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A Rocky Start for Limonov's Bid for Presidency

By Roland Oliphant

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Radical writer and former National Bolshevik leader Eduard Limonov will submit an application to become a presidential candidate by next week, despite being locked out of the hotel where he planned to launch his campaign.

Limonov and supporters began gathering the signatures they needed for a nomination on Sunday morning — but were temporarily thwarted when the Izmailovo hotel they had planned to use refused them admission.

"When we arrived at 8:30 this morning, we found lots of police waiting for us and the hotel entrance blocked with a metal barrier. The hotel wouldn't let us in," Limonov told The Moscow Times by telephone Sunday afternoon.

The activists set up a signature station on a bus at their disposal in a nearby parking lot, instead. Limonov told The Moscow Times that "about 500 signatures" had been gathered by 1

p.m. Sunday.

Limonov is a leader of the unregistered The Other Russia party, an opposition party that has no parliamentary seats and was not registered to run in elections to the State Duma on Dec. 4.

Presidential candidates who are not nominated by registered political parties need to submit the signatures of 500 supporters in order to be registered as a presidential candidate by the Central Elections Commission.

They then have to gather an additional 2 million signatures from across Russia to ensure a place on the ballot on March 4.

The Central Elections Commission — whose chairman Vladimir Churov has been the object of increasing public ridicule over reports of fraud at the Duma Elections on Dec. 4 — could still kick the former National Bolshevik off the ballot, if it decides the signatures are forged.

Limonov has vowed to waive his French citizenship in order to conform with the constitutional requirement that the president cannot hold dual nationality.

Limonov, who was a driving force behind the Strategy 31 rallies in favor of freedom of assembly, attended a rally calling for Churov's ouster at Ploshchad Revolyutsii on Saturday, but refused to march with other protestors to the approved venue at Bolotnaya Ploshchad, denouncing it as "a compromise made by bourgeois politicians."

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