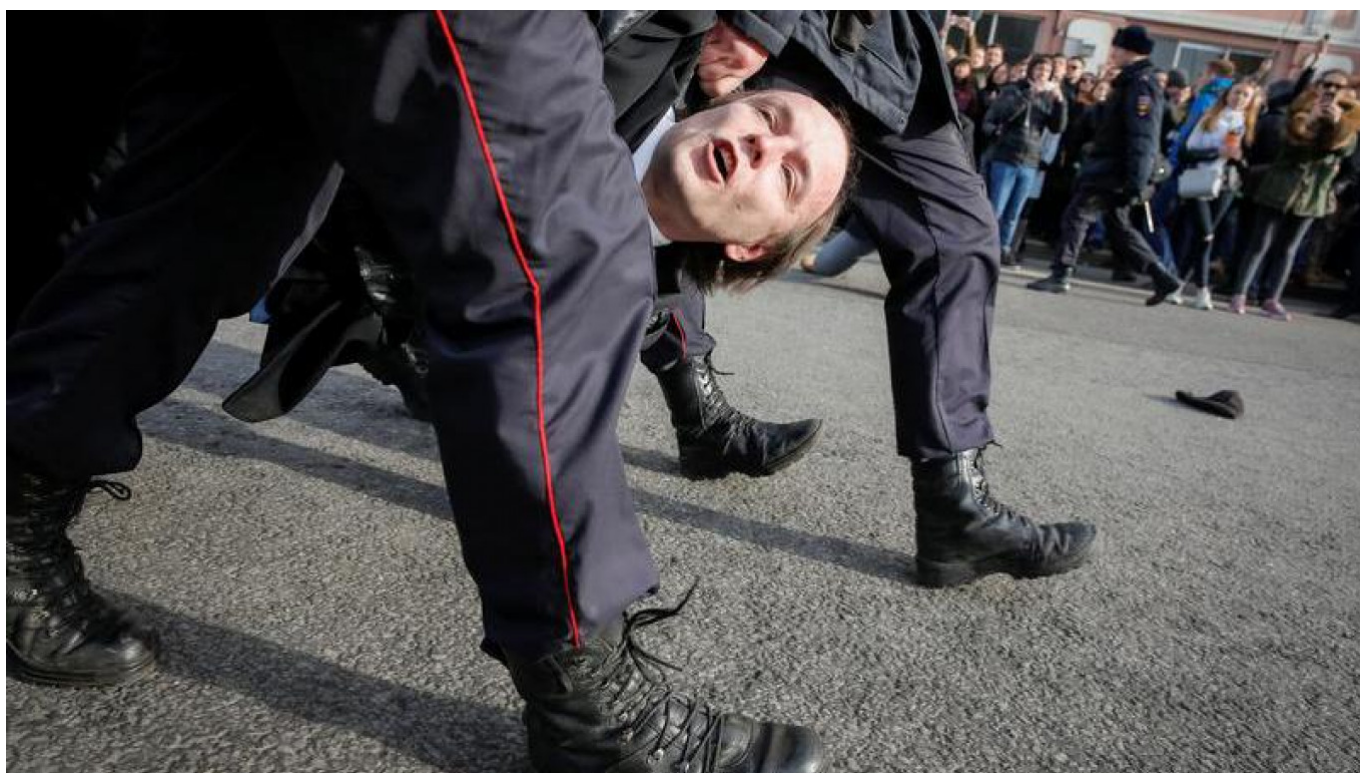


Kremlin's Reply to Anti-Corruption Demonstrations: We Can Deal With It Ourselves

By [Pavel Aptekar](#) and [Nikolai Eppe](#)

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Law enforcement officers detain an opposition supporter during a rally in Moscow, March 26, 2017.
Maxim Shemetov / Reuters

The Kremlin's answer to accusations of corruption are as follows: Russian civil servants' income reports are transparent for the Secret Service and that is enough. If someone else wants to know, it constitutes an attempt to compromise the government's integrity.

These comments regarding Aleksey Navalny's anti-corruption investigation and protest demonstrations on the 26th of March describe a Soviet understanding of fighting corruption within the Russian government.

In Saturday's interview for the ABC television channel Dmitry Peskov, the presidential press attaché conveyed that the civil servants' incomes "are very transparent as far as the services

are concerned, which need the information [...] to fight corruption in our country.”

Activists' claims are populist and invalid, because activists “simply don't have the information that the Secret Service has.” This begs the question: why not make this information accessible to the activists? Maybe they will then stop pursuing a populist agenda?

However, according to Vladimir Peskov's comment, activists use the data they have incorrectly. “We consistently take action to counter corruption” said Putin on Thursday. “I consider it wrong when political forces attempt to use that as a tool for promoting their interests and not for the sake of improving the situation in the country. This is the Arab Spring method. We all know very well what that leads to. That became the reason for the government overthrow in Ukraine and created chaos in the country.”

These are important conceptual statements. According to this worldview, society is not the subject of politics, and only the Kremlin and the Secret Service (FSB) can fight corruption.

“The authorities try to maintain a monopoly on fighting corruption,” politologist Aleksey Makarkin argues.

“It is convenient for the authorities to divulge this information in small doses to demonstrate that it is fighting bribery.”

Aleksey Navalny's last investigation concerns Dmitry Medvedev, the man within the President's closest circle. Any admission of his undeclared income will have an effect on the image of the Head of Government, which is unacceptable for the Kremlin, says politologist Nikolai Petrov.

People are to trust the officially publicized information and Secret Service's competence. Society is assigned the role of its Soviet counterpart: that of watcher and consultant. Citizens are able to convey information to the government, but making decisions regarding its integrity is up to the specific people trusted by the ruling bureaucracy.

Transparency International vice-president Elena Panfilova points out that the citizens are more interested in fighting corruption than bureaucracy, and therefore should be independent. In the Internet era, attempts to hide or classify something are useless. These attempts raise the interest in the unlawful capital gains of the elite. Tools used to achieve transparency develop faster than the instruments to limit them.

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