The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Yabloko Rally Honors Slain Football Fan

By Alexander Bratersky

January 16, 2011



Nationalist leader Sergei Belov, right, carrying a wreath at a Yabloko rally on Kronshtadtsky Bulvar on Saturday. **Igor Tabakov**

Hundreds of young people rallied on Saturday to commemorate a football fan killed last month in an interracial brawl, but despite police fears, the event, organized by Yabloko and attended by nationalist leaders, ended peacefully.

Nevertheless, 19 people were briefly detained by police for a check into whether they had participated in violent Dec. 11 rioting on Manezh Square over the death.

Another 22 people were held after a sanctioned rally in St. Petersburg attended by 250 to 300 participants, Fontanka.ru reported, and 24 were detained at an improvised march in Yaroslavl, Interfax reported.

In Moscow, more than 1,000 people gathered on Kronshtadsky Bulvar in the city's northeast where Yegor Sviridov, a Spartak Moscow fan, was shot dead 40 days earlier in a fight with North Caucasus natives.

Some 4,000 police and Interior Ministry troops kept watch across the city Sunday for possible rioting, Moscow police spokesman Viktor Biryukov said, Gazeta.ru reported. No incidents were reported.

In a rare twist, the rally was organized by the liberal Yabloko party, and its leader, Sergei Mitrokhin, laid flowers at the site of Sviridov's death.

The relationship between liberal politicians and nationalists is strained at best, but Mitrokhin's assistant, Artur Grokhovsky, who carried out the logistics of organizing the rally, told The Moscow Times on Sunday that "the event was organized so that people of all sorts of ideological viewpoints, even radical ones, could attend as long as they respected the law."

Grokhovsky denied that Yabloko was courting the football fan community for votes in upcoming State Duma elections in December.

Mitrokhin agreed, writing on his Twitter blog after the event, "I'm against Nazis privatizing his [Sviridov's] memory."

The rally was attended by two ultranationalist leaders, Sergei Belov, head of the Movement Against Illegal Migration, and Dmitry Demushkin, head of the banned Slavic Union. Neither made speeches.

The event ended with some participants singing "Sacred War," a World War II song about fighting Nazi invaders.

The December rioting prompted fears about a rise of ultranationalism in the country, but participants at Saturday's event said their anger was primarily directed at the police. The investigation into Sviridov's death infuriated football fans and nationalists — two communities that often include the same people — when the police released several North Caucasus suspects. Suspicions flourished that the suspects had bribed the police, and the suspects are now back in custody.

"This case is a good example of what happens when the authorities do not react properly to an outrageous situation," said Maxim, 32, a Spartak fan sporting a scarf with team colors. "Things might turn out much worse."

Maxim, who refused to give his last name for fear of reprisal, condemned attacks on Central Asian migrants after Sviridov's death, saying crime groups, not regular migrant workers, were to blame for increasing ethnic tensions.

"I don't understand why innocent workers from Central Asia were killed," he said. "Ethnic gangs should be taken care of."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/01/16/yabloko-rally-honors-slain-football-fan-a4239