

FROM 1890 TO SARAJEVO

The 1890s saw the rise of mass political parties and a growing radicalization, social and national, throughout East Central Europe. In Hungary the long rule of Kálmán Tisza ended in 1890, and subsequent developments were the formation of a Hungarian Social Democratic Party (which held its first congress in 1894 and adopted its program in 1903) and a Smallholders Party in 1909. A small but increasingly vocal National Bourgeois Radical Party represented the voice of urban intelligentsia. Oszkár Jászi was one of the leaders; the magnate Mihály Károlyi gravitated toward it. None of these movements could successfully challenge the succeeding governments, which excelled in manipulations combined with occasional reprisals, and increasingly emphasized Magyar nationalism. The celebrations of the Millennium in 1896 saw its veritable outburst. "Never did we talk so much of our being Hungarian,"⁴⁹ commented a leading historian. The semi-mythical ancestor, "the Turanian rider," fearless but realistic, an observer rather than a discoverer, was represented in various literary heroes as the embodiment of the national characteristics. The Magyar spirit was distinguished by love of one's native land, rejection of servility, and creativity in politics. Students in Budapest vowed to wear only national costume; landowners subscribed to an agrarian program and fulminated against big business that was "international" and "cosmopolitan." They opposed to it a program of national and Christian politics. Although there were anti-Semitic undertones in the new, integral nationalism, many Jews eagerly participated in the Magyarization campaign. Articles in the press which they often owned or influenced prophesied that in forty years' time there would be 17 million Magyars as against 7 million non-Magyars. Indeed, spontaneous and forced Magyarization resulted in an increase of Hungarians in the 1867-1914 period from 40 to 48 percent in all the lands of the Holy Crown.

Nationalism was a weapon used against democrats, socialists, and radicals, and even the Catholic Church, in a Hungarian version of Kulturkampf in 1892-6. But the chief battles were fought in the Magyar versus non-Magyar confrontations. The resistance of some nationalities stiffened visibly. Subject to pressures and manipulations and finding a common front with the Hungarian opposition difficult, the Croats were driven into cooperation with the Serbs (the Fiume 1905 Resolution). The Zagreb trial in 1908 and then the Balkan wars intensified the tensions. The Croatian constitution was suspended in 1912 and 1913. Although various deals still intervened, the Croatian political program was departing from the trialist (Austro-Hungarian-South Slav) conception and moving toward a Yugoslav system.

Romanians and Serbs, by virtue of their Greek Orthodoxy (or Greek Catholicism) were largely immune from Magyarization in the religious sphere. They could also look to Bucharest and Belgrade for support. Still, the Romanian Memorandum trial of 1894, to mention only one of the political persecutions, pushed them toward cooperation with the other nationalities. The results were a Budapest congress in 1895 and the emergence of a club of nationalities in the Hungarian parliament in 1906. The Slovaks were worst off. Linguistic Magyarization made new inroads (such as the Lex Apponyi in 1907) into education and Protestant churches. The Hungarian Catholic hierarchy supported by the state battled with Slovak parishes. An incident at the Černova church resulted in some fifteen people being shot by the gendarmes. A Catholic political movement took shape in

the Slovak People's Party in 1905. Its leader, Father Andrej Hlinka, had some hopes of cooperation with the new Hungarian Catholic People's Party. Similarly the Slovak social democrats organized themselves within the Hungarian social democratic movement. Another group associated with the periodical *Hlas* looked to Prague's progressive circles for inspiration and guidance. The situation appeared desperate to Slovak leaders. Mass following was lacking. The feeble Slovak culture and national consciousness could, if the worst fears were justified, succumb in a generation or so to complete Magyarization. As it was, the percentage of the Slovaks in the region declined between 1880 and 1910. The hard life and a feeling of hopelessness drove nearly 500,000 of them abroad as emigrants.

The relations between Budapest and Vienna were not free from friction. The remark of Count Gyula Andrássy that through the Compromise the Hungarians had sacrificed their material interests to the idea of liberty reflected a feeling of dissatisfaction with various aspects of coexistence with Austria. The question of the army remained particularly sensitive, and demands for a national army set off a crisis that reached its high point in 1905. The governing liberals lost the election, a rare occurrence, and dualism itself was threatened.

The year 1905 was a year of revolution in Russia and its Polish lands. Strikes and unrest spilled into the Habsburg monarchy. After intricate political maneuvers in which the bait of universal suffrage was used by all sides to the conflict, so as to gain the support of the masses, Francis Joseph prevailed. Universal manhood suffrage was introduced in Cisleithenia in 1907 but not in Hungary. The liberals reorganized themselves and assumed power under a new name and under the undisputed leadership of István Tisza. Did it mean that dualism was safe and Hungary firmly wedded to it? Or did it mean that on the eve of the First World War none of the real problems was resolved in the lands of the Crown of St Stephen, be they socio-political, or to do with nationalities, or with relations with Vienna? It is difficult to give a definite answer, for nationality problems contrasted with a relative stability, and popular grievances with material progress.

In culture lights shone brightly. Three universities in addition to that of Budapest represented high levels of scholarship. The capital was a glittering city in which radically inclined intellectuals were playing an important part. European readers were familiar with the novelist Ferenc Molnár and the earlier-mentioned Mór Jókai, whose impact in Hungary was comparable to that of Jirásek among the Czechs and even Sienkiewicz among the Poles. Less well-known abroad was the greatest poet of the early twentieth century Endre Ady, the "prophet of Hungarian destiny." The fame of the historical painter Mihály Munkácsy reached the West; the rising genius of Béla Bartók in music would later be generally recognized. As the war approached Hungarian civilization was in no way inferior to that of the West, and some of its cultural or artistic figures were international giants.

Shifting one's sights from Hungary to Bohemia one is struck by certain parallel developments, although contrasts dominate. The 1890s also saw a reorientation of Czech politics that reflected a democratization and a radicalization of society. It was accompanied by conflicts about the direction which the nation should take to promote its objectives. The Centennial Exhibition in Prague in 1891 testified to the enormous material advancement that made the country the leading province, economically and in terms of its social program, of the monarchy. Yet political gains did not follow economic achievements. The 1890 agreement (the Punkta) on a German-Czech linguistic compromise in schools and in the courts was not acceptable to the Young Czechs, who

came to the fore as the leading force in the country. The agreement was realized only in Moravia; in Bohemia the Young Czechs, representing liberal, anti-clerical, and radical nationalists, adopted policies of confrontation that lasted for the next four years. But student riots in 1893 that led to the so-called Omladina trials demonstrated the futility both of such demonstrations and of the martial law which followed.

A new cabinet in Vienna led by Kazimierz Badeni tried reforms. In 1896 it added a fifth curia of voters which comprised all adult males hitherto denied voting rights; this represented more electors than in the four existing curias (great landowners, chambers of commerce, towns, and villages) combined. Badeni also introduced language reforms which would have put Czech on a par with German. The Young Czechs, reverting to more opportunistic tactics, cooperated with the Badeni government; the Germans engineered its fall which prevented the realization of language reforms. Disappointed, the Young Czechs pursued policies of filibuster and obstruction in the Reichsrat. Their goal remained Austro-Slavism: a federalized monarchy and diplomatic reorientation away from Germany and toward France and Russia. In 1908 Karel Kramář launched Neo-Slavism with a congress in Prague, in which both the Russians and the Poles participated. But Kramář, who considered the idea of Czech independence an illusion and Slavdom "our last ultimate" refuge, really concentrated on current politics in the monarchy. Moreover, the Young Czech monopoly of power was being undercut by the emergence of mass political parties, a consequence of the electoral reforms of 1896 and 1907, and by the appearance on the Czech scene of Tomáš Masaryk. A new generation educated in Czech schools was now entering public life, and Czech modernism was challenging not only arts but also the prevalent view of society, nation, and politics.

The oldest Czech mass party, the social democrats, in 1896 gained a far-reaching autonomy within the all-Austrian party. Those who put more stress on nationalism and less on Marx established the National Socialist Party two years later. Its program carried some anti-Semitic overtones. The middle-of-the-road agrarians came into being in 1899; the forerunners of the Catholic Party also joined the political spectrum. Of all these groups and parties only the small Progressive State Rights Party openly advocated the destruction of the dual monarchy and an independent Czech state. Masaryk, who headed another tiny party of Realists, never went that far. But when he wrote to Kramář, "You are fighting for Austria! I am not!" he expressed a novel approach and a new philosophy of Czech politics.

Masaryk turned to history for inspiration, and he largely followed in the footsteps of Palacký. Rejecting futile lamentations over the catastrophe of the White Mountain, he insisted that the strength of the Czech nation was derived from spiritual values. These, which he termed profoundly humanistic, he traced back to the Hussites and the Czech Brethren. They, much more than the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, were in Masaryk's opinion the catalyst of the nineteenth-century Czech national renaissance. Although, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, the historian Pekař disputed Masaryk's interpretation of the Czech past and rejected the concept that the nation was a carrier of a single idea in history, Masaryk's ideas had a wide resonance. Being a moralist to philosophers and a philosopher to politicians, Masaryk was above all seen as a sage, an intellectual, and a moral giant. This did not mean that he escaped criticism, even bitter attacks. His defense of the Jew Hilsner, accused of ritual murder, and his exposure as

forgery of some cherished Czech medieval documents earned him public disapproval. His call for action through moral regeneration was not fully appreciated; his universalist approach to the Czech question ("The Czech question was either a world question or no question at all") was not fully comprehended.

Indeed, a kind of national schizophrenia reigned in Bohemia with simultaneous displays of rebelliousness and loyalism, both tinged by a petit bourgeois mentality. The constant talk about a small nation and small possibilities resulted, in the opinion of the historian Kořálka, in a cult of the average little Czech. "In no way do we lack gold and silver in our conflict with Vienna," commented a prominent contemporary figure, "but we lack manliness and courage, perseverance and self-sacrifice in political struggles."⁵⁰ Masaryk himself castigated Czech politicians who unable to be lions turned into foxes, and unable to be heroes turned into lackeys. In a sense it was convenient for the nation to be without its own statehood, for it could derive benefits from the economic, cultural, and political life of a state for which it bore no responsibility. True, there were the customary two Czech members of the Vienna cabinet, but they were hardly representative of national aspirations. Still, the Czechs, as a leader affirmed in 1911 in parliament, had a real interest in the survival of the monarchy. Had the Austrians handled them more cleverly they could have, as a Czech writer put it, "wrapped the Czech nation around their little finger."⁵¹

Although the 1905 strikes shook Bohemia the country was hardly an oppressed province. True, a certain political deadlock existed as German intransigence made a genuine federalization of the monarchy impossible. But not only economic, but also cultural life was thriving. The two giants in music, Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák died respectively in 1884 and 1904, but their impact remained. Modernist Czech painters worked chiefly in France but the tradition of the romantic, national paintings of J. Mánes was very much alive. Prague was the centre of a special Jewish-German culture of which Kafka was in many ways a symbol and an embodiment.

Turning to the lands of partitioned Poland, the 1890s saw the rise of a challenge to Warsaw positivism and "triloyalism," perceived as degenerating into policies of vested class interests and servility toward the government. The challenge came from the left and right: from the nascent forces of socialism and the national democratic movement. Somewhat later populism arose. All these trends were assisted by the broadening of the political and social base, especially after the 1905 Revolution, and they stressed an all-Polish character transcending the borders of Austria, Prussia, and Russia. They were sustained by a single Polish culture.

The national democratic movement grew out of the Polish League, founded in Switzerland in 1887. Its program rejected passivity or reconciliation with the partitioning powers and sought to mobilize Poles for active struggle for independence. Transformed into a National League in 1893 with headquarters in Warsaw, the movement developed an ideology that was shaped largely by the ideas of Roman Dmowski. A natural scientist by training, and coming from a poor urban milieu, Dmowski became a herald of integral nationalism in Poland that represented a drastic change in Polish political thought.

Regarding the nation, "a living social organism," as the supreme value, and its interests as transcending those of the individual and humanity, Dmowski denounced the old noble nation for having compromised national interests. Furthering its own advantages, he wrote, it had promoted an eastern expansion which diluted and weakened the ethnic Polish core. By relying on Jews the *szlachta* had ruined towns and prevented the rise of a middle class.

Tying the Polish cause to liberalism, revolution, or humanitarian sentiments, the Poles had engaged in foolhardy uprisings counting on the non-existing solidarity of peoples. Dmowski saw politics in terms of social Darwinism, as a struggle in which national egoism was the norm and survival the object. He wanted to mold a modern Polish nation out of its healthiest and strongest elements, namely the peasantry. In practice this meant waging a largely successful educational action of promoting national awareness. But it entailed a conflict with non-Polish nationalities: Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Belorussians, and Jews. The first three groups Dmowski sought to polonize, but according to him only individual Jews could be assimilated. Anti-Semitism, enhanced by the growing number of Jews in the Congress Kingdom and the economic competition with the Polish middle class, played an ever increasing role in Dmowski's ideology.

Dmowski considered that on political grounds Polish and Jewish interests clashed. While to the national democrats Germany was the most dangerous enemy and Russia a potential ally, the Jews believed exactly the opposite. Dmowski pointed to the visible Jewish presence in the socialist movement that was increasing his anti-socialist stance. An important characteristic of the Polish League and the national democrats was that they did not look upon themselves as representing a political trend, but rather, the very basic interests of the nation. Hence their tendency toward political-ideological monopoly and intolerance of other programs.

The year 1893 saw the rise of another challenge to the existing political and socio-economic order, namely the appearance of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Its most forceful personality was Józef Piłsudski. An impoverished member of the Lithuanian gentry, brought up in the cult of the January uprising, Piłsudski believed in the tradition of the old Commonwealth and saw Poland's way to emancipation through the collapse of the tsarist empire. PPS combined Marxist tenets with Polish national objectives, and invoked Marx to claim that the role of socialism in Poland was to be a rampart of the progressive West against the reactionary and backward East. Piłsudski insisted that the social oppression of the Polish workers was intensified by the oppression of the whole nation. He regarded the industrial proletariat in much the same way as Polish radicals had once viewed the peasantry, namely as an indispensable force to carry on the old struggle for national liberation and social justice.

The program of PPS was rejected by the leftist, "internationalist" Social Democratic Party grouped around Rosa Luxemburg and Feliks Dzierżyński, which by 1918 would provide the nucleus for the Communist Party of Poland. The social democrats (SDKPiL) argued that for the Polish proletariat national independence (most unlikely in any case on economic grounds) would mean regression and not progress. The socialist fatherland was as real to Rosa Luxemburg as Poland was to Piłsudski. But what form and shape could a future Poland take? PPS came to favor a federalist approach that recognized the national rights of Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians and hoped for their voluntary union with the Poles. The growth of nationalism among these nations, however, was making such a program highly problematic.

The 1905 Revolution in the Russian empire brought the national democrats and the socialists in the Kingdom to an open confrontation. When at the height of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904 both Piłsudski and Dmowski had gone to Tokyo, the first argued for a Japanese-supported insurrection in the Congress Kingdom, the latter opposed it. Tokyo opted for caution. In the Kingdom the PPS fighting squads were already battling the

Russians and engaging in semi-revolutionary activities; the national democrats clashed with the socialists. Dmowski, insisting on the need for peace and order, tried to gain concessions from St Petersburg, both then, and subsequently at the Duma (parliament) when it was called into existence. By 1908 the policies of Dmowski had failed to bring any concessions from Russia, and the attempts to raise the Polish-Russian dialogue to an international level through the Neo-Slavist movement proved unsuccessful. Thwarted in another electoral bid to the Duma, Dmowski blamed the Jews and in 1912 launched a boycott of Jewish businesses. Feelings ran high.

Piłsudski's increasingly insurrectionist-type actions produced a split in the PPS, and Piłsudski transferred his headquarters to Galicia. There he embarked on the preparation of a Polish military force that could show the Polish flag in the international war which to many seemed imminent. By necessity this force would have to be on the Austrian side, contrary to Dmowski's view, which had put the place of the Poles on the side of France and Russia against Germany and Austria.

Austrian Galicia witnessed a wave of émigrés from Russian Poland after the 1905 Revolution. They colored the political life of the province. On an earlier date Dmowski had also operated from this Polish Piedmont. The rule of Galician conservatives was constantly challenged from the right and the left. The earlier-mentioned electoral reforms in the monarchy did not apply to local Galician elections, which explains why the conservatives could still maintain themselves in power. But the fifth curia and then universal male suffrage helped the growth of the Social Democratic Party of Galicia, of national democrats and later of the peasant party, "Piast," and of similar groupings on the Ukrainian side. The Ukrainian-Polish tension grew and in 1908 resulted in the assassination of the Polish viceroy. Attempts to achieve some form of compromise were interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War.

Shifting one's sights, Prussian Poland continued its economic progress, especially as Chancellor Caprivi's government gave the Poles a respite which allowed them to strengthen their national position. But the germanization onslaught continued and it gained impetus with the German militant organization known as Hakate (HKT). Children at Wreschen (Września) who refused to say the Lord's Prayer in German were flogged; land expropriations occurred under flimsy pretexts. No wonder that the local Poles espoused the national democratic program, and the Silesian leader W. Korfanty joined the National League.

Although the partition borders had deepened division among Poles and even affected their mentality, Polish culture continued to be the surest and strongest national link. Poles everywhere were under the spell of the historic novels of Sienkiewicz, and saw their past through the eyes of the Galician painter Jan Matějko. Modernism in the "Young Poland" version added new elements to national expression. Whether it was the plays of S. Wyspiański or the works of S. Żeromski tinged with social radicalism, they all had a ringing national message. The reality of peasant life was masterfully represented by W. Reymont. Literary and art critics, journalists, prominent scholars, to mention only the historian S. Askenazy, or great musicians like the virtuoso I. J. Paderewski, contributed to the maintenance of high levels of Polish culture.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand on June 28, 1914 in Sarajevo triggered the Austrian-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia and then hostilities that quickly assumed all-European dimensions. To begin with Hungary, it could hardly expect anything from the conflict and Premir Tisza opposed war until overridden by the emperor. As in the case of virtually all belligerent nations, the Hungarians temporarily settled their political differences. But hardly anyone among them was prepared for the long duration of the conflict and the untold sufferings it would bring. Indeed, the cost of the war proved staggering. Almost one and a half million people were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. Shortages of basic commodities and a rampant inflation made life miserable. From 1915 the social democrats began to oppose war; by 1917 the group of Károlyi and Jászi came out with demands for peace, universal suffrage, and somewhat ill-defined projects for the federalization of Hungary. The political establishment headed by Tisza resisted, and it took a great deal of pressure from the new ruler, Emperor-King Charles, for Tisza to resign, in June 1917.

By this time the war had entered a clearly ideological stage. The two revolutions in Russia reverberated throughout the world as did President Wilson's proclamations in favor of national self-determination. In Hungary socialist agitation increased among the war-weary masses; on May 1, 1917 there were massive demonstrations; the culminating point was reached with the general strike in Budapest in January 1918. The efforts of Charles to extricate the monarchy from the war through a separate peace misfired. His last-minute attempt to federalize the empire in October 1918 made Budapest declare the end of the Compromise. Only a personal union briefly linked Austria and Hungary while Károlyi formed the Hungarian National Council. A subsequent revolutionary upheaval brought to the fore a Károlyi government. Tisza, seen by many as responsible for the country's misfortune, perished from an assassin's bullet.

Károlyi's government represented an independent Hungary that would be drastically transformed through universal suffrage, land reform, and democratization. His government sought to retain the allegiance of the non-Magyar nationalities through some form of federalist arrangements, even by making Hungary part of a Danubian United Nations. Distancing himself from the past Károlyi hoped to have Hungary treated by the Allies as a "new" state, and by concluding a separate armistice at Belgrade protect its territorial integrity against its neighbors' encroachments. These proved to be unrealistic expectations.

True, in the early stages of the war the Croats, whose troops fought well, might have been satisfied with a trialist (Austro-Hungarian-South Slav) solution. In 1917, however, the Yugoslav émigré committee (representing the monarchy's Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes) concluded the Pact of Corfu with the government of Serbia. It called for a common kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. In October 1918 the *sabor* officially dissolved the union with Hungary and joined the newly created state. The Slovaks and Transylvanian Romanians were passive in the early war years; there were hardly any desertions from the army. But the Allies promised Transylvania to Romania in the secret Treaty of Bucharest of 1916, and when the war ended *faits accomplis* in the province placed Transylvania and adjacent territories in Romanian hands. The Allies ordered Hungary to evacuate Slovakia. Thus before the Paris Peace Conference met Hungary had been reduced to the core of its

prewar territory and was open to further encroachments by Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. With the French army behind them, Budapest was powerless. Károlyi resigned in March, and as the communists took over, Hungary's future was a question mark.

The story of Czechs and Slovaks during the First World War was completely different from that of the Hungarians. The latter were trying to salvage their state in the midst of a conflict into which they had been drawn much against their will and interest. The former two were bent on creating their own state out of the ruins of the Habsburg monarchy. This was a bold undertaking and the Allies had to be persuaded of its merits.

The Czech nation was not politically prepared for war and all its possible consequences. The program of independence was taken up by Masaryk, who despaired of any other solution and went abroad toward the end of 1914. He was joined later by E. Beneš and assisted by M. Štefánik, a Slovak who lived in France. These men became the leaders of the "struggle abroad" movement, as distinct from the "struggle at home" trend associated with Kramář. The latter initially placed his hopes in the liberation of Czech lands by the tsarist armies and thought of some connection between Bohemia and Russia. But he also cooperated with Masaryk and Beneš through the political group known as the Maffie. The difference between the two trends was largely a matter of emphasis (with the West or with Russia), but it became magnified and affected domestic politics after 1918.

Masaryk and Beneš had a difficult task. The Czech question was viewed as an internal matter of the Austrian monarchy, which the Allies had no intention of destroying. Masaryk and Beneš seemed isolated, for the major Czech political parties followed pro-Habsburg policies out of loyalty, fear, or opportunism. Even as late as January 1917 they disavowed Masaryk's and Beneš's activities abroad. It was only when the specter of a German-dominated Mitteleuropa began to haunt the Allies in 1916 that plans for a "new" East Central Europe replacing Austro-Hungary received serious consideration.

Under the impact of the February and October Revolutions (actually of March and November 1917) in Russia, and the growing hardships at home, the Czechs began openly to demand a federalization of the monarchy. A self-governing Czechoslovak state would be part of it. The Slovaks, incidentally, could thus far play no active role, for they had no contact with Prague until April 1917.

The Czechoslovak National Council (its name varied) presided over by Masaryk and established in Paris in the spring of 1916 now stood a greater chance of having its demands for national independence recognized by the Allies. The issue of a Czechoslovak army came to the fore. The Russian Provisional Government declared in favor of an independent Czechoslovakia, and a Czechoslovak brigade formed in Russia fought a victorious battle at Zborów in July 1917. But the outbreak of the bolshevik revolution complicated matters. The Czecho-slovak leadership sought to avoid any involvement of the Czechoslovak legion in the Russian civil war, and wished to bring the troops to France. But the situation got out of hand and the legion found itself struggling against the bolsheviks in its Siberian "Anabasis." Some 50,000 Czech soldiers controlling the trans-Siberian railroad were performing a service to the Allies disproportionate to their size. Although the story is complex and Masaryk's role controversial, it is certain that the legion greatly assisted Czechoslovak efforts to secure Allied official recognition.

This goal was not reached easily. The organization of Czechoslovak troops in France and Italy (out of Austrian prisoners of war), the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in

Rome - a major anti-Habsburg demonstration - and Beneš's skillful diplomacy were, however, paving the way. The Pittsburgh Agreement was concluded in Masaryk's presence by Czechs and Slovaks in America in favor of a common state, and was a significant move. But in the final analysis the fate of Czechoslovakia depended on the Allied attitude toward the maintenance of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In January 1917 the Allies spoke vaguely of a "liberation of Czechoslovaks from foreign domination." Wilson's Fourteen Points insisted merely on the "freest opportunity of autonomous development" for the Czechs. The situation underwent a change in the spring of 1918. The Epiphany declaration of Czech deputies for complete self-determination and for Czechoslovakia's participation in a peace conference showed how far the process of disintegration had gone. In October 1918, Charles's federalist manifesto came out simultaneously with Masaryk's declaration of Czechoslovak independence. On October 28 independence was proclaimed in Prague and a day later by the Slovaks.

A new state arose, already recognized as a belligerent ally. It was shortly in control of most of the territories it claimed: the lands of the Crown of St Wenceslas and Slovakia. Its borders were yet to be drawn officially, but President Masaryk and the foreign minister Beneš could count on Allied support. Indeed, this point was stressed when Masaryk spoke of bringing to the Czechs "independence on a plate," although he later also said, "Our independence was truly bought with blood."⁵² This was a reference to the struggles of the legion in Russia and to sacrifices at home. Kramář, who was at one point charged with treason and sentenced to death, insisted that without these actions the diplomacy of Masaryk and Beneš would have been vain. Here were the germs of a controversy that has not abated to the present day.

Polish strivings for independence during the war were much more complex than those of the Czechs. The fact that Poland was divided among three powers made it potentially an international issue, and with two partitioners (Germany and Austro-Hungary) facing the third (Russia) there was some hope and room for maneuver. Yet the victory of either side would still be a victory by an oppressor. What is more, an average Pole could hardly imagine that after 120 years of partitions a free and independent Poland could re-emerge.

Dmowski's conviction that Germany was Poland's main enemy led him to tie the Polish question to the Franco-Russian alliance. The manifesto of the Russian commander-in-chief, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievich, promising the Poles unity under the tsar's scepter, seemed encouraging. But deeds did not follow words. When the German-Austrian armies drove the Russians out of the kingdom in 1915, Dmowski left for the West. There he went beyond his original advocacy of Poland's unification, and spoke openly of full independence. The Allies were cautious. Poland, they felt, was Russia's business, and Petrograd resented outside interference. Moreover, Dmowski represented but one of the main Polish trends, the second being the anti-Russian and by necessity pro-Central Powers current of Pilsudski.

To Pilsudski and the Polish left, Russia was the main obstacle to independence, although full independence could only come with the collapse of all three partitioning powers. Dmowski viewed such a contingency unrealistic; Pilsudski ruminated that the Central Powers might first defeat Russia and then succumb to the West. In any case war would so weaken the partitioners that even a small Polish armed force could play a disproportionately large role. Insisting that the Polish sword must not be absent from the combat, Pilsudski headed the legion operating out of Galicia. Although this placed him on

the side of the Central Powers, Pilsudski (unlike Galician conservatives) treated the cooperation with Vienna as tactical. When the Russians were forced out of the Kingdom, Pilsudski escalated his political demands when negotiating with the Austrian and German authorities, and requested maximum concessions. Emphasizing that the Poles could fight only under their own flag, he sabotaged the creation of a Polish army sponsored by the Central Powers, and proceeded to build up a clandestine Polish Military Organization (POW). On November 5, 1916, Berlin and Vienna issued the Two Emperors' Manifesto announcing the establishment of a free Kingdom of Poland. Its borders as well as the form of its association with one or both Central Powers were left unspecified. Russia denounced the manifesto as a breach of international law, but had, in the tsar's order of the day, to promise on its side freedom and unity to the Poles.

The Central Powers set up a Polish Temporary State Council in the Kingdom within which Pilsudski pursued his own aims. With the outbreak of the revolution in Russia, he opined that the Central Powers had now replaced the former tsardom as the main threat to Poland. A conflict was unavoidable, and in the summer of 1917 the Germans imprisoned Pilsudski in the fortress of Magdeburg. The legions were disbanded and partly interned. The Central Powers, however, proceeded with the creation of a Regency Council and a rudimentary Polish administration, judiciary, army, and education in the Kingdom.

These developments provided Dmowski with the argument that unless the Allies did something for Poland the Germans would be able

to make use of all Polish resources for their own ends. While Dmowski was active in Paris and London, setting up in August 1917 a National Polish Committee as a spokesman in the Allied camp, Paderewski was propagating the Polish cause in the United States. Through Colonel House he gained access to President Wilson. In January 1917 Wilson had already affirmed, in his Peace without Victory address, that statesmen everywhere were in favor of a united and free Poland. In late March the Russian Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet came out for Polish freedom, yet it seemed clear that Russia meant to keep Poland within its sphere of influence. All this changed with the bolsheviks gaining control and the separate peace with the Central Powers in Brest Litovsk in March 1918. The West not only lost its Russian ally, but felt threatened with a social revolution from the East. A Polish state appeared under these circumstances not only a matter of justice but of interest to the Allies, particularly to the French. As for those Poles who pursued pro-Central Powers policies, the Treaty of Brest Litovsk (which injured Polish interests) marked the end of their hopes.

A Polish army composed mainly of volunteers from America and commanded by General Józef Haller came into existence in France. It was placed under the political authority of the National Polish Committee. In January 1918, the thirteenth of Wilson's Fourteen Points affirmed the need for the creation of an independent Poland, composed of an indisputably Polish population, and with a secure access to the sea. On June 3 the Inter-Allied Conference confirmed that such a Poland was one of the conditions of a just peace. Events now moved fast. With Austro-Hungary crumbling and the federalist manifesto of Charles coming too late to save it, the Poles of Galicia regarded themselves as part of a rising Polish state. The government of the Congress Kingdom sought to emancipate itself from the Regency Council and declared independence. The parties of the left in turn proclaimed in Lublin the government of a People's Poland. On November 10 Pilsudski, released by the Germans, arrived in Warsaw. Both the Lublin government and

the Regents handed over to him all political and military powers. Pilsudski was thus in control of the Kingdom (which he succeeded in peacefully clearing of German troops) and of the western part of Galicia. In eastern Galicia, where the Ukrainians had proclaimed an independent republic, fighting began. All other borders were in flux, with clashes occurring; and from the east the bolshevik threat loomed large.

Paris wanted to recognize Dmowski's Committee as Poland's government, and although the British and the Americans prevented it (mainly because of its rightist character), the Committee remained a rival to Pilsudski. By January 1919, however, a compromise occurred. Pilsudski remained head of state, Paderewski became premier, and Dmowski 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 extrême 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 (Těšín, 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. Pilsudski 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-Pilsudski 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. Pilsudski 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. Pilsudski's opponents, trying to belittle his achievement, called it the "miracle of the Vistula." 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. Pilsudski 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 - 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 Beneš 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 (%) Total	14.0 13.6-	14.2 7.9-	29.9
population	15.2	9.1	26.8-34.8
increase in millions	110.4 34.5*	98.0	89.7 60.6
Density per sq. km	34.7	51.8	45.5
Dependent on		29.6	
agriculture (%) Active			
persons per 100			
ha of arable land			

*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* (Wrocław, 1983), p. 22; Z. Landau and J. Tomaszewski, *Polska w Europie i świecie 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 transportation 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 Łódź textile industry regressed to its 1870 levels. 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 Gyor 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.

	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 region 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 elite, 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 elite 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 anti-clericalism 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. Slonimski; 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 avantgarde 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 Hašek, from Czechoslovakia, became known throughout Europe, but the impact on literature and on Czechoslovak politics of Karel Čapek 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 elite (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 multiparty 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 *samaja* constitution of 1935. A turning point was Pilsudski'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 Pilsudski-Dmowski conflict which was colored even more by

outlook and mentality than by doctrine.

Pilsudski 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 Pilsudski'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.

Pilsudski'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 Pilsudski 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 multinational state with a uninationalist ideology."⁵³ Or, to express it differently, it was perceived by Poles as a national state although having a large number of minorities. Originally, Pilsudski 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. Pilsudski, 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-Pilsudski 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 tradition 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 value 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 pale reflection? 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, Patočka wrote, that Beneš 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 interparty 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 multiethnicity 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 Beneš - 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. Kramář 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 region. 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 Švehla comprised not only German ministers but briefly even Hlinka's populists. But the cooperation with the latter broke down over the arrest and trial of a Slovak populist leader Vojtěch 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 German 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 German Party. In the 1935 general elections it captured two-thirds of the German 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 German and Italian accusations of Czechoslovakia as an advance guard of communism. The main Western ally, France, became increasingly weak and indecisive. A tension 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. Hodža, the moderate Slovak agrarian who became prime minister, was not equal to the deceased Švehla.

It was an isolated and domestically undermined Czechoslovakia that entered the fateful year 1938. Demands of the Sudeten German 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 German 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. Nor 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 union, 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 ultimatum 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 Hácha. It was called Czecho-Slovakia and under the Žilina 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 German shadow fell on the country, which had to adjust its internal system to Nazi demands. Berlin closely watched Czech-Slovak friction and when matters reached a high point it summoned Tiso and persuaded him to declare Slovak independence on March 14, 1939. Simultaneously Hácha was called in by Hitler and overawed by the threat of a German bombardment of Prague unless he accepted the status of a German protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. On March 15, German troops marched into Prague. Roughly at that time Hungary, assisted by Poland, occupied Carpatho-Ukraine, which had also declared its independent status. The Czechoslovak state was no more.

Interwar Hungary lacked both the achievements and the dramatic denouement of Czechoslovakia. A threefold periodization seems appropriate: first, the initial revolution of the left in 1919, second the decade of Bethlen, and third, the post-1932 "revolution of the right." The initial revolution was indeed an upheaval, a double one in fact begun by Károlyi and his supporters who sought to create a democratic system based on universal secret suffrage, land reform, an eight-hour working day, and civic freedoms. Károlyi's idealism - the only land distributed was his own - hardly sufficed to install such basic changes in the war-ravaged and partly occupied country. If the Allies had been willing to help this experiment it might have succeeded, but their policy toward the ex-enemy was devoid of sympathy. Driven to despair by constant demands to vacate more territory to be occupied by the neighbors' armies, Károlyi's government fell in a bloodless revolution. The bolsheviks led by Béla Kun were in power. Based on communist-socialist cooperation and fed by the initial military successes of the Red Army against its Romanian and Czechoslovak neighbors, the Republic of the Soviets lasted for over four months. It alienated the peasant masses by its anti-religious propaganda and the nationalization (rather than distribution) of landed estates. The industrial proletariat, although significantly increased during the First World War, provided an insufficient base of support. Kun's faith in a universal revolution and in a joining up with Russian bolsheviks made him dogmatic and unimaginative. He sought to promote a dictatorship of the proletariat and frightened the other classes by threats of a bloodbath. In fact, the Red Terror claimed far fewer victims than those who later perished during the White Terror.

When the Red Army began to disintegrate under the Romanian advance, which resulted in the occupation of Budapest itself, the Hun-garian bolsheviks lost all chance of survival. The leadership fled the country. The significance of the communist episode lay in discrediting the political left, accused of "Godless bolshevism," and the Jews whose

visibility among the leadership (beginning with Kun himself) was high, even though the majority of Hungarian Jews did not support the revolution.

A counter-revolutionary political and military movement, formed in the French-occupied Szeged and Arad, and eventually led by Admiral Horthy, exacted a heavy toll from their opponents. Horthy promised to punish the "sinful city" of Budapest, and reprisals ended only when the new regime needed to gain respectability to win Allied recognition and negotiate the peace treaty. The January 1920 elections, from which the socialists abstained and the communists were banned, gave victory to a conservative rightist party. Under the name "Unity Party" it was to exercise power for the next quarter of a century. In a monarchy without a king, for the two attempts by Charles Habsburg in 1921 to regain his crown were defeated by Horthy, the legitimists had to reconcile themselves to the banning of the old dynasty.

Count István Bethlen, as mentioned, built and operated the political system. Abhorring demagoguery and conscious of the fact that the radicalism of the counter-revolution constituted a threat to property and order, Bethlen steered a middle course. He neutralized the Smallholders Party by promises of land reform. He struck a deal with the social democrats, permitting their activities although only in towns and without political strikes. The earlier-mentioned restrictions in electoral practices and the restoration of the upper house of the parliament completed Bethlen's work. His regime succeeded in bringing Hungary out of international isolation. A much needed loan materialized under the auspices of the League of Nations. Needless to say, the moderate and aristocratically tinged policies of Bethlen did not appeal to the radical nationalists who, like Captain Gömbös, had played a leading role in the Szeged movement.

As the Great Depression struck Hungary, contributing as elsewhere to radicalization of politics, Bethlen withdrew but remained a power behind the scene. In 1932 Horthy named Gömbös premier who adopted a program in which extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism, and some fascist-like trappings were prominently displayed. Hungary became more polarized than before. An ill-assorted alliance of Habsburg legitimists, Bethlenites, Jewish capitalists, some anti-Nazi populists, trade unionists, and bourgeois liberals faced the "Christian middle class," some army officers, certain members of the aristocracy, and the intelligentsia. Gömbös was driven to make compromises with the wealthy Jews and the conservative aristocracy, promising not to bring any sweeping changes. There is a question as to whether he would have kept these promises or proceeded toward a totalitarian model, but he died in 1936. In any case the "revolution of the right" was in full swing, even though Horthy tried to restrain it. He was more successful in keeping out of power the growing mass movement of the openly Nazi Arrow Cross, led by Szálasi. This was possible only because of the electoral geometry as practiced at the time, but even so the Arrow Cross and its allies in 1939 registered a spectacular increase in votes.

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

The impact of the Third Reich was increasingly visible under Gömbös, 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 German. 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 Pilsudski 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 Pilsudski. 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 came into being under the premiership of the tough, pragmatic populist leader Witos in 1923, Pilsudski 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 fascination 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 Pilsudski 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 Pilsudski's forces, supported by the entire left, prevailed. A new period began.

After 1926 the powers of the president were somewhat increased, but Pilsudski refused the post. While his associate Mościcki became president, Pilsudski 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, Pilsudski 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. Pilsudski 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 Cooperation with the Government (BBWR). They became the largest group in the *sejm* after the 1928 elections.

Pilsudski 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, Pilsudski had the leading politicians arrested, mishandled, and imprisoned in the Brześć fortress and tried in 1931. The sentences were light, for Pilsudski's objective of overawing the opposition had already been achieved. It was tragic and paradoxical that Pilsudski, 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 sabre rattling earned Polish diplomacy severe criticism that a more powerful state might have been spared. While Marshal Pilsudski'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 Pilsudski became an empty shell when he died in May of the same year.

Pilsudski'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 Pilsudski 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 Mościcki steered his own course, but he was challenged by the new commander-in-chief, Marshal Smigly-Rydz who was being represented as the true successor of Pilsudski. 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 Pilsudski 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.

