

Pause mass protests?

Reply to Leonid Volkov statement

Socialisticheskaya Alternativa, February 4th 2021



On the evening of February 4, when not all detainees from the previous days had been yet transferred to special detention facilities, Leonid Volkov spoke on behalf of the Navalny Team with a programmatic statement. **Volkov said no further protests were planned until the spring, as they could only lead to increased repression and the complete dismantling of the movement's regional centers.** "Alexei asks us to concentrate for the autumn. We will get him out of prison with the help of foreign policy" - this is how he tried to outline the tactics of further action.

Volkov's statement provoked a fair outrage among all those who have bravely taken to the streets under the batons of OMON (riot police) in the last two weeks, to be arrested, beaten and bullied. Particularly outrageous is the claim that "the protest must end at its high". **Over 11,000 arrested, thousands imprisoned; over 800 people crammed into the Sakharovo concentration camp and sentenced to many days in an environment full of bullying; Navalny behind bars - is that the "high"?**

Volkov suggests that all the dissatisfied "invest their strength and energy" for the preparation of a "smart vote" in the State Duma elections - this again sounds like a mockery! What elections can we talk about at all in a situation where the regime is openly spitting on an "amended" constitution, not to mention other laws? **What is the task of the "200,000 observers" that the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) wants to train by the autumn, who will let them into the polling stations?**

Demonstrators' demands - the release of political prisoners and Putin's resignation - will not be resolved by the September 2nd elections. And most importantly, for whom should we vote "smart"? For the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which has openly opposed the protesters? For clowns from the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia? For "A Just Russia", which pacts with Prilepin? No other candidates will be available in the fall. **The only adequate response to these pseudo-elections is to boycott them by all available means.**

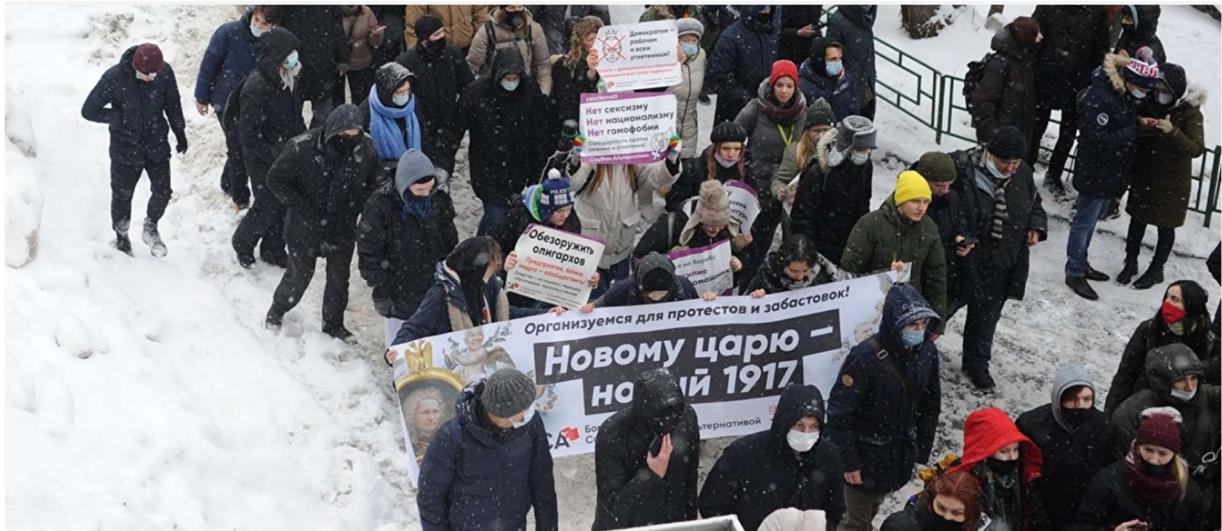
In the end, however, there is nothing surprising about Volkov's words. Yes, in the last 5 years, Navalny and later his closest collaborators have moved strongly to the left under the pressure of the moods of broad sections of the population - at least in their rhetoric. **In essence, however, they have remained the same pro-capitalist politicians, for whom elections are the preferred means of fighting over street mobilizations and the self-organization of protesters, who are always "threaten" to cross predetermined boundaries.**

One thing the FBK leadership simply does not understand: the mass movement cannot simply be "suspended" and then "restarted" at the right time. **Navalny's arrest served only as a pretext for an outbreak of popular outrage that had accumulated over many years and was compounded by the coronavirus crisis. This indignation will not go away.** Volkov's statement only confirms our view that protest and the whole movement need a democratic structure and elected leadership.

The decision of the Navalny's collaborators has angered many, and that is understandable and correct. It is important that this does not lead to disappointment and demoralization!

If FBK withdraws from the protests - it is their decision. **People will go their own way without looking back at cowardly intrigueres.**

The main thing now is that the protest does not lose its mass character and is **better organized**. The tactics of further action cannot be determined by politicians who have cut themselves off from the masses, but by the protesters themselves.



That is why we call on everyone to come together in protest committees - in places of residence, workplaces, schools and universities. Discuss with colleagues, classmates, neighbors what forms the protests should take when their leadership has given them up. **Join the two-hour strike we are preparing for March 5th! Hold a meeting right in your neighborhood and involve those who have not yet joined the movement. Our strenght and guarantee of success are in solidarity and organization. Contact us and join us.**

Do you have contacts in Russia or in the Russian community in the Czech Republic - colleagues, classmates? Contact them and call for actions independent of the decisions of the Navalny staff. Do you know about companies connected to the Putin regime - either directly or as important business partners? Help us reach their employees. Solidarity demonstrations are important, but unlike "foreign policies", the regime needs to be pushed through massive effective solidarity between workers and young people.

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