

Report: Arkhangelsk Cultural Minister Fired for Requiring Workers to Celebrate Crimea

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People watch the fireworks during the celebrations for the first anniversary of the Crimean treaty signing in Sevastopol, March 18, 2015.

The Culture Minister of the northern Russian region of Arkhangelsk has allegedly been dismissed from his post for having ordered civil servants to attend a rally celebrating Russia's annexation of Crimea, news agency FlashNord reported Tuesday.

"Officially, [Lev] Vostryakov was dismissed due to having reached retirement age. In fact, it was for the foolish directive to send employees of subordinate institutions to a rally in support of Crimea," an unnamed regional government source said, FlashNord reported.

Vostryakov, who had served as Culture Minister since April 2012, ostensibly sent out an official letter to ministry employees stipulating certain quotas for attendance at the rally, including 20 people from its cultural institutions and 50 from its educational institutions, FlashNord reported, featuring a purportedly scanned copy of the letter.

The Arkhangelsk Ministry of Culture was unavailable for comment, despite numerous phone calls from The Moscow Times.

The rally was held on March 18 to celebrate the one-year anniversary of Russia's annexation of Crimea. Some 2,000 revelers reportedly turned out to participate in the event, which took place on the city's main square.

Similar festivities were held across the country, including a massive celebration on Red Square, where President Vladimir Putin delivered a speech lauding the annexation and sang along to the Russian national anthem.

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