

Russian Man Returns His \$1 Pension Bonus to Medvedev in Disgust

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Sergei Karpukhin / AP

A retired man living in rural Tomsk was so disgusted with his pension adjustment this month that he mailed it to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, attaching a note that read, “From the village to the capital, for your hangover.”

The envelope contained 60 rubles (a little more than a dollar), and it cost 133 rubles just to send it. The man, Viktor Smirnyagin, says he had to haggle for about an hour at the post office, where they refused at first to accept the parcel, according to the news site Takie Dela.

In Smirnyagin’s letter, he railed against the federal government, writing, “They’re destroying us in every possible way. [...] They’re doing this openly, and the whole world is laughing at us, because we stay silent, while they grab millions and billions.”

Smirnyagin says he returned his miserly pension bump to raise awareness about the government’s failure to support retirees. “Maybe now they’ll hear us. They’ll hear us, if we

pelt them with these kopecks they're always yelling about. Maybe they'll be ashamed," he said.

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Last year, the Russian government expected inflation to reach 5.8 percent, and officials agreed to index pension payments accordingly. Inflation turned out to be lower, however, and all that was necessary was a 5.4-percent raise, which the state paid out in February. Officials then decided to follow through with the original budget, and pension payments were raised again — this time by 0.38 percent — in April.

It was this small additional bump that Smirnyagin mailed to Dmitry Medvedev.

Smirnyagin likely singled out Russia's prime minister because of Alexei Navalny's recent investigative report accusing Medvedev of masterminding a corrupt real-estate empire. Navalny's allegations fueled nationwide protests in late March that have been credited with reenergizing Russia's political opposition.

The anti-corruption movement has generated strong support among young Russians, but the campaign clearly appeals to some older citizens, as well, if Viktor Smirnyagin is any indication.

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