

Putin's Campaign Manager Says Country Has "Normal," "Civilized" Corruption

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Russia has returned to having "'normal,' 'civilized' corruption" after the "heady" 1990s, Vladimir Putin's campaign manager Stanislav Govorukhin said in an interview Friday.

Govorukhin said corruption existed in tsarist times and that Putin's leadership did not engender the phenomenon.

"In the 90s, there was no corruption—instead there was unrestrained thievery, overt looting. Billions [of rubles], factories, [entire] sectors were stolen," he said in a wide-ranging interview with newspaper Trud.

"Today we have once again returned to 'normal,' 'civilized' corruption, which, alas, also exists in China (there, it's true, they shoot you for it), and in Italy, and in America. It's more inherent to us than it is to those countries, but we, I repeat, are crawling out of frightening, unrestrained thievery. You can't get rid of this vice in a single minute," he said.

Anti-corruption blogger and opposition politician Alexei Navalny quickly seized on the comments, calling on his followers to create a poster displaying Govorukhin's words.

"The best one we will hang in elevators throughout the country," Navalny wrote on his blog.

"The garrulous old man Govorukhin"—who is 75 years old—"is a wonderful present to us," he wrote.

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