

We Are People, Citizens

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Anyone who was at the protest meeting this past Monday can tell you that this was something new. Thousands of young people, many of whom had never been to a protest before, showing their anger at blatant election fraud.

Something began that day, and later this afternoon we will get an idea of where it is heading, as tens of thousands of people are expected at Bolotnaya Ploshchad.

In less than a week, the country has changed. If someone had told you that tens of thousands of people — 35,000 have signed up on Facebook alone — would demonstrate against fake elections, would you have believed them? None of us at this paper would.

Last Monday's protest was, until the ugly standoffs after it, a remarkably calm and polite event — civil society at its best. People are fed up with the lies, the cheap tricks — the most recent being an extension of the school day today — fed up with the need to suspend belief when the news comes on television.

The Moscow Times will have much of its staff reporting at today's protest. We will have a live blog running with updates. We will also have a document with us that lists the relevant article

in the legal code that defends journalists' right to report at such event. Many of the protestors will have just as detailed knowledge in their heads or written down so that they can protect themselves.

People are fed up with having to defend themselves against the government and are beginning to demand something from their government instead. There are fears of trouble from the authorities and from the small minority who look to revolution, but thankfully there has also been much discussion and hope for a peaceful protest.

One message that has proved immensely popular has been a Livejournal blog by the user lady_spring in which she asks for a civilized, polite protest.

"Let us show that we are not a CROWD, we are PEOPLE, CITIZENS," the author writes.

Let them show that today.

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