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Moscow City Hall Bans Rally Commemorating 1991 Coup

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Moscow City Hall has turned down an application for a rally commemorating the August Coup of 1991, event co-organizer Mikhail Shneider announced on his Facebook page Wednesday. It is the first time in 24 years that the city authorities have turned down the application for the annual event, he said.

Organizers had requested permission to march from the Gorbaty Bridge to the "Defenders of a Free Russia" monument close to the Novy Arbat. Authorities said repairs to the streets near Moscow's White House, where the memorial events have taken place since 1992, meant that the march could not take place.

Two other events — one in memory of the dead heroes of the Soviet Union and defenders of free Russia, the other in memory of the defenders of the White House — were also turned down, Shneider said. Officials have offered Sokolniki Park and Suvorovskaya Ploshchad in the north of Moscow as alternative venues.

Shneider and fellow co-organizer Lev Ponomaryov, a prominent human rights advocate, plan to contest the decision.

Russia's August Coup in 1991 saw hardliners within the Soviet Union's Communist Party attempt to wrest control of the government from leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The coup's bloodless failure is considered by many to have sparked the fall of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

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