

The Politics of Ethnicity in Central Europe

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Introduction

During the years 1985 to 1990 Central Europe bore witness to some truly remarkable changes. As the Gorbachev reform process gathered pace it gradually became clear to ruling elites, ordinary citizens, and dissidents as well as to seasoned foreign observers of politics in this part of Europe, that Mikhail Gorbachev was intent upon re-inventing Marxist socialism. As we know he was unable to accomplish this mammoth task, and from the summer of 1989 one by one the states of Central Europe began to leave the Soviet orbit. The question then became one of what would replace the old order? The most optimistic of commentators predicted a painless transition to politics based upon the value systems extant in the western part of Europe. The more gloomy prophesied a return to the authoritarian values of the preWorld War Two era. Unsurprisingly neither forecast was correct, and instead we have seen the establishment of a variety of regimes, none of which exactly replicates either the image of past experience in Central Europe, or the West European model. This state of affairs is due to the combination of inter-state relations, historical memory, economic performance, value systems, and cleavage patterns which govern the conduct of domestic politics in this part of Europe.

This volume deals with politics in Central Europe. It is composed of two distinct but never the less interrelated parts, with the chapter on Germany's relationship with the area taking the form of a bridge between the two sections. The initial focus lies with ideas of nation and nation-building processes in those states which by and large come from what was once referred to as the northern tier of the former Soviet bloc; Poland, Czechoslovakia/The Czech Republic/ Slovakia and Hungary. These states have many similarities apart from their former geopolitical status. Although after their foundation as putative

nation-states none of them can be claimed to have experienced fully functioning liberal democracy during the interwar period, they all possess a liberal and democratic tradition which marks them out from their erstwhile allies in the aforementioned Soviet bloc. These states also share another characteristic. Since the fall of 'really existing socialism' with the partial exception of Slovakia, they have made the most effective transition to both an economic system which allows for some expression of market principles and the construction of a polity which can be described as approximating to the civic democratic type.

That said, this volume is not designed to act as a guide to the political systems of each of these countries. Instead, its purpose is to focus upon one aspect of politics in each of these countries, namely the politics of ethnicity, and then to further the reader's understanding of the complexities of such politics through an examination of that area of Central Europe known as Silesia. Through our macro-analysis in the early part of the volume we will explore the dimensions of nationalist/ethnic conflict in the region. We have adopted this approach for a number of reasons. First, most of all we wish to inform the interested reader who may possess no specialist knowledge of the subject. Secondly, in all the states under examination, such conflicts have been of importance in shaping the nature of contemporary politics and indeed the current inter-state borders and ethnographic composition of each of these countries. Thirdly, we wish to dispel the myth that this part of Europe is some kind of dormant ethnic volcano which may erupt at any moment. This is not to deny that such problems exist. Rather it is to say that such problems are often magnified out of all proportion; sometimes out of ignorance, and on occasion because political capital can be accrued by exploiting historical grievance and a sense of the 'Other'. It is for such reasons that special attention is paid to Germany's historical involvement both in Central Europe as a whole and especially in Silesia in order to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the background to the contemporary situation. Finally — and herein lies the key to understanding why Silesia has been selected as our primary case study — in their various historical incarnations, various sovereigns of the countries under examination have either laid claim to or exercised sovereignty over Silesia, and attitudes toward Silesia and its population remain on the political agenda, particularly in Poland, in which country by far the greater part of Silesia now lies.

These then are some of the reasons for a micro-study of the politics of ethnicity in Silesia. Another reason for engaging in such a study is

because the story of Silesia epitomizes the conflict concerning ethnic provenance and identity which has dogged politics in this area of Europe since the dawning of the age of nationalism at the end of the eighteenth century. Despite the claims of primordial nationalists, Silesia never has been, and to this day is not an 'ethnic monolith.' Neither has it despite the wishes of some Silesians, ever succeeded in constituting itself as a nation-state. Instead in the modern era, it and more importantly its population has been, the object of Polish, German and Czech(oslovak) nationalism. As the reader will discover, Silesia has had a bewildering variety of rulers over the centuries, all of whom have left their mark. At various times during the medieval era it found itself to be part of the Bohemian, Polish and Czech kingdoms. In 1526 it was incorporated within the Habsburg Empire. At various times as part of that empire and its successor, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it fell under the Czech, Hungarian or Viennese crowns, and at one time even formed part of the estate of the House of Luxembourg.

We should not fall into the trap of thinking that each of these rulers sort to fashion the inhabitants of Silesia in their own national image. The rulers of medieval kingdoms cared little about the bundle of factors which constitute the modern notion of ethnicity, any more than did imperial rulers until Napoleon's armies and Herder's ideas on nationhood ignited the continent. However, once the spark of nationalist doctrine had been lit, so nationalist movements appeared among peoples who previously in terms of collective identities had by and large only identified themselves as members of Christendom, the vassals of their aristocratic masters, or as the residents of a fairly narrowly defined locality. With the spread of such a doctrine and its ally, industrial society, it became possible, and perhaps necessary, to construct what Benedict Anderson has so memorably described as 'imagined communities'. With the growth of mass industrialization, came the need for mass literacy. As rural pre-capitalist forms appeared ever more redundant, so political activists sought to render the new world intelligible. The doctrine of self-determination and the emulation of the French, British, and American models of modern state organization increasingly became an object of desire.

In the case of Silesia, the Prussians, who had wrested possession of Silesia from Vienna in the 1740s, sought to turn the population into Prussian Germans. In the case of Lower Silesia this was not particularly problematic, as Slav inhabitants of the area had long since been assimilated into the Germanic culture of the migrants and settlers who had been invited to settle the area in the Middle Ages. As will become clear

in the volume, in Upper Silesia the situation was different. This was a true cultural borderland, and until the onset of industrialization in the latter part of the eighteenth century, a distant backwater about which Berlin cared little. However, as Upper Silesia was transformed into an industrial powerhouse so migrants from other parts of Germany, as well as from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, gravitated toward the area. Together with migrants to the cities from rural Upper Silesia, these Slav groups began to lose the trappings of their culture and acquire a German identity and culture.

Yet the passage of Upper Silesia into the *Deutschtum* did not go uncontested. Those who remained in the villages often remained largely unaffected by these processes right up until the early part of the present century. As we shall see, the nascent Czech and most especially the Polish national movements also laid claim to the territory, its growing wealth and its indigenous population. The Upper Silesian population, and gradually the entire territory of Silesia, became the object of nationalist aspirations and agendas. In essence, the second part of this volume deals with the antecedents to, and the nature of this contest, the conflicting claims put forward by each of the parties, and the nature of politics and in particular ethno-politics in (Upper) Silesia today. The chapters which pertain directly to Silesia seek to elucidate key themes and issues which have affected each part of Silesia in the national era, and careful attention is paid to the historical role of Germany, precisely because although only a small fragment of Silesia today lies within Germany, it was German culture and Silesia's relationship with Germany that was the most important factor in Silesian politics from the early part of the nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War.

This volume does not seek to vindicate the position of one or the other of the various protagonists in the battle for Silesia. Rather what it seeks to do, as dispassionately as possible, is to analyse and describe the events and processes by which Silesia and its population exist in the form they do today. In so doing, material which may be uncomfortable to nationalist partisans from all countries which have laid claim to Silesia is presented. The authors make no apology for adopting this stance. There would be little point in producing a volume which merely seeks to re-tell the partisan claims of one side or the other, and which in effect does nothing to aid our understanding of the area and its people.

Through the prism of Silesia the volume seeks to explain to the new reader just why ethnicity has been the focus of so much conflict in

Central Europe. In so doing it seeks to make clear that ethnicity is not some kind of biologically determined phenomenon, but rather that it is a social construct, albeit a deeply seated one. By virtue of a seeming paradox, ethnicity can be and often is fluid, as the case of Upper Silesia, and the competing nationalist claims over its population, together with the response of that population to such claims, shows. Rather than being determined by genetic make-up, ethnicity is as often as not determined by economic progress and political expediency, and indeed sometimes by the sheer need to survive.

In the latter stages of the volume, we examine the nature of ethnopolitics in Silesia today. It is to be hoped that after having read this book, the reader will come away disabused of the idea that Silesia and other parts of Central Europe are some kind of perpetually ticking ethnic time bomb. On the contrary it is suggested that national-ethnic conflicts are by no means inevitable and as much as anything else the products of specific ideological and socio-economic tensions and forces. We make no predictions for the future, save to say that Polish accession to the European Union may provide a long-term solution to residual tensions over Silesia, and finally extinguish the embers of previous conflicts. Above all, we hope that having read our work, the reader will come away informed and enlightened about the nature of ethno-politics in Central Europe, both at the macro and micro levels.

1

Nationalism and the Nation-State in Central Europe Establishing the parameters

This chapter has a dual purpose. The initial objective is to familiarize the reader with the ideas which from the late eighteenth century provided the stimulus for nation-building in the European continent. Within that the differences between the West European and East European experiences are made clear, as are the factors which caused such a contrast to come about. The second objective is to chart the growth of both the idea of nation and the doctrine of nationalism in Central Europe, the response of the imperial powers to this phenomenon, and finally to make some observations on the politics of ethnicity in Central Europe following the collapse of empire and the establishment of titular nation-states upon the ruins of the old order. As we shall see, the Versailles system contained the seeds of its own destruction and in order to appreciate why this system was so fundamentally flawed, we must first establish the intellectual propositions upon which ideas of nation and national self-determination in Central Europe were based.

The chapter is also designed to facilitate understanding of some of the phenomena and events which are covered elsewhere in the volume. It is not designed to serve as a historical narrative. Rather it seeks to explain why in Central Europe ideas of nation and routes to national self-determination have been different from those traditionally employed in Western Europe. Although reference to past events is unavoidable just as it is necessary, it is more important that we understand the intellectual and other forces which influenced the growth of the national idea. As a result a straightforward narrational style has deliberately been avoided. Similarly, given that Chapter 3 deals exclu-

sively with the impact of Germany in Central Europe, in the early part of this chapter the empirical focus lies primarily with developments in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, and not with Prussia or the Wilhelmine Reich.

The role of ideas

Putative nation-states first emerged in the west of Europe more specifically in England, the Netherlands and France between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. An historically shared territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of members, and a common civic culture and ideology are the components of the standard western model of the nation-state (Smith, 1991:11). However, the conditions under which nations were forged in Western Europe differed significantly from those prevailing in the east of Europe at the dawn of the nineteenth century as Napoleon's armies spread the doctrine of self-determination throughout the continent. Put simply, in Western Europe the process of nation-building was state led, whereas in the eastern part of the continent, nationalist ideologues attempted to carve nation-states from among a patchwork of territories which were generally subservient to one of the various European/Eurasian empires.

The growth of the bureaucratic centralized state in Western Europe tended to precede the construction of the 'nation'. The comparatively stable environment provided by fully-fledged feudalism in England and France fostered the growth of the state, which in turn became the primary agency of nation building in the aforementioned countries. Consequently, allegiance to the state, residence therein, and submission to its jurisdiction are the hallmarks of the western idea of nationality. So much so that the use of the terms 'citizen' and 'national' are virtually interchangeable. An individual's place of residence and their passport are the primary determinants of nationality, and it is these territorial and juridical criteria (*jus soli*) in part, that confuse and conflate the terms 'state' and 'nation', and lead to the misnomer 'nation-state' (Ra'anan et al., 1991:11).

Outside the western world, or in our case Central and Eastern Europe, nationalism arose not only later, but also generally at an 'earlier' stage of social and political development. The frontiers of an existing state and of nascent nationalism rarely coincided, and so it was that nationalism grew as a protest against and in conflict with the existing state pattern-not primarily to transform it into a citizens' state

but to redraw the political boundaries in conformity with ethnographic demands (Kohn, 1945). These 'revived' nations, deprived as they were of the chance to engage in state-building according to the West European model, endeavored to recreate the nation, primarily in the cultural field. Nationalists in Central Europe often created an idealized picture of the 'promised land', which was simultaneously based on a romanticized version of the past and devoid of any immediate connection with the present, or indeed in some instances any connection with what might pass for reality.

The reinterpretation of western notions of nationality in the east necessitated the incorporation of pre-national modes of thought within the nascent national consciousness, which were then reinforced by a vigorous process of ethnic homogenization. Perhaps the pivotal pre-national concept prevalent in the east was that of *jus sanguinis*, literally 'issues of blood'. In contrast to the western concept of *jus solis*, it is not *where* an individual resides or indeed was born which determines their nationality, but rather *who* they are, their cultural, religious and historic identity and from whom they are descended i.e. their ethnicity. In part the concept of *jus sanguinis* was the product of the historic experience of different cultural groups residing side by side on the same territory yet maintaining distinct identities both in a cultural and a legal sense. Consequently one is dealing here with the *personal* concept of nationality as opposed to the western *territorial* concept, and as we have just seen, this difference between western and eastern notions of nationality, or the territorial and ethnic interpretations of identity is by no means new (Kohn, 1945 ; Smith, 1971 ; Kellas, 1991 ; Ra'anan, 1991).

So membership of the nation is affected both by philosophical/ideological principles and the political circumstance upon which the nation has been built. In Western Europe, where statehood preceded nation-building, membership of the nation has traditionally been open and inclusive in a legal-political sense. Legal-political membership however, is not the same as cultural membership of a nation. Full acceptance into the national community does not rest solely upon the fulfilment of legal and political criteria, there is also a cultural threshold which has to be met. Deviation from the cultural norm may be tolerated but is not necessarily welcomed. The newcomer is generally encouraged, either formally or informally, to conform to a certain standard of cultural homogeneity. Cosmopolitanism is attractive in theory, but does tend to have its limits in practice, even in states whose national community is founded upon the principle of *jus solis*.

In a state which employs the notion of *jus sanguinis* it is even more difficult for outsiders to become members of the titular nation. As identity is constituted largely around the ancestry and cultural inheritance of the individual, no amount of legal or constitutional mechanisms can fully ensure equality of participation in the national community. In fact, some states utilize legal and constitutional means to deny 'others' equal citizenship, an outstanding case until recently being the difficulties encountered by German-born descendants of non-ethnic German immigrants to Germany in obtaining German nationality.

Indeed, Germanic notions of identity were crucial for the nationalist movements of nineteenth century Central Europe, as they came under the countervailing influences of French and German nationalism. The revolutionary decade of 1789-99 in France saw dramatic changes in the notion of sovereignty. Power was transferred from the monarchy to the citizenry, at least in theory. The state was no longer identified with the king but with the nation, and the nation was then forged in the image of the state. Thus, the idea that the sovereignty of the state could be equated with the will of the nation was born. However the notion that citizenry equaled nation was a hotly contested one. In principle, membership of the nation was based upon citizenship, and citizenship required the individual to adhere to a common set of laws, rights and obligations. In practice the acquisition of French citizenship became inextricable from the acquisition of the French language. The logic being that in order fully to participate in the affairs of the state an individual must speak the language of the state (Hobsbawm, 1992: 22).

Whereas the organizational structures of the French state served as a role model for nationalist elites in Central Europe, French notions of citizenship were treated with more caution. With regard to notions of who could constitute a member of the national community, of more importance in the long run was the German notion of cultural nationalism as developed in the eighteenth century above all by Johann Gottfried von Herder. For Herder, the nation was an organic entity, as natural as the family or other forms of social organization. This was because he saw humans as social animals for whom gregariousness and communication are the foundations of existence. Human society developed in relation to its environment, and thus the diversity of nations could be explained by their relationship to their surroundings. Cultural markers such as language, customs and character were defined by geographic boundaries. Hence, nations were natural and each was endowed with a distinctive national spirit, shaped by its environment

and expressed through culture and language (Llobera, 1994: 167). For Herder, the Germans formed but a single Volk by virtue of their use of a common German language. For Herder, states as constituted during his lifetime were in and of themselves artificial creations, and served only to divide nations or constrain different nations to live uneasily side by side. The only natural state was the nation-state: one people speaking the same language, in its own territory, governing itself. For Herder this was a universal principle, which applied not only to Germany but also to the nations of Central Europe to whom empires denied the natural right of self-determination and individual and collective cultural expression.

A further impulse to such ideas was occasioned when Johann Gottlieb Fichte , in his "Addresses to the German Nation", written in the aftermath of Prussia's defeat at the hands of Napoleon at Jena in 1806, sought to harness the 'power of the soul' to aid in the revitalization of the Prussian state, the creation of a German nation-state which would surpass the achievements of Jacobin France and one which would be a community of individuals linked by descent and culture rather than residence. To this end the will of society, and especially that of the young as the inheritors of the nation, should be bent to the collective will of the nation. For Fichte, a nation could only be constituted by a group of people who were possessed of a common language. In turn such a nation could preserve itself only if it constituted its own state. Moreover he claimed that those political frontiers which separate the members of a nation had to be overturned on the grounds they were arbitrary, unnatural and unjust. The diversity of political institutions in the German-speaking world at the time was for many an impediment to the development of a modern German nation-state. What Fichte and his contemporaries succeeded in doing was to foster the revolutionary idea that the boundaries of states should in some way be 'natural', and correspond with apparently equally 'natural' discrete ethno-linguistic boundaries (Kedourie, 1960: 63). One can only surmise that had Fichte had the benefit of modern transportation and telecommunication links, he may have been forced to reconsider the extent to which such theories corresponded to everyday reality.

Such a comment is not as dismissive as it appears at first sight. Perhaps the most striking contrast between Western and Eastern Europe is that although they are of a comparable size, even today the ethnic composition of Eastern Europe is some three times as diverse as that of Western Europe, despite the carnage wrought by two world wars, accompanying campaigns of genocide, and the forcible expulsion

of millions of people from their places of birth. Neither diversity nor war and its attendant consequences is the overriding cause of the dominant form of nationalism in this area, but when that diversity is overlaid by the intermingled patterns of settlement the difficulty of providing clear-cut analysis of and/or solutions to the 'nationalities problem' is vividly illustrated. Some groups are relatively compact, such as the Czechs and Poles, whilst others such as the Jews and Roma, and until 1945-49 the Germans, exhibit a more diasporic pattern. In the main given that many groups reside predominantly within certain areas the pattern can best be described as mixed.

The contemporary arrangement of ethnic groups in Central Europe although largely having been shaped during the years 1919-49, has its origins in the centuries of colonization and conquest of Europe from Asia in the first millennium AD. Population movement and pressure from Asia saw older established population groups either pushed to the geographical peripheries of Europe, or submerged within the newcomers as they surged through the Eurasian plains. Initially the acquisition of land was due as much to demographic swamping as pitched battles and armed conflict only came about as land ceased to be available. Although successive migrations disrupted what we now label Eastern Europe and Russia, Western Europe settled down into a relatively more stable and sedentary condition. The last significant period of eastern invasion in the thirteenth century saw the East Slavs fall under the dominance of the Mongols, precisely at that time when groups such as the Poles, Czechs and Magyars, themselves descended from earlier waves of Asiatic migrants, were becoming ever more exposed to western ideas and influences. After this turbulent era the pattern of settlement became more stable, the eventual extension of the Holy Roman Empire and its various offshoots and imitators affecting it through programmes of 'ethnic management' (Pearson, 1983), and significantly by virtue of German colonization.

The importance of territory in the precarious environment of Eastern Europe cannot be overestimated. It is the claim to territory that counts for nationalists, almost as much as the demand that it then be populated by the 'rightful' owners. Claims to land can be roughly divided into demographic and historic, the majority settlement of an area and its past ownership respectively. Frequently, the two claims clash as in the case of Transylvania. Ruled by the Magyars until the twentieth century, the Romanians claimed to be the larger population from the eighteenth century. The selective use of history generally enables both sides to present a positive case. Moreover, demographic claims are no

more free from bias than historical ones. Statistics, elections and plebiscites can all be rigged and interpreted to taste, and in the checkered history of the region generally have been. A large proportion of population statistics from the pre-1919 empires and their interwar successors tend to exaggerate the dominance of the majority population and underestimate the numbers of minorities. In between the two world wars the Polish state invented a new nationality, *tutejszi* or 'people from here', for the inhabitants of certain areas in which Byelorussians predominated. The result was to considerably reduce the number of regions in which Byelorussians constituted the majority.

The degree to which an appeal to nationalism found a popular response within a given population also rested upon territorial considerations. Those who enjoy daily proximity with the borders of the state tend to have much stronger feelings of national identity than those who inhabit the more insulated regions of a territory. Awareness of the alternatives and the greater relevance of territorial readjustment contrasts with the near complacency of the 'core dwellers'. This 'castle and border' model ([Ardrey, 1967](#)) corresponds with the idea that identity becomes more pronounced as the level of threat to that identity increases ([Larrain, 1994: 143](#)). However, because territory and nation did not always coincide, spontaneous nationalism could not always be counted upon to secure the land. In the absence of the imperial notions of tradition and ancestral right, nation-builders downplayed regional identities and a more artificial legitimacy that of 'nationalism' was invoked ([Pearson, 1983](#)). The superiority of the fatherland or motherland came to be espoused, and the corrupt and unnatural character of neighboring states was taken for granted. The national territory became a sacrosanct and living organic entity, the partitioning of which was viewed as a blasphemous defilement of the very soul of the nation.

The metaphor of the soul is quite apt as nationalism took on the aura of a secular religion. Its relationship with the more traditional forms of religion was ambiguous. Established religions were generally supportive of nationalism in a situation where a different faith was introduced by a conquering power. In some cases the respective churches even took it upon themselves to act as the guardians of the nation when no other means of protection was available. When the Polish nation found itself partitioned between the Catholic Austrians, Protestant Prussians and Orthodox Russians, the Roman Catholic Church in the Polish lands succeeded in both securing the future of the Polish nation and extending its authority over the Poles to such an

extent that by the mid- nineteenth century it was unthinkable to be a non-Catholic Pole, unless you were Jewish, in which case your standing as a Pole, or otherwise, depended upon the needs of the governing power at the time. However, when nationalism came to fulfill a similar function to that of religion in the life of a significant section of the population, or became too radical or anti-clerical, then the traditional/conservative face of the church would surface.

For some groups religion acted as the primary identifier in demarcating themselves from another group. In the case of the Jews it generally served to separate them from everyone else, but was also needed as a surrogate for a lack of territory. For the Roma the weaker bond of the Romani language had to suffice. The Uniate Ruthenes clung to their Orthodox rituals under papal auspices in order to differentiate themselves from Orthodox Ukrainians. However, language tended to play the decisive role in the identification of ethnic and national groups in Central Europe. Broadly speaking, in Central Europe during the imperial era two types of language were in use, the lower-class parochial vernaculars, and the upper-class cosmopolitan *lingua franca*. Despite the fact that it had never had wide currency in the eastern part of Europe, there were attempts to replace German and French with Latin as the international language of communication. Under the influence of German Romanticism it had become popular for the upper-classes and educated elites to unearth the folklore and traditions of the peasantry, including the vernacular languages, and it gradually became apparent that there was a linguistic fragmentation in Eastern Europe to match its ethnic heterogeneity. Clearly the nationalist doctrine that every linguistic group should constitute itself as a nation was not as straightforward as it might seem. A possible reason for this is that it was a totally unsuitable criterion to apply. For example *Hochdeutsch* was just about the only factor that all the Germanic peoples had in common, and even then it was primarily the preserve of an educated elite. As protégés of German nationalist philosophy, nationalists in Central Europe attempted to apply a model developed in conditions that did not match their own, and indeed barely existed in Germany, with wildly varying results.

The hypersensitivity of nationalists over language was institutionalized by almost every emergent nation of Eastern Europe. Fervent nationalists objected not only to foreign semantic intrusions but even to foreigners attempting to speak their language: interpreting such attempts as infringements of the nation's monopoly of access to its sacred inheritance. Thus the obvious pragmatic advantages of language

to nationalism, such as promoting linguistic solidarity within the national territory and asserting the separate identity and high status of the nation before an international audience, were soon overlaid by a mystical, semi-religious aura. With communion reserved for the chosen people and deliberately withheld from outsiders, language became the sacrament of nationalism.

As the nineteenth century wore on a new phenomenon became apparent. It was at first unimportant, yet as we shall see later in the volume, it came to define the nature of inter-ethnic relations in Central Europe. We are speaking of the politics of race, and ideas of a hierarchical arrangement of the races, with all that such a statement implies. From the middle of the nineteenth century, such undercurrents became observable among certain quarters of the Magyar, German and Czech national movements. Pan-Slavism also existed but it was generally only when an isolated Slav group was menaced by neighbors of another race that a sense of 'racial community' surfaced among Slavs. Non-Slavic groups however, were more aware of the demographic weakness of their position. The notion of beleaguered 'ethnic islands' provided a breeding ground for issues of race to appear in the cause of ethnic survival, and a portent of what was to follow in the twentieth century. Bohemian Germans in particular began to develop a siege mentality which, over the course of time made them more receptive to the ideas of Spencer and Social Darwinism, especially as the agencies and instruments of mass social control which made such philosophies feasible became more widespread (Pearson, 1983).

The experience of empire

The merging of racist with nationalist doctrine was still some way off. Despite the creation of the short-lived and ill-fated Second German Empire in 1871, throughout the course of the nineteenth century it became more apparent that the imperial order was under threat. This was especially true of the Ottoman Empire, or at least its European possessions, and the Habsburg Empire, or Austro-Hungarian Empire, as it became known after the *Ausgleich* of 1867. External intervention in the Habsburg Empire played a virtually negligible role in the activities of the national minorities, rather it was the efforts of the monarchy to manage the multi-national problem that contributed in large part to the shape of the subsequent national regimes in the inter-war years. In the Habsburg Monarchy the nationality problem dominated the domestic political agenda. A total of eleven recognized distinct territor-

ial groups existed within the empire's boundaries; Germans, Magyars, Czechs, Poles, Ruthenians (Carpatho-Ukrainians), Romanians, Croats, Slovaks, Serbs, Slovenes and Italians. 1848 marked the point at which liberal and national claims erupted throughout Europe, and within the empire transformed an administrative headache into a political nightmare. The danger for the Danubian Monarchy was that claims for national self-determination took precedence over demands for the democratization of society. The events of 1848 were successfully contained by the establishment's counterrevolution but nevertheless set in motion a process that was to change the territorial face of Central Europe. Unsurprisingly, the strongest challenge to Habsburg rule came from the second largest national group, the Magyars.

A revival of Magyar culture had begun in the 1820s, in part as a response to the Germanization efforts of Emperor Josef II in the late eighteenth century (Pearson, 1983). The Magyar nobility were concerned with maintaining their feudal rights and privileges, but as romantic nationalism spread, fueled by the writings of intellectuals such as Sandor Petöfi (himself a Magyarized Serb), the need to widen the base of the nation was recognized. In the absence of a strong middle class, radical nationalism became associated with intellectuals and the impoverished gentry. An individual from the latter group who was to take a leading part in the events of 1848-49 was Lajos Kossuth, who represented the populist side of Magyar nationalism that saw the Magyar nation as under threat from the demographically superior Slavs (Taylor, 1948). For the romantics the Magyars had sacrificed themselves in the wars against the Turks, and had been taken advantage of by their neighbors in their moment of weakness. In the face of this strident appeal to blood the smaller minorities within the Magyar lands inevitably sided with the Habsburgs, who with the aid of Russia, eventually subdued the new Hungary in 1849. Savage reprisals served only to furnish the nationalist cause with martyrs, and the Hungarian lands were administratively re-divided deliberately cutting across historic boundaries.

Actions on both sides in the conflict clearly illustrate how minority nationalism in the empire came to be associated with blood and land. The Magyar reaction against Austro-German dominance and their own repressive treatment of their minorities inevitably divided groups along ethnic lines. This policy was further exacerbated by the imperial policy of pitting differing national groups against one another in order to restore imperial control. After the Magyars had been subjugated the recourse to territorial re-division emphasized the importance of

territory as a resource, and inflamed the minority's sense of injustice and determination to win it back. Such strategies of ethnic management were applied throughout the empire and generated a common response: the burgeoning of ethnically based nationalist movements (Pearson, 1983).

Between 1849 and 1867 Hungarian nationalists, under the leadership of more liberal individuals such as Ferenc Deak, followed a concerted program of passive resistance and public protest toward Vienna. Not only did this gain the respect of the imperial authorities, but it also allowed the Hungarians to make the most of any changes in the fortunes of the empire. This opportunity arose in 1866 with the defeat of Austria by Prussia at Sadowa, which simultaneously ended Austrian involvement in and signaled Prussian ascendancy over Germany. The consequent slump in morale in Vienna was effectively exploited by the Hungarians, who were able to negotiate the compromise or *Ausgleich* of 1867. The division of the empire into Austrian and Hungarian spheres of influence had major repercussions for nationality policy in both halves of the empire. For the Austro-Germans political liberalization in 1860 meant that an accord had to be reached with the Czechs and the Poles as the two next largest groups. In Hungary, continued Magyarization deeply affected the tone of inter-ethnic relations, especially with the emergent Slovaks.

Although dominant within the Viennese empire, Germans still only made up just over a third of the population as a whole (Kann, 1974). In order to retain control of the parliament in Vienna they needed the support of one of the smaller groups. Entering into coalition with the Polish Conservative Party of Galicia had a number of advantages. First, such a coalition possessed a parliamentary majority. Secondly, unlike the Czechs, all Poles did not live within the empire. Thirdly, once again unlike the Czechs, the Poles had not been alienated by the *Ausgleich* with Hungary, and furthermore Galicia was geographically remote. In return for their support the Poles were granted a good deal of autonomy. The process of Germanization in Galicia was halted, Polish became an official language, and the universities of Cracow and Lwow were turned into centers of Polish learning. Such a compromise with the Czechs would have entailed far more risks for Vienna. As the third largest national minority the Czechs had been aggrieved by concessions made to the Magyars, and considered themselves next in line for promotion to power-sharing. The proximity of the Czech and German populations to one another in Bohemia and Moravia made the granting of the sort of privileges the Poles enjoyed virtually impos-

sible. Nevertheless, the Czechs continued to press for some sort of recognition, but despite their persistence, both the Hohenwart federalist plan of 1871, and the Badeni scheme to grant the Czech language equality with German foundered before German and Magyar opposition. The Germans, alarmed by the growth of the Czech economy and bourgeoisie, were determined to maintain their superior social position. Meanwhile, the Magyars refused to countenance any alteration of the dualist system to include a third partner. Fortunately for the Germans, there was no significant Czech movement willing to risk their economic prosperity for the elusive goal of national sovereignty. In Galicia the Polish nobility were only too happy to maintain their status through cooperation with the empire, having already been reminded of their precarious position when imperial forces rescued them from the peasant *jacquerie* of 1846 (Davies, 1986).

Within Hungary the picture was far more uniform. Croats, Romanians and Slovaks were subject to Magyarization policies on a comprehensive scale (Taylor, 1948). Having all supported the Habsburgs against the Magyars in 1848-49, the removal of Austrian protection in 1867 left them at the mercy of Hungarian assimilationist policies. Despite the passing of a Nationalities Law in 1868 granting recognition of minority language, education and cultural rights, the reality was that as far as the Hungarians were concerned there were many nationalities in the kingdom but only one nation, the Magyars. Magyarization was forcefully imposed through education and the imposition of the Magyar language; those who assimilated would be treated as equals, those who chose to retain their distinctive cultures were fiercely repressed. Long-standing tension between Hungarians and Romanians over Transylvania further aggravated relations between the two groups. As for the Slovaks, their late-blooming national consciousness in the early nineteenth century suffered a major setback under the Hungarians. The only minority to fare reasonably well in the Hungarian Kingdom were the Serbs. This was primarily for two reasons; firstly, the existence of a strong Serbian state made the treatment of the Serbs a foreign policy issue as well as a domestic one; and secondly, the promotion of Serbs in Croatia-Slavonia helped to undermine Croat ascendancy (Pearson, 1983).

Given the mutually contradictory tensions that existed within all the European/Eurasian empires, and the burgeoning hostility of a vengeful France toward an increasingly more powerful and bellicose Germany, it was becoming increasingly likely that war would be employed as a means of providing some kind of 'resolution', to the problems of a

state-system that was increasingly anachronistic and dysfunctional. It came in August 1914, and by November of that year the old order had completely collapsed in Central Europe. Before analysing the consequences of that debacle, let us first make some observations about Czardom. As we shall see an understanding of Poland's relationship with imperial Russia, and its successor the Soviet Union is crucial to understanding Polish attitudes toward nation, and the territory of Silesia with which the latter part of the volume is concerned.

The Russian empire in Europe

For the Romanovs the revolutions of 1848 were not so much an immediate threat to imperial authority, as a warning of possible future unrest. Curiously, the role played by the Third Department, the oppressive police apparatus set up by Nicholas I after the Decembrist Revolt of 1825, was minimal (Seton-Watson, 1967). The aggressive and arbitrary actions of the internal police were well known and feared, but the likelihood of this reputation being enough to dissuade minority groups from demanding greater autonomy from the Czar is improbable. Of the groups closest to the Russian heartlands, the largest ones, the Ukrainians and Byelorussians, were at a much earlier stage of national consciousness than subordinate minorities further west. As for the Poles, the disaster of the 1830 rising in the Russian controlled Congress Kingdom and the suppression of the 1846 *jacquerie* in Austrian Galicia, had taken the wind out of the sails of any resistance movement.

Many of the minorities within the empire proper had been subject to Russification since the first half of the nineteenth century. Prior to this, loyalty to the Czar had been the overwhelming consideration. However, the centralization processes beginning in the seventeenth century received a more nationalistic impulse after the defeat of Napoleon in 1812. Thus, by the nineteenth century the official attitude towards the Ukrainians and the Byelorussians was that they were in fact either Russians, or 'Little Russians' who could be incorporated quite easily within the wider Russian nation. This attitude became more pronounced from the 1840s. At the same time Ukrainian nationalism was receiving a considerable boost from the poetry of Taras Shevchenko, who wrote in Ukrainian and so helped to produce a standard literary Ukrainian. Linked to this was the belief amongst nationally aware Ukrainians that Muscovy had usurped the earlier foundation of Kievan Rus'. In the Baltic provinces the Czarist authorities attempted to mini-

mize the influence of non-Russian cultures. With regard to the Poles, as Slavs they could theoretically have been included within the Greater Russian aspirations, under the guise of Pan-Slavism. Yet, as the Czarist authorities were to find out, most of their efforts in Russifying their European borderlands would confront the intractable problem of Polish national aspirations.

The establishment of Congress Poland in 1815 had allowed those Poles living under Czarist rule a certain amount of autonomy in domestic affairs. These limited constitutional rights had been suspended after the 1830 rising. By the 1860s some attempts were being made under Wielopolski to win Polish loyalty for the Czar through a program of reforms. Polish radicals were opposed to any policies any policies which might encourage Polish-Russian reconciliation and proceeded to agitate against them. They may well have been unsuccessful in this had not Wielopolski, in a misguided attempt to deprive the radicals of support, declared his intention to conscript young Poles into the Russian army, and in so doing helped to precipitate the rebellion of 1860, which differed from that of 1830 in two ways. First, it was a guerrilla war waged in the countryside rather than a frontal assault on the forces of the Czar. Secondly, after the Polish defeat Russian reprisals were savage and far-reaching. Deportations to Siberia, the confiscation of property, executions and imprisonment were not enough, the name of Poland was to be wiped off the map of Europe.

From 1864 onward the policy of Russification, including in the newly absorbed provinces of the Vistulaland, as the Congress Kingdom was now known, proceeded apace. Loyalty to the Czar was no longer sufficient, subjects of the Russian Empire would now be Russians or potential traitors. Throughout the nineteenth century reforms in administration and education sought to impose the Russian language upon minority groups. However, as these reforms consisted mainly of enforcing the use of Russian from above and closing indigenous educational establishments, not to mention the erection of Orthodox churches in Catholic and Protestant parishes, their effect was to arouse feelings of resentment rather than loyalty. Previously acquiescent groups asserted themselves in reaction to such measures. For those to whom the Russians already appeared as enemies it all served to add fuel to the nationalist fire.

In 1905 the domestic social and political situation of the Russian Empire reached crisis point. Waves of strikes and political protests, precipitated by the massacre of peaceful demonstrators outside the Czar's Winter Palace in St Petersburg, forced Nicholas II to concede the estab-

lishment of a Duma. In the non-Russian provinces the revolutionary situation was seized upon by the growing nationalist movements. The Finns recovered some of their former autonomy, the Poles made gains in the field of education in the Polish language, whilst other groups used the resultant instability as an opportunity to gather more support for their various national causes. This period of relative freedom was however brief. By 1907, under the prime ministership of Stolypin, Russian nationalism had begun to reassert itself. In its effort to become a modern state, at least in Europe, the Czarist authorities attempted to impose the sovereignty of the Russian nation upon its subject peoples. Yet just as Magyarization failed in Hungary after 1867, so Russification was unsuccessful in its mission to convert the Poles, Ukrainians and others, all of whom were beginning to assume collective political identities of their own. In short the concessions of 1905 solved nothing.

We have already noted that in the summer of 1914 the pressures upon the imperial system caused the First World War. The factors that precipitated the outbreak of hostilities are well known, as is the course of the war itself (Taylor, 1948). The collapse of the Romanov Empire through internal revolution did not immediately affect either the Austro-Hungarian or the German empires. However, the end was not long in coming. In a bid to divert such a nationalist revolution a late effort was made to transform the Austro-Hungarian Empire into a federation in October 1918, but it was too late. The armistice, President Wilson's Fourteen Points and the recognition of the general right to self-determination ended the long-running multi-national experiment that had been the Habsburg Empire.

National independence and interdependence

Space does not permit us to go into any detail on the negotiations which surrounded the establishment of the new state system in Europe in 1918 and 1919. Suffice it to say that in Central Europe politics was greatly influenced by the experience of imperial rule, whether it had emanated from Berlin, Vienna or Moscow. Previous policies of ethnic and territorial divide and rule coupled with memories of aggressive assimilationism set the tone for inter-ethnic relations in the interwar years. The examples of Germany and Italy in the 1860s demonstrated the effectiveness of military action in order to strengthen the territorial base of the state, and the need for a strong center. The imperial legacy also undermined the notion of self-determination. States were based

on particular national ascendancies, and as such the right of different nationalities to equal treatment was denied, as was the principle of equal participation of minority nationalities in the new states' political institutions. In general, where assimilation was the goal of state centres, the states of Western Europe encouraged it through inclusion in the political process, whilst the governments of East-Central European states pursued it through exclusion and the implementation of discriminatory policies against minority groups. The elites of the newly independent states were now in a position to either accept or ignore external ideas and influences upon nation-and state-building policy. Despite the declarations of good intent and the activities of the new-born League of Nations, in Central Europe, nation-building policy invariably followed the ethnic rather than civic path.

In effect the Treaties of Versailles and Trianon did nothing to solve the nationality problem of Central Europe. What they did succeed in doing was to reduce the preponderance of minority populations by about half. Under the empires, approximately half their populations constituted 'minorities', under the new state system the proportion still stood at around one quarter, many of whom were bewildered by the failure of the victorious allies to bestow the gift of self-determination upon them. The dominant minority system had been replaced by one of dominant majorities (Pearson, 1983). This was especially true for the Magyars and Poles. In Czechoslovakia, the Czechs constituted but a dominant minority. Prior experience of imperial treatment and the political realities of the new states would inevitably define contemporary inter-communal relations. For the Germans and Magyars the loss of their formerly dominant positions made the prospects of reconciliation to the new situation particularly problematic. The Bohemian Germans, who for so long had resisted attempts by the Czechs to gain equal status, now found themselves incorporated into a Czech dominated state. For Slovaks, national self-determination meant junior status within a new state.

In Czechoslovakia (the Slovaks even denied the recognition granted by a capital letter), the Pittsburgh Agreement negotiated by Masaryk with the émigré Slovak population in the United States in return for financial and political support was never implemented. The agreement had proposed the establishment of an autonomous diet for Slovakia within a federal Czecho-Slovak state. In reality Slovakia became a virtual dependency of the Czech Lands, a unitary state structure was imposed from Prague, and Czech administrators occupied the vast majority of senior positions within Slovakia itself. The Czech claim

that this was for the good of the Slovaks after their suppression by the Magyars was hardly borne out by the widening economic and social gap between the two groups over the course of the 1920s and 1930s. Territorial autonomy was also to have been extended to the Ruthenian population, but this too was withheld. The Czech attitude is perhaps understandable given that the German, Magyar and Ruthene minorities could all look to patron states across the border, and that the Germans in particular were unreconciled to their inclusion in Czechoslovakia, but the Czech policy of strengthening the center merely served to increase the alienation of the non-Czech periphery. As we shall see later in the volume, these tensions were eventually to be 'solved' by a number of measures: the Munich Agreement of 1938; independence in 1939 for Slovakia with German backing, and the absorption in the same year of the remaining Czech Lands by Germany, without any reference to the wishes of the Czechs themselves.

Turning to Hungary, we find that the Magyars, although in possession of their own state, were particularly aggrieved by the loss of two-thirds of their territory and the inclusion of one third of the Magyar population in surrounding 'foreign' states. Hungary's former position as the junior partner in the empire meant that it was a loser in the territorial readjustment that followed the war. The hasty establishment of a government by liberal politicians in September 1918 was not enough to divert the wrath of the Allies, nor placate the minorities (Pearson, 1983: 170). The government could not withstand the national trauma of Trianon and the loss of Transylvania, Croatia and Vojvodina. The communist party rushed to fill the vacuum and a proletarian republic under Bela Kun was proclaimed (Bideleux and Jeffries, 1998: 423). The collapse of the new republic in the face of internal resistance and external threat meant that the left had forfeited its legitimacy to govern in interwar Hungary. The swing to the right under Admiral Horthy would lead inexorably to alliance with Nazi Germany.

To the north, the new Polish state was proclaimed on Armistice Day 1918. The incoming authorities had to somehow rationalize and unify six separate currencies, five distinct regional administrations, the four languages of command used in the army, three legal codes and two incompatible rail gauges. Not only was there a proliferation of political groupings with varying programs seeking to perform these tasks, there were also three different state-building traditions to draw upon. The diverse ethnic make-up of the new Poland would also put additional strains upon the fledgling territorial structure.

In addition to over three million Jews, there were also large numbers of Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Germans and Lithuanians. Accommodation of smaller groups, such as Czechs, Slovaks and Greeks was not particularly problematic. This was not the case for the larger groups. Accusations of discrimination against the Lithuanians in the north-east of Poland were compounded by the dispute over the city of Wilno (Vilnius). Where Ukrainians and Byelorussians were in the majority claims of discrimination were expressed by sub-state nationalist movements (Leslie, 1980). In the west, territorial redistribution had been undertaken not only to restore former Polish land to the Poles, but also with an eye to constraining German power. The large numbers of ethnic Germans who remained unreconciled to the re-created Polish state were later to provide a focus for German revanchism, and, as we shall see in particular, the Polish-German dispute over Silesia and the ethnic provenance of its inhabitants was to prove to be of crucial importance in determining the fate of millions of people.

Theoretically, German-Polish and domestic tensions could have been overcome had Poland developed a political system that facilitated compromise, and a political elite willing to foster a spirit of accommodation. Unfortunately, as many of the post-Versailles regimes discovered, a stable political system is often dependent upon a stable economy. In Poland, a series of feeble governments was faced by a long list of intractable problems and a succession of economic crises. In an attempt to impose some sort of order, Marshall Pilsudski came out of retirement in 1926 and established the *Sanacja* (revitalization) regime. This military junta operated behind a parliamentary facade, democratic institutions being bypassed rather than abolished. Concerns over newly won national independence meant that the touchstone for any moderately successful national party was necessarily nationalism. The fragmentary nature of the Polish parliamentary system meant that no consistent national line was followed.

Despite his successful coup Pilsudski, who was himself partly of Lithuanian extraction and who strove no matter how haphazardly to create some notion of civic identity independent of ethnicity, and the *Sanacja* were unable to effect any improvement in inter-ethnic relations. Democratic and nationalistic opposition to the *Sanacja* regime was severely punished. When the parties of the centre-left published a democratic manifesto in June 1930, calling on *Pilsudski* to relinquish power, those responsible were summarily arrested, imprisoned and exiled. The National Democrats meanwhile had formed a broad right-wing opposition bloc titled the Camp of Great Poland (OWP).

Inevitably, this organisation slid towards nationalist xenophobia and was instrumental in driving the Bloc for Minorities into support for the Non-Party Bloc for Co-operation with the Government (BBWR). After the death of Pilsudski in 1935 the army continued to dominate political life under the 'regime of the colonels' within the Camp of National Unification (OZoN). This regime was fairly undistinguished except in one field. Although sandwiched between two hostile powers, namely Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, rather than make tactical concessions to either of the parties in order to ensure that in the event of conflict Poland would not be fighting on two fronts, the colonels looked to France as the guarantor of Polish independence. The result of this 'policy' was the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the Fourth Partition.

Concluding remarks

As is clear from the above by the autumn of 1939 the whole edifice had crumbled. The post-Versailles state system had been flawed from its inception. The problems of economic slump merely served cruelly to expose just how illegitimate such structures were. Hypothetical answers to the crisis became increasingly radical and hysterical in their tone. Eventually, and particularly in Germany, hyper-nationalism became entwined with doctrines of racial superiority and a demand that a campaign of racial purification take place in order for once and for all to destroy the ancestral cause of this and all other crises of civilization.

In order to achieve their ends, the Nazis were determined to reshape Central Europe in their own image. Alongside programs of genocide directed against the Jews and other 'degenerate' groups, a campaign was launched which effectively sought to reduce Poles to the status of *Untermenschen*. Such policies were accompanied by some remarkable ideological gymnastics on the part of the regime in Berlin, which made common cause with the palpably non-Aryan governments in Budapest and Bratislava. In short one nation was pitted against the other, in a classic policy of divide and rule, and the inter-state boundaries were redrawn accordingly.

With the final defeat of Germany and its allies in 1945, so Stalin came to implement his plans for Central Europe. Once again this involved the redrawing of state borders and attempts to homogenize the population, this time through mass deportations, primarily although not exclusively of Germans, as opposed to by means of genocide. With the benefit of hindsight we can say that no matter how

morally reprehensible such policies were, with regard to Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and both of its successor states the policy seems largely to have achieved its desired ends.

Not only are these countries much more ethnically homogeneous today than they were in the 1930s, they have emerged as liberal democracies which are much more stable than many predicted they would be. Although it is true that to a certain extent the political cultures of these countries had remained frozen during the years of Soviet imperialism, the governments in Prague, Bratislava, Warsaw and Budapest are markedly different from their pre-war precursors. In the following chapter we shall focus upon how since 1989 successive governments in each of these four countries have sought to manage the process of ethnic accommodation. We will discover that areas of conflict and concern still do exist. More importantly perhaps, we shall find that predictions of an ethnic conflagration have proven to be wide of the mark.

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