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# Moscow's First Monstration Is Fittingly Absurd

## All power to the imagination!

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"All Power to the Imagination" - and not to Soviet power - reads the lead banner in Moscow's first Monstration. **Anastasia Manuilova / MT**

On Tuesday dozens of men and women holding bright posters with absurd slogans gathered in the center of Moscow to participate in one of the best-known and oddest modern Russian demonstrations: the Monstration.

The first Monstration was held far from the Russian capital city in Novosibirsk in the mid-2000s. It was created by the artist Artyom Loskytov, who said that the idea for Monstration was simple.

A Monstration is a public performance similar to a demonstration, but instead of using political posters, its participants appear on the streets with statements which make no

political or even logical sense. The goal of a Monstration is to shake up a boring political procession — and to have fun.

During the last 10 years, activists in more and more cities in Russia joined in and organized their own Monstrations.

But the hold-out city was Moscow. The city government refused to issue a permit.

“At first it looked like everything would be like usual this year. We sent in our application for the event to the city administration, they rejected it, we started to suggest some other possible places to hold it, they started to tell us it’s too late now, and so on,” Leonid Yuldashev, the organizer of Moscow Monstration, told The Moscow Times.

But later he and his friends made a deal with the Left Coalition, a communist group, to let the Monstration join their demonstration as a separate column. “It’s done this way in other cities, but for some reason it never worked in Moscow before,” Yuldashev said.

Judging by the crowd at the starting point by the Barrikadnaya metro station and the group that marched off from there, about 100-150 people marched in the first Moscow Monstration.

“We think it’s a good start, considering that we could only begin promoting it yesterday when we realized we could really march with the Left Coalition. But even on short notice we see a lot of people and great slogans, totally in Monstration style,” Yuldashev said.

The main slogan of Moscow Monstration, which was written on the organizers’ banner carried at the front of the demonstration, was “All Power to the Imagination!”

Behind them, demonstrators carried signs reading “The Power of the Absurd!” “We Ban Bans” and “Piece, Work, Nonsense ” — which was, perhaps, a play on the traditional May 1 banner “May, Peace, Labor.”

Other activists brought posters with slogans such as “Free the prisoners of the Schengen area,” “I am sorry for your Mom,” “Say no to anti-semiotics,” “Revolutions happen in a dream” and “I’m not here for that.”

The Monstration marchers were of various ages and appearances, but most of them looked ready to have fun. As Alexander, 35, an IT-specialist, explained, there was “spring madness” in the air, so he, his wife and son came to join in. They had signs that read: “I Want Money and To Kiss,” “Don’t Stress Out, Do Have Fun” and “Let It Go.”

“It’s our first time, and we already like it. The slogans we brought today here mirror our mood,” Alexander said.

For Sasha, 30, who works in advertising, the Moscow Monstration was a way to have a good time. She came here with a slogan “I am for same-sex scrimmage.” “My poster can mean anything,” she laughed.

Polina, 22, a designer from Novosibirsk who’d seen Monstrations a few times, told The

Moscow Times that, “It’s important for people to have the right to express themselves, so it’s it great that they got this right in Moscow, too. It already looks like Novosibirsk.” She had a double-sided poster: “Let’s go get beer” on one side and “Pudding – Thief” on the other.

People watched the demonstration from houses along the march route, and even the police seemed to be enjoying themselves, pointing at signs and laughing.

But some activists had trouble all the same. One man wasn’t allowed to join the march for a long time since, a policeman explained, no one understood the meaning of his sign: Mea vido dokole. It was, apparently, nonsense words from an old IT joke.

The woman with a poster “Pudding-Thief” had to paint over the word “thief” to avoid similarity with another famous slogan, “Putin-Thief.”

And at the end of the march, one of the activists was arrested for carrying a rainbow-colored umbrella. The rainbow is usually associated with gay rights groups, which were not granted permission to demonstrate.

That was a perfectly absurd end to the first Moscow Monstration.

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