

Thousands at Pro-Kremlin Rally

December 12, 2011



A Putin supporter showing where he stands at a rally in Manezh Square. **Ivan Sekretarev**

Two days after a record protest rally in Moscow, the ruling United Russia party staged its own demonstration in the capital, but insisted that it was not a reaction to the opposition's event.

Police estimated that about 25,000 people attended the pro-Kremlin rally on Manezh Square on Monday, Interfax reported.

Photos [posted](#) on Twitter by popular blogger Rustem Agadamov showed a much thinner crowd, numbering several thousands at best. Gazeta.ru [put](#) the number at 5,000.

Police said the Saturday rally on Bolotnaya Ploshchad, in protest of alleged voting fraud that gave United Russia a decisive victory in parliamentary elections this month, also attracted 25,000 participants.

Independent observers and organizers put the number of attendees between 30,000 and 100,000. Thousands more attended rallies across the country.

Either way, it was the largest protest of its kind since Vladimir Putin first rose to power 12

years ago.

On United Russia's web site, party boss Andrei Vorobyov [said](#) the Manezh rally was to mark Constitution Day — celebrated on Dec. 12 — and “is by no means a reaction to Bolotnaya [Ploshchad protests].”

But speakers — including United Russia's Andrei Isayev and Russia's envoy to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin — spoke repeatedly in support of Putin's bid to resume the office of the presidency. Putin was among the main targets of criticism at Bolotnaya Ploshchad.

Rogozin said in his speech that many attendees were at both Manezh Square and Bolotnaya Ploshchad, and lambasted “fat cats” among top officials and businessmen.

But he also said Putin is the only leader who can stop unspecified forces in Europe and the United States who see Russia as “easy prey.”

The event ended with speakers on stage chanting “Russia!” before a silent crowd, Kommersant reporter Alexander Chernykh [said](#) on Twitter.

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