

would represent Poland at the forthcoming Paris Peace Conference. It was up to the Allies to draw the definitive borders of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, but a new and independent East Central Europe was already in existence, although it was tumultuous, ravaged, and internally divided.

THE DIFFICULT INDEPENDENCE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The First World War brought the collapse of the conservative monarchies in Europe and a victory for democracy and national self-determination. This victory, however, was neither complete nor permanent. The triumph of bolshevism in Russia meant not only the end of tsardom, but also the elimination of the nascent parliamentary regime. A way toward totalitarianism was opened under Lenin and reached its heyday under Stalin. In Italy a totalitarian creed of the extreme right came to prevail with the victory of the fascists in 1922. The advent of Nazi Germany in 1933 meant the addition of stringent racist doctrines. A formidable challenge arose which the Western democracies faced somewhat passively. The Great Depression called into question the very nature of capitalism. It radicalized the masses and brought new arguments and new recruits to the anti-democratic camp. Indeed, there came about a profound crisis of parliamentary democracy as derived from nineteenth-century liberal ideas, political and economic. In the West only Britain, France, and the smaller states of Scandinavia, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands successfully withstood the assault on their institutions. In East Central Europe, buffeted by the totalitarian gales from east and west, and struggling with economic problems worsened by the Depression, only Czechoslovakia was able to retain until 1938 a democratic parliamentary regime and economic stability. But even in this case one can speak only of a relative success.

The principle of national self-determination which the peacemakers, especially President Wilson, adopted as a guide for the reconstruction of East Central Europe, was to correlate state borders with ethnic divisions. In view of the existence, in many cases, of inextricably mixed areas, and the need to take into account economic, strategic, and historic factors, it was virtually impossible to draw absolutely equitable borders. True, fewer national minorities would be found after the First World War than before, but in the age of rampant nationalism they

posed insoluble problems. The ensuing instability was worsened by the fact that although Germany had been defeated it did not cease to be a great power. Similarly, the weakening of the Russian colossus through revolution and civil war was of a temporary nature. Both states, discontented, revengeful, and isolated, posed a threat to the new East Central Europe, particularly to the Polish state.

Poland recovered its independence as a result of a combination of many factors. War had broken the solidarity of the partitioning states, and Russia had been forced out of the Polish lands by the Central Powers. They in turn were defeated by the Allies, while the two revolutions in Russia, the upheaval in Germany, and the disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy created a power vacuum. It was filled by the will and determination of the Polish nation that had never abandoned its struggle for freedom. Polish borders with Germany were drawn by the Paris Peace Conference, although the Poles were not mere spectators, as witnessed by the 1918-21 uprisings in Prussian Poland. The new frontiers denied to Poland its historic harbor Gdańsk, which became the Free City of Danzig, and they split, after a plebiscite, Upper Silesia. The Germans did not accept the existence of the "corridor" (as they called it) linking Poland with the Baltic Sea and separating Germany from East Prussia. They denounced it as an artificial monstrosity, although ethnically it was predominantly Polish and had been part of Poland before the partitions. Polish-Czechoslovak frontiers were easier to establish except for a small part in Silesia (TéSín, Cieszyn, Teschen) which the Czechs seized by force in 1919. The subsequent division of this economically rich district was deeply resented by the Poles, and it contributed to the bad blood between the two countries.

The Peace Conference could not effectively establish Poland's eastern frontiers given the chaos prevailing in the former Russian empire and the absence of Russia's representative in Paris. The advancing detachments of the Red Army, seeking to carry revolution westward, clashed with the Poles claiming the lands that had belonged to the old Commonwealth. In former eastern Galicia an armed confrontation between the Ukrainians and the Poles lasted until 1919, when the Polish side took over the entire province.

Dmowski and the Polish right demanded the borders of 1772 as corrected by ethnic changes that had occurred in the course of the nineteenth century. This meant a certain expansion in the west (Silesia) and a contraction in the east (roughly the line of the second partition)-In the latter region the Polish minority was strong culturally and economically and Dmowski believed in the possibility of assimilating the Ukrainians and Belorussians. Piłsudski and the left favored a "federalist" approach that would lead - after the withdrawal of Russia from all of the lands of the old Commonwealth - to the creation of a bloc

of federated or allied countries: Poland, Lithuania, Belorussia, and the Ukraine. The Dmowski-Piłsudski controversy over Polish eastern policies was not lost on the great powers, although they, as well as the borderland nations, often suspected that both trends disguised Polish imperialist designs.

The Peace Conference did not unequivocally side with the Poles against the bolsheviks, politically or militarily, but it did not recognize the bolsheviks or try to make peace with them either. Procrastinating and zigzagging the conference in late 1919 proposed a minimal Polish border in the east, known later as the Curzon Line. This was no solution, and Allied preference for a policy of neither war nor peace with the bolsheviks was unacceptable to the embattled Poles. Piłsudski believed that peace could only be achieved after a military victory. Gaining the support of the Ukrainian leader Petliura, he launched an offensive in the spring of 1920 that resulted in the capture of Kiev. The Red Army attacked in turn and reached the outskirts of Warsaw. The entire postwar settlement was suddenly at stake. Poland and perhaps even Europe was saved through the "eighteenth decisive battle of the world," as a British diplomat termed the Polish victory. Piłsudski's opponents, trying to belittle his achievement, called it the "miracle of the Vístula." The bolshevik rout opened the way to negotiations. The Peace Treaty of Riga of 1921 split the ethnically mixed, but largely Ukrainian and Belorussian borderlands between Poland and the Soviets. As for Vilnius (Wilno) and its region - historically Lithuanian, but ethnically Polish-Belorussian-Jewish - it was seized militarily by the Poles. Piłsudski was willing to give this region to Lithuania but only if the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were recreated. This, the Lithuanians, bent on independent national existence, were unwilling to accept. A wall of enmity arose between the two nations.

As compared with all the complexities of the Polish territorial settlement, the drawing of Czechoslovak borders was far less dramatic. The old frontiers with Germany remained unchanged, the Allies having no intention of applying the ethnic principle to them or to Austria because it would have resulted in a Germany stronger than before the war. Hence the Sudeten Germans, as they came to be known, vainly sought to detach the border regions from the new Czechoslovak state. While the peacemakers endorsed the historic borders of Bohemia and Moravia I in Silesia the above-mentioned controversy with the Poles flared up - they accepted borders in Slovakia that were a mixture of ethnic, economic, and strategic compromises. Several almost purely Hungarian-inhabited regions were included in them. Further east, the region known as Carpatho-Ruthenia or Carpatho-Ukraine, was transferred from Hungary to Czechoslovakia mainly on strategic grounds, to establish contiguity with Romania. The Hungarians' bad record of

minority treatment was also invoked in this settlement. Thus, except for some extravagant claims, virtually all Czechoslovak territorial demands were granted, making the country highly heterogeneous. Somewhat ingeniously Benes drew comparisons with Switzerland; critics said that a near replica of the Habsburg monarchy had been created.

Czechoslovakia was the darling of the Entente; Hungary was its *bête noire*. All the efforts of Károlyi to win Allied sympathy for the new state after the disintegration of historic Hungary were in vain. The subsequent short-lived Soviet Hungarian republic only increased antagonism toward the Hungarians and delayed the peace treaty. When signed in 1920 with the counter-revolutionary regime of Admiral M. Horthy, it proved to be the harshest of all treaties that followed the First World War. Not only was the ethnic principle used everywhere against Hungary, but it was also violated when operating in Hungary's favor. Plebiscite demands (with one exception in Sopron) were refused. In virtue of the Treaty of Trianon Hungary (excluding Croatia) was reduced territorially by two-thirds and in terms of population by three-fifths. Almost every third ethnic Magyar found himself now living under Romanian, Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, or Austrian rule. Hungary was fully independent at last but under conditions that amounted to a national disaster. Small wonder that extreme bitterness prevailed and the cry "nem, nem, soha" ("no, no, never") reverberated throughout the truncated land. The Hungarians became obsessed with a revision of Trianon, revisionism shaping to a large extent Budapest's external and domestic politics.

The new international order that arose out of the postwar treaties was to be based on the League of Nations. Yet from the outset its main pillar, the United States, was absent, and the support of the remaining two, Britain and France, was weakened by their mutual differences. The French were intent on the fulfillment of Versailles, preservation of the status quo, and prevention of a German comeback, by force if necessary. The British wished to eliminate the causes of German revisionism by satisfying German grievances through peaceful change. As time went on, France became increasingly dependent on Britain. This had dire consequences for France's Eastern allies, Poland and Czechoslovakia, whose fate was closely associated with the preservation of the postwar system.

The international situation and the foreign policies of the three East Central European states exerted a great impact on their domestic evolution and vice versa. Poland, recreated albeit in a different shape after one hundred and twenty-odd years of partitions found itself between the German Scylla and the Russian Charybdis, or as it was said at the time, between the jaws of a gigantic pair of pincers which when closed would crush it. Poland could not, without jeopardizing its

independence, side either with Germany against Russia or vice versa. Hence, Warsaw's foreign policy came to be based on the twin principles of balance and alliances with France and Romania. It was not always easy to reconcile the two.

Unlike Poland Czechoslovakia had no declared enemy among the great powers. Identifying closely with the new international order, Prague relied in its foreign policy on three elements: the League of Nations, with which it cooperated very closely; the alliance with France, whose protégé it became; and regionally the Little Entente, composed of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. In the mid-1930s a pact with the USSR was added. As for the Little Entente, designed to keep Hungary in check, it was above all a diplomatic instrument operative against revisionism, a Habsburg restoration, or a union (*Anschluss*) between Germany and Austria.

The international standing of the defeated and truncated Hungary was obviously very different from that of the victor states. With an area of 92,963 sq. km Hungary was much smaller than Czechoslovakia with 140,493 sq. km and Poland whose territory comprised some 388,634 sq. km. Poland was the sixth largest state in Europe; Czechoslovakia was only thirteenth, but it made up for the difference in economic might. Hungary was by far too weak to think of altering the Trianon settlement by force, and it pursued its revisionism through diplomacy. Budapest's foreign policy oscillated between cooperation with Rome and with Berlin, while seeking also to exert some influence in London. Its options were obviously limited. Hungarian enmity centered on Czechoslovakia, the loss of Slovakia being particularly resented, and here Budapest and Warsaw found some common ground. The Polish card was never a trump in the Hungarian diplomatic pack, but it had its use, and it reinforced the traditional friendship between the Hungarians and the Poles.

While many reasons seemed to dictate Polish-Czechoslovak cooperation the two states never closed ranks. Prague did not want to jeopardize its position by siding with Poland, which was threatened by both Germany and the USSR. When in the mid-1930s the situation changed to Czechoslovak disadvantage, Prague's advances met with a cool reception in Warsaw. Hungarian, Czechoslovak, or Polish external preoccupations, whether they were a desire for change or the fear of it, affected domestic developments, political and economic. Concern for security necessitated heavy military expenditure by both Poland and Czechoslovakia. Hungary, of course, was disarmed under the Treaty of Trianon.

ECONOMY, SOCIETY, CULTURE

Many traditional socio-economic and cultural features remained unchanged in interwar East Central Europe. But there were also new phenomena. With the merger of Bohemia and Moravia with Slovakia and Carpatho-Ukraine within the Czechoslovak state, the country as a whole offered more parallels to Hungary and Poland, becoming more truly East Central European. Still, it was the most advanced of the three; Hungary came second; Poland was a poor third.

As can be seen from the figures in Table 7.1, the population of the three countries increased; that of Poland much more rapidly than that of its neighbors. Czechoslovakia remained the most densely populated country, and the number actively engaged in the rural population was high throughout the area. In fact, it was higher than needed on economic grounds. The result was, to use current terminology, hidden unemployment.

While roughly as many people in Italy or Germany were actively engaged in agriculture per ha of arable land as in Czechoslovakia or Hungary, the average figures for Britain and Denmark were much smaller: 15-17 persons. As regards totals deriving their livelihood from agriculture the average for Western Europe would be between 20 and 40 percent of the entire population.

Table 7.1 Population and agriculture in interwar East Central Europe

Total population	Czechoslovakia	Hungary	Poland
Increase (%)	14.0	14.2	29.9
Total population increase in millions	13.6-15.2	7.9-9.1	26.8-34.8
Density per sq. km	110.4	98.0	89.7
Dependent on agriculture (%)	34.5*	51.8	60.6
Active persons per 100 ha of arable land	34.7	29.6	45.5

*In Bohemia-Moravia 25.6 percent; in Slovakia-Carpatho-Ukraine 58.5.
Sources: J. Zarnowski, "Authoritarian systems in Central and South-Eastern Europe 1918-1939," in J. Zarnowski (ed.), *Dictatorships in East Central Europe 1918-1939* (Wroctaw, 1983), p. 22; Z. Landau and J. Tomaszewski, *Polska iv Europie i siviectie 1918-1939* (2nd, rev. edn, Warsaw, 1984), p. 36; M. C. Kaser and E. A. Radice (eds), *The Economic History of Eastern Europe 1919-75*, vol. I (Oxford, 1985), pp. 75 and 82.

The number of hectares of arable land per tractor (in 1939) showed that Czechoslovakia with 920 and Hungary with 829 were somewhat behind France (700) and a long way behind Germany (227). The figure for Poland was exceptionally low: 8,400. One must remember, however, the war devastations in the Polish lands, which were responsible for

almost halving the cattle herds, leaving large portions of land fallow, and crippling the system of transportaci3n through the destruction of bridges, railroad stations, and rolling stock.

To remedy the existing problems it was essential to change the structure of agriculture, modernize production methods, and relieve the rural overpopulation through land reform and industrialization. Land reform *per se* was no panacea, but it was important on political and psychological grounds, and all three countries adopted it. In Czechoslovakia roughly 16 percent of arable land formerly owned by Germans and Hungarians was distributed, in Poland about 10 percent (although about 25 percent of large estates were affected), in Hungary about 4 percent (but the figure for large estates was only 10 percent). Thus, in the Hungarian case there was no real transformation of the countryside and old conditions and relationships survived.

While agriculture had been a cause of economic dynamism in the nineteenth century, now only Bohemia and some parts of western Poland produced surpluses of agricultural capital. In Hungary the owners of the large estates mainly consumed theirs. Some accumulation of industrial capital occurred in the Hungarian case in the Budapest region, or in Polish Silesia. But there was need of more foreign investments, and indeed foreign capital played a significant, if not always a beneficial, role in interior East Central Europe.

Foreign investments in Poland (with the United States and France leading) reached a high point of over 40 percent of capital in the Polish joint stock companies. They were placed in the key branches of the economy: oil, heavy industry, electricity. Foreign capital was often of a speculative kind, seeking quick profits that were not reinvested in the country. There was a good deal of friction and mutual recrimination. The situation was rather different in Czechoslovakia where foreign capital in industry, representing 20 percent of the total investments, was much better integrated in the country's strong economy. French and British capital was particularly important. The presence of foreign investments was less striking in Hungary where, however, foreign loans were much larger than in the other two countries: \$95 per capita as compared to \$27 in Poland and \$14 in Czechoslovakia.

To turn to industry, the output of iron in the former Congress Kingdom fell in the wake of the First World War to one-tenth of the pre-1914 production; the L3dz textile industry regressed to its 1870 lev3is. The total industrial output (mining excluded) of Poland in 1920-1 was 35 percent of that of 1913. The corresponding figures for Czechoslovakia and Hungary were 84.9 and 80 percent.

After achieving a certain degree of economic recovery and financial stabilization in the mid-1920s, East Central Europe was hit by the Great Depression on a scale unparalleled elsewhere. While European

industrial production (USSR excluded) fell by 27 percent, in Poland the drop was 41 percent. In the period 1929-33 Polish national income declined by 25 percent. Unemployment affected 43 percent of the working population. Even Czechoslovakia, which overcame the Depression earlier than its neighbors, had not reached its 1929 level of production by 1937.

The necessary condition of industrial growth was a strong and expanding domestic market, in terms of consumption and investments, and this was not realizable in Poland. Attempts were made, however, to tackle the problem of industrialization through state intervention, particularly in the late 1930s. As it was, the Polish state controlled about 16 percent of national wealth. Out of the total investment in the industrial sector the state owned 58 percent in 1928 and 63 percent in 1939. In Hungary the state share was much smaller, only about 5 percent. Thanks to the involvement of the state and French credits, the Poles built their harbor, Gdynia. Its architect, Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, in 1936 launched an imaginative project of a Central Industrial District (COP) involving the construction and development of steel mills, chemical industries, and armament factories. A comprehensive six-year plan followed, aiming at a radical restructuring of the economy. While Polish means were insufficient to achieve it, there was a 28 percent increase in industrial production over a two-year period. The incorporation in 1938 of Teschen, which produced 52.2 percent of Poland's coke, 67 percent of its pig iron, and 38 percent of its steel, was a powerful boost. Were the chances of a self-sustaining economic take-off real? Experts are divided. The launching in Hungary of a somewhat comparable Győr program of industrialization did not achieve a similar upsurge. Hungarian economic expansion was mainly in consumer, not investment, goods. By and large, the country progressed least, comparatively speaking, toward sustained capital accumulation.

Historians have characterized the relationship between agriculture and industry in Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia as dual economy. They mean that the agrarian sector revolving largely around local markets and operating along traditional ways, was as it were divorced from industry. The peasantry was too poor to buy industrial products; the industry, deprived of an expanding market, could not develop cheap mass production. A "price scissors" opened wider between the rising prices of the industrial goods the farmer had to buy and the farm products he had to sell in order to survive at near-subsistence level. There was a vicious circle.

In 1936 industrial workers constituted 44.6 percent of the actively working population of Czechoslovakia, 21.8 percent of that in Hungary, and 18.5 percent of that of Poland. The ratio between population and industrial output was about 1:1 in Czechoslovakia, 2:1 in Hungary, and

3:1 in Poland. By way of comparison, we can note that in Germany the ratio was 1:2. Production per capita, taking the European averages in 1936-40 as an indicator, amounted to roughly 67 percent in Czechoslovakia, 43 percent in Hungary, and 20 percent in Poland. These figures represented an increase over 1913 in the first two countries, and a slight decrease in the Polish case. Should we thus speak of stagnation or even a decline of the interwar Polish economy? While new branches were developed, for instance chemical and electrical industries, and pre-1913 levels were surpassed in hard coal or iron ores, to mention just two, there were instances of stagnation or even regression in many areas of the economy.

New frontiers naturally affected economic developments in East Central Europe. Postwar boundaries were generally advantageous for Czechoslovakia. Although the disappearance of the large market of Austro-Hungary caused problems, the country as a whole adapted its production and trade structure to the new situation. Czechoslovakia figured among the first ten industrial producers in Europe. Internally, however, Slovakia suffered from the severing of its natural (in terms of geography and Communications) ties with Hungary. Trade and population movements were adversely affected, and within Czechoslovakia the Slovak lands underwent a certain "deindustrialization." As for the small banking system it passed from German and Hungarian to Czech hands. The 1913 levels were passed only by 1937.

The disappearance of the geographic unity represented by the Crown of St Stephen produced at first dramatic difficulties for the Hungarian economy. After Trianon the country retained some 55.5 percent of its industrial production value, about 50.9 percent of its industrial labor, and 49 percent of its factories. Losses were particularly heavy in the timber industry (84 percent), and iron ore production (89 percent). Those in the machinery industry, printing, and clothing were relatively light. By and large post-Trianon Hungary was a more industrialized country than the historic Kingdom.

Problems faced by the Polish economy were of an entirely different nature. Here a single economic unity was created out of three distinct parts, which for more than a century had operated in the context of different economic systems. In trade, the loss of the Russian market and a dependence on Germany called for new departures. Indeed, all of East Central Europe faced the complex problem of reorientation of its foreign trade. Without entering into all the intricacies one may just observe a retraction of regional commerce and an overall decline. While this was true for interwar Europe in general, the three countries experienced the fall in value more strongly than many other states. Table 7.2 shows the regional decline.

Table 7.2 Foreign trade in dollars per capita

	1925	1929	1938
Czechoslovakia	128	138	42
Hungary	59	72	30
Poland	32	37	14

Source: Based on Z. Landau and J. Tomaszewski, *Polska w Europie i świecie 1918-39* (2nd, rev. edn, Warsaw, 1984), p. 227.

The social structure of the región underwent no basic changes, although some issues became more acute. In Hungary, the highly visible aristocracy now comprised the refugees from Transylvania and Slovakia who had lost their land. Birth was still more important than wealth, and an official annual publication dutifully recorded titles, ranks, and precedence. Szeklers had their noble status verified and many others laid a claim to nobility; a hereditary "Order of Valiants" was established by the Regent. Within the political élite, however, a larger proportion of commoners than in the past was noticeable.

The intelligentsia doubled proportionately through an influx of refugees from the lost lands, but the old distinction between the Christian or "historic" middle class (the gentry) and the other part in which Jews or people of Jewish origin were dominant, remained valid. The post-Trianon borders contained only half of the former Jewish population, and its numbers continued to decline. But proportionately it stayed at the 5 percent level, and became if anything more bourgeois and Budapest-centered. While 82 percent of Magyars belonged to the poorest stratum, only 24 percent of Jews (of which 3 percent were in agriculture) did. By contrast, the Jews constituted over 40 percent of great industrialists and nearly 20 percent of big landowners. The phenomenon of a split middle class, a cultural gap between Budapest and the countryside, and the unresolved problem of an agrarian proletariat, contributed to the socio-economic backwardness of the country.

As in the past Polish and Hungarian societies had many similarities. The gentry tradition and ethos continued to dominate over a bourgeois outlook, or at least it constituted a certain ideal to which other social groups aspired. True, Polish aristocracy could hardly rival their Hungarian counterparts in political importance. Officially all hereditary titles were abolished. The landowning gentry struggled hard to maintain its traditional way of life on the heavily mortgaged estates. If upward social mobility was relatively modest, social relations seemed to have been more democratized and modernized than in Hungary. The percentage of the petite bourgeoisie increased slightly (11 to nearly 12 percent) and those of the workers rose from 27.5 to 30.2 percent. The intelligentsia, estimated at 500,000 people and composed of white-

collar workers and free professions, continued to gain in numbers and importance. The largest single group was the peasantry, about 70 percent, but figures would be different if we took into account the multi-ethnic composition of the total population.

The Poles, according to the 1931 census, accounted for 69 percent of the inhabitants of interwar Poland. The Jews who, unlike in Hungary, were officially counted as a national minority, were numerically the third largest group (after the Ukrainians) and amounted to roughly 10 percent. Around 90 percent of them were unassimilated, and distinguished themselves by dress, mode of life, and the Yiddish language. They lived in a world apart, as the novels of Isaac Bashevis Singer demonstrate so well. Only thirteen individuals were great landowners, and members of the grande bourgeoisie were hardly numerous. Two-thirds of Jews belonged to the petite bourgeoisie, especially small traders and craftsmen, which was increasingly pauperized. They were visible among the white-collar workers (about 14 percent) and constituted nearly 50 percent of the free professions, virtually dominating medicine and law. Not only was the occupational structure of the Jewish community different from that of the Poles and other minorities, but they were also unevenly distributed throughout the country. The Jewish population ranged from tiny groups in western Poland to majorities in the small towns of former eastern Galicia and Russian Poland, and constituted nearly 30 percent of the population of Warsaw.

By way of contrast the Ukrainians and Belorussians were a "territorial" minority living in fairly compact blocs in regions adjoining those inhabited by their countrymen across the border in the USSR. Nine-tenths of the Ukrainians - who according to statistics numbered below 4.5 million, but were probably well over 5 million - were peasants and agricultural workers. Virtually all the Belorussians (ranging between 1 and 1.9 million) belonged to this category. The German minority had a much more balanced structure: around 24 percent in mining and industry, and close to 60 percent in agriculture. The Germans, comprising some 800,000 people, led the other minorities in economic and social standing, not to mention educational and cultural standards. More than half of them lived in the regions that had been formerly under Prussia.

Czechoslovakia was even more multinational than Poland. Czech and Slovaks constituted (according to the 1931 census) jointly 66.9 percent of the population; the Czechs over 50 percent, the Slovaks over 16 percent. The Germans with 23 percent came in fact second after the Czechs; the Hungarians amounted to some 5 percent and the Ukrainians to about 3.8 percent. The social structure of the Bohemian-Moravian-Silesian lands differed greatly from that of Slovakia and even more so from Carpatho-Ukraine. Czech society, characterized by

upward mobility, had a large middle class (20 percent of the economically active population), a growing working class (about 30 percent), and a well integrated peasantry that resembled western European farmers. The country's élite was drawn from the grande bourgeoisie (some 5 percent of the total population) as well as from the middle class (often one generation removed from the villages) and the prosperous peasants. The practical and down-to-earth Czech continued to represent bourgeois values, and he had more affinity with his hard-working German neighbor than with a member of the Polish intelligentsia or a Magyar nobleman.

In Slovakia, the vast majority of people were peasants. Owing to a high birth rate and economic dislocations, a large number fell into the category of destitute rural proletariat. The small industrial and commercial sector was largely dominated by Germans and Jews, and a portion of the landed estates was in Hungarian hands. Still, a relatively small number of Slovak families controlled a significant part of the country's wealth. A tiny Slovak gentry often intellectually Magyarized, and a growing intelligentsia which showed traces of the age-long Hungarian connection, but was now in the forefront of Slovak activities, completed the picture.

The Jewish issue as a socio-economic problem existed in Slovakia where the Jews constituted 4.8 percent, and in the backward Carpatho-Ukraine around 12 percent. Only about half of all people of Judaic faith defined themselves as being of Jewish nationality. This represented 1.3 percent of the total population of Czechoslovakia. In Bohemia and Moravia the figures were much smaller - 0.2 and 0.6 percent - for many persons of Jewish faith regarded themselves as Czechs or as Germans.

Religious, national, and social issues were frequently interconnected, and the standing of the church in society was high in various parts of East Central Europe. In Hungary 65 percent of the population was Roman Catholic and 27 percent Protestant. Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia were predominantly Catholic although adherence to Catholicism was often nominal in Bohemia and among the middle classes in general. The Germans were mostly Catholic. In Slovakia the division between the Catholic majority (69 percent) and a Protestant minority (18.7 percent) had social and political connotations. By and large the Slovak Protestants were closer to the Czechs and represented the wealthier element; among Germans and Hungarians there were Lutherans and Calvinists. All this made Slovak nationalists tend to consider only Catholic Slovaks as genuine Slovaks.

This tendency to identify religion with nationality was pronounced in Poland where the nationalists stressed the Pole equals Catholic equation. Interwar Poland consisted of 63 percent Roman Catholics, 11

percent Greek Catholics (Uniates), 11.5 percent Greek Orthodox, and 3.2 percent Protestants. (Jews who have been mentioned above are not included in these figures.) Although Poles were predominantly Catholic there were also some Polish Protestants. Ukrainians and Belorussians were either Greek Catholic or Orthodox. There was a Catholic minority among the Belorussians and the Germans, the latter being mainly Protestant.

The social, economic, and national position of the Catholic Church in Poland was traditionally high. But this does not mean that anticlericalism was non-existent, particularly among the leftist intelligentsia. The clergy inclined to a tactical alliance with the political right. The Archbishop of Gniezno was the primate of Poland, and his standing was probably even more elevated than that of his Hungarian counterpart, the Archbishop of Esztergom, given the influential Protestant section in that country. In Poland, Slovakia, and often among the Ukrainians priesthood represented social advancement and prestige. The Slovak Father A. Hlinka or the Ukrainian Metropolitan A. Sheptytskyi were both father figures and national leaders.

Even the briefest overview of the independent East Central Europe must stress the importance of culture, for this was a rich period in intellectual, artistic, and scholarly activities. Polish poetry reached new heights with J. Tuwim, K. Wierzyński, and A. Stonimski; prose was dominated by women writers. The pioneering theater of S. I. Witkiewicz was later to achieve world-wide recognition and this was also true for a few avant-garde authors. The name of K. Szymanowski, the foremost composer, deserves mention. In the case of Hungary the music of Bartók and Z. Kodály was known throughout the world. The prose of Mihály Babits and Zsigmond Móricz as well as the poetry of Attila József gained a high place in the literature of the country. The name of Jaroslav Hasek, from Czechoslovakia, became known throughout Europe, but the impact on literature and on Czechoslovak politics of Karel Capek was of special importance. Kafka's earlier-mentioned works transcended the Czechoslovak framework.

The traditional importance of arts and *belles-lettres* must not make us forget the great achievements in learning. Among the many disciplines for which the region was renowned let us just mention the Polish and Hungarian schools of mathematics and philosophy, and the Prague center of structural linguistics. In the interwar period Poland had 24 institutions of higher learning, Czechoslovakia 17, Hungary 13. As throughout Europe, universities were elitist and had relatively few students from the lower classes. Still, one could speak of an overproduction of intelligentsia and a scarcity of white-collar positions. Did interwar education foster nationalism? After the long period of foreign rule which often produced a depreciation of national values a reaction

was understandable. The government used the schools and the army as instruments of national integration. While illiteracy was very low in Bohemia and Hungary (respectively 2.4 and 8.8 percent) it was still significant in Slovakia and Poland (15 and 23.15 percent). As nationalism became more stringent in the 1930s, and the Great Depression produced hardships, universities and even high schools became politicized and students were often driven to extreme positions: nationalist or, less frequently, communist.

East Central Europe could boast doctors, lawyers, engineers, scholars, and intellectuals who were second to none in Europe. There were also highly qualified technicians, artisans, and blue-collar workers. None the less a gap, least visible in Czechoslovakia, between the cultural aspirations and the means to satisfy them was characteristic of the entire region. The vast majority was poor, and the leading class, the intelligentsia, often suffered privations. The fact that the membership in the élite (the intelligentsia) was determined by educational standards rather than by economic status as in the case of the middle class symbolized the difference between East Central and Western Europe.

POLITICS

Interwar politics in the region were naturally affected by socio-economic and cultural structures and relationships. In the pursuit of a stable constitutional-political model Poland moved from a weak parliamentary regime to a contested authoritarian system. Authoritarianism also prevailed in Hungary, where an essentially conservative regime was gradually yielding to the challenge of a radical right. Czechoslovakia alone was relatively successful in its parliamentary system.

Political institutions were shaped by native traditions, when they existed, and by West European models. At this time, parliamentary democracy in the West operated either on the British two-party or the French multi-party system. The latter seemed to correspond better to East Central European theory and practice of politics. In the West a professional civil service assured a relatively smooth functioning of the administration. The "new" states of the region had to create their own bureaucracy, often inspired by or inherited from the Habsburg monarchy. Throughout most Polish lands, the tradition of a native civil servant was lacking.

In Poland the interwar period was characterized by a quest for a political model which led all the way from the French-inspired 1921 constitution to the *sanacja* constitution of 1935. A turning point was Piłsudski's *coup d'état* of 1926, which made the marshal the real master of the country. The parliamentary system failed largely because of the gulf that separated the mainly socialist left from the national-

democratic-led right. Except for short periods of national emergency the two could not form common cabinets. This restricted political maneuver to right-center or left-center coalitions, and the center (mainly populist) although numerous did not effectively play the role of a balancer or a bridge. The left-right rift was enhanced by the Piłsudski-Dmowski conflict which was colored even more by outlook and mentality than by doctrine.

Piłsudski and his followers, but not the left as such, came to govern Poland. In a way they became a center, not so much in terms of ideology, for their "state ideology" was somewhat nebulous, but through a pragmatic approach that transcended party politics. Most of Piłsudski's men were former legionaries, now high-ranking officers. Hence people talked of a "colonels' regime." Yet, it would be a mistake to imagine a militarization of Polish politics along the lines of a South American junta. The army in reborn Poland was too young to have created its own establishment, and these officers were not so much professionals as men who through the force of circumstances had to fight for the rebirth of their country in uniform.

Piłsudski's principal adversary Dmowski never governed Poland, but he exerted a sway over the minds of many a Pole, particularly of the younger generation. Increasingly uninterested in parliamentary politics he steered his followers in the direction of a "national revolution" as exemplified by Mussolini's Italy or Salazar's Portugal. Historians who speak of Dmowski as a nationalist and apply the same adjective to Piłsudski confuse the doctrinaire nationalism of the former with the ardent patriotism of the latter. The difference was basic and it could be observed when examining attitudes of nationals and patriots toward national minorities. It is true, however, that there were times when it was blurred in practice.

Poland, as a German historian put it, was "a multi-national state with a uni-nationalist ideology."⁵³ Or, to express it differently, it was perceived by Poles as a national state although having a large number of minorities. Originally, Piłsudski and the left favored concessions to non-Poles provided they were good citizens. But passions ran too high on both sides. Neither the Poles who denied autonomy to the Ukrainians in eastern Galicia and resorted to reprisals, nor the Ukrainians who made use of terrorism could find an area of agreement. At times the practice of the government came dangerously close to the program of the integral nationalists who wanted to cut drastically the rights of the minorities under the slogan "Poland for the Poles."

The stringent anti-Semitism of the Dmowski camp, particularly of its extremist splinters like Falanga, was translated into demands for the elimination of Jews from politics, the economy, and culture. Piłsudski, to whom anti-Semitism was completely alien, never tolerated such

positions. After his death, however, some of his followers began to borrow the nationalist slogans (anti-Semitic ones included), largely for tactical reasons. Condemning the use of violence as practiced by extreme nationalists, the post-Piłsudski government admitted the legitimacy of economic boycott and explored possibilities of gradual Jewish emigration. The latter also figured as a possible solution in centrist and leftist programs and was supported by Zionist groups. No anti-Jewish legislation was, however, adopted by the interwar Polish republic.

Having experimented first with a "sejmocracy" and then with a "pluralist authoritarianism" or limited dictatorship, Poland offered a very different picture from Hungary, which looked to its prewar past for political inspiration. A Habsburg restoration did not prove a real option for domestic and external reasons, but Hungary remained a kingdom, be it only to retain claims to the lands that had been historically part of St Stephen's Crown. Admiral Miklós Horthy, a former aide-de-camp of Francis Joseph, became regent. His original position of holding the kingdom for its rightful ruler was little more than a sham. Horthy's Hungary, however, revived much of the past. The electoral reform of the initial postwar period was abandoned and the suffrage limited to some 27 to 29 percent of potential voters. Open ballot was restored in the countryside. The upper house also re-emerged, although in a somewhat changed form. All these provisions ensured the rule of the so-called Unity Party, which was an instrument for administration rather than a union of like-minded people. While opposition parties were tolerated in the parliament they had no possibility of going beyond their status of a permanent minority.

The interwar Hungarian model was largely worked out during the 1921-31 decade of I. Bethlen's premiership. It was a neo-conservative system reminiscent of that under István Tisza, based on the manipulation of the electorate and administrative pressures. Its actual practices were more important than the nationalist ideas that had accompanied the counter-revolution and were characterized by xenophobia, anti-urbanism, and anti-modernism. The extremists regarded liberalism, socialism, and bolshevism (seen as a sequel) as essentially un-Hungarian. They emphasized their attachment to the past and to Christianity and they preached various forms of anti-Semitism.

Horthy himself was an anti-Semite, which did not prevent his political establishment from making deals with the top Jewish grande bourgeoisie. In that as in other respects the ruling conservatives, often drawn from the aristocracy, differed significantly from the radical right which ranged from nationalist extremists (but still operating within the system) to openly Nazi-type mass movements like the Arrow Cross. The latter did not gain power, but made those in power come closer to their views. This was evident in the anti-Jewish laws of the 1930s, the

last of which in 1941 resembled the racist Nuremberg Law. Conservative Hungarians strongly objected to them as they objected to the rabble-rousing and crude Hungarian Nazis who defied their notion of gentlemanly behavior in politics.

It was ironic that it was the Hungarian Jews, many of them ardent Magyars and Magyarizers, who were singled out for these discriminatory measures, even though there were exceptions and loopholes. But in the near ethnic Hungary the Jews suddenly became the only *de facto* national minority. They were no longer needed as allies, and the high visibility of Jews during the communist episode helped to turn popular feeling against them. The other national minority, the Germans, also largely Magyarized, was by contrast a privileged group with a tradición of military service. Some Germans, although it is debatable whether they were a majority, proved susceptible to the attraction of Hitler's Germany. This seemed to be valid for certain members of the officers' corps who played an important role in politics.

The contest between the conservative and the radical right constituted the essence of Hungarian politics in the interwar period. The left had been badly discredited by its association with the communists. There existed a "third road" group, which opposed both capitalism and communism. Its heralds preached populism as a valued system that was least corrupted by the ill effects of industrial society: materialism, atheism, cosmopolitanism. With its Christian and patriotic - although bordering on nationalist - watchwords, the third road populism belonged to a transition zone between practical politics and political thought. It never had a direct impact on major political developments.

Turning to Czechoslovakia, its political system, operating under the 1920 constitution, seemed patterned on the French model. Yet unlike the latter it was characterized by great stability. Coming close to the "directed democracy" concept, vainly pursued by the Poles, it was based on three pillars: the castle (*hrad*), meaning the president and his associates; the governmental coalition; and the financial and economic establishment. Presidential powers, not inconsiderable in themselves, became much greater in the hands of Masaryk, who until the early 1930s appointed and dismissed premiers at will. The image of the "president-liberator" was consciously cultivated by his admirers. He was, like the former emperor, a father figure: the "old gentleman," as he was familiarly called. Only a minority strongly opposed Masaryk and questioned his fundamental ideas and the use he made of them in politics. Was Beneš, the second president, Masaryk's spiritual heir or merely his palé reelección? Opinions differed sharply, and the philosopher Jan Patočka passed the severest judgement on Beneš when he called him "an ambitious, diligent, talkative mediocrity." It was a

tragedy, Patocka wrote, that Benes had to "decide upon the future moral profile of the Czech nation" and that "he chose smallness."⁵⁴

Masaryk's rule, as a historian put it, was a dictatorship based on respect. The president believed that a dash of dictatorship was essential in a democracy that was not yet fully mature. There were instances of governmental handling of opponents in Slovakia (Hlinka or Tuka) or in Bohemia (Gajda) when the law seemed to have been stretched a bit. As for the Czech bureaucracy it continued the Austrian tradition of combining moderate effectiveness and honesty with some harshness.

The governmental coalition, an informal semi-permanent fixture, was at the very heart of the Czechoslovak political system. An author called Czechoslovakia a multinational parties' state. The five major political parties: the agrarians, social democrats, national socialists, populists, and national democrats (hence the term *pětka* (five)) acted as shareholders of power and beneficiaries of spoils and patronage. Governed by a strict discipline that precluded the possibility of rebellion in the ranks, the parties made the parliament little more than a forum for debate. No cabinet was overthrown by a non-confidence vote in the chambers, for all real decisions were made by the party leaders. The concern for an inter-party balance assisted the Communist Party - the only one that operated legally in East Central Europe - for even the rightists feared that banning it would unduly strengthen the socialists and thus destroy the equilibrium.

Cabinets assumed various forms, going beyond the five or contracting below that number. From 1926 Sudeten Germans were represented in the government. The largest party, the agrarians, was present in all political cabinets, and their leader Antonín Svehla deserved more credit than he usually receives for making the system work. National democrats led by Kramář were mostly in opposition, and the challenge to the regime from the right in 1926 and 1935 proved a failure.

Characterized by a low degree of polarization, the system was occasionally criticized as somewhat mechanistic and uninspiring. More serious was the accusation of inner incompatibility between the proposition that the Czechoslovak republic must be a democracy with equal political and civil rights for all its nationalities, and the assumption that it must express Czechoslovak national culture. In other words, was real democracy and multi-ethnicity reconcilable in twentieth-century East Central Europe?

Masaryk did not think in terms of a Czech national state, but there was no clearly visible alternative program, and the administration, especially on the local level, promoted Czechization. Prague's centralism was supported by Masaryk's Slovak associates who thought it necessary to de-Magyarize, secularize, and modernize Slovakia. In the absence of trained Slovak cadres there was a need for Czech

administrators, teachers, and specialists, but while some of these people were dedicated, others were arrogant and viewed the Slovaks as poor and backward Czechs. The government's policies were often unimaginative and insensitive. The Czechs spoke of losing money in Slovakia and taunted the Slovaks with the question of where they would go if they left the republic. The Austrian tradition of avoiding change unless forced by circumstances had left its imprint on the Czech administrative style.

The argument that the Slovak problem resulted from divisions among Slovaks is only partly correct. True, the largely Protestant pro-Czechoslovak establishment - the twenty families that ruled Slovakia, according to Benes - confronted the populists, Catholic and autonomists. The latter all too frequently claimed that they spoke for all Slovaks, but their strength and the prestige of their leader Father Hlinka was undeniable. To represent him as a disgruntled office seeker was a political mistake. Prague's role was hardly that of a disinterested observer of inner Slovak divisions, and the rejection by the parliament of the thrice-introduced bill for Slovakia's autonomy only aggravated matters.

The Slovak question was basically a constitutional problem - after all the republic was a state of Czechs and Slovaks - but it also appeared as a national minority issue. The German question belonged more to the latter category, although the Germans viewed themselves as natives of Bohemia and wanted the position of co-rulers or associates in the multinational state. Their short-lived secessions in 1918 somewhat compromised this position, as did the Czech reaction to the German "rebels." Even Masaryk once called the Sudeten Germans "immigrants." But it was clear that some arrangement was necessary, and as mentioned, the Germans came to be represented in the cabinet, the only minority in East Central Europe to enjoy such a privilege. Was this a token arrangement, and was the subsequent worsening of Czech-German relations unavoidable? Or could their demands for autonomy have been satisfied, since even in 1939 a third of Sudeten Germans did not oppose the Czechoslovak state? There are no easy answers. We must remember, however, not to divorce the evolution of German-Czech relations from the rise of Hitler and his policy of making the German minority an instrument for the destruction of the republic.

THE TWENTY YEARS 1919-39

Turning to a chronological overview we must go back to the proclamation of the Czechoslovak state on October 28, 1918 in Prague. It marked a bloodless transition which preserved legal continuity with the defunct monarchy. The constitutional process of building the state was the work of Czechs and Slovak centralists; the Germans and other

national minorities were not involved. Kramáf became briefly premier, and his national democrats pursued anti-inflationary policies that spared the country the first postwar economic and financial chaos that prevailed elsewhere throughout the región. Under the presidency of Masaryk, who would be re-elected twice more, and with Beneš as the perennial foreign minister until 1935, the state became stabilized internally and externally. The formation of the Little Entente and the alliance with France (in 1924) were the major achievements in the international field.

The "castle" successfully weathered the 1926 crisis in which the right and especially the small but vocal fascist group promoted General Rudolf (Radola) Gajda as the leader. His removal from the army and his later trial, as well as Beneš's victory over the rightist faction among the national socialists showed the futility of a challenge to the system. A "gentlemen's coalition" under Svehla comprised not only Germán ministers but briefly even Hlinka's populists. But the cooperaci3n with the latter broke down over the arrest and trial of a Slovak populist leader Vojt3ch Tuka, accused of treason. It was a bad omen for the future.

The Great Depression hit the German-inhabited regions as well as Slovakia particularly hard. In the atmosphere of radicalization, nationalist and extremist political trends came to the fore. The rise of Hitler had a direct impact on Czechoslovakia. Thus far Prague's relations with Germany had been correct if not friendly; now the thrust of the Nazi program menaced the Czechoslovak republic. The dissatisfied Germán minority became receptive to extremist slogans. In 1933 an organization arose under the leadership of Konrad Henlein that assumed its final pro-Nazi form two years later as the Sudeten Germán Party. In the 1935 general elections it captured two-thirds of the Germán vote. By that time Hlinka's populists had also strengthened their position, and the 1933 celebration of the founding of the first Christian church in Nitra in Slovakia turned into a demonstration in favor of Slovak autonomy.

The mid-1930s represented a turning point. The international situation grew more tense. The signing of the 1935 pacts between Paris, Prague, and Moscow only increased Germán and Italian accusations of Czechoslovakia as an advance guard of communism. The main Western ally, France, became increasingly weak and indecisive. A tensi3n with Poland grew as Warsaw fanned the grievances of the Polish minority in Teschen, flirted with Slovaks and found itself on the opposite side to Prague in international counsels. The Hungarian anti-Czechoslovak stance grew bolder. There was unintended irony in the wish extended to Beneš on his succession to Masaryk in 1935 that he become the "president unifier." Lacking Masaryk's stature and fighting spirit, Beneš was more adroit in external than domestic politics. M. Hodza,

the mod3rate Slovak aerarian who became prime minister, was not equal to the deceased Svehla.

It was an isolated and domestically undermined Czechoslovakia that entered the fateful year 1938. Demands of the Sudeten Germán Party for far-reaching autonomy were voiced in the Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) program and were meant as escalating demands. When Beneš, whose position was weakened by the British mediatory mission under Lord Runciman, satisfied (in his fourth plan) virtually all the Germán demands, the response was an uprising and Henlein's flight to Germany. It was now a showdown between Hitler and Beneš, with the Western powers anxious to avoid war and willing as arbiters to sacrifice Czechoslovakia. Should Beneš have defied all pressures, united the country in resistance to Hitler, and risked a war in isolation that was bound to be lost? This is a question which has been preoccupying many a Czech and Slovak as well as historians. The risk was enormous and Beneš felt he had no right to sacrifice an entire generation. The recollection of the catastrophe of the White Mountain was present in his mind. Ňor did Beneš wish to appear in Western eyes as the man who recklessly plunged Europe in war. So, he chose to capitulate, and the price in terms of national morale was heavy. A "Munich complex" would henceforth haunt Beneš and his people.

The Slovaks, deprived of Hlinka, who died in August 1938, were now led by the discordant Tiso-Sidor team. The two negotiated with Prague, and Sidor did appeal for the defense of the common fatherland. But Beneš proved unwilling or unable to open a new chapter in Czech-Slovak relations. Slovak leaders made secret overtures to Warsaw for a Polish-Slovak uni3n, but generally they felt uncertain and vulnerable.

The fate of Czechoslovakia was decided by the German-Italian-British-French dictate at Munich. Czech western provinces were annexed to Germany. Subsequently, under the so-called First Vienna Award (by Germany and Italy) parts of southern Slovakia were transferred to Hungary. As for the contested Teschen, Poland gained it (and a little more) through a direct ultimátum addressed to Prague. Czechoslovakia lost some 30 percent of its territory, one-third of the population, and two-fifths of its industrial capacity, not to mention the strategic and fortified borders. Beneš apparently hoped that the truncated country might survive until the outbreak of the general war that he believed imminent. But he was forced to resign, and the Second Republic arose under the colorless president Emil Hacha. It was called Czecho-Slovakia and under the ťilina accord it was a state of two equal nations with their own parliaments and administrations. Carpatho-Ukraine received an autonomous status. All this proved to be a transient arrangement. The Germán shadow fell on the country, which had to adjust its internal system to Nazi demands. Berlín closely watched Czech-Slovak friction

They were successful in the working-class districts of Budapest and around it, in áreas dominated by agrarian radicáis, among Protestants and Catholics, Germans, and the lower classes.

The impact of the Third Reich was increasingly visible under Gómbós, the first foreign statesman to visit Hitler officially, and under his successors. By 1939 Hungary's economic dependence on Germany was expressed by 50 percent of all exports and 26 percent of imports. One half of all foreign capital was Germán. The Nazi example served as inspiration for the anti-Jewish legislation, which the conservative upper house vainly opposed. The pro-German line earned Hungary the already-mentioned territorial gains under the Vienna award in 1938 and in Carpatho-Ukraine in 1939. The anti-Trianon stance was present throughout all these years, the post-1920 Hungary being treated as a truncated and mutilated fatherland and not a permanent state that could be taken for granted and identified with.

The history of interwar Poland fell, like that of Hungary, into clearly delineated periods, the divisions being even sharper. The initial phase of building up the state ended in 1921 with the adoption of the March constitution, the Upper Silesian plebiscite, the treaty of Riga with the Soviets, and the alliances with France and Romania. During the first three months Piłsudski had virtually dictatorial powers and then he acted as a constitutional head of state. He refused, however, to be a candidate for the presidency under the 1921 constitution that placed all power in the *sejm*. The latter's composition at this point showed a rightist plurality (36 percent) with the center slightly below that figure and the left having some 27 percent of deputies.

The election of G. Narutowicz as president in 1922 opened a new phase. The right vehemently protested against his choice, calling him a president imposed by the national minority vote which had allegedly swung the balance. A nationalist fanatic shot Narutowicz, a murder that shocked the nation and deeply affected Piłsudski. The new president Wojciechowski, although elected by the same majority, was more acceptable to the right, and assumed office without difficulty. As a right-center coalition carne into being under the premiership of the tough, pragmatic populist leader Witos in 1923, Piłsudski withdrew from politics and the army. The three years that followed were characterized by frequently changing cabinets - seven months' duration being the average - and grievous economic problems. The hyper-inflation of 1923 was, however, brought under control by the Grabski reforms, which introduced a stable currency. But there was a growing discontent among the masses and fears about the future. Germany waged an economic war on Poland, and rejoining European counsels through the Locarno treaties in 1925 it did not hide its revisionist anti-Polish objectives.

Projects for constitutional and political change became more current. Those on the right showed a growing fascinación with Italian fascism and proposed to curtail the presence of national minorities in the parliament. The left spoke of a threat to democracy, and the Jews in particular were alarmed. The eyes of the left were turning toward Piłsudski as the only savior. He was fulminating against unbridled parliamentarism and irresponsible politicians, calling for "cleansing" (*sanacja*) of the entire system. He had devoted supporters among his former legionaries in and out of the army, and in May 1926 he led a few regiments on Warsaw. This was designed as an armed demonstration that would force the president to dismiss another center-right cabinet of Witos. The unexpected resistance of Wojciechowski led to a clash and bloodshed. After three days of fighting Piłsudski's forces, supported by the entire left, prevailed. A new period began.

After 1926 the powers of the president were somewhat increased, but Piłsudski refused the post. While his associate Moscicki became president, Piłsudski commanded the army and was twice premier. But he was the real master. A born leader and a complex personality, comparable in some respects to Charles de Gaulle, Piłsudski rejected fascism, but did not seek cooperation with a chastized *sejm*. Trying deliberately to discredit it along with the political parties, he wanted the cabinet to govern and the *sejm* merely to control its activities. Piłsudski disappointed the left by insisting that he wished to remain above parties, and his supporters, ranging from socialists to conservatives, organized themselves into a Non-partisan Bloc of Cooperación with the Government (BBWR). They became the largest group in the *sejm* after the 1928 elections.

Piłsudski was growing impatient with what he regarded as sterile opposition. He responded to some acts of Ukrainian terrorism by ordering brutal reprisals ("pacifications") in 1930. When the center-left Consolidated bloc accused the government of destroying democracy, Piłsudski had the leading politicians arrested, mishandled, and imprisoned in the Brzesc fortress and tried in 1931. The sentences were light, for Piłsudski's objective of overawing the opposition had already been achieved. It was tragic and paradoxical that Piłsudski, who genuinely believed that force "does not educate but destroys" felt obliged to use such high-handed methods. His main concern, as always, was with the security of the country, and he devoted most of his attention and energy to foreign policy and the military. In 1932 Poland signed a non-aggression treaty with the USSR and two years later a similar declaration with Nazi Germany. The jaws of the pincers were seemingly pried further apart. Under Józef Beck as foreign minister, Warsaw pursued a policy of balance. There was really no alternative, for Poland's tragedy, as a French historian remarked, was that it was reborn too

weak to be a power and too strong to be reconciled to the role of a client state. A certain defiant style and occasional sabré rattling earned Polish diplomacy severe criticism that a more powerful state might have been spared. While Marshal Piłsudski's health declined and he became a tense, intolerant, almost neurotic recluse, his followers passed a new constitution through dubious parliamentary tactics. The April 1935 constitution was of a presidential-authoritarian type that dispensed with the traditional division of powers. The president was placed above all branches of government, the judiciary, the legislature, and the army. But the constitution that was made for Piłsudski became an empty shell when he died in May of the same year.

Piłsudski's legend could not be bequeathed and his supporters' constant invocation of his name was no substitute for policy. Torn by personal rivalries and contradictions, the Piłsudski camp began to disintegrate. A democratic wing was opposing those who, observing the successes of dictators and the shortcomings of parliamentary democracy, stood for an authoritarian regime. President Moscicki steered his own course, but he was challenged by the new commander-in-chief, Marshal Śmigły-Rydz who was being represented as the true successor of Piłsudski. To enlarge the basis of governmental power a new political movement, the Camp of National Unity (OZN) replaced the defunct BBWR. Its ideology, as a wit put it, was a cocktail: 40 percent nationalism, 30 percent social radicalism, 20 percent agrarianism, and 10 percent anti-Semitism. It proved a soulless body. Under the existing conditions Poland could either evolve toward a semi-totalitarian model for which Dmowski's nationalism would be needed as the cement, or return to parliamentary democracy. Since the political parties boycotted general elections, because of a new law that discriminated against them, only the local elections held in 1938-9 provided some indications of the political profile of the country. In larger towns the government gained about a third of the vote, but was followed closely by the socialists and the nationalists. The opposition grew in strength with the united Populist Party (SL) and the newly formed Christian Democratic Front Morges, so-named after Paderewski's residence in Switzerland. What direction would Polish politics have taken if peace had prevailed for another decade or so? It is impossible to say.

As the threat of war loomed large, the governmental camp refused to share power and responsibility with the opposition. It persisted in this attitude when Germany launched the attack on Poland on September 1 that started the Second World War, and it went down with Poland in the military catastrophe that followed.

The point has sometimes been made, especially in the West, that the interwar East Central Europe was a failure. It has been suggested that the discrepancy between an advanced political model and the backward

socio-economic context in which it operated precluded any chances of success. The fact that it was the most advanced country, Czechoslovakia, that achieved the greatest stability seems to argue in favor of this thesis. But it leaves unexplained Prague's inability to resolve either the Czech-Slovak or the Czech-German problem. In the case of Hungary it is true that its interwar record and achievements did not compare favorably with those of the preceding century of semi-independence. But then the shock of Trianon and the ensuing revulsions were partly responsible for it. Looking at the big neighbors, surely the Bethlen middle-of-the-road model or the post-1926 authoritarianism of the Piłsudski camp compared favorably with what was happening at that time in Italy, Germany, or the USSR.

In a sense each of the three states emerging after centuries of dependence or partitions was a half-way house and faced problems of overawing magnitude. That they did not resolve them in twenty years time is not all that surprising. Czechoslovakia and Poland had national minorities that they could neither absorb nor conciliate through federalist solutions, although autonomous arrangements were a possibility that the intensely nationalist atmosphere made virtually inapplicable. Hungary, and also Poland, operated with an amalgam of a free market and a planned economy, but for social reasons did not go far enough in the directions of reforms. The Czechoslovak parliamentary system proved unusually successful; those of Poland and Hungary did not, but they still retained enough traditional pluralism to preserve their civil societies. During those twenty years the national cohesion of Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, and Hungarians was strengthened. The spiritual and moral value of independence was great for peoples who had been deprived of it. If excessive nationalism was the price, it still allowed them to survive the trials of the Second World War and of forty-five years of communism that followed. The resources of Czechoslovakia and Poland were insufficient to protect them against Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The fact that they succumbed tells more about the system of international security or lack thereof, and of the guardians of the post-Versailles order than about the states of East Central Europe. Munich and later Yalta testified only to the vulnerability of the region, not to its inability to survive in freedom.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, but while it met with stiff resistance the outcome of the struggle was never in doubt. Britain and France declared war on Germany three days later, but brought no effective aid to the outnumbered and outgunned Poles. On September 17 the Red Army acting in collusion with Germany (the Ribbentrop-

Molotov pact) struck from the east. There were hardly any Polish troops available to oppose the entering Soviets.

A new partition of the country placed western lands under direct German rule, their Polish and Jewish population being deported into a central region called the General Gouvernement. There the Poles were to be reduced to the lowest material and cultural levels, and the Jews shut in ghettos and then liquidated. A similar fate awaited most Gypsies. The General Gouvernement thus became the scene of one of the most horrible developments in history, the Holocaust. The Auschwitz (Oswiecim) concentration camp together with the death camps of Treblinka and Sobibor was grim testimony to the Final Solution. Occupied Poland, dotted with Nazi camps, came to be the cemetery of Polish and much of European Jewry. Jewish resistance was hardly possible, although it did flare up in the Warsaw ghetto uprising in April 1943. The death penalty for harboring Jews (nonexistent elsewhere in Europe) discouraged assistance on the part of the Poles, whose attitudes ranged from passivity to the two extremes of denunciation and active help. The Polish underground, the largest and most effective in Europe, the resistance movement in Yugoslavia excepted, extended some help and tried in vain to alert the West to the terrible plight of the Jews.

Life under the German occupation was a continuous nightmare. Arrests, hostage-taking, mass executions, were all meant to terrorize the Poles, who were denied secondary and higher education and whose elite and heritage were systematically destroyed. The eastern lands suffered comparably under the Soviets, who sought, however, to cloak their actions under the mask of pseudo-legality. Thus "elections" were held that produced the usual figures in the 90 percent range in favor of incorporation into Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belorussia. Undesirables were "resettled," that is, deported under inhuman conditions into various provinces of the USSR. Although exact figures may never be known over one and a half million Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, and Belorussians - men, women, and children - were involved. Most of them never returned. In all, some six million Polish citizens perished in the Second World War; about half of them were Jews.

The Poles did not surrender after the lost campaign of September 1939. A Polish government which represented a legal continuity of the Polish state was constituted, mostly out of prewar opposition leaders, in Allied France. After the French collapse in 1940 it moved to England. Under the presidency of W. Raczkiewicz, General Władysław Sikorski became premier and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, which were composed of Poles who lived abroad or succeeded in escaping from the occupied country. These troops distinguished themselves in virtually every European theater of war and in North Africa. Polish

pilots played a disproportionately large role in the Battle of Britain. The small navy was often cited for bravery. The military underground in Poland, the Home Army, was also under the orders of the government in London.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Sikorski government found itself in a singular situation. The new ally in the anti-German coalition had so far been an accomplice of Hitler in the invasion and partitioning of Poland. It was difficult to view it suddenly as a friend. Succumbing to British pressures and wishing to free the deported Poles, Sikorski signed a pact with the USSR on July 30. It restored Soviet-Polish relations, provided for an "amnesty" to Poles in the Soviet Union, and permitted the organization of a Polish army there. Although the accord annulled the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact it did not explicitly restore the prewar borders. Henceforth, the Soviets would insist on retaining their territorial acquisitions by invoking the fake elections of 1939. The Polish government was split on the wisdom of such an imprecise accord, but Sikorski felt that no viable alternative existed. So he journeyed to Moscow to sign an agreement with Stalin on the Polish army in Russia, which was placed under the command of General Anders. But mutual suspicions lingered. The Poles did not trust the Soviets, and indeed friction over the troops ensued. Eventually, they were evacuated to the Middle East, and fought later under British command, gaining a major victory at Monte Cassino.

Sikorski realized the vulnerability of Poland facing in effect two foes: Germany with which a life-and-death struggle was being waged, and the Soviet Union, which had hegemonic designs on East Central Europe. He sought to obtain the backing of the United States (during the three Washington visits) and of Britain. He tried to strengthen the position of postwar Poland and of the entire region by planning, jointly with Beneš, a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation. But neither Roosevelt nor Churchill wished to wreck their cooperation with the USSR on the Polish rock. Churchill believed that if the Poles reconciled themselves to territorial losses in the east, Russia would not interfere with their domestic freedoms. This sounded logical, but was in reality misleading. Stalin wanted a "friendly" postwar Poland that would subordinate itself to the USSR. Only a government controlled by the communists could guarantee such behavior. Moreover, Sikorski could hardly sign away half of the country, the home of many of his soldiers, without being accused of treason. Thus the situation began to look hopeless as the Red Army stemmed the German tide at Stalingrad, and began a westward advance that would bring it to the heart of Europe.

In April 1943 the Germans announced a discovery in the Katyn woods of mass graves of Polish officers who had been captured by the Red Army in 1939. The Soviet authorities, when pressed by the Sikorski

government, had hitherto professed complete ignorance as to the fate of these officers. Now that the Polish government asked the Swiss Red Cross to investigate the allegations of a Soviet massacre, Stalin accused the Poles of playing into Germán hands and broke off diplomatic relations with them. The Polish position deteriorated with the mysterious death of Sikorski in a plane crash, and the arrest by the Gestapo of the commander of the underground Home Army (AK). The new premier, a populist leader S. Mikołajczyk, and the new commander-in-chief General Sosnkowski, lacked Sikorski's standing. Worse still, they strongly disagreed with one another.

The hope that Soviet-Polish relations could be restored through actual cooperation in the field was dashed. The Red Army had been accepting the aid of the Home Army against the Germans, but once victorious it proceeded to arrest Polish officers and incorporate the other ranks into its own communist-led Polish units. From May 1943 a Polish division, later expanded, was organized in Russia under the command of General Berling. Its political umbrella was the communist-led Union of Polish Patriots in Moscow. Meanwhile a small communist-directed partisan movement developed in occupied Poland as a rival to the main underground. A pro-Moscow National Committee of the Homeland (KRN) was constituted toward the end of 1943, and a Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) was installed in the Soviet-occupied town of Lublin in July 1944. As the Soviets were driving the Germans out of Poland they were establishing their own military and political structure in the country.

The Western Allies felt that they had limited means of influencing the course of events. They virtually conceded all prewar Polish eastern lands to Stalin at the Conference in Teherán in 1943. The Poles were to be compensated at the expense of Germany. The British pressed Mikołajczyk to accept and the premier went to bargain in Moscow in August 1944. Simultaneously Warsaw staged a massive uprising against the retreating Germans, hoping to clear the city of them in time to act as host to the advancing Red Army. But the Germans were still too powerful, and the Soviets withheld their aid, regarding the uprising as politically directed against them. Therefore, even British and American planes flying rescue missions were denied permission to land at Soviet airports. In the course of the next two months of fighting the élite of the Home Army perished alongside 200,000 inhabitants of Warsaw. The city was reduced to ashes. Whether the rising was necessary or avoidable is still debated.

The Warsaw uprising was perhaps the most dramatic event of the war and it left permanent scars. Mikołajczyk's subsequent efforts to preserve Poland's independence at the price of some territorial concessions proved futile, and he resigned. His successor, the veteran

socialist T. Arciszewski, was merely tolerated by the Allies; his government was that of national protest. The fate of Poland was decided independently of the Poles at the Yalta Conference. There the Teherán border deal was endorsed and a formula found for recognizing the already functioning communist government which was to be enlarged by the addition of a few non-communist Poles like Mikołajczyk. It called itself the provisional government of national unity. What bitter irony!

The Red Army was in control of Poland and the communists were in power. The Berling-led troops constituted the fighting force. Sixteen leaders of the underground, lured into talks by the Russians, were arrested and flown to Moscow to be tried. The remnants of the dissolved Home Army were hunted down. Under these conditions the "free and unfettered" elections promised in the Yalta accord were hardly a realistic proposition; Poland was destined to be a Soviet satellite.

The dramatic story of Poland offered a contrast to wartime developments in Czechoslovakia. Its two parts, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and the formally independent Slovak state, in turn differed greatly from one another. The protectorate was treated as an economic base and a reservoir of the Germán Reich, free from Allied bombings, its inhabitants exempted from military service. It contributed 9 to 12 percent of the total Germán industrial output. Although the Czech intelligentsia faced persecutions - universities were closed - and the Jews were gradually liquidated, workers and farmers were actually courted. Much of the administration was in the hands of the Czechs, although under strict Germán control, and Protector Constantin von Neurath was a moderate compared with his sadistic successor in 1941, Heydrich, and the governor of Poland, H. Frank. Under these conditions the Czechs sought to survive without unduly provoking the Germans, and avoided provocations and reprisals.

This did not mean that they willingly adjusted to the Nazi regime. There was an underground and a range of resistance groups. But they practiced rather passive resistance and economic sabotage. A tough line was taken by Heydrich: imposition of martial law and the execution of Premier Elias, who was accused of contacts with Benes's government in London; it called for a response. A team of Czechoslovak paratroopers sent from London killed Heydrich. By way of reprisals the Germans razed to the ground the village of Lidice, shot all the male inhabitants and deported women and children, many of whom died. Advertised by Germán propaganda in order to overawe the Czechs - unlike massacres in Poland that were often concealed - Lidice became a symbol of Nazi brutality. It was psychologically easier to feel for and identify with a hundred or so villagers than with millions being

systematically exterminated. After a certain point these just became statistics.

The post-Heydrich terror leveled off in the remaining years of the war. All in all, although the estimates vary, some 55,000 Czechs perished in the Second World War alongside some 70,000 Jews who represented three-quarters of the total Jewish population.

The Germans at first treated Slovakia as a show piece of the Nazi "New Order." For the Slovaks this was their first chance to enjoy the attributes of a national state of their own. The price, however, was heavy: an accommodation to Nazi Germany in a material and spiritual sense. Most industries came under German control; some Slovak troops joined in the war against the Soviet Union; anti-Jewish measures resulted in the deportation and death of three-quarters of Slovak Jewry. Slovakia was established as a one-party state under a constitution of July 21, 1939 that followed Austrian and Portuguese corporatist models; it was headed by Father J. Tiso as President, and after 1942 as Leader. He tried to curb the pro-Nazi extremists but enjoyed the support of Berlin, which wished to preserve a certain stability in the country. Slovak freedom of maneuver was greatly restricted. Attempts to strengthen its position *vis-a-vis* Hungary by cooperation with Romania and Croatia were opposed by Germany. Contacts with the Allies had to be most circumspect and were channeled through the Vatican. It was actually under the pressure from the papacy, as supported by some Slovak bishops, that Tiso halted the deportations of the Jews in the 1942-4 period.

Turning to Czechoslovak activities abroad, Beneš had in 1939 already begun to agitate for the creation of a political center that would be recognized by the Allies and to obtain an official repudiation of Munich. Prevailing over potential rivals, especially Hodza and those who insisted on a Czecho-Slovak federative structure after the war, Beneš in July 1940 gained Britain's recognition for his provisional government. After the German invasion of the USSR a full recognition from the three big Allies followed. By 1942 Britain and the Free French repudiated Munich, which implied the restoration of prewar frontiers. Subsequently Beneš obtained a somewhat reluctant Allied approval for the postwar deportation of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia. It was evident that Beneš attached great importance to collaboration with the USSR, which he saw as the liberator and the dominant power in East Central Europe. The role of Czechoslovakia, as he put it, was to be a bridge between the West and the East. Beneš's rather optimistic vision contrasted with that of the Poles. Under Moscow's pressure he abandoned plans for a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation, and further distanced himself from the isolated Poles by signing an alliance with

the USSR in December 1943. While in Moscow he urged Stalin to eradicate "feudalism" in postwar Poland and Hungary.

As the Soviet armies neared Czechoslovakia, and Romania switched sides from the Germans to the Russians, an underground Slovak National Council, comprising democrats and communists and endorsed by Beneš, was getting ready to stage an uprising. Part of the army joined in. The uprising, precipitated by an attack by Slovak partisans on the Germans in late August 1944, lasted for two months, but received no real Soviet aid. Its collapse was followed by the German occupation of the country and harsh reprisals. The uprising is still hotly debated. Was it a communist-inspired operation or was it a Slovak national struggle against the Germans and the satellite regime? Did it constitute (from the Slovaks' standpoint) national redemption or treason? Was it manipulated by the government seeking to maintain independent Slovakia? Be what it may, the rising was, except for military operations of small Czechoslovak units on the Western and Russian fronts, the only great battle fought against the Germans. To say that is not to dismiss the brief uprising in Prague in May, another much disputed event.

As the Red Armies were entering Czechoslovakia Beneš flew to Moscow, where he presided over an agreement with Czech and Slovak communists to form a new government. This was much more than an enlargement of the London-based ministry. From the liberated town of Kosice a program was announced on April 5, 1945 that was to serve as the basis of the new Czechoslovakia. The underground in Prague, seemingly encouraged both by communists and the Košice government, decided to rise on May 4. It was a somewhat confused affair. Czech communists did not wish the American troops of General Patton to help liberate the city; this honor was to be reserved for the Red Army. Besides, Patton had orders not to encroach on the Soviet sphere of activities. The underground was not strong enough to win militarily and was paradoxically saved from a massacre by the anti-Soviet Russian units of General Vlasov who turned against the Germans. In spite of the fact that Germany surrendered to the Allies on May 8, the local German troops were still able to negotiate their withdrawal with the Czechs. On May 9 the Red Army officially "liberated" Prague although it is not clear from whom. The entire operation cost about 2,000 Czech lives.

Unlike the Polish government, Beneš could return to Prague in triumph, but the picture was not as rosy as it seemed. Postwar Czechoslovakia no longer comprised Carpatho-Ukraine, which had been seized rather high-handedly by the USSR, and the new regime bore only a seeming resemblance to the prewar model.

The wartime story of Hungary differs sharply from that of the Poles,

Czechs, and Slovaks. Driven by the constant urge to recover its former place and undo the Treaty of Trianon, an urge colored somewhat by ideological preferences, Hungary entered the Second World War on the side of Germany and Italy. First, in April 1941, acting under Berlin's pressure the Hungarians joined in the attack on Yugoslavia. The act was considered shameful by Premier Teleki, who committed suicide. Then after an incident at Kosice (Kassa) that was probably manufactured, Hungary declared war on the USSR in June. There was little that Hungary could gain from this war. As mentioned earlier, Budapest had regained parts of Slovakia in 1938, annexed Carpatho-Ukraine in 1939, and received half of Transylvania under the Second Vienna Award made by Germany and Italy in 1940. Hungary reclaimed Bacska in Vojvodina from Yugoslavia after the campaign in 1941. As a result of all these territorial changes the state almost doubled its size and population. But the durability of gains depended largely on Germany, and Budapest felt that it had to compete with Romania in particular for German support. Thus the country became ever more dependent on Berlin, politically and economically, and it had to send troops to fight on the eastern front.

The Hungarians tried to convey to the British that it would be a mistake to place them in the same category as Hitler's Reich. Indeed, they harbored Polish military and civilian refugees and did not fire on Allied aircraft. The latter in turn did not bomb Hungary until the German troops occupied it in March 1944.

During the course of the war Horthy tried to continue his policies of slowing down or moderating an evolution to the right, and keeping the local Nazis on leash. This proved increasingly difficult, given the growing dependence on Germany, and resulted in political zigzags. The shock over the atrocities committed by Hungarian military, among whom the rightist radicals played an important role, in occupied Novi Sad in Yugoslavia, which claimed thousands of Serb and Jewish victims, contributed to a change of premiers. L. Bárdossy, who had been subservient to the Germans, made room for M. Kállay. The latter was well aware of the Hungarian dilemma of being caught between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, and he explored ways of getting out of the war through secret overtures to the West. The débâcle suffered by the Hungarian army at Voronezh reinforced those who wanted peace. In the mean time a drastic curtailment of active war effort took place. All this was not lost on Hitler.

On March 19, 1944 German troops occupied Hungary. Kállay had to take refuge in the Turkish embassy; Bethlen, who had been using his influence to stiffen Horthy's resistance to the Germans, went into hiding. The regent gave in, and a new government was named that complied with German demands for mass deportations of Jews. Horthy

prevented, however, the inclusion of those living in Budapest. While yielding to Berlin, Horthy had not abandoned his plans to bring Hungary out of the war. As Romania switched sides in August, Horthy authorized an armistice with the Russians, a maneuver which was clumsily executed and left him unprotected. This time the Germans forced him to name the Arrow Cross leader Szálasi as premier, and then removed the regent from Hungary to Germany.

The Hungarian Nazis at last tasted power and they proceeded to deport Budapest Jews and to intensify the Hungarian war effort. In September and October, however, the fighting moved on to Hungarian soil, and under the aegis of the Red Army a provisional government came into existence in Debrecen in December. It comprised three Horthyite generals, social democrats, populists, and communists under the premiership of General B. Miklós. The government signed an armistice with the Allies and declared war on Germany. On April 11, 1945 it was installed in a Budapest ravaged by a long siege. Both Hungary and Romania were now on the Allied side and they vied for the control of Transylvania. Would Hungary return to its post-Trianon shape, making war and all the sacrifices needless and vain? The price paid by the country, maneuvered into war, was high and the future seemed uncertain. It was clear that a new era was dawning, but it held in store many dangers and few hopes.