



The Political Voice

by Undergraduates for Undergraduates in the UF Department of Political Science

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Growing Up in Post-Soviet Russia

By Julia Boyd

I was born in the Soviet Union on July 14th, 1991 as Yulia Alexandrovna Gordienko in a small southern Siberian town called Yurga in the Kemerovo Oblast.

If you pinpoint the city on a map, you will find that it is located just above the cusp on China that touches Russia, surrounded by Mongolia and Kazakhstan. Like many other industrial cities in the Soviet Union, Yurga was a post-World War II settlement built by German prisoners of war where a large factory employed a majority of citizens to build parts for weapons. Both of my grandparents were mechanical engineers, my maternal grandmother worked for a local 4-year college and my maternal grandfather worked in the factory. My great-grandparents, like most others in Russia, were veterans of World War II and had a collection of medals and honors from the Soviet Government.

When “shock therapy” spread throughout Russia and hyperinflation soared in late 1991 and early 1992, the economic state devastated most families, wiping out any money that people had saved and their overall purchasing power. My grandfather was no longer paid in the factory that he worked in, and bread

was sometimes passed around as a wage substitute. Mass poverty engulfed the town, and a flood of people left Yurga to move abroad. My mother also eventually left Yurga in order to transfer her studies to a university in a nearby larger city, Tomsk, leaving me in the care of my grandparents, Yuri Kondratiev and Nina Kondratieva. It was generally common for grandparents to help raise their grandchildren, as communal and family networks are an important center of Russian culture.

Despite the economic downturn, my childhood did contain many happy memories. From a young age, my family showered me with love, toys, and attention. Every New Year’s, my grandmother, a fashion protégé, would sew elaborate costumes and dresses for me and my Barbie dolls. My grandfather would take me skiing and sledding, and my mother would often bring food, toys, and clothes,



commodities that were scarce for most at the time. Growing up I loved to watch old Soviet children’s shows, Disney cartoons, and Brazilian soap operas, which were incredibly popular at the time.

However, looking back, the devastation that plagued Russia at the time was often depressing. All apartments had steel bars barring the windows and two doors, one wood and one steel, to protect from intruders. Often even the most extreme precautions did not prevent



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burglary, and my apartment was robbed numerous times. When my mother took me to the hospital for two weeks to treat an ear infection, our apartment was robbed clean; even the bathtub and the toilet were ripped out of the walls. The few cars that people owned would either be stolen or taken apart within the hour if left unsupervised. Sometimes, young thieves would even steal hats from walking pedestrians in the dead of winter.

The streets of Russia painted an even bleaker scene. Old eighty-year-old *babushkas*, stripped of their pensions and left starving and homeless, huddled in the street corner, begging for *kopeikas* (a form of coin similar to a penny, the lowest monetary value out of all the coins and bills). One particular instance I could never forget was a young boy, no more than five or six years old, spread out on two sheets of newspaper in the dead of winter, when temperatures fell to negative 40 or 50 degrees Fahrenheit. He wore a brown potato sack with holes, his hands and face were muddy and he was shivering profusely while lying on the ground. In the midst of a crowd of people, no one even stopped to stare.

Perhaps it is these unbearable circumstances that motivated my mother to leave Russia, under any circumstances necessary. When I moved in with her in a studio apartment in Tomsk in 1998, I already aspired for a better life elsewhere. The school that I attended



in my last few years brought many memorable and terrifying experiences including called-in bomb threats and monthly nuclear attack drills, where children would put on cloth masks and crouch in the basement in anticipation of an attack. There were also defense classes, teaching first graders what to do in case of kidnapping, burglary, fire, and theft.

Although today, I am just another blonde Gator girl who likes to listen to Maroon 5, shop at Victoria's Secret, and grab a triple-esspresso coffee at Starbucks, I also consider myself a transnational citizen whose formative international experiences have led to an interest in economics, politics, and public policy. I still carry both my American and Russian passports, and to me, my familiarity with different cultures and economic backgrounds has taught me to appreciate every opportunity I've had and to never look down, blame, or make assumptions about those that are suffering from poverty, hunger, or lack of opportunity for a better life. After all, if it wasn't for luck, I could have still been stuck in an exiled Siberian town in the middle of nowhere. ●





A Two Sided Coin

By Jeff Abalos

In May of 2009, the Sri Lankan government decisively brought to an end the final phase of a thirty year separatist insurgency led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The efficiency of the counter-insurgency (COIN) operation executed by the Sri Lankan military, lasting only three years from its beginning in 2006 after the breaking of a four-year cease fire, has drawn the attention of other nations beleaguered by their own insurgency problems.

Among the nations that reportedly view the tactics used by General Rajapaksa as potentially game-changing for the world of COIN tactics are the likes of Israel, Colombia, and Malaysia. These nations, and many others, continue to suffer from their own domestic insurgencies and the massive success of the Sri Lankan model, as it is beginning to be called, provides a possible solution to their woes.

What exactly is this emerging Sri Lankan model, also referred to as the Rajapaksa Model after the general who championed it to

victory in 2009? The question of its use outside the limited and unique example of Sri Lanka must also be raised. The Rajapaksa Model focuses on three main themes. The first of these is a unified political front that is willing to see the COIN operation out to its necessary end and unwilling to bend or yield to the insurgency. Second, there must be strict control over the media, both domestic and foreign, by the government to prevent outside pressures from influencing the flow and efficiency of the COIN operation. This includes any non-governmental

organizations operating within the area COIN operations are taking place. The third main tenet of General Rajapaksa's model is the use of combined forces, conventional and counter-insurgency oriented, that put the destruction of the insurgent warfighters as their primary goal before all others, including the preservation of civilian lives.

Many of these tactics put forth by the Sri Lankan model would seem repugnant to most Americans. They would appear to go against many traditional American values, such as freedom of the press and the importance of civilian lives. It is no surprise then that State Department reports on human rights in Sri Lanka between 2006 and 2009 were some of the harshest in the nation's history. The United Nations is still conducting investigations into what exactly occurred during the brutal three-year campaign in the north of the island.

Moral implications aside, there seems to be little debate that as far as a military COIN operation can succeed, the Sri Lankan model has been a roaring success. Still, questions remain as to whether the success can be credited to just the last three-years of a thirty year struggle. There is also



Tamil protesters in Parliament Square in May 2009, flying the flag of the LTTE. STEVE PUNTER

uncertainty regarding how well model will translate to other nations. There are rumblings amongst strategists and analysts within the COIN community that the answer to both of the previous questions is no. Some argue that in the wake of a post-9/11 world that takes a harsh view towards terrorist activity, the LTTE was already quickly losing its support from the Tamil global diaspora, a crucial source of funds and revenue for the now-defunct rebel movement. Others point to the successful efforts of the Sri Lankan and Indian navies

in cutting off water-based supply routes to LTTE held lands in the north of Sri Lanka and question whether such tactics would work against insurgencies that do not have their backs to the sea. There is a final crucial uniqueness to the Sri Lankan insurgency that is rarely seen in many others around the globe. In its final years, the LTTE shifted their military operations into the more conventional realm and sought to fight a standard war of territory acquisition and defense against Sri Lanka's armed forces. Some COIN specialists question

whether the LTTE was even an insurgency in its final years. It can reasonably be argued that Sri Lanka fought a standard civil war against the LTTE in the 21st century, rather than a strictly COIN operation.

Regardless, the implications of other nations using the Sri Lankan model against their own insurgencies are enormous. If nations such as Colombia and Malaysia fail to pin their respective insurgent movements between the ocean and their national armies, they risk causing massive population movements across national borders of both resource-draining refugees and potentially dangerous insurgent fighters. An attempt to contain a domestic insurgency can thus swiftly spiral into greater regional instability. There is also the problem of the massive human rights violations that will likely ensue if any nation attempts to similarly repeat General Rajapaksa's success. It is the opinion of this author that any policy maker seeking to emulate the Sri Lankan model study hard the lessons learned and watch to see if the peace bought with so much blood will last for that island nation. ●



BEHIND THE DESK: EXAMINING INTERNSHIPS

A Summer with the ACLU

By Trevor Myers

The American Civil Liberties Union, by definition of its founders, is the nation's guardian of liberty; working daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country (aclu.org). Essentially, it is a non-profit organization that provides legal assistance and support to individuals facing anything from first amendment rights to equal protection under the law, and from due process to privacy. The objective of the ACLU is to help extend rights to marginalized people of the American population that have traditionally been denied their rights; these include, but are not limited to, people of color, women, the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community, prisoners and people living with disabilities (aclu.org).

However, throughout

the years, the ACLU has long been considered a controversial organization, taking on cases that generate mixed public opinion. As I made my way through the headquarters of the American Civil Liberties of Florida back in early May, located at 4500 Biscayne Boulevard in Miami, I knew that my time among this group of passionate and driven individuals from across the state would be an informative and rewarding educational experience. Two months prior, I had been doing research on non-profit organizations in Broward County that were looking for summer interns to fill positions. As I stumbled upon the website of the ACLU of Broward County, I recalled hearing about a recent case in Mississippi where the ACLU had represented a homosexual teenage girl whose prom was cancelled because she wanted to bring another girl as her date. "This would be the perfect

opportunity to get some legal experience under my belt," I thought.

The state board meeting took place on May 16, the first time that I was going to meet my internship coordinator and president of the ACLU Broward County chapter, Brad Koogler. The meeting lasted about six hours and focused primarily on the executive, legislative, and judicial issues within the ACLU of Florida. Afterwards, the meeting adjourned and I was left with the task of researching events for the next six months for which the Broward chapter could set up public education workshops.

The first chapter board meeting that I attended took place on May 18, two days after the state board meeting. Brad Koogler, president of the chapter, announced that the primary focus for this year's agenda would be religious freedom and immigrants' rights. Alan Scheib, a member of the chapter, is beginning to build his army for an inevitable war just one year away. The following is an excerpt from an ACLU chapter action plan:

Governor Rick Scott has indicated that he supports and plans to pursue a program for school vouchers. Proponents typically prefer to call voucher schemes "parental choice" or "opportunity scholarships." The proposal is part of a program characterized as "education savings accounts. Governor Scott also plans to increase the number of charter schools and "relax" the regulation and oversight of charter schools. But the main battle to protect religious freedom and church-state separation will be about protecting the constitutional "no aid" provision. The proposal for education savings accounts that will provide "vouchers for all" (to attend "private" schools, most of which are church-run schools) can only be accomplished by stripping out of the Florida Constitution the Article 1, Section 3 "no aid" to sectarian institutions provision.

Governor Scott's plan presents a serious constitutional problem because such an action would violate the separation of church and state. Calling it "a shady way of opening the door for school vouchers for all," a Florida teachers union is suing to keep off the 2012 ballot an initiative that would repeal a state ban on spending money on religious organizations. The no-aid provision surfaced prominently in 2004 in *Bush v. Holmes*. The First District Court of Appeal ruled that the Opportunity Scholarships voucher program was unconstitutional because it violated the provision (The Suncoast News). Currently, the ACLU of Broward County is attempting to build coalitions with other non-profit organizations in the county to take on Governor Rick Scott in 2012. Part of my job was to target college/university organizations to get young people involved in coalition building with our chapter.

The ACLU of Broward County's second focus is on immigrant's rights. Recently, a Brazilian community centered in north Broward reached out to our organization for assistance with a problem that Brazilian immigrants were having with law enforcement because of racial profiling. In 2010, Arizona signed the nation's toughest bill on illegal immigration which aims to identify, prosecute and deport illegal immigrants. In Florida, the Senate recently approved a watered-down bill to

curb illegal immigration. While the ACLU of Florida has vowed questions not previously posed. In the short time that I to constitutionally challenge any type of racial profiling law, the Broward County chapter has taken the initiative to set up workshops to educate members of the Brazilian community on their civil liberties by creating pamphlets in Portuguese.

In conclusion, the American Civil Liberties Union is an organization whose dedication to upholding the freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution often makes it the target of controversial public opinion. Over the past ninety years, the ACLU has represented a multitude of

represented a multitude of individuals in over twenty landmark cases which forced the Supreme Court to answer questions not previously posed. In the short time that I have been with the ACLU, my knowledge of Florida politics has grown substantially. I have experienced first-hand how the legal panel creates an action plan and how motivated members carry it out. Overall, the ACLU has been welcoming, direct and helpful in meeting my internal expectations for a summer internship. I am confident that as we enter this new decade, the influence of the ACLU will continue to grow and defend new questions challenged about civil liberties. ●

United States Department of State

By Alec Puig

From June 18 to August 12, I enjoyed one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life working towards fulfilling U.S. public diplomacy initiatives within the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. There I published global alumni news, conducted numerous presentations, and helped train embassy staff. For those of you interested in a quality internship with legitimate policy implications, I implore you to read on and apply for a program with the Department of State. But, before I begin to describe my internship, I should touch upon the extensive application and screening process that preceded it.

In late December, I applied for the Summer Clerical Program, one of seven State Department programs intended for undergraduates listed here: <http://careers.state.gov/students/programs#nogo>. The main difference between the program I chose and the Student Internship was that I gave up my ability to choose the bureau I would work for in exchange for a competitive salary. I would not receive notice of my acceptance until May 1st; unfortunately, we were supposed to have been informed by early March. This was a direct result of the ongoing budget battles raging at the time. By the

time I discovered I had been hired, I had all but abandoned the internship and began preparing to spend six weeks studying abroad in Salzburg, Austria. There I was contacted by email stating that I had failed to acquire an interim security clearance. To remedy the situation, I had to schedule a personal interview with diplomatic security before I would be allowed to begin my internship. A week later, I travelled two hours by train to the U.S. embassy in Vienna where I conducted my interview. To my relief, the night I left Austria I was granted my interim clearance and I immediately

began looking for housing in Washington, D.C.

Orientation began with a security screening, paperwork, and a number of mundane briefings on workplace conduct. From there I was left to find my building and begin working. Unfortunately, I realized the address I had been given was incorrect when I walked a mile under an angry summer sun to find myself at the Office of Student Programs. Luckily, after a number of phone calls, emails, and confusion I arrived at my assignment at the Office of Alumni Affairs two hours later. Our primary responsibility as an office

was to foster and maintain an alumni association of every individual who ever studied abroad or attended an exchange in the United States under a State Department program such as the Fulbright or Gilman Scholarship.

This alumni network is made up of hundreds of thousands of individuals who understand U.S. society and culture well enough to serve as liaisons between U.S. public diplomacy and their respective countries. The association currently lays claim to over 700,000 individuals, 350 former and current heads of state, and over 50 Nobel Laureates.

My first two weeks on the job were very difficult for me because I had to simultaneously adjust to my position, understand the mission of my office, and learn the expansive language of jargon and acronyms affectionately titled "State Speak." Fortunately, my coworkers were all very welcoming, hardworking people that made the transition to an otherwise bureaucratic desk job into a fun and exciting opportunity to better grasp international attitudes towards U.S. foreign policy. One of the most enlightening experiences I benefited from was during a training we held for a group

of embassy employees from around the world on maintaining alumni affairs in their countries. During the weeklong training I befriended a Tunisian in his twenties who shared with me eye-opening knowledge and sentiments of his people regarding the Tunisian Revolution and the Arab Spring. He invariably intimated to me his overflowing feelings of excitement and optimism for the future of his country. In addition, I had weekly opportunities to improve my public speaking skills at board meetings and presentations which culminated in me speaking at the Secretary of State's podium in Loy Henderson Auditorium to over 200 attendees. I also had the chance to help organize the Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund, or AEIF in State Speak. This is an annual contest conducted by the Office of Alumni Affairs to fund development projects around the world. Winning projects included everything from entrepreneurial workshops to inventions, namely a solar powered fruit drier. Clerical work was also a large part of my duties, but it always directly related to overarching public diplomacy goals.

Aside from my nine to

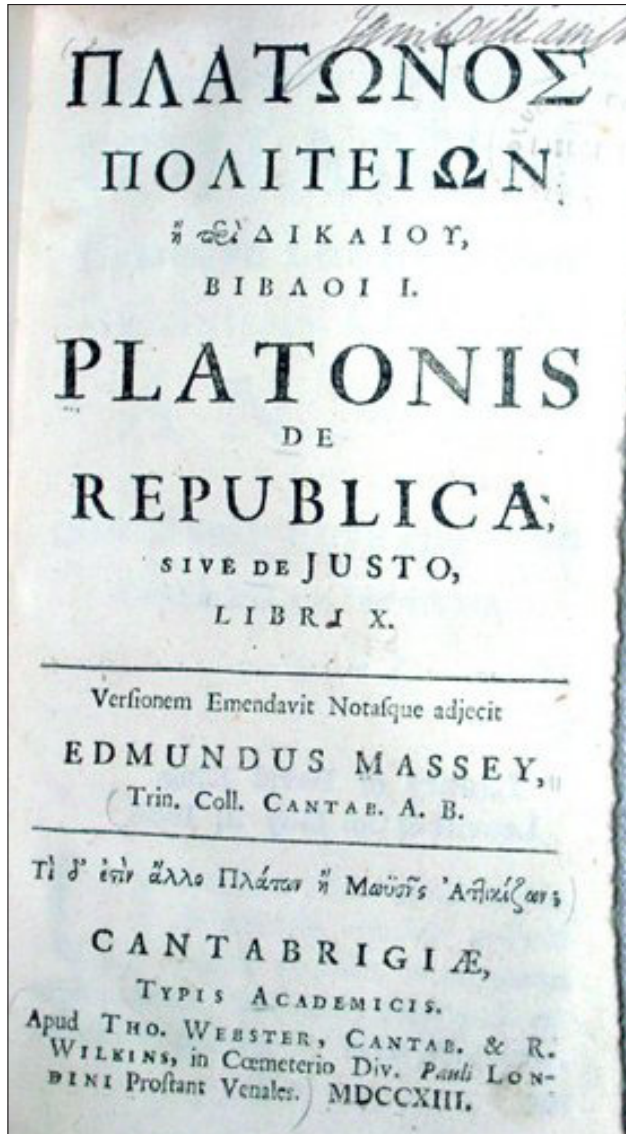
five work experiences, there were no shortages of mesmerizing moments at the Harry S. Truman Building. Weekly brown bag lunches with high ranking department officials and invariable protests outside the building were some of the most common instances of intrigue for me. While at the State Department, I was able to meet and speak with the Coordinator of the Office of Cuban Affairs who put me in contact with some of the scholars I plan on citing in my upcoming Honor's Thesis. But, probably the most unanticipated occurrence was when I unintentionally crossed paths with Former Secretary of State Colin Powell surrounded by guards. At that moment, I was so dumbstruck by his presence that all I could do was stare at him and smile. The smile, unfortunately, was returned by a mixed look of awkward confusion and annoyance. Nonetheless, I remained grinning like a child on Christmas for the rest of the day. Interestingly enough, Intern Appreciation Day was within that same week, which culminated in a wonderful speech given by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton regarding the various careers available in the U.S. government, Foreign Service, and the Department of State. Living in Washington, D.C. was equally exciting and I spent the majority of my weekends taking in the sites and enjoying the nightlife.

I encourage anyone who has taken the time to read this article in its entirety to apply to the Summer Clerical Program, Student Internship Program, or any other Department of State Student Program. The experience was life-changing for me and gave me a solid look into the everyday functions of our nation's government. From instances of crippling bureaucracy to moments of awe-inspiring progress, I saw a piece of it all. Regardless of your major or career prospects there is undoubtedly a bureau or office that will appeal to you and your strengths and I am confident you will not regret your decision. If you would like more information about my experience or any other internship opportunity at the Department of State please feel free to email me at apuig107@ufl.edu. ●



A Soulless Republic

By Carissa Reddick



Plato's "Republic" from year 1713.
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Unless you are a freshman or you sleep during all of your Political Science lectures (highly unrecommended), then you have heard of Plato before and Plato's Republic.

What happens in this book is, Plato, in the written guise of Socrates, argues with himself in the clever disguise of other men about what justice really is and how it can be obtained. By the end of the book, Plato has laid out before us one of the most radical and revolutionary ideas of the perfectly just society, riddled with division of labor and classism, void of real families and most freedoms, yet somehow Plato manages to argue that we will all be happier this way. Given Plato's rigid definition of justice: each man doing what he is best suited to do, can we really say that Plato has met his own justice requirement?

Plato believes there are three types of souls: Gold, Silver, and Bronze. Gold-souled individuals seem to be the best, or at least the best suited to rule. These people are driven by reason first, then spirit and finally appetite. They are the philosophers that Plato places at the very top of society; the only ones worthy of ruling. The Silver-souled individuals are best suited to be warriors because they are ruled most by spirit, followed by reason and finally appetite. And last, but probably least, we have the Bronze-souled individuals who are given the responsibility of being the farmers, the artisans, the market owners, etc., governed mainly by appetite, then spirit and finally reason.

Can this soul system really be conducive to and result in a truly just society? Let's take a closer look at the characteristics associated with each soul. Reason is associated with the gold-souled philosopher kings/queens who are best suited to rule over the population. If Reason is the ability to use, and the exercise of, good judgment, then how can this be something that one is just born with? Reason is something that is learned gradually over time through the trial and error of life experiences. One cannot experience true trial and error when their career path has already been chosen for them and they spend the majority of their life preparing for this role.

If Spirit is described as courage, strength, and all other things associated with a great warrior, then how can one be born with these qualities? I have never met a newborn ready to go off to battle. Courage is something that we develop, much like reason, over a period of time through life experiences that teach us when to be courageous and when it is wise to leave a situation. Also, one must have good reason to be courageous. People don't usually fight for any reason.

Something has to seriously motivate you in order to act. Someone telling you that you are best suited to work out every day naked next to your silver-souled companions and die for people you have never met, just isn't going to cut it.

The citizens with the Bronze souls have the most freedom. They can choose to be artists, merchants, tax collectors, or anything else that does not involve ruling or fighting. These people

resort to reason last and appetite first. Can it really be a just society if those who are considered to be the best are forced to have less freedom than those who are supposed to be their subordinates? Can a society really be just when there is any type of superordinate/subordinate classification system? I think not. One day silver souls will get tired of being told that they are less than the philosopher kings, yet they must still fight to protect them. The Bronze souls will get sick of the rigidity of their lives, never moving forward or having any opportunities to be more than low class.

Finally, Plato fails to account for human emotion.

It is true that as humans we act with reason for some situations but completely with emotion for others. Are emotion-driven reactions a matter of spirit or appetite? Emotions make up a great deal of human life and human decisions, but Plato does not treat us as humans. He treats us as rigid little robots who are either guided by reason, spirit, or appetite and that's it. We don't change over time; there is no such thing as rehabilitation or growth. Granted, the United States may have its governmental flaws, but I am more inclined to bear the harsh judicial system of the United States over Plato's *Republic*. ●



UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Department of Political Science
234 Anderson Hall
P.O. Box 117325
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352)392-0262

The Political Voice is sponsored by the Beta Gamma chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha.

Contributors:

Jeff Abalos	Dayme Sanchez
Julia Boyd	Carissa Reddick
Brooke Hettig	Alec Puig
Trevor Myers	Lauren Wilson

