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SAVE THE DATE!

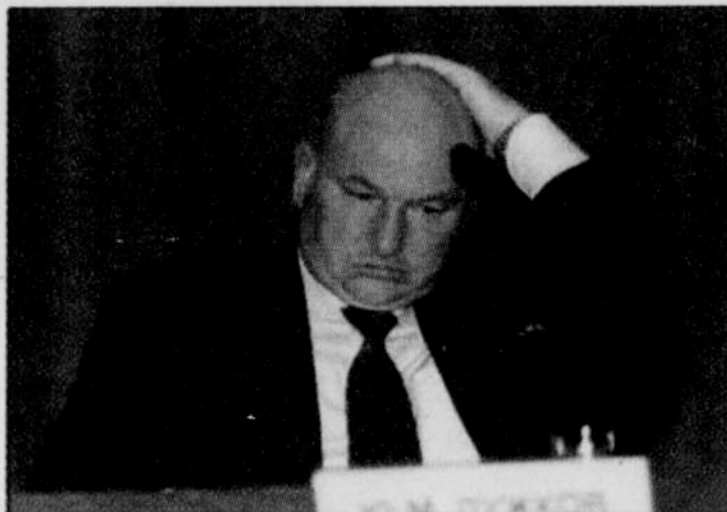
THE 2ND ANNUAL WAREHOUSE PRIDE PARTY IS SATURDAY, JUNE 17

world

EUROPE

Moscow Pride Banned

Although Mayor Yuri Luzhkov vowed that he "will not permit such parades," queers are expected to stage Moscow's first Gay Pride march May 27. Luzhkov cited security concerns, according to Interfax news agency.



Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov said he will not allow the city's first Pride parade, slated for May 27.

In line with local requirements, organizers requested a permit for the parade May 15. They plan to make the final decision on whether to march just three hours before the parade's planned start time, during the closing session of a Pride-week anti-homophobia conference.

"Over the last days, and despite the fact that our site www.gayrussia.ru/en was hacked and offline for 12 hours, we have received many messages of support from inside Russia of people—gays and straights—who said that initially they did not plan to come for the Pride, but that after the recent events, they will definitely take part," said one of the organizers, Nikolai Alekseev. "The Russian medias have been quite supportive to gays and lesbians in their reporting of the situation. People understand that this is a question of democracy. If the mayor of Moscow feels himself higher than the constitution and bans a Gay Pride, then tomorrow...which social group will be their target next?"

Luzhkov has said the march would "provoke society."

"I will not permit such parades," he said in February. "My philosophy is my negative attitude to these phenomena, as I believe them to be unnatural to the human nature."

Alekseev says Pride organizers need support from abroad.

"If you want to help us, then we hope to see you in Moscow soon," he said. "We don't need money in this fight. We need your presence with us."

As the parade date approaches, forces opposed to the march have escalated their tactics.

Around 300 religious extremists, skinheads and members of Russian nationalist organizations attacked people entering Moscow's Renaissance Event Club as it hosted the first in a new series of gay parties April 30. The protesters threw eggs, tomatoes, bottles and rocks while chanting "Pedersasts go away" and "Shame on you, gays and lesbians."

It was "the most massive and aggressive action of homophobic extremists against sexual minorities in Russian history," Alekseev said.

People inside the club were evacuated by police in small groups and whisked away in special buses. There were no serious injuries.

"This was a very well-planned action," Alekseev noted. "Participants were brought

to...the club by buses and then taken back also by buses. The protest took place late at night before the national holiday, which caught police and media unprepared."

Some of the protesters told reporters they will target the Pride parade in a similar fashion.

The next evening, about 100 demonstrators from the same groups visited another gay bar, Tri Obezany. Riot police arrested 39 of them for hooliganism after they tried to prevent patrons from entering the venue, shouted insults and tossed eggs, fruit and bottles.

The subgroup of protesters affiliated with Christian churches waved crosses and icons and chanted "God is with us," the British Broadcasting Corp. reported.

Meanwhile, a new poll has found that 49 percent of Russians believe prominent Islamic mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin of the Russian Muslim Central Directorate should be prosecuted for saying in

February that gays "should be bashed" if they march.

The scientific Levada-Centre/GayRussia.Ru poll questioned 1,600 people across the nation. About 28 percent of those polled opposed prosecuting Tadzhuiddin, and 23 percent had no opinion.

"The majority of Russians consider the statements of Tadzhuiddin directed towards homosexuals in general and participants of the Gay Pride totally inadmissible," Alekseev said.

Article 282 of Russia's criminal code bans inciting hatred toward a social group. Gay activists asked the general prosecutor to open a criminal investigation of Tadzhuiddin, but the office rejected the request May 3, explaining, "The Quran is a legal document in Russia, and it says that gays should be killed."

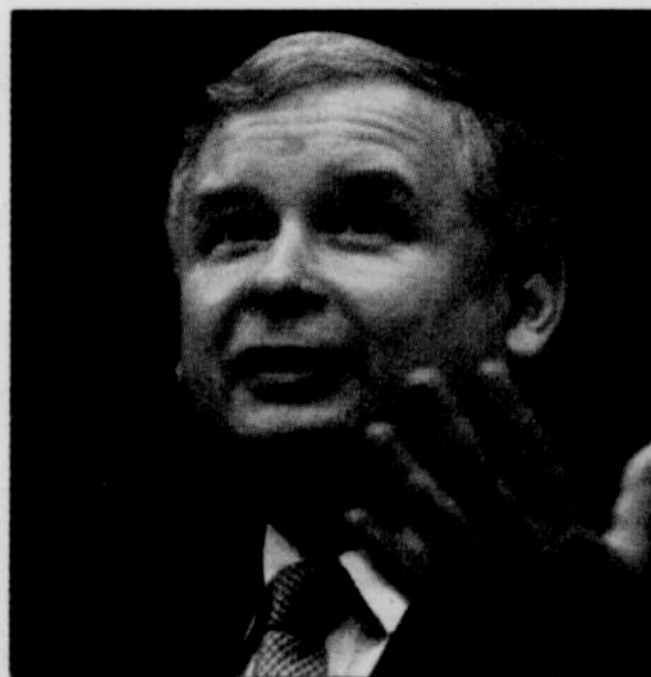
Activists have appealed the decision.

Polish Gay March Attacked

The Gay Pride march in Krakow, Poland, was attacked April 28 by members of the right-wing All Poland Youth Group, the British Broadcasting Corp. reported.

The counterdemonstrators threw rocks and eggs and chased after the marchers even when they deviated from the planned route.

Police with riot shields and clubs prevented a more direct clash. Several counterprotesters were arrested.



Homophobia has increased in Poland since conservative Law and Justice Party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski came into power.