

Prokhorov Sought Orange Revolution-Style Tent Camps

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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Prokhorov pictured last week with Sheikhtudinov, who says he has received threats since joining Right Cause. **Igor Tabakov**

The real reason that the Kremlin sacrificed the Right Cause party was because its former billionaire leader Mikhail Prokhorov had wanted to organize Orange Revolution-style tent camps in a faux opposition drive to win seats in the State Duma elections, a senior party official said Tuesday.

Right Cause, a pro-business party whose popularity hovers around 2 percent, needed a massive injection of support to clear the 7 percent threshold in the December vote, so Prokhorov planned for followers to camp out in the streets in tents, like during the 2004 Ukrainian protests that eventually toppled the regime of President Leonid Kuchma, the official told The Moscow Times.

Another party official confirmed his remarks. They both spoke on condition of anonymity,

citing fear of reprisal from the Kremlin.

But the idea could not have appealed to the Kremlin, which ardently opposed the Orange Revolution and spent years ensuring that no such public protests took place in Russia.

The Right Cause official said Surkov was pleased that Prokhorov left the party last Thursday, citing him as saying during a private conversation: "It was good that we got rid of him before he was elected to the Duma."

Surkov's office had no immediate comment about the claim Tuesday.

Right Cause, which ended a days-long election convention Tuesday, will pose no threat to the Kremlin after it decided to trade President Dmitry Medvedev for a second-tier female tennis star on its party list for the elections.

A proposal to invite Medvedev to head the party was rejected by a 1-77 vote. Party member Andrei Dunayev said it was a "purely technical decision."

Right Cause voted to top its party list with Dunayev, former presidential candidate Andrei Bogdanov and 24-year-old Anna Chakvetadze, currently ranked in 48th place by the Women's Tennis Association.

Chakvetadze, whose inclusion looked like a feeble attempt at damage control after the internal rift that saw Prokhorov ousted, said she wanted to "try something new" and focus on women's rights and children's sports if she makes it into the Duma.

The party approved the list of 377 candidates for the vote, but only after heated and angry debates at the Izmailovo hotel on the city's eastern outskirts.

Senior party boss Boris Nadezhdin, a Prokhorov ally, voted against the party list without Prokhorov on it. Another high-profile member, journalist Georgy Bovt, abstained from voting.

But 61 of 73 delegates supported the list, which included no big names other than Chakvetadze.

For Nadezhdin, the vote was a chance to slam the door behind him. He announced at the convention that he would not remain in the same party as Bogdanov, a man who he said "works on the assignments of the [presidential] administration."

Bogdanov, indeed, has a resume of pro-Kremlin jobs. In 2004 he snatched the leadership of the now-defunct Democratic Party of Russia from former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, denying him a political vehicle, and in 2008 he ran in the presidential race, winning a dismal 1.3 percent of the vote.

He and Dunayev were at the front of the anti-Prokhorov coup as well, taking over the party's executive committee last week and ensuring the backing of the majority of the convention's delegates.

Prokhorov has said many delegates had forged their credentials and worked for the Kremlin.

But he made no attempt to regain control over Right Cause, announcing last Thursday that he might create a new political movement — but not before the December elections.

Nadezhdin said on the sidelines of the convention that he would join any new group formed by Prokhorov. "If he does it, he will be the only person to try the impossible task of fighting the presidential administration," Nadezhdin said.

Prokhorov has blamed his ouster on Surkov, who he said was trying to interfere with the party's decision making by demanding that he drop Yevgeny Roizman, an anti-drug activist with a criminal record, from the party list.

The attacks on Surkov raised many eyebrows because Prokhorov's installment as the head of Right Cause in June was widely seen as a Kremlin attempt to sweep liberal votes.

Bogdanov and his supporters have claimed that they rebelled against Prokhorov because of his authoritarian management style and disregard for longtime party members.

Bogdanov told *The Moscow Times* on Tuesday that the party was now "united as ever," and complained that Prokhorov had treated him and other party members like "trash."

After taking the helm at Right Cause in late June, Prokhorov brought in a group of spin doctors who had worked in the Ukrainian presidential elections, managing the campaigns of Viktor Yanukovich in 2004 — during the Orange Revolution — and Arseny Yatsenyuk in 2009. Both men lost the vote.

Prokhorov campaign chief Rifat Sheikhtudinov, a Duma deputy with the Liberal Democratic Party, which he left for Prokhorov, may face a criminal case after the December elections, *Izvestia* [reported](#) Tuesday.

Since 2007, Sheikhtudinov has been accused of wrongdoing in the bankruptcy of the state-owned airline ticket office he used to head. The Liberal Democratic Party has spoke in his defense before, but party leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy told *Izvestia* that Sheikhtudinov had now lost his backing.

Curiously, Sheikhtudinov said last week that he had started receiving threats. At a news conference with Prokhorov, he showed reporters a cell phone text message promising "problems" for him. He did not elaborate or identify the sender.

Party member Dunayev said the party would file its paperwork with the Central Elections Commission no later than Monday.

He also shed light Tuesday on a quirky logo for Right Cause, introduced under Prokhorov. The logo is a "constructivist sign depicting movement to the right," Dunayev said, adding that it would not be changed.

But a party-sponsored All-Russia Congress of Blondes, set to take place in Sochi this weekend, has been postponed indefinitely because funding was frozen after Prokhorov's exit, organizers told Interfax. Right Cause did not address the issue at Tuesday's convention.

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