



Tributes to Galina Starovoitova

ARIEL COHEN

Galina Starovoitova was murdered in the stairwell of her apartment building in the heart of St. Petersburg on Friday, 20 November 1998. Starovoitova, a popular member of the Duma and a leading Russian democrat, was the victim of a professional, mafia-style hit. Two assassins, a man and a woman, sprayed her and her assistant with gunfire. She died on the spot.

I knew Galina well. We had been guests at each other's homes, and had met on numerous occasions at international conferences and in her office at the Duma. We spent hours talking about her lone and difficult fight to make Russia "normal," to secure rights for Russians that we tend to take for granted in the United States, such as freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom to engage in economic activities, freedom from arbitrary state prosecution. Hers was a long, hard struggle in a country full of hatred, of crime, of Gulag mass graves.

Starovoitova was a close associate of Andrey Sakharov, the famous human rights activist and father of the hydrogen bomb. Together they fought in 1988–89 for a multiparty system and elementary civil rights for the Russian population. Sakharov died after being heckled in a parliament session by those holding power today in Moscow (Gorbachev's communists). Starovoitova remained to continue his struggle. She was among the leaders of the Democratic Russia movement. She was also among the reformers who took over, together with Boris Yeltsin, after the August 1991 putsch was defeated. Trained as an ethnographer, she became the president's ethnic affairs adviser. However, she did not survive for long in the communist-dominated government apparatus inherited by Yeltsin and never purged of the remnants of the Communist Party.

Starovoitova fought the communists in the parliament, proposing a law on "lustration," a process of de-communization similar to the German de-Nazification. Such a law would have partially limited the access of former communists

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to government service, as was attempted in the Czech Republic and East Germany after the collapse of the Berlin Wall or the defeat of the Third Reich. Of course, Russia, which never underwent its own Nuremberg trials, rejected Starovoitova's proposition.

When Yeltsin engaged Russia in a bloody war against Chechnya, Starovoitova harshly criticized him. She voted against Primakov's nomination as prime minister and most recently blasted the anti-Semitic remarks of the communist deputy General Albert Makashov, who publicly advocated "hanging the Kikes" and physically eliminating the democratic reformers. She harshly denounced her fellow Duma members for their failure to strip Makashov of his immunity and prosecute him for fanning ethnic hatred—a criminal offense under Russian law. St. Petersburg, a city that staunchly supports democratic candidates, is also known for its small, but hard core, neo-Nazi organizations. Could it be that a coalition of communists and ultranationalists killed her for her vocal resistance to their hateful words and deeds?

Proud that she was the first woman candidate for the office of defense minister (which probably caused more than one heart attack among the top generals), Galina talked about running for president of Russia in the year 2000. More significantly, she was a candidate for governor of the Leningrad region. Could that have been the motive for her murder? Another candidate for the Leningrad job is none other than the ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, whom Galina often denounced in the Duma. Zhirinovskiy's party is notorious for its ties to organized crime.

Finally, both Starovoitova and her press attaché spoke and wrote against the numerous gangland style murders that have plagued St. Petersburg more than any other Russian city. Numerous bankers, businessmen, and prominent city officials have been gunned down in Peter the Great's grim capital. Could it be that fearless Galina was about to expose some particularly dirty dealings of the local mob?

Yegor Gaidar, a leader of Russian reformers, called Starovoitova's murder a political assassination. She often was blamed by communists and ultranationalists for her role in dismantling their beloved Soviet Union. In the smog of lawlessness enveloping Russia today as it did Germany after World War I, the shots fired at Starovoitova rang like the gunfire that killed Walter Rathenau, the foreign minister of the Weimar Republic, who was blamed for Germany's defeat in the war and the loss of the empire. Is Galina's death going to be a milestone in Russia's long descent into a fate like that of Weimar?

One hopes that Russia will find within itself enough healthy forces to pull itself out of the vortex of political assassination and murder-for-hire. A prominent religious leader, Alexander Men, was mysteriously killed in 1992. A much beloved television anchor, Vlad Listyev, was gunned down in 1995. All these murders shocked the country. And now, Starovoitova. All of these cases have one thing in common—the people who were murdered were fighters against evil. They were beloved, popular leaders. In all of the cases President Yeltsin solemnly promised to place the murder investigations under his personal control. And the murderers were never found.

The strike against Galina was a strike against Russian democracy. She was a symbol. Now that the symbol has been cut down, other democrats in Russia are

calling on the West to pressure Prime Minister Primakov's government to prosecute communists and Nazi-style ultranationalists for the criminal offenses they commit. Tomorrow may be too late. Russian democrats and their friends in the West are demanding that the Russian government fight organized crime—and find Galina's murderers.

Galina Starovoitova was full of energy. She loved life. She loved and believed in people. She never despaired. In these days of gloom, we should forever remember her and her struggle.

BLAIR A. RUBLE

Galina Starovoitova profoundly believed in the fundamental dignity of human existence. She was as forceful a defender of individual liberty as Russia has ever produced. This extraordinary woman was a heroic advocate of human rights, of democratic reform, and of Russia itself. And she did not see any contradiction among the three.

Galina was hardly shy about her beliefs. She once confided to me with no little pride that, on having listened to her address the Council of Foreign Relations in New York, Henry Kissinger was heard to observe that Galina was a “real tub thumper.” Galina seemed equally smitten with the facts that it was Kissinger who offered this characterization, and that she indeed knew how to thump a tub when necessary.

Galina and I had met well before the likes of Henry Kissinger would be attending her speeches. I spent the better part of the 1980s conducting research and writing her speeches. I spent the better part of the 1980s conducting research and writing a book on Leningrad politics. Galya, at precisely the same moment, was writing what would become *Ethnic Groups in a Contemporary Soviet City*, a book about that same city. *Ethnic Groups*, to my mind, is the single best *Soviet* book about the life of a *Soviet* city. Inevitably, our paths would cross.

Galya and I had known about one another and about each other's work since the early 1980s, exchanging messages whenever possible through this third party or that back channel. We were not able to see one another in person, however, until *perestroika* had well run its course. We finally actually met on a dark autumn Sunday evening in Moscow in 1989. She was already serving in the USSR Supreme Soviet, representing Armenia. We now forget that Moscow in 1989 was still Soviet, which meant that Galya and I had to meet in the street. Not only was it safer for both of us to meet in a crowded public place, but Soviet planners had never believed in the value of well lit, cozy cafes and other semi-public spaces. Galya and I thus planned a rendezvous at a designated phone booth, in a dark passageway, behind a decidedly not-yet-renovated National Hotel.

Galya had just moved from Leningrad to Moscow, so we chatted, as exiled Petersburgers will do, about the tribulations of Moscow life. We moved on to talk about our work, Soviet politics, and the like. We strolled in circles around the Manezh Square, the Alexander Gardens, Red Square, and Kitai gorod, with the

evening getting colder by the minute. Finally, Galya had had enough of walking around in circles and suggested that we sit quietly in a buffet in the Hotel Rossiia and converse as if we were “two civilized people.” The Hotel Rossiia was still off-limits to mere passers-by, but Galya would not be stopped by the phalanx of police agents sent to dispatch us on our way. I saw for the first time her authority and assertiveness, as well as a dash of the arrogance of a naval officer’s daughter that would stand her in such good stead in the political battles that were still before her.

Galya came to spend a month at the Kennan Institute as a Woodrow Wilson Center guest scholar not too long thereafter. The visit was her first time in the United States, and after having completed her grant period in D.C. she went off to see New York. I joined her there to show her the city and spent a most memorable day. Galya Starovoitova, please recall, was a specialist on cities and on ethnicity. What better town for her than New York City? Together with anthropologist Nora Dudwick, we hopped on the subway and headed out to the ethnic neighborhoods of Brooklyn.

Galya was fascinated by her discovery of New York, and her excitement was intensified by the Soviet-era awareness that she might never be permitted to return. If Nora and I had been her guides, she quickly became our teacher. To walk through a multiethnic Brooklyn neighborhood with as perceptive an observer of cities and ethnicity as Galya Starovoitova was the treat of a lifetime.

At day’s end, as we wandered around the Lower East Side, Galya admitted that she had saved a portion of her Woodrow Wilson Center stipend so that she could buy pocket calculators for school children in Armenia. I watched with bemusement as Galya negotiated with a stunned discount electronics store proprietor with the same intensity that she would display in her negotiations with President Yeltsin in the months to follow. Galya left America a few days later with a suitcase full of hundreds of pocket calculators bound for Yerevan.

Galya and I somehow did not spend a great deal of time together after that wonderful day in New York. We found ourselves in the same room from time to time, to be sure. Galya, as a founding member of the Kennan Institute’s Russian Alumni Association, faithfully attended the association’s annual banquets even though she could not really spare the time. We would manage to catch a quiet five, ten, or fifteen minutes together amid the chaos and hubbub of a Russian *vecher*. We would always promise one another that we would get together soon in quieter circumstances. But Galya was no longer the urban specialist whom I had guided around New York City. She had become a prominent public figure of considerable consequence. So we had to settle for a chat at some overcrowded table laden with far too much food and alcohol.

One Saturday last October—just a very few short weeks ago—I found myself in a Moscow hotel room. The time must have been around four o’clock, as afternoon was turning to evening in that peculiarly Moscow way that darkness can descend and envelop all. I was getting ready to go out to the theater and had switched on the television in the misguided hope that its sound would mask the racket from a construction site next door. I vaguely noted a program

host announcing a forthcoming interview with Galya, so I stopped puttering about and watched an astonishing, half-hour televised account of Galya's life.

The interview was far more open, in that Russian sort of way, than we Americans find comfortable. Galya spoke about her failed first marriage, about problems with her cherished son Platon, about the difficulties of juggling family life with a public career. Those of us who knew Galya understood that she had led something of a turbulent personal life, and much of it was there on the television for all of Russia to see.

Galya recounted her chance meeting at Brown University with physicist Andrei Volkov, an encounter that changed her life. Andrei had at last brought Galya that contentment for which all human beings so desperately search. Galina Starovoitova, now married to Andrei, had become a happy woman, a happiness that we now painfully know would be stolen from her far too quickly.

Discussions about Russia in Washington—and in Moscow, too, for that matter—all too often become reduced to a rather silly game of so-called optimists versus so-called pessimists. Such conversations are inevitable in their own way, yet they bleach complexity, texture, and contradiction out of our appreciation of Russian—indeed, human—reality. Russia—like *all* nations—exists at many more levels than the merely rational. To comprehend Russia we must understand the rationality of the empirical and physical, but also come to appreciate the power of the spiritual and the metaphysical. Such is not a fate special to Russia, for herein lies the mystery of all human existence on this planet.

One begins to realize at the level of the metaphysical that the violence and brutality of Russian history—to say nothing of the Soviet regime's unspeakable crimes—have unleashed demons to rampage across the Russian landscape. One such demon extinguished the physical being of Galina Vasil'evna Starovoitova in a bleak St. Petersburg staircase on 20 November 1998.

Galina's scholarship on Leningrad and other Soviet cities remains a remarkable achievement, combining methodological sophistication with genuine wisdom. To my great good fortune, we continued to exchange our publications as we always had since the mid-1980s—her last book arrived in my mail box at the end of last week. I am always reminded when reading whatever Galya wrote that her scholarship effectively combined the potency of empirical fact with the power of an almost metaphysical Truth with a capital *T*.

Galina knew how to concede a point here or there in negotiations with a Lower East Side shopkeeper or with a Duma deputy. But she always did so without losing sight of her fundamental principles and values. And here, in her incorruptibility, lies Galina's profound legacy for her beloved Russia—for she truly loved her country regardless of what Russia's pseudopatriots might say or think.

We are now left with but the hope and the prayer that the demons haunting Russian life can finally be put to rest; that Russia will become, in fact, the multiethnic, democratic, and tolerant society in which Galina Vasil'evna Starovoitova so fervently believed, and for which she so tirelessly fought.

NIKOLAI ZLOBIN

Who killed Galina Starovoitova? That question, I would argue, becomes less important as the days go by since she was shot to death in front of her apartment. It is not that her killers should not be caught and brought to justice, but that I realize they're probably dead already—that tends to happen with contract killers in Russia. It is not that those who organized the assassination should not be held accountable, only that we all know that escaping punishment in Russia these days is very easy. Because the news of Galina's death was met with relief among her political enemies, and even some of her political allies, I hold little hope that we will find the contractors, the killers, or the real reasons behind her death.

We grieve the loss of such a special person, a dear friend to many of us at *Demokratizatsiya*. But rather than focus on what would surely be a futile search for her killers, we must begin the excruciating process of appraising the damage that has been done to Russian democracy, for which no one will be able to compensate. When we lost Galina, we lost someone who was present at the birth of the democratic movement in the USSR, who was one of the founders and a cochair of the movement Democratic Russia. Together with Andrei Sakharov, Galina gave Boris Yeltsin, then a party aparatchik, his first lessons in democracy. When we lost Galina, we lost the last pure democrat of Russia.

I lost a friend, whose very existence I cherished. Our journal lost a member of its editorial board, a woman who gave her life for the principles to which our journal is dedicated. Having known her for such a long time, I realize now that I probably underestimated the impact she had on many others' lives. To me, Galina was a pal—we drank together, relaxed together, complained about our personal and professional victories and failures, the state of our finances, the state of our health. Recalling those lively conversations is painful indeed. So instead, I would like to pay tribute to her professional evolution and the qualities that made her the exceptional politician that she was.

Galina Vasilyevna was born in Cheljabisk fifty-two years ago. She received her B.A. in 1966 from Leningrad College of Military Engineering and her M.A. in 1970 in social psychology from Leningrad State University. She received her Ph.D. in social anthropology from the Institute of Ethnography, USSR Academy of Science in 1980. For seventeen years, she worked in the Academy of Science of USSR and taught university classes in social psychology. In 1989, she was elected people's deputy in the Supreme Soviet USSR from the capital of Armenia, Yerevan. She was a member of the Interregional Deputy's Group. Approximately 300,000 people populated her electoral district, and Galina—a Russian—received their overwhelming support, winning some 80 percent of the vote. Within a year, she was elected as a Russian people's deputy, this time from Leningrad, and again, she received more than 80 percent of the vote. She was the only female member of both parliaments, Russian and Soviet. In the Russian parliament, she was one of the leaders of the faction "Democratic Russia, Coalition of Reforms" but lost her mandate as a deputy when she did not come to the Tenth Extraordinary Congress.

In 1993, Galina was elected to the Duma from the same district of St. Petersburg. There were twenty-five candidates from this district, a record number, including experienced politicians, bankers, generals, and journalists. It is a testament to her ability to encourage and inspire her constituents that Galina, the lone female candidate, won the election and then was re-elected two years later. In the second Duma, however, she did not join any faction, but was a member of the Committee of Civic Unions and Religious Organizations. Throughout this time, Galina kept her work as a cochair of the Democratic Russia movement and remained cochair of the party "DemRussia."

In the history of Russia, and in the record of Eastern European reforms of the last ten years, Galina's status is equal to that of Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, or Mikail Gorbachev. Until her death, she was the most popular and the highest-ranking female politician in eastern Europe. And although she was not a feminist in the popular sense, her political career no doubt inspired many women. In 1996, she became the first woman in Russian history to declare her participation in a presidential campaign, and although she lost, she was planning to run again in 2000.

No doubt Galina understood all too well that the current Russian situation offered her little chance of winning a presidential election. But she also understood the importance of campaigning: to have the opportunity to engage in discussions with the whole country; to have a legitimate forum from which she could defend the ideals of democracy and freedom, to which she had committed her life; to be able to voice her concerns about the danger of communism's return and the dangers of fascism and nationalism, despite the fact that many of her colleagues see that as a way to restore order to Russia. But Galina was never afraid of holding the unpopular view; in fact, she relished the challenge to sway opinions.

It is easy to speak to a crowd when they applaud. It is much more difficult, however, to tell them what they do not want to hear—the bitter truth. And it is still more difficult, even dangerous, to face the crowd and tell them that they are wrong. Galina was often in the minority and sometimes alone in her opinions, which rarely were greeted with applause. Countless times, though, we were later forced to admit that she was right. She was right too often, and the rest of us were slow to come around—and this is one of the deepest tragedies of Russian reforms.

Galina was ready for the challenge when she decided to start a campaign for governor of the Leningrad district, considered one of the most corrupt and criminal areas of the country. She stood little chance of winning but wanted to demonstrate the necessity of democratic resistance to the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, the party of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, which was gaining strength. The LDPR had its own candidate on the ballot. Again, Galina was more forward-thinking than the rest of us and, as a result, did not receive the necessary support from her democratic colleagues. Her friend Harley Balzer of Georgetown University said Galina had confided to him just months before her death the perils of an LDPR win. Zhirinovsky already had his governor in place in Pskov, and Galina feared his party would wrest control of the whole northeast of Russia, including several key ports.

Along with Andrei Sakharov and Father Alexander Men, Galina was among the strongest and most determined defenders of human rights. Regardless of how her advocacy would affect her political career or her place among Russian democrats, and regardless of public opinion, Galina fought passionately for human rights. She believed in human rights as more than a campaign platform, and that those rights transcended politics; they should not be dependent on political circumstances or the balance of power. Her commitment was clear, and her outspokenness won her few fans among current Russian politicians. In fact, it soon became an obstacle to her political career and kept her from securing a more reliable place among the Kremlin's and Duma's conspirators, for most of whom human rights was one more political card to be played when necessary.

The murder of Alexander Men—still unsolved—and the death of Andrei Sakharov struck a huge blow to the human rights movement in Russia. Now, the killing of Galina Starovoitova threatens the movement's very existence. I fear that one of the consequences of this crime will be that many decent people will, out of fear or lack of inspiration, lose the willingness to speak out about injustice. If even Galina, fighting for such a righteous cause, could be killed, people may think twice before taking up her fight against corruption, nationalists, communists, and all of the enemies of democratic reform in Russia. Russians' already tenuous belief in the integrity of Russian politics and in the morality of Russian power may have perished with our beloved Galina.

They are saying now that Galina's personality merged pragmatism with political naiveté, which kept her, on occasion, from measuring situations realistically. I cannot disagree that she was a pragmatist. Galina was a thoughtful and excellent researcher, the author of great works on the problems of interethnic conflicts, the ethnic history of Leningrad, an ethnography of Abkhazia—work that required a very utilitarian approach to the harsh realities of life. At the same time, it has been said that in 1988, in the midst of the Armenian-Karabakh conflict, Galina organized a secret meeting with several Moscow human rights activists and the leader of Karabakh in the spirit of the best spy novels, with passwords, signs, and secret passages.

Perhaps those who call Galina naïve fail to appreciate her integrity. Was it naiveté that led Andrei Sakharov or Alexander Solzhenitsyn never to lower themselves to dirty tricks, never to compromise their integrity for personal gain? Was Galina naïve, then, since she possessed the same kind of sincerity as Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, or Martin Luther King? I think not. She could be single-minded in her cause; perhaps that was seen by some as naiveté.

Communists hated Galina, and they had many reasons for their hatred. They saw her as an annihilator of the USSR and of the Communist Party; she was the founder of the main anticommunist organization, the Democratic Russia Movement, which led Boris Yeltsin to victory in the 1991 presidential election—prompting the end of the Soviet empire. She played a significant role in destroying the CPSU and USSR. Communists hated Galina because, until her death, she was viewed as the main ideologist of anticommunism and fought ferociously any efforts to resurrect communism. In a 1994 interview with the founder of

Demokratizatsiya, Fredo Arias-King, Galina said bitterly, “Even our ‘Nuremberg’—the trial on the crime of the CPSU, was unsuccessful and nobody was punished as a result. The physician who tortured Andrei Sakharov is free and even retains all of his medals and honors. The agent who tortured academician Nikolai Vavilov, who died in prison, is still around and was never punished.”

In summer 1989, Galina was among very few politicians who voted against a Congress of People’s Deputies resolution dedicated to Tiananmen Square violence. Andrei Sakharov later confessed that he did not grasp right away the shameful character of this resolution. After conversations with Galina, he changed his position. Together, they wrote an alternative resolution, which was signed by many democratic deputies. It was their first collaborate writing project, and more were to follow. In August 1991, when the USSR was shocked and shaken by the Communist coup, Galina was in Great Britain. Via the BBC, she called for resistance and also persuaded Margaret Thatcher to condemn the coup. The British press referred to her adoringly as the “Russian Iron Lady.”

Immediately after Galina’s death, Democratic Russia published a statement that says in part, “In the eyes of millions of Russians, Galina Vasilyevna embodied those forces which swept the Soviet Communist Party from power and led Russia along the path of democratic reforms.” Former first deputy prime minister Anatoly Chubais declared at her funeral that Galina was killed because she stood in the way of communists and bandits. Galina was a bold enemy of nationalism and chauvinism. Nationalists of all kinds hated her because she advocated equality of nations and nationalities and favored political solutions to interethnic conflicts. Just before she was killed, she voiced her disgust with the anti-Semitic comments of Duma deputy general Albert Makashov, as well as with those leaders of the Communist Party who refused to censure the racial epithets of their colleagues. It was an honor that she was the only non-Jew on the All-Russian-Jewish Committee.

Several years ago, Galina remarked that the nationality mark in the new Russian passport promoted a “false feeling of pride for belonging to one’s nation.” She said, “Someone is proud to be a Tatar, to be Russian, to be Jew. But what is there really to be proud of? The fact that you happened to be born to your parents and in that particular place, is not an achievement. One must be proud of his merits, of his character and his deeds.” She added, “The nation is not a biological mark which you are born with and live in until your last hour. Catherine II was a German princess, but she became a Russian governess and she certainly felt Russian.”

Even among Russian democrats were those who did not like Galina, particularly because she insisted on the necessity of a law of lustration, which would interrupt the upward mobility of many current democrats who had established their careers in the Communist Party or in the KGB. Their dislike was further fueled by Galina’s constant criticism of those Russian authorities responsible for violating the rights of ethnic minorities. That led to a falling-out with Yeltsin at the beginning of the war in Chechnya, although his public remarks after her death suggest that he still thought of her with affection and admiration. He called Gali-

na a “passionate tribute to democracy who stood at the sources of the new Russia. One of the brightest figures in Russia politics.”

Some democrats were critical of Galina’s public support of Mikhail Gorbachev and the fact that she maintained a relationship with him even after his resignation. She was one of very few Russians who praised him as a historic figure and voiced her tribute loudly, even though her countrymen might take more pleasure in blackening a former president’s reputation. She was equally outspoken on the merits of Alexander Yakovlev. Other democrats did not like Galina because, even as she fought for democracy, they continued to pay their monthly fees to the Communist Party and carry their Komsomol pins. Many of them actually struggled against democracy, thinking that a ragtag group from Democratic Russia would never be able to destroy the monolith of the CPSU, supported by the command economy and the KGB.

Galina was the voice of true Russian democracy, resonant and hopeful among the crowded choir of insincere voices. Boris Yeltsin’s former press secretary Viacheslav Kostikov, said that the people who surrounded Yeltsin squeezed out Galina from their company, in an attempt to sever the president’s connections with someone who might someday dare to disagree with him. In an interview with *Demokratizatsiya*, Galina spoke about the new Russian constitution. “First, I would really pay attention to the enormous power that is concentrated in the Russian presidency,” she said. “Second, I would also look at renegotiating the special relations with certain regions and autonomies in Russia. . . . For the most part the Russian constitution is a good one, but there are still certain elements of socialist state.”

Several times in our own conversations, Galina criticized the politics of Washington toward Russia. She knew that some Westerners, particularly American experts and politicians, were irritated by her critical opinion on the subject. While she had a favorable opinion of U.S. Russian policy in the time of Reagan and Bush; she could not fathom Washington’s willingness to pardon the unforgivable: human rights violations, corruption, and organized crime, Russia’s passiveness in implementing reforms, disregard of public opinion and the needs and problems of average Russians. She was just about the only Russian democrat who openly and passionately warned that current policy would not only fail, but would make the path to reform more difficult. Of course, she was right. In addition, she urged Russia’s inclusion in NATO. Galina never hid her beliefs; she called public attention to what she saw as conspiracy, as amoral struggles for power and influence. In a tribute to Galina, her friend Susan Eisenhower wrote, “Americans like to talk about our country as the ‘land of the free and the home of the brave,’ but most of us will never know what it is like to have our principles tested in life or death terms.”

Her fearlessness and unwavering belief in the principles of democracy were absolute, although they brought her both admiration and condemnation. I often wondered why she did not engage a bodyguard. She usually laughed in answer and said she had nothing to be afraid of, because what she was doing was right. I suspect that a bodyguard to her was a luxury she could not afford, and she pre-

ferred not to allow some commercial entity to pay for her security because it would result in the loss of her political freedom. Fighting against corruption and the mafia, she did not have *krisha*, or cover. “To fight against organized crime,” she said to me once, “and at the same time ask them to protect you, is not a fight but rather, spitefulness, because you deceive the people who voted for you.” Despite her monumental achievements, Galina was down-to-earth, someone who was comfortable in any situation. In her presence, people could relax and easily pour out their hearts. She was charming and quick-witted, with a raucous sense of humor and a mile-wide smile. Her boundless supply of energy and enthusiasm was beautiful to behold. I am not alone in my affection for Galina, I know; many people loved her. I realize, too, that many people hated her and probably wanted her dead.

Galina was a politician of the highest order. Her aim was not to build a successful political career but to fight for justice, no matter how difficult or lonely that fight would be. That is why people saw her as a true democrat, maybe the last true democrat in Russia. And that is why, sadly, political plotters and vultures who fill Russia’s corridors of power will fail to comprehend or acknowledge Galina’s momentous contributions. They will survive her death very easily. After all, she was not “one of them.” She was not timid, either—she would not hold her tongue just to make things comfortable for them. Her absence will be felt by many as a crippling of real democratic reforms in Russia. Let her legacy be one of action, guided by compassion.