

Surkov Links Graft To Liberals

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The Kremlin's first deputy chief of staff has accused the liberal opposition of fostering the country's rampant corruption and encouraged his pet youth movement to campaign against it.

Liberals have brought to politics the practice of "buying and collecting officials" in order to "exchange state services among one another," which was developed in business circles in the 1990s, Vladislav Surkov said, the Nashi youth group [said](#) in a statement Wednesday.

"And now those who've created this scheme [and] institutionalized corruption are blaming us and preparing anti-corruption reports," Surkov told Nashi activists at a meeting Tuesday, the group said.

Surkov named no names, but liberal opposition leader Boris Nemtsov has released two reports claiming that corruption has worsened during the rule of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev in the 2000s.

Russia has plummeted in corruption [ratings](#) under Putin and Medvedev, dropping from 79th place in 2001 to 154th in 2009 in Transparency International's worldwide Corruption

Perceptions Index.

Surkov, who himself worked as a businessman before obtaining a Kremlin job in 1999, also said the liberal opposition is surviving on “gray” foreign grants, which he called an example of corruption. Liberal opposition groups have repeatedly denied being financed from abroad.

Surkov’s meeting with Nashi was to endorse the group’s new anti-corruption program dubbed “[Beliye Fartuki](#),” or “White Aprons.” The group scheduled for Saturday a rally of 50,000 young people in Moscow, with each participant to provide an online report about a graft story he or she has personally witnessed.

Liberal activists have not commented on Surkov’s allegations. Nemtsov himself was implicated by media in an illegal privatization case in the Nizhny Novgorod region, which he governed in the 1990s, but was never charged.

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