

# ВИЛЕНСКИЙ. ДМИТРИЙ / VILENSKY. DMITRI

## Protest Match

Excerpted text from the documentary video

**G8 SUMMIT  
KIROV STADIUM  
JULY, 2006  
SAINT PETERSBURG, RUSSIA**

**VOICEOVER:** *More than 200 forum delegates from all over Russia are detained on their way to Petersburg.*

*Running the social forum in parallel with the Summit was something that was vetted with the authorities, who made an offer that couldn't be refused: to hold the forum at the Kirov Stadium, a splendid monument of Soviet architecture now doomed to demolition.*

**BK:** I never supported having the social forum at the stadium, but that's how it turned out. As we were coming here we found out that the Kirov Stadium has been redubbed the Estadio Victor Jara and then the Pinochet Stadium. So the associations that come to mind aren't pleasant ones. But a match is being played here anyway. It's no-holds-barred football: the cops have a ten-man advantage, and they're playing against a clown, not another footballer.

*Everyone was sure that the authorities allocated this easily isolatable site on purpose, in order to keep the situation under control.*

*The authorities did their best to make sure that even minimal participation in the forum would seem risky.*

**IP:** The symbolism here is tied to what happened in Chile in 1973. There are some obvious parallels: people in an enclosed space, their freedom of movement severely limited. Otherwise the main symbol is the fact that we've gathered in a city that's borne so many revolutions.

*It was like living in a condemned squat: you know that the police have planned a raid, but for the time being you feel safe and ready for anything.*

*Even before the forum began, the FSB and the police were blackmailing activists, demanding that they not take part in any protests and the forum. Most print shops refused to print information about the forum and people were arrested for handing out leaflets.*

**DD:** This really is a reservation. The authorities decided to let a minimal number of people they call "anti-globalists" meet so that they could keep us under control while those eight stuffed shirts hobnob over in Strelna. We can only hope that in the future the 18-year-olds who managed to get here will beat them hands down. And then we won't even be talking about compromising with the authorities. There won't be any authorities — that's all.

*At the stadium it became clear that the movement's slogan—"We're everywhere!"—didn't apply to Russia. Most international groups didn't send delegates.*

*The reasons for the no-shows: fear of rough treatment by the police and total control of arriving foreigners. As a result, there were fewer than 50 guests at the stadium.*

The names of participants and organizations were taken from the program of The Second Russian Social Forum.

Translated by  
**THOMAS CAMPBELL**

**VOICEOVER:** Dmitri Vilensky  
**DD:** Dmitri Dzhvania, *Resistance Movement*  
**IP:** Ivan Ovsiannikov, *Socialist Resistance*,  
Yaroslavl  
**BK:** Boris Kagarlitsky, *Moscow*

**CC:** Carine Clément, *Institute for Collective Action*  
**R:** Ruslan, *Workers Democracy*, Petersburg  
**LR:** Larisa Romanova, *Moscow*  
**L:** Alexander Lekhman, *Forward Socialist Movement*, Moscow  
**O:** Olga, *Autonomous Action*  
**P:** Pavel, Pyotr Alexeev, *Resistance Movement*  
**IP:** Ilya Ponomarev, *Left Front*  
**S:** Zhenya (Elephant), *Petersburg*



**BK:** There are rules here, we just don't understand them. They change every few hours according to some kind of strange logic. I feel like one of those hedgehogs in *Alice in Wonderland* that Alice and the other players have to hit with her flamingos. The hedgehogs scurry off, they try to avoid getting hit. We're like those hedgehogs. Sometimes we escape, sometimes we end up going down. We didn't have a choice. We had to do some kind of event for the G8. It's a matter of principle, of honor and ethics. I think it was the right tack to organize a Russian social forum. It wouldn't have been right only to organize a countersummit to protest the G8. Here in Russia we have lots of our own problems we need to discuss.

**IP:** If the other side threw out the rulebook, then we should too. This is the main thing. One of the biggest problems for Russian leftists today is that they're playing against us without rules, but we try to obey the law, to honor truces. This is nonsense. We should use anything that doesn't contradict our political views or force us to make unacceptable compromises. We need to use the whole arsenal to resist the current order.

*Because of these events many people had the sense that during the summit the stadium became a temporary autonomous zone. If you made it past the police cordon, past the metal detectors, if you'd surrendered all the suspicious items in your bag, then the stadium was a place where you were probably safe from arrest. Getting out of the stadium was an adventure: the FSB made it clear that they had complete lists of all movement members that they were tapping mobile phones and knew where most of the activists lived.*

**R:** If there aren't many of us, even if it's just me, that's how it was in the Brezhnev years. Three people would go out on the square and simply protest. . . . That's what it means to me to be human. A real Marxist is someone who can go out onto the field alone.

*Discussions in the bleachers, behind metal barriers, under a scorching sun.*

*The speakers were often drowned out by the roar of patrol copters. Protests were scheduled for the next day and many folks knew they'd be arrested. But for now they*



were arguing about new forms of exploitation, social and ecological alternatives to neoliberalism, the struggle against the state's antisocial actions, how to achieve peace in the North Caucasus, abolishing patents on drugs.

**L:** You just have to work for the world's future. The only guarantee that a new society will be built is the work we're doing now. We're making our contribution to the building of a new world.

*They talked about community-focused urban development, student solidarity and student rights, environmental friendly energy sources, trade union solidarity, how to organize clerical workers, solidarity with the Latin American revolution, the problems of migrant workers, aid to socialist political prisoners, strategies for protecting public transportation, the revolutionary dialectic of the current moment, questions of union solidarity, the prospects of the antifascist movement, and economic alternatives for the future.*

**IP:** This new world can be achieved via revolution and via evolution. For me, revolution is something romantic. It's a way of life. But I think it's more likely we'll get to

the new world using evolutionary means. Because thanks to the efforts and sacrifices we revolutionaries make, the other side makes concessions and the whole system begins to change, albeit slowly. The historical process is inevitable, its logic obvious. In any case we'll get to where we're going. I hope we can do this earlier rather than later, more effectively, with fewer victims.

*The groups met at the stadium: The Assembly of Cheated Apartment Co-op Members, Action Committees Against In-fill Construction and Forcible Evictions, The Soviet of Coordinating Soviets, The Alternatives Movement, The Committee for Unified Action, The All-Russia Labor Confederation, The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, The Assembly of Dorm Residents Committees, The Movement for Direct Government Workgroup, and the group Chto Delat?.*

**S:** It's not like we're waiting for the revolution as one moment in history, when everything will be completely new, different, totally ideal. Of course there will still be problems, conflicts, etc. There's this really great slogan that the Spanish anarchist Durruti thought up: *We carry a new world here, in our hearts.* This means we



build a new world every day, in our relationships with each other,

*As usual, Chto Delat? proposed talking about the role of culture in the struggle for human liberation, how art might help people gain dignity, how we can become more and imagine different kinds of human community.*

**P:** It's okay if I don't live to see this world. The main thing is that it comes to pass. I'll make my contribution, just as many have before and will again.

*What does it mean to stand with the oppressed? How do we overcome inferiority and oppression and achieve equality?*

**DD:** "Another world" is like a myth. It's something to strive for. It's what enchants us, what rouses us to action. It's like the idea of beauty. We dream of communism, of a non-authoritarian society, of self-government.

This myth has to mobilize us. Because to achieve even a modicum of participatory democracy we have to demonstrate in principle how human nature should develop.

*What does Lenin's famous phrase mean: that one should study, study and study communism again in a genuine way?*

**O:** My friends and I already live in another world. Because what we do and how we spend our time is quite different from how other people live. . . .

*How can we study something that doesn't exist as a ready set of facts? How can we take advantage of our non-knowledge and each time call for something that doesn't exist?*

**CC:** Even if I live to see the revolutionary situation, then I probably won't survive the revolution. I mean that a true revolutionary should die after the revolution. But



this doesn't mean I'm at all pessimistic. On the contrary, it means that I'm fighting here and now for the future.

There was a Palestinian there who told us the story of an artist who made a drawing of a small child with his hands tied behind his back. This image became a symbol of the Palestinians' struggle for their freedom.

He told us that the artist had received the greatest award—he was killed. That's exactly how he put it. These words forced all of us to think differently about art's meaning.

**БК:** When it comes down to it, we are that other world. We're making it with our lives and our fates. With our existence.

*In the twilight of the last days of the White Nights, when the heat had lifted, I suddenly felt that sadness had descended on the stadium. There was nothing personal about it. It was political sadness, the impossibility of action.*

*On the final evening, when the stadium was completely surrounded by the OMON the forum's organizers made a decision: to leave the stadium and hold a demonstration.*

*All the actions held this day and the day after were shut down almost instantly. Most activists were being followed and many of them were detained even before the actions began.*

*The press were intensely interested in any form of protest: the attempt to block Nevsky Prospect near a hotel where many reporters were staying, the breaking up of a traditional weekly anti-Chechen war demo, and other protests were recorded by many cameras. The media machine needed to reproduce images of stylish antiglobalists fighting with cops in heavy armor.*

*Everything was supposed to look the way such things usually look, so that the average citizen wouldn't be disappointed: we also live in a democratic country.*



*I ask myself: Did we have the chance to sense our place in history? Are we repeating history as a farce or are we capable of making it anew? I'm sure that everyone can write their own history. /*

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