

## EDITORIAL NOTE

### 1990: Anno Fatalis?

Events, mercifully, are momentarily moving less swiftly: though the structure of a new Europe remains largely undetermined, the refashioned forms of each country or republic, recently released from heavy-handed or less suppressive Soviet tutelage, take shape with each local, national and republican election, thereby hinting at future political climates in which minorities will have to operate. Unfortunately, by mid-year, it is a mixed picture; no nation in Eastern Europe and republic in the Soviet Union has voted—and otherwise expressed its will—definitively. No country or republic has yet assumed a relatively stable political stance vis-à-vis its minorities. Too many unknowns and imponderables remain that could radically alter or significantly modify minority policies.

The short and long range implications for minorities of Gorbachev-sanctioned “restructuring” have yet to crystallize. In Eastern Europe, de-Sovietization has made way for the restoration and resurrection of old agendas and attitudes that could profoundly determine the conditions of minorities: the conflict surrounding the Hungarians in Romania is a case in point. In the Soviet Union, de-Stalinization has quickened age-old republican nationalisms, which in turn, have spawned a new dimension of ethnic minority issues—the activated concerns of minorities in each Soviet republic, as the quests for autonomy and independence from Moscow give birth to republic policies sometimes more and sometimes less responsive to the sensitivities of local ethnic minorities. Ironically, an increasingly vocal and anxious minority are the Russian populations scattered throughout the fourteen republics around the RSFSR.

While perestroika-inspired republican nationalism strives to loosen Moscow’s grip, more and more national minorities in the republics (must) look to Moscow as a guarantor of their interests from potential, actual, and feared excesses of ethnic majority politics in each republic. This dynamic of tensions between republican majority nationalisms and republican minority nationalisms and their conflicting relations to the center considerably complicates and enriches the picture for analysts observing the evolving circumstances in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

The first half of 1990 brings sobering news in the wake of the heady expectations reaped during the harvest of the “Miracle of 1989.” To date, more and more events tend to support the pessimists, those who harbor little faith in the abilities of the new societies to make a viable commitment to

tolerance of ethnic pluralism. Recent legislation and other official and public pronouncements following elections and reforms in both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union do little to buttress the hopes of the optimists that post-Brezhnev era governments have the resources to steer unambiguously in the direction of a politics entirely purged of ethnic chauvinism. The dangers to minorities are obvious in a region where minorities have always been vulnerable and too often targeted by myopic ethnocentric policies.

Perhaps the latter half of 1990 will bring about a revised tack as each nation and sub-unit navigates the treacherous waters of domestic politics now so intimately influenced by century-old ingrained, enlightened and/or prejudiced, attitudes of including or excluding minorities. It will be a fateful but paradoxical year, because, in large measure, free choice will also be modified by virtually unalterable traditions: for purposes of illustration, note the return of traditional (non-Soviet) anti-semitisms and judeophobia.

HRH  
March, 1990

### **APOLOGIA—Why the Delay?**

This issue, Volume XVII, No. 2 (Fall, 1989), follows *Nationalities Papers, Volume XX, No. 1* (Spring, 1992). The delay was purely technical, a shift from one technology to another. *Nationalities Papers* is now fully computerized; all future issues are now on track and we envision no further delays.

We regret the inconvenience this delayed issue may have caused for our readers and subscribers.

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