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper reported that Alexeyeva, one of the organizers of this Sunday's rally, met with Surkov on Monday — hours before City Hall's decision to authorize the event for 800 people.

Opposition activists had originally sought a permit for 1,500, while City Hall had only cleared a demonstration for 200, citing the construction. The Mayor's Office also proposed the central Bolotnaya Ploshchad as a venue for the full 1,500 protesters.

The opposition has attempted to stage rallies on Triumfalnaya Ploshchad since last year but never managed to obtain the city's permission. The rallies that were staged ended in police crackdowns.

But Surkov criticized the ban shortly after last month's removal of Mayor Yury Luzhkov, after which City Hall approved the Oct. 31 rally. The opposition protests on the 31st day of a month in defense of the 31st article of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of assembly.

Alexeyeva agreed to the limit of 800 protesters, but co-organizer Eduard Limonov slammed the decision as a “betrayal” Tuesday and said his supporters would hold a separate event.

City police are also going to offer an informal apology to Alexander Artemyev, an activist who had his hand broken while being detained at a Triumfalnaya Ploshchad rally in May, Gazeta.ru reported Wednesday. No one was charged in the incident.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/10/27/passions-flare-over-triumfalnaya-protest-a2542