

Pro-Kremlin Group Announces Competing May 6 Rally

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A sign held by demonstrators at a pro-Putin rally on Feb. 4 at Poklonnaya Gora. The sign reads: "He who is for Putin is for Russia." **Chloe Cranston**

Pro-Kremlin political group the All-Russia People's Front announced Friday that it will hold an event with 50,000 participants at Poklonnaya Gora on Sunday, the one-year anniversary of the group's founding and the same day opposition forces plan to rally across town at Bolotnaya Ploshchad.

The event will run from 6 to 7 p.m. and will include speeches by State Duma deputies from the allied United Russia party Vyacheslav Lysakov and Alyona Arshinova, Ruined Roads civic group leader Alexander Vasilyev, and Uralvagonzavod factory head Igor Kholmansk, RIA-Novosti reported, citing a news release by the People's Front.

Arshinova told the news agency that even though the event was just announced, the group had spent the last month planning an event to mark the occasion of its founding a year ago.

"I can't say that our event is spontaneous, because we had talked and thought about how

to celebrate this anniversary," she said.

On May 6 of last year, Vladimir Putin proposed creating the People's Front at a United Russia conference in Volgograd. The group fielded candidates in December's Duma elections running with United Russia.

Putin will take office for his third term as president on Monday.

The People's Front has termed their demonstration a "cultural event," which does not require advance approval by City Hall as many public events do, Moscow regional security chief Alexei Maierov told RIA-Novosti.

Parliamentarian Arshinova said the event is not a response to the "March of a Million" organized by opposition groups that will be held Sunday. The political opposition will rally under the slogans "for fair government" and "for Russia without Putin."

Sunday's rallies will mirror two held on Feb. 4, when a pro-Kremlin "Anti-Orange" event was held at Poklonnaya Gora and the opposition marched along Bolshaya Yakimanka to Bolotnaya Ploshchad, the same route opposition demonstrators will travel along Sunday.

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