strators in Derry. The IRA then launched an armed campaign. Yet, O'Toole points out, *mass* violence between Protestants and Catholics "did not take hold."

Statistics on the killings from the recent *Lost Lives* by three journalists and an academic, as well as another independent study, belie claims that the paramilitary groups were acting defensively. Of the 1,771 people slain by the IRA, little more than half belonged to the British armed forces, the local police, or military auxiliaries. And of the more than 1,000 killed by Loyalist paramilitaries, only 29 had IRA ties. "The overwhelming majority of their victims were innocent Catholics chosen purely on the basis of their religion," O'Toole says.

The paramilitaries on both sides had to use brutality to enforce their authority. The IRA killed 198 members of the broader Catholic community—compared with 138 killed by the British army. The IRA also was responsible for the deaths, accidental or deliberate, of 149 of its own members—34 more than the British army and police killed. The Loyalist paramilitaries similarly killed twice as many of their own as the IRA managed to slay.

Surveys conducted in Northern Ireland between 1989 and 1995 showed that almost 40 percent of the population—half Catholics, half Protestants—refused to identify themselves as either unionist or nationalist. "Their quiet, even silent, refusal to get involved," O'Toole says, "thwarted the aims of the paramilitaries. The IRA could never win enough active support, particularly in the Republic of Ireland, where most Irish Catholic nationalists live, to have a realistic prospect of forcing the British to withdraw." This reality finally sank in.

With the 1998 Belfast Agreement being implemented and all the main sources of violence "now decisively committed to the peace process," O'Toole says, the Troubles seem over. "Ordinary people . . . finally defeated all attempts to reduce them to unflinching bigots."

Will Russians Sober Up?

"First Steps: AA and Alcoholism in Russia" by Patricia Critchlow, in *Current History* (Oct. 2000),
4225 Main St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19127.

Some 20 million Russians are much too fond of their vodka. That's the estimated number of alcoholics in Russia, a nation of only 145 million. Russians consume, on average, a staggering 3.5 to four gallons of pure alcohol a year—well above the World Health Organization's "safe level" of two gallons per year. Among the adverse consequences: between 25,000 and 40,000 deaths annually from alcohol poisoning, and shortened life expectancy. For various reasons, Russian males born in 1999 have a life expectancy of only 59.8 years, four years less than for those born in 1990.

Excessive drinking has long been "a scourge of Russian society," notes Critchlow, who did fieldwork on the subject for a master's degree from Harvard University. But, she reports, a ray of hope has appeared, in the form of *Anonimnye Alkogoliki* (Alcoholics Anonymous, or AA) self-help groups.

Such organizations were not allowed during most of the Soviet era. Before Mikhail Gorbachev rose to power in the 1980s, Soviet leaders welcomed alcohol sales as a source of state revenue and did not view heavy drinking as a significant social problem. Gorbachev, however, launched an "anti-alcohol campaign," which proved ineffective. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Critchlow says, "economic insecurity, low morale, and a sense of disillusionment have contributed to an increase in excessive drinking." President Boris Yeltsin was "a poor role model." His successor, Vladimir Putin, has criticized excessive drinking by officials. He also has hiked taxes on retail sales of alcohol, but this apparently prompted a turn to bootleg liquor, some of it deadly. In the first five months of 2000, a total of 15,823 Russians died of alcohol poisoning—a 45 percent increase over the toll during the same period in 1999.

Under Gorbachev, restrictions on AA groups were eased, and by the end of his regime, the self-help organizations could be found in 12 cities. By late 1999, there were 180 AA groups in 90 cities and towns. Physicians (whose income is threatened) and Russian Orthodox clergymen (who see

AA as a foreign religious cult) have resisted. A St. Petersburg program claims that 45 percent of its more than 500 patients have stayed sober for at least a year—a very impressive figure, Critchlow says, but the mathematics of alcoholism is daunting.

As the AA movement spreads in the next 10 years, she calculates, it may be able to help perhaps 35,000 alcoholics at most. "Ultimately," Critchlow concludes, "any broad-scale solution . . . must come from within Russian society."

The Country of Laughter and Forgetting

"Czech Malaise and Europe" by Matthew Rhodes, in *Problems of Post-Communism* (Mar.–Apr. 2000), George Washington Univ., Inst. for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies, 2013 G St., N.W., Ste. 401, Washington, D.C. 20052.

After the Velvet Revolution toppled Czechoslovakia's communist government in 1989, and an amicable agreement four years later to split the country in two, the Czech Republic appeared to be on a bright track. Faced with the daunting task of recovering from 40 years of oppression and economic stagnation, the country's leaders, notably Prime Minister Václav Klaus, seemed to be creating a model of postcommunist reform. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invited the Czech Republic to join, and European Union (EU) membership seemed a foregone conclusion. But then, in 1997, says Rhodes, professor of international security studies at the United States Air War College, "the 'Czech miracle' collapsed." Klaus's Civic Democratic Party lost its majority following a series of bank failures and financial scandals. Foreign investment dwindled, a minority government took over, and EU membership became a distant prospect. What went wrong?

Though the economic downturn began before the minority government headed by Milos Zeman, of the Czech Social Democratic Party, took office, government austerity measures have pushed the Social Democrats' public approval ratings below 20 percent. This has made it harder to advance the party's expressly "pro-Europe" goals, says Rhodes.

Zeman campaigned in 1998 by "combining support for NATO membership with a call for a national referendum on the issue," Rhodes notes. But the referendum idea was abandoned in the face of "intense opposition . . . from the other mainstream parties, as well as the quiet disapproval of NATO officials," and NATO membership became a reality in March 1999. Less than a fortnight later, however, popular Czech support for joining the alliance, never strong, evaporated when air strikes against Yugoslavia in support of the Kosovar Albanians commenced. The Czech government gave NATO forces access to Czech territory and airbases, but Zeman denounced the supporters of the bombing as "primitive troglodytes," and claimed the attack had been planned before Czech admission to the alliance.

Meanwhile, popular support for membership in the EU has dropped from 80 percent in the early 1990s to around 40 percent, despite predictions that isolation could cost the country $6 billion in EU aid over six years. Many Czechs have been put off by the EU's corruption, its trade policies, and its criticisms of their government's efforts to alter Czech laws and institutions to fit EU requirements.

"Many disillusioned Czechs have come to view their country's political machinations with indifference," notes Rhodes. As some see it, the recent complications in ties with the West are "just the latest manifestation of the Czech national tradition of giving perfunctory external obeisance to dominant great powers while inwardly seeking to preserve their own traditions and pursue quiet, provincial lives." It's an approach in keeping with the anarchistic spirit of the famous Czech novelist Jaroslav Hašek's *Good Soldier Schweik* (1920–23), and it may "have served Czechs well under the Hapsburgs, Nazis, and Soviets," Rhodes says. But he fears that without firm leadership by a strong national government committed to the European idea, the Czech Republic may be fated for "marginalization in 21st-century Europe."