

efficacy, he notes, is the inadequacy of the data for the period before the Soviet Union collapsed. In recent years, however, “measured average real consumption has been consistently higher than in early 1992, when the marketization reforms were introduced,” he says. The proportion of the population below the poverty line has *fallen*—from 34 percent in 1992 to 22 percent in April 1996. “The most dire predictions of famine and economic collapse . . . have not been borne out, nor have there been riots or similar manifestations of deep social discord. In the two main instances when the Russian electorate was called upon to determine the direction of economic policy—the referendum of April 1993 and the 1996 presidential election—modest majorities preferred reform.”

But in voting for Yeltsin last year (rather than Communist Gennadi Zyuganov), what many Russians wanted, despite their expectations of further economic hardship, was not so much more reform as stability, argues Dmitri Shlapentokh, a professor of Russian and world history at Indiana University, South Bend, writing in the *Washington Quarterly* (Winter 1997). Although disgusted with politics and politicians, many Russians viewed Yeltsin as representing “the relatively predictable and secure

status quo—as opposed to the risks inherent in change.”

That the election was held at all is a sign of progress toward democracy, Amy Knight, author of *Spies without Cloaks: The KGB's Successors* (1996), notes in the same issue of that journal, but “democracy still appears to be far away.” One of the biggest obstacles, she says, is Russia’s failure to attempt to come to terms with its communist past. “If a new regime simply glosses over past abuses because of either vested interests within the government or the continued influence exerted by the old political leadership, then it takes on the corruption of the old regime. This is what has happened in Russia.” Despite the dissolution of the KGB in 1991, she says, the successor security services “still play a larger-than-life role in politics,” exerting a “pervasive influence” on domestic and foreign policy.

“Russia should not be mistaken for a democratic state,” agrees David Remnick, author of *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire* (1993), writing in *Foreign Affairs* (Jan.–Feb. 1997). Nevertheless, he has not given up hope that Russia will become a democracy one day. Americans are too impatient, he believes. “A new era has begun. Russia has entered the world, and everything, even freedom . . . is possible.”

History's Revenge

“Dateline Sudetenland: Hostages to History” by Timothy W. Ryback, in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1996–97), 2400 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037–1153.

It was a day that will long live in the annals of folly. On September 30, 1938, in Munich, British prime minister Neville Chamberlain tried to appease Adolf Hitler by agreeing to Nazi Germany’s annexation of the Sudetenland. Six months later, Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia. During the seven years of Nazi occupation that followed, thousands perished in death camps. And then, in 1945—in what until recently has been just an ugly historical footnote to the larger tragedy—Czechs took their revenge. They expelled three million ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia, slaughtering tens of thousands—men, women, and children. Now this “footnote” has been elevated to the center of a dispute

that could impede the Czech Republic’s entry into the European Union (EU).

It was the Czechs themselves who first brought up the issue after the “Velvet Revolution” of 1989, notes Ryback, director of the Salzburg Seminar, a forum for international dialogue based in Salzburg, Austria. Just days after his election as president of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel denounced the expulsions as “deeply immoral.” But Czech attempts at reconciliation with the displaced Sudeten German population, now located mainly in Bavaria, ended in 1991 after the Czechoslovak prime minister and Franz Neubauer, head of the Munich-based Sudeten German Heritage Union, exchanged bitter words.

However, with “one in every four inhabitants of Bavaria claiming Sudeten German heritage, and with Bavaria representing the power base—and much of the economic muscle—of [Chancellor Helmut] Kohl’s conservative coalition government, Neubauer exercises considerable leverage in Bonn,” Ryback says. The Germans removed a clause from the 1992 Czechoslovak-German friendship treaty that would have annulled all Sudeten German property claims in Czechoslovakia, and Germany has blocked compensation payments to 12,000 Czech survivors of Nazi persecution. In the Czech Republic, meanwhile, the Czech Constitutional Court in 1995 not only upheld an old postwar decree depriving the Germans of their property and assets but declared the German people “collectively responsible” for the Nazis’ crimes.

By last spring, it appeared that senior German and Czech officials had smoothed things over. But in May, at the annual Sudeten German rally in Nuremberg, German finance minister Theo Waigel roiled the waters with a broadside attacking the Czechs for the “ethnic cleansing” of 1945 and subtly threatening to block their



Nazi troops march into the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, soon after “peace for our time” was secured at Munich.

petition for full membership in the EU unless a public apology was forthcoming.

The best course for both countries, Ryback believes, would be an apology from Prague in exchange for a renunciation by the German government of Sudeten German claims in the Czech Republic. Such a joint declaration would provoke howls of outrage on both sides, but the uproar probably would not have lasting consequences. In the end, he says, the most remarkable feature about the current conflict may be that the German government has been able, in the shadow of the Nazi past, to speak firmly about an injustice done to Germans then, but without trying to equate the vengeance killings with the Nazi atrocities. “The contemporary Germans are indeed not the Germans of 50 years ago.”

Professors of Genocide

“Africa’s Murderous Professors” by Michael Chege, in *The National Interest* (Winter 1996–97), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

When the predominant Hutus savagely eliminated some 850,000 Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994, their weapon of choice was the garden machete, and it was widely assumed that the driving force behind this genocide was just as primitive—“tribalism.” In fact, says Chege, a citizen of Kenya who is director of the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida, Gainesville, “The catechism of the madness

that . . . overtook Rwanda was authored not by some African magician extolling the supremacy of the Hutu race in ancient ‘tribal’ wars, but by accomplished Rwandan professional historians, journalists, and sociologists at the service of a quasi-traditionalist and genocidally inclined cabal.”

President Juvénal Habyarimana’s Hutu-dominated regime might have reached a