

The Speech of Russian Anarchist Alexei Polikhovich in Moscow

For Which He Is Currently Imprisoned

CrimethInc.

August 14, 2019

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In Moscow, at the end of August 10, plainclothes police officers arrested the anarchist Alexei Polikhovich on his way home from Russia's largest opposition demonstration since 2011. A local Moscow court formally charged Alexei with "petty hooliganism" and sentenced him to 13 days in jail. The arrest stemmed from a combative and passionate speech Alexei gave to thousands in Moscow that day. You can follow updates on his legal status [here](#). We consider it especially important to support Russian anarchists in view of the recent slew of torture cases in Russia and the other risks that dissidents face there. Likewise, we consider international solidarity between anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist movements to be the only hope for humanity, in contrast to all liberals, nationalists, and supposed leftists who throw in their lot with one faction of the global ruling class or another.

The massive rally on August 10 was the culmination of weeks of both authorized and unauthorized demonstrations in Moscow and elsewhere around Russia. The wave of demonstrations began on July 20, when 20,000 people gathered in Moscow to demand "fair" and "clean" local elections. A slew of liberal opposition candidates have been barred from running in the Moscow elections coming up on September 8. The July 20 demonstration was called to oppose what the opposition sees as collusion between the ruling United Russia Party, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin, President Vladimir Putin, and their allies to prevent liberal opposition candidates from running.

While July 20 was large but rather quiet, one week later, on July 27, an unauthorized protest in front of Moscow City Hall took a different turn. Between 1000–1200 people were arrested out of a crowd of 3500, which included 700 journalists. The heavy-handed brutality against the demonstrators by the Moscow special police forces, the OMON, was nothing particularly new. Neither was the array of absurd charges, some carrying heavy fines and others potential jail time, that the Russian state doled out.

Surely this added to both the anxiety and resolve of those who gathered on August 3 for another unauthorized opposition protest, at which another 1000 people were detained. Footage circulated widely on social media showing the brute force of Moscow's OMON.

Regardless of the liberal politics of the Russian opposition, these circumstances render the impetus for Alexei's speech self-evident. Below, we present the text of Alexei's speech that he posted on the internet prior to the demonstration.

Glossary

For the benefit of those outside Russia, here is a brief guide to some of the references Alexei Polikhovich makes in his speech.

Bolotnaya Square Case — The Bolotnaya Square Case stemmed from the Russian opposition movement of 2011–2012, in which hundreds of thousands of people participated. On May 6, 2012, the "March of Millions" ended with clashes in Bolotnaya Square in Moscow. A number of people were arrested, including Alexei Polikhovich and anti-fascist Alexei Gaskarov. This made the Bolotnaya Square Case synonymous with the struggle to free Russian political prisoners.

Berkut — The Berkut were the infamous riot police in Kyiv, Ukraine loyal to the regime of Russian-supported Viktor Yanukovich, responsible for policing and using lethal force against protestors during the Euromaidan uprising in 2013–14.

Commander Sergei Kusyuk — A former Berkut officer who oversaw operations against Euromaidan, Sergei Kusyuk is now working with the OMON in Moscow and was seen at one of the recent protests.

Ivan Golyunov — Russian police sparked a movement when they arrested the journalist Ivan Golyunov under false pretenses, planting drugs on him. His investigation into the corruption behind the Moscow funeral business sparked the police-mafia collusion leading to his false arrest. After considerable outcry, he was eventually released. He has become a symbolic figure for the opposition.

Alexei Navalny — Alexei Navalny is Russia's most famous opposition/anti-corruption activist. As a liberal, he flirts with right-wing nationalism, and has produced famous investigations into Russian politicians and oligarchs revealing their unscrupulous earnings. He is able to mobilize a large base; as a consequence, he is regularly arrested for his opposition activities.

Alexei Polikhovich's Speech

Hello everyone.

My name is Alexei Polikhovich, and I spent three years, three months, and three days in prison because of the Bolotnaya Square riot. I was imprisoned for grabbing the hands of a riot cop who was beating protesters. And now I'm standing in front of you because I am furious.

I am furious that history is repeating itself. I am furious because anonymous people in helmets, masks, and armor are beating defenseless people on the streets of Moscow. They are beating them again and again they will go unpunished. I am furious that Moscow is occupied by these storm troopers who consider us all enemies of Russia.

I saw them. I saw a man in a helmet with a baton furiously beating someone who was lying on the ground and screaming. I saw hordes of those people in helmets attacking people who were standing there peacefully. The only thing that was dangerous on July 27 was the law enforcement officers. They alone.

They learned to beat us—and then they learned to play victim in the courts and say how they were injured by a thrown plastic cup or from the touch of our warm, tender hands, just like they hurt from the chant “Cops are Shame of Russia.” They cry in their anonymous cowardly Telegram channels that they are the real Russian men and we are paid provocateurs. Hey men, what is it like to play victim in the courts against students, graduate students, bloggers, TV directors, volunteers? What will your children say about these stories when they grow up? Your children will hate you. Children of cops—hate cops!

I am furious that once every seven years, the ship of the Investigative Committee sails into Moscow and whisks young people away to the Cretan labyrinth like a sacrifice to the Minotaur. To insure that Athens—Moscow—remains a peaceful city of barbecue festivals. So that the fugitives and traitors of Berkut can safely practice fencing with batons on our bodies. So that Colonel Kusyuk can still wear his mustache on our land and command the crackdowns on peaceful demonstrations.

They come every seven years to sacrifice us. And so it is. Today I am furious and want you to feel the outrage too. I want you—all of us—to become Ariadne for the thirteen guys who have

already been imprisoned in the riot case so far. I believe that we can handle it. After [the case of Ivan] Golunov, I believe that we have the strength to throw down a thread that will guide them out of the labyrinth of prisons, courts, and police brutality.

How many people are here now? Many thousands. I want to see these thousands under the windows of the Basmanny Court [the court that ordered the arrests]—here, we are very close to the Basmanny Court. I am not a supporter of Navalny, I do not believe in elections, I am just a Russian anarchist. A simple Russian man. I want us to shout to all the Kusyuks, the Moscow election commission, riot police, cops, judges, and bureaucrats. *You are crazy fucks!* They are crazy fucks! They are crazy fucks!

Support the people in prison. Come home and write a letter to them in jail. Donate money for food and the lawyer fees. Find the person with a donation box in the crowd now—it is my accomplice from the Bolotnaya case, Volodya Akimenkov—give him funds for political prisoners. Talk about it and go to the court; the protests beneath the windows of the court should never stop.

Remember their names. Remember their names—not as the names of victims or heroes, but as the names of your friends who will be home soon. Shout them out:

Alexey Minyailo
Vladislav Barabanov
Kirill Zhukov
Egor Zhukov
Ivan Podkopaev
Samariddin Radzhapov
Evgeny Kovalenko
Sergey Abanichev
Daniel Conon
Sergey Fomin
Aydar Gubaidulin
Danila Begletz
Dmitry Vasiliev
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Retrieved on 17th June 2021 from crimethinc.com

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