

## OTHER NATIONS

## If Found Innocent, Try, Try Again

**THE SOURCES:** "Trust In Public Institutions in Russia: The Lowest in the World" by Vladimir Shlapentokh, in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, June 2006, and "Not Guilty Until the Supreme Court Finds You Guilty: A Reflection on Jury Trials in Russia" by Kristi O'Malley, in *Demokratizatsiya*, Winter 2006.

THE TYPICAL RUSSIAN TODAY is almost as suspicious as was Stalin, who mistrusted peasants, bureaucrats, officers, allies, agents, and his own wife—for a start. No Russian institution commands even a moderate level of trust from more than half of the population. Russians have the lowest level of confidence in their social institutions in the world, according to Michigan State University sociologist Vladimir Shlapentokh.

Russia's courts, for example, enjoy the trust of only 15 percent of the pop-

ulation. And when it comes to juries, a post-Soviet innovation, typical Russians appear not to trust even one another. The nation's experience with jury trials has triggered controversy and criticism. The recurring theme during academic and judicial conferences, and in the news media, is that the Russian people are not "mature enough" for jury trials and too many criminals are escaping punishment.

In 1993, when jury trials were first permitted, under the new Russian constitution, a total of two were held. By 2004, the number had jumped to 1,000. In some regions more than 60 percent of all defendants now demand jury trials, writes Kristi O'Malley, a Washington lawyer who has worked on judicial reform efforts in Russia for the U.S. Justice Department.



Jurors hear a 1994 double homicide case in one of Russia's first jury trials. Jurors are more likely to find defendants not guilty than judges are, and acquittals are often overturned by the Supreme Court.

That's not surprising. Juries acquit about 15 to 20 percent of defendants, judges about 1 percent. Not-guilty verdicts are new in the country, where the Soviet system convicted virtually 100 percent of the accused.

But an acquittal can be only the beginning of the story. Both convictions and acquittals can be appealed. In 2005 the Russian Supreme Court overturned 49 percent of the acquittals that were appealed, compared with only 14.5 percent of the guilty verdicts.

A Russian told O'Malley that prosecutors often appeal and re-appeal an acquittal "until they get what they want." That's a mistake, she believes. She argues that the Supreme Court should stop overturning so many acquittals and reform the haphazard lower court procedures that open the door to numerous appeals. Jury acquittals send "a message to the authorities that there are some uses of state power that people are not willing to tolerate."

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## David and Goliath in Africa

**THE SOURCE:** "West Africa Versus the United States on Cotton Subsidies: How, Why, and What Next?" by Elinor Lynn Heinisch, in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, June 2006.

WHEN THREE IMPOVERISHED African countries took on American cotton producers in 2003, charging that subsidized U.S. cotton was flooding the market and reducing the price of their main export, it was a watershed event in international

trade relations, according to Elinor Lynn Heinisch, a press officer with the aid organization CARE. It proved that politically and economically weak countries can effectively challenge farm subsidies in the world's strongest nations.

Cotton is the most important export crop of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Benin, the world's 4th-, 10th-, and 16th-poorest countries. Farmers in landlocked Burkina Faso, located to the north of Ghana, can grow cotton at a cost of 21 cents per pound, working plots of two to three acres by hand and relying on rain for irrigation. The cost of cotton production for U.S. farmers is between 68 and 80 cents per pound.

Simple arithmetic would suggest that the African farmers would put the Americans out of business, but America's 30,000 cotton farms claim to provide some 440,000 jobs, and the cotton lobby is an important political player in Washington. The U.S. government spends \$3.9 billion a year on subsidies to American cotton farmers, Heinisch writes, paying many producers the difference between the market price—currently hovering a bit above 50 cents per pound—and a “target price” of 72 cents per pound.

The Africans took their complaints about the subsidies to the World Trade Organization (WTO), piggybacking on a cotton-related unfair trade practice case brought by vastly richer Brazil. (Few developing countries have the legal or financial resources to bring a case on their own.) They contended that subsidies caused U.S. farmers to produce more cotton than they would otherwise grow, sell it at an artificially low price, and undermine the livelihoods of farmers in the three West

African nations. Cotton producers there are not subsidized, and government intervention in cotton markets has been cut back, leaving farmers' incomes to rise and fall with world prices.

The Africans became the public face of an immensely complicated world trade issue. For the first time, an African head of state testified before the U.S. House of Representatives International Relations Subcommittee on Africa. President Amadou Toumani Touré of Mali and President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso published an op-ed piece in *The New York Times*. Officials of all three countries flew to Geneva, where the WTO was meeting, and spoke elsewhere in Europe. They enlisted allies in international agencies and charities. At one point, the WTO director-general broke from “conventional neutrality” to say that the African complaints had merit, according to Heinisch. The cotton campaign paid off in March 2005, when the WTO ruled in favor of Brazil—and its African allies—and the United States announced it would move to comply.

Brazil, seizing the possibility that a revived Doha round of trade talks might permanently level the playing field for international cotton producers, put off its demand for \$3 billion in damages from the United States. Now that the trade negotiations have collapsed, it remains to be seen whether Brazil's African supporters will try to wrest more from the U.S. Department of Agriculture than the \$7 million “cotton improvement program” offered. It is a paltry substitute, the Africans have said, for fair prices in the global free market.

## OTHER NATIONS

## The 1.3-Million-Person Gap

**THE SOURCE:** “Voodoo Demographics” by Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid, and Michael L. Wise, in *Azure*, Summer 2006.

ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN LEADERS sing from the same score on only one topic: demographics. The rapidly growing Palestinian population could eventually overwhelm Israeli Jews by sheer force of numbers. As the late Yasir Arafat said, “The womb of the Palestinian woman will defeat the Zionists.”

But the numbers behind the Palestinian “demographic time bomb” are inflated, contend Bennett Zimmerman, a former strategy consultant with Bain & Company, historian Roberta Seid, and Michael L. Wise, a specialist in mathematical modeling. The actual Palestinian Arab population is only 2.5 million—not the 3.8 million reported by the Palestinian Authority. Palestinians are nowhere close to outnumbering Israel's 5.5 million Jews, even if the Israeli Arab population of more than a million is included.

The 1.3-million-person gap began to open up in 1997, when the Palestinians conducted their only census, say the authors. In one dramatic leap, the official Palestinian population jumped by 30 percent. The new figure was achieved by double-counting 210,000 Arabs who lived in Jerusalem—they had already been counted in Israel's census—and by adding at least 325,000 Palestinians who were living outside the Palestinian Authority's territory, including many residing overseas. Since then, the Palestinian