



## Russia: “Morally Corrupt to the Core”

Yet this is no joke. UR’s “anomalous” win in Tambov, [writes](#) long-time Russian parliamentarian Vladimir Ryzhkov, reflects an “entire society” that is becoming “morally corrupt to the core.”

Citing a 20-page report issued by the Tambov regional head of the Party of People’s Freedom, attorney Nikolai Vorobyov, Ryzhkov details Russian election fraud that is truly staggering in scope and organization. (And yet we hear nothing from the Obama administration about the fact that the world’s second most powerful nation is regressing to tyranny.)



According to Ryzhkov, the scheme was run out of Tambov State Technical University. Students — sometimes under the threat of expulsion or failure — were used as operatives and were given pre-prepared ballots. The students and conspiring election officials were also given pocket calendars advertising a blood-donor drive as a means to identify each other. Then, writes Ryzhkov:

Here is how the “donors” operated. A minivan would transport a group of four or five students all day, bringing them to one polling place after another. After pulling up, the young people would leave the car, present their calendars to a committee member who held the same calendar and then receive a bunch of absentee ballots for people who had either died, moved away but remained on the lists or were otherwise unable to vote. They would then enter the voting booth and pretend to fill out the absentee ballot, but step out and drop the pack of pre-prepared ballots in the box. Then they would return to their bosses from the election committee for another blue folder.

The conveyor belt of “donors” worked all day like a well-oiled machine, right up until the polling places closed that evening. The operation involved about 1,300 young people and their coordinators, dozens of cars and hundreds of election committee members — mainly teachers, doctors, social workers and municipal employees. Also involved were members of the Federal Security Service, Interior Ministry and Prosecutor General’s Office, who were instructed to remove obstinate election observers and ignore the hundreds of complaints that citizens and observers lodged regarding election violations.

The result is that at least a third of Putin’s party’s vote was a product of fraud. And this is all being facilitated by corrupt judges and law-enforcement agencies that are stymieing efforts to bring a criminal case against the conspirators.

What Ryzhkov laments most, however, is the complicity of thousands of average citizens. People from all walks of life participated in the fraud, while a far greater number, including policemen, looked the other way. And then there were the willing students who, drunk on empty party slogans (sound familiar?), zealously stole votes for demagogic kleptocrats. Of course, though, it would be silly to expect anything but relative moral congruence between the people and their leaders. As John Adams told us,



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 13, 2011

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“Public Virtue is the only Foundation of Republics,” and it “cannot exist in a nation without private [virtue].”

At *American Thinker*, Kim Zigfeld elaborates on the private corruption plaguing Russia, [writing](#):

In other words, many Russians in Tambov were willing to help their government shaft their fellow citizens just for the fun of it.

That’s a theme in modern Russian history. During the time of Stalin, Russians fell over themselves trying to turn in their neighbors and send them off to concentration camps in Siberia.

Unfortunately, this seems to be a theme in Eastern Europe in general. For example, a friend of mine who has spent some time in Poland tells of an attitude prevailing in the nation that goes something like this: If your neighbor acquires a goat, you don’t just want a goat yourself; you want his goat to die. And this attitude is reflected in interpersonal relations. Much unlike the rural American area in which my friend lives, he says that if you pass someone in the street in Poland and give him a friendly nod, the reaction is usually a dirty look. I myself almost got into a fight with a fellow on a Polish train after making friendly eye contact (he was drunk as a skunk and probably could’ve been blown over with a straw).

Perhaps the reason for this is that, as numerous [articles](#) have explained about Russian culture, smiling at strangers in such places can cause them to take offense. It’s said that a smile can make a Russian suspicious — or at least suspect that its wearer isn’t mentally healthy. It is one of the big differences between East and West, and psychologists have offered explanations for it — all dripping with cultural relativism. But my explanation for the attitude in question here is a bit different.

When French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville toured these United States in 1831, he noted how Americans would voluntarily unite to further the common good or help fellow men in need. That is what you call solidarity. And this is why it’s ironic that Poland’s 1980s anti-communist movement was labeled Solidarity: The nation has little actual solidarity. And maybe, just perhaps, if the quality were more intensely present in Eastern Europe, there never would have been a need for such a movement in the first place.

Getting back to convivial countenances, also note that not all American locales are as smiley as others; our dangerous inner-city neighborhoods are more Russian in orientation, with people smiling less in public and avoiding eye contact more. In light of this, it seems unlikely that failure to smile reflects personal mental, and societal, health.

Perhaps these stone-faced cultures, Christian all, ought to ponder something Jesus said: “He who does the will of my Father in Heaven is my mother and my brother.” If a land has so little sense of brotherhood and charity that people wish their neighbor ill and can’t even smile at one another, what kind of government will it deserve?

Having said this, I won’t be too hard on our Slavic friends. The default for man has always been tyranny, a fact that should make us appreciate our Republic, and fear for its future, all the more. Traditional America was an anomaly in world history, the handiwork of a great number of unique men who all came together in the same time and place. And given man’s natural tendencies, it’s not surprising that we’re squandering their bequeathal and regressing to that dark human default.

Such a dour note is enough to make one frown, I know. But the real solution, in the West or East, is to cultivate the private virtue of which the public is born. And a few more smiles wouldn’t hurt, either.



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