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Russian Opposition Leaders Detained at Anti-Putin Rally

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Russian opposition leader Sergei Udaltsov waves to the media before entering the Russian Investigative Committee's office in Moscow, Russia, Friday, Dec. 14, 2012.

[Jessica Golloher](#)

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December 15, 2012

MOSCOW — Thousands of demonstrators have gathered in central Moscow to protest Russian President Vladimir Putin. At least 30 people, including prominent opposition leaders, have been arrested.

As a police helicopter flew above, protesters rallied Saturday in front of Russia's headquarters for the Federal Security Service, formerly known as the KGB. The demonstration was not sanctioned by Moscow authorities and those who participated or organized

the rally faced large fines and arrest. Officials say the fines are meant to protect the security of the average Russian.

Opposition leader Sergei Udaltsov, who was arrested during the event, says it is absurd that people can not express their opinions in Russia.

He says we wanted to hold a peaceful freedom march today within the framework of the law. But he goes on to say that the authorities banned the march for no reason whatsoever. He says the government is afraid of its citizens.

Russians began protesting in December 2011 in the largest demonstrations since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The rallies began after ruling party United Russia won the country's parliamentary elections.

Demonstrators claim the party won by ballot stuffing and vote rigging, charges it denies.

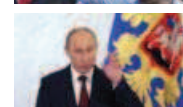
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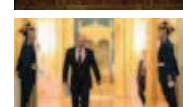
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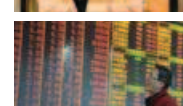
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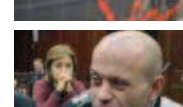
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Since then, demonstrators have continued to rally against Russian President Vladimir Putin's unprecedented third term. Protesters say he runs the country through a tightly controlled political system and corruption. The Kremlin denies the accusations.

Since Putin has been in office, Russia has seen a major crackdown on dissent. Anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny, a major organizer of the anti-Kremlin protests who was also arrested Saturday, had been previously charged with fraud for allegedly stealing millions of dollars in timber and now faces another investigation for fraud. He says the charges against him are politically motivated. Moscow denies the claim. Navalny faces up to 10 years in prison.

Additionally, the fines for participating in and organizing unsanctioned demonstrations against the Kremlin have increased more than 150-fold, that is more than the average annual salary of a Russian.

Tamara, a Muscovite in her 20s who did not want to use her last name, said she almost did not come to the rally because she was afraid of the fines.

She says I think a lot of people did not show up because they are afraid of the fines. I am afraid too it would take me months of work to pay the fine off.

In addition to Udaltsov and Navalny, other prominent opposition leaders were detained Saturday including Ilya Yashin and TV personality Ksenia Sobchak.

Despite this, opposition leaders say they will continue to protest.




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Sergei Udaltsov

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Sergei Stanislavovich Udaltsov (Russian: Сергей Станиславович Удальцов; born 16 February 1977) is a Russian political activist and leader of the Left Front movement.^[1] In 2011 and 2012, he helped lead a series of protests against Vladimir Putin.

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December 2011 arrest

On 4 December 2011, the day of the Russian legislative elections, Udaltsov was arrested in Moscow for allegedly "resisting officers' recommendations to cross the road in the correct place" and detained for five days.^[1] As he finished this, Udaltsov was immediately rearrested and given a 15-day sentence for allegedly earlier leaving hospital without permission when he was being treated there during a previous, different period of detention in October. Around twenty officers came to pick him up, together with plainclothes members of the FSB.^[1]

Udaltsov was in the same prison as another activist, blogger Alexei Navalny. While in prison, Udaltsov went on hunger strike to protest against the conditions.^[1]

In December Amnesty International named him a prisoner of conscience and called for his immediate release.^[2] One of Udaltsov's lawyers, Violetta Volkova, applied to the European Court of Human Rights for his release, claiming a list of procedural violations.^[1]

As of 17 December 2011, since November 2010 Udaltsov had spent a total of 86 days in detention for a variety of minor crimes and misdemeanours.^[1] According to Nikolai Polozov, one of his lawyers, "These cases are fabricated as a deliberate obstacle to prevent Sergei from exercising his constitutional right to free political expression".^[1]

Sergei Udaltsov
Сергей Удальцов



Chairman of the Vanguard of Red Youth

Incumbent

Assumed office

4 May 1999

Chairman of the Left Front

Incumbent

Assumed office

18 October 2008

Chairman of the Russian United Labour Front

Incumbent

Assumed office

22 February 2010

Personal details

Born	Udaltsov Sergey Stanislavovich 16 February 1977 Moscow
Spouse(s)	Anastasia Udaltsova, children Ivan (born in 2002) and Oleg (born in 2005)
Profession	lawyer

May 2012 demonstrations



Addressing supporters after release from jail, 24 May 2012

Udaltsov played a leading role in the Moscow demonstrations protesting Putin's inauguration following the presidential election, taking an aggressive approach as the demonstrators attempted to exceed the limits imposed on them by the police. He was arrested, released, then re-arrested at a later demonstration and sentenced to 15 days. Adaption of a more militant posture was a change of tactics for the protest movement, which heretofore had dutifully sought permits and maintained a peaceful atmosphere.^{[3][4]}

On 8 May, the day after Putin was inaugurated, Udaltsov and fellow opposition leader Alexey Navalny were arrested after an anti-Putin rally at Clean Ponds, and were each given 15-day jail sentences.^[5] In response, Amnesty International again designated him (as well as Navalny) a prisoner of conscience.^[6]

October 2012 conspiracy charge

In October 2012, the pro-government news channel NTV aired a documentary titled "Anatomy Of A Protest 2", which accused Udaltsov, Udaltsov's assistant Konstantin Lebedev, and Leonid Razvozhayev, a parliamentary aide to opposition MP Ilya V. Ponomarev, of meeting with Georgian politician Givi Targamadze for the purpose of overthrowing Putin.^{[7][8]} The documentary purported to show a low-quality secret recording of a meeting between Targamadze and Russian activists, which NTV stated had been given to its staff "on the street by a stranger of Georgian nationality". The Investigative Committee of Russia (SK) stated it had found the footage to be genuine, while bloggers debated its validity, stating that at least one fragment of footage was used twice with different voice-overs.^[8] Udaltsov denied the documentary's accusations on Twitter, calling it "dirt and lies" and a "provocation whose ultimate objective is to justify my arrest".^[9]

Following the broadcast, an SK spokesman stated that the government was considering terrorism charges against Udaltsov on the basis of the video,^[7] and Razvozhayev, Udaltsov, and Konstantin Lebedev, an assistant of Udaltsov's, were charged with "plotting mass disturbances".^[10] Udaltsov was arrested by a squad of masked commandos on 17 October.^[9] Razvozhayev fled to Kiev, Ukraine, to apply for asylum, but was allegedly kidnapped by security forces, returned to Moscow, tortured, and made to sign a confession implicating himself, Udaltsov, and anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny.^{[11][12]}

On 26 October, Udaltsov was charged with plotting riots.^[13] An SK spokesman also accused him of an attempt "to plan and prepare terrorist acts and other actions threatening the life and health of Russians", and suggested that he could face life imprisonment.^[9] The Associated Press described the charges as continuation of "a widespread crackdown on the movement against President Vladimir Putin".^[14]

Udaltsov was arrested again on 27 October along with Navalny and Ilya Yashin while attempting to join a protest against Razvozhayev's alleged kidnapping and torture. The three were charged with violating public order, for which they could be fined up to 30,000 rubles (US\$1,000) or given 50 hours of community service.^[15]

December 2012 arrest in Lubyanka Square

Udaltsov and Navalny were among those arrested at a protest in Lubyanka Square on December 15, 2012. According to press reports, about 2,000 protesters had gathered, despite being threatened with huge fines for participating in an unsanctioned demonstration. Russian lawmaker Dmitri Gudkov was quoted as saying, "There is still protest and we want change, and they can't frighten us with detention or pressure or searches or arrests or anything else."^[16]

Political views

In a January 2012 interview, Udaltsov called for "a direct democracy, where the people would have their say through fair and transparent referendums, where they could interact with authorities using the Internet, where they could have a say in social reforms." According to Udaltsov: "We are not nostalgic about the Soviet Union, we do not argue for a return to a centrally planned economy where social initiative was stifled, but we do want to preserve what was good in the Soviet system while adopting new paths to development; we want to see the social-democratic development of Russia."^[17]

He served as a campaign manager for Communist Party of the Russian Federation candidate Gennady Zyuganov during the 2012 presidential election.^[4]

Personal life

Sergei is married to Anastasiya Udaltsova, a press officer for Left Front. They are known as the "revolutionary couple" of Russian politics.^[18] Together they have two sons, Ivan (born in 2002) and Oleg (born in 2005).^[1]

See also

- Vanguard of Red Youth

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