The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moscow 'Patriot' Rally Draws Dozens Not Thousands of Participants

By Anna Dolgov

October 12, 2015



A Russian television channel reported that thousands of people gathered in Moscow for a rally strengthening "patriotism" — but the rally never took place, according to photographers and bloggers at the scene.

Moscow's Moskva-24 television channel reported Sunday that "several thousand people" had gathered at the VDNKh exhibition center in the north of the capital, standing in formation to spell the words: "I am a patriot," and holding Russian flags and balloons in the country's white, blue and red national colors.

The footage provided in the newscast did little to illustrate the reporter's enthusiastic account. The video broadcast by Moskva-24 showed approximately a dozen people milling around the entrance to the exhibition center, and a few participants dashing about with Russian flags.

That footage accurately conveyed the extent of the gathering, according to independent media photographers and bloggers reporting from the scene.

“A few people ran around with flags, trying to gather people up, but people declined to gather,” prominent blogger Ilya Varlamov said on his LifeJournal social network page. “Passers-by refused, saying it was chilly, they didn't want to get cold, and anyway they still had a lot of things to do.”

In the end, organizers have managed to “only get enough people for the letter 'P'” of the intended patriotic phrase, Varlamov wrote in his sarcastic post, titled “Has Moscow run out of patriots?”

Moskva-24 backed up its broadcast by a Twitter message that read: “The massive action 'I am a patriot' has taken place at the entrance to VDNKh.”

Photographer Ilya Belitsky of the Ura.ru news portal tweeted back at Moskva-24: “Not even a hundred people gathered there, get a conscience!”

The rally, which was approved by the city government, the exhibition center administration and the district police department, was intended to “strengthen the patriotic mood among the public” and “popularize the proud title of 'Russian patriot,'” organizers of the gathering, youth organization “Feniks” (“Phoenix”) said in a statement.

In a post on Russia's leading social network, VKontakte, ahead of the planned gathering, organizers were seeking “participants” and “volunteers” for the rally.

Rally preparations included the erection of a medical tent at the edge of the square — “in case somebody gets sick from the meaninglessness of the proceedings,” Varlamov quipped.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/10/12/moscow-patriot-rally-draws-dozens-not-thousands-of-participants-a50199