Interwar East Central Europe, 1918–1941

The Failure of Democracy-building, the Fate of Minorities

EDITED BY SABRINA P. RAMET

INTERWAR EAST CENTRAL EUROPE, 1918–1941

This monograph focuses on the challenges that interwar regimes faced and how they coped with them in the aftermath of World War One, focusing especially on the failure to establish and stabilize democratic regimes, as well as on the fate of ethnic and religious minorities. Topics explored include the political systems and how they changed during the two decades under review, land reform, Church–state relations, and culture. Countries studied include Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania.

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Cover image: Marshal Piłsudski entering Warsaw on 12 May 1926 at the start of his coup © Alamy Stock Photo

For Frank Cibulka

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PREFACE

Why now? Why present yet another book about interwar East Central Europe? There have been at least five books published that deal with the politics of this region during the years 1918–1939/1941. What can we add? To begin with, this book is the first multi-authored book, with each contributor (or one of the contributors in a co-authored chapter) fluent in the main language of the country being studied. We also have been able to take advantage of the latest scholarship as the most recent of the competing volumes (by Ivan Berend) was published two decades ago, while the volume that has been considered "standard" since its publication (by Joseph Rothschild) came out 45 years ago. But there is another reason that makes our topic timely. This is that, if one considers the problems and challenges that East Central Europe confronted in those earlier years, one quickly apprehends that the problems and challenges that not only East Central Europe but also, in fact, the entire world is facing today are quite similar, if not the same. Both then and now, we see the erosion of democracy in multiple states. Both then and now, we see the rise of right-wing regimes and the growing presence of extreme-right ideologies. Both then and now, we see corruption and the venality and greed of elites, leading them to adopt policies not in the best interests of the respective country. Both then and now, we find more than a quarter of the population in some countries below the poverty line (including Kosovo where 34.8% of the population is below the poverty line today, with more than 60% in Yemen and more than 70% in Somalia). And finally, both then and now, we find ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities treated unequally compared with the majority groups. By examining the forces that brought down the efforts at democratization in East Central Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, and the consequences of the failure of democratization, we may perhaps learn some lessons about approaching today's challenges.

All but one of the earlier volumes on interwar East Central Europe (or Eastern Europe) are single-authored volumes; the exception is the work of two authors writing in collaboration. In chronological order of publication, these monographs are Hugh Seton-Watson's *Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918–1941* (Cambridge University Press, 1945); C. A. Macartney and A. W. Palmer's *Independent Eastern Europe: A History* (Macmillan/St. Martin's Press, 1962); Joseph Rothschild's *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (University of Washington Press, 1974); Edward D. Wynot's *Caldron of Conflict: Eastern Europe, 1918–1945* (Harlan Davidson, 1999); and Ivan Berend's *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (University of California Press, 2001).

Hugh Seton-Watson's book is a remarkable achievement, when one considers that it was published as early as 1945. According to the author, the book relied heavily on interviews and conversations he had in the region. There are no footnotes or endnotes and no bibliography; yet the book is obviously meticulously researched. One of his central arguments is that the interwar regimes aggravated such interethnic problems as had existed in the region, adding that the entire region stood in need of a radical overhaul of economic and social structures. In spite of its many virtues, the book omitted Albania from coverage as well as any discussion of the Concordat in Poland; it also omitted Romanian politician Vintilă Brătianu (who served as prime minister of Romania 1927–1928), and it postponed a discussion of the Great Powers to the end of the book.

Seventeen years passed before C. A. Macartney and A. W. Palmer's *Independent Eastern Europe* made its appearance. Their book is organized chronologically, covering the entire region, but without separate chapters for individual countries. Among the topics omitted from the index are the 1925 Concordat in Poland, Romanian politician Gheorghe Tătărescu, who served as prime minister of his country 1934–1937 and again 1939–1940, and any mention or discussion of land reform in Romania. Macartney has been described as a "Hungarophile historian"[1] but this volume was praised in 1962, tautologically, as "the best that exists on the fourteen small states that separated Germany and the Soviet Union in the interwar period":[2] as the *only* book on the subject at that time, it could only have been the best of one. R. P. Morgan praised the authors for having written a "well-documented and skilfully drafted history" – praise to which I can also subscribe – but Morgan also faults the authors for overloading the reader with massive amounts of detail, and for having avoided a direct confrontation with the question as to whether internal weaknesses or external pressures mattered more for the fate of the region.[3] Additionally, Morgan faults the authors for having produced a "distinctly pro-Hungarian account" and for possibly entertaining an "anti-Czech bias," alongside other questionable judgments that the reviewer attributes to the authors.[4]

Deferring a discussion of Joseph Rothschild's *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* for the time being, we come to Edward D. Wynot's

Caldron of Conflict: Eastern Europe, 1918–1945, published in 1999 but largely invisible in academic works. In fact, scouring JSTOR and the online sites for journals published by Elsevier and by the University of Chicago Press, I was unable to locate a single review of this book. This short book (111 pages of text, supplemented by a 20-page bibliographic essay) is organized chronologically, but without separate chapters for individual countries. Chapters 1–2 bring the story to 1919, chapters 3 and 4 cover the years 1920–1929 and 1929–1939 respectively, with chapter 5 covering World War Two. My impression is that Wynot's treatment of interwar Czechoslovakia is more balanced than Rothschild's and that his treatment of interwar Poland, perhaps especially the Piłsudski era – as brief as it is – strikes the right balance; on the other hand, his brief portrait of the Bulgarian agrarian leader Aleksandar Stamboliysky is more negative than that sketched by John D. Bell in *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899–1923* (Princeton University Press, 1975), while I found his sections devoted to interwar Yugoslavia deeply disappointing. To begin with, there is Wynot's reference to a supposedly "ancient historical Serb–Croat ethnic and religious enmity" (p. 41), forgetting first, that in ancient times the ancestors of the Serbs and Croats still lived in the east, roughly in the area of today's Belarus and that they were polytheists and not engaged in any particular conflict; second, that Serbs and Croats in the Austro-Hungarian Empire formed an electoral coalition in the early twentieth century; and third, that the problems between Serbs and Croats got underway only after the proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes at the end of 1918 – scarcely in "ancient" times. Wynot also makes no mention whatsoever of the anti-Croat violence perpetrated by the Chetniks and the two other Serb militias, the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA) and Serbian National Youth (SRNAO), in the interwar era, and, in the context of World War Two, he underestimates the extent of Chetnik collaboration with the Axis. Wynot made his reputation as a specialist in Polish affairs and may not have looked at either Yugoslav or Romanian affairs outside the context of work on this book. Omissions from Wynot's index include: the (Roman) Catholic Church, the 1925 Concordat in Poland, Serbian politician Dragiša Cvetković (who served as prime minister of Yugoslavia from 1939 to 1941), Polish politician Wincenty Witos (who served three nonconsecutive terms as prime minister during the years 1920–1926), Romanian politician Alexandru Averescu (who served three nonconsecutive terms as prime minister during the years 1918–1927), Bulgarian politician Aleksandar Malinov (who served three nonconsecutive terms as prime minister, 1908–1911, June–November 1918, and June–October 1931), the prominent Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu, and, especially surprising for a book covering the years up to 1945, Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac.

The prolific Iván T. Berend produced the most recent volume devoted to the subject, under the title *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe*

before World War II. The volume is organized into 14 thematic chapters; there are no chapters devoted to individual countries. The first four chapters focus on the years 1900–1918 to set the stage for what is to follow. Chapters 5–6 are devoted to revolutionary processes, including the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and attempted revolutions in Austria and the Baltic states, and are also devoted to the establishment of national states. Chapters 7–13 look at authoritarianism (with chapter 8 devoted to Bolshevik Russia), economic challenges, the peasantry, and challenges posed by the Stalinist model. Finally, chapter 14 revives a previous topic, now placing its focus squarely on art, with the chapter title "The Art of Crisis and the Crisis in Art." This is the only book of the five to reflect a strong interest in music, as shown in the presence between its covers of discussion of composers Sergei Prokofiev, Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, Dmitry Shostakovich, Arnold Schönberg, Richard Strauss, and Igor Stravinsky. This is a supremely ambitious book and makes for challenging reading. Its organization, however, does not lend itself to what one might call proper discussions of the politics of the various states; nor was that the author's intention. Omissions from the index that are shared with Wynot include the 1925 Concordat in Poland, Dragiša Cvetković, Wincenty Witos, Alexandru Averescu, Aleksandar Malinov, Take Ionescu, and Nicolae Titulescu. Other omissions from Berend's index include the Serbian Orthodox Church, Konrad Henlein, Vladko Maček (Radić's successor as Croatian Peasant Party leader), Slovenian politician Anton Korošec, Prince Paul (Pavle) of Yugoslavia, the Bulgarian political–military organization "Zveno," Bulgarian politician Aleksandar Tsankov (who served as prime minister of his country, 1923–1926), Vintilă Brătianu, and Romanian politician Gheorghe Tătărescu (who served two nonconsecutive terms as prime minister of his country, 1934–1937 and 1939–1940). Nonetheless, Berend's book is especially strong in its coverage of Hungary, and there is much to learn from his discussion of music in interwar East Central Europe. In spite of the aforementioned omissions, Berend's book has won well-deserved praise for offering "the broadest synthesis of the modern social, economic, and cultural history of the region that we possess, probably in any language" – though not *political* history![5]

That brings us to Joseph Rothschild's fine volume, which I have used in my East European history class more often than not. Rothschild's best chapters are those devoted to Hungary and Romania, while I consider his chapters on Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia flawed, chiefly due to omissions or the downplaying of important actors and factors. Rothschild's volume is the closest to ours in concept, consisting as it does of an introduction followed by individual country chapters covering the seven countries in the region. However, where we include a chapter on peasant parties, Rothschild included a chapter devoted to the Baltic states together with a chapter on culture. The latter chapter includes passing references to Czech composers Leoš Janáček and Bohuslav Martinu, Hungarian composers Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály; Czech painters Otakar Kubín-Coubine and František Kupka; Austrian painter

(with a Czech name) Oskar Kokoschka; and Polish theater producers Stefan Jaracz, Juliusz Osterwa, and Leon Schiller. Omissions from the index include: the Serbian Agrarian politician Dragoljub Jovanović, and the Concordat in Poland.

In a largely laudatory review published in *Slavic Review*, Roman Szporluk noted that Rothschild opted for an asymmetric treatment of themes in the book, choosing to use Romania as the vehicle to discuss radical-right movements (and consequently saying less about the Ustaša and Arrow Cross movements in the Yugoslav and Hungarian chapters respectively), selecting Bulgaria to discuss the peasantry (thereby paying less attention to the peasantry in, for example, Romania and Yugoslavia, where there were vital peasant parties, with, for example, 72% of Romanians working in agriculture in 1919), using Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia as vehicles for the discussion of multiethnic issues (although Poles represented less than 70% of the population of Poland in 1921 and although there were significant German and Hungarian minorities in Romania in the interwar years), and relying on the Polish case to discuss how a government party operated.[6] This approach results in omissions in all of the country chapters. Szporluk also argues that the material on culture "might have been more effective if it had been parceled out among the national chapters."[7]

At the time of its publication, Rothschild's book was a breakthrough and struck a balance between a scholarly work useful to specialists and a textbook usable in the classroom. But that classic work is now 45 years old; in this volume, we have been able to take advantage of more than 45 years of scholarship on the era, which has appeared since Rothschild's book was published.

In assembling this volume over a period of three years, we have focused on the challenges that the interwar regimes faced and how they coped with them, especially on the failure to establish and stabilize democratic regimes, as well as on the fate of ethnic and religious minorities. Beyond these central themes, the main subjects explored herein are the political systems and how they changed during the two decades under review; land reform (including its ethnic dimension in the case of Czechoslovakia, and the economic difficulties involved for the recipients of land parcels in the case of Hungary); Church–state relations (including the 1925 concordat in Poland and the failed effort to obtain a concordat in Yugoslavia); and, inevitably, the international context. The chapters also include tables providing numbers and percentages of nationality groups in the country (based on census results) and of religious groups in the country (based on census results or other reliable sources).

For this volume, we have adopted the following conventions. First, following a convention well known and respected in ecclesiastical circles, we write "Church" whenever referring to a religious institution and "church" when referring to a building or facility. Second, following a convention well known and observed in fascist studies, we write "Fascist" whenever referring to Italy, as in "Fascist Italy," but "fascist" when referring to fascism elsewhere in the

region or to generic fascism. Third, we use capital letters in referring to political parties such as the Liberal Party in Hungary (just as one refers to the Republican Party in the USA and the Labour Party in Great Britain). And fourth, we refer to the region under consideration by either of two terms: *East Central Europe* or *Central and Southeastern Europe.*

Sabrina P. Ramet
Saksvik, 16 September 2019

Notes

1 Stanley B. Winters, Review of *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, by Ivan T. Berend, in *Central European History*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2001), p. 125.
2 E. C. Helmreich, "Review of *Independent Eastern Europe: A History*, by C. A. Macartney and A. W. Palmer," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (October 1962), p. 133.
3 R. P. Morgan, "Review of *Independent Eastern Europe: A History*, by C. A. Macartney and A. W. Palmer," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1963), p. 150.
4 Ibid., p. 151.
5 John Connelly, "Review of *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, by Ivan T. Berend," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (December 1999), pp. 1096, 1098.
6 Roman Szporluk, "Review of *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, by Joseph Rothschild," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (March 1976), p. 147.
7 Ibid., p. 148.

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INTERWAR EAST CENTRAL EUROPE, 1918–1941

The failure of democracy-building, the fate of minorities – an Introduction

Sabrina P. Ramet[1]

In examining the failure of democracy-building in interwar East Central Europe, the primary questions are: How far back in time should we trace the origins of the failure? and What were the primary causes of failure? One could, if one wished, trace the problems back to the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans beginning in the fourteenth century and to the three partitions of Poland in the years 1772–1795. As a result of these conquests and the hasty break-up of Austria-Hungary in the course of 1918, the East Central European states entered the interwar era with little or no recent experience of independent statehood, but with very recent experience of wartime trauma. The trauma of World War One also accelerated (though it did not originate) far-right tendencies, especially in countries where more nationalist-oriented persons felt that their country had been unjustly treated in the course of the war and subsequent peace treaties. But the foregoing considerations notwithstanding, all seven countries that comprised interwar East Central Europe entered the third decade of the twentieth century with one or another version of parliamentarism and having agreed to protect the interests of local ethnic and religious minorities. Thus, our collective investigation must necessarily focus on what went wrong (and what went right) after 1918. As for the causes of the failure of democracy-building per se, the chief factors to be considered are (1) domestic issues, (2) the region-wide depression that began with the stock market crash of 29 October 1929, and (3) external factors, especially the role of Nazi Germany. The collapse of parliamentary systems (or, perhaps, "quasi-parliamentary regimes"[2]) taking place prior to October 1929 should be traced primarily, if not solely, to domestic issues, whether corruption, or interethnic frictions, or some other cause. After the stock market crash, the economies in the entire region were impacted to one extent or another; and after the Nazi *Machtergreifung* in March 1933, the Third Reich also played a destructive role in the region. The

annexation of Austria (the *Anschluss*) left Czechoslovakia surrounded by Nazi Germany on three sides, placing enormous stress on that republic, even before the appeasement of German Führer Adolf Hitler at Czechoslovakia's expense by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and French Premier Édouard Daladier in September 1938. By that point, German preparation for war was well underway and political leaders across Europe realized that, in the absence of some *deus ex machina*, war seemed to have become unavoidable.

The countries included in this survey of interwar East Central Europe are those traditionally included in this set.[3] From time to time scholars have suggested including other states in what we have called East Central (or Eastern) Europe – such as the Baltic states,[4] or Austria. Although one might identify some commonalities between the states conventionally understood as constituting "East Central Europe" and these others, nonetheless, there are factors that, in combination, define the region uniquely – long suppression within larger empires, high levels of illiteracy as of 1919 (with some exceptions, such as in Czechoslovakia), widespread poverty at the dawn of the interwar era, and high levels of political instability in the interwar years).

At the dawn of the interwar era

In 1914, just before the outbreak of World War One on 28 July 1914, much of the region known variously as Eastern Europe, East Central Europe, or Central and Southeastern Europe, was divided between Hohenzollern Germany, Habsburg Austria-Hungary, and Romanov Russia, with the Ottoman Empire holding onto a region surrounding Istanbul. The other countries in the region – Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece – were smaller than the three empires in expanse, population, wealth, resources, and military strength. The war pitted Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria against Great Britain, France, and Russia, who were later joined by Italy, Romania, and the United States. Germany and its allies lost the war, and at the war's end, 8,528,831 soldiers lay dead, with total casualties across the continent estimated at more than 37 million. Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire were broken up, with Russia losing Ukraine, Belorussia, and Transcaucasia briefly, and Finland and the Baltic states for the duration. Germany lost its African colonies, which were seized by Britain and France, and also lost land to France, Belgium, Denmark, Poland, and Lithuania, with the city of Danzig taken from Germany and set up as a free city.

The following states (or empires) lost at least 400,000 lives each (in ascending order): Italy (466,000), the British Empire (908,000), Austria-Hungary (1,200,000), the French Empire (1,385,000), Russia (1,700,000), and Germany (1,718,000).[5] Among the countries of East Central Europe, Romania suffered the largest losses (335,706).[6] Poland is not listed since it regained its independence only at the end of war, but there were also significant Polish casualties included in the numbers reported for Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany.

Germany signed an armistice on 11 November 1918, but fighting continued on several fronts for a few years. The Russo-Polish War of 1919–1921 ended with Poland expanding its eastern border beyond what British diplomat Lord Curzon had suggested and, in the process, bringing large numbers of Belorussians and Ukrainians under Polish rule.[7] In the south, the Belgrade regime was eager to bring Montenegro, Macedonia, and Kosovo into the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, but encountered armed resistance in all three zones. Montenegro had been an independent state and fielded troops to resist the invading Serbian troops and paramilitary units; but by 1923 resistance had been crushed and Montenegro was annexed. Macedonia had been annexed by force in the course of the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 but, with widespread pro-Bulgarian sentiment among Macedonians, the Belgrade regime considered it necessary to station 50,000 Serbian army troops and police in the province. And in Kosovo, Serbs remembered that some 150,000 Serbs had been driven out of Kosovo by armed Albanians between 1876 and 1912 and they were determined to consolidate their hold on the region. Local Albanians formed paramilitary units and attacked government buildings and trains and rustled cattle until 1924. Only then did Belgrade manage to establish order.[8] Finally, in Russia, a civil war raged until 1921 (with the Red Army conquering Georgia in April of that year). The war pitted several groups of monarchist forces, supported by about 200,000 Allied troops and Japanese forces in the east, against the newly formed Bolshevik Red Army. Ultimately, the Bolsheviks won, with 1.5 million combatants dead, and with about 8 million citizens having died as a result of military action, famine, and disease.[9]

At the start of 1919, there were 13 new or revived states, only three of which remained on the map by 1941. These states were: Belarus and Ukraine, briefly in 1919; Armenia and Azerbaijan, until 1922; Georgia, until 1924; Czechoslovakia and Poland, until 1939; Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, until 1940 (although they regained their independence half a century later); and Finland, Ireland, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later known as Yugoslavia), which expired twice – once in 1941 and again in 1991. The war gave birth to fascism and Nazism, disrupted railway networks, which had been constructed with pre-1914 borders in mind, opened or reopened controversies about borders, including the so-called "Polish corridor," which was populated mostly by Germans but assigned to Poland, and fueled challenges and crises of legitimation.

Following a brief section devoted to commonalities and patterns, this chapter will turn to assessing the factors that brought down parliamentary systems in the region, looking first at those countries where parliamentary systems were overthrown between 1919 and 1929, i.e., before the onset of the Great Depression and the creation of the Third Reich in Germany, followed by an examination of Romania and Czechoslovakia, in which democracy was undermined in 1930 and late 1938 respectively. In these two cases, the Great Depression was a major factor in bringing an end to parliamentary rule, although parliamentarism in Czechoslovakia might well have survived the Depression had

Nazi Germany not cast its shadow over the country, backing Konrad Henlein's Sudeten German Party and annexing the German-inhabited regions of the Sudetenland, later annexing Bohemia and Moravia and setting up Slovakia as an Axis satellite.

Commonalities and patterns

What is immediately striking about the states of interwar East Central Europe is that not a single one of them could claim to have the same boundaries in 1919 as in 1875. Indeed, except for Romania and Bulgaria, none of the states of East Central Europe had even existed before 1878, although the Kingdom of Hungary had been an autonomous unit within the Austro-Hungarian Empire since the *Ausgleich* (Compromise) of 1867.[10] Albania emerged as an independent state in 1913, Poland regained its independence at the end of 1918, Czechoslovakia was stitched together as a new state at the end of 1918, Hungary was recognized as an independent state under the Treaty of St. Germain (10 September 1919) but its borders were not finalized on paper until the Treaty of Trianon (4 June 1920), and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (hereafter, Yugoslavia) was declared at the end of 1918.

Nor were the births or rebirths of these states easy. In Poland, newly elected president Gabriel Narutowicz was assassinated on 16 December 1922, five days after having taken office. In Albania, Prince Wilhelm of Wied had been recruited in March 1914, in order to give his new country a royal pedigree, but was forced into exile six months later.[11] The eventual republic would be extinguished de facto by its eleventh prime minister, Ahmed Zogu (1895–1961), in January 1925 and de jure on 1 September 1928, when Zogu declared himself King Zog I and formally abolished the republic.[12] In Yugoslavia (as the country was called beginning in October 1929), the aforementioned resistance amounted to nothing less than a localized civil war. In Bulgaria, the Agrarian-led government of Prime Minister Aleksandar Stamboliyski (1879–1923) was overthrown in June 1923 and Stamboliyski was brutally murdered.[13] In Hungary, the provisional government proclaimed by Count Mihály Károlyi imploded within three months, having faced diverse challenges including the hostility of local Catholic clerics to the republican form of government, which they denounced as "both anti-Christian and unpatriotic."[14] Károlyi's government gave way to a communist regime headed de facto by Béla Kun (1886–1939), who was head of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Kun immediately declared martial law, banned the sale of alcoholic beverages, began to reorganize the army as a Red Army, set up revolutionary tribunals to replace the preexisting system of courts, and increased wages for workers, with equal pay guaranteed for women. The Revolutionary Governing Council followed this up by nationalizing, without compensation, all medium-sized and large estates, expropriating the landed estates of the Church, nationalizing Church-run schools, and declaring the separation of Church and state. Kun expressed his

hope and belief that these radical measures would prove to be just one block in a broader transition to a continent-wide communist social order.[15] Kun's regime lasted only 133 days, being extinguished by invading Romanian forces, which subsequently withdrew from Budapest, allowing Admiral Miklós Horthy's forces to enter the capital and Horthy to claim the title of Regent of Hungary, which he held until October 1944. And in Romania, the first of two royal coups d'état was carried out by King Ferdinand in March 1920, installing General Alexandru Averescu (1859–1938) in power, who "de facto repudiated the promises and agreements made at the end of the war."[16] The People's Party, which served as Averescu's political vehicle, was anti-reform, anti-communist, antisemitic, and anti-Magyar. Subsequent rigged elections in May 1920 "dealt a fatal blow to the reformist and 'democratic' forces of Greater Rumania."[17] And when it comes to broken promises, one should not forget the promises made by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), the eventual first president of Czechoslovakia, to American Slovaks and to the Ruthenes that these peoples would be granted autonomy in the new state of Czechoslovakia.[18] The promise to the Ruthenes to grant regional autonomy was retracted using the argument that the Ruthenes were too backward to be capable of self-administration.[19] For their part, the Slovaks obtained their autonomy only in the wake of the Munich Agreement of September 1938, which transferred the German-inhabited Sudetenland to Germany; subsequently, the First Vienna Award (2 November 1938) returned the Hungarian-inhabited region in southern Slovakia, which Czechoslovak forces had seized by force, to Hungarian rule.[20]

Some of the new borders in the region were determined by plebiscite – for example, the border between Austria and Yugoslavia involving Slovenes, and the Upper Silesia plebiscite to fix the border between Germany and Poland. Other borders were settled by armed force or by Allied diktat: this applied to Hungary, which lost two-thirds of its territory and one-third of its Hungarian population as sanctioned by the Treaty of Trianon,[21] Bulgaria, which lost its access to the Aegean Sea as a result of the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (November 1919),[22] and Poland, which, as already noted, annexed a large swathe of lands in the east, inhabited predominantly by Belorussians and Ukrainians, achieved in the course of the Russo-Polish War and agreed in the Treaty of Riga (18 March 1921).[23]

The early instability, described above, was symptomatic not only of typically extreme political polarization but also of a lack of consensus on the rules of the political game (and, of course, on the borders of every state in the region). Certainly, Sudeten Germans did not want to be adjoined to Czechoslovakia, just as the Ukrainians brought into Poland by Marshal Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935) had no desire to be included in the Polish state.[24] There were other profound disagreements. In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), quite apart from the resistance of many Montenegrins, Macedonians, and Kosovar Albanians to inclusion in the Serb-dominated state, the dominant Croatian party – the Croatian Republican Peasant Party –

rejected the monarchy and wanted the new state to have a *federal* form, while the dominant Serbian parties insisted on a unitary political system.[25] Again, in Czechoslovakia – to repeat for emphasis – the Slovak People's Party of Fr. Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938) wanted Slovakia to enjoy autonomy, while the Czech parties refused to consider this option until late 1938. Indeed, the turbulence of the interwar era, which was especially obvious in Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia was a consequence and reflection of this lack of consensus. The sheer number of political parties contending for representation (see Table 1.1, below) also made its contribution to the political turbulence of the 1920s and into the 1930s.

There were other problems and challenges as well. Among other things, the hectic redrawing of borders brought various complications in tow. To begin with, railways had been constructed to facilitate transportation and the movement of goods *within* the Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Romanov empires respectively. When these empires were broken up, the new states faced the difficulty that some of their cities had better connections with cities in other countries than with other cities within their own respective countries. In addition, in Poland and Romania the railway systems constructed by the empires had used different gauges and, in the case of Romania, it took until 1923 to standardize the gauges of all railway lines.[26]

The three sections of Poland operated initially with different systems of education and, during 1918–1919, there were as many as six currencies in circulation in Poland: German marks, Austrian crowns, Russian rubles, Polish marks, "occupation marks" issued by the German High Command in the east, and varieties of Russian currency.[27] Until 1920, a tariff barrier remained in place between former Prussian Poland and the rest of Poland, and one even needed a passport to travel from Warsaw to Poznań. Four legal systems functioned in the emergent Polish state (in the Russian sector, the region of the

TABLE 1.1 The number of political parties represented in national parliaments in East Central Europe in select elections

	Year	*Number of parties represented in parliament*
Czechoslovakia	1920	16
Yugoslavia	1920	11*
Romania	1928	11
Poland	1922	11
Hungary	1922	7
Bulgaria	1919	14

Source: Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1974; second printing with corrections, 1977; eighth printing, 1998), pp. 49, 102, 161, 215, 301, 334.
* This figure counts coalitions and groupings as units.

Congress Kingdom retained a modified version of the Napoleonic code, while elsewhere in the former Russian sector the same legal system had obtained as in the rest of the Russian Empire).

In Czechoslovakia, the Czech provinces inherited the Austrian legal code, while Slovakia and Ruthenia operated initially under the less liberal Hungarian code. In the Yugoslav kingdom, there were at first six distinct legal-administrative systems in place, fueling uncertainty and administrative chaos. Even though the government soon established a special ministry to standardize the laws, progress on standardization was slow.[28] Even the Serbian Orthodox Church found itself straddled with significant administrative differences from one region to another. It was not until 1929 that the Serbian Orthodox Church achieved organizational and administrative unity.[29] Similar problems also plagued Romania in the initial years after 1918, as authorities confronted the need to synchronize the diverse legal and administrative systems in the Regat, Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia.[30]

Finally, at the dawn of the interwar era, illiteracy was a problem in most of the countries in the region. As the figures in Table 1.2 make clear, only in Czechoslovakia and Hungary was illiteracy among persons six years of age or older less than 10%, while, in Romania and Albania in the early decades of the twentieth century, more than three-quarters of the population was illiterate. Where Yugoslavia was concerned, the rate of illiteracy was highly variable, ranging from the lowest rate of illiteracy among persons age 11 or older in Slovenia (8.8%) to the highest rate in Bosnia-Herzegovina (80.5%).

The first group of failures, 1919–1929: Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, Poland, and Yugoslavia

All seven states began their political journey after the end of World War One by setting up multiparty parliamentary systems. But by the end of 1930, only Czechoslovakia still functioned under an albeit flawed parliamentary system and, by the end of 1938, even the Czechoslovak system had been fundamentally undermined.

Democracy, properly understood, was never put into practice in interwar Hungary. After the brief episodes involving Count Mihály Károlyi and subsequently Béla Kun, the right-wing regime of Admiral Miklós Horthy (1868–1957) initiated a reign of terror, claiming the lives of about 5,000 people and herding another 70,000 into newly established concentration camps.[31] As the terror subsided, Horthy was elected regent of Hungary on 1 March 1920. By 14 April 1921, the conservative Count István Bethlen (1874–1946) assumed the office of prime minister, which he would hold for 10 years. In his maiden speech to the parliament, Bethlen called for a middle position between "unbridled freedom and unrestrained dictatorship."[32] The parliament was not asked to approve Bethlen's appointment and the Smallholder Party, the largest party in the parliament, held only a minority of seats in Bethlen's cabinet. Bethlen now prepared

TABLE 1.2 Illiteracy in interwar East Central Europe

Albania	80% of the population was functionally illiterate in 1920
Bulgaria (illiteracy among persons 10 years of age or older)	46.4% in 1920, 39.3% in 1926, 31.4% in 1934
Czechoslovakia	in 1930, 5% of persons 6 years of age or older were illiterate, but 8.16% of Slovaks were illiterate
Hungary (illiteracy among persons 6 years of age or older)	13.7% in 1920, 9.6% in 1930, 7.1–7.4% in 1941
Poland	33.1% of the population was illiterate in 1921; 23% in 1930; by 1939 this had been reduced to 18%
Romania	prior to World War One, 78% of Romanians were illiterate; in 1930, 48.5% of persons 7 years of age or older among the rural population were illiterate
Yugoslavia (illiteracy among persons 12 years of age or older in 1921, 11 years of age or older in 1931)	50.5% in 1921, 44.6% in 1931
Regions of Yugoslavia (illiteracy among persons 11 years or older in 1921)	Serbia (including Kosovo), 65.4%; Vojvodina, 23.3%; Croatia-Slavonia, 32.3%; Dalmatia, 49.5%; Slovenia, 8.8%; Bosnia-Herzegovina, 80.5%; Macedonia, 83.4%; Montenegro, 67%

Sources: *Progress of Literacy in Various Countries: A Preliminary Statistical Study of Available Census Data Since 1900* (Paris: UNESCO, 1953), at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000028/002898EB.pdf [accessed on 11 October 2017], pp. 21–22, 46, 162, 163; M. J. Alex Standich, "Enver Hoxha's Role in the Development of Socialist Albanian Myths," in Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer (Eds.), *Albanian Identities: Myth and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 115; Anna M. Cienciala, "The Birth of Czechoslovakia, 1914–1920," *History 557 Lecture Notes*, at http://acienciala.faculty.ku.edu/hist557/lect12.htm [accessed on 11 October 2017]; Zsolt Nagy, *Great Expectations and Interwar Realities: Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918–1941* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2017), p. 111; Małgorzata Mizerska-Wrotkowska and José Luis Martínez, *Poland and Spain in the Interwar and Postwar Period* (Madrid: Schedas S.L., 2015), p. 38; Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 30; Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 344; and Dušan Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 1999), p. 105.

a new electoral law – to confirm an earlier executive decree promulgated by Horthy – which required that men be 24 years of age, but women 30 years of age, in order to be eligible to vote, and established that an open ballot would be used in 195 rural districts (but with a secret ballot in 50 urban districts).[33] The government also paid subsidies to conservative newspapers and tapped the telephones of some opposition politicians and opposition newspapers.[34] Over time it became apparent that what was called "the Horthy regime" was in fact the Bethlen regime, with Horthy content to play a largely ceremonial role. Bethlen

continued as prime minister until August 1931 and, after a short interlude during which Count Gyula Károlyi served as prime minister, the right-wing Gyula Gömbös (1886–1936), who had previously met with members of the then-fledgling Nazi party in Bavaria as well as with representatives of Mussolini's Fascist government,[35] was appointed prime minister (on 1 October 1932). Gömbös set about building a fascist party with a mass following and disseminating fascist propaganda among the working class.[36] He also tried to liquidate the trade unions and replace them with fascist organizations. On 16 June 1933, Gömbös became the first foreign statesman to visit Adolf Hitler. Gömbös later became ill and died in autumn 1936, but Hungary's rightward drift was not to be reversed.

In 1920, almost half a million Jews lived in Hungary, accounting for 6% of the country's population.[37] That same year, the Horthy regime adopted a numerus clausus (de facto, a quota), limiting the proportion of Jewish students enrolled in universities or institutes of higher education to 6%, corresponding to the proportion of Jews in Hungary at the time. Between April 1921 and October 1932, during the prime ministerships of István Bethlen and Gyula Károlyi, the anti-Jewish restrictions were not strictly enforced. But in October 1932, once Gömbös moved into the prime minister's office, the regime got to work on framing additional anti-Jewish legislation. A major anti-Jewish law was adopted on 29 May 1938, when Béla Imredy was prime minister, setting an upper limit of 20% for Jews working in the liberal professions and the economy. A second anti-Jewish law was passed under Prime Minister Pál Teleki on 4 May 1939, "reduc[ing] the role of Jews in Hungarian economic life even more, setting the limits to 6%."[38] Hardship turned to catastrophe in 1944 after the radical right Arrow Cross seized power in Hungary and stepped up the deportation of Jews to Auschwitz.

Particularly troubling was the fact that, when something like an opposition to the dominant conservatives emerged in Hungary, its leading figure was Ferenc Szálasi (1897–1946), leader of the fascist Arrow Cross party. What should be evident from the foregoing account is that the Hungarian liberals associated with Mihály Károlyi were too weak to establish a democratic system. The Hungarian authoritarian regime emerged and sustained itself above all due to domestic factors.

Elsewhere in the region, coups were more typical of the path of degeneration into dictatorship. The rash of coups and assassinations that plagued East Central Europe during the interwar years (see Tables 1.3 and 1.4) was symptomatic simultaneously of the weakness of political institutions, the lack of popular dedication to those institutions, and the weakness of anything we might call a civic culture. This weakness was also reflected, in the cases of Albania, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia, in the fact that new constitutions were adopted in these four states within 3 to 15 years of the adoption of the first constitutions (see Table 1.5). Developments in Bulgaria followed a similar course. The quashing of the left-wing Agrarian government and murder of Agrarian leader Stamboliyski in June 1923 have already been mentioned. What

TABLE 1.3 Coups in interwar East Central Europe

1920	Romania	King Ferdinand installed General Alexandru Averescu as prime minister, after Ion Brătianu stepped aside
1923	Bulgaria	Prime Minister Aleksandar Stamboliyski assassinated; a new right-wing regime replaced his agrarian regime
1924	Albania	A Yugoslav military force loyal to the exiled Ahmed Bey Zogu overthrew the government of Prime Minister Fan Noli; two weeks later Zogu returned and was installed as president of Albania
1926	Poland	Having watched the prolonged political chaos in the country, Marshal Józef Piłsudski led a force of loyal legionnaires in a march on Warsaw where, in the course of three days, he succeeded in obtaining the resignation of the elected government; after that, he was the leading figure in the new regime, although he did not occupy the post of either president or prime minister but rather served as minister of military affairs, general inspector of the armed forces, and chairman of the war council
1929	Yugoslavia	King Aleksandar suspended the constitution, prorogued the parliament, and established a personal dictatorship
1930	Romania	Having renounced his right of succession five years earlier when he was forced to leave the country, Prince Carol Hohenzollern returned to Romania, dismissed the regency, and installed himself as King Carol II; his rule subsequently evolved into a personal dictatorship
1934	Bulgaria	The Military League overthrew the Popular Bloc government and installed Colonel Kimon Georgiev as prime minister
1938	Romania	On 10 February 1938, King Carol II declared a royal dictatorship, outlawing all political parties
1941	Yugoslavia	On 27 March 1941, at 2:15 a.m., a group of army officers led by Air Force General Bora Mirković overthrew the government and installed a new government

followed was the establishment, with the support of the army, of a right-wing government headed by the erstwhile professor of economics, Aleksandar Tsankov (1879–1959), who came in as prime minister and minister of the interior. In the short run, the Tsankov regime sought to curry favor with the peasantry by redistributing more land than the Agrarian government had done – although those receiving land were required to pay higher sums for their new acquisitions than those who had been granted land by the Agrarians.[39] In autumn 1925, Tsankov's government sought a loan from the League of Nations, in order to take care of the many refugees in the country; Whitehall responded that, as a condition for the loan, Tsankov would have to relinquish the post of prime minister. Accordingly, in January 1926, Andrey Lyapchev (1866–1933) assumed the office of prime minister. Tsankov left the cabinet

TABLE 1.4 Prominent political figures assassinated in East Central Europe, 1919–1940

1920	Esad Pasha Toptani, former prime minister of Albania (1914–1916), assassinated by Avni Rrustemi, who would later be elected to the Albanian parliament
1921	Milorad Drašković, minister of internal affairs of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, assassinated by communists
1922	Gabriel Narutowicz, president of Poland, assassinated by Eligiusz Nie-wiadomski, a painter associated with the right-wing National Democratic Party
1923	Aleksandar Stamboliyski, prime minister of Bulgaria, assassinated by members of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization
1923	Raiko Daskalov, a leading figure in the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, assassinated by members of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization
1923	Alois Rašín, minister of finance of Czechoslovakia, assassinated by anarchist Josef Šoupal
1924	Avni Rrustemi, member of the Albanian parliament, assassinated by Jusuf Reçi, an agent of Ahmed Zogu
1928	Đuro Basariček, prominent member of the Croatian Peasant Party, assassinated by Puniša Račić, a Serb nationalist and member of the parliament
1928	Stjepan Radić, president of the Croatian Peasant Party, assassinated by Puniša Račić, a Serb nationalist and member of the parliament
1931	Milan Šufflay, Croatian historian and politician, assassinated by members of the Young Yugoslavia organization
1931	Tadeusz Holówko, Polish politician assassinated by militants of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists
1933	Josip Predavec, vice president of the Croatian Peasant Party, assassinated by Tomo Koščec
1933	Ion G. Duca, prime minister of Romania, assassinated by members of the Iron Guard
1934	King Aleksandar of Yugoslavia, assassinated by a member of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, working in tandem with the Croatian Ustaša movement
1934	Bronisław Pieracki, minister of internal affairs of Poland, assassinated by a Ukrainian nationalist affiliated with the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists
1936	Mihai Stelescu, a former member of the Legion of the Archangel Michael/Iron Guard (hereafter Iron Guard), assassinated by Legionaries led by Ion Caratănase
1938	Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, leader of the Iron Guard, allegedly shot while trying to escape from prison, but actually garroted
1939	Armand Calinescu, prime minister of Romania, assassinated by members of the Iron Guard
1940	Nicolae Iorga, co-founder of the Democratic Nationalist Party and former prime minister of Romania, assassinated by members of the Iron Guard

(Continued)

TABLE 1.4 *(Cont.)*

1940	Virgil Madgearu, prominent member of the Peasants' Party and later of its successor, the National Peasants' Party, assassinated by members of the Iron Guard
1940	Gheorghe Argeşanu, former minister of national defense and former prime minister of Romania, assassinated by members of the Iron Guard

TABLE 1.5 States with two or more constitutions during the interwar era

Albania	January 1925	Adoption of a constitution for the Republic of Albania
	1928	Adoption of a Fundamental Statute for the Kingdom of Albania
	June 1939	Promulgation by King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy of a new Fundamental Statute for Albania
Poland	February 1919	Passage of the "Small Constitution"
	March 1921	Adoption of a constitution providing for a weak presidency
	April 1935	Adoption of a constitution providing for a strong presidency
Romania	March 1923	Adoption of a constitution establishing a bicameral parliament and codifying the separation of powers
	February 1938	Issuance of a constitution drafted by Istrate Micescu, on instructions from King Carol II, scrapping the separation of powers and providing a legal foundation for the royal dictatorship
	5 September 1940	The king suspended the constitution
Yugoslavia (until October 1929, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes)	June 1921	Adoption of the Vidovdan (St. Vitus Day) constitution
	September 1931	A new constitution was decreed by King Aleksandar, dropping the secret ballot

altogether, and now became president of the Sŭbranie (the national assembly); with the result that Bulgaria was able to receive the loan it had requested. The early years of the 1930s were, nonetheless, years of economic hardship for Bulgarians. The global economic crisis reached the country in the second half of 1930 and only ended in 1935.[40]

The Bulgarian government refused to renounce its revanchism and wanted to regain lands taken during the Balkan Wars and World War One.[41] Then, in the 1930s, Tsankov created the National Social Movement, putting members in uniforms copied from the German Nazis. Tsankov's party did well in local elections in February 1934; three months later, Colonels Damian Velchev and Kimon Georgiev launched a coup. Their regime lasted less than two years and, in November 1935, King Boris III (1894–1943) removed and jailed Georgiev and installed Georgi Kyoseivanov as prime minister, establishing a royal dictatorship. What Boris wanted, as he put it, was "a tidy and *disciplined* democracy imbued with the idea of social solidarity."[42]

In terms of religious and ethnic composition, Bulgaria was largely homogeneous; according to census results, Eastern Orthodox believers accounted for 83.8% of the country's population in 1920, rising to 84.4% in 1934, while ethnic Bulgarians accounted for 83.4% of the population in 1920 and 86.8% in 1934.[43] The largest religious minority was the Muslims (14.3% in 1920, 13.5% in 1934), followed at a distance by the Jews (0.9% in 1920, 0.8% in 1934) and Roman Catholics (0.7% in 1920, 0.8% in 1934).[44] Most of the more than 600,000 Muslims were Turks, but the 1920 census also reported the presence of 88,399 (Bulgarophone) Pomaks; by 1934, there were 134,125 Pomaks in Bulgaria, of whom 95% lived in villages.[45] In 1915, Bulgarian historian Yordan Ivanof claimed that Pomaks placed more emphasis on religion than on nationality (language) and preferred to be viewed as Turks.[46] From the standpoint of Bulgarian authorities, the Turkish presence was a problem. During the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, Bulgarian authorities used force to try to convert ("reconvert" according to authorities) Pomaks to Christianity. The Bulgarian authorities viewed the Pomaks as part of the Bulgarian nation, because they spoke Bulgarian and on the assumption of their ethnic Slavic origin, and the authorities claimed that their forebears had been forced by the Ottomans to convert to Islam. But, in the early interwar years, the Pomaks identified as Turks because they were Muslims and because of some traditions shared with pre-Kemalist Turks, such as wearing the *fez* (for men) or the veil (for women). Bulgarian authorities set out to convince the Pomaks that Islam was not incompatible with Bulgarian nationality, while also seeking to persuade Pomak men to replace the *fez* with the European-style hat. Some Bulgarians sought to advance the assimilation of Pomaks by calling them "Bulgarian Mohammedans."[47]

One of the challenges that the Turks and Pomaks faced was their low levels of literacy. In 1926, only 12% of Bulgaria's Turks were literate, while a mere 6.5% of Pomaks were literate that year. Even in 1934, most Turks and Pomaks were illiterate, while literacy among Bulgarians was roughly four times that within the

two Muslim groups.[48] Literacy would start with the young and Bulgaria's schools were supposed to function as engines of Bulgarianization of the Pomaks. In schools for that group, Christian themes were left out, so that the focus could be placed firmly on promoting a Bulgarian consciousness in the minds of pupils. On the other hand, Bulgarian authorities saw no place for Turks and hoped to reduce and, with time, eliminate the ethnic Turkish presence in Bulgaria.[49]

By contrast with other countries in the northern tier, Albania and Bulgaria had high levels of illiteracy, poverty, and corruption, and also had traditions of brigandage, poorly developed transportation infrastructure, overpopulation, and relatively low levels of educational attainment. Other problems included poor soil, a lack of Western capital investment, high taxes, and governmental inefficiency – all of these being domestic factors. On the other hand, Bulgaria had enjoyed de facto independence (officially autonomy) since 1878, declaring independence officially in 1908, while Albania's independence (declared in November 1912) obtained Western recognition as a result of the London Conference in 1913. (Romania had achieved complete independence in 1878.) However, such advantages as might have accrued to Albania and Bulgaria as a result of having attained independence prior to World War One were more than offset by their loss of territory in the course of the Balkan Wars and, in the case of Bulgaria, a further loss of land as an outcome of World War One, as well as the Allied demand for punitively high reparations, both of which provoked deep resentment in some quarters.

At the dawn of the interwar era, the Albanian political landscape was dominated by two political parties: the Progressive Party led by Shefqet Verlaci, which was opposed to land reform; and the Popular Party, in which Bishop Fan S. Noli and Ahmed Bey Zogu were prominent personalities, with Noli open to land reform. The first postwar elections were held in April 1921 and were followed by three years of internal instability. Along the way, the Popular Party won control of the government in December 1921 and Zogu became minister of internal affairs, while Noli became foreign minister. In December 1922, Zogu took the office of prime minister for himself. However, Zogu's rivals exacted a crippling compromise. As Bernd Fischer recounts in Chapter 8, in this volume, "[t]he position of minister of the interior … was rotated on a weekly basis." Not surprisingly, this resulted in the rapid turnover of officials appointed by the minister.[50] This absurd modus operandi reflected, among other things, the political naivete of Albania's self-seeking politicians.

By 1922, Zogu and Noli had split and, in elections held in November of that year, Zogu's party increased its share of deputies in the parliament to 50 out of 102. The remaining 52 seats were held by Noli's party, Christians, beys, and people not affiliated with any party.[51] On 24 February 1924, Zogu was shot three times in the parliament by a member of the Union of Young Albanians, an organization established by Avni Rrystem, an associate of Fan Noli. Zogu resigned as prime minister the next day, to be succeeded by Shevqet Verlaci, his prospective father-in-law, who agreed only reluctantly to

accept the post. Later, Rrystem, by then a deputy in the Constituent Assembly, was shot dead by one of Zogu's adherents.[52]

Noli felt that he could never gain political primacy as long as Zogu was in the country; he therefore demanded that Zogu leave Albania and take his followers with him. As the country sank into disorder, 7,000 insurgent troops closed in on Tirana, the country's capital. When Zogu discovered that local citizens were not ready to risk their lives for him, he took 600 supporters to the mountains, later retreating to Yugoslavia. With Italian support, Noli seized power in June, but failed to satisfy his peasant supporters.[53] As prime minister, Noli was as naive as he was ambitious, pledging to disarm the entire population, uproot feudalism, assert the authority of the state over extralegal agents, reform the civil service and the military, balance the budget, improve conditions for farmers, reorganize the educational system, and make it easier for foreigners to invest in Albania. But Noli lacked both domestic support for his program and financial backing.[54] Zogu returned from exile in December with Yugoslav military support and, by 24 December, had reasserted his control of Albania. The following month, he was confirmed as prime minister of Albania; subsequently the Constituent Assembly elected him president of the country. Within six months, relying on violence and the threat of violence, Zogu had established his regime on firm foundations, in the meantime turning to Italy for economic and political support. Multiparty parliamentarism was unfamiliar to Albanians, for whom monarchy was traditional and more comfortable. Meanwhile, immediately after the war, Zogu, who had already developed a partiality for monarchy, visited Rome, where he came under the spell of memories of Augustus Caesar, whom he described as "the greatest incarnation of a political man."[55] On 24 December 1927, then-President Ahmed Zogu was voted "Savior of the Nation" by the Assembly and, on 1 September 1928, that same body acclaimed Zogu king of the Albanians. In accepting the crown, the new king, who styled himself King Zog I, swore an oath on both the Koran and the Bible.[56]

The parliament continued to meet, but it served as little more than a rubber stamp for King Zog's decisions. Zog assured himself of the deputies' compliance by dispensing generous bribes, made possible by funding from Fascist Italy. But, of course, the Italians exacted a price for their subsidies. Among other things, Italy gained a large degree of control over the Albanian army and, by 1931, had infiltrated most Albanian ministries.[57] Although Zog balked at renewing the 1927 Treaty of Alliance with Italy when it expired in 1931, Albania remained dependent on Italian largesse and, therefore, under Italian influence throughout the remainder of the interwar years. Zog introduced a new civil code in 1929, established a new, more effective gendarmerie, and decreed a new penal code in 1930 and a new commercial code the following year. But these were decreed from above; it was the "Savior of the Nation" who was in charge.

The next country to see its parliamentary system fail was Poland. Marshal Józef Piłsudski served as reborn Poland's first head of state, 1918–1922, and, in

free and fair elections, would almost surely have won the presidency. Polish conservative politicians were well aware of Piłsudski's huge popularity, following his victorious campaign against the Red Army, and did not want him to become a strong president. For that reason, the country's first constitution (17 March 1921) was crafted in such a way as to create a very weak presidency – so weak that the marshal lost any interest in the position and withdrew his name from consideration for that post. Crafting a constitution with such a purpose did not bode well for Polish democracy. Moreover, with more than 8 political parties represented in the Sejm (11 in 1922), coalitions were unstable and changes in the government make-up were frequent. Thus, between the end of 1918 and May 1926, 14 governments tried to govern Poland.

Polish politics was severely polarized from the outset. Roman Dmowski (1864–1939), the leader of the right-wing National Democrats (ND), wanted to build an ethnically homogeneous Poland by assimilating non-Polish Eastern Slavs and encouraging Germans and Jews to leave Poland.[58] In Dmowski's view, Poles' primary loyalty should be to the Polish nation. Rural Catholic clergy and some bishops endorsed Dmowski's program.[59] Dmowski's main rival was Piłsudski, who wanted Poland to emerge as a commonwealth of diverse nationalities and with citizens owing their primary loyalty not to the nation, but to the Polish state.[60] Piłsudski had no patience with antisemitism, but, where the Catholic Church was concerned, the Catholic hierarchy subscribed to a third vision for Poland, stressing their desire to see Catholicism established as the official state religion and Catholic religious instruction introduced as a mandatory subject in the state schools.[61]

The assassination of president-elect Narutowicz, mentioned above, was the work of an ND sympathizer – which induced the ND deputies in the Sejm to accept the appointment of a centrist military hero, General Władysław Sikorski, as prime minister on 16 December 1922. But in May 1923, the National Democrats entered into a coalition with the centrist Piast Peasant Party. Piast leader Wincenty Witos (1874–1945) assumed the office of the prime minister. In response, Piłsudski, who had held the important post of chief of the general staff since the previous December, now resigned from that position and withdrew to his country home in Sulejówek, 17 km. east of Warsaw.[62] Not wishing to be beholden to the Piast government in any way, Piłsudski decided not to accept his pension as former chief of staff or former chief of the general staff and assigned it to support the Stefan Batory University in Wilno, where he had grown up. Piłsudski supported himself and his family from his writings and by presenting lectures. Retired though he may have been, the right-wing government remained apprehensive of the marshal and placed him under surveillance.[63] Witos lost the prime ministership in December 1923, when Piast split over the question of land reform.[64] His successor was Władysław Grabski (1874–1938), who had previously served as prime minister from 27 June 1920 to 24 July 1920. On returning to the prime minister's office, Grabski faced serious economic challenges with the value of

the Polish mark plummeting precipitously. The Sejm addressed the challenge on 5 January 1924, by granting Grabski extraordinary powers to issue decrees affecting the economy. Grabski oversaw the introduction of a new currency, the Polish złoty, in April 1924, but a poor harvest and the impact of German tariffs (introduced in early 1925) and Germany's decision to halt imports of Polish coal on 15 June 1925 undermined Grabski's efforts to stabilize the economy.[65] When the economic crisis intensified, the main Polish parties agreed to a grand coalition headed by Aleksander Skrzyński, a diplomat without ties to any political party. What should be stressed in the transfer of power from Grabski to Skrzyński, as Joseph Rothschild has noted, is that it was brought about

> by public unrest and by the Bank Polski, not by the Sejm … The cabinet's fall was thus interpreted as a failure not only of democracy but even of semi-democracy, for democracy was assumed to have already failed with the granting of discretionary decree powers to Grabski on January 5, 1924.[66]

Corruption and financial scandals were rife in these years. But the readiness of parliamentary deputies to interfere in public administration and of the cabinet to engage in fiscal adventurism undermined public confidence in the authorities. Nor did the press, with its partisan and irresponsible journalism, help. It was in such circumstances that about a thousand officers, among them several generals, came to Sulejówek to show their respect for the marshal. Addressing Marshal Piłsudski on behalf of the gathering and referring to Piłsudski's victory over the Red Army in 1920, General Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer called upon the marshal to rescue Poland from its chaos. Meanwhile, economic troubles were multiplying. The złoty collapsed in March–April 1926, and when panicked Poles rushed to withdraw their funds from their savings accounts, 20 banks failed. By this point, there were some 400,000 officially unemployed, which is to say not counting new, young entrants onto the labor market or about two million rural poor.[67] There were street protests and riots in cities across Poland. More and more people were calling for a dictator to put matters in order,[68] and most of them were thinking of Piłsudski.

On 7 January 1926, Jędrzej Moraczewski, the socialist minister of public works, suggested to his fellow members of the cabinet, that Piłsudski be recalled to active service. There followed negotiations between Prime Minister Skrzyński and Piłsudski.[69] But before the cabinet had a chance to finalize an agreement with the marshal, the government fell and, on 10 May, Witos returned to the prime minister's office to begin his third term at the helm. It was to be his shortest.

On the eve of formally assuming the prime ministership, Witos told the press corps that he intended to get tough with his political adversaries, especially Piłsudski, who he said should not be allowed to play any role in public life. But Witos was not content with that and went further, daring Piłsudski to test his strength. "Let Marshal Piłsudski finally come out of hiding," Witos challenged,

let him form a new government … [I]f he fails to do this, he will create the impression that he does not really care about setting things right in the country … It is said that Piłsudski has the army behind him; if he does, let him seize power by force … I would not hesitate to do so. If Piłsudski does not do so, it would appear that he does not have these forces behind him after all.[70]

The next day, 10 May, as Witos assumed office, Piłsudski replied with an interview for Warsaw's *Morning Courier* (*Kurjer Poranny*), attacking Witos, Grabski, and their associates for moral decrepitude and asserting that "the 'moral interests' of the state were at stake."[71] When Witos learned about the interview, he tried to have copies of the issue confiscated, but this only stoked public interest in the interview, while angering Poles at this attempt to suppress the free press. The four most important leftist parties in the parliament brought out a joint manifesto, declaring that the ministers making up Witos's new government were "exploitative, incompetent, and provocatively weak, and promis[ing] to actively oppose it with every means at their disposal."[72] The following morning, at 7 a.m., Piłsudski set out by foot for Warsaw, accompanied by his loyal legionnaires. At first, the government resisted Piłsudski's endeavor to end its agony, with troops loyal to the government defending the key government buildings. By the end of 12 May, there were private citizens arming themselves and coming out to join Piłsudski's modest force. Two days later, troops from nearby garrisons defected to Piłsudski, swelling his ranks. The government finally succumbed in the night of 14–15 May, allowing Piłsudski to install his chosen candidate, Kazimierz Bartel (1882–1941), as prime minister.

Between 1926 and his death on 12 May 1935, except for two brief periods, Piłsudski was content to hold the posts of general inspector of the armed forces (a post created for him) and minister of war – although he was effectively "the power behind the throne." The two exceptions were 2 October 1926–27 June 1928 and 15 August–4 December 1930, during which periods he took over as prime minister. He used his first term as prime minister to organize the Non-Partisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government (BBWR), effectively a bloc of people pledging their support for the marshal in whatever he might undertake. During his second, even briefer term as prime minister, he had Witos and other opposition leaders arrested and imprisoned in the fortress at Brześć and organized elections in November 1930 in which the BBWR garnered 55.6% of the seats in the Sejm.[73]

Among the challenges that Piłsudski inherited from previous governments was that involving the country's minorities, among whom there were 4½ million Ukrainians and Ruthenes, approximately 3 million Jews, 1,697,000 Belorussians, and 734,000 Germans.[74] Although there was antipathy toward all four of these groups on the part of many Poles, antisemitism was particularly sharp, having both cultural and religious aspects. In the first half of the 1920s, Ukrainian

nationalists, who wanted an independent state, engaged in a guerrilla war against Polish authorities. Ukrainian grievances were exacerbated when, in 1924, the Polish Sejm adopted a law promoting bilingual schools, thereby effecting a reduction in the number of single-language Ukrainian schools. But when Piłsudski took power in May 1926, he criticized the minority policy of previous governments, which had emphasized assimilation, and sought to turn over a new leaf.[75] In 1929, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists was founded and immediately launched a campaign of terror against state functionaries. In autumn 1930, Polish authorities hit back, sending the army into eastern Galicia to effect a "pacification" of the countryside. Subsequently, the Ukrainians built up a cooperative movement that, in the 1930s, consisted of 3,500 cooperatives, with 700,000 members. Henryk Józewski, a loyal lieutenant of Piłsudski, thought that Ukrainian loyalty could be won by making concessions in cultural, religious, and educational policy. But events did not bear out Józewski's optimism and Poland's Ukrainians remained alienated.[76]

Piłsudski ruled Poland in an authoritarian manner, but he also brought political stability to the country, signed a concordat with the Catholic Church, championed equal rights for Poland's Jews,[77] and, in what proved to be a vain effort to assure Poland's security in dangerous times, signed non-aggression pacts with the Soviet Union (in July 1932) and with the Third Reich (in January 1934). The attempt to create a democratic system on the foundations of the 1921 constitution failed miserably. It failed, in the first place, because its drafters had deliberately omitted to provide a check (in the form of a strong executive) on the powers of the parliament, thus allowing the extreme political polarization to do its worst to the political system. On 23 April 1935, the Sejm approved a new constitution for Poland, establishing a strong presidency.[78] Three weeks later, Piłsudski was dead and none of the leading politicians were able to fill his shoes. Rigged elections were held in November 1935, giving the BBWR a large victory. But fewer than half of eligible Poles bothered to vote. Following this superficial victory, the regime disbanded the BBWR. By the late 1930s, with Piłsudski no longer on hand to provide a check, the National Democrats were gravitating toward fascism, antisemitism became rampant, and opposition parties turned to organizing strikes in order to press their points of view.

Comprising roughly 7.8% of the Polish population,[79] the Polish Jewish community was the largest such community in the region. Culturally, the Jews were largely unassimilated, and about 80% of them spoke Yiddish as their mother tongue. Few were comfortable with Hebrew and, thus, while there was a flourishing Yiddish press, with two mass circulation daily newspapers in Warsaw, alongside hundreds of other Yiddish publications, the Hebrew-language press was struggling to find readers. There was also a lively Yiddish theater and a Jewish scientific institute in Vilna, which had been set up in 1925.[80] From the very beginning of the Polish Republic, Poles discriminated against Jews in hiring; and boycotts of Jewish businesses were by no means uncommon. Poles were also known to boycott German-owned stores.[81] Jews

were subjected to physical attacks, especially by Polish university students and, in the later 1930s, the number of boycotts of Jewish-owned shops and physical attacks on Jews increased, with the wave of antisemitic violence continuing until 1938, when the government took action against it.[82]

In sum, we may say that the challenges that Poland faced in the years leading up to Piłsudski's coup were of its own making – especially the weak presidency, the low threshold for political parties to get into the Sejm, and the rampant antisemitism. Although Piłsudski's regime preserved the outward appearance of a parliamentary system, after May 1926 the flawed parliamentarism of the first half dozen years was replaced by a system in which Piłsudski had the final word.

Yugoslavia, as already noted, was not the product of consensus. Even the constitution was "purchased" in a dirty deal, with Serbian parties obtaining the assent of the Yugoslav Muslim Organization to the centralist constitution, in exchange for certain promises that, according to historian Mustafa Imamović, were never honored.[83] In the lead-up to elections held on 8 February 1925, the Croatian Republican Peasant Party was prevented from campaigning, even though the names of its candidates appeared on the ballot. The electoral fraud being perpetrated was made completely obvious by the arrest and temporary detention of several leading figures of the Croatian Republican Peasant Party, including Stjepan Radić (1871–1928), Vladko Maček (1879–1964), and the Košutić brothers.[84] Many Serbs despised the Croatian party leader, Stjepan Radić, and, on 20 June 1928, a corrupt Serbian Radical deputy named Puniša Račić pulled out a gun in the parliamentary chamber and shot Radić and two other Croatian deputies. Wounded in the stomach, Radić lingered for another month and a half before dying on 8 August 1928. Five months later, on 6 January 1929, King Aleksandar (1888–1934) declared a royal dictatorship, banned all political parties, and decreed a new constitution (see Table 1.3). The 12 years remaining in the life of interwar Yugoslavia were marred by corruption in high echelons and growing violence on the part of Serbian, Croatian, and Bosniak-Muslim paramilitary organizations.[85] Among those paramilitary groups, the most important were the Chetnik organization "For King and Fatherland – Petar Mrkonjić," established in November 1929, and the Croatian fascist Ustaša movement, which announced itself in April 1931, though the Serb Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA) should also be mentioned.[86] All three of these were extreme nationalist-chauvinist organizations, with the Chetniks seeking to create a greater Serbia, with non-Serbs to be either liquidated or expelled, the Ustaša movement seeking to create an ethnically homogeneous Croatian state by promoting secession and, as time would show, a combination of liquidation or expulsion of Serbs, and the ORJUNA movement, which existed only from 1921 to 1929, advocating a unitary Yugoslav state. In October 1934, King Aleksandar was assassinated by an agent of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) working in collusion with the Ustaša.

Non-Serbs suffered various forms of discrimination in the interwar years. To begin with, the regime did not recognize Slovenes, Croats, or Macedonians as distinct nations and, until 1929, Slovenes and Croats were required to pay higher rates of taxation than other people.[87] Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were described as tribes of a "tri-named" people, while Macedonians – whom Bulgaria viewed as the western branch of the Bulgarian nation – were represented as "southern Serbs." In a similar way, the Bosniaks (Muslims) were likewise not recognized as a distinct people. However, breaking down the population by ethnicity (see Table 1.6) shows that none of Yugoslavia's peoples accounted for even 40% of the total. To put it another way, all of Yugoslavia's peoples were (numerical) minorities.

They were divided by religion and language. Among the larger groups, Croats and Slovenes were mostly Catholics; Serbs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians were mostly Eastern Orthodox; and Bosniaks, like most Kosovar Albanians, were Muslims. In terms of language, Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, and Bosniaks all spoke somewhat different variants of Serbo-Croatian, while Slovenes and Macedonians had their own languages. Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, and Macedonian were (and are) South Slav languages, unlike the languages spoken by other groups listed in Table 1.6. Religion and language

TABLE 1.6 The population of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), by ethnicity (1918)

Group	Number	% of total
Serbs and Montenegrins	4,704,876	38.8
Croats	2,889,102	23.9
Slovenes	1,023,588	8.5
Bosniaks (Muslims)	759,656	6.3
Macedonians	630,000	5.3
Germans	512,207	4.3
Albanians	483,871	4.0
Hungarians	472,079	3.9
Romanians	183,563	1.6
Turks	143,453	1.2
Italians	11,630	0.1
Other Slavs*	198,857	1.6
Others	42,756	0.3

Sources: Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije, 1918–1988*, Vol. 1: *Kraljevina Jugoslavija, 1914–1941* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1988), p. 32; and Dušan Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing tehnička knjiga, 1999), p. 86.
* = Czechs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Russians, Ukrainians, Ruthenes.

became politicized, with the regime making some not very successful efforts to Serbianize the language spoken by Macedonians. The regime also pressured Roman Catholics to convert to the Orthodox Church and promoted the schismatic Old Catholic Church in an effort to wean away those Roman Catholics not prepared to become Orthodox.[88] Moreover,

> [a]lthough Catholics accounted for 39.3% of the kingdom's population in 1921, with Orthodox believers accounting for 46.7%, the Ministry of Faiths allocated (in its 1921 budget) 141,246,426 K. for the Orthodox against a paltry 10,903,993 for the Catholic Church … In spite of a partial correction in subsequent years, the imbalance and discrimination continued.[89]

The Albanians of Kosovo were also targets of discrimination. Specifically, the regime seized 154,287 acres of land from local Albanians, driving roughly 45,000 of them to flee the country between 1918 and 1941. By the end of 1940, Serbs and Montenegrins had been given 57,704 acres of the land confiscated from the Albanians, with much of the rest held for army and government use.[90] The regime did not try to hide its desire to get rid of its Albanians and "[o]n 11 July 1938, Belgrade signed an accord with Ankara, under which the Turkish government agreed to take in 40,000 Albanian families (roughly 200,000 Albanians) during the years 1939–1944 … But budgetary problems together with the outbreak of war" in September 1939 had the result that the program was never fully implemented.[91]

In fact, right down to 27 April 1939, when the Maček-Cvetković *sporazum* (agreement) established a large autonomous Croatian unit (*banovina*), interwar Yugoslavia functioned under the hegemony of Serbian politicians and to the disadvantage of non-Serbs. Given that, as of 1918, Serbs made up only 38.8% of the population of Yugoslavia,[92] this minority rule can scarcely be seen as compatible with conventional understandings of democracy.

The last two failures, 1930, 1938: Romania and Czechoslovakia

From one point of view, the failure of democracy in Romania might be traced to May 1920, when King Ferdinand staged a royal coup d'état. However, after this a new constitution was promulgated in 1923, declaring that Romania was a "unitary and indivisible state"[93] – a clear allusion to the denial of the right of national self-determination to the Hungarians of Transylvania – and a rocky parliamentary system was launched. Elections in interwar Romania were patently unfair, thanks in part to a constitutional amendment that provided that any political party that received 40% or more of the popular vote in a general election would be allocated 50% of the seats in the lower house, "the other half being distributed according to the number of votes cast …, *including [to] that [party] which had achieved the 40 per cent premium.*"[94] In the

meantime, Prince Carol's liaison with Magda Lupescu, even while married to Elena, the daughter of King Constantine of Greece, was the stuff of scandal and, in 1925, he was forced to go into exile.[95] In January 1926, he was officially excluded from the succession, renouncing his right to the throne, and, upon the death of his father, King Ferdinand, Carol's five-year-old son, Michael, was declared king, albeit with a regency council appointed to take care of the affairs of state until the king came of age. Genuinely free elections were held on 12 December 1928, as a result of which 11 political parties gained seats in the parliament (see Table 1.1). although the incoming parliament was dominated by the National Peasant Party, which had captured 78% of the vote.[96] However, the first nail in the coffin of Romania's parliamentary system came in June 1930, when Carol II returned from exile and seized the throne. A fan of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, King Carol II (1893–1953) "distrusted democracy in general and loathed its perverted Romanian version in particular."[97] In the early years of his reign, the king engaged in an intense tug-of-war with Iuliu Maniu (1873–1953), leader of the National Peasant Party, over which of them should be dominant, although superficially their conflict appeared to focus on the king's relationship with Lupescu. Foreign policy was also an area of conflict and, in his search for allies against Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu (1882–1941), King Carol tried to use the extreme-right Iron Guard (also known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael) to strengthen his position. But in doing so, the king gave the Iron Guard greater visibility than it might otherwise have had.[98] The Iron Guard had no interest in race theories; its members aspired not to racial purification but to bring about a rebirth of Orthodox Christianity. Nichifor Crainic, after 1932 chair of the History of Modern Religious and Church Literature at the University of Bucharest, was affiliated for a while with the Iron Guard and held "that Romanian Orthodoxy should become the basis for conducting politics and running the state."[99] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899–1938), the founder and leader of the Iron Guard until his assassination in 1938, believed that Romania stood at a crossroads and that all traditional institutions (monarchy, Church, family, private property) had been called into question, and even morality itself was, in his opinion, in danger of disintegration – and for all of this he blamed the Jews. In the mid-1930s, partly as a result of the economic crisis brought on by the stock market crash of 1929, but also due to the failure of the Peasant Party to uphold a socially progressive program, Romanian politics slid steadily rightward.[100] By the end of 1937, the Iron Guard had about 270,000 members and, in parliamentary elections held in December of that year, drew 478,000 votes.[101]

King Carol later came to view the Iron Guard as a threat, and, on 10 February 1938, declared a royal dictatorship, outlawing all political parties. The king introduced a new constitution, which was based on corporatist principles. Later, in April, on the advice of Armand Călinescu, the minister of internal affairs, the king authorized the arrest of Codreanu and other leaders of the Guard, on suspicion of treasonous collaboration with the Third Reich.

The following month, Codreanu was sentenced to 10 years of forced labor. In November of that year, Codreanu and other imprisoned Guardists were murdered while allegedly trying to escape from a police van.[102] Since the Guardists were garroted, it seems unlikely that they were on the run when they were murdered. Two years after the assassination of Codreanu, Iron Guard members were heading some important ministries, and Romania was officially declared a "National Legionnaire State," putting the final nail in the coffin of parliamentary rule in Romania. By that point, Carol had been forced to abdicate and Marshal Ion Antonescu (1882–1946), the erstwhile prime minister, had installed himself as conducător or leader of the state.

The largest minorities in interwar Romania were the Hungarians (7.9%), Germans (4.1%), and Jews (4.0%), with Ukrainians in fourth place (3.2%). The Germans consisted of Transylvanian Saxons, Banat Swabians, and Szatmar Swabians. The Saxons and Swabians paid the highest taxes of all of Romania's inhabitants.[103] Moreover, in connection with the 1922 land reform, Transylvanian Saxons and Hungarians suffered disproportionately, with the Saxons losing important financial resources.[104] Neither the Hungarians nor the Germans had been consulted about being incorporated into Romania; what Romania's Hungarians wanted was to be allowed to reattach their lands to Hungary, while the Germans – Saxons and Swabians alike – wanted cultural autonomy (or cultural self-determination), including a guarantee that Germans could use their own language in schools and government offices.[105]

The Jews of Romania faced prejudice grounded in religious, racial, and economic reasons. Jealousy of Jewish professional and economic success was widespread, given their strong representation in the medical, dental, legal, banking, and journalistic professions.[106] Antisemitism became more open in the course of the 1920s and 1930s, and in 1937 the Confederation of the Association of Professional Intellectuals expelled all Jews from its affiliated organizations. The following year, King Carol's government adopted a law requiring that Jews who had obtained Romanian citizenship in 1918–1919 reapply, against a three-week deadline. Later, after the king's overthrow by Marshal Ion Antonescu, the marshal put in place policies that resulted in the deaths of 300,000 out of a pre-war total of 675,000 Romanian Jews.[107]

As in the case of the countries discussed above, Romania's problems were directly or indirectly largely of its own making, but the world economic crisis was beyond Romania's control and, in the mid-1930s, more than 80% of Romania's population lived below the poverty line.[108] As for far-right currents, although Codreanu looked to Nazi Germany as a model,[109] the regime in Berlin preferred to consolidate its alliance with King Carol II. Indeed, "[a]s a result of Carol's positive policy towards the Reich, senior German officials were in agreement as to the need for Carol to remain on the Romanian throne." Codreanu's Legion/ Iron Guard was of distinctly lower interest for Germany until late 1938. As Rebecca Haynes explains, "It was only after the murder of Codreanu in November 1938 that the movement became heavily influenced by the Nazis."[110]

It is quite clear that Czechoslovakia was an exception to the general trends in the region in at least one regard, viz., the parliamentary system continued to function until pressures from Nazi Germany forced the country to cede the Sudetenland and subsequently, in its final six months as a state (until March 1939), pushed the country in a less than democratic direction. No other country in the region maintained a working parliamentary system for such a relatively long period of time. In an early work about twentieth-century Czechoslovakia,[111] Josef Korbel painted a rosy picture of interwar Czechoslovakia as an island of liberal democracy in a sea of authoritarianism and turmoil, even as a model to the world. Interwar Czechoslovakia did have its strengths and its advantages, but it also had serious faults and debilities, most of them stemming from the nonconsensual foundation of the state. The Germans of the Sudetenland, the second largest national group in the country after the Czechs – or after the Czechoslovak nation, since Czechs and Slovaks were counted as branches of a common nation – were not offered a plebiscite, and the states of the victorious Triple Entente and their allies pointedly denied the Sudetenland Germans the right of self-determination. The Slovaks joined the new state on the understanding that they were to be granted regional autonomy; this promise was broken and only, very belatedly "honored" nearly 20 years after the founding of the state, in the wake of the infamous Munich Agreement, described in Chapter 3 in this volume. The Ruthenes, inhabiting a small stretch of land to the east of Slovakia, were absorbed into the country on the promise of an autonomy that was never granted. And those Hungarians who came to live in southern Slovakia were absorbed through military conquest and, just like the Sudetenland Germans, denied the right of national self-determination. Like Yugoslavia, where the regime proclaimed that Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs were branches of a single "tri-named," Yugoslav people, the leading figures in the Prague regime were convinced that Czechs and Slovaks were branches of a single Czechoslovak nation. The Czechoslovak idea had developed in the nineteenth century and Masaryk himself was the son of a Slovak father and a Germanized Moravian mother – thus, a true Czechoslovak. But Czechoslovak convictions were largely the property of intellectuals and politicians based in Prague, while most, if not all, of the Catholic peasants of Slovakia called themselves "Slovaks," not "Czechoslovaks." Since the Czech and Slovak languages were and are very close – closer than Spanish and Italian – and readily mutually comprehensible, the term was plausible. But until 1918 Czechs and Slovaks had never shared a national state of their own and, even within the Habsburg Empire, after the Ausgleich of 1867, the Czechs were assigned to the Cisleithanian (Austrian) half of the dual monarchy, while the Slovaks were assigned to the Transleithanian (Hungarian) half. (See Table 1.7.)

What is immediately clear from Table 1.7 is that those states that were on the winning side in World War One – three of them new creations at the end of that war – ended up with titular nationalities no greater than 75% (Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia eventually broke up). Meanwhile, those states on the losing side – Albania had lost in the Balkan Wars, Hungary had lost in World War One, and Bulgaria had been on the losing side in both wars – ended up with

TABLE 1.7 Percentage of the titular nationality in East Central European countries

	Titular nation-ality (%)	Year
Victors in World War One		
Poland	69.2	1921
Czechoslovakia		
"Czechoslovaks" of whom about 60% were Czechs, and 40% Slovaks	65.51	1921
Yugoslavia		
Serbo-Croat speakers*	74.36	1921
Romania	71.9	1930
Losers in the Balkan Wars or in World War One		
Hungary	89.5	1920
Bulgaria	83.4	1920
Albania	92	1929

Sources: Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1974; second printing with corrections, 1977; eighth printing, 1998), pp. 36, 89, 192, 203, 284, 328; and Jason Hunter Tomes, *King Zog of Albania: Europe's Self-Made Muslim King* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), p. 147. The percentages of Czechs and Slovaks are taken from Wolfgang Libal, *Die Tschechen. Unsere eigentümlichen Nachbarn* (Vienna: Ibera Verlag, 2004), p. 32.
Note: * Includes Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks), and Montenegrins.

titular nationalities in the range of 83–92%. Given the premium placed on ethnic homogeneity by many of the region's leaders (though not by Poland's Marshal Piłsudski), it is apparent that the losers, had they been content with their situation, might have had better prospects for stability.

The founders of the First Czechoslovak Republic operated on the not unreasonable assumption that steady economic improvement would gradually ease resentments on the part of Sudeten Germans and Hungarians, while social development would eventually achieve partial (in terms of class) homogenization of society.[112] In the short run, this assumption seemed to be borne out, at least where the Germans were concerned. From 1926, when the German Agrarian Party and the German Christian Social Party entered the government, until 1935, when Konrad Henlein's right-wing Sudeten German Party attracted two-thirds of the Sudeten German vote, it seemed that Czechoslovakia's Germans might be finding a way to work within the Czechoslovak system. But the 1929 stock market crash hit the Sudeten Germans especially hard (because they had deposited their savings in banks in Germany) and thus began the spiral downward and the unraveling of Czechoslovakia. For that matter although, according to Andrea Orzoff, Czechoslovakia's ethnic and religious minorities enjoyed greater toleration than minorities in other countries in East Central Europe, Masaryk and Beneš had some "doubts

about parliamentary democracy" and "[a]t times they even contemplated" carrying out a coup or preventing members of certain groups from voting, for example women or soldiers.[113] By 1938, with Henlein's emergence onto the national stage, the complaints and demands of Sudeten Germans, as conveyed by Henlein, assumed a certain urgency. Henlein even presented himself as an advocate of the rights of all the country's non-Czechs, telling an audience in Karlsbad in April 1938 that, as matters stood at the time, "all non-Czech peoples have every reason to feel unfree, deprived of their natural rights, and oppressed."[114]

Later that year, in the wake of the Munich Agreement, which transferred the Sudetenland to Germany, a Second Czecho-Slovak Republic (hyphenated) was declared on 6 October 1938. As early as 23 October 1938, the Czech patriotic organization "Sokol" adopted a resolution calling on Czech Jews who had come to the country after 1914 to return to their original homes. Subsequently, on 27 January 1939, decrees were issued by the Czechoslovak government calling for the deportation of all those who were not identified as Czechs, Slovaks, or Ruthenes and for stripping them of their citizenship. The primary target was the Jews, but the decrees also covered the Hungarians.[115] Six weeks later, in mid-March 1939, the German Wehrmacht marched into the country, occupying Prague. With that, the Czech regions were established as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and incorporated into the Third Reich, Hungary was able to reoccupy Hungarian-inhabited lands that had been seized by Czechoslovakia in 1919, and what was left of Slovakia was set up as a German puppet state, with Monsignor Jozef Tiso at the helm.[116] With that, Czechoslovakia expired with no more than a whimper.

Conclusion

This chapter, like this volume, has focused on two intertwined themes of interwar East Central Europe – the failure of democracy and the fate of ethnic minorities. Since democracy failed not only in those states on the winning side in World War One but also in the relatively homogeneous states of Albania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, we know that ethnic diversity was not the only reason for the failure of democracy. But, in the absence of interethnic consent and agreement on the rules of the game, it was certainly a contributing factor. Across the region, ethnic minorities suffered discrimination in language use, employment, sometimes in taxation (as in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and in Romania), and sometimes in land reform (as in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes). The Paris Peace treaties (Versailles, Trianon, St. Germain, and Neuilly-sur-Seine) were not drafted with an eye to assuring the reintegration of the losing states into harmonious interaction with the victors (as had been done with France after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815) but were characterized rather by vengefulness, the winners' desire to whittle down the losers and burden them with reparations, and the desire to aggrandize their own victorious countries and friends. There is little surprise, then, that these products of short-term

thinking stirred deep resentment in the defeated nations and set the stage for the outbreak of World War Two just two decades after the conclusion of World War One.[117] This consideration even led the brilliant but controversial historian, A. J. P. Taylor, to suggest that the entire period, 1914–1945, should be understood as a single war, with an "intermission" in the middle.[118]

I have tried to emphasize in this chapter that the stock market crash of October 1929 with the ensuing Great Depression was challenging for all the countries in the region and, in the case of Czechoslovakia, one of the three critical factors contributing to the collapse of the parliamentary system, the others being the rise of Konrad Henlein's Sudeten German Party and the role of Nazi Germany in forcing Prague to cede the Sudetenland in September 1938. With that, not only the Czechs, but all of the people of Czechoslovakia – in the longer term even the Sudeten Germans – became victims of Hitler's expansionist project and the ensuing war. In the absence of the Third Reich's territorial avarice, Czechoslovakia might well have survived, in spite of discrimination against non-Czechs in language use, political representation, employment, and land reform. But its liberal credentials were flawed.

And there were other problems hindering the construction of stable democracies in the region, including low levels of literacy in several countries, constitutions written in such a way as to permit a large number of political parties to gain seats in parliament, and the recurrence of assassination as a way of resolving disputes. Nor was the lack of experience with pluralism in most of these countries irrelevant. Finally, it should be kept in mind that there is nothing automatic about either establishing or maintaining a democracy, and that new pluralist systems are especially vulnerable to corruption, corrosion, and dismantlement. Yet, for all that, certain political figures of the interwar era (such as Poland's Józef Piłsudski, Croatia's Vladko Maček, and Serbia's Dragoljub Jovanović) can provide some inspiration even for the current generation, while the record of that era can provide some lessons about recourses to be avoided, as well as a certain amount of grist for myth-making.

Notes

1   Research for this chapter was begun in 1993–1994, when I was Foreign Visiting Fellow at the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University in Sapporo, Japan. I am grateful for the opportunity to use the excellent library at the Center and to the fine scholars I met there for making our stay in Japan both pleasant and productive. I am also grateful to Bernd Jürgen Fischer and Stipica Grgić for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.
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2

THE POLISH SECOND REPUBLIC

The geopolitics of failure

M. B. B. Biskupski[1]

The Second Polish Republic, appearing in the fall of 1918, saw historical ideologies forced to conform to geopolitical reality. This was simply impossible, and the state was incapable of existence, faltered briefly, and was destroyed by external, not internal, forces. Internal politics, including minority relations, did not determine the state's survival. The Western powers rarely concerned themselves with Poland or the east of Europe. They did not understand, and the Second Republic was doomed.[2]

Poland, obliterated by the partitions at the end of the eighteenth century, had been one of the traditional pillars of European architecture, separating a German-dominated center, and a Russian east. Poland's geopolitical role was to prevent the continent from becoming a contest between the two. The result was a huge multiethnic, multicultural "commonwealth," first so named in the sixteenth century, but already foreshadowed in the fourteenth century. Decentralized, with a weak monarchy, Poland was a precocious quasi-republic, with an elected parliament, a constitution, and officially proclaimed religious toleration dominated by a large, integrating nobility. The Poles created an unrivalled elite, but it was far too small. The nobility also successfully opposed taxation and governmental centralization. As Europe entered the age of Absolutism, Poland inevitably became unable to protect its national interests. Already in the seventeenth century, Poland's decline was obvious. By the end of the next century, it was incapable of withstanding its aggressive neighbors, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and was partitioned among them, disappearing from the map in 1795. The resultant "Polish Question" was geopolitical: how to rebuild a Poland capable of surviving.

The partitions resulted in a subsequent romanticized version of national greatness, according to which Poland was built on republican institutions. Central was the belief that Poland had created a federation from ethnically

and religiously disparate elements. The partitions created a cult of national martyrdom, an inspiring legend, and a vision for the future. This was the basis of Polish federalism, the structural form of "civic nationalism" epitomized by Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935).[3]

A competing understanding of the Polish past blamed the country's historic weakness on the failure to create national unity. Poland's decentralized and tolerant federalism made it a historical failure. Hence, for Poland to regain – and maintain – independence, it had to be a "modern" state characterized by unity – "national egoism" created by a "moral–political movement."[4] This was the essence of the nationalism of Roman Dmowski (1864–1939), which rejected historic traditionalism as delusional, based on an irrelevant past.

Both had the same goal: geopolitical security, but these irreconcilable solutions were based on dubious assumptions. Piłsudski's federal vision consisted of a dominating Polish core, closely linked with Ukraine and historic Lithuania (including its Belarusian territories).[5] This would, to a considerable degree, replicate the pre-partition commonwealth. This reformed Poland would be multinational and multidenominational – it would not *resurrect* the past, but be informed by it. Since Piłsudski was aware of the nationalist sentiments growing among the populations of the east, he had to convince them to cooperate despite their considerable resentment of traditional Polish domination. Piłsudski's assertion that he would respect the "national identities" of the minorities was "almost certainly sincere."[6] He did not ignore nationalism, but sought to accommodate it by erecting a federation of nationalities, or separate states, in close alliance.[7] The alternative, a collection of small ethnic states, spelled inevitable disaster. This part of Europe is striking for its ethnic complexity; mutually acceptable borders were really impossible.

Dmowski's vision called for a uniform community, thus solving the problem of minorities by not having any. National minorities were scorned: the historically alien Jews most of all. But would an *ethnic* Poland be large enough without a considerable portion of its historic territory? A larger Poland, however, would contain minorities and thus not be uniform. Piłsudski and Dmowski competed to solve Poland's geopolitical nightmare, by advancing "mutually exclusive" ideologies.[8] Was Dmowski "modern" by extolling paranoiac nationalism, or blind to the historic role of Poland to unite the east?[9] Was Piłsudski's multiethnic patriotism obsolete, or the true "modernism" that addressed geopolitical realities by accommodating nationalism?

The Second Republic was the worst possible solution to the country's intrinsic difficulties. It was too small to be safe in international affairs, but had too many minorities to be stable and democratic. Democracy "failed" in the Second Republic; it lacked the basis to survive. Thus, Piłsudski and Dmowski, each envisioning a "great" Poland, proffered strategies impossible to realize.[10] Poland had to be large and decentralized, or small and uniform. The Second Republic was neither.

Poland Reappears

Poland re-emerged in 1918 for two reasons. First, World War One had led to the destruction of all three partitioning powers: Russia had lost the war, and the Bolshevik seizure of power in November 1917 resulted in a long civil war that distracted it from Europe. Austria-Hungary had stumbled through the war and, by 1918, was in ruins. Germany had been defeated, and its fate was, at least temporarily, in the hands of the victorious Western powers, who met in Paris in 1919 to reconstruct Europe. However, this historic moment for Poland, with a power vacuum in the east, would have been meaningless, had many Poles not achieved a high level of national consciousness. The war did *not* create Poland; the *Poles* created Poland because the war provided circumstances that allowed them to act.

The date of 11 November 1918 is regarded as the birth of the state.[11] Piłsudski had returned the night before from the prison in Magdeburg, where the Germans had confined him in July of 1917, unintentionally making him not a wartime ally of the Central Powers, but a martyr for Poland. He was already a legend because of his wartime exploits, centered around the creation of a Polish army, the "Legions," and a long career in underground socialist politics.

He had no obstacles to domination. The Regency Council, the puppet agency established by the Germans in occupied Warsaw in 1917, transferred its power to him. Days earlier, the nebulous socialist government in Lublin, created by Ignacy Daszyński, had recognized his leadership. Only the communists tried to prevent an independent Polish state from emerging and facilitate a Russian invasion.[12] Even Dmowski wisely noted that, if his nationalists refused to accept Piłsudski, they would "cut the throat" of Poland.[13]

While Piłsudski was consolidating power in Warsaw, Dmowski was abroad pursuing his long effort to convince the powers to support the idea of a restored Poland. Although he had been able to create, in 1917, a pseudo-government-in exile, the Polish National Committee (KNP), the powers never recognized it. Hence, Dmowski had only a fragile foundation upon which to build Poland.

Briefly, it seemed that Piłsudski's position would be challenged by maestro-turned-statesman Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860–1941). Paderewski's claim to a role in the reborn country was simple. He had spent many of the war years in the United States cultivating connections with President Woodrow Wilson and his entourage. Wilson publicly endorsed the idea of an independent Poland on two occasions. Paderewski claimed credit for both: he was the link between Poland and America. However, his influence with the Americans was more assertion than reality. Wilson quickly proved a dubious champion of Polish interests. His vague endorsement of Polish independence never became clear policy, and he found Polish geopolitical concerns incomprehensible.[14] Paderewski's position was really built only on ephemeral international sympathy. When Paderewski arrived in Warsaw, Piłsudski quickly manipulated him into accepting the impressive title of "President," while keeping real power in his

own hands.[15] Paderewski was the titular head of Poland throughout 1919, but did very little beyond making an appearance at the Paris Peace Conference.

Reborn Poland had no real borders. The small state created by the Austrian and German occupiers in 1916 was the nucleus. Even here, Warsaw was not securely Polish because it retained a considerable German occupation force. Piłsudski was able to arrange their rapid departure, which was a major accomplishment. But vast territories that Piłsudski hoped to include in his commonwealth were not part of the new state. The Germans held western Poland including the Baltic sea coast; southeastern Poland was ferociously contested with the Ukrainians, and, in the south, tiny Cieszyn in Austrian Silesia pitted Poles against Czechs. The east, the historic Polish *kresy*, was a huge battlefield between the Poles and the Russians. In 1918, Russia was engulfed in civil war – between the Bolsheviks and their anti-communist enemies – the outcome of which was far from certain. A Polish victory would really have required both sides to lose. This huge multinational borderland constituted the dispositive geopolitical dilemma. Whose dream in the east was realizable? Piłsudski's federalism or Dmowski's national "incorporation"?

The west

At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, Dmowski presented his geopolitical program. Given the atmosphere in Paris, especially the obvious hostility of the British, it has been argued that Dmowski's efforts were as successful as they could be.[16] His argument was simple: Germany was Poland's great historic enemy and without a strong Poland, Germany would control much of Europe, leaving only Russia as a counterweight, crushing Poland. Hence, Dmowski wanted to annex Poznania and West Prussia from Germany and a small portion of East Prussia, as well as mineral-rich Upper Silesia. Population estimates are very uncertain, but the local trends almost all favored the Poles. For Dmowski, the key was East Prussia with its vital Baltic coastline. His solutions were vague and changing. He once bizarrely suggested that some sort of independent "republic" should be erected around Prussian Königsberg.[17]

Although some estimates put the Polish majority there at over 60%, the Germans claimed that many of these were not Polish but members of another Slavic people known as Kashubs. This was not an impressive argument as the Kashubs had voted for Polish representatives to the Reichstag before the war and substantially identified with them.[18] The powers did not handle matters well. Ordering a plebiscite, they did nothing to manage the voting, which was run exclusively by Germans. As a result, the vote favored them by 96%. But this really reflected larger forces at play. The Germans were negotiating with the advancing Soviets.[19] The plebiscite coincided with the decisive moment of the Polish–Russian War of 1919–1921. July 1920 was the nadir of Poland's military fortunes; the disastrous battle of Wilno was on the very day of the plebiscite. A vote for Poland would have doomed a resident of East Prussia to Bolshevik domination, while a German vote was the way to salvation from Bolshevik rule.

The East Prussian decision presented Poland with the likelihood of an extremely weak Baltic position. However, the famous Free City of Danzig (now Gdańsk) issue made the situation worse. President Wilson had spoken of a future Poland having a "secure access" to the Baltic in his "Fourteen Points," but he included no particulars, and Wilson was obviously confounded. At Paris, Dmowski argued that, although the port city of Danzig was overwhelmingly German, the territory was indispensable to Poland's economy: the issue was how to square the supposed right of self-determination, proclaimed by Wilson, of thousands of Germans who comprised the overwhelming majority of Danzig's population with the economic interests of millions of Poles?[20] Although the French and, perhaps, the Americans were persuaded, the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George insisted on a settlement that was more favorable to the Germans. The result was the establishment of the "Free City of Danzig," comprising the urban center and adjacent territories totaling about 800 square miles. The hybrid was to be under direct the League of Nations control via a high commissioner. Poland would, however, enjoy a customs union and the right to represent the area in international matters. There was even a tiny Polish garrison posted in the city.

Danzig became at once the focal point of Polish–German hostilities between the wars. Both sides had powerful arguments – the Germans ethnographic, the Poles security and economic necessity. Given the bitter relations between the two, compromise was most unlikely. For the Germans, the loss of control of the city epitomized the injustice of the Peace Conference's Versailles Treaty and justified radical revisionism. For the Poles, their very existence was under threat.

Given the East Prussian plebiscite and the creation of the Free City, the portion of the Baltic shore within Poland was very narrow: the "Polish Corridor," a small territory separating the bulk of Germany from East Prussia. The Germans argued that the "Corridor" was artificially added to Poland to give them sea access. Actually, the situation was quite the opposite. The Poles were the great majority of the population in that area in 1919, and their majority rose markedly thereafter due, in large part, to the decision by the German minority to leave. The Poles claimed that, by 1939, fewer than 10% of the population was German.

German–Polish enmity was much increased by other imbroglios fundamental to the creation of the Second Republic. The first was the Wielkopolska Rising of 1919. Despite German claims, the population there was at least 60% Polish and growing. The arrival of Paderewski, in the area's center, Poznań, at the end of December 1918 prompted a long-planned Polish rising. Piłsudski's decree a month earlier announcing that Wielkopolska would vote in the upcoming Polish parliamentary elections was an attempted coup, effectively incorporating Wielkopolska. The decree elicited Berlin's furious response. However, distracted by military mutinies, rioting in the streets in Berlin, and overall chaos, the Germans were not positioned to protect their interests, and the Poles prevailed in a war famous for its viciousness – 10,000 casualties over several weeks. By the time the Paris Peace Conference convened, Wielkopolska was in Polish hands – the first successful Polish insurrection in modern times.

The Poles also hoped to obtain mineral-rich Upper Silesia from the Germans. The Conference ordered the problem to be decided by plebiscite. Although some estimates put the Polish majority as high as 70%, they were the economic underclass, with the Germans dominating the territory. Thus, the balance of forces was complicated. The plebiscite decision led to a series of conflicts launched by the Poles known as the two Silesian Risings of 1919–1921. The 1921 plebiscite produced a German victory, but the subsequent territorial demarcation was generous to the Poles. Nonetheless, the Poles, led by Wojciech Korfanty, launched a desperate third rising to prevent a rumored British intention to support German claims. The powers sent a British–French–Italian contingent to maintain order. The French favored the Poles, but the British units fought openly on the side of the Germans. The final frontiers left large minorities on both sides of the border, and the casualties from the uprisings ran into the thousands. Silesia was, predictably, another key point of interwar Polish–German hostility.

Dmowski's claims in the west required restraint in the east.[21] Hence, he consigned to the Russians the Polish territories seized by the Russians in the first two partitions. Lithuania was to be ethnically homogeneous and hence very small, and Belarus was little more than an annoyance. Despite this radical reduction, Dmowski's envisioned Poland would have had 38 million inhabitants covering 456,000 square kilometers. But it would have had a large minority population, and it was not the homogeneous country he had long championed. He also demanded territories such as Grodno and parts of Mińsk, neither of which had a Polish majority. He was convinced that these ethnically diverse areas could be quickly polonized – but how far east did the absorptive capacities of Poland reach, and how long a process would it be? Dmowski's vision was geopolitically different from that of Piłsudski who, while focused on the east, tended to minimize the significance of Poland's border with Germany,[22] while Dmowski seemed not to realize the consequences of a very large Russia.

The final piece of the so-called "western borders" comprised the complex Cieszyn dispute. The area was part of historic Silesia, which had been under Habsburg control. Despite its small size, the area was important because of its minerals and railroad connections. The local population concluded a division of the territory on 5 November 1919 that assigned most of it to the Poles, who were the largest population group in the region. However, the new Czechoslovak government in Prague rejected the decision and attacked the Poles. The Polish position was difficult because Polish forces were already engaged in a war with the Ukrainians in the east, and in the Wielkopolska Rising in the west. As a result, the Poles lost much of the region. The Peace Conference oddly refused to intervene, and the Czechs predictably rejected the Polish proposal for a plebiscite. The Conference clearly favored the Czechs – "their favorite child" – over the Poles.[23] The issue was finally resolved in July 1920 by the Council of Ambassadors, which left the entire territory to the Czechs. This outraged the Poles because the Czechs comprised only about 7% of the Cieszyn region. It was a major contribution to the subsequent hostile relationship between Warsaw and Prague.[24]

The east

The basis of Pilsudski's geopolitics was building an eastern federation approximating the dimensions of the old Commonwealth. This required the non-Polish population of the *kresy* to share this dream, or, more accurately, to understand that if such a regional bloc did not emerge the territory would again be dominated by Russia.

   Given their numbers and huge territory, the Ukrainians were the most important group to win over, and the most difficult. Hatred of the Poles was a central theme in Ukrainian nationalism. Each side regarded the other as an impediment to a national future. It was the extraordinary series of Polish–Ukrainian wars fought between 1648 and 1699 that had really destroyed the old commonwealth. Hence, some form of reconciliation was imperative for Piłsudski's vision. Contrariwise, Dmowski wanted no relationship with the Ukrainians whom he saw as a threat to Polish unity.[25] In November 1918, a Polish–Ukrainian struggle for Galicia erupted. Fighting was vicious and left lasting hatred. Initially, the Ukrainians had the upper hand, but Polish reinforcements turned the tide, and virtually all of the contested territory was gained by the Poles, notably the major city of Lwów (Lviv for Ukrainians), a place deeply embedded into Polish national lore, but an island in a Ukrainian sea.

   But worse was to come. By the end of 1919, the Ukrainians were defeated in their wars with the Russians – both communists and anti-communists. Hence, most of the territory was in Russian hands. The last Ukrainian leader, Symon Petlura, escaped to Poland and made contact with Piłsudski. He realized that the only possible defense against Russian absorption was to seek alliance with the Poles.[26]

   The eventual agreement has often been dismissed as a Polish attempt to exploit the Ukrainians' weak position, but both leaders really understood that only such an alliance could protect them from Russia.[27] This goal was never grasped by the Western powers who were always guided by a lingering view of East Central Europe dominated by Russia. For them, there would be no Ukraine, and Poland would be insignificant.[28] Petlura was confident that the Ukrainians could ally with Poland without risking eventual Polish absorption – a correct conclusion.[29] Besides, there was no alternative. The Poles knew that circumstances favored them and insisted on an agreement favorable to them. Whether Petlura was a far-sighted hero, or a virtual traitor as many Ukrainians concluded, it would not be the last time that aggressive intolerance damaged both peoples.[30]

   Despite their small numbers and territory, the Lithuanians were vital to Piłsudski's renewed federation. But here too the situation was bad. Piłsudski made repeated attempts to win Lithuanian cooperation, or, failing that, to overthrow the Lithuanian government.[31] The key was Wilno, a city the Lithuanians considered their historic capital. But by 1919 very few Lithuanians lived there – only about 2% of the total Lithuanian population– and polonization had long been at work there; the Piłsudski family is an example.

Reportedly, he said "one day Wilno will be the capital of Europe." Seemingly nonsense, it reflected the great expanse of his geopolitical dreams.[32] In 1921, Piłsudski ordered General Lucjan Żeligowski to seize the city. Piłsudski then offered it to the Lithuanians as a bribe for federation. They considered it Polish imperialism and rejected it.[33]

The smallest eastern problem was that of the poor Belarusians, who had a weakly developed national consciousness. Hence, there was no serious Belarusian leader or movement with which to deal. In frustration, Piłsudski once referred to the "Belarusian fiction."[34] For Piłsudski, the Belarusians were really a derivative problem: reconcile with the Lithuanians and thereby rebuild the nucleus of the commonwealth.[35] A Belarusian version of Petlura, Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz, assembled a small military unit that achieved nothing.[36]

The Polish–Russian War

The ferocious 1919–1920 war between the Bolshevik regime in Russia and Poland had huge consequences. Had the Poles lost – and they barely won – the Second Republic would have died and one may speculate on whether a later version would ever have arisen. But this merely introduces larger, though counterfactual, speculation: having defeated Poland, how far westward would Russian forces have been able to advance? The deeply embedded Polish belief that they were the rampart of the West was enormously increased.

The war began with a Polish–Ukrainian offensive (with about 20% of the troops being Ukrainian), led by General Edward Śmigły-Rydz (1886–1941), which rapidly took Kiev and expelled the Russians. The Poles almost instantly handed the city to the Ukrainians. Piłsudski issued a proclamation creating a free Ukraine and promising a rapid Polish withdrawal from the territory. It was the most important step in fashioning a Piłsudskiite east. This zenith of Polish military fortunes was short-lived however. Few Ukrainians rallied around Petlura, and a Russian counterattack drove the Polish–Ukrainian allies westward in increasing disarray. With Warsaw within Russian grasp, Piłsudski executed a brilliant counterattack in the Battle of Warsaw, which sent the Russians reeling back, saved the country, and raised him to iconic status, thereby ensuring his dominant role in the Second Republic and in the subsequent imagination of his countrymen. As Russian retreat became rout, Piłsudski wanted to continue eastward to end Russian hegemony in Eastern Europe. But, what Piłsudski saw as Poland's historic moment to regain the lost commonwealth, Dmowski's nationalists feared would involve acquiring a huge minority population. With Piłsudski's countrymen exhausted, and the West unsupportive, even critical, his dreams were dashed. So hostile were the nationalists that they denied Piłsudski credit for the victory.[37]

The Treaty of Riga brought peace in 1921, but the Russians regarded it as only a temporary cease-fire. For the Poles, it was a catastrophe, though not all realized it.[38] Piłsudski had failed in the east: it had been Poland's last chance to reverse the tide of history and was "the defeat of [Piłsudski's] entire eastern strategy."[39]

The moment can best be captured by his brief meeting with the Ukrainians in 1920: "Panowie, ja Was przepraszam." (Gentlemen, I give you my apology).

Piłsudski knew that Poland's situation was already hopeless. After all, he had said "Poland is doomed to greatness," and the Poland of 1921 was not great. The rest of his life was bitter and desperate. He referred to himself as a "failure."[40] A prophetic incident late in the war deserves mention. In July 1920, when the Poles' position in the war was abysmal, they met with leaders of France and Great Britain, at Spa in Belgium, to discuss possible aid in stopping the Red Army. The French sent a number of valuable advisors, but no substantive aid, and the British were simply abusive. The British position was informed by the so-called "Curzon Line," which ostensibly drew a "racial" boundary between Poles and Russians in the east. This boundary was simply nonsense, as it referred to areas in the east of historic Poland as "indisputably Russian,"[41]

Building a new Poland

The Second Republic had to face overwhelming challenges in knitting together three areas not united since the partitions. This was made very much more difficult by the fact that wartime destruction had left the country in ruins. Subsequent frontier wars with Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Czechs, and Germans, made matters even worse. The fact that this was accomplished rests on two fundamentals: the iconic status of Piłsudski, which inspired hope and confidence, and a profound patriotism that had allowed the country to survive the nineteenth century.

Ezra Mendelsohn once suggested that one of the "legacies" of the partitions was that Polish political leaders in the Second Republic were more interested in foreign affairs than in domestic issues.[42] This was not by choice. Dmowski's quest for national unity precluded a democratic society. Piłsudski did not erect a large, federal state. Only such a Poland would have had the basis for a democratic society.

The first parliamentary elections (held in January 1919) at once disclosed structural problems. Modeled largely on France, the country was ruled by a two-chamber parliament: the lower house, Sejm, and the Senate, the latter being more symbolic than determinative. Acting together, they elected a president. Real power resided with the prime minister, whose position reflected the composition of the Sejm. Initially, the Sejm was dominated by the nationalists, a coalition of four parties, which gained about 40% (perhaps more) of the seats.[43] From the outset, the preoccupation of the coalition was with minority issues, especially the Jews. The nationalist geopolitical orientation was simple: Germany was Poland's enemy. Hence, France was everything. When France became increasingly tolerant of German aggression, in the 1930s, the nationalists had no coherent foreign policy.[44]

A powerful Left had about 30% of the seats. Among them, the largest group, the Polish Socialist Party, was characterized by a rather traditionalist

patriotism awkwardly mixed with class politics, and it had long ago distanced itself from the internationalist Marxist Left. It was closely associated with Piłsudski, one of its founders. The center, a multiparty coalition, had only about 15% but could create a dominating coalition by joining either Left or Right. A "middle" never really emerged.[45] The huge peasant population had no unifying party. The most powerful was the rightist Piast, led by Wincenty Witos (1874–1945); the far less influential Wyzwolenie was on the Left. These parties were famous for confusion and corruption. They were really only a class lobby. There was a minuscule conservative group, but it reflected the last shreds of the old nobility. Not surprisingly, the minorities, about one-third of the population, comprised a significant portion of the Sejm, dominated by the extraordinarily factionalized Jews who held about 10% of the Sejm.[46] Among the Jews, the dominant party was the traditionalist Agudat, which endorsed the Polish state. However, there were also factions favoring autonomy, as well as Zionists, presenting a complicated problem for the Poles. Over the next several years the Agudat faded, and the Left-Zionist faction became increasingly influential.[47]

Due to the Polish–Ukrainian war then raging, there were no deputies from Eastern Galicia.[48] The Belarusian minority was inconsequential.[49] German parties, 1.7%, were preoccupied with consolidation, and some of their elements were dissolved as early as 1923, accused of espionage. After 1933, loyalty to Hitler's Germany became dominant.[50] In general, the fluidity of party allegiance, inexperience, and embarrassing corruption led to frequent disorder, which explains why Piłsudski was able to dominate Polish politics.[51]

The first president of Poland, Gabriel Narutowicz, was elected in 1922. The consequences of the election were very bad and caused great damage to the country. The political Right was bitterly opposed to Narutowicz because they claimed that his support from minority delegates, mostly Jewish, was destructive of national unity, and they emotionally insisted that a *Polish* Poland precluded the minorities playing a determinative role. The fact that Narutowicz was an atheist was not helpful. The large minority vote was unsettling to the Right, 16% of the Sejm and 17.6% of the Senate. Since the Jews were the "least Polish," they drew particular denunciation. Hence, his election resulted in a frenzy of nationalist denunciation of the minorities. With the Polish war against the Bolsheviks just concluded, the fact that the Jews comprised 20% of the Communist Party was a spur to nationalist denunciation.[52] The nationalists won a paradoxical political "victory" a few days after the election when Narutowicz was assassinated by a demented member of the Right, Eligiusz Niewiadomski, who had intended to kill *Piłsudski*. Originally, Niewiadomski's political views suggested the dangers from the *Right*, but the nationalists were rapidly able to champion the assassin as a patriot attempting to preserve national unity. Even the Left, traditional defenders of the minorities, were "bullied by violence" into curtailing their support for Narutowicz and his allies.[53]

But 1922 is remembered not just for the famous and embittering assassination, but as a time of tumultuous changes that shook the young state to its

foundations. Disgusted by the vulgar political world after the Narutowicz assassination, and a visibly incompetent Sejm, Piłsudski left the political scene, disappearing into grumpy reclusiveness. Nobody could replace him. National politics seemed to be spiraling out of control.

The year 1922 also brought economic crisis, characterized by fantastic inflation – 1,000% in just a few months. The government was helpless and soon overthrown.[54] Massive strikes erupted, leading to direct confrontations with the army. In Kraków, 30 people died, and more than 100 were injured. Political stability was in question.[55] Desperate efforts to obtain foreign loans were an embarrassing fiasco. One observer concluded that, well into the 1920s, the economy appeared to be on the edge of collapse. It was only in 1924 that the situation stabilized, briefly, thanks to the efforts of Władysław Grabski, a nationalist politician with economic skills. However, he quickly lost popularity and was removed from office.

Economics aside, he deserves credit for presiding over the 1925 concordat with the Vatican, stabilizing relations with the Church. Negotiated by his brother, Stanisław, the settlement was not pleasing to most Poles, especially the Piłsudskiites who correctly saw it as granting the Vatican too many concessions. Ironically, despite his sour disposition regarding the endless negotiations, Piłsudski was a friend of Pope Pius XI.[56]

The economic consequences had broad implications. A poor Poland was not an attractive site for foreign investment. Here the case of the United States is illustrative. At its inception, the Second Republic anticipated a large and active role for the Americans. This quickly proved to be delusional. Polish efforts to raise loans were embarrassing failures. But, while dismissing Poland, the Americans made large investments in Germany.[57] By 1929 the Americans had already lent Weimar Germany six times as much as they had lent Poland. The situation later worsened.[58] France, Poland's only significant ally, provided little economic support because its low level of industrialization did not address Poland's needs. An economic relationship with a far more powerful Germany was dangerous in the extreme. Great Britain had little interest in linkages with Poland, and efforts to attract British investment produced very little. Russia was obviously impossible. Hence, outside support for Polish economic development was pathetic.

Piłsudski returns, 1926

Political stability was absent until 1926 when Piłsudski seized power in the famous May coup.[59] In the weeks before the coup, a new government, dominated by the Right, under Witos, was formed. At the time, there were about 100 political parties active in Poland; 30 of these were represented in the Sejm. Riots of frustration erupted in Warsaw. Fourteen governments had come and gone over the previous few years. Witos represented more of the same, but he was rumored to be planning to discard the constitution and establish a dictatorship. He even asked Piłsudski to join a reconstructed government.[60] Piłsudski was

disgusted, as was the Left, who saw him as the only solution.[61] For the marshal and his faithful, Witos was simply despicable.[62]

The long-planned coup reflected Piłsudski's conviction that Poland's situation was dire and declining, and he feared the increasing role of the nationalists.[63] The international situation was also evolving to Poland's disadvantage. The Treaty of Locarno (1925) was a major German diplomatic victory, and Berlin's trade war with Poland was damaging. The future was ominous. Poland, literally, had to be saved, its "spirit reanimated."[64] The coup led to fighting – there were 1,500 casualties in Warsaw alone.[65] Lasting enmity arose within the military – between those who supported Piłsudski and those who were loyal to the elected government.[66] The enduring question was: Had Piłsudski saved Poland from catastrophe, or destroyed its nascent democratic system?

The coup had an ideological preamble, an amorphous "Piłsudskiism" called the "sanacja." A difficult word to translate, it implies civic virtue, an end to corruption – creating a healthy society, and not just an extension of executive power. Piłsudski never developed a political program – a task he disdained – but had sought to create an dedicated devotion to simple decency, an end to hopeless partisanship, and the consolidation of patriotism.[67] He saw it as the reification of "imponderabilia": a concatenation of historic, but undefined, Polish honor and greatness. It was to be, as a devotee argued, "the great idea" thus far lacking in the Republic.[68] The very vagueness of the sanacja explains why its supporters came from every political faction in Poland.[69]

This intended apolitical system was epitomized by Kazimierz Bartel (1882–1941), a colorless and weak figure whom Pilsudski had chosen to be prime minister even before the coup. Despite repeated calls to support sanacja, Bartel did little during his three terms as premier. This was obviously Piłsudski's intent: he, and no one else, would run Poland. The nationalists, caught off guard, went into sudden, but temporary, decline.[70]

Joseph Rothschild, has argued that Piłsudski did not, ultimately, create a successful Poland because of his concentration on "state-building," epitomized by his foreign policy and his focus on the military, and his lack of interest in "nation-building." Though well known, this is not a persuasive thesis. Piłsudski's Poland was to be built on patriotism, as distinct from nationalism. The result would be a Poland reminiscent of the commonwealth promoting loyalty to a shared state and civic nationalism, not the creation of a unified nation, ethnic nationalism. Piłsudski was not a nationalist and saw the horrors it was creating. To suggest the reverse, amounts to criticism of Piłsudski for not being Dmowski.[71]

Despite his criticism of pre-partition Poland's domination by the nobility (the szlachta), he, an aristocrat, represented a notion of a military elite in effective control; a political noblesse oblige. But by not creating an identifiable ideological alternative, Piłsudski effectively lost Poland to the nationalists. Ideology is not always better than the evocation of tradition.

Soon after the coup, Piłsudski assembled a new government consisting largely of his World War One legionnaire officers, the "colonels." He dismissed

members of the Sejm as "apes" and declared himself to be "the greatest man in Poland."[72] In a dramatic gesture, Piłsudski suddenly marched into the Sejm, loyal officers accompanying him, obviously attempting to overawe them. The Sejm convoked a special session in which Piłsudski's critics accused him of forming a dictatorship, but they offered no alternative plan.

Economic changes gave the post-coup government a few years of popularity.[73] Foreign trade doubled in less than two years. Unemployment fell by more than 70%, wages rose, and this progress ended only with the Depression.[74] These dramatic changes reflected a continental trend, but also resulted in a more optimistic society. Progress was interrupted for several years by the Depression, but had recommenced by the mid-1930s, personified by Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, who was allowed to launch his dream of a reborn, industrialized Polish economy. The famous creation of a modern port at Gdynia had more than economic goals – it was designed to prompt national unity by merging minorities into a new, burgeoning economy. The culmination was the huge "Central Industrial Region" (COP) begun in 1936 and interrupted only by the war. There was much popular support: unity through prosperity – a hallmark of the West.[75] However, Poland was simply too poor for significant change.

Piłsudski's frustration with the notoriously unproductive Sejm caused him to fashion, in 1927, a parliamentary instrument called the "Non-Party Bloc for Cooperation with the Government" (Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem, BBWR). It was a congeries of pro-*sanacja* supporters in the Sejm.[76] He was attempting to institutionalize a Piłsudskiite legislature without introducing a new, inevitably factionalizing party.[77] This was made easier by the fact that his political opponents were so disorganized that it took them three years to compose a political alternative.[78] The BBWR, rapidly cobbled together by Walery Sławek, Pilsudski's most devoted lieutenant, was his way of allowing himself to concentrate on executive issues without the nuisance of legislative interference. The Bloc was an odd combination of the old legionnaires fulfilling their duty, and the younger intelligentsia fascinated by a moral vision of lifting Poland from the political morass.[79] Notably, the large Agudat Jewish party worked openly with the *sanacja*, even joining the BBWR, which also launched an effort to cultivate the Ukrainians.[80] Both initiatives were examples of patriotism not nationalism.

Opponents of Piłsudski's effort to control the Sejm were faced with a daunting problem. Ironically, whereas the *sanacja* celebrated moral uprightness, the Bloc was crooked from the beginning. Unfortunately, it is obvious that the Marshal was aware of these schemes, which included financing off the books, electoral manipulation, and suppression of political criticism. The 1928 elections were anticipated to create a dominating Piłsudskiite majority in the Sejm. Bloc supporters even called for the *sanacja*'s political opponents to leave public life. But, though it did well, the Bloc fell short of its plans to dominate parliament, failing to gain one-third of the seats. The consequences were complex. The election was a crushing defeat for the right, and the *sanacja*'s chief

opponent was the loose coalition of leftist parties, the "Centrolew," which collapsed in about a year. Soon an era of bitter confrontations ensued, almost paralyzing political life in Poland. The Sejm even cast a no-confidence vote for the *sanacja* government in 1929. With a virtually dysfunctional parliament, and a charismatic authoritarian dominating the country, fundamental splits resulted that were never healed: a Pole could support Piłsudski, the *sanacja*, or was on the nationalist right, or the embittered left, feeling that Piłsudski had betrayed them by establishing a virtual military dictatorship. Piłsudski was denounced as a "dictator" and rallies against him dotted Poland. Garlicki has argued that a civil war was possibly in the offing by 1930.[81]

Piłsudski's reaction was brutal. After long preparation, he ordered that scores of political opponents be confined to prison in Brześć (now Brest-Litovsk) on ridiculous charges, where their treatment was abominable. Significantly, virtually all those arrested were on the political left; Piłsudski, long associated with that faction, was now effectively acting from the right.[82] The era begun in 1926 had given way to an era of a more repressive regime.[83] The November 1930 election was rigged and BBWR success was assured. This was not simply a clash between Piłsudski and the Sejm, but a reflection of the effects of the Depression on Poland: the economy had declined greatly, strikes had led to riots, and the situation was very bad. The nationalists exploited economic suffering by emphasizing their traditional criticism of the powerful position of the Jews in the economy.

Whether Poland was a dictatorship is still subject to debate, but Poland was no longer a democracy. Piłsudski's last years were awash in cabinet reshuffling – proof that he was little interested in politics and governance. His defenders explained the situation this way: "Marshal Piłsudski is not a dictator," said a supporter, "he is the great moral authority who remains loyal to his mission – the protector of the strength, security and creation of the state."[84] Certainly inspiring, but not a program.

With the Depression, industrial production dropped by 20–25%, and unemployment began rising at 10% annually. Given its socioeconomic structure, the decline in agricultural prices – some by as much as 66% after 1930 – was simply disastrous. These trends really reversed only by about 1937. In sum, the economic history of the Second Republic is controversial depending on which starting figures you use, 1913 or 1919; though the latter, a more sensible point of departure, provides more positive results, they are not without controversy.

The weak economy was fundamental to explaining interwar Poland's military and geopolitical situation. After 1921, insufficient funds were directed to military needs – one of the main reasons for Piłsudski's mordant criticism of the government. After Piłsudski seized power in 1926, the military's situation improved, and the budget increased slightly after 1926, though it soon plateaued. The catastrophe after 1929 had irretrievable consequences for Poland's military position. Military spending reflected the slow overall economic growth, and meager foreign investment.[85] This became a disastrous vector by the 1930s when both

Berlin and Moscow rapidly increased the size and modernity of their armed forces.[86] In the last years of peace, Germany's military budget was 37 times as great as Poland's, and for every Pole working in the arms industry, there were 28 Germans.[87] By the mid-1930s, the Polish general staff had concluded that a war with both Germany and Russia would be impossible, leaving only an "armed demonstration against a fourth partition."[88] A few years earlier a Polish–French alliance may well have prevailed against the Germans, but no longer.[89] The Polish military was the inevitable victim of the national economy.

Piłsudski launched no dramatic foreign policy initiatives, believing that there would be no major threats for about five years, during which Poland could concentrate on military build-up and social consolidation.[90] This was the plan the marshal explained to Moscow immediately upon coming to power: Warsaw had no aggressive designs.[91] The French were frightened, the British critical, the Russians suspicious, the Germans aggressive, and the Americans uncaring. The immediate problem was Lithuania. Kaunas was convinced that the Piłsudski coup would result in a Polish invasion and sought Russian protection. In turn, Moscow promised to support Lithuanian claims to Wilno. Each country began to mistreat its minorities, and the threat of war appeared, but in 1927 Piłsudski bullied the Lithuanians into standing down. It was only in 1938 that relations became normal, but by then it was too late to accomplish anything.[92]

Days before the marshal died, the Sejm adopted the "May constitution" of 1935, replacing the 1921 constitution. Piłsudski played a considerable role in shaping it. He was guided by practicality, not ideology: the document was not to reflect "state philosophy, but the realism of life." Although it concentrated significant power in the executive office, Piłsudski was careful not to exaggerate this authority, nor end a role for the Sejm. He specifically cited both Soviet Russia and Mussolini's Italy as examples where parliamentarianism had been ended, being replaced by autocracy. How "authoritarian" the constitution was is still debated.[93]

However, 1935 was an unmitigated disaster for Poland. Pilsudski's death, on 12 May, removed the center of Polish life. He could not be replaced. He had long been in political control, but this fact merely distracts us. His role in the creation of modern Poland was unique; when Poland floundered through the first years of independence, he restored order and confidence, despite his increasing disdain for democracy in doing so. General Kazimierz Sosnkowski was convinced that Piłsudski's very presence had "shielded" (*osłaniała*) Poland, and after 1935, he was gone.[94] But the most important thing is this, that he constructed modern Polish pride. Beck's last words to him capture this phenomenon: "men whom you have honored with your confidence are never afraid."

With Piłsudski gone, his political opponents, including such major figures as the gifted but vain General Władysław Sikorski, Paderewski, Witos, and others (the so-called *Front Morges*), tried to create a new center to oppose the *sanacja*, without surrendering to the nationalist movement, but their efforts were little more than disorganized scrambling. In desperation, they may even have planned a violent coup, probably instigated by Sikorski, who hated

Piłsudski.[95] Their inability to create a coherent alternative, meant that post-1935 Polish politics was a struggle between Piłsudski's adrift heirs, and Dmowski's nationalists.[96]

Piłsudski left no guidelines, and his lieutenants floundered about; evanescent factions appeared. Piłsudski had clearly favored an important role for Sławek, and bequeathed the army to General Edward Śmigły-Rydz, bypassing the far more able Sosnkowski.[97] Rydz had proven himself an outstanding battlefield commander during the war with Russia – some claimed he had never been defeated – but even Piłsudski doubted his strategic abilities. Sosnkowski, clearly brilliant, had damaged his standing with his fellow Piłsudskiites during the 1926 coup when he was so indecisive that he attempted suicide. Colonel Józef Beck, Piłsudski's trusted foreign minister, retained his position after 1935, but really played no role in the government.

Sławek, a noble figure indeed, proved a disaster. His actions were mysterious and erratic. After reconfiguring the electoral laws to assure a dominant role for the BBWR, he dissolved it, in contradiction of the *sanacja* policy since 1928. He then resigned the premiership; and he committed suicide in 1939. Sławek's last effort was a kind of revived *sanacja* based on elevated moral principles, designed to unite the nation above tawdry politics; it was, however, too late for such gentle experiments.[98] With the government adrift, Ignacy Mościcki, the president since 1926, schemed to seize power in cooperation with Rydz. They were not an impressive duo as neither had political experience and, though Rydz was an illustrious legionnaire, Mościcki was really only a figurehead. Poland had neither the inspiring symbol nor the mechanism of leadership.[99]

Divided into warring factions, the *sanacja* decided to pseudo-resurrect Piłsudski by creating a mythic Rydz. With the international situation becoming very dark, many Poles were convinced that even a symbolic Piłsudski was better than none. Rydz was elevated to the rank of "Second Marshal," Piłsudski having been the "First," and an incessant propaganda campaign extolled him as the embodiment of the Polish martial tradition. This was too much for Piłsudski's acolytes who virtually abandoned Rydz.

Finally, the colonels decided to create a kind of amorphous movement to galvanize the nation:[100] hence, the well-named "Camp of National Unity" (Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego, OZON). A kind of organizer of national passion, the Camp was nothing like the BBWR. It was ostensibly the creation of a legionnaire, Adam Koc, but he found OZON morally objectionable from the outset and accepted the position of leader of OZON only due to pressure from Rydz. To Koc it was contrary to the "ideology" of Pilsudski.[101] Indeed, its increasingly shrill nationalism, including flirtations with antisemitism, was really a rejection of Piłsudski in favor of Dmowski.[102]

Understandably, most *sanacja* loyalists rejected it because its central feature was Dmowski's celebration of national unity with obvious consequences for the minorities. Indeed, to lure nationalists, the Camp became increasingly

antisemitic inducing the Jewish Agudat to leave. The BBWR had welcomed Jewish supporters, OZON rejected them. By 1937 the *sanacja* even endorsed the boycott of Jewish shops. Some Piłsudskiites competed with the nationalists to arouse anti-Jewish passion, despite desperate efforts by their former colleagues to block the trend.[103] A series of small pogroms also stained the years after 1935. Universities were increasingly characterized by the segregation of Jewish students in classes. An odd countertrend was represented by the peasant parties, which became less antisemitic after about 1937, leaving the movement a substantially urban phenomenon.[104]

The *sanacja* devoted much effort to promote Jewish emigration from Poland – a panacea for antisemitism.[105] Despite this, major violence was virtually non-existent. After an explosive start, the Camp began to disintegrate as its hope of integrating the country's transcending factions proved unavailing. It virtually collapsed.

Piłsudski's coup, and the incarnation of *sanacja*, had led Dmowski to immediate action. He explained the coup as the work of Jews and Freemasons making Piłsudski unacceptable.[106] In 1927, Dmowski had created the "Camp of Great Poland" (Obóz Wielkiej Polski) in Poznań – long an *endecja* bastion. It was intended to be a rival of *sanacja* and plotted *sanacja*'s destruction by armed action, even training paramilitary forces. Never a party but rather a congeries of factions – predominantly ardently political youth, the intelligentsia, and the urban middle class – it grew rapidly to become the largest political movement in Poland with, eventually, perhaps 300,000 members. Dmowski's goals were obvious: he praised Mussolini's Italy and openly referred to the Camp as fascist.[107]

Its initial program is striking in its bluntness: only members of the "Polish nation" were to be accorded full rights. Minorities were to be, at best, mistrusted, and subject to forcible polonization. Given their low level of assimilation and powerful role in the economy, the Jews were particularly denounced. They were to be, somehow, removed from public life. The results were predictable. The Camp's organization of anti-Jewish outbreaks in Galicia resulted in the Camp's being banned there in 1928. By 1933, it was outlawed throughout the country, accused of spreading hatred and racism.[108] Immediately thereafter, there was a yet more radical recrudescence: the "National Radical Camp" (Obóz Narodowy Radykalny, ONR), referred to as the Falanga. Based on Mussolini's movement, it was immediately banned. Even Dmowski denounced it, producing chaos on the right.[109] It was coupled with antisemitism, and intolerance of all minorities. Some rightist factions even considered launching a coup against the s*anacja*.[110] This, again, allows us to see the link between nationalist geopolitics, economic woes, and hatred of minorities. Radicalization of nationalism and the disastrous depression are clearly linked.[111]

The result was planned outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence, the boycotting of Jewish shops, and the exclusion of Jews from higher education (the numerus clausus). Immediately clashes with the *sanacja* government led to arrests on a

large scale. This vision of Poland was the precise opposite of what the *sanacja* had preached, and it posed the question for the Second Republic: Would the nationalists prevail, or would a more traditional view of Poland come out ahead, epitomized by the initially vague declarations by the *sanacja*? In time, the *sanacja* evolved toward the right.

Long indifferent, if not hostile, to traditional Polish Catholicism, the nationalists' insistence on "national egoism" had earlier earned denunciations of "sin … apostasy, heresy" and a denial of "Christian morality" by the Church. But by 1926, the nationalists had begun a process of "religification" (*ureligijnienie się*), which emphasized the intrinsic role of Catholicism in "polonism" (*polskość*).[112] This realignment reflects the *endecja*'s realization that hostility to Catholicism was not marketable in interwar Poland.[113] By the early 1930s, nationalists called for the creation of a Catholic state,[114] an essentially "medieval" vision.[115] This resulted in a supplemental arsenal for denunciations of minorities: now being non-Catholic also removed one from real membership in the Second Republic.

Piłsudski's view of the Church had been at best tolerant, and no prominent Piłsudskiite was particularly religious.[116] The Church moved, after 1926, and much more after 1935, to collaboration, fearing the *sanacja* as a creature of the left.[117] The nationalists denounced the *sanacja* for being insufficiently protective of Catholic interests.[118] Thrown on the defensive, the *sanacja* was quick to react and, after about 1930, began a serious effort to mollify the Church and ignore an awkward past.[119]

The relationship between the Polish Church and the Jews was complex and sensitive. The behavior of the Church was, in Pease's sarcastic words "not always abysmal" – perhaps not a satisfying assessment for a relationship composed of theoretical *caritas* and practical dislike. Two fundamental questions are inherent. The first is whether Catholicism is historically and inevitably hostile to the Jews. The second is the degree to which *Polish* Catholicism exceeded the failures of the brothers in faith outside of Poland. An unsatisfying conclusion is that sincere acceptance of Jews was rare indeed. Hate was, however, not a universal passion. Perhaps the pervasiveness of mistrustful disdain is all we can confirm.[120]

By 1935 a portion – how large is debatable – of the Catholic intelligentsia had come to conclusions about Jews similar to traditional nationalist arguments. Landau-Czajka argues that the Catholic press shared the view that it was "essential to mount a defence against the threat" posed by the Jews.[121] After 1935, the large *Przegląd katolicki* and the smaller *Odrodzenie*, frequently argued that Jews were not an assimilable element of Polish society. This certainly indicated that elements of the Catholic intelligentsia were openly antisemitic, but it is impossible to judge how common such conclusions were among the general population. Primate Cardinal August Hlond bluntly condemned antisemitism as contrary to Catholic ethics and demanded that they be "loved," *but* he also made reference to "harmful influences"

(*szkodliwe wplywe*) from Jews.[122] It is, however, obvious that elements of the Church had adopted a position that was nationalist, while technically still not being part of the movement.[123]

With political chaos everywhere, the last months of the Second Republic witnessed a final, indeed moving conclusion – "clear consolidation of Polish and Jewish citizens,"[124] the exaltation of national unity, sacrificial patriotism, and faith, and a congealing of divides in the face of disaster. A Polish journalist observed that the youth of Poland awaited the looming war with "enthusiasm."[125] After two decades of floundering about, a downward path ever more evident, and compromise with the repulsive siren of radical nationalism, the Second Republic was, perhaps, briefly reborn on the eve of its death.

Retrospectively, it is clear that the greatest tragedy of interwar Poland was the failure of Piłsudski's "state assimilation" dream by which ethnic minorities would have been persuaded that loyalty to the Polish state did not require the abandonment of ethnicity. This, logical and attractive aspect of the *sanacja* regime did not prove lasting, and "polonization" was more threatening than inclusive. "State assimilation," the counterpoising of patriotism with nationalism, was a Piłsudski solution to the disaster of Dmowskiite nationalism. As a final effort to create a national ideology based on Polish history, its failure was truly a pity.

The minorities problem

The underlying principle of modern Polish nationalism was the insistence on unity. From the start, this raised questions of toleration and cooperation. All non-Poles were suspect and regarded as damaging national unity. The more alien you were from the theoretically model Pole, the more threatening you were to national unity. If that had been the only option Poles had to protect their sovereignty, rapid assimilation would have been indispensable; but the nationalists had a history of excluding the Jews from that goal.

Only about two-thirds of the Second Republic was Polish.[126] Of the major minorities, the Belarusians, about 3% of the population, with a long history of assimilation based on social mobility, could seemingly be regarded with a degree of tolerance, especially if they were Roman Catholic. In general, the lower the degree of national consciousness, the less threatening the group. However, the real problem for Warsaw was that the Belarusians were very poor. This made them sympathetic to the blandishments of the radical left, which, in turn, made them mistrusted by the Poles. By the 1930s a Belarusian political group was disbanded by the government for communist activities.[127] A small radical nationalist element, operating with Lithuanian support, was violently anti-Polish.[128] In 1924, 100 Belarusians, commanded by a Soviet officer, decimated a Polish town.[129] The Belarusians were more troublesome than had been anticipated.

The Lithuanians, a mere 0.3% of the Second Republic, had recently become possessed by nationalism. Their long role within the commonwealth

and a shared Catholicism were of no consequence. The independent Lithuanian state, Poland's neighbor, was a passionate enemy of Warsaw. As a Russian diplomat noted in 1927, the Lithuanians were convinced that Warsaw planned to attack them at any moment. The future would result in a German–Russian destruction of Poland that, in turn, would allow Lithuania to gain much territory: this had the makings of an irrational foreign policy. For its part, Warsaw was convinced that the Lithuanians were a tool in the hands of Berlin and Moscow. A cooperative relationship between Warsaw and Kaunas was impossible.[130]

Lithuanian assimilation to Polish culture was ancient and had produced many "Lithuanian–Poles," Piłsudski being the most significant. The historic conversion now exacerbated Polish–Lithuanian discord. For a Lithuanian nationalist, a Pole of Lithuanian origin was a traitor and epitomized the much loathed polonization. It may well be true that the number of prominent Poles of at least partial Lithuanian origin may well have equaled the number of devout Lithuanian nationalists.

The German minority presented Warsaw with a serious problem. At first glance, the future seemed assured for the Poles. The total number of Germans in Poland was not great, about 2.3%, and, far more important, their demographic vector was irreversibly downward.[131] However, despite small and dwindling numbers, their social and economic position was quite extraordinary.[132] In Upper Silesia the Germans were predominant, in other scattered areas in western Poland they also occupied a position disproportionate to their numbers.

The Germans were the most anti-Polish minority in the Second Republic, even the Ukrainians had proponents of cooperation with the Poles. In the years preceding 1914, German obsession with national unity caused them to detest the Poles who were demographically more robust – in effect "polonizing" eastern Germany. Worse, Polish nationalism emerged in areas such as Silesia, where it had long been absent. German assertion of racial superiority confronted increasingly aggressive Polish nationalism producing a irreconcilable situation.

The Germans in the Second Republic could not accept rule from Warsaw. The bad situation was incomparably worsened after the Nazi era began in 1933. Thereafter, the Germans in Poland were increasingly hostile to, and mistrusted by, the Poles.[133] This growing ethnic and cultural war was the preamble to the German extermination policy in the east after 1939. As war approached, an American diplomat described Polish–German relations in the Second Republic as "an eye for an eye."[134]

The Ukrainian problem

The Ukrainians were the "dynamite" of the Second Republic.[135] Comprising 14% of the total population, they were concentrated in the southeast. Long before the First World War, Polish–Ukrainian hostility had been a significant issue in the Habsburg Empire. Their failure to create an independent state from the wreckage

of World War One became a consuming anguish for Ukrainian nationalists. Given this dreadful recent past, the fact that Poles and Ukrainians fought a ferocious and long battle to dominate Galicia made matters immensely worse.

Since aggressive nationalism had not created independence, for many Ukrainians, Poland had to be destroyed to allow a free Ukraine to emerge. The failure of the later Piłsudski–Petlura alliance was a disaster for both peoples. Piłsudski desperately wanted it to build a permanent bridge, the positive consequences of which would have been enormous – it was another historic moment when "history refused to turn."[136] The result was that the only thing left linking Poles and Ukrainians after 1918 was hatred.

In the complex world of Ukrainian politics, anti-polonism was overwhelming, even to the extent of prompting collaboration with the Soviet Union. The 1925 Ukrainian National Democratic Organization (UNDO) organized the destruction of Polish villages and inflicted many casualties. Ukrainian nationalists tried to eliminate prominent Poles as well as fellow Ukrainians who favored cooperation with the Poles, making sincere reconciliation impossible. Polish troops were dispatched and repression was brutal. Piłsudski began a policy of granting land in the Ukrainian-populated east to Polish veterans – a provocation, whatever its motivation.[137]

One of Piłsudski's first actions after 1926 was a "wholesale revision" of policy toward the minorities.[138] The architect would be Henryk Józewski who was dispatched to Wołyń (Volhynia), a heavily Ukrainian area in the southeast.[139] He was soon joined by Tadeusz Hołówko, known for his efforts at Polish–Ukrainian reconciliation by extolling civic patriotism and opposing ethnic nationalism. Józewski and Hołówko would not only cultivate the Ukrainians, but also try to win them over to cooperation, and even to oppose the Soviets. They also dealt with Petlura, living in exile. It was the complex product of a Polish fascination with Prometheanism, a Romantic geopolitics that dreamed of dismantling the Soviet Union and recreating a pre-partition Polish commonwealth, characterized by the *sanacja*'s "state patriotism" to create a shared homeland, not a national state. Scattered evidence suggests this Polish "Ukrainianism" was not without success: many Ukrainians were disgusted with ceaseless UNDO violence. The Poles also cultivated the historic links some Ukrainians had had with the commonwealth. Hołówko had long advocated a similar policy toward the Belarusians, involving a reconstruction of the historic *kresy*. By 1939, more than 500,000 Ukrainians, a significant number, proclaimed themselves to be Polish. But Polish efforts at reconciliation were brief and limited. Thus, a new version of the Piłsudski–Petlura pact never reached large proportions, and it was drowned in ethnic hatred that served only Soviet Russia.[140] It was the last, abortive, effort to realize Piłsudski's geopolitical vision.[141]

Instead, the southeast of Poland was defaced by murder and repression. Ukrainian nationalists regarded assassination as a useful means to instill ethnic hatred, so several score, both Poles and Ukrainians, were targeted, including President Stanisław Wojciechowski and Piłsudski himself.[142] In

1934, agents of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) murdered both Interior Minister Bronisław Pieracki and Hołówko.[143] After Piłsudski's death, the effort collapsed. Polish nationalists managed to oust Józewski, ending Warsaw's last positive efforts in Volhynia. By then, the Ukrainians saw the Piłsudskiites as functionally nationalists.[144]

In 1934, a prison camp was opened at Bereza Kartuska and eventually 500 Ukrainian terrorists were incarcerated along with communists and other opponents of the *sanacja*. Warsaw's dislike of its Ukrainian minority helped undermine stability and damaged democratic practice, but the issue is only comprehensible in a larger context. Radical Ukrainian nationalist organizations had three European headquarters, Prague, Kaunas, and, especially, Berlin. They worked closely with German military intelligence.[145]

Moscow had also been cultivating Ukrainian terrorism against Poland. UNDO was financed by both Moscow and Berlin. It exploited the minority issue in the Second Republic by condemning Polish antisemitism as a harbinger of anti-Ukrainianism. Of course, this was simple cynicism because UNDO was antisemitic. In the 1930s, UNDO changed to endorsing the creation of an autonomous Ukrainian region within Poland. There were even invocations of the Piłsudski–Petlura compact[146] Ceaseless agitation and murder were too much for many Ukrainians who sought some *modus vivendi* with Warsaw. Reports of the mass murder of Ukrainians in Soviet Russia helped UNDO to shed its founding anti-Polonism, and favor cooperation with Warsaw. Relations were so bitter that reports of Germany openly "organizing and arming" Ukrainians were circulating by 1939.[147] The irony of the Ukrainian problem in the Second Republic is that the Ukrainian departure from Poland would not have resulted in national independence, but in absorption by the Soviets whose mistreatment of the Ukrainians is, of course, legendary.

The Jews

The Jews had a very long history in Poland and through most of it the host community was at least tolerant, which explains why so large a percentage of world Jewry lived in Poland.[148] However, by the nineteenth century, transformative changes had appeared in Russian Poland. Since the eighteenth century, Hasidism insisted that intercourse with the Poles be rare, extolling Jewish isolation. Rival Jewish groups were "alarmed and shocked by what they saw as [this] hostility to the non-Jewish world."[149] This Hasidic isolationist disposition was especially strong in the *kresy*. By contrast, Enlightenment arguments (the Haskalah), encouraged Jews either to integrate into the Polish national community, or to support a separatist nationalism, Zionism.[150]

Rapid acculturation – including the use of the local language – was far more advanced among German Jews. Berlin used pressure to secularize its Jews and integrate them into the larger society. Study at German universities became a commonplace.[151] The Habsburg Empire made similar efforts but

later and less vigorously. Thus, as late as 1850, "westernization had not yet made serious inroads into Polish Jewry."[152] Polonsky concluded that, in Prussia, the Jews were acculturated citizens, but citizens, in historic Poland, they were not.[153]

By the 1880s, Zionism appeared, arguing that the West was fundamentally Judeophobe and thus the Jews could never assimilate, and must re-congregate in the Holy Land. Although controversial, this conclusion reflected the Jews' long history of being a small minority in a Christian world.[154] Socialism, growing apace with Zionism, enjoyed wide support among the Jews. Jewry's strident opposition to Polish independence was a very difficult barrier to cross for there to be Polish–Jewish collaboration.[155] Piłsudski, an exception, saw socialism as a potentially unifying phenomenon to unite victims of Russian tyranny.[156]

An episode linking Polish liberals with Enlightenment Jews (Haskalah), in favor of integration, was very brief. Zionism was not a proponent of assimilation.[157] Polonized Jews were "vastly outnumbered," at least in Russian Poland.[158] In the *kresy*, the Jews were, according to Mendelsohn, "impervious to assimilation."[159] The rapid rise of Zionism proportionally increased Jewish opposition to assimilation.

More lasting was the cooperation of the 1897 socialist Jewish Bund and the Polish Left. But this too began to crumble when exclusionary "national egoism" appeared among the Poles, which found all minorities in historic Poland a threat to national unity, with the Jews, the least assimilable, the most repulsive. Simultaneously, a response to integral nationalism was the rapidly expanding Bund, which endorsed "national-cultural autonomy" for the Jews. The openly nationalist Po'alei Zion was founded soon after.

By 1905, however, this tentative cooperation failed when Dmowskiite nationalism had spread among the Poles, and the Jews adopted an increasingly adamant call for autonomy in Poland, even endorsing the idea of Poland becoming a permanent part of Russia. By 1906, the Bund denounced the advocacy of Polish independence. Jewish socialists rejected Polish socialism in favor of German or Russian versions. This was one of the causes of the Polish Socialist Party's (PPS's) bifurcation, with only the left wing continuing to support Jewish aims. By 1914, paradoxically, the Polish nationalists and the Jewish left concurred that "assimilation was bankrupt."[160]

By 1900, *kresy* Jews played an enormous role in the local PPS. By the late nineteenth century, the Jewish role in the *kresy* was enormous, causing Haim Zhitlkowsky to conclude that they had "taken it," and become the local "master race."[161] By the 1930s, Jan Borski argued, this resulted in the Jews being "not connected by any 'spiritual or emotional ties' with Poland."[162] As a result only a small segment preferred to stay in Poland.

Whereas the numerically small Jewish population of Western Europe rapidly acculturated, even assimilated, Polish Jews, by contrast, remained profoundly distinct. This visible separateness contributed to Polish mistrust of the Jews as essentially alien. The growing nineteenth-century Polish fear of Jewish cooperation with

the partitioners, and the large urban presence of the Jews and their powerful economic position, did not contribute to tolerance and generosity, but evoked mistrust and hatred: the nationalists centered their goal of Polish unity on hostility toward the Jews, but the real engine was fear. Even before World War One, Dmowski warned that Warsaw was increasingly dominated by Russified Jews and Germans. The Germans, he argued, were certainly hostile foreigners, but the Jews were far worse: only about 10% spoke Polish as a first language, and their cultural differences with the Poles were fundamental, religion being the most obvious.[163] Hence, a "modern" Pole had to be hostile to the Jews because they were blocking Poland's future. Dmowski's analysis made the situation impossible. Polish nationalism became increasingly fixated on the Jews as the proverbial "other" whose very existence damaged national unity. From the Jewish perspective, the advance of polonization was not part of an "integrationist" movement, which really did not exist.[164]

The Jews of Russian Poland, under increasing pressure from the tsarist government, had become increasingly Russified. A small and isolated community in an alien sea, ultimately the Jews had three choices. They could attempt to remain isolated from their surroundings, but this was an increasingly hopeless option, and the Jews became ever more integrated into a modernizing world. Failing isolation, they could choose between Russia and Poland. This choice was preordained. In the long historical contest to control the eastern margins of Europe, the Poles had lost and the Russians had won. Sentimental attachment to pre-partition Poland gained a Jew nothing, and provoked the ire of the Russians. Support for the Russians gave the Jews some security and hope. The Poles had no solution to this trend, which was both frightening and depressing. Polish mistrust and bitterness grew rapidly.[165]

Polish nationalism created an impossible situation: if the Jews did *not* assimilate they were foreigners damaging national unity, but assimilation solved nothing because the Jews were supposedly so innately hostile to European civilization that their absorption was fraudulent, and, in any case, it really amounted to national suicide.[166] Even Paderewski, hardly known for anti-Jewish prejudice, mused over whether the Jews were inveterately hostile to the new Republic.

Some Jews had supported Polish efforts to regain independence: there were more Jews in Piłsudski's iconic legions than all other minority communities combined. But the great majority of Jews were not part of the Polish world. The Jews comprised almost 9% of the Second Republic.[167] Only a handful of Jews were assimilated and the new Poland, poor, weak, and beset with problems, was not an attractive option. More than three-quarters of all Jews lived in cities, often forming a large percentage of the total, especially in eastern Poland, while Warsaw and Łódź in central Poland were about one-third Jewish.[168]

During the 1919–1920 Russo–Polish war, the Poles were convinced that the Jews were pro-Russian, pro-communist, or both. As a result, many Jews were treated brutally, and at least 500 were killed. Deadly events occurred, most

notably the Pińsk massacre of 5 April 1919, Lwów at the end of 1918, and later Wilno, where Polish soldiers murdered a number of Jews.[169] A large number of Jews were arrested on the basis of suspected pro-Bolshevik sympathies; the camp at Jabłonna held far more Jews than any other *kresy* minority.[170] Although the Poles claimed that they were convinced that the local Jews supported the Bolsheviks, antisemitic distrust was a major factor.[171] To his credit, Piłsudski was much disturbed by the reports, though his concern for the damage done to Poland's image abroad may have been his principal concern. Dmowski's perfervid antisemitism, already well known in the West, was a large obstacle in protecting Poland from denunciation for outrageously mistreating its Jews. However, antisemitic nationalism was a phenomenon widespread in the east of Europe after 1918.[172] As Böhler has argued, "military violence was an omnipresent phenomenon all over post-war Europe … the Polish example is by no means an exception."[173] Brykczyński has contextualized these events: "Poles killed fellow Poles, poor killed rich, there was a 'general increase in violence' at a time of breakdown and chaos."[174]

The reaction of the Jewish community worldwide was understandably one of horror, and large anti-Polish demonstrations appeared, especially in New York. The idea of an autonomous Jewish "state within a state" solution, a Jewish nationalist goal, incited fury among the Poles.[175] Denunciations of nascent Poland, bruited about in some Jewish quarters, was the greatest possible gain for Dmowskiite nationalism, which could now claim that the Jews virtually plotted the destruction of the new state. The controversial report of the Morgenthau Commission, sent by President Wilson to investigate widespread reports of Polish massacres, largely exonerated the Poles, and specifically denied the argument that antisemitism was universal or government policy.[176] It was much too little to satisfy the Jews, nor could it dampen Polish resentment over the accusations.

The culmination of this confrontation was the inclusion of the "minorities clause" at the Paris Peace Conference, by which "new states" had to guarantee minority protection. Failure to sign would result in serious consequences in international relations, and it was little more than blackmail, especially for weak states beset by enormous problems. States with a very foul history of mistreatment of minorities were *not* required to sign, thus creating a divide in Europe: Poland was, in effect, accused of moral inferiority.[177] When Paderewski raised the issue of protecting the Polish minority in Germany, he was told that although it was "just and logical," it could not be done.[178] This inevitably provoked Polish resentment of its Jewish population, which often supported the minorities clause. This then stoked antisemitic resentment, playing into the hands of Dmowski's nationalists who wanted to assimilate everybody except Jews.[179]

Poland had to be strong; strength requires unity; the Jews damaged unity. Antisemitism, for the nationalists, thus had a geopolitical foundation. Whereas Piłsudski wanted a large Poland that would include minorities, this Poland did not appear. It is noteworthy that Piłsudski was a philo-Semite who had even

endorsed Jewish autonomy before the war.[180] Hence, Dmowskiite Poland, smaller, yet somehow shorn of minorities, was in practice the only alternative. The centrality of antisemitism to Dmowskiite nationalism raises a difficult point: if nationalism was *ab origine* antisemitic, its spread and intensification made the dislike of Jews a major theme in the Second Republic.[181] Antisemitism became an essential conflict between the nationalists and the Piłsudskiites and undermined the structure of democracy in Poland.[182]

The depth of antisemitic sentiments and the rapidity with which they spread reflected the dreadful start of the Second Republic. Piłsudski's efforts at "state assimilation" after 1926 were admirable and had, among other attributes, the evocation of the pre-partition multinational commonwealth, but they were too generous for a Polish population that was weak, increasingly paranoiac, and obsessed with unity in the face of threat. Serious economic problems in the early 1920s and the worst years of the Depression were a boon for the nationalists who could conjoin the realities of the economy with the traditional denunciation of the Jews as exploiters of the poor.[183] A poor Poland was one ripe for national animosity. As Poland's international position deteriorated, antisemitic behavior increased. Since the Second Republic was poor and endangered from its inception, "structural" antisemitism was inherent.

In general, the Second Republic failed to solve its minorities problem. Aggressive nationalism increased among the minority population in the face of clumsy and often aggressive Polish efforts at assimilation. The situation became dramatically worse after Pilsudski's death and the regime's Camp of National Unity was infamous for its harsh treatment of minorities. The nationalists won; the cost was incalculable.

Geopolitics, 1922–1939

Espying a path to security for the Second Republic may have been impossible. Both Germany and Russia regarded their relationship with Poland as unacceptable. The insoluble dilemma for Warsaw was that the foundation of postwar German foreign policy after March 1933 was the "annihilation" of Poland, preferably in collaboration with Russia.[184] The United States effectively withdrew from an active political role in Europe, and Great Britain made it clear that it subordinated Polish interests to reconciliation with the Germans.[185] That left only France. Hence, the relationship with Paris (formalized in the 1921 alliance) became the central pillar in Polish foreign policy. But, as the French position in Europe faded, so did Polish security. As important as France was to Poland, the relationship was never reciprocal. For Paris, Warsaw was a potential ally against the Germans, but the French had no interest in supporting Poland against the Russians.[186] Already in the early 1920s Paris was moving closer to the British – and American – position of appeasing Germany at the expense of Poland.[187] Worse, the 1922 Rapallo Treaty reconciled Germany and Soviet Russia, and also contained secret clauses regarding military cooperation.

Polish hopes that the League of Nations, created at the Paris Peace Conference, could play an important role in maintaining European security, rapidly disappeared. The Germans maintained a constant barrage of accusations that Warsaw was mistreating its German minority. In merely a few years, Berlin filed 9,942 claims against Poland just from Upper Silesia! Only 43 were not rejected out of hand by the League Nations. Occasional similar claims by the Lithuanians and Czechs meant that "Poland was always on the League agenda."[188] Warsaw was thus on the defensive and abandoned hope that the League could protect Polish interests.[189]

Whereas Rapallo threatened Poland, the Locarno Treaty of 1925 was much worse: Berlin recognized the permanence of its border with France but made no similar guaranty to Poland or Czechoslovakia. France did nothing to protect its eastern allies. This "saddest moment" in Warsaw's interwar foreign relations, this exposed Poland to threat. But if Poland was going to be threatened, so would France be.[190] The Poles never forgave the French, and Piłsudski's seizure of power in 1926 was motivated, at least in part, as noted, by his conviction that Poland's security had been gravely damaged by Locarno, and the just-begun German trade war was designed to blackmail Poland.[191] Locarno was a disaster for Europe as a whole, because the British saw it as an excuse to remove themselves from issues of continental security, while Berlin understood it to mean that it would have greater freedom to pursue revisionism. Thus Poland really had no serious ally after 1925.[192] Piłsudski concluded that war with Germany and Russia was inevitable.[193]

Distracted by problems in the Far East, and interested in cooperation with Warsaw to lessen the German threat in the West, the Russians were receptive to the Polish notion of a non-aggression pact, which was eventually signed in 1932. It may have increased Warsaw's leverage with Berlin, but that was brief and marginal. When Hitler assumed power the following year, Piłsudski undertook a series of efforts to test the dictator's aggressive intentions regarding Poland, reinforcing the Polish garrison in the Free City, sending a Polish warship into its harbor, and mobilizing Polish troops stationed nearby. He even drafted a secret memorandum about possible war with Germany. He purportedly proposed to Paris a "preventive war" against Germany.[194] In retrospect, Warsaw's concerns should have been obvious. The West, Piłsudski concluded, would do nothing to oppose an aggressive Hitler.

In the summer of 1933, Mussolini launched the "Four Power Pact," to facilitate a British, German, French, and Italian domination of Europe. This would remove Warsaw from any serious role in Europe. In October, Germany left the League. An ephemeral Italian–Polish alliance failed even before it could be finalized. Piłsudski saw Poland's only option in some form of rapprochement with the Germans.[195] Hence, Warsaw signed a non-aggression pact with Berlin in 1934. Foreign Minister Józef Beck argued ruefully that the 1934 declaration was the logical outcome of Locarno. But, as Piłsudski

admitted, this "balance" policy, had purchased only a few years of peace and solved nothing.[196] This was best reflected in Beck's foreign policy: seek the status quo in a dynamic Europe.[197]

The French were appalled by the Polish–German pact and accused Poland of aligning itself with Hitler. This was the beginning of the charge that Warsaw had become the effective ally of Germany, an argument long repeated. Of course, an increasingly aggressive Germany was the result of the West's delusional inertness, not Poland's illusions regarding Hitler. Obviously adrift, Paris decided to join with Moscow to block Germany by the "Eastern Pact." But this quickly collapsed into chaos when London wished to include Germany! Piłsudski was convinced that the plan would be disastrous. Paris suspected that Warsaw was secretly in collusion with Berlin, and Warsaw saw the large role Moscow was taking as threatening.[198]

By 1936, Poland's position was in a downward spiral. By then Franco-Polish relations were in ruins. Warsaw courted England but achieved nothing. The League had utterly failed to deal with Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, thus proving its insignificance. Italy decided not to oppose German aims in Central Europe, but to cooperate in their realization, thus forming the Axis. London publicly dropped opposition to German rearmament. The symbolic surrender of the West to Germany was its reaction to Germany's 1936 remilitarization of the Rhineland. In direct violation of the Versailles Treaty, the Germans not only damaged France's strategic position, but humiliated her profoundly. Warsaw realized what was at stake, and beseeched France to defend its own interests with a forceful response, pledging immediate military support. The French did nothing except earn contempt from Berlin and disgust from Warsaw. The Germans put increasing pressure on Warsaw to create closer relations. Knowing that Poland's position in such a relationship would be pitiful, Beck resisted, but could not offer a blunt rejection due to the "appeasement" policy of the Western powers.

Given Poland's geopolitical dilemma, the only possible option had been the long-imagined creation of a local alliance system. Piłsudski's original efforts had failed by 1920. Subsequently, Warsaw mounted other efforts, often referred to as the "Baltic Bloc," and tried to form some relationship with the south and southeast parts of Europe. Both efforts were more desperation than strategy.

The Baltic Bloc could not be realized due to bad relations between Warsaw and Kaunas. Although Latvia occasionally showed interest, it was not enough. Estonia and Finland really did not pursue the issue. However, even a reconciliation with Lithuania would have given Warsaw very little as it was small and weak; it could be only a stepping-stone to the north.

A more impressive possibility lay to the south, Beck's "Third Europe" vision. The central problem for a Warsaw-based system was the perpetually strained relationship with Czechoslovakia. Initial approaches to Masaryk by Piłsudski were rejected.[199] For Prague, Poland's dangerous relationship with the Russians made it a poor choice as an ally, as it would draw the Czechs into friction with a

power that they viewed favorably. For Prague, the threat came from Germany, especially given their large German minority. Hence, good relations with the Russians were necessary. Indeed, after Hitler assumed power in 1933, Warsaw and Prague adopted contradictory orientations. The Czechs courted the Russians, and Warsaw became increasingly cooperative with Berlin. Warsaw's relationship with Budapest and Bucharest really meant nothing. Despite misty notions of creating an alliance system sufficiently large as to include Turkey, the only ally Warsaw was able to find was Romania. Poor, militarily weak, and with fewer than 20 million people, Romania was not significant.

Without a Warsaw–Prague axis, no "Third Europe" was possible. Poland's military was increasingly obsolete, and by the mid-1930s the rapid expansion of forces by both Moscow and Berlin made the situation dreadful. Despite a crushing military budget, the Polish position increasingly weakened, giving Warsaw little to sell to a potential ally. Prague denounced Warsaw for not being more active in efforts to court Moscow. To the Poles, Russia was a threat, not an ally.[200] The regional tragedy was that no geopolitical solution between the Poles and the Czechs was possible.

German absorption of Austria (the *Anschluss* of March 1938) and the West's betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich in September/October made the Polish position precarious. With Czechoslovakia in peril, Poland demanded the return of part of the Cieszyn area, Zaolzie. Beck had concluded that the West would do nothing to protect Czech retention of the area, and Germany would seize the territory, which the Poles had claimed; indeed, Hitler had already admitted this demand in late September.[201] Beck's action was prompted by a desire to save what could be saved. Despite the persuasiveness of this calculation, Polish quasi-cooperation in the destruction of Czechoslovakia cast Poland in a dreadful light, and strengthened suspicions that Poland was an ally of Hitler.[202] Certainly, there is little doubt that Beck retained delusional notions of closer Polish–German relations without compromising Polish sovereignty. In sum, Warsaw's foreign policy was little more than floundering about. But what alternatives existed in light of appeasement are not discernible.

For the Second Republic, the first months of 1939 bordered on the incomprehensible. Berlin was pressing for a virtual alliance but simultaneously encouraging Ukrainians to create an independent state; this would have been a disaster for Poland. Warsaw's efforts to improve relations with Moscow came to nothing. And the West was inert. In March 1939, the Germans seized what was left of Czechoslovakia. The British had beguiled themselves into accepting Hitler's promise at Munich of no future territorial claims. Now, abruptly, both London and Paris realized that Hitler had broader plans.

Finally realizing the menace of Hitler, London signed an alliance with Poland in April 1939, and France also declared its support. London had said nothing, however, about helping Poland to defend its borders: the British announcement was simply fraudulent. The British government had never been interested in Polish security.[203] The British action was not an end to

appeasement, but the preamble to a second Munich.[204] Warsaw's desperate efforts to gain British financial support to refurbish its weak military situation, met with little support. Soon the situation deteriorated yet further. Moscow exerted increasing pressure on Warsaw to cooperate but demanded huge concessions in return. Worse, the Poles were aware that London and Paris were pursuing an accord with Moscow that accepted all Russian demands at Poland's expense. Shortly before the German invasion, the American military attaché in Warsaw reported that "for many Poles, war would be fun [*zabawa*] compared to the daily drudgery [*harówka*]."[205] The Hitler–Stalin Pact, signed a few days prior, meant Poland's destruction. The Germans invaded Poland early on 1 September, and the Russians followed a couple of weeks later.[206] Britain and France declared war on 3 September, but, characteristically, did nothing. As the world moved towards war, Beck delivered the most moving words in Polish history: "We Poles do not accept the idea of peace at any price. There is only one thing in the lives of people, nations, and states, which has no price. This is honor."

The foreign policy of the Second Republic was really simple. Poland did not emerge in 1921 as a significant power. Thus, its ability to provide for its own security did not exist. Obviously, Poland could not prevent a resurgence of Germany or Russia. Warsaw's repeated failure to join this or that alliance, Beck's diplomatic vulgarity in seizing Zaolzie, and repeated flirtations with Berlin and Moscow, did not improve Poland's security. Ultimately, Poland perished because, like the rest of East Central Europe, it did not exist in the "mental geography" of the West.

Conclusions

Can we make dispositive conclusions about an era in Polish history that lasted only 20 years? Given the convulsive characteristics of the era, especially the consolidation of both Nazism and communism, assessing the failures and achievements of small states in an impossible location is difficult indeed.

Poland suffered approximately 2 million *military* casualties in World War One. The number of *civilian* casualties may have reached an additional seven figures. By 1919 almost 7 million more Poles were stricken by influenza, with deaths exceeding 100,000. Between 1918 and 1921 about 300,000 more Poles fell in battle. Additionally, civilian casualties in this era have never been precisely calculated but were enormous.[207] There were 2 million buildings destroyed, and a large percentage of factories, railroads, and other economic assets were gone. By comparison, total Czech losses after 1918 were *50* dead. Damage was virtually nonexistent. The birth of the Second Republic was Phoenix-like.

The easiest solution is to blame intolerant nationalism for destroying the basis of democratic order in the Second Republic. This, in turn, reflects the culmination of a generation of intolerance of minorities coupled with a perfervid stress on national unity. It was the collapse of Poland's geopolitical

prospects – in other words, its future – that prompted the nationalistic solution. When Poland was great it was tolerant; when it was small it was not.[208]

What other European land had witnessed such destruction, fought significant battles until 1921, and found itself in a hopeless geopolitical situation from the outset? Creating an army from discordant scraps, deemed by a senior soldier "the greatest improvisation known in the history of warfare" meant that by 1920 the army numbered over 1 million. Many, but too few.[209] Civic attainments, rarely noted, were considerable. In 1922, Prime Minister Julian Nowak argued that the rebuilding of Poland knew no historic precedent. It was, in the words of a contemporary German historian, "an enormous achievement against all odds."[210]

Piłsudski had a noble vision that also understood the geopolitics of modern Europe. For more than a generation, the nationalists had argued that Poland could survive only by remaining unified – in defiance of the country's historic tradition. But, with federalism failing, the nationalists offered the only alternative. Their fanatical celebration of unity and obsession with the minorities grievously undermined democracy. A democratic Second Republic could have endured only in a Europe that offered the Poles geopolitical security.

TABLE 2.1 Ethnicity in Poland, by language (1931)

The Second Republic conducted two censuses, one in 1921 another in 1931. Both have serious problems. The first, for example, does not count, inter alia, the Wilno area or Silesia. Hence, I have used the 1931 figures, the accuracy of which is still controversial. In addition, ethnicity/nationality is not used as a category, but instead "first language." There are also has some strange categories: neither Ukrainian nor Belarusian, but "Ruthenian." It is, however, the best we have available. Thus, from a total population of 31,915,779:

Polish	21,993,444
Ukrainian	3,221,975
Ruthenian	1,219,647
Belarusian	989,852
Russian	138,713
Czech	38,097
Lithuanian	83,116
German	740,992
Yiddish	2,489,034
Hebrew	243,539
Local	707,088
Other	11,119
Not declared	39,163

TABLE 2.2 Religious faith in Poland (1931)

Roman Catholic	20,670,051
Greek Catholic	3,336,164
Orthodox	3,762,484
Protestant (Lutheran)	424,216
Protestant (Reformed)	33,295
Protestant United	269,531
Protestant (general)	108,216
Other Christian	145,418
Judaism	3,113,933
Other non-Christian	6750
Non-believers	6058
Not declared	39,663

TABLE 2.3 Parliamentary representation of Poland's political parties (1922, from the first full election)

	%
Christian Union of National Unity	29.1
Bloc of National Minorities	16.0
Piast	13.2
Wyzwolenie	11.0
Polish Socialist Party	10.3
National Workers Party	5.4
"Jewish Group"	4.6
Polish Center	3.0
"Ukrainian Group"	1.6
Communist Party	1.4
Radical Peasant Party	1.3
Polish People's Party "Left"	0.7
People's Council	0.5
Unia Narodowo-Państwowe	0.4
Centrum Mieszczańskie	0.3
Invalids and Demobilized Soldiers	0.1
Others	1.5

Notes

1 I have profited from the advice of my colleagues, Christopher N. Fritsch and Jochen Böhler.

2 Roman Wapiński, *Polska i male ojczyzny polaków* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1994), pp. 317ff.

3 Regarding "civic" versus "ethno-nationalism" see Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland's Threatening "Other"* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp. 3ff.

4 Ibid., p. 60.

5 Przemysław Hauser, "Jedność w wielości," in Wojciech Wrzesiński (ed.), *Do nie-podległości, 1918, 1944–45, 1989*. (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo sejmowe, 1998), p. 133; and Jochen Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918–1921: The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 5–6.

6 Antony Polonsky, "Introduction," *Polin*, Vol. 14 (2001), p. 14.

7 Piłsudski probably believed that the minorities would eventually become Poles. See Stanisław Mackiewicz, *Historia Polski* (London: Puls, 1994), p. 122.

8 Antony Polonsky, "The Second Republic in Contemporary Perspective," in Timothy Wiles (ed.), *Poland Between the Wars 1918–1939* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Polish Studies Center, 1989), p. 3.

9 Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 200–201.

10 Marek Kornat, "Jakiej Polski pragnęli Polacy?," in *Pamięć i sprawiedliwości* (Warsaw: IPN, 2018). Both were from the outset "pessimistic" about Poland's future. See Andrzej Ajnenkiel, "Romana Dmowskiego i Józefa Piłsudskiego spór o Polskę," in Wrzesiński, *Do niepodległości*, p. 223.

11 M. B. B. Biskupski, *Independence Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

12 Andrzej Ajnenkiel, "The Establishment of a National Government in Poland, 1918," in Paul Latawski (ed.), *The Reconstruction of Poland, 1914–1923* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), p. 138.

13 Wojciech Roszkowski, "The Reconstruction of the Government and State in the Second Polish Republic," in Latawski, *Reconstruction*.

14 M. B. B. Biskupski, "The Wilsonian View of Poland: Idealism and Geopolitical Traditionalism," John Micgiel (ed.), *Wilsonian East Central Europe* (New York: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1995), pp. 123–145.

15 M. B. B. Biskupski, "The Origins of the Paderewski Government in 1919," *Polish Review*, Vol. 33 (1988), pp. 157–166.

16 Mackiewicz, *Historia Polski*, p. 136.

17 Kay Lundgreen-Nielsen, *The Polish Problem at the Paris Peace Conference* (Odense, Denmark, 1979), pp. 167–168.

18 The precise determination of who and what is a Kaszubian remains controversial. Jan Baudouin de Courtenay one remarked that Kaszubian was "more Polish than Polish," but this does not determine national consciousness. A recent review is Tomasz Kamusella and Motoki Nomachi, "The Long Shadow of Borders: The Cases of Kashubian and Silesian in Poland," in *Eurasia Border Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Fall 2014), pp. 35–59. It is, however, not dispositive.

19 Joseph Healy, "Central Europe in Flux," Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, Scotland, 2003.

20 M. B. B. Biskupski, *The United States and the Rebirth of Poland, 1914–1918* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Republic of Letters, 2012), p. 406.

21 Kornat, "Jakiej Polski," p. 55.

22 Lundgreen-Nielsen, *The Polish Problem*, p. 263.

23 Böhler, *Civil War*, p. 96.

24 See Piotr Wandycz, *France and her Eastern Allies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), pp. 75ff.

25   Jakub Krzysztonek, "Roman Dmowski a kwestia ukraińska," in Krzysztof Kofin and Mateusz Kofin (eds.), *Endecja wczoraj i dziś* (Łódź: Archaegraph, 2017); and "Ewolucja polskiego nacjonalizmu od 'egoizmu narodowego' Z. Balickiego do 'nacjonalizmu chrześcijańskiego J. Giertycha," in Kofin and Kofin, *Endecja Balickiego*, pp. 85–102.

26   Piotr S. Wandycz, "Nieznane listy Petlury do Piłsudskiego," *Zeszyty Historyczne*, Vol. 8 (1965), pp. 181–186.

27   Healy, "Central Europe," [note 19], p. 131.

28   Kornat, "Jakiej Polski," pp. 55–57.

29   Jan Jacek Bruski, "Geneza sojuszu między Ukrainą a Polską," in *Arcana*, No. 23 (5/1998), pp. 47–57.

30   Piotr Wandycz, "Z zagadnień współpracy polsko-ukraińskiej w latach 1919–1920," *Zeszyty Historyczne*, Vol. 12 (1967), p. 3.

31   Anna M. Cienciala, *From Versailles to Locarno* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1984), pp. 124–129.

32   Mackiewicz, *Historia Polski*, p. 249.

33   Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 62–63.

34   Kazimierz Podlaski, *Białorusini, Litwini, Ukraińcy* (Białystok, Poland: Versus, 1990), p. 32.

35   Jerzy Borzęcki, *The Soviet–Polish Peace of 1921* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 70.

36   Andrzej Nowak, *Polska i trzy Rosje* (Warsaw: PAN, 2015), pp. 326–343. Regarding Bułak-Bałachowicz, see Remigiusz Piotrowski, *Zamach na II RP* (Warsaw: PWN, 2018), pp. 88ff.

37   M. B. B. Biskupski, "Paderewski, Polish Politics and the Battle for Warsaw, 1920," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3–4 (Autumn–Winter 1987).

38   Recently unearthed Soviet documents reveal that of the Poles left east of the Riga frontier 200,000–250,000 were murdered by the NKVD (Soviet secret police). See Paweł Styrna, "Defense of Western Civilization or 'Polish Imperialism'?," *Polish Review*, Vol. 58 (2013), p. 208.

39   Wandycz, "Z zagadnień współpracy," p. 24; and Borzęcki, *The Soviet–Polish Peace.*

40   Paul Brykczyński, "A Poland for the Poles?," in *Pravo*, No. 1 (2007), p. 18.

41   Władysław Grabski, *Wspomnienia ze Spa* (London: Ofycyna poetów i malarzy, 1973). It is noteworthy that the Curzon Line was based on frontiers drawn for the eighteenth-century partitions while other parts were simply made up.

42   Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915–1926* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 5.

43   Olaf Bergmann, *Narodowa Demokracja wobec problematyki żydowskiej w latach 1918–1929* (Poznań, Poland: Wydawnictwo poznańskie, 1998), p. 63.

44   Jerzy Holzer, *Mozaika polityczna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1974).

45   Wolfgang Templin, *Der Kampf um Polen* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2018), p. 204.

46   What Mendelsohn called political "manic depression." See his "Jewish Politics in Interwar Poland," in Yisrael Gutman et al. (eds.), *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 1989), pp. 10ff.

47   Holzer, *Mozaika*, pp. 261–274, 562–580.

48   Andrzej Ajnenkiel, *Spór o model parlamentaryzmu* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1972), pp. 190–191.

49   Holzer, *Mozaika*, pp. 253–260.

50   Ibid., pp. 274–282, 580–594.

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3

INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA – A NATIONAL STATE FOR A MULTIETHNIC POPULATION

Sabrina P. Ramet and Carol Skalnik Leff[1]

In 2017, in the lead-up to the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia, the major Czech and Slovak public opinion institutes published a joint study as a historical retrospective on the modern history of the two countries. When polled on the positive developments in the twentieth century, the attainment of Czechoslovakia's statehood in 1918 ranked first, by a wide margin among Czechs, narrowly edging out the Velvet Revolution of 1989 among Slovaks.[2] In a subsequent centenary poll, the dominant figure of the First Republic, President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), was the most admired figure among Czechs (followed by Jan Palach and Václav Havel), and third among Slovaks (behind Masaryk's Slovak colleague in the wartime drive for international recognition of a Czechoslovak state, Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880–1919), and Alexander Dubček, who served as first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia at the time of the Prague Spring). In the national mythologies of each country, the interwar republic clearly remains a central reference point.

However, the picture derived from these opinion surveys is more complex than that. The Czech roster of the 11 *least* favored leaders (ranked negatively or ambivalently) include 7 Slovaks, all but one from the period 1918–1945. And while Czechs have continued to perceive the First Republic as a seminal event in their modern history in the 2018 poll, second only to the Velvet Revolution, for Slovaks it ranks farther down the list, well after the Velvet Revolution, Slovak independence in 1993, European Union and Eurozone membership, and the Slovak National Uprising of 1944.[3]

The discrepancies in these findings reflect a deeper problem in the history of the First Republic. This history has been both glorified as a shining exception to democratic collapse in interwar Europe and vilified as an elitist Potemkin democracy. Indeed, the state was born with significant national

identity and legitimacy problems. Two large and unhappy minorities, Hungarian and German, had suffered status reversal as the formerly dominant ethnic powers on the territory of the new country. At the inauguration of the state, minority parties generally challenged the authority of the new state. Further, Czechoslovakia was born in a greater degree of upheaval and uncertainty than the *fait accompli* of statehood would suggest. The statehood project itself germinated in wartime conditions, with attendant complexities of communication, both between the Masaryk-led exile movement for independence and the home country, and between Czech and Slovak activists. Characteristic of the chaotic circumstances is the well-known fact that the Slovak National Council issued a Declaration in Turčiansky Svätý Martin approving the establishment of a joint state with the Czechs on 30 October 1918, unaware of the Prague declaration of independent statehood on 28 October. Thus, as J. W. Bruegel has stated, "Pre-Munich Czechoslovakia was neither the heaven on earth it seems in the memories of the older Czech generation nor the hell conjured up by the biased nationalist German historians."[4]

Several times during the war, the diplomatic and domestic political ground had shifted. In the diplomatic sphere, hesitancy among the Western allies and the two-stage Russian Revolution impacted the domestic alignments; notably, the Russian Revolution undercut the wing of Czech politicians embracing the pan-Slavic ideal of the tsarist Russian protector. Multiple and highly conflicting postwar initiatives compounded the uncertainties for all parties. The Habsburg Emperor Karl had issued a belated federalization proposal for the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy, which alarmed the Germans in the Czech lands and gained no traction with the Czechs. In the fall of 1918, representatives to the Austrian Reichsrat formed a Provisional National Assembly of Austrian Germans, the first of a series of mobilizations at the regional levels of Moravia and Bohemia with large German populations.[5]

The situation was even murkier on formerly Hungarian territory, where Slovakia (Upper Hungary, or *Felvidék*) had no defined territorial existence. The Hungarian government maneuvered, amid internal controversy, to authorize local National Councils, whose loyalties to or even capabilities of controlling their own territory, were highly ambiguous. Czechoslovak troops moved in to remove Hungarian troops, neutralize local Hungarian officials, and counter the Hungarian government's encouragement of breakaway regions, as in east Slovakia.[6] The spillover of Béla Kun's Hungarian Revolution in 1919 only intensified the threat level. As Pavol Blaho wrote to his long-time colleague, Vavro Šrobár, "Vavro, only iron centralism will save us!"[7]

Czechoslovakia as a militant democracy

This context is necessary to understand the consequential and often flawed decisions of the postwar Czechoslovak leadership. The first consequence of the birth story is the way relations between ethnic groups in the new state and

hence democracy itself were profoundly "securitized"[8] from the outset –
understood in terms of internal and international threats; in this context we
focus on two components. The first is a new multinational state with restive
minorities, countered by a national project Masaryk had been promoting in
some form since at least the 1890s: "Czechoslovakism," a narrative laden
with a defensive logic and multiple ambiguities as to its political, linguistic,
and ethnic meanings. The second is the immediate postwar threat of com-
munist revolutionary upheaval, which was manifested in the Béla Kun
regime's incursion into Slovak territory, thus combining the ethnic Hungarian
challenge to the state with the left-wing political thrust.[9] Communist revolu-
tions also tore apart the then-dominant Social Democratic Party, losing its
left wing to a fledging and electorally successful Communist Party.

Domestic politics remained embedded in international politics throughout
the interwar period. Even the party system was not hermetically sealed from
international influence: minority parties in Czechoslovakia consulted coun-
terparts and officials in Austria, Hungary, and Germany in the interwar
period. This international framing is important because that international
dimension remained a core vulnerability that was only heightened in the
Depression era and with the rise of Adolf Hitler.

One measure of the securitized environment was a series of legislative
actions designed to protect the republic against enemies, foreign and domes-
tic. In a famous article of the late 1930s, as Hitler's shadow lengthened, Karl
Loewenstein argued the need for "militant democracy," and approvingly
noted that Czechoslovakia had "the most comprehensive and intelligent leg-
islation against fascism now in existence in any modern state, and, what is
more, the authorities used the powers conferred upon them with undaunted
energy,"[10] including rule by decree, heavy surveillance, and criminalization of
some political speech. Miroslav Mareš, who sees a long Czech tradition of the
phenomenon, defines militant democracy as "a democratic regime that takes
active steps to defend its constitutional and political values through the use of
repressive legal instruments and other measures."[11] Giovanni Capoccia, who
has undertaken an extensive study of anti-extremist legislation in interwar
Europe and the dilemma of tolerating the democratically intolerant, singles
out Czechoslovakia for intensive study in this regard. Noting the "extreme
fragmentation and ideological differentiation"[12] of the political arena, he
identified the coping strategy as one that mobilized a spectrum of emergency
powers and protections against disloyalty and anti-democratic extremism that
included situational restrictions on freedom of association, assembly, and the
press, prohibitions on secret societies and militias, and specifically protections
against libel against the honor of the president.

The economy was also "securitized" against the formerly dominant neigh-
boring powers. The so-called Nostrification Law, promulgated immediately in
1919, provided that "all corporations active in the Czechoslovak Republic
(CSR) were obliged to have headquarters in Czechoslovak territory and

boards of directors [had to be] composed of a majority of members (80%) who since January 1, 1914, were residents of localities situated on Czech territory."[13] This measure, of course, as intended, had a disproportionate effect on the German, Hungarian, and Austrian businesses – usually registered in Budapest or especially Vienna – in their newly internationalized context, but it also insulated the Czechoslovak economy from the rampant hyperinflation in neighboring countries.

Thus, in the face of genuine security concerns, the interwar state took measures that would ultimately have unfortunate consequences for the quality and resilience of democracy in the new state, specifically in terms of the political status of non-Czech ethnic groups. The exclusion of the German and Hungarian populations from participation in the formation of the new state, whether justified or not, was a political mistake. It was well known that the German population in the Sudetenland and the Hungarians in what had been Hungary were opposed to being included in Czechoslovakia. Yet, having set up a provisional government for Czechoslovakia in Paris on 14 October 1918, Masaryk and Edvard Beneš (1884–1948) sent in veterans of the Czech Legions to secure the borders they desired; this was accomplished quickly between December 1918 and January 1919.[14] The National Committee, which had been operating in Paris, held elections to boost its membership to 256; the Germans and Hungarians refused to stand for election, because they considered both the National Committee, now renaming itself the Revolutionary National Assembly, and the Czech plan to annex the regions in which they lived to be illegitimate. "The Czechs took their revenge by not allowing any Sudeten German representatives to take part in drafting the constitution."[15] The National Committee had adopted a provisional constitution on 13 November 1918, empowering itself, as the Revolutionary National Assembly, to pass the "final" constitution for the state. In May 1919, the Entente powers had handed Beneš their Memorandum III, calling on the Czechoslovak Republic to guarantee the Germans resident in the country "all the rights to which they are entitled." This was understood to mean that German would be recognized as the second official language of the country. Instead, the constitution defined the "Czechoslovak" nation as the "state-forming nation" of the republic, and a subsequent language law declared "Czechoslovak" (a concept under which Slovak lost recognition as a language in its own right) to be the official state language; this new Czechoslovak nation now appeared to be the largest nationality group in the country, as shown in Table 3.1.

Pursuant to this, 33,000 German bureaucrats lost their jobs in 1926, when fluency in Czechoslovak became mandatory for government jobs.[16] The Czechs were exultant and, in November 1918, a group of Czech nationalists toppled a statue of the Virgin Mary that had stood on Old Town Square in downtown Prague, "believing it had been erected to commemorate the Czechs' humiliating defeat at the Battle of White Mountain [in 1620]. In fact, the Habsburgs built the column to celebrate the defeat of the Swedish army

TABLE 3.1 Population by ethnicity (mother tongue), in %

	1921	1930
Czechoslovak	65.51	66.91
German	23.36	22.32
Hungarian	5.57	4.78
Ruthenian/Ukrainian	3.45	3.79
Polish	0.57	0.57
Hebrew or Yiddish	1.35	1.29
Other	0.19	0.34
TOTAL	100.00	100.00

Source: Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle, and London: University of Washington Press, 1977), p. 89.

that had invaded Prague during the Thirty Years War."[17] Although the majority of Czechs were, at the time, Catholics, there were influential voices promoting the idea that Czechs should look back to Jan Hus (1369–1415), who had challenged the doctrine of transubstantiation and repudiated the pope's claims to monarchical authority, and who was burned at the stake.[18] Masaryk, it is said, "was personally responsible for much of the pro-Hus nationalist ideology."[19] As nationalist euphoria peaked, vengeful crowds took their revenge on Catholic churches and statues, which they associated with the long rule of the Catholic Habsburgs, destroying or damaging a tangible number in the first four years of the republic. Nonetheless, Catholics, whether active or passive, comprised the vast majority of the population, as shown in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2 Population by religion, in %

	1921	1930
Roman Catholic	76.29	73.54
Eastern Rite Catholic	3.93	3.97
Lutheran	3.93	3.99
Czechoslovak National	3.86	5.39
"Israelite"	2.60	2.42
Bohemian Brethren	1.72	2.02
No religious affiliation	5.32	5.80
(Others all less than 1%)		

Source: Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle, and London: University of Washington Press, 1977), p. 90.

The early years were also years of physical privation, marked by social and political disorder, problems with the food supply, scarcity of food, fuel, and consumer goods (due to the war), and inflation. In addition, the rail system had been built to connect Prague and Bratislava with major towns in Austria (Cisleithania) and Hungary (Transleithania) and was ill suited to the new boundaries.[20] Clashes between Czechs and Germans were commonplace in the first years, while, in November 1920, an anti-Jewish riot in Prague resulted in the trashing of the Jewish town hall. Indeed, Sudeten Germans had such contempt for the constitution that, in 1921, they repeatedly hurled stink bombs across the floor of the parliament.[21]

In the following analysis, we will examine interactions within the ethnic matrix and some of its consequences: first, the dominant place of the Czechs in the republic, and the character of the interwar democracy more generally, followed by an account of the fortunes of the country's second-largest group – the Germans – before turning to the situation of the Slovaks and the Hungarians and, in brief, the Ruthenes. The final sections view the endgame of the short-lived First Republic: the crisis of 1938 and the emergence in the much briefer Second Republic, which lasted from the end of 1938 to March 1939.

The Czechs in power

Masaryk and Beneš justified their creation of a national state, by which is meant a state dominated by one nationality group – the Czechs (or Czechoslovaks), in this instance – by asserting the allegedly unique moral character of the Czech nation and by constructing a cult of Masaryk to make him appear to be among the wisest heads of state ever to walk the planet. Masaryk and Beneš, the founders of Czechoslovakia, earned their political spurs in the Austria–Hungary of Kaiser Franz Joseph (1830–1916; reigned 1848–1916) and took the formulae of Austria–Hungary as their blueprint, replicating some of the key elements of that blueprint. To begin with, the legitimacy of the Austro-Hungarian state was linked to the cult of the Habsburgs and, specifically, to the personality cult of Franz Joseph, which became so powerful that it has survived until the present day, albeit now primarily as kitsch. Associated with this cult of Franz Joseph was the notion of *Kaisertreue*, or loyalty to the Kaiser.[22] Behind this notion lay the assumption that it was the Kaiser who held the Austro-Hungarian state together. Similarly, in interwar Czechoslovakia, the inner circle deliberately crafted and promoted a cult of Masaryk in the conviction that this was the best means of creating unity among the country's disparate nationalities.[23] In its day, the cult of Masaryk was perhaps even more ambitious than the cult of Franz Joseph had been, in that the Austrian Kaiser, unlike Masaryk, was never compared to Moses, let alone Jesus Christ.[24] Typical is Beneš declaration in 1917:

> The Czech nation, deeply idealistic and humanitarian, ha[s] pursued in its
> life, its history and its centuries-long endeavors a lofty aim: to attain a

> high religious and moral concept of its existence … by seeking [to pro-
> mote] philosophical and ethical ideals of happiness, justice and human-
> ity … The Czechoslovak State will be an exemplar of modern democracy:
> strong economically and spiritually, having no nobility and living in the
> democratic traditions of its national history.[25]

Roughly around the same time, he presented the claim that "Masaryk …
knew, perhaps better than anyone, both theoretically and practically, not only
all the problems of the Slav nations but also those of the Germans, who
themselves recognized him as an authority."[26] In spite of Prague's unequal
treatment of the members of its diverse nationality groups, Masaryk's image-
makers worked hard to build a personality cult around the president, claiming
for him lofty morality and commitment to egalitarianism.[27]

The truth was more complex. To begin with, Masaryk certainly acknowl-
edged that subsuming Czechs and Slovaks under a common "Czechoslovak"
ethnic rubric, although the arguments for that common identity were stronger
then than they would be today, also served as a counterweight against the
Germans of the Sudetenland. Although he had famously defended the unem-
ployed Jewish workman Leopold Hilsner against a charge of blood libel in
1898, Masaryk admitted privately to being "emotionally antisemitic,"[28] while
the government over which he presided favored Czech Protestants over Czech
Catholics for positions of power and responsibility.[29] Czechoslovakia may be
credited as having had, in the years up to September 1938, more democratic
elements than other countries of Eastern Europe. Among other reasons, this
was because the population was the most literate in the region (see Table 1.2)
and, within some limits, had a more highly developed respect for liberal
values[30] than other peoples in Eastern Europe, although the higher level of
economic development was also a relevant factor.[31] But there were also unde-
mocratic elements from the beginning. Already in the constituent assembly,
"only 40 out of 256 seats were granted to the Slovaks, and none at all to the
Germans, Hungarians, Poles, or Ruthenians … [Moreover,] Czechoslovakia
was the *only* country in interwar Eastern Europe to eliminate a referendum on
the country's constitution after its drafting."[32] Masaryk told novelist Karel
Čapek at one point, "Dictatorship interrupts Parliament, but makes possible
the rule of the people; therefore it makes democracy possible."[33] That para-
doxical understanding of democracy underlay the state's frequent resort to the
tools of militant democracy in perceived and actual crisis: censorship, impri-
sonment, and coercion of various kinds.[34]

The constitution established a unitary state with power concentrated at the
center, a securitizing move that was to cause much subsequent conflict. It is
important here to emphasize the long-term drawbacks of a new political
order created in the midst of upheaval, without prior negotiations and con-
sultations among the affected peoples. The chaotic initial situation in Slovakia
added a further temporary centralizing element; Vavro Šrobár (1867–1950), a

Masaryk ally and the only Slovak present to sign the Prague Declaration of Independence in 1918, served as minister plenipotentiary for Slovakia in the initial crisis period, with full authority to make all decisions for Slovakia. Reflecting on the 150th anniversary of his birth, the post-communist press would call him "the First Slovak Dictator."[35]

The institutional underpinnings of the new regime were democratic, however; there was full adult suffrage,[36] and a broad spectrum of parties contested elections that were freer of corruption than elsewhere in the region. As Peter Bugge notes in his critical assessment:

> In October 1918, Masaryk and the domestic national leaders uniformly declared that the new Czechoslovak State was to be a democracy. This was confirmed in the Czechoslovak Constitution of February 29, 1920, which described the state as a democratic republic with a president at its head, and a bicameral parliament elected by proportional vote with no limiting threshold. Suffrage was equal, secret, and universal, a segregation of powers prescribed, and all fundamental civil and political guaranteed according to contemporary standards.[37]

This system continued to function throughout the First Republic, with regular elections held and even the regional anomaly of the continued legality and electoral participation of the Communist Party.

At the same time, both formal and informal elements of the system in operation functioned to position the Czechs in the dominant position. Both Slovak and German parties complained vociferously about malapportionment,[38] and justifiably so, since the ratio of deputies to constituents heavily favored the Czech lands. The constitution laid the groundwork for inegalitarian representation in the two houses of parliament,[39] and the signatures required for candidate nomination also privileged the Czech lands; where voters in the historically Czech lands needed to collect only 100 signatures to register a candidate, voters in Slovakia and Ruthenia needed to collect almost 1,000 signatures,[40] "and the administration of Ruthenia remained overwhelmingly Czech."[41]

The party system that emerged from the basic legal and constitutional guidelines, however, vividly reflected underlying cleavages. Current scholars see the complex interwar partisan alignments – with dozens of parties represented in parliament in any given election cycle – as "parallel party systems" segmented along ethnic lines. Indeed, Josef Harna has argued that there was no real opposition in this partisan structure, because the numerically dominant mainstream Czech parties were almost continuously in government coalition, unified by their concern with managing the ethnic mosaic, even if divided on many other issues.[42]

The formal political system was buttressed by a framework of informal interactions surrounding both the presidency and parliamentary government structures. The two most important were the Hrad (the Castle)[43] group around

President Masaryk and the Pĕtka (The Five), often in tension with each other. (Note that both groups were rooted in the institutions but operated outside them.)

The controversial Pĕtka is described in contemporary scholarship today as an "extra-parliamentary, extra-governmental, and even extra-constitutional"[44] group of leaders of the five most important (Czech) parties of the Left and Right. These parties served in most interwar government coalitions: the Social Democrats, the National Socialists (no relation to the German Nazis), the Czech Populists, the National Democrats, and, above all, the king-maker Agrarians, who served in every interwar government and usually held the prime ministership. Emerging in response to the crisis period of 1920 to stabilize the new polity, arguably with some success, the Pĕtka was nevertheless widely criticized for its behind-the-scenes, untransparent maneuverings – in Czech parlance *za'kulisi*, or backstage. This system functioned on the basis of very disciplined parliamentary parties, such that the decisions of the Pĕtka tended to be decisive.[45] The centrality and cohesion of the Pĕtka deteriorated after the emergency period, but this quasi-institutionalized collaboration may well have been necessary to manage the emergency transition period to functional statehood. However, it did reflect two strategic vulnerabilities. In the first place, these parties were embedded in the ethnic Czech dimension of the party system, and only one prime minister among the 17 governments of the First Republic was not Czech. The backstage operation of the Pĕtka also set an elitist tone for what later became a central judgment of the interwar period as an elitist democracy – which we will note later in our concluding reflections on the interwar period.

There is an irony in Masaryk's democratic agenda. With his long-term emphasis on the need to generate a socially aware and engaged citizenry, he was relatively indifferent and even, at times, hostile to institution-building, and relied heavily on the other major ex-governmental group – the Hrad – which included key cabinet ministers, notably the interior minister, but also the Legionnaires group, and other public figures.[46] Masaryk retained ties with the party system, but he also leveraged special relationships with journalists and public intellectuals such as Karel Čapek,[47] both of which enabled him to develop a machinery for insight into the political dynamics of the time. The Czechoslovak presidency lacked the strong constitutional powers Masaryk had wanted, but he was able to build on his personal authority to intercede in key political decisions: he was active in the construction of the post-electoral government coalition. Notably, and rather ironically, in his zeal to construct the foundations for a democratic state, Masaryk expressed the desire to "supervise everything,"[48] and often acted on that desire.

The Germans marginalized

As the First Republic began its short life, all the German parties were demanding national autonomy, although some forces rejected the new state outright and there were different formulae for accommodation offered, ranging from cultural autonomy to extensive political autonomy. From the

beginning, however, Masaryk ruled out any form of autonomy. In 1920, writing in the German-language newspaper *Prager Tagblatt*, Jaroslav Stránský described Czechoslovakia as a state "whose purpose it is to create and to protect the political independence of the Czechs and Slovaks in their entirety."[49] The fact that this clear statement was published in a German-language newspaper appearing in the capital city is not without significance. But there were both benefits and drawbacks for the Germans of Czechoslovakia. On the benefit side, it is important to note that the Sudeten Germans enjoyed proportional representation in parliament and in the city administration; they enjoyed an advanced network of cultural institutions including musical life, theater, and an extensive daily and periodical press; and they had two universities, two technical colleges, an Academy of Music, 90 secondary schools, 14 training colleges, and 3,363 lower and 430 higher primary schools, all operating in the German language.[50] Moreover, 25.46% of the state's budget for higher education was allocated to German institutions, even though Germans comprised 23.32% of the population at that time.[51]

The fact that moderate (so-called "activist") German parties, which accepted the inclusion of German-inhabited regions in Czechoslovakia, polled between 74% and 83% of the German vote in the elections of 1920, 1925, and 1929 reflects the fact that, prior to the onset of the Great Depression that followed the US stock market crash in 1929, and the rise of Hitler, Sudeten Germans were becoming reconciled to the idea of living in Czechoslovakia and finding much to value. In 1926, the German Agrarian Party and the German Christian Social Party entered the government as part of the governing coalition; in 1929, the German Social Democrats replaced the German Christian Socials in the coalition. It may also be noted that, in 1937, the leading German parties reached an agreement with the leading Czechoslovak parties for increased German participation in the administrative apparatus.

On the other hand, in the years 1918–1938 – which is to say, throughout the life of the First Republic – Germans, Hungarians, Eastern Slavs, and Poles were all underrepresented in the civil service.[52] This underrepresentation is graphically shown in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3 Employment of minorities in the government sector in 1938

	% of population	% of government jobs
Germans	22.3	10.0
Hungarians	4.8	1.8
Ruthenes, Ukrainians, Russians	3.8	1.1
Poles	0.6	0.4

Source: Attila Simon, *The Hungarians of Slovakia in 1938*, translated by Andrew Gane (Boulder, Colo., and Budapest: Social Science Monographs & The Balassi Institute, 2012), p. 25.

Among other matters that gave offense to Germans were: the fact that German schools with fewer than 30 students enrolled were shut down; the fact that postmen would not deliver letters to addresses with street names in any language other than Czech (or Czechoslovak); and the fact that, in the first roll call in the parliament, the German deputies found that their names were being called out in Czech.[53]

Some of the most serious sources of grievance, however, were economic, and here assessments are somewhat difficult, not least because any economic initiative with distributional consequences was likely to disproportionately impact the dominant economic positions of the interwar Germans. The controversy about land reform is a case in point. In any country where large estates were expropriated and lands redistributed, there have been controversies and disputes; it was certainly inevitable in this case, where Germans held the preponderance of large estates in the Czech lands. It is, nonetheless, useful to see who complained about what. The Land Control Act was passed on 16 April 1919 and authorized the government to expropriate estates larger than 150 hectares (370 acres). Landless persons, families of fallen soldiers, and farmers possessing only small parcels of land were to be given priority. But no family would be allocated more land than its members could cultivate.[54] A Land Office was set up to carry out the reform, which was substantially completed even before the activist German parties joined the government in 1926. According to Václav Beneš, the "Czechoslovak land reform was – for its period – a progressive and enlightened measure, which benefited a very large number of persons and harmed the interests of only very few."[55] However, the Germans complained that a large proportion of the forests expropriated by the authorities in January 1923 had belonged to them and that they were the objects of discrimination.[56]

Both German and Czech sources concluded that these expropriations were dictated by strategic calculations, since various badly administered forests in Slovakia were left alone. The law also provided that peasants who had leased the same parcel of land since at least 1901 should be allowed to buy it, regardless of the nationality of the peasant or the landowner; there is no evidence of discrimination where long-lease land was concerned, and, indeed, there were German farmers who received land from Czech landowners. It is telling that the Land Office did not keep any record of the nationality of applicants.[57] However, the overall scholarship does suggest two things: first, that the actual pattern of distribution may not have significantly disadvantaged the Germans, but second, and more importantly, the underlying reality was not the politically resonant factor in shaping public opinion. More striking perhaps than the German complaints was the national purpose overtly claimed by the Czech politicians – characterizing land reform as national restitution for centuries of creeping Germanization.[58]

Nostrification obviously had its impact as well. Also relevant is the fact that banks in Sudetenland had deposited most of their assets with banks in Vienna and those assets were still deposited in Vienna when, on 25 February

1919, the Czech finance minister "froze all fiscal transactions and separated the new Czech currency from the depreciating but still circulating imperial one."[59] Separation from the imperial currencies was of course an early step in all the successor states. However, Sudeten Germans were particularly unfortunate in then transferring their funds to banks in Germany, only to have the value of their deposits destroyed by the catastrophic inflation of 1923.

Nonetheless, until the Great Depression hit Czechoslovakia, the Sudeten Germans tended to vote for the moderate parties. However, international trade collapsed in the 1930s and, by 1933, Czechoslovakia's foreign trade stood at just 28% of its level in 1929. The decline in trade in turn slowed down production, which, in 1933, stood at 60.2% of its level in 1929. Agricultural production also declined by roughly the same percentage.[60] Weimar Germany, also faced with a serious economic crisis, adopted the economic protectionist policies widespread elsewhere, which led to a sharp decline in German–Czechoslovak trade. This hit the German districts of Czechoslovakia especially hard; Sudeten Germans now experienced higher rates of unemployment than Czechs.[61] With this, Germans started to gravitate to a more radical party.

The first election that saw a shift of German votes to the right came in 1935, when the newly formed Sudeten German Party (SdP, from the German, Sudetendeutsche Partei), attracting two-thirds of the German vote, won 15.2% of the total vote for the Chamber of Deputies, placing 44 of its candidates in that chamber, and 15.0% of the vote for the Senate, capturing 23 seats in that body. The SdP was the creation of Konrad Henlein, who began his career as a leader in a patriotic gymnastic organization in Bohemia. In 1934, he set up the Sudeten German Home Front, recasting it as the SdP the following year. Only the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party managed a (slightly) stronger finish in the 1935 elections, winning 45 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and matching the SdP's win of 23 seats in the Senate. Henlein's support crossed class borders, with both middle class and working class Germans voting for his party.

Although the SdP benefited from significant financial support from the Third Reich in 1935, it would be an oversimplification to conclude that Henlein was, from the start of his career, a mere puppet of Berlin.[62] Mark Cornwall, who has traced Henlein's "maneuvers" in the course of the 1930s, concludes that he was at heart a *völkisch* Sudeten German, who, from the outset of his public career, had found democracy "un-German."[63]

Henlein's demands escalated over time. At first (in October 1934, before the establishment of the SdP), Henlein demanded merely administrative decentralization throughout Czechoslovakia; later (in June 1936) he demanded federalization on the basis of "racial units." In response, Beneš visited the German districts and proposed a model of "reasonable decentralization, with economic and administrative regionalism." Henlein rejected this initiative, insisting that race be recognized as the basis for autonomous zones. Eventually, on 24 April 1938, after meeting with Hitler the previous month, he would demand that the Nazi legal order be introduced in the Sudetenland and that the Sudeten Germans

be accorded equal legal status with the Czechs.[64] In June 1938, Henlein's party garnered just over 91.4% of the German vote in municipal elections. With this, the stage was set for the crisis that ended the First Republic.

It should be noted that the framework for addressing the position of minorities in Czechoslovakia – and the Germans in particular – was both domestic and international. In the aftermath of World War One, 14 successor states from East Central Europe (including Turkey) were obligated to sign bilateral minority rights treaties with the Allied powers, with the newly established League of Nations authorized as the recipient and evaluator of minority grievance petitions. Czechoslovakia and other new states thereby committed to affording collective rights in education and language use to their respective designated minorities in areas of high minority concentration. Designed to counterbalance the concerns and conflicts over boundary drawing and other outstanding issues, this system was controversial from the beginning. The successor states vocally resented the application of scrutiny to which Western states were not subject, perceiving this as a violation of their sovereignty. Minorities repeatedly criticized the passivity and the lack of transparency of the League's minority commission. Between 1920 and 1926, representatives of the Sudeten Germans filed 19 petitions with the League of Nations, complaining about violations of their rights (key issues centered on land reform). Konrad Henlein would later complain that these petitions yielded no results[65] – at least not until the two moderate German parties joined the governing coalition.

Henlein's criticism was not unjustified. The minority petition process was not, in the event, a powerful instrument for regulating minority affairs. Petitions were acknowledged, but those whose petitions were rejected – the overwhelming majority – did not receive a response. The rare cases forwarded for consideration showed deference to the treaty-bound states; governments met with the council, but not with the petitioners.[66] The implicit goal was often to alleviate tensions that would exacerbate security concerns. Petitions with intemperate language were rejected out of hand. As a human rights regime, it rather resembled the later post-communist activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE's) high commissioner on national minorities, whose mandate was to serve as "an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage"[67] rather than as a defender of minority rights. Even after Weimar Germany joined the League, promising to accept its minority rights protocol, the German government generally neglected the apparatus, and its primary emphasis was on Polish actions on its German minority. That confrontation essentially destroyed the efficacy of the League's Minorities Section. Facing increasing pressure from Hitler's Germany, Czechoslovakia withdrew from the treaty obligations in 1936.

Slovaks and the question of autonomy

The Slovaks would enter the new state with decided institutional and developmental disadvantages. Politics in the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy

were governed by what Milan Zemko has styled "an anachronistic" political system,[68] reflective of some of the maladies of pre-reform British politics in the early nineteenth century: rotten boroughs, electoral malapportionment, and a severely constricted suffrage base.[69] Education in the Slovak language had been seriously curtailed since the inception of the Dual Monarchy. At the time the Czechoslovak state was founded, about one-third of Slovaks were illiterate (while almost 100% of Czech adults were fully literate). The Slovak elite itself was heavily Magyarized as a condition of participation in business and the professions. In this context, future Slovak Prime Minister Milan Hodža (1878–1944), as he launched his political career, despaired of Slovak political potential: "The Slovak is satisfied with his political passivity – and even more, he enjoys it fully. We not only don't politically mobilize, but don't even prepare for being able to mobilize politically in the future."[70] Although Slovak politics proved more resilient than Hodža feared, the contrast with the political development of the Czech lands was sharp, where greater economic development, an articulated party system, and universal manhood suffrage (1907) allowed for strong organizational advantages over those on Slovak territory.

The situation of the Slovaks, however, differed from that of the Sudeten Germans in three key respects. First, unlike the Germans, the Slovaks originally gave their enthusiastic support to the idea of unification in a common state with the Czechs, not only through the aforementioned Pittsburgh Agreement, signed by Slovak Americans, but also by the Martin Declaration on 30 October, on which occasion local Slovaks adopted a resolution that included this affirmation: "The Slovak nation is a part of the Czechoslovak nation, united in language and in the history of its culture."[71] Second, the very concept of a "state-forming Czechoslovak nation" included the Slovaks at least nominally in the first tier of the unequal partners to the new state. And third, more so than the Germans, significant Slovak forces were fervently Catholic and feared Czech secularism. Certainly, the state's assumption of control over the Catholic Church's parochial schools and confiscation of Church lands within the framework of land reform were seen as the most concrete manifestation of Czech secularism. The religious divide tended to undermine Czech–Slovak cooperation, as revealed in President Masaryk's complaint on one occasion that Slovaks were "apt to be fanatically Catholic and priest-ridden."[72] For his part, the charismatic Fr. Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938), leader of the Slovak People's Party, rejected "Czechoslovakization" and warned that Czech "atheism could destroy us."[73]

According to the 1921 census, 77.4% of Slovaks were Catholic and 17.6% were Protestants, mostly Lutherans.[74] But while Slovak Catholics were skeptical about the government in Prague, Slovak Lutherans tended to have positive views about the central government; in turn, the government in Prague felt that it could trust Slovak Lutherans more than it could trust Slovak Catholics and preferred to appoint Lutherans to positions of responsibility. Indeed, Czech politicians relied on a very narrow cadre of trusted Slovaks,

none of them from the largest ethnic Slovak party: Vavro Šrobár, Ivan Dérer, and the more independent Agrarian Milan Hodža.[75] These three men alone occupied some 60% of the interwar cabinet positions allocated to Slovaks.

A further cause of resentment was the arrival – and persistence – of the "missionary Czechs" to fill positions vacated by departing Hungarian officialdom "to purge government offices and schools of Hungarian influence" and put the administration and education on a (new) solid foundation. There was a shortage of personnel to staff the administrative apparatus in Slovakia as well as a shortage of teachers. Some of this influx was necessary. But as historian James Felak recounts, the newcomers were often patronizing, and insensitive to local language and culture:

> Especially vexing for many Slovaks was the perception that more Czechs had come to Slovakia than were needed. By 1930, they numbered over 100,000, 21,828 of whom were employed in the state apparatus or the free professions, that is, as self-employed professionals. However much skilled personnel [were] needed, Slovaks could not help but notice that a number of Czech "immigrants" filled positions, such as postman or railroad worker, for which there were enough qualified Slovak applicants on hand. Prague-based political parties were awarding these posts to their supporters as patronage.[76]

Ivan Dérer, in his capacity as minister of education from 1929 to 1934, made a serious effort to develop and improve education in Slovakia. But he wanted not merely to educate but also to indoctrinate and assimilate; among other things, he promoted a reform of Slovak grammar and orthography to bring the Slovak language closer to Czech.[77]

Another cause of grievance was that the central government was slow to incorporate political and economic structures into a single statewide framework. From 1920 to 1927, Slovakia did not exist as an administrative unit, but was divided into six counties (as in the Hungarian period) while the Czech lands retained their historical political structure with identifiable Bohemian and Moravian units. A law promulgating a county structure for all of Czechoslovakia was passed in 1922, but stiff resistance from Czechs in protection of their historical boundaries forestalled its actualization there.

The unamalgamated tax structure was also highly unfavorable to Slovakia.[78] There were other problems too, such as the fact that the gap between Czech and Slovak standards of living grew larger in the years 1919–1937 so that, by 1937, the per capita income in Slovakia stood at just half of that in the Czech lands.[79] Concentrating initially on "nationalizing" the economy to block German and Hungarian influence, and committed to what we would now call a neoliberal economic policy that advantaged the more powerful industrial base of the Czech lands, Prague did little to redress the balance with Slovakia; indeed, Slovakia actually de-industrialized in failed competition with Czech industry during most of the First Republic.[80]

These grievances amplified the case for Slovak autonomy. The pivotal figure in the autonomist movement was the aforementioned Father Hlinka, imprisoned before the war for championship of Slovak interests in Hungary and the leader of the Catholic political wing in pre-war Slovak politics that consolidated into the Slovak People's Party (SPP) after 1918. Hlinka had signed the Martin Declaration of 30 October 1918 and had promoted Czechoslovak unity in lectures and meetings in the three months that followed. But the imposition of state control over parochial schools rankled with Hlinka and soon his SPP was protesting against this, as well as protesting against discrimination against Slovak Catholics in hiring for the public sector and the stationing of Czech soldiers in Slovak lands.[81] By September 1919, Hlinka had turned his back on the Martin Declaration and now asserted, "We are neither Czechs nor Czechoslovaks; we are just simply Slovaks."[82] Hlinka was actually in prison at the time the Constituent Assembly was drafting a new constitution for the country[83]; but the SPP representatives pleaded for the grant of autonomy to Slovakia. However, the majority of members of the parliamentary Slovak Club felt that, given deficiencies in trained specialists and funds, Slovakia could not yet afford autonomy. Indeed, the constitution of 1920 made no provision for autonomy.

Finishing second among Slovak voters in the 1920 elections to the newly created parliament, Hlinka's party, renamed in 1925 Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSPP), was the dominant electoral force in Slovakia in all subsequent elections. Autonomy, based on the unfulfilled promise of the Pittsburgh Agreement, was the party's remedy for accumulated grievances against the central government, and "Pragocentrism," the source of Slovak ills. The party presented several unsuccessful formal autonomy initiatives over the course of the First Republic. The first and most extensive SPP proposal in January 1922 included the establishment of a Slovak Diet empowered to pass laws for Slovakia. Two others foundered in 1930 and during the premiership of Milan Hodža.

There were two serious efforts to address Slovak desiderata in the years 1919–1938: the first was associated with the inclusion of the HSPP in the government between 1927 and 1929 – the so-called Gentleman's Coalition (*panská koalice*) after the Social Democrats left the government – which also incorporated German parties for the first time. In 1927, new legislation abolished the county system and reorganized Czechoslovakia into three provinces: Bohemia, Moravia-Silesia, and Slovakia.

However, this sole experiment in incorporating the HSPP into the cabinet ended in failure, for reasons that highlighted the securitized politics of the First Republic. The Czechs and their Slovak allies had long been concerned about the loyalty of "neo-Slovaks" or Magyarones. These concerns were reinforced when, on 1 January 1928, legal scholar Vojtech Tuka (1880–1946), a prominent member of the HSPP, published an article in the HSPP newspaper *Slovak* alleging that there was a secret clause in the Martin Declaration. The secret clause supposedly specified that the unification of Slovakia with the Czech lands had been agreed on a 10-year trial basis only and that,

after the expiration of that trial period (on 30 October 1928), Slovakia would be free to dissolve its bonds with the Czech lands. His parliamentary immunity suspended, Tuka was subsequently arrested, put on trial for treason and espionage, and imprisoned.[84] The HSPP left the government in protest, never to return from opposition. Indeed, substantial party losses in the 1928 regional elections suggested that a protest party fared better in opposition.

The second serious initiative to bridge the Czech–Slovak gap came in the years 1935–1938, when Milan Hodža (1878–1944), leader of the Slovak branch of the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party, served as prime minister. The HSPP continued to press for autonomy, seeing that as crucial, among other things, to defending Slovakia from Czech secularism. In the final days of the First Republic, American Slovaks brought the original copy of the Pittsburgh Agreement to Slovakia and, on 5 June 1938, Hlinka held up the document before a large crowd gathered in Bratislava. On 19 August 1938, the HSPP introduced its third bill for Slovak autonomy, three days after Hlinka had died, just before his 74th birthday. Hlinka had not designated a successor, but after a brief rivalry between Msgr. Jozef Tiso (1887–1947), who had served in the parliament since 1925, and Karol Sidor, commander of the Hlinka Guard, the former was confirmed on 31 August 1938 as acting chairman of the party.

The grievances of Hungarians

In 1919, Slovakia had a population of 2,923,214 persons, of whom 689,565 were Hungarians, representing 23.6% of the population of Slovakia. An additional 102,000 Hungarians lived in Ruthenia at that time. Some Hungarians fled to Hungary after the Czechoslovak annexation and, by the time the census was conducted just two years later, the number of Hungarians living in Slovakia had declined to 634,827 (representing 21.48% of the population of Slovakia). By 1930, the number of Hungarians had declined still further, dropping to 571,988 (17.58% of Slovakia's population).[85] According to Attila Simon, some of the refugees left of their own accord, while others were forced out by the Czechoslovak authorities. In the larger cities, such as Pozsony/Bratislava, Nyitra/Nitra, Kassa/Košice, and Nagyszombat/Trnava, there were people fluent in both Hungarian and Slovak, who identified as Hungarians as long as the Austro-Hungarian empire existed, but who were quite ready to declare themselves "Czechoslovaks" in the 1919 census – the so-called "Neo-Slovaks." Again, the Czechoslovak state introduced the census category "nationality," replacing "native language," which had been used in earlier censuses; this had the consequence that about 130,000 Hungaro-phone Jews were no longer counted as Hungarians.[86] However, the number of Hungarians living in Slovakia actually increased by more than 50,000 in the years 1930–1938 and, according to data published by the Czechoslovak Statistical Office on 1 July 1937, the total population of Slovakia had reached 3,540,175 by then, including 622,843 Hungarians, representing 17.59% of Slovakia's population.[87]

What makes the situation of Hungarians in interwar Czechoslovakia particularly poignant is the fact that, even in the 1930s, more than 90% of them were living within a 20–30 mile-wide strip of land along the border with Hungary – which is to say that the entire "Hungarian problem," such as it was, could have been avoided by holding a plebiscite in those districts with Hungarian or mixed populations. The underrepresentation of Hungarians in the government sector was noted above but here it may be added that, soon after the formation of the new state, the government dismissed a large number of Hungarians from jobs in the public sector in a loyalty purge.[88] Hungarians were also underrepresented in commerce, transport, the army, and public administration. Indeed, although "Czechoslovaks" accounted for 66.91% of the population according to the 1930 census, they occupied 87.4% of government jobs in January 1938. At the Ministry of Education, 350 of the 356 staff were "Czechoslovaks," 5 were Germans, and 1 was a Ruthene: not a single Hungarian was employed at that ministry. Similarly, 99.1% of senior railway officials were "Czechoslovaks," as were 88.4% of postal service employees. Further, among 483 gendarme officers, there was not a single Hungarian.[89] There were also allegations from Hungarians that they were the victims of discrimination in the land reform.[90]

There were linguistic problems too, such as the fact that, having established a minimum proportion of 20% locally for the members of any minority to enjoy the right to use their native language in official settings, Czechoslovak authorities proceeded to redraw district lines in order to deprive Hungarians in several communities of that right.[91] In spite of these maneuvers, however, in the 1930s, 82% of Hungarians still lived in districts where they made up at least 20% of the local population.[92] The measure of Hungarian anger may be gauged from the fact that an estimated 60% of Hungarians voted for opposition parties in the interwar years, while an additional 20–25% typically supported the Communist Party, with Hungarian support for the communists peaking at 30%.[93]

Czechoslovak authorities may be given credit for supporting local libraries and for extending funding to Hungarian district cultural bodies. However, in the political climate of those years, some Hungarians viewed the recipient cultural bodies with distrust, if only because they received state funding.[94] In addition, between 1918 and 1938, there were more than 650 Hungarian-language periodicals published, for longer or shorter periods of time. According to Béla Gabóda, "[t]he new government saw its most urgent task to reduce and dismantle the Hungarian school system and to increase quickly the number of 'Czechoslovak' schools."[95] Measures taken by the authorities in the educational sector included

> the unexplained closure of [some] Hungarian schools, the suppression of Hungarian culture in Hungarian-language schools, the complete absence of ethnic Hungarian educational supervisors, and the abolition of higher

education in Hungarian. The nation-state ambitions of Czechoslovakia were particularly strident with regard to the content of education. History books sought to "inform" ethnic Hungarian students of a "Czechoslovak past" in which Hungarians appeared only as the barbaric enemy of the superior Slavs, and in which the democratic Czechoslovak state and its idealized president, T. G. Masaryk, represented the zenith of historical development. Most of the high school principals were ethnic Slovaks, as were also a third of the teachers in Hungarian-language high schools.[96]

The geopolitical context framed the ways in which the Hungarian question was securitized as a threat to the state. Barred from having input in the postwar peace conferences, Hungary had suffered a particularly punitive settlement in terms of population and territory lost, lodging the Treaty of Trianon (signed on 4 June 1920) in historical memory as a travesty. As Leslie Waters and other scholars suggest, Trianon involved an utter rejection of the sacrosanct Hungarian linkage of nation and territory, even though until the late nineteenth-century Magyarization drive, less than half the population spoke Hungarian. The official foreign policy of the interwar state was revisionist, but not fully irredentist; Waters cites a 1929 foreign ministry memo that defined Hungary's negotiating position:

> Concerning territorial questions the Hungarian government accepts the principles declared by President Wilson in his Fourteen Points. According to these, the territories populated by a Magyar majority along the frontiers of present-day Hungary should naturally be unified with the mother country while the reattachment of the rest of the former Hungarian lands populated by non-Magyar-speaking nationalities should be subject to the free will and the plebiscite of the inhabitants themselves.[97]

This dignified posture, however, did not reflect the inflamed political discourse on both sides of the Slovak–Hungarian border, or the less visible backstage efforts to undermine the credibility of the Czechoslovak state. The government reaction to this dilemma was a somewhat counterproductive constraint on interaction with Hungarian institutions. Until 1928, for example, young Hungarians desiring to pursue higher education could enroll in colleges or universities in Hungary or work toward a degree in Czechoslovakia, at an institution with either Czechoslovak or German as the language of instruction. But in 1928, Milan Hodža, later prime minister, then minister of education, issued a decree to the effect that college and university degrees earned in Hungary would no longer be recognized in Czechoslovakia.[98] In the same spirit, a decree issued in 1920 had banned the importation of any materials from Hungary. Although this decree was inspired by the flow of irredentist propaganda seeking to reverse the Czechoslovak conquest of Hungarian

regions, it extended also to nonpolitical materials. It was only on 1 June 1932 that the Ministry of the Interior lifted the ban on the importation of non-political printed materials from Hungary.[99]

Comprising less than 4% of the population, the Ruthenes were politically in a very weak position from the very beginning of the republic. Moreover, about two-thirds of the 600,000 inhabitants of Ruthenia, as of 1914, were poor peasants and mountain folk, speaking various dialects of Ukrainian.[100] The remaining third were either Hungarian officials (many of whom left the country after 1918) or Jews. Ruthenia was, and remained, the poorest part of Czechoslovakia. In October 1918, Gregorij Žatković, the American Car-patho-Ruthenian leader, met with Masaryk in the USA and obtained the latter's promise that, within Czechoslovakia, Ruthenia would enjoy adminis-trative autonomy. Following a referendum among American Ruthenes, a Ruthenian Congress met in Scranton on 19 November 1918 and approved Ruthenia's adherence to Czechoslovakia (this action was unknown in Ruthe-nia for two months). In Ruthenia itself, most Ruthenes were politically passive and, to the extent that they had any opinion, may initially have preferred to remain affiliated with Hungary![101] However, flux in the geopolitical context in late 1918 and early 1919 set the stage for a series of local convocations in the region with different orientations, respectively favoring unification with a western Ukrainian project, remaining with Hungary, accession to Czechoslo-vakia, or even independence.[102] Ultimately on 8 May 1919, the National Council in Užhorod (Ungvár) proclaimed the unification of Ruthenia with Czechoslovakia. Žatković was named governor of Ruthenia, but the promise of autonomy was not honored and, in frustration, Žatković resigned on 17 April 1921, returning to Pittsburgh, where he resumed his law practice. Con-stitutional provisions for Ruthenian autonomy were not actualized until the decisive revisions of 1938, only to disappear as Hungary took over the terri-tory in the First Vienna Award of 1938.

The crisis of 1938

Henlein's demand, in April 1938, that the Nazi legal order be introduced in the Sudetenland signaled both an escalation in tensions and the start of a new phase in discussions about the rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia. In his address to the party faithful at Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) on 23 April, Henlein further demanded full equality for Germans and Czechs, recognition of the Germans' right of self-determination, full self-government in German dis-tricts, and a reorientation of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy, to align the country with the Third Reich.[103] Henlein had, in October 1937, been received for a cordial meeting with Sir Robert Vansittart, special advisor to the British government, who expressed sympathy for Henlein's position as the SdP leader outlined it at that time,[104] and the Foreign Office, for its part, was completely fed up with what it perceived as Czech self-righteous obstinacy, tendencies to

self-congratulation, and inability to understand German grievances.[105] Two weeks after Henlein's speech at Karlovy Vary, the British and the French called on Prague to do its utmost to come to some agreement with Henlein's SdP – short, of course, of nazifying the Sudetenland and reorienting Czechoslovak foreign policy. The Foreign Office was aware, however, of Hitler's funding for the SdP, which was part of the rationale for urging compromise.

On 19 May, reports reached Whitehall that the German Wehrmacht was approaching the Czechoslovak border; in response, Prague ordered a partial mobilization. German authorities denied any ill intentions and claimed that the troop movements were just part of a "routine exercise." Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Kamil Krofta (1876–1945) was convinced that, at that point, the German army was not ready to launch a war. However, the Nazis had already prepared "Operation Green," the plan to invade Czechoslovakia, even though the date for an invasion had not yet been set.[106] By this point, Henlein, who had at one time spoken merely of autonomy and who had referred only slightly obliquely to "self-determination" for the Sudeten Germans the previous month, now demanded *Anschluss* to Germany.

In fact, Hitler had been warned by his chief of staff, General Ludwig Beck, that Germany was not equipped to sustain a long war and that, in the event of a precipitous attack on Czechoslovakia, Britain might well come to the aid of the Czechs.[107] In addition, France had extended an unconditional guarantee to come to Czechoslovakia's aid, if attacked. Moreover, the Soviets had offered to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia if, but only if, France honored her pledge (even though the Soviet Union did not, at the time, share a common border with Czechoslovakia). Thus, in Hitler's view, Britain was the key to solving the issue according to his desires. "Russia would not move without France and France would not move without Britain. This made Britain's attitude the key to the conquest of Czechoslovakia, which had long been Hitler's belief."[108] Hitler backed off for the time being, but he called on his generals to prepare to invade Czechoslovakia no later than 1 October 1938. Although war games conducted in June showed that Czechoslovakia could probably be overrun within 11 days, Beck feared that this would trigger a war in which Germany would ultimately be defeated. On 16 July 1938, he drew up a memorandum advocating that the army's top generals submit a collective resignation in protest at Hitler's plans, assuring them that they would "thereby have saved their Fatherland from the worst, from destruction."[109] Beck read his memorandum to a meeting of top generals on 4 August but there was no consensus on what to do, let alone on whether confronting Hitler was either sensible or safe. Meanwhile,

> weeks of anti-Czech propaganda, often near-hysterical in tone, had shaped the impression that the issue was about the despicable persecution of the German minority, not the military destruction of Czechoslovakia. But whether or not the Sudeten Germans came "home to the Reich" was,

for the overwhelming majority of the population, less important than avoiding the war which Hitler was determined to have.[110]

In the meantime, the British had persuaded President Beneš to agree to submit the dispute to arbitration and to accept Walter Runciman, a millionaire shipowner and politician, as mediator and arbiter. After he arrived in Prague on 3 August, Runciman was bombarded with stories of Czech persecution and oppression of the Sudeten Germans. In reply, according to the newspaper *Narodni list*, Lord Runciman advised the Sudeten Germans to distance themselves from German culture and develop their own culture on the Swiss–German model.[111] Then, on 6 August 1938, Konrad Henlein's newspaper, *Rundschau*, ran an article under the headline "*Was man unter Entnationalisierung versteht*" (What one understands by denationalization). According to *Rundschau*,

> The core of the entire national struggle, of the whole Czecho-Slovak problem, [is the Prague regime's] effort to call the Sudeten Germans' deepest moral and political rights into question. What does the new nationalities statute of the regime say to this core problem? Nothing! It speaks always only of "individuals," but never of people [Volk], land [Boden], and homeland [Heimat].[112]

Three days later, on 8 August 1938, the Sudeten German Party turned over to Lord Runciman a list of violent acts said to have been perpetrated by Czechs against Germans in recent days.[113] Meanwhile, the German press continued its campaign, alleging "Czech terror" against Germans. Typical of this campaign was an article published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 28 August, which reported that

> in recent months … hardly a day passes on which Sudeten Germans are not attacked and beaten by armed Czechs and communists … It scarcely needs stressing that, in all of these cases, which have taken place in all parts of the Sudeten-German language region, the perpetrators are never found by the Czech legal authorities.[114]

By the end of the month, Lord Runciman had become convinced that there was a problem and that Sudeten German demands needed to be treated seriously. Runciman now spoke with Beneš, conveying his concerns. Under heavy pressure from Runciman, Beneš contacted the Sudeten German leaders on 2 September to inform them that he would do his best to meet their demands, and prepared a plan that he presented on 7 September. The Sudeten German leaders were more than surprised when it turned out that Beneš was proposing to grant almost all of Henlein's demands as presented at Karlovy Vary, including full autonomy. However, Henlein had been instructed by

Hitler to make demands that the Czechoslovak government would not accept and, to this end, Henlein demanded that Sudeten Germans be granted the right to profess Nazi ideology.[115] Further, inevitably, the SdP was not prepared to accept Beneš' package, now wanting nothing short of annexation by Germany. Negotiations were broken off and there were fresh disorders in the Sudetenland. The German news organ *Völkischer Beobacher* claimed on 17 September that an estimated 15,000 Sudeten Germans had fled the "terror" in Czechoslovakia, taking refuge in Germany.[116] In the meantime, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940) had already proposed a meeting with Hitler, which was set for 15 September. Chamberlain ignored information from a highly placed German opposed to Hitler that, in the event of a firm declaration by the British government that any move against Czechoslovakia would be met by force, some of Hitler's generals would remove the Führer from power.[117] Instead, brushing aside this disclosure, the British prime minister, upon his return to London with Hitler's demands, proposed to his cabinet that Prague be pressured to transfer to Germany all districts of Sudetenland where Germans were in the majority – again, without a referendum, even though some Sudeten Germans were fiercely anti-Nazi! After that, an international commission, on which Britain and France would have seats, would draw new boundaries between Germany and Czechoslovakia. The cabinet accepted this proposal and passed it along to Prague; however, the Czechoslovak government rejected it. The British and French governments now confronted Prague with an ultimatum: accept the Anglo-French proposal or France would rescind its pledge to assist Czechoslovakia in the event of war, and Britain would not aid France in that eventuality. Prague caved in but, when Chamberlain presented this trophy to Hitler, the German Führer now demanded even greater concessions. With tensions rising, Benito Mussolini (1883–1945), the Italian *Duce*, having been approached by the British ambassador in Rome on Chamberlain's behalf, suggested a meeting of leaders of Germany, Italy, Britain, and France. The other parties agreed and, on 29 September 1938, the four met in Munich to discuss how to resolve the crisis. Neither the Soviet Union nor Czechoslovakia was invited to send a representative! As the Czechs say: "*O nas, bes nas*" – "About us, without us."

Agreement was reached on 30 September and presented as a diktat to the Czechoslovak government, calling for the territory inhabited by Germans to be ceded to Germany by 10 October. As a result of the Munich Agreement, Czechoslovakia lost 11,600 square miles to Germany, together with 3,869,000 inhabitants, roughly 34% of the population of the entire country.[118] On 5 October 1938, Edvard Beneš resigned as president, having previously appointed a new government headed by General Jan Syrový. Meeting with an Anglo-French delegation after Beneš' resignation, Syrový said, "In this affair, we have been willing to fight on the side of the angels. Now we shall hunt with the wolves."[119] As the Germans took possession of the Sudetenland, armed Schutzstaffel (SS) troops murdered Czechs and Jews they encountered.

Thousands of Czechs and Jews, fleeing from the Nazis or expelled by them, sought refuge in Czechoslovak territory, but were initially turned back; among the 170,000 refugees eventually allowed to enter rump Czechoslovakia were 12,000 Social Democrats and other anti-Nazi Germans.[120] In fact, according to J. W. Bruegel, there were tens of thousands of Germans prepared to fight, in September 1938, "together with the Czechs, for Czechoslovak independence."[121]

Here, it should perhaps be emphasized that, even with Henlein's Sudetendeutsche partei making trouble for Prague, Czechoslovakia could almost surely have survived, but for Hitler's territorial ambitions and Neville Chamberlain's willingness to indulge Hitler. The Third Reich was clearly the perpetrator in the fall of Czechoslovakia; Czechoslovakia was the victim of Nazi expansionism.

The Second Republic

As early as 1 October 1938, the day after the Munich Agreement had been signed, the Polish government made contact with the government in Prague, to renew its claim to the Těšín enclave. Hungary also put pressure on Prague to return the Hungarian-inhabited regions it had seized in 1919. Hitler now presented himself as mediator and, in the First Vienna Award, Hungary gained more than 4,000 square miles of territory[122] in which 86.5% of the local population was Hungarian, while Poland gained a few villages, in which 56% of the population was Czech and only 35% Polish. As a result of the First Vienna Award, Ruthenia lost its southwestern corner to Hungary. About this time, the government in Prague belatedly granted autonomy to Ruthenia.

On 17 August 1938, the day after Fr. Hlinka's death, representatives of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party presented their party's demands for Slovak autonomy to the central parliament and for the establishment of an autonomous Slovak Diet and for recognition of Slovak as the official language in Slovakia. Negotiations between Prague and Bratislava stalled until after the signing of the Munich Agreement. But, on 22 November 1938, the bicameral parliament in Prague passed a new constitution, converting Czechoslovakia into a confederal state, granting Slovak autonomy and hyphenating the name of the country – henceforth, Czecho-Slovakia.[123] On 30 November, Emil Hácha, erstwhile president of the Supreme Administrative Court, was elected president of Czecho-Slovakia. Rudolf Beran, leader of Czech National Unity, became prime minister, replacing General Syrovy, who once more became minister of defense. At the end of November 1938, the authorities in Prague, who by now controlled only Bohemia and Moravia, introduced antisemitic legislation.[124] The Prague parliament also passed an Enabling Act, which granted the government the power to rule by decree in the event of an "emergency."[125] In Slovakia, Prime Minister Tiso set an impossibly short deadline for would-be candidates to register to stand for election to the Slovak Diet.

Only members of his own party, who had received advance notice of the deadline, were able to register in time. The result was that the Hlinka Slovak People's Party/Party of Slovak National Unity collected 97.5% of the vote, thereby establishing a one-party state.[126] By January 1939, Hitler was making more demands on the country, including specifically a firm reorientation of its foreign policy to Berlin, the reduction of her armed forces, and the adoption of antisemitic legislation throughout the confederated country.[127] Msgr. Tiso needed little prompting, as he was determined to remove Jews from the economic and political life of the country, and replace them with Catholic Slovaks. The autonomous regime in Bratislava also ordered the dissolution of the local Jewish party. In fact, radical antisemitism came to the fore in Slovakia as early as the beginning of December 1938, when the synagogue in Trnava was desecrated and a boycott of Jewish-owned businesses was announced. Bratislava also showed an anti-Czech disposition, forcing many Czech professionals to leave the country; on 12 December 1938, an agreement was reached between Bratislava and Prague that the 9,000 Czech state employees still in Slovakia would leave, to be replaced by Slovaks. This came against the background of rising tensions between the Czech and Slovak parts of the confederation, and Bratislava was the scene of anti-Czech and anti-Jewish demonstrations. Meanwhile, in Prague, by January 1939, authorities were demanding that Jews who had moved to Czechoslovakia after 1918 should leave.[128] On 2 March, legislation was passed authorizing the establishment of two forced-labor camps for "nomads" – one in Bohemia and one in Moravia; these were intended to be used for Roma/Gypsies.[129] A week later, in a highly provocative move, President Hácha dismissed all members of the autonomous Slovak government, except for Pavol Teplanský, and entrusted the new government to the leadership of Jozef Sivák; at the same time, Hácha declared martial law. Tiso refused to accept his dismissal from the prime ministership and appealed to Berlin for protection. Hitler invited Tiso to come to Berlin for consultations and told the monsignor that, if he declared Slovak independence, Berlin would be its and his guarantor. On 14 March, the Slovak Diet recast itself as a parliament and declared Slovak independence with Tiso back at the helm; on the same day, Carpatho-Ukraine (Ruthenia) declared its independence. The next day, Hungarian troops marched into Khust and snuffed out the one-day-old Republic of Carpatho-Ukraine. The same day, after the Wehrmacht occupied Prague, the Czech lands were placed under German "protection," as the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia." With this, the last remnants of interwar Czechoslovakia were snuffed out.

Conclusion

Sir Robert Vansittart, at one time foreign undersecretary for Central Europe and a close observer of Czechoslovak politics, repeatedly suggested to Prague authorities that they restructure their country as a "state of nationalities," by

which he meant a state in which the peoples who made up Czechoslovakia would be treated equally and enjoy complete equality proportional to their representation in the population.[130] On another occasion, in a note to Anthony Eden (on 25 August 1936), Vansittart commented, "I too, of course, think – as every perspicacious man must – that the Czechs have ruined themselves by their follies and corruptions and that it is now too late to save them or their composite country from the wrath to come."[131] In retrospect, we may judge these to have been prophetic words.

Interwar Czechoslovakia has sometimes been held up as a unique exception in its time, as a democratic island in a sea of increasingly authoritarian states.[132] The truth is not so simple. Certainly, interwar Czechoslovakia was less corrupt than other states of Eastern Europe at the time and elections were generally free, if not entirely fair, given the ethnic imbalances explained above. Again, the rate of literacy among Czechs and Sudeten Germans, though not among Slovaks or Ruthenes, was certainly higher than the regional average and, on average, the Czechoslovak standard of living was higher than that in other countries of the region, although the Czechs lived best, while the Ruthenes were the poorest, at least until the onset of the Great Depression in 1929–1930. Moreover, the government's support of German cultural institutions may be contrasted with the quite different ways in which the cultural institutions of minorities were treated in most of the other states of the region.

But there are also factors held in common with other states in the region. To begin with, *every* state in interwar Eastern Europe, especially those with multiethnic populations, was guided by the principle that there was a "state-forming" nation that should be dominant – Poles in Poland, Romanians in Romania, and so forth. Second, the Czech project to construct a "Czecho-slovak" nation, by adding Slovaks to their number, drawing upon an idea popularized in the nineteenth century, was matched by the project, advanced by some Serbs and, at first, some Croats, to invent a "tri-named people," consisting of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes – another idea first developed in the nineteenth century – treating Macedonians as "south Serbs" and largely disregarding any notion that the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina might be anything other than Serbs or Croats and thus members of the "tri-named people," later more commonly called Yugoslavs. Third, Czechoslovakia shared with Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Kingdom of Yugoslavia the distinction of having annexed lands inhabited by Hungarians from Hungary – against the will of the resident population. Fourth, Czechoslovakia, like other countries in the region (Hungary, Poland, Romania), carried out a land reform that gave rise to complaints – in this case of favoritism of the Czechs. Fifth, there were disputes about the proper place of the dominant religious association. And sixth, though not necessarily finally, Czechoslovakia, like every other country in the region, began its political journey after World War One by launching a multiparty parliamentary democracy but, within 20 years, sank into authoritarianism, even if it was the

last to do so and did so only after Nazi Germany annexed the Sudetenland, thereby removing the country's natural defenses. Czechoslovakia, in sum, faced many of the same challenges as other countries in the region, embarked on its path with its elites construing ethnic diversity as a problem to be solved (as was the case also in Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia), and employed some of the same policy instruments, including fostering a cult of the leader, in an attempt to legitimate a system not founded on consensus.

Notes

1 Some of the Czech materials cited herein were translated by Jeffrey Castle; the Hungarian materials cited herein were translated by Agnes Simon. We are grateful to the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) for providing funding to cover the costs of these translations.
2 Paulína Tabery and Zora Bútorová (IVO and CVVM), "Tisková zaprává. Osudové osmičky v historickém vědomi české a slovenské veřejnosti: události, obdobi, osobnosti," *Sociologický ustav av ČR*, Press Report (12 June 2018), at https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c6/a4654/f77/p d180612.pdf [accessed 3 June 2019].
3 Ibid.
4 J. W. Bruegel, "The Germans in Pre-War Czechoslovakia," in Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža (eds.), *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918–1948* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 187.
5 See Dieter Salomon, "Od rozpadu podunajské monarchie do konce druhé světové války," in Ernst Nittner et al. (eds.), *Tisíc let česko-německých vztahů: Data, jména a fakta k politickému, kulturnímu a církevnímu vývoji v českých zemích* (Prague: ISE – Institut pro středoevropskou kulturu a politiku, 1991), pp. 187–190.
6 See especially Eva Irmanová, "Negotiations with Slovaks and the Struggle of the Czechoslovak and Hungarian Governments for Slovakia," *Central and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe, 1918–1938*, edited by Ferenc Eiler and Dagmar Háková (Prague: Masarykův ústav and [Archiv] Akademie věd ČR; Budapest: MTA Etnikai-nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézete, 2009), p. 8.
7 As quoted in Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918–1987* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 136–137.
8 For a contemporary application of the term, see Gwendolyn Sasse, "Securitization or Securing Rights? Exploring the Conceptual Foundations of Policies towards Minorities and Migrants in Europe," *JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (November 2004), pp. 673–693.
9 When the Czechoslovak army first occupied Slovak/Hungarian territory, fighting erupted between Hungarian troops and the invading troops. The Czechoslovaks seemed to have the upper hand until 21 March 1919, when Comintern agent Béla Kun established a Hungarian Soviet Republic and reorganized the Hungarian army, which quickly took control of two-thirds of Slovakia. A Slovak Soviet Republic was proclaimed in Prešov on 16 June, but Hungarian troops were forced to withdraw in the face of pressure from the victorious Entente powers. The Slovak Soviet Republic came to an end on 7 July 1919; at that point, Czechoslovak troops moved in to take control of the desired territory. Subsequently, the Hungarian Soviet Republic collapsed on 1 August 1919, after 133 days in existence. Zsuza L. Nagy, "Revolution in Hungary (1918–1919)," in Ervin Pamlényi (ed.), *A History of Hungary* (London: Collet's, 1975; from

Budapest: Zrínyi Printing House/Corvina, 1973,), pp. 442–449; and Hugh Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), pp. 176–177.

10   Karl Lowenstein, "Militant Democracy and Fundamental Rights II," in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (August 1937), p. 642.

11   Miroslav Mareš, "Czech Militant Democracy in Action: Dissolution of the Workers' Party and the Wider Context of this Act," *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 26, Issue 1 (November 2012), p. 34.

12   Giovanni Capoccia, "Legislative Responses against Extremism: The 'Protection of Democracy' in the First Czechoslovak Republic (1920–1938)," *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2003), pp. 691–738, at p. 701.

13   Milan Olejník, "The Development of the Slovak Industries during the First Ten Years of the Czechoslovak Republic," *Štúdie a články*, No. 1 (2003), at http://www.saske.sk/cas/archiv/1-2003/olejnik.html [accessed 3 June 2019]. A careful assessment of the logic and consequences of the nostrification policy can be found in Antonie Doležalová, "Zwischen Autarkie, Emanzipation und Diskriminierung: Die Nostrifizierung in der Tschechoslowakei Nach 1918," *Bohemia*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (2013), pp. 46–93

14   Karel Pichlík, "Die Entstehung der Tschechoslowakei," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte,* Vol. 17, No. 2 (April 1969), pp. 179–180. See also Victor Mamatey, "The Establishment of the Republic," Mamatey and Luža, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic,* pp. 29–30.

15   Wolfgang Libal, *Die Tschechen. Unsere eigentümlichen Nachbarn* (Vienna: Ibera Verlag, 2004), p. 33.

16   James Ramon Felak, "Priests in East European Politics: Ignaz Seipel, Jan Šrámek, and Andrej Hlinka," in Sabrina P. Ramet and Donald W. Treadgold (eds.), *Render unto Caesar: The Religious Sphere in World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: American University Press, 1995), p. 278; and Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 140.

17   Cynthia J. Paces, "'The Czech Nation Must be Catholic!' An Alternative Version of Czech Nationalism during the First Republic," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1999), p. 414.

18   Regarding Hus, see Pedro [Sabrina P.] Ramet, "Christianity and National Heritage among the Czechs and Slovaks," in Pedro [Sabrina P.] Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, revised and expanded edition (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1989), pp. 267–268; and Agnew, *The Czechs*, pp. 41–43. See also Tomáš G. Masaryk, *The Meaning of Czech History*, edited by René Wellek, translated from Czech by Peter Kussi (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974).

19   Paces, "'The Czech Nation Must be Catholic!'," p. 424.

20   Václav L. Beneš, "Czechoslovak Democracy and Its Problems, 1918–1920," in Mamatey and Luža, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 58.

21   Zbyněk Zeman, *The Masaryks: The Making of Czechoslovakia* (London, and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1990; first published Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1976), p. 142.

22   See James Shedel, "Emperor, Church, and People: Religion and Dynastic Loyalty during the Golden Jubilee of Franz Joseph," *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (January 1990), pp. 71–92.

23   See Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, pp. 53, 121, 131.

24   Regarding comparisons of Masaryk to Moses and Jesus Christ, see ibid., p. 123.

25   *Edvard Beneš in his Own Words: Threescore Years of a Statesman, Builder And Philosopher* (New York: Czech-American National Alliance, 1944), pp. 5, 6.

26   Ibid., p. 16.

27   Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, p. 119.

28 Ibid., p. 83.

29 Yeshayahu Jelinek, "Nationalism in Slovakia and the Communists, 1918–1929," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (March 1975), p. 70.

30 For an enumeration and explanation of civic virtues and liberal values, see Sabrina P. Ramet, "Civic Virtues, Liberal Values, and the Civic Culture," in Sabrina P. Ramet, Ola Listhaug, and Albert Simkus (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia: Value Transformation, Education, and Media* (Basingstoke, U.K. and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 13–25. See also Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Liberal Project and the Transformation of Democracy: The Case of East Central Europe* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), especially Chapters 1–3, 8.

31 The new territory inherited the majority of the Dual Monarchy's industrial assets.

32 Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle,* p. 62 (our emphasis); see also Peter Bugge, "Czech Democracy 1918–1939 – Paragon or Parody?," *Bohemia*, 47 (2006/7), p. 10.

33 As quoted in Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, p. 64.

34 Yeshayahu Jelinek, "Storm-Troopers in Slovakia: The Rodobrana and the Hlinka Guard," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1971), p. 101.

35 "Vavro Šrobár: Prvý slovenský diktátor, ktorý pri obrane Bratislavy neváhal brať rukojemníkov," *Denník* (10 August 2017), at https://dennikn.sk/844296/vavro-srobar-pri-obrane-bratislavy-nevahal-brat-rukojemnikov-pre-skandal-s-obrazm i-zvazoval-aj-samovrazdu/ [accessed 7 September 2019]. For a full appreciation of his role in the First Republic, see Josette Baer, *A Life Dedicated to the Republic: Vavro Srobár's Slovak Czechoslovakism* (Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem Verlag, 2014).

36 Universal suffrage granted in the new state constitution essentially destroyed the archaic Hungarian party system: there were more than 3 million eligible voters in Slovakia in 1920, compared with the previous election, in 1910, when there were only 1,069,480 in all of Hungary. See András Gerő: Nationalities and the Hungarian Parliament (1867–1918), Paper presented at the conference Parliaments and Minorities: Ethnicities, Nations and Religions in Europe, 1848–1948, British Academy, London (12–14 May 2014). See "Nationalities and the Hungarian Parliament 1867–1918," at http://geroandras.hu/en/blog/2016/03/24/nationa lities-and-the-hungarian-parliament-1867-1918/ [accessed 7 September 2019]. The broadened suffrage had less effect in the Czech lands, as the Austrian grant of male suffrage in 1907 had created the base for greater continuity in political partisan currents.

37 Bugge, "Czech Democracy 1918–1939," p. 4.

38 Salomon, "Od rozpadu podunajské monarchie," pp. 193–196.

39 Specifically, in the 300-seat Chamber of Deputies, a representative from the Czech lands represented on average 43,464 constituents, while a deputy from Slovakia represented 49,073 constituents, and a deputy from Ruthenia 67,303 constituents. In the 150-seat Senate, a representative from Bohemia, Moravia, or Silesia represented an average of 86,927 constituents, while a senator from Slovakia represented 96,564 constituents, and one from Ruthenia fully 151,433 constituents, meaning that Ruthenes had not much more than half of the voting power of the Czechs. See Andrej Tóth, Lukáš Novotny, and Michal Stehlík, *Národnostní menšiny v Československu 1918–1938: Od státu národníiho ke státu narodnostnímu?* [National Minorities in Czechoslovakia 1918–1938: From Nation State to Nationalist State?] (Prague: Opera Facultatis philosophicae Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis, 2012), pp. 250–251.

40 According to the rules set down on 29 February 1920, as cited in ibid., p. 252.

41 Philip Longworth, *The Making of Eastern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992; reprinted 1993), p. 69.

42 See Josef Harna, "First Czechoslovak Republic 1918–1938)," Jaroslav Pánek and Oldřich Tůma (eds.), *A History of the Czech Lands*, 2nd edition (Prague: Charles University Karolinum Press, 2018), pp. 437–480.

43 The Prague Castle complex is and was the official seat of the presidency.

44 "Masaryk a velká pětka: Roundtable," *ČT*, Historie.cs (23 July 2008), at https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/archiv/1447201-masaryk-a-velka-petka [accessed 3 June 2019].

45 Discipline was reinforced by the character of the mandate, as MPs were reliant on the party to retain their seats and could be expelled for defections. The only choice for defectors was to find another party list to run on. Hence the schisms that were common in post-communist Eastern Europe were rare in the 1920s and 1930s.

46 Regarding relations between the Hrad and parliament, see Zeman, *The Masaryks*, pp. 140–143.

47 See Andrea Orzoff, "'The Literary Organ of Politics': Tomáš Masaryk and Political Journalism, 1925–1929," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Summer 2004), pp. 275–300

48 Tóth, Novotny, and Stehlík, *Národnostní menšiny v Československu 1918–1938*, pp. 250–251.

49 *Prager Tagblatt* (30 November 1920), as quoted in Bruegel, "The Germans in Pre-War Czechoslovakia," p. 178.

50 R. W. Seton-Watson, "The German Minority in Czechoslovakia," *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 16, No. 4 (July 1938), pp. 658–659.

51 Bruegel, "The Germans in Pre-War Czechoslovakia," p. 184.

52 Ibid., p. 183.

53 Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, p. 140.

54 Milan Otáhal, *Zápas o pozemkovou reformu v ČSR* [The Fight over Land Reform in the Czechoslovak Republic] (Prague: Nakladatelství Československé akademie věd, 1963), p. 147. Note that Czech agriculture was already highly commercialized and embedded in a cooperative system that counterbalanced the problem of economies of scale.

55 Beneš, "Czechoslovak Democracy and Its Problems" [note 20], p. 92. See also Klimek, *Velké dějiny*, pp. 286–287.

56 Lucy Elizabeth Textor, *Land Reform in Czechoslovakia* (London: Unwin Brothers, 1923), p. 131; and Joseph F. Zacek, "Czechoslovak Fascisms," in Peter F. Sugar (ed.), *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918–1945* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC Clio, 1971), p. 59.

57 Textor, *Land Reform*, pp. 131, 133.

58 Mark Cornwall, "'National Reparation'? The Czech Land Reform and the Sudeten Germans 1918–38," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (April 1997), pp. 259–280.

59 Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle, and London: University of Washington Press, 1974; 2nd printing with corrections, 1977), p. 123.

60 Victor S. Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy 1920–1938," in Mamatey and Luža, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 143.

61 Seton-Watson, "The German Minority in Czechoslovakia," p. 660; and Agnew, *The Czechs,* p. 193.

62 Agnew, *The Czechs,* p. 195.

63 Mark Cornwall, "The Czechoslovak Sphinx: 'Moderate and Reasonable' Konrad Henlein," in Rebecca Haynes and Martyn Rady (eds.), *In the Shadow of Hitler: Personalities of the Right in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp. 206–226.

64 Agnew, *The Czechs*, p. 196; Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, p. 130; and Seton-Watson, "The German Minority in Czechoslovakia," pp. 663, 665. The quoted extract appears on p. 663 of Seton-Watson's article.

65 Konrad Henlein, "The German Minority in Czechoslovakia," *International Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (July–August 1936), p. 563.

66 Roser Cusso notes that of the 950 petitions received, 550 were accepted, a third of which were simply archived. The rest were negotiated in committee with the governments involved. Only 14 went to the full Council, and 7 to the International Court of Justice. Roser Cussó, "La défaite de la SDN face aux nationalismes des majorités: La Section des minorités et l'irrecevabilité des pétitions « hors traité »," *Études internationales*, Vol. 44, No. 1, March 2013, p. 74. See also Carole Fink, "Defender of Minorities: Germany in the League of Nations, 1926–1933," *Central European History*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1972), pp. 330–357.

67 Mandate of the OSCE high commissioner on national minorities (HCNM), at https://www.osce.org/hcnm/107878 [accessed 3 June 2019]. The UN documentation notes: "The HCNM is, above all, a political instrument and is not intended to supervise States' compliance with their OSCE commitments or international obligations. He does not function as an advocate or ombudsman for minorities or as recourse for individuals belonging to national minorities. He is a High Commissioner on (not for) National Minorities." United Nations, Pamphlet no. 9 of the UN Guide for Minorities, p. 2. See also Arie Bloed, "The High Commissioner on National Minorities: Origins and Background," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2013), pp. 15–24.

68 Milan Zemko, "Slovensko v historickom hľadaní svojej demokratickej identity," in Martin Bútora Martin, Zora Bútorová Zora, Miroslav Kollár Miroslav, and Grigorij Mesežnikov Grigorij (eds.), *Kde sme? Mentálne mapy Slovenska* (Bratislava: IVO, Kalligram, 2010), p. 31.

69 Universal suffrage granted in Czechoslovakia's 1920 constitution essentially destroyed the basis of the archaic Hungarian party system; there were more than 3 million eligible voters in Slovakia in 1920, whereas in the previous election of 1910 there were only just over a million eligible voters in all of Hungary.

70 Hodza, cited in Zemko, "Slovensko v historickom hľadaní," p. 32.

71 As quoted in Mamatey, "The Establishment of the Republic," p. 26. For a brief discussion of the ambiguities of the Czechoslovak concept in the Martin Declaration, see Carol Skalnik Leff, "Slovakia and the Making of Czechoslovakia: Controversies and Legacies," *Kosmas*, New Series, Vol. 2, No. 1, Special Edition (Spring 2019), at https://www.svu2000.org/kosmas/ebooks/pdf/Kosmas_Free_NS2019_02-1.pdf [accessed 4 June 2019], p. 132.

72 As quoted in Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia* [note 7], p. 204.

73 As quoted in Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), p. 191.

74 James R. Felak, *At the Price of the Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1929–1938* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994), p. 22.

75 Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia*, pp. 192–193.

76 Felak, *At the Price of the Republic*, p. 20.

77 Mamatey, "The Development of Czechoslovak Democracy," p. 150; confirmed in Felak, *At the Price of the Republic*, p. 87.

78 Until 1929, residents of Slovakia faced an income tax rate of 10% (vs. 3% in Bohemia) and a 23% tax on purchases of alcohol (vs. 10% in Bohemia); the tax rate for businesses was three times as high in Slovakia as in Czech land, Felak, *At the Price of the Republic*, p. 24.

79 Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, p. 120.

80 Petr Pavlínek, "Regional Development and the Disintegration of Czechoslovakia," *Geoforum*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (November 1995), pp. 351–354; and Olejník, "The Development of the Slovak Industries during the First Ten Years of the Czechoslovak Republic."

81 Felak*, At the Price of the Republic*, p. 27.

82 As quoted in ibid., p. 27.

83 In an ill-advised and unsuccessful trip to the Paris Peace Conference, on a false passport, to press for Slovak autonomy and criticize the dictatorial powers of Vavro Šrobar, Hlinka had unguardedly aligned himself with a delegation of Hungarian sympathizers, none of whom returned to Slovakia. On his return, the Czechoslovak government interned him until April 1920 on the grounds of undermining the negotiations and challenging the new state's legitimacy.

84 Tuka was released in 1939, to play a central role in the wartime Slovak state.

85 Attila Simon, *The Hungarians of Slovakia in 1938*, translated by Andrew Gane (Boulder, Colo., and Budapest: Social Science Monographs & The Balassi Institute, 2012), p. 2. Professor Leff has the original statistical annuals on file.

86 Ibid., pp. 3–4.

87 Ibid., p. 9.

88 Ibid., p. 172.

89 Ibid., pp. 24–27.

90 László Szarka, "A magyar revíziós politika eredményei and dilemmái" [Results and Dilemmas of Hungarian Revisionist Politics], in Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec, and László Szarka (eds.), *Kisebbségi magyar közösségek a 20. században* [*Hungarian Minority Communities in the 20th Century*] (Budapest: Gondolat and MTA Kisebbségkutató Int., 2008), pp. 138–145.

91 István Lanstyák, "A szlovák nyelv árnyékában: A magyar nyelv helyzete Csehszlovákiában 1918–1991" [In the Shadow of the Slovakian Language: The Situation of the Hungarian Language in Czechoslovakia 1918–1991], in Miklós Kontra, *Tanulmányok a határainkon túli kétnyelvúségről* [*Studies About the Bilingualism of Hungarian Minorities in the Countries Neighboring Hungary*] (Budapest: Magyarságkutató Intézet, 1991), pp. 13–15; and Bertram de Colonna, *Czecho-Slovakia Within* (London: T. Butterworth, 1938), pp. 20–21, as cited in Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, p. 191.

92 Lanstyák, "A szlovák nyelv árnyékában," pp. 15–16.

93 Simon, *The Hungarians of Slovakia*, pp. 33, 36.

94 Ibid., p. 40.

95 Béla Gabóda, "Kisebbségi iskolaügy Kárpátalján a Csehszlovák Köztársaság idején (1919–1938) (I. rész)" [Minority Educational Affairs During the Czechoslovak Republic (1919–1938) (Part I)], *Fórum: Társadalomtudományi Szemle*, Vol. 5, Issue 1 (2003), p. 24.

96 Simon, *The Hungarians of Slovakia*, pp. 46–47.

97 Leslie M. Waters, *Resurrecting the Nation: Felvidék and the Hungarian Territorial Revisionist Project, 1938–1945*, UCLA doctoral dissertation, 2012, p. 31; and, more generally, her excellent discussion of interwar Hungarian political attitudes, pp. 14–39 at https://escholarship.org/uc/item/779543v9 [accessed 7 September 2019].

98 Simon, *The Hungarians of Slovakia*, p. 50.

99 Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, p. 167. But see also p. 170.

100 The Ruthenian (now Rusyn) language variants were not yet codified. Three standardizations now exist: the Croatian/Pannonian (1923), Slovak Rusyn (1995) and Polish Rusyn/Lemko (2000).

101 Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe between the Wars 1918–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945), p. 180.

102 Paul Magocsi, "The Ruthenian Decision to Unite with Czechoslovakia," *Slavic Review,* Vol. 34, No. 2 (June 1975), pp. 360–381.

103 Konrad Henlein, speech at Karlsbad, 23 April 1938, extracted in "The Demands of the Sudeten Germans," in *Bulletin of International News*, Vol. 15, No. 9 (7 May 1938), p. 10.

104 W. W. Wallace, "The Making of the May Crisis of 1938," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 41, No. 97 (June 1963), p. 384.

105   Jonathan Zorach, "The British View of the Czechs in the Era before the Munich Crisis," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (January 1979), p. 70.

106   Wallace, "The Making of the May Crisis," pp. 373, 377–379; and Keith Eubank, "Munich," in Mamatey and Luža, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 244.

107   Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, a one-volume abridgement of a two-volume set (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p. 425.

108   Wallace, "The Making of the May Crisis," p. 383.

109   As quoted in Kershaw, *Hitler*, p. 428.

110   Ibid., p. 431.

111   As quoted in "Runciman – zu objektiv? Die englische Delegation soll eine 'Sudetendeutsche Eigenkultur' befürworten," *Völkischer Beobachter* (5 August 1938), p. 8.

112   *Rundschau*, as extracted in "Prager Täuschungsmanöver um den Kernpunkt des tschecho-slowakischen Problems," *Völkischer Beobachter* (7 August 1938), p. 8.

113   "Gdp. unterrichtet Runciman über Tschechenterror," *Völkischer Beobachter* (10 August 1938), p. 1.

114   "Sudetendeutsche sollen Freiwild bleiben," *Völkischer Beobachter* (28 August 1938), p. 1.

115   Gordon Thomas and Greg Lewis, *Defying Hitler: The Germans who Resisted Nazi Rule* (London and New York: Penguin Random House, 2019), p. 76.

116   "Zeugen des tschechischen Blutterrors – 15000 Flüchtlinge," *Völkischer Beobachter* (17 September 1938), p. 1.

117   Thomas and Lewis, *Defying Hitler*, pp. 78–81.

118   Eubank, "Munich," pp. 246–250; and Theodor Prochazka, "The Second Republic, 1939–1939," in Mamatey and Luža, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic*, p. 257.

119   As quoted in Telford Taylor, *Munich: The Price of Peace* (Garden City, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1980), p. 910.

120   Ibid., pp. 912–914.

121   Bruegel, "The Germans in Pre-War Czechoslovakia," p. 182. For further discussion of diplomacy in September 1938, see Igor Lukes, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš in the 1930s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), Chapter 7 ("September 1938").

122   4,570 square miles according to Prochazka, "The Second Republic," p. 258; 4,011 square miles according to Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 92; nearly 12,000 square km, i.e., nearly 4,672 square miles according to Miklós Molnár, *A Concise History of Hungary*, translated from Hungarian by Anna Magyar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 281; and 12,103 square km, i.e., 4,673 square miles according to Deborah S. Cornelius, *Hungary in World War II: Caught in the Cauldron* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), p. 91.

123   Zoltán Balassa, "A cenzúra története Csehszlovákiában, 1918–1992: a magyar sajtószabadság lehetőségei: 'az újságírók tolla a legkönnyebben hajlítható'" [The History of Censorship in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1992: The Possibilities for Freedom in the Hungarian Press: "the pen of the journalist is the easiest to bend"], in István Apró and Vince Paál (eds.), *A határon túli magyar sajtó Trianontól a XX. század végéig: fejezetek a magyar sajtószabadság történetéből* [*Hungarian Minority Press from Trianon to the End of the 20th Century*] (Budapest: Médiatudományi Intézet, 2014), pp. 28–29.

124   Heinrich Bodensieck, "Das Dritte Reich und die Lage der Juden in der Tschecho-Slowakei nach München," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (July 1961), p. 250.

125   Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 97.

126   Ibid.
127   Prochazka, "The Second Republic," p. 266.
128   Bodensieck, "Das Dritte Reich und die Lage der Juden," pp. 253–256, 258; and
      Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, pp. 98–99, 102.
129   Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 101.
130   Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, p. 176.
131   As quoted in Zorach, "The British View of the Czechs," p. 62.
132   The most influential book taking this line is Josef Korbel, *Twentieth-Century
      Czechoslovakia: The Meaning of its History* (New York: Columbia University
      Press, 1977).

4

INTERWAR HUNGARY

Democratization and the fate of minorities

Béla Bodó

The late nineteenth-century global order was based on liberal principles and practices, such as the expansion of individual rights; secularization; the free flow of people, goods, services, and information; the regulation and bureaucratization of international relations, including warfare; and the rise of supranational organizations tasked with the peaceful resolution of conflicts. There were more than 70 states in the world in 1900; yet the fate of the world was still decided in the 5 major European capitals and in Washington. The states that dominated international politics around 1900 were, with the exception of the United States, still empires. None of these empires were dictatorships: Great Britain, by far the most important imperial power, was a liberal constitutional monarchy; France, which had the second largest empire, was a republic. Imperial Germany had only a few overseas possessions in Africa, while the Austro-Hungarian Empire had none; they were liberal *Rechtsstaats*, in which the executive branch of governments, for historical reasons, possessed more power than their counterparts in the West. The only authoritarian state in Europe was the Russian Empire; however, even in Russia, there was a functioning parliament, with several legal and illegal political parties running at fairly open elections, and, before World War One, a lively public opinion fed information by hundreds of newspapers. Europe remained a collection of small and large states, which were equal, to paraphrase the historian Leopold von Ranke, only in God's eyes. Inequality between states went hand in hand with inequality in wealth, culture, and social opportunities among citizens. Within the empires, citizens in the mother country enjoyed more rights and far higher standards of living than the subjects in the colonies. The same was true, to a lesser extent, for the ethnic and religious minorities in the other European countries. Before 1914, international law guaranteed only the free exercise of religious rights. Ethnic minorities and cultures possessed no communal rights. The rapidly expanding, centralizing, and homogenizing states saw minority culture as a hindrance to modernization, and the

continued survival of ethnic minorities as a sign of weakness and a security threat. On a few occasions, the more authoritarian Russian and Ottoman empires aimed to guarantee security through deportation – the removal of entire ethnic groups from border areas and their forced resettlement into the country's interior. More typically, the modernizing states used the schools, the armed services, and the state bureaucracy to assimilate ethnic minorities. As testimony to the immense power of the modern states, assisted in part by urbanization, the assimilations of ethnic minorities, even such self-conscious groups as the Poles in the German and Russian empires, increased rapidly before World War One. While entire cultures and languages disappeared, forced assimilation created a backlash among the members of the cultural and political elites of the surviving ethnic minorities; their justified resentment, coupled with their growing paranoia, led to the doubling of their efforts to preserve their cultures and identities. By 1914, the leaders of the ethnic groups in East Central Europe saw the destruction of the empires and the establishment of separate states as the only way to achieve their goal.

The liberal global order and the international community were seriously shaken by World War One. Globalization came to a halt with the outbreak of the military conflict; international trade declined and overseas migration was reduced to a trickle in the interwar period. Economic nationalism, autarky, and high tariffs favored the formation of trading blocs at the expense of free trade. Autarky in the economic realm in turn reinforced the trend toward nativism in domestic affairs and isolationism in foreign affairs, not only in the United States and Britain, but in the rest of Europe as well. The maritime empires survived the war intact; thanks to the mandate system, Britain and France expanded their influence over more territories in the interwar period.[1] Still, the future belonged to the nation-states, whose numbers increased dramatically in the next 60 years. The hierarchy of states, races, nations, and ethnic groups barely changed after 1919; nor did social inequality and racism disappear, or even decline significantly, in the developed countries in the interwar period. The end of World War One and ensuing peace treaties satisfied the national aspiration of some groups: Poland was resurrected; Czech and Slovak nationalists carved out a new state in the northern part of the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire; the unification of Transylvania and Bessarabia with the Old Kingdom delighted the Romanian intelligentsia and political elite; the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918 realized the dreams of South Slavic nationalists. Yet the war and the ensuing peace treaties also disappointed as many groups as they satisfied. The majority of Croats, Slovenes, Slovaks, Bosniaks, and Ruthenians failed to identify with the new states in which they found themselves. While the Baltic states and Finland became independent, Ukrainian and Belorussia nationalists, who still represented minorities in their respective groups, saw their political aspirations crushed by the Soviet army and bureaucracy. The new international order angered the losers of the war even more. The new borders of the defeated states were imposed from above by the victorious powers. Only on a handful of occasions

were the populations in the disputed regions allowed to express their wishes through referendums. The new borders rarely followed ethnic lines but were drawn on the basis of geopolitical and economic considerations or pseudo-historical arguments. It comes as no surprise that the defeated states and ethnic groups saw the borders as unjust and temporary, and the new international system, which should be destroyed at the first opportunity, as transitory.[2]

The founders of the Wilsonian New Order recognized the harmful effects of modern nationalism – unleashed in part by the promises that they had made to the subject groups in Imperial Germany and the Dual Monarchy during the war. Their solution to the problems created by the peace treaties and the redrawing of the borders was to strengthen the existing international organizations and create new ones. The most important of these new organizations was the League of Nations. The brainchild of the American president, Woodrow Wilson, the League of Nations was intended to provide a forum to articulate shared concerns, such as the fate of ethnic minorities, and to resolve conflicts through negotiation and dialogue. There were about 36 million minority inhabitants in Europe in the interwar period; the vast majority, 25 million, that is three out of four such individuals, lived in East Central Europe.[3] Germans represented the largest ethnic minority; in 1930, about 9 million out the 36 million (one out of four) members of the national minorities in Eastern Europe were German. The largest group lived in Czechoslovakia (3.5 million), where there were more Germans than Slovaks in 1921. Jews, who in many places were still counted as a religious minority, were the most vilified and threatened group in the region. Both groups had been seen as outsiders, wealthy, and, in the case of Germans before 1918, as politically privileged. Their relative wealth and middle-class status made them the object of envy among impoverished peasants, déclassé noblemen, and the upwardly mobile members of the native middle class. Mark Mazower was right to point out that, beside the so-called Jewish Question, there was a so-called German Question in interwar Europe, which functioned as a constant source of tension in the 1920s and an excuse for the war in the late 1930s. While the treatment of the Jews varied (from violent attacks in the post-war period, to toleration in the 1920s, to renewed attacks and antisemitic legislation in the 1930s), Germans enjoyed full cultural autonomy in the Baltic states of Estonia and Latvia; in Yugoslavia and Romania, they were considered a privileged minority (at least compared to other non-Slavic groups, such as Hungarians), whereas the Poles treated Germans as second-class citizens and potential traitors in the 1920s. More than 575,000 Germans fled Poland between 1919 and 1926 because of violence, fear of violence, oppression, and confiscation of their properties. The number of German refugees from Poland surpassed both in total and proportional terms the number of Germans who left Czechoslovakia (where about 10% of the ethnic German population departed, along with 200,000 Germans whom the French forced out of the newly incorporated Alsace-Lorraine after the war). Czechoslovakia respected individual rights but deprived ethnic Germans of communal rights: the government closed down

schools, expelled tens of thousands of ethnic Germans from the civil service, tried to change the ethnic make-up of the borderlands by sponsoring the settlement of Czechs in German communities, and instituted land reform at the expense of German and Hungarian farmers. In Hungary, as we will see later, the private property of ethnic Germans was respected and their geographical and upward social mobility not only tolerated but encouraged. Yet, unlike in Romania and Yugoslavia, they were put under pressure to assimilate.[4]

The solution of the liberal international community, and the great powers, to the problem of ethnic minorities was to force the countries in East Central Europe to sign minority treaties to guarantee certain rights, especially in the fields of culture and education. The minority treaties signed in the immediate postwar period represented a watershed in international relations: they were concerned with collective rather than individual rights and, unlike earlier agreements, they guaranteed not only religious but also cultural rights. Many states in East Central Europe resented the fact that they were obliged to sign such agreements, while great powers, such as Germany and Italy, were exempted. The signatories rightly viewed their international obligations under the minority treaties as a violation of their sovereignty as independent nations. The minority treaties were, indeed, intrusive. They not only protected existing ethnic minorities, but also sought to create new ones by granting ill-defined groups rights that they had not requested or even desired (Jews in Hungary, for example, regarded themselves as a religious rather than an ethnic minority, and wanted to be treated as such). In East Central Europe, Czechoslovakia was the only state that took the stipulations of the minority treaty seriously and even tried up to a point to incorporate its basic principles into its nationality legislation; Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Romania, on the other hand, tried to skirt their treaty obligations as much as possible. The main weakness of the minority treaties was that the League of Nations simply lacked the mechanisms to enforce its stipulations. Between 1922 and 1939, Hungarian minorities in Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia handed in 103 petitions to the League. More than half of these petitions came from Romania; the majority complained about discrimination against Hungarian farmers during the land reforms and the closing of minority schools and other cultural institutions. Only a handful of these petitions reached the level of the highest instance, the Council, and none of them was handled by the highest authority, the International Court in Hague.[5] The Hungarian minority did not represent an exception. The minority treaty that it had signed did not prevent Poland from closing down Ukrainian schools, or the Yugoslav police from mistreating Macedonian minority leaders in the 1920s. While it remained important as a sounding board, the League failed in its main mission: it made precious little contribution to peaceful solutions to pressing problems.[6]

The following study considers the fate of ethnic minorities in interwar Hungary from a regional perspective. Hungarian policies toward its minorities were entangled with the treatment of Hungarian minorities in neighboring territories.

These lands were not considered foreign territory, but occupied territory, a creation of the Treaty of Trianon. Hungarian foreign and domestic policies on the matter of ethnic minorities were, then, part of the same state policy. It is thus from this perspective that we compare the fate of ethnic Hungarians in lands that once belonged to Hungary to that of ethnic minorities living within the new borders of postwar Hungary.

The Hungarian community in the neighboring states, 1919–1933

Hungary is rightly considered one of the biggest losers of World War One. The Treaty of Trianon signed in early June 1920 reduced the country to less than one-third of its former size; the country lost half of its population, and about one-quarter of its Magyar-speaking citizens. About 30% (3.2 million out of 10.6 million) of the population in the detached territories spoke Hungarian as their first language. The majority of these Magyars lived in compact and ethnically more or less homogeneous towns and villages along, or in close proximity to, the new borders. Romania was awarded one-third of the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary; the awarded territory was larger than what was left as interwar Hungary. Out of the 5,257,000 newly incorporated subjects who came under Romanian rule, about one-third (31.61%, or 1,661,000) were Hungarians, 564,000 were Germans (10.74%), and 2,829,000 were ethnic Romanians (57.65%). There remained about one million Hungarians in Slovakia and Ruthenia and half a million in Yugoslavia. Once a middling power and state, Hungary became one of the smallest countries in Central Europe: one-quarter the size of Poland and one-third that of Romania or Yugoslavia; even Czechoslovakia was one-and-a-half times as large as Hungary. With the loss of territory and population came the loss of historical towns, such as Pozsony (Bratislava), Kassa (Košice), and Kolozsvár (Cluj); countless mines, factories, and banks; and some of the best agricultural land in Europe. The treaty almost completely disarmed the country, making it virtually defenseless in the face of repeated threats of intervention and complete annihilation by its neighboring states in the early 1920s.[7]

Even before the signing of the Treaty of Trianon, tens of thousands of people fled their homes and sought refuge from the invading troops in the country's interior. The Treaty of Trianon of 1920 provided for a relatively longer period for individuals and their families to choose their homeland; if they decided to leave, they could sell their property and take the proceeds with them. Since international law did not recognize dual citizenship, civil servants, who refused to take an oath to the new state, were especially eager to take advantage of this opportunity.[8] Altogether about 400,000 Hungarians left the disputed territories between the fall of 1918 and the end of 1924. The majority, about 220,000, came from Transylvania and Partium (the region between the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania); they represented 13.4% of the ethnic Hungarian population there. The majority of the refugees hailed

from the elite and the middle and lower-middle classes: they were aristocrats, gentry landowners, liberal professionals, teachers, rural and municipal administrators, railway employees, and white-collar workers. Only a small minority of the refugees were able to find full-time employment and shelter in the country's interior. Desperate and angry, many of these refugees first cast their lot with the communist regime in the spring and summer of 1919; later, during the counterrevolution, the majority found their political homes in the right-wing patriotic associations and irredentist organizations and parties.[9] While their members could be found in every political group, from the communists to the liberal conservatives and national socialists, the majority of refugees continued to support right-wing radical and fascist groups and policies in the interwar period.

While about 10% fled their homeland, the vast majority of Hungarians in the neighboring countries either could not or did not want to leave. Their treatment in the new states varied greatly: in regard to their individual and communal rights, ethnic Hungarians fared better in Czechoslovakia than in Romania. The worst situation was that of ethnic Hungarians in Yugoslavia. None of these states could decide if they wanted to integrate or permanently marginalize and exclude their respective Magyar minorities. In all three states, Hungarians faced economic, cultural, and political discrimination in the interwar period.[10] The drastic land reforms carried out in all three countries in the 1920s were designed to break the political influence of the Hungarian landholding nobility, reduce the power of the Catholic Church in the social and educational fields; and curry favor with non-Magyar farmers. Hungarian peasants and agricultural laborers received only a small percentage of the land to which they would normally have been entitled, had the process been fair, "ethnically blind," and free of corruption. Hungarian civil servants were forced to take an oath to the new states and show proficiency in the official language; when they refused, or were unable to do so, they were unceremoniously dismissed from their jobs. The state imposed higher taxes on Hungarian landholders and businesses, while local administrators often withdrew or refused to renew the business permits of Magyar entrepreneurs. The impacts of these changes were uneven: some people and groups even profited from the changes of the borders and political sovereignty. Hungarian industrial workers and agricultural laborers in Czechoslovakia enjoyed higher standards of living, had more rights, and obtained more generous social benefits than their counterparts in Hungary. Not every civil servant was sacked, even in Romania and Yugoslavia; those who were prepared to serve the new state were welcome, especially if they also acted as the local agents of the government party to bring in votes. The renegades, as Hungarian public opinion in Romania called these individuals, were not difficult to find, especially in the Szekler region. In spite of the willingness of thousands of Hungarian civil servants to make their deal with the new holders of power, the cleansing of the state apparatus continued. Using language proficiency and political unreliability as both litmus tests and

excuses, the Romanian, as well as the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak, states continued to purge the offices of the rural and municipal administrations of Magyar speakers and replace them with members of the dominant groups, even in places where the majority of the population was Hungarian.

The cultural war between Czechs and Germans, the fight over street signs and monuments that had begun in the 1880s in Bohemia and Moravia, reached its crescendo in the postwar period.[11] In the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia, Northern Serbia (Vojvodina), and Romania, however, the ire of the new states was directed against reminders of Hungarian rule after 1919. In the next few years, the authorities changed the names of streets and squares, and they tore down old public monuments and erected new ones, to honor the memories of national heroes and to commemorate glorious events and national tragedies. In many places in Transylvania, the state forced the Hungarian minorities to finance, through local taxes, the building of Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches. The majority of these churches, many of which were of cathedral size, were built in towns with limited Romanian presence and on the main streets and squares in order to advertise political change and compete with, and overshadow, the reminders of the Hungarian past. Admittedly, all these changes took years to accomplish. The local governments were too poor to build too many monuments and churches. Because of local resistance, the changes in many predominantly Hungarian towns in Transylvania remained superficial: while the main avenues received new designations, neutral names of small streets were simply translated into Romanian; in any case the local population continued to use the old names in private and often even in public.[12]

Demographic engineering and cultural discrimination went hand in hand: after 1919, the new holders of power in the neighboring states tried to alter the ethnic and cultural profile of towns and villages along the new borders by encouraging the settlement of peasants from the interior and promising teachers and civil servants higher salaries to take up positions in predominantly Hungarian communities. Many of these administrators either did not speak the language of the local population or simply refused to serve their clients in Hungarian. All three states waged a war on Hungarian schools and cultural institutions. More than 72% of schools in territories taken from Hungary by Romania were either denominational or communal; they were split almost equally between majority and minority schools. The Romanian constitution of 1923 recognized only Romanian as an official language and gave the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches more power (and financial support) than they had enjoyed previously in the field of education. Although the law in theory guaranteed the existence of minority schools, it did not ensure continued financial support for them. Deprived of state support, even though adults continued to pay their taxes, the schools were forced to survive on donations and the financial support of impoverished Churches. Six hundred Hungarian elementary schools were forced to close down in the interwar period. High school and university education suffered perhaps even more: 39 secondary

schools (63% of the total) and 7 out of 35 teachers' colleges were put out of business. Altogether, the Hungarian community lost 50% of its secondary schools in the interwar period in Romania.[13] The situation of minority schools was equally bad in interwar Yugoslavia, but better in democratic Czechoslovakia. Having branded schools as the agents of Magyarization, the new authorities targeted schools in highly contested regions and in towns and villages, where Hungarians were clearly in the minority. Since the application of minority rights was tied to percentages, the local authorities constantly manipulated the numbers. Civil servants "analyzed" family names to assert the ethnic background of citizens: having an ambiguous family name, such as Horváth, Rácz, or Oláh, was enough for the local authorities to forbid parents to enroll their children in minority schools. Such arbitrary administrative practices were often enough to change, at least on paper, the ethnic profile of entire communities and counties. The number of Hungarian newspapers and periodicals declined drastically in all three states as well: many were proscribed outright, while others went bankrupt for lack of interest. Here again, there was a difference between the more authoritarian Yugoslavia and Romania, on the one hand, and Czechoslovakia, on the other, where the decline was less drastic and where, for political purposes, the state even financially supported a select group of Hungarian publications and writers critical of the Horthy regime.

Political discrimination involved the gerrymandering of electoral districts, the manipulation of voters' lists and the number of mandates carried by each district, voters' intimidation, and the depriving of politically tainted individuals and groups the right to participate in the electoral process. A typical example of the first type of discrimination was the division of the Vojvodina region in Yugoslavia into two subregions (oblasts) to prevent the formation of a strong Hungarian voting bloc along the River Tisza.[14] All three countries initially permitted the operation of Hungarian political parties. In Yugoslavia, the Hungarian Party (Magyar Párt or MP) was proscribed with the formation of a military dictatorship in 1929; however, the main political representatives of the Magyar population – the Hungarian National Party of Romania (Országos Magyar Párt or OMP) in Romania and the National Christian Socialist Party (Országos Keresztény Szocialista Párt or OKSzP) in Czechoslovakia – survived until the late 1930s. The minority parties differed significantly from the mass parties in Hungary. Unlike political parties in Hungary, the minority parties in the neighboring states were more tolerant of ideological differences (or rather, they subordinated ideological differences to ethnic survival); they served to unite, rather than divide, the political community, and defended not only the social and economic interests but also the identity of their members. The political parties maintained strong ties with religious and cultural organizations, such as Churches, clubs, schools, and editorial offices of newspapers and journals. The roles of cultural and political institutions often overlapped: in Yugoslavia, for example, journals such as *Kalangya* (Haystack) and *Híd* (Bridge) took over the roles of the Hungarian

Party after its dissolution. The Hungarian ethnic parties in the neighboring states were socially more progressive than the majority of political parties and pressure groups in Budapest. Ethnic politicians were, paradoxically, given the discrimination that they often faced, less chauvinistic than their Hungarian counterparts. Minority leaders tended to think in regional (East Central European) rather than national terms; not blinded by the chimera of past glory, they were able to assess their weight, the position of Hungary on the continent, and the opportunities that geopolitical changes represented more realistically. In Hungary, politicians cited alleged Hungarian cultural superiority as the justification for the planned restoration of their political superiority; in the neighboring states, the leaders of the Hungarian community wanted equality and fair treatment. Hungarian politicians had difficulties in communicating with their Czech, Serb, or Romanian counterparts. To defend the social and cultural interests of their constituency, minority community leaders, on the other hand, had to be in contact with majority public figures.[15] They also maintained regular contact with international organizations, such as the League of Nations, and cultivated strong ties with the leaders of ethnic minorities in other countries. Minority leaders were excellent motivators: thanks to their efforts, participation among Hungarians in local and national elections remained high in the interwar period. They were ready to form alliances with other parties to protect and promote the interests of their voters. In Romania, the Liberal governments were more nationalistic; when the National Peasant Party (1928–1933) was in power, the Hungarian community enjoyed more opportunities, however. Still, as a sign of continued hostility, only on three occasions was the OMP was able to break out of isolation. In 1923 and 1926 it formed a pact with the People's Party (Partidul popular), led by General Averescu, by promising the candidate loyalty in return for more rights; in 1927, it allied itself in the local elections with the National Liberal Party and with the German Party. Having no partner in a Romania where the center of political gravity shifted drastically to the right, the OMP returned to its original position of independence in the 1930s.[16]

The majority of Hungarians in the neighboring states lived in regions in which Magyars historically held the leverage of power: Slovakia (Felvidék); Transylvania (Erdély), Partium (Parcium), Banate (Bánat), and Bačka (Bácska). Thus, it came rather naturally for the new Hungarian minority parties to take on the role of the defender of regional interests and local identities against the nationalizing centers. In Romania, many Hungarian minority leaders championed the idea of Transylvanism, which advocated cultural and, in the long run, political autonomy for the multiethnic region. Transylvanism had its heyday in the 1920s: by the late 1930s, however, it had lost much of its attractiveness for the Hungarian intelligentsia (whereas it had never attracted great support among Romanians).[17] Even less successful was the idea of providing cultural or political autonomy for the Szekler region. A minority of Romanian politicians supported the development of a separate Székely identity

as a means of splitting the Hungarian community: yet granting them political autonomy never emerged as a serious option. Budapest, on the other hand, was interested mainly in revisionism: autonomy to the Szekler in Romania was an option much lower on their list, applicable only when revisionism had failed.[18] Like Transylvanism, "the native inhabitant concepts" in Slovakia and in Carpathian Ruthenia, which were to unify the "original Hungarian, Slovak, German, and Ruthenian inhabitants against the 'imperialist' Czech outsiders, through the formation of an 'autonomist bloc'" proved to be a non-starter, because of Slovak–Hungarian antagonism.[19] While the Hungarian minorities sought to weaken the power of the central governments in the neighboring countries, the Czechoslovak, Romanian, and Yugoslav political elites tried to both splinter and isolate their Magyar communities by driving a wedge between Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians, on the one hand, and ethnic Germans (particularly the highly assimilated Swabian communities) and the Magyar minorities, on the other hand. By registering Jews as an independent ethnic group and providing them with the same rights in all three states, and by treating ethnic Germans as a privileged minority group in Romania and Yugoslavia, Hungary's neighbors sought to reduce the political and social weight and the cultural influence of the Magyar population. The skillful application of the age-old divide-and-rule tactic registered considerable success among Jews in the countryside in Slovakia and Ruthenia by the late 1930s, and the Swabians in Yugoslavia and the Saxons (who had been traditionally opposed to Hungarian nationalism) in Transylvania. The Swabians and Jews in Northern Transylvania and the Jews in urban settlements in Slovakia, on the other hand, continued to regard themselves as Hungarians. As writers, journalists, and editors of magazines, Jewish intellectuals in particular played a vital role in the preservation of Hungarian high culture in towns like Kolozsvár (Cluj) and Nagyvárad (Oradea) in Romania and Pozsony (Bratislava) and Kassa in Slovakia.

The policies of all three states toward the Hungarian minority vacillated between assimilation and discrimination, between integration and exclusion. Nation-building proved to be, at best, a half success in Romania and, as subsequent events showed, a failure in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The political elites in all three states failed to integrate the Hungarian community into the political system. Despite corruption and the inefficiency of the nationalist states and the resistance of the ethnic minority, the impact of formal and informal discrimination on the Hungarian minorities was devastating. By the late 1930s, the ethnic make-up of the major towns and some of the border regions changed dramatically. Physical space had been largely nationalized; the reminders of the Hungarian past and presence, with a few exceptions, had been removed. These drastic changes only increased the desperation, paranoia, and alienation of the minority population from the majority, and made the call for border revision even more enticing.

Ethnic and religious minorities in Hungary, 1919–1933

Each country in East Central Europe in the interwar period, Rogers Brubaker writes, was a "nationalizing state," seeking to assimilate or destroy the ethnic minorities found on its territory. Simultaneously, the same "nationalizing" states functioned as "kin states" and "external homelands" for their minorities in the neighboring countries or further afield. In the highly nationalistic climate of the 1920s and 1930s, each state thus functioned both as a protector and as a destroyer of minority rights. The weakest member of the "triadic nexus," the minority political parties, tried desperately to navigate between the competing states, making compromises when possible and resisting the pressures when necessary to avoid war and ensure survival.[20] In an influential book on wartime Transylvania, Holly Case showed how Hungary and Romania competed for Hitler's favor: they opened their markets to German companies, changed their domestic arrangements, and passed laws and regulations (including racial laws) to keep Hitler on their side. Nazi Germany, on the other hand, took over the role of the League of Nations as peacemaker. In Transylvania, the Nazis, and to a lesser extent their Italian Fascist ally, behaved like "normal powers"; they tried to mediate the conflict between the two competing countries, address the pressing problems and complaints of the local populations, and restrain the radicals on both sides in order to prevent the outbreak of war, which could sabotage their own war effort.[21]

Hungary in the interwar period certainly fits the description of a simultaneously "nationalizing" and protecting "kindred" state. The Hungarian government provided the Magyar minorities with financial, moral, and political support and helped their leaders with their community-building efforts to prevent mass migrations, keep Hungarians in the disputed territories, increase their standards of living, and preserve and reinforce their ethnic and cultural identity. The "kindred" state also kept the plight of the Hungarian minority in the neighboring states on the agenda of international organizations and foreign governments. The ultimate goal of the Hungarian government was the revision of the borders; everything else, such as minority rights and the material well-being of its conationals was subordinated to this goal. As Case has shown, the fate of the Hungarian minority, or indeed any minority in the region, was not decided by the competition between the two rival states alone. None of the small states in the region was fully sovereign; they were as much the creations of the great powers, the result of ever-changing power constellations, as the product of their own efforts. Their fate, the shapes of their borders and, last but not least, their social and political order all depended on the grace of the great powers and that of the international community. Hungary and its neighbors, like meteorites, fell into the orbit of several "international communities" between 1918 and 1949. Each of these communities had its own interests, values, prejudices, and phobias, which the new dependencies had to recognize, respect, and internalize, or to which they had to pay, at least, lip service. Each

international community preferred to deal with the minority issue differently. Normally, the countries were pulled into not one but two or even three such power galaxies, which meant that the political elite in Hungary and its neighbors had to serve, and live up to the expectations of, several masters simultaneously. After 1918, Hungary's fate was determined by the victorious Western powers; even though many Hungarian politicians rejected the Versailles system and the Wilsonian liberal order, they were forced to live by its rules if they wanted to have their voices heard, interests respected, and geopolitical goals realized. The liberal West continued to exercise some influence over Hungarian domestic and foreign policy in the late 1930s and early 1940s. However, after 1933, it was not the liberal international community, but the fascist powers, especially Italy and Germany, that provided the model for the Hungarian political class. The fascist international community, too, subscribed to certain values, pursued relatively well-defined geopolitical interests, and possessed distinctive domestic arrangements, political culture and style. Like many solar systems, the fascist international community had not one but two suns or centers – Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. By 1940, this condominium had come to an end; during the war Hungary became a satellite of Nazi Germany. Finally, after 1944, Hungary fell into the orbit of the Soviet Union, and was forced to join the communist world, of which it remained a part until 1989.

Besides the interaction with neighbors and the pressure from the great powers, domestic factors such as political tradition, the lessons drawn from recent events, and political mobilization and democratization set the parameters of official policy in Hungary toward ethnic and religious minorities in the interwar period. The traditional view of interwar Hungary as a reactionary state with a stagnant and backward-looking "neo-baroque" society (an image best propagated by the conservative scholar Gyula Szegfű) has been recently challenged by historians. Democratization, despite temporary setbacks, proceeded by leaps and bounds in the interwar period: the Horthy regime in the 1920s and 1930s, in spite of its reputation in Europe as a reactionary state, was far more democratic than either half of the Dual Monarchy had been. The democratic flow had many undercurrents. Perhaps it is better to speak about multiple democratization processes, each being underpinned by different ideologies, supported by different social and political groups, and pursued for different ends: bolshevization between October 1918 and July 1919; right-wing radical political mobilization between August 1919 and the summer of 1922; conservative democratization between 1922 and 1932; fascist ascendancy in the 1930s, national socialist democratization during the war; and, finally sovietization between 1945 and 1949. Each of these phases brought new groups into the political process, while suppressing the voices of others; each pursued different domestic policies and each treated its ethnic and religious minorities differently.

The war and the ensuing peace treaties changed the ethnic composition of Hungary drastically. While, in 1910, ethnic minorities constituted about 50% of the country's population, by 1922, their share had declined to 10%. Before the

war, the largest ethnic minorities were the Romanians and the Slovaks; after the war, the Germans became the largest minority (551,211 or 6.9% of the population).[22] Until 1941, the majority of Jews saw themselves, and were officially regarded, as a religious rather than as an ethnic group. In 1910, there were about 911,000 Jews in Hungary (not counting Croatia), making up 5% of the population. In the much-reduced territory of postwar Hungary, there were 473,000 Jews in 1920, or 5.9% of the population.[23] The majority of Germans and Jews were culturally assimilated: the former had become essentially bilingual by 1920, while, with the exception of a small minority, Jews had come to speak Hungarian as their first, and often their only, language. Unlike the predominantly rural Romanian and South Slavic population, the more urban Germans and Jews were willingly assimilationist: by 1910, more than 2 million had joined the Magyar nation. Germans and Jews played vital roles in the economic, cultural, and political life of the country; thanks to the restrictive franchise, which favored the wealthier elements, Jews and Germans were over-represented among voters and officeholders, especially in larger towns. As the editors of major newspapers, journalists, and writers, assimilated Germans and Jews often championed a more intolerant form of nationalism; socialist and bourgeois radicals, both before and after 1918, often blamed them for the growing tension between Magyars and the ethnic minorities.

The democratization process in the immediate postwar period was chaotic; the most powerful of all the recently emancipated social groups, the organized working class, held the leverage of power under both the democratic republic and the communist dictatorship. The democratic regime promised autonomy to ethnic Germans in January 1919 and proved to be more sympathetic toward Zionism. The Council Republic (Soviet Republic) respected cultural rights and supported the use of German in education and local government, founded new schools, and even opened a German theater in Budapest. The communists were generally hostile toward religious institutions; although the Budapest regime did not single out Jews as an enemy (and in fact treated the Catholic Church much worse), it did proscribe several Jewish periodicals and forced many Jewish welfare and cultural institutions to close their doors.[24] The majority of ethnic Germans were property owners: farmers, artisans, and shopkeepers – individuals and groups on which a Council Republic staged a veritable war in the spring and summer of 1919. Jews were even better off than ethnic Germans, not to mention Magyars. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Germans and Jews played a major role, both as organizers and foot soldiers, in the resistance to the Bolshevik dictatorship. Ethnic German (or Swabian) villagers were among the first to rise up against communist rule; in Szeged, the center of the counterrevolution, Jews made up more than a third of the members of the officers' company that took control of the local military base in May 1919. Both Jews and Germans were overrepresented among the victims of the Red Terror; Jewish financiers gave donations and provided badly needed loans to buy weapons and pay the salaries of right-wing officers.[25]

Democratization during the counterrevolution was mainly about the political mobilization of the landholding peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie, state bureaucracy, and conservative and antisemitic segments of the working class. The political expression of this mobilization was the formation of new mass parties, such as the peasant Smallholders' Party, Christian socialist parties, student fraternities, the right-wing veterans, and patriotic associations (many of these organizations, such as the Hungarian National Defence Association (Magyar Országos Véderő Egylet, or MOVE) and the Association of Awakening Hungarians (Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete, or ÉME) were forced underground during the democratic revolution, but reached the zenith of their power after August 1919). The so-called Friedrich Franchise in the fall of 1919, by removing property qualifications and lowering literacy and residential requirements, gave voting rights to nearly the entire adult population over the age of 24. The first national election on the basis of this new law was held in January 1920. The political representatives of the organized working class, the Social Democratic Party, boycotted the election because of voters' suppression, the mass arrests and internment of labor activists, and the suppression of trade unions and other labor organizations. The election thus led to the victory of the Smallholders' Party and the Christian National Unity Party (Keresztény Nemzeti Egyesülés Pártja or KNEP). The new and all-powerful legislative body, the National Assembly, was for the following two years dominated by right-wing antisemitic parties and associations. Its chambers were filled with hate speech and personal attacks directed at Jews, demanding the nationalization of Jewish property, forced emigration, exclusion from schools, and insisting on the profession of faith, ghettoization, and expulsion of Jews. The right-wing radical democratization not only promised few rights but hid new dangers for ethnic and religious minorities.

Even before the Red Terror, the victory of the counterrevolution, and the announcement of the Treaty of Trianon, nationalist writers and journalists blamed the lost war and the occupation of the borderland by the armies of the neighboring states on these two minorities. The most influential literary text of the postwar period, Dezső Szabó's novel the *Swept-Away Village* (*Az elsodort falu*), which was published, paradoxically, with the financial support of the Soviet Republic in the spring of 1919, targeted Jews and ethnic Germans as traitors and internal enemies. Their purported assimilation in the nation, Szabó suggested, was both insincere and harmful to the nation because it had polluted its character and undermined its unity. Ranting and hate speech were not confined to the august chamber of the National Assembly, the editorial officers of right-wing radical newspapers and student clubs. Hate spilled over onto the streets: during the so-called White Terror in the fall and winter of 1919, right-wing paramilitary units and enraged mobs murdered between 1,500 and 3,000 Jews, staged more than 60 pogroms, expelled hundreds of Jews from their communities, burned down and otherwise vandalized dozens of temples, cemeteries, and monuments. There were a few attacks on ethnic Germans, too, especially during the militia uprisings in western Hungary in the

summer and fall of 1921. By and large, however, the German community remained untouched by the White Terror. In fact, many of the worst atrocities against Jews took place in the Swabian villages in western Hungary; assimilated ethnic Germans were also overrepresented in some of the elite officers' detachments, such as the Osztenburg Officers' Company, responsible for some of the worst anti-Jewish atrocities during the counterrevolution.[26]

In spite of the support that it had given to its leaders, the German community did not profit from the counterrevolution. Passed on 20 August 1919, the new minority law, which guaranteed only individual but no communal rights, represented a setback. The new law recognized the right of ethnic minorities to establish and maintain separate schools and cultural organizations; yet it tasked the local, predominantly Hungarian authorities, to evaluate the needs and issue the permits.[27] The political elite also rejected the idea, and it did everything in its power to prevent the formation of German ethnic parties; instead of creating a separate political organization, ethnic Germans thus continued to cast their votes with the existing political parties organized along social and ideological rather than cultural and linguistic lines. There was also a fainthearted attempt in the early 1920s to establish a separate Jewish political party; this effort, too, foundered on the indifference of the majority of Hungarian Jews, who saw no reason to form an alliance with liberal parties. While both communities had reasons to complain, it was Jews who, beside blue-collar workers, suffered the most during the counterrevolution. In August 1920, the National Assembly passed the infamous numerus clausus legislation (Law XXV of 1920), which limited on the number of minority students at university to the share of that given minority in the general population. Although theoretically applied to every minority, the real purpose of the law was to reduce the percentage of Jewish students from 15% (at some schools and faculties the percentage was in fact much higher) to 6%, or below. One of the first antisemitic laws in postwar East Central Europe, the numerus clausus legislation officially ended legal equality in Hungary.[28] A few months later, in November 1920, the parliament passed the conservative land reform (Law XXXVI of 13 November 1920). Named after its sponsor, the Smallholders' leader István Nagyatádi Szabó, the land reform targeted mainly Jewish landowners (described summarily as war speculators) for the confiscation of their properties. The land reform was the first attempt, according the historian Krisztián Ungváry, to solve a social problem, or at least reduce social tensions at the expense of a minority. The law marked the beginning of the "ethnicization of social policy": a trend that found its ultimate expression in the anti-Jewish legislation of the 1930s and 1940s and served as one of the main roots of the genocide.[29]

Conservatism and democratization

The Hungarian government in the early 1920s was not a free agent, remaining dependent on the favors and protection of Western powers against its

neighbors. Even though deeply suspicious of the values and intentions that underpinned the Versailles system, the regime in Budapest continued to pay lip service to its principles in order to break out of diplomatic isolation and protect its interests. In foreign newspapers, Hungarian decision-makers sought to refute the rumor about state-supported, or at least tolerated, violence against Jews during the counterrevolution. At international forums, the same politicians defended the numerus clausus legislation as a purely social measure aimed to reduce overcrowding in the classroom and regulate the market for university-trained professionals. Paradoxically, the political elite turned to Jewish leaders to conduct a public relations campaign on their behalf and justify their revisionist claims. After 1923, they also used the international connection of the predominantly Jewish financial aristocracy to obtain Western loans needed to jump-start the economy and stabilize the new currency. Wedded to the prewar status quo, Hungarian Jewish leaders obliged. Determined to defend the achievement of emancipation, patriotic Hungarian Jews refused to take advantage of the minority protection treaties to obtain more cultural and political rights. The conservative authoritarian government under Count István Bethlen hoped to make "a deal with the Jews" after December 1921 (the same way as it had done with the Smallholders' Party and the Social Democrats). The deal foundered, however, on the insistence of the Jewish religious and community leaders that the government fully restore the prewar status quo. The Hungarian political elite refused to rescind the numerus clausus legislation – a task that remained on the agenda of international organizations, without achieving a real breakthrough, for the remainder of the 1920s. While no official agreement had been signed, a silent form of understanding did slowly emerge between Jewish leaders and the conservative political elite after 1922. Jewish financiers helped the government to obtain foreign loans and improve the image of the country abroad, while Jewish businessmen, professionals, artisans, and workers made a vital contribution to the revival of the economy. In return, the government reined in, and in the end dissolved, the main source of chaos and anti-Jewish violence – the paramilitary groups; slowly it also ended the war on liberal newspapers and political and social organizations. The numerus clausus remained on the books, and its goals were more or less realized; no similar legislation was passed in the 1920s, however. Judaism, moreover, remained an accepted, that is state-supported, religion; Jewish schools and social and other cultural institutions continued their work unmolested. In spite of the numerus clausus law, Jews remained the dominant force in the medical profession in the capital; they also continued to be overrepresented among lawyers, pharmacists, dentists, journalists, actors, and a host of other professions. As a sign of returning confidence, the rates of conversion to Christianity and intermarriage with Gentiles declined after 1922 (but remained high compared to the prewar period). Zionism, after a short success during the postwar chaos, remained a marginal political movement among culturally assimilated Jews in Budapest and other major towns.

Democratization, i.e., the politicization of the masses and their entry into the political decision-making process, after World War One led to more discrimination and violence against the ethnic minorities. Determined to rein in the right-wing radical forces that dominated the legislature between 1920 and 1922, Prime Minister István Bethlen pushed a more restrictive electoral law through parliament in 1922; four years later, in 1926, he restored the upper house of parliament. By raising the educational, citizenship, and residential requirements and the voting age of women from 24 to 30, the new election law disenfranchised entire groups: its impact on poor women, indigent farmers, and agricultural laborers, was particularly devastating. With a strike of the pen, Bethlen reduced the share of the population with the right to vote from 40% to 28% of the total population, and from 75% to 58% of the adult population over 24 years of age. By 1922, Hungary had once again become one of the most undemocratic countries in Europe. Equally devastating was the reintroduction of the open ballot (a technique used to intimidate the agrarian poor in the countryside after 1922). Because of open ballots, peasant representation declined drastically in the provinces: about 50% of the deputies remained wealthy landowners in the interwar period. While significantly altered and slowed down, the process of democratization did not come to a full stop, however. Unlike in the immediate postwar period, the main beneficiary of conservative democratization after 1921 was not the working and lower middle classes but the middle class.[30] As a sign of the restoration, with significant modification, of the prewar conservative liberal order, Bethlen created from the remnants of the Smallholders' Party and the KNEP a new political organization, the Unity Party (Egységespárt), which, under different names, functioned as the party of government until 1944. After 1922, the opposition parties had no chance to get into power peacefully. Using intimidation, bureaucratic heavy-handedness, and the gerrymandering of electoral districts, the Unity Party pulled between 58% and 69% of the votes in national elections between 1922 and 1939 and had a comfortable two-third majority in the lower chamber of the parliament. The Unity Party and its successor occupied the upper echelon of the state bureaucracy; however, it also enjoyed the support of large segments of the population from the heavily Jewish entrepreneurial class in the capital to rural administrators, artisans, non-Jewish shopkeepers, and wealthier peasants.[31]

Because of these changes, the political elite after 1922 enjoyed greater leeway to formulate a comprehensive policy toward ethnic minorities. The mastermind behind this policy was Count Pál Teleki. A man of a complex character, Teleki served as prime minister twice in the interwar period and exercised a major influence on Hungarian foreign policy. A convinced antisemite and radical right politician, Teleki was one of the main sponsors of the numerus clausus legislation of 1920 and the First Anti-Jewish Law of 1938. A renowned scientist (a geologist by trade) and university professor, Teleki understood the ethnic, cultural, and political complexity of the region better than anyone else in Hungary and the neighboring states. On the other hand, he was more ideological and

rigid than his fellow Transylvanian politician and friend, István Bethlen.[32] The scholarly Teleki distinguished between three kinds of minorities in historical Hungary and the Danubian Basin: traditional minorities, such as the Saxons, who had lived together with the majority of Magyar population for centuries, and had preserved their language and culture and way of life; immigrants, such as Swabians (ethnic Germans) and Jews who had arrived in Hungary, either individually or in small groups, after the expulsion of the Turks in the late seventeenth century; and the third, the so-called captive or forced minorities, such as the Hungarians in the neighboring states, who had been cut off from their brethren by force after 1918. Teleki and the Hungarian government were prepared to recognize the collective rights of people in the first group. He also considered it as the duty of the government to ensure the survival and defend the rights of the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring states. However, he was reluctant to extend the same collective rights to Swabian Germans and Jews in the second group. The fate of these groups, he believed, was assimilation or eventual emigration from the country.[33]

Touched by biological racism, Teleki considered only a small minority of the Jews to be able and willing to be assimilated and worthy of inclusion in the Hungarian nation. He looked at the assimilation of ethnic Germans much more favorably. Teleki and Prime Minister István Bethlen, who shared his views, were prepared to fully respect the rights of the small Slovak, Romanian, and Serbian minorities in Hungary to gain credibility abroad and protect Hungarians in the neighboring states. Both, however, continued to subordinate minority rights to the full or partial revision of the border and to national revival. Hungarian politicians in the 1920s and early 1930s tried to convince German politicians that they had the same interest in the region. In return for German support, the government in Budapest was prepared to give concessions in the field of culture, i.e., fully observe its treaty obligations, vis-à-vis ethnic Germans. The Bethlen government sought to prevail on the good services of the main German ethnic organization, the Hungarian-German Cultural Association (der Ungarländishe Deutsche Volksbuildingsverein, or UDV) and its leader, Jakob Bleyer, to act as an intermediary between the two countries. This attempt to blackmail the German government produced meager results. German politicians, such as the foreign minister, Gustav Stresemann, sought to internationalize the minority issue and preferred to work through the League of Nations and other international institutions rather than via bilateral negotiations. In any case, the German government was only marginally interested in the fate of the small and highly assimilated Swabian minority in Hungary and refused to base its foreign policy on such a minor issue.[34]

Playing the ethnic German card produced few dividends for Hungarian foreign policy before 1933. On the other, its policy of forced assimilation proved by and large successful. The Hungarian government neglected its obligations under the minority treaty signed in 1919 to extend more cultural rights to the German minority. Hungarian became the main language of instruction in all but a handful of minority schools in the 1920s; the government also kept a

close eye on the negligible number of German newspapers and periodicals printed in Hungary, while discouraging foreign imports. The small group of German intellectuals interested in the fate of the Swabian minority had a hard time overcoming the resistance of local notables determined to bring the process of assimilation to completion. The work of creating an ethnic minority out of German-speaking Hungarian peasants proved exceedingly difficult. Swabian peasants historically thought in local and religious rather than national/ethnic and political terms. Modernization both promoted and hindered the development of ethnic identity. Through newspapers, books, and tales told by visitors from Germany, Swabian peasants learned about the larger German world and began to think of themselves as part of a larger community, the German *Volk*. Interested in social mobility, many, however, preferred to educate their children in Hungarian schools. The *Volksbuildingsverein* remained a purely cultural association with no political function. The goals of the organization were to preserve the German language; cultivate local customs and traditions; collect folksongs and ballads; preserve peasant customs; advise farmers on everyday issues from medical problems to animal husbandry; publish journals and calendars; preserve and modernize the identity of its members; and prevent their full assimilation. Minority leaders, such as Bleyer and Gusztáv Gratz saw themselves as, and encouraged their follows to remain, Hungarian patriots. Both supported the full restoration of Hungary's border and the use of Hungarian as the only official language. Bleyer developed the idea of "double loyalty" to both the Hungarian state and German ethnicity. The organization registered only limited success: membership remained low, and the assimilation of Swabian Germans into the Hungarian nation increased rapidly in the 1920s. Frustrated by the Hungarian government's refusal to honor its treaty obligations, Bleyer began to talk about the need to establish direct relations with the German Reich and ask for the assistance of Nazi politicians to attain more rights after 1932. He feared that Hitler and the new Hungarian prime minister, Gyula Gömbös, would make a deal at the expense of the German minority. The meeting between Bleyer and Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, in May 1933 did not go well, and produced no major result. However, the publicized and increasingly frequent contact between the Nazis and the leaders of the German minority was enough to infuriate Hungarian nationalists. One of their number, the journalist Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky challenged Bleyer to a duel; Bleyer accepted the challenge and the minority leader was seriously wounded and died of his injuries a few months later in early December 1933. His death marked the end of an era, and of an important chapter in the history of the German minority in Hungary.

Democratization and minority policy under the shadow of fascism

The rise of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany was welcomed by many people in East Central Europe. Young nationalists saw fascism as modern and progressive;

army officers and technocrats admired the military might and technological achievement of the two fascist powers; economists tried to replicate the economic success of the German four-year plan; agrarian socialists hailed Italian land-reclamation efforts, cheap loans, and the moral support that the Nazi government had given to German farmers. Corporatism, higher wages, and the expansion of the welfare state, as practised by both states, was seen as the best way to avoid social conflicts and incorporate the working class into political life. Fascist pronatalist policies were imitated even by democratic and leftist socialist regimes. But the two fascist powers were best liked by countries such as Hungary for their stands made on foreign policy issues. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany claimed to be the enemies of the liberal international order and the postwar status quo. One of the first actions of the new Nazi government in Germany was to leave the League of Nations, which had been tasked to manage diplomatic conflicts peacefully and address the needs and complaints of ethnic minorities after World War One. The professed ideal of both countries in the 1930s was an ethnically, and, at a later stage, racially homogeneous nation-state, which implied the unification of their conationals in an enlarged country. This fascist goal was not particularly original: in fact, with a few exceptions, the majority of the state and ethnic groups in Europe had pursued the same goal since the late nineteenth century. What separated the fascists, particularly the Nazis, from their liberal counterparts was their narrow definition of ethnicity or race, which excluded the possibility of assimilation, and the methods propagated to realize their goal. The fascists preferred population exchanges and the forced emigration of unwanted people to achieve their goals. As convinced Social Darwinists, they saw war as not only inevitable but also desirable, and euthanasia and ethnic cleansing as acceptable means of social and population engineering. The first victims of their ideology were the handicapped, the "anti-socials," and German Jews. The first two groups faced sterilization and, after 1939, murder. German Jews, on the other hand, were first removed from the civil service and barred from attending universities and high schools. Deprived of their livelihood as professionals and with their properties and valuables largely misappropriated, Jews were offered the choice of leaving the country permanently or staying behind as impoverished pariahs. By September 1939, under enormous pressure, three-quarters of Germany's Jews had left the country, mainly for the United States and Palestine. The vast majority of those who had stayed behind would later fall victim to the Holocaust.

By the mid-1930s, confederation plans (Maniu Plan, Tardieu Plan, and Danubian Federation Plan), which promised to remove, or at least reduce the importance of, borders had lost much of their appeal to the political and intellectual elites in the region. The attempt to incorporate ethnic minorities into political life, and at the same time find some sort of accommodation with Hungary on the border issues, was tried several times; the final times were with Romania between 1932 and 1936 and Czechoslovakia in 1937 and 1938. Always half-hearted, these efforts foundered either on the resistance of the state

bureaucracy or on the mistrust of minority leaders and their Hungarian backers.[35] In Romania, King Carol II dissolved the parliament, proscribed the political parties and reorganized social life along corporatist lines in 1938; the proscription of the ethnic minority parties pulled the carpet out from under any further negotiations. In any case, by 1938, the Hungarian political community had long given up any hope for accommodation and had cast its lot on the side of revisionism.[36] In Czechoslovakia, the same process of dissimilation and political distancing began with the replacement of the moderate Géza Szüllő with the more radical János Esterházy as the leader of main party of ethnic Hungarians in 1932. Esterházy no longer considered cultural autonomy the main goal of his party; his hope was to obtain, through an alliance with Slovak and German nationalists, political autonomy as the first step toward independence. The Hungarian minority party sought to destabilize and destroy Czechoslovakia to pave the way for the reunification of Upper Hungary (Slovakia) with Hungary.[37]

Revisionism remained the goal of Hungarian foreign policy after 1920. Yet politicians had a different understanding of what it actually entailed. Few responsible statesmen, from Teleki to Gömbös, thought that the full revision of the borders was feasible or even desirable. Yet, for fear of a backlash, they did not publicly take a stand against the official position, which advocated full restoration. The political elite continued to vacillate between dream and reality, between full and partial revision – one based on historical rights and economic and strategic interests, and the other based on ethnic principles.[38] The problem of Hungarian revisionism was twofold. First, the politicians had failed to secure the support of either the liberal or the fascist international community. The Western powers were prepared to offer only minor concessions on the border issue; Nazi Germany, on the other hand, demanded full obedience in return for partial support. The second problem was that Hungary lacked the military might needed to pose a credible threat to Czechoslovakia in order to blackmail its neighbor or achieve its goals through war. Eager to avoid military defeat and full international isolation in the West, Hungarian statesmen refused to play the role of the agent provocateur during the Czechoslovak crisis in the fall of 1938 by attacking its neighbor first. The government in Budapest proved to be a "reluctant ally," and, as a form of punishment, the First Vienna Award of 1938, supported by the two fascist powers, returned only a small segment of Slovakia to Hungary. The fascist international community drew the new border along ethnic lines: 85% of the population in the returned territory consisted of Hungarians. The Hungarian government, Teleki in particular, viewed the deal as a defeat. The Nazi success in Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939, the defeat of Poland in September, and the annihilation of France in June 1940 convinced the Hungarian political elite, Regent Miklós Horthy in particular, to cast their lot fully with Nazi Germany. Teleki, who for the last time tried in vain to convince the Western powers to support the return of at least half of Transylvania, including the

Szeklerland, in the spring of 1940, was defeated.[39] He also failed to obtain political autonomy for Ruthenia, after the annexation of the territory by the Hungarian Army in 1939. His attempt to rein in Hungarian nationalism by providing more rights to the historical minorities foundered on the stubborn resistance of United Hungarian Party (Egyesült Magyar Párt) in what used to be Czechoslovakia and that of the national socialist parties in Hungary. Having given up on the West, the Hungarian government began to bring its foreign and domestic policy entirely in line with Nazi Germany, and to compete with Romania and Slovakia for Hitler's favor to gain more territory or keep what it had already gained.

By 1940, Nazi Germany had become the arbiter of the small nations' fate and the country to create and maintain order (*Ordnungsmacht*) in East Central Europe. Until 1941, the year of the attack on the Soviet Union, the official goal of Nazi foreign policy was to create an ethnically homogeneous state, restore its sovereignty over all German lands, and either expel or assimilate the non-German population. Greater German nationalists remained active and influential in the Nazi elite until the very end; yet, after 1939, they had to keep pace with, and after 1941 were rapidly losing ground to, proponents of the empire. The change, according to Mark Mazower, professor of history at Columbia University, New York, could be observed in many aspects of life: starting in 1939, for example, Nazi Germany was quickly becoming a multiethnic society. By 1944, there were more than 7 million foreign workers in the Third Reich. Some were volunteers attracted by high wages from the neighboring states in the West, such as France and Belgium, or allied countries in the East, such as Hungary and Slovakia. Others, the majority, were slave laborers, kidnapped from schools and from the streets in Poland and Ukraine, or Russian prisoners of war (POWs) forced to do the most backbreaking jobs.[40] Besides the labor force, the army also quickly became internationalized. In 1940, SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler began to recruit foreigners, first ethnic Germans, and then non-Germans, including Russians, normally dismissed as *Untermenschen*, and Croatian and Albanian Muslims. By 1944, 20 out of the 47 Waffen-SS Divisions were either partially or fully non-Germans. By the end of the war, the Waffen-SS had more non-German members than Germans. It was the first European army with such a large foreign contingent since the time of Napoleon.[41] The Nazis were even more successful in recruiting auxiliary troops (*Hilfswillige*) to deal with POWs, assist them with the occupation, and help them to carry out the Jewish genocide. Ukrainians and Baltic peoples, Volga, and Crimean Tatars were perhaps the most enthusiastic volunteers, but every ethnic group, including Belarusians and Russians could be found among them.[42]

Nazi Germany was rapidly becoming an empire and the center of power in Europe after 1939. But it was ill-prepared to play the role of unifier. Nazi Germany and the fascist international community could not compete with the Allies in the realms of ideology and propaganda. The central part of its ideology, German racial superiority, repulsed rather than inspired and divided

rather than united the people of Europe. Hitler was not interested in plans of economic unification; the few plans that Nazi intellectuals had drafted in this regard were shelved after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. The Nazis preferred kidnapping and robbery to peaceful cooperation and trade to satisfy its growing need for manpower and natural resources. Resembling a vampire, specialized in the direct extraction of resources to finance the continuation of the war, the Third Reich failed to provide the people of Europe with a positive vision for the future;[43] the Nazi leaders were equally ill-equipped to play the role of a liberator or that of a neutral arbiter. The Nazis did help a few ethnic groups, such as the Slovaks and Croats, to realize their dreams of national statehood. However, they preferred to destroy existing structures rather than create new ones and to pit groups against each other (Ukrainians against Poles; Poles and Ukrainians against Jews), rather than solve their conflicts. The peaceful settlement of the Romanian–Hungarian conflict in 1940 seems to have represented an exception in this regard. Hitler and his advisors feared that a war between the two allies over Transylvania might draw in the Soviets, and it could have led to the loss of or drastic reduction in the flow of natural resources, such as oil. Believing that Hitler was on their side, it was the Romanians who requested arbitration by the fascist power, which led to the Second Vienna Award on 30 August 1940. The new borders, paradoxically, conformed more closely to the Wilsonian ideal than the boundaries set by the Treaty of Trianon: about half of the population of northern Transylvania was Hungarian (52% were Hungarians, 38% Romanian, and 10% German), according to the Hungarian census of 1941, or one-third of the province; Magyars were the majority in most counties, and every major town in northern Transylvania had a Hungarian majority. There were more than 1 million Romanians in Hungary after 1940, while more than 400,000 lived in southern Transylvania. The Western countries and the Soviet Union rejected the Second Vienna Award as a diktat on Romania. The Nazis had not made up their minds about the ultimate fate of the province either, and they continued, until the end, to use the issue to blackmail both parties. Romania became a revisionist power in 1940; the result of arbitration, on the other hand, only whetted the appetite of the Hungarians who dreamed about the return of the entire province. Drawn up in bad faith, the agreement on new borders could not last long.[44]

The same was true, to an even greater degree, for the new Hungarian–Serbian borders drawn unilaterally after the Nazis and their allies attacked and destroyed Yugoslavia in April 1941. Before the attack, Nazi Germany had demanded that its Italian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian allies provide military assistance. Grateful for the return of northern Transylvania, tempted by the promise of further territorial gains, and increasingly convinced that Germany would win the war, the Hungarian government, which had recently signed an "eternal friendship" treaty with Yugoslavia, decided to give in to the German demands. Teleki, who opposed the invasion, had committed suicide before the Hungarian troops crossed the post-1920 borders. To preserve the appearance of legality, Hungarian

troops took possession of Vojvodina (Bácska), the Baranya Triangle, and the Medjumure (Muraköz) only after Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia on 11 April 1941. But the move fooled no one in the West or the Soviet Union. In the multiethnic territories taken from Yugoslavia, Hungarians represented the largest ethnic group (about 39%); yet they were still in the minority. Yugoslavia represented the last border adjustment in Hungary's favor during the war. Thus, between 1938 and 1942, Hungary recovered about half of the territories lost after World War One; and its population increased from 9 to 14.6 million. About 50% of the almost 5 million new citizens spoke Hungarian as their first language; 20% were Romanians, 10% Ruthenians, about 9% South Slavs, and the rest Germans and Slovaks. Hungary once again became one of the ethnically most diverse lands in Europe. The ethnic minorities made up about one-fifth (21%) of the population after 1941; Romanians represented the largest group (7.5%), followed by Germans (5%), Ruthenians (3.8%), Slovaks (1.8%), Serbs (1. 6%), and Croats (1%).[45]

What to do with the large minority population became a question of the first order after 1941. After Teleki's departure, no one in the political elite advocated political autonomy (particularly for Romanians in Transylvania). Paradoxically, for the right-wing opponent of the government, the plans of the national socialist Arrow Cross Party came closest to a federalist solution under, of course, Hungarian leadership (according to the Hungarian historian László Karsai). The ideal of the Hungarian political elite remained the ethnically homogeneous nation-state; to achieve this goal, they were increasingly ready to countenance the use of heavy-handed methods, such as expulsion and violence against unarmed civilians. Hungarian paramilitary groups had committed dozens of atrocities against Jews, Slovaks, and Ruthenian and Czech soldiers in 1938 and 1939. Hungarian army units killed as many as 900 during their march into northern Transylvania in the fall of 1940. But the worst atrocity occurred in Novi Sad in January 1942, when Hungarian gendarmes and soldiers murdered between 3,000 and 4,000 Jews, Serbs, Roma, and ethnic Hungarians in what they considered an anti-insurgency operation.[46] Hungarian authorities expelled Czech, Romanian, and South Slav civil servants who had settled in the three disputed territories after 1920. The new holders treated the ethnic minorities in the same manner as, and often even worse than, the Hungarians had been treated in the interwar period: they closed down schools, proscribed newspapers and journals, demolished memorials, and even a handful of Orthodox churches, and expelled the minorities from the civil service, fired them from their jobs and deprived them of political representation. The most important positions in the civil service went to Magyars from the interior; soon even local Hungarians came to resent the haughtiness and greed of the newcomers, who showed little respect for local customs and ignored local sensitivities.[47]

The Second Vienna Award of 1940 marked a watershed in Hungarian foreign and domestic policy. The fate of Transylvania figured at the very top of the

priorities of the Romanian and Hungarian governments during the war. Both countries were prepared to go a long way to satisfy Nazi demands and ensure Hitler's good will – including making concessions on domestic policy issues.[48] As an expression of gratitude, Hungary increased food and fodder deliveries to Germany, tied the Hungarian currency to the Reichsmark, and gave a German company the concession to drill for oil in southeastern Hungary. In October 1940, Hungary allowed German troops to transit the country on their way to Romania. In November, by joining the Tripartite Pact, a form of fascist international, the political establishment put an official end to Teleki's policy of neutrality. As a repayment for northern Transylvania, Hungary recognized the Nazified *Volksbund* as the sole representative of ethnic Germans, gave the German minority almost complete cultural autonomy, and allowed the Waffen-SS to recruit soldiers from among ethnic Germans. The preparation for a new antisemitic law more in line with the Nazi legislation was already under way in the summer: known as the Third Anti-Jewish Law of 1941 (Law XV of 1941), it prohibited sexual relations between Jews and Gentiles.

The latest research emphasizes the importance of economic reasons, professional interests, and ideological factors, such as the rise of a new and socially more committed generation of right-wing politicians, as the source of the antisemitic laws in Hungary. These developments, in my opinion, were part of a larger trend only: the rapid democratization of political life in the 1930s. The Great Depression led to the revival of the peasant Smallholders' Party in 1931; the crisis also gave birth to more than a dozen right-wing radical, fascist, and national socialist parties, pressure groups, and patriotic associations. The most important of these new groups was the Arrow Cross, which was quickly becoming the dominant force on the far right after 1935. Simultaneously, professional associations, student fraternities, and even religious organizations, underwent a process of rapid politicization, mainly on the side of the antisemitic right. Increased political participation went hand in hand with the spread of violence. By 1938, physical attacks on Jews on the streets, university cafeterias, restaurants, and other public spaces once again became common. In February 1939, the members of the Arrow Cross tried unsuccessfully to blow up the Neolog Synagogue on Dohány Street in Budapest. The government reacted to the rise of the national socialist right by temporarily proscribing the Arrow Cross and by arresting 73 of its members. In June, the court sentenced the Arrow Cross leader, Ferenc Szálasi, to three years in prison on the charge of sedition. In spite of the crackdown and voters' intimidation, the Arrow Cross and its national socialist allies achieved a remarkable breakthrough in last national election held the same year. In 1939, they received about 25% of the votes and gained 49 seats (19% of the total) in the lower chamber of parliament. Had the election been clean, fair, and fully democratic, the national socialists might have received as much as 40% of the aggregate votes and become the strongest force. As in the early 1920s, democratization led to a rapid rise in anti-Jewish agitation in the

parliament: the security police estimated that about 75% of the parlia-
mentarians in the early 1940s were radical antisemites. Democratization made
the passing of anti-Jewish legislation easier.[49]

The main line of division on the political right ran not only between the gov-
ernments and the national socialists in opposition, but also between the con-
servative political establishment around Regent Horthy and the right-wing
radicals in the ruling party of government. After 1932, with few exceptions, it
was the right-wing radicals who provided the prime ministers and dominated the
governments. The prime ministers from Gyula Gömbös to Béla Imrédy were
serious political and social reformers; they also believed in universal suffrage and
promoted mass mobilization as a form of direct participation in the political
process. The 1930s witnessed the passing of some of the most progressive social
legislation (reduction of work hours, introduction of minimum wages, extensions
to social safety nets to better part of the agrarian population and white-collar
workers, cheap credit to farmers, etc.). Like many of its fascist and conservative
counterparts, the Hungarian governments in the 1930s pursued pronatalist poli-
cies, such as providing loans to married couples, in order to boost birth rates and
increase their military potential. What was unique about the new social safety
net in Hungary, as compared to its English or American counterparts, was that
the Hungarian government financed its expansion mainly by taxing Jewish
banks and industrial enterprises. The "ethnicization" of social policy, which had
begun with the numerus clausus legislation in 1920, switched into a higher gear
after 1935. The anti-Jewish laws adopted between 1938 and 1942 were the pro-
ducts of domestic pressure and imitation of the Nazi example, rather than direct
German interference: they were also the results of the ongoing democratization
of political life. The "demos" in this respect meant mainly the Gentile segment of
the middle class, known in contemporary parlance as the Christian middle class,
and its various substrata: doctors, engineers, lawyers, journalists, university stu-
dents, actors, etc. The first two laws served to reduce competition by expelling
Jews from the civil service and drastically lowering their share among gainfully
employed and academically trained professionals. The Third Anti-Jewish Law of
1941, which regulated sexual relations between the Jews and Gentiles, was more
restrictive than the German Nuremberg Law of 1935. Between 1938 and 1941, in
regard to the destruction of Jewish livelihoods and the social marginalization of
the Jews, Hungary had caught up with Nazi Germany.[50] By 1941, there was a
consensus in the political elite that, with the exception of a small minority
deemed fully assimilated and economically useful, Jews had no place in Hungary
and would have to leave the country after the war. However, unlike the Nazis, the
Hungarian political elite did not force emigration before or during the war; it
consistently refused to introduce the yellow star, segregate, and ghettoize Jews.
Unlike its neighbors, and despite heavy German pressure after the summer of
1942, Hungary refused to be drawn into the genocide.

Besides the Jews, the second possible target of ethnic and religious pre-
judice, social resentment, and greed were ethnic Germans. While the enemies

of the Jews came from the radical and national socialist Right, it was the agrarian socialist and progressive democrats in the Independent Smallholders' Party and the Populist writers who sought to destroy the livelihood and steal the property of ethnic Germans. Populism in Hungary was a complex movement, borrowing ideas freely from French conservatives and Marxist and non-Marxist socialists in Scandinavia, Germany, Romania, and Russia. The majority harbored resentment against Jews as both industrial and agrarian capitalists and allies of the conservative political establishment and the aristocracy; however, their principal enemy was the ethnic Germans. The Populists' main demand was drastic land reform at the expense of aristocrats, bourgeois landowners, and the Catholic Church. The Populists and the peasant politicians portrayed Swabian farmers both as unfair competitors and as a biological and political threat, thus as agents of the Third Reich.[51] They cast covetous eyes on the properties of diligent Swabian peasants, particularly in Transdanubia, dreaming of and, after the outbreak of the war, openly advocating their departure and the distribution of their lands and valuables among poverty-stricken Magyar agricultural laborers and farmers. Political events and social and cultural development played into their hands. Like the majority population, ethnic Germans in interwar Hungary moved to the right politically in the 1930s. Their main organization, the Volksbund, which replaced the defunct Volksbildungsverein, openly sought the support of Nazi Germany in the second half of the 1930s. The Volksbund was a strongly antisemitic, authoritarian, militaristic and, like the majority of national socialist parties, politically radical and socially progressive organization. Like all the fascist and national socialist parties, the Volksbund was also the product of the democratization of Hungarian politics under the shadow of Nazism in Hungary. By 1938, the Volksbund had both allied itself politically with the Arrow Cross and competed with it for the support of ethnic Germans. Unlike the culturally more assimilated ethnic Germans in the Arrow Cross, the supporters of the Volksbund no longer saw themselves as Hungarian patriots. They owed their allegiance to Nazi Germany and Hitler, rather than to Hungary and Horthy: they no longer regarded themselves as German-speaking Hungarians but as members of an allegedly superior race, the Germans, living in Hungary. The Nazis, however, were interested in the ethnic German minorities in East Central Europe primarily as migrant workers, settlers, and soldiers. In the fall of 1939, in a long speech, Hitler announced his intention to bring ethnic Germans back home to the Third Reich after the war. While the Hungarian government welcomed the speech, Hitler's announcement created a backlash among the Swabian population in Transdanubia. Even though increasingly targeted by Nazi and Volksbund propaganda, ethnic Germans, particularly the more well-to-do farmers among them, did not want to give up the fruits of their labor and their inheritance. The majority of ethnic Germans also harbored misgivings about the concession that the Hungarian government had given to Hitler after August 1940, which permitted the

Waffen-SS to recruit volunteers. The recruitment of ethnic Germans into the Waffen-SS marked a turning point in their history: the beginning of the end of their existence as a large community in Hungary. Those who donned the Nazi SS uniform also had to give up their Hungarian citizenship, which, in reality meant emigration. Unlike their counterparts in Bácska and northern Transylvania, not to mention the Saxons in southern Transylvania and the Swabians in the Banat region, ethnic Germans in western Hungary were reluctant to join the SS. After the Nazi occupation of the country in March 1944, they did not have any choice, however. In the following five months, between 60,000 and 80,000 ethnic Germans were drafted into the Waffen-SS. At least some of the Waffen-SS members served as guards in the concentration camps; many more fought against and killed non-Jews. The community as whole, however, watched the unfolding of the events, including that of Jewish genocide, from the sidelines: the genocide in Hungary was the work of Magyar civil servants, soldiers, and policemen, working under the direction of their Nazi allies.[52]

Conclusion

Interwar Hungary was not a politically reactionary and culturally stagnant country, as many Western observers and Hungarian intellectuals from the communist Andor Gábor to the conservative Gyula Szegfú believed. In the 30 years between 1918 and 1948, the Hungarian political elite flirted with more ideologies and experimented with more political systems than the American political elite during the American republic's entire history. In this short period, Hungary fell into the orbit of three great powers and became a member of three radically different international communities. Even though the world around them had been in flux, the main goal of the political elite in Hungary had remained the same: they tried to realize the dream of nineteenth-century liberals, the formation of an ethnically and culturally homogeneous nation-state. The dream of the political class in Hungary was not unique: their old and new neighbors pursued essentially the same goal. The role of a "saturated" power and that of a revisionist power thus became interchangeable. To make matters even more complicated, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany pursued the same vision, at least until World War Two. An important factor that separated the liberal powers, and the liberal international community as a whole, from their authoritarian, fascist, and Stalinist counterparts, was their treatment of their ethnic minorities. The international order created at Versailles after 1918 was fraudulent in many respects; yet unlike the pre-1914, or the post-1945, systems, it did at least envision ethnic minorities as valuable and permanent entities and meaningful actors in domestic and international politics. The goal of international organizations, such as the League of Nations, was to ensure their continued existence and defend their cultural rights, especially their language rights. The fascists, on the other hand, saw no future for the ethnic minorities in Europe: their solution in peacetime to the problems associated with diversity was population exchange, forced emigration for the

majority, and complete cultural and ethnic assimilation for the rest. During the war, they used enslavement, starvation, deportation, and genocide to achieve the same vision.

As a result of World War One and the Treaty of Trianon, about one-third of the Magyar-speaking population of the Kingdom of Hungary had ended up in the territories of the neighboring states. To protect them, the government in Budapest and minority leaders in the neighboring states turned to the liberal international community and its organizations, such as the League of Nations to address their many grievances. The goal of the Hungarian government remained (at least partial, but preferably full) revision of the borders; minority rights were used only as a means to that end. At home, the political elite treated the surviving minorities, such as Jews and Germans, in more or less the same manner as the neighbors treated Hungarians in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. The Swabian population continued their, in part forced, in part voluntary, assimilation into the Hungarian nation in the 1920s. The Jews, on

TABLE 4.1 The ethnic composition of the population in Hungary, 1920–1941

	1920	1930	1941	
	Mother tongue	Mother tongue	Mother tongue	Ethnicity
Hungarian	7,155,973 (89.6%)	8,000,335 (92.1%)	11,367,342 (77.5%)	11,881,455 (80.9%)
German	550,062 (6.9%)	477,153 (5.5%)	719,762 (4.9%)	533,045 (3.6%)
Slovak	141,877 (1.8%)	104,789 (1.2%)	268,913 (1.8%)	175,550 (1.2%)
Romanian	23,695 (0.3%)	16,221 (0.2%)	1,100,352 (7.5%)	1,051,026 (7.2%)
Ruthenian	N/D	N/D	564,092 (3.8%)	547,770 (3.7%)
Croatian	58,931 (0.7%)	46,337 (0.5%)	127,441 (0.9%)	12,346 (0.1%)
Serbian	17,132 (0.2%)	7,031 (0.1%)	241,907 (1.6%)	213,585 (1.5%)
Vend and Slovene	6,087 (0.1%)	5,464 (0.1%)	69,586 (0.5%)	20,336 (0.1%)
Roma	6,989 (0.1%)	7,841 (0.1%)	57,372 (0.4%)	76,209 (0.5%)
Others	26,123 (0.3%)	18,946 (0.2%)	30,835 (0.2%)	29,210 (0.2%)
Yiddish, Hebrew	N/D	N/D	131,971 (0.9%)	139,041 (0.9%)
Total	1,986,869	8,685,117	14,679,573	

Source: Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország Társadalomtörténete. A Reformkortól a Második Világháborúig* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2004), p. 213.

TABLE 4.2 Religious distribution of the population in Hungary, 1920–1930

Religion	1920		1930	
	Population	*%*	*Population*	*%*
Roman Catholic	5,096,729	63.9	5,634,103	64.8
Greek Catholic	175,247	2.2	201,093	2.3
Orthodox	50,990	0.6	39,839	0.5
Lutheran	497,012	6.2	534,065	6.1
Reformed	1,670,144	21.0	1,813,162	20.9
Unitarian	6224	0.1	6266	0.1
Israelite	473,310	5.9	444,567	5.1
Anglican	87	0.0	–	–
Baptist	4187	0.0	9399	0.1
Muslim	468	0.1	–	–
Jehovah Witness	–	–	2487	0.1
Others	3101	0.1	1379	0.1
Agnostic	1245	0.1	1959	0.1
Unknown	1399	–	–	–
Total	7,980,143	100	8,688,319	100

Source: Margit Balogh and Jenő Gergely, *Egyházak az Újkori Magyarországon 1790–1992. Adattár* [*Churches in Modern Hungary 1790–1992*]; and Statistics (Budapest, 1996), p. 165, as cited by Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország Társadalomtörténete. A Reformkortól a Második Világháborúig* [*The Social History of Hungary. From the Age of Reform to the Second World War*] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2004), p. 216.

the other hand, even though the majority had become Hungarian-speakers by 1914, faced violence and legal discrimination in the immediate postwar period. Their situation improved significantly under the premiership of the conservative prime minister, István Bethlen, after 1921. But the idea of solving pressing problems at the expense of an ethnic minority survived the consolidation of the counterrevolutionary regime. The democratization of political life in the 1930s awakened hopes for drastic social reforms at the expense of the Jews and ethnic Germans. After 1938, the Jewish community once again faced formal discrimination: the new anti-Jewish laws went much further than the numerus clausus legislation in 1920. By 1944, Hungarian Jews had lost all the achievements of emancipation; they had become pariahs in their own land. Ethnic Germans, who stood under the protection of Hitler, on the other hand, witnessed a serious improvement in their position in society. The anti-Jewish laws of the late 1930s and 1940s did not necessarily lead to Hungarian participation in the Holocaust. Yet social reforms at the expense of the Jews failed to achieve the conservative goal of taking the wind out of national socialist

TABLE 4.3 Religious distribution of the population in Hungary, 1938–1941

Religion	Trianon Hungary		Upper Hungary		Ruthenia		Northern Transylvania		Southern Hungary		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Roman. Catholic	6,122,583	65.7	661,088	62.3	49,681	7.2	536,160	20.8	703,722	68.3	8,073,234	55
GreekCatholic	233,672	2.5	80,857	7.6	412,308	59.4	957,753	37.1	15,826	1.5	1,700,146	11.6
Orthodox	38,321	0.4	2992	0.3	124,671	18.0	228,800	8.9	166,170	16.2	560,954	3.8
Lutheran	557,647	6.0	33,990	3.2	2136	0.3	44312	1.7	91,844	8.9	729,929	5
Reform.	1,934,892	20.8	203,607	19.1	22,058	3.2	591,755	23	36,964	3.6	2,789,276	19
Unit.ian	8,465	0.1	163	0	104	0	49,193	1.9	74	0	57,999	0.4
Baptist	17,917	0.2	818	0.1	1272	0.2	16,908	0.6	697	0.1	36,802	0.2
Israelite	400,980	4.3	77,700	7.3	80,960	11.6	151,125	5.9	14,242	1.4	725,007	4.9
Others	708	0	64	0	16	0	348	0	350	0	1486	0
Agnostic	3841	0	966	0	801	0.1	1523	0.1	107	0	7238	0.1
Unknown	966	0	47	0	15	0	193	0	31	0	1252	0
Total	9,319,992	100	1,062,022	100	694,022	100	2,577,260	100	1,030,027	100	14,683,323	100

Source: Margit Balogh and Jenő Gergely, *Egyházak az Újkori Magyarországon 1790–1992. Adattár* [*Churches in Modern Hungary 1790–1992. Statistics*] (Budapest, 1996), p. 170, as cited by Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország Társadalomtörténete. A Reformkortól a Második Világháborúig* [*The Social History of Hungary. From the Age of Reform to the Second World War*] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2004), p. 219.

agitation and weaning the radical and fascist Right. Social reforms at the expense of the Jews also gave the population the impression that stealing from Jews was not a crime or sin, but a virtue. The Nazis found it easy to find collaborators among civil servants, the army, the police, and even the political elite, who were ready and willing to participate in the genocide. The population, who had under the impact of the anti-Jewish laws, cut their social and emotional ties with Jews, watched the deportation of their neighbors and colleagues from the sidelines. While ethnic Germans who had joined the Waffen-SS bore a special responsibility for the war and the genocide, the majority of Swabian peasants were, like most people, the playthings of history. Their fate was sealed by the Nazi defeat and the Soviet conquest of their country. Having fallen into the orbit of a new power, Hungary once again underwent a process of democratization after 1945. The Allies, particularly the Soviet Union, were eager to expel ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe. Yet the main force behind their expulsion was the new political forces, such as the Communist Party and its peasant allies. The expulsion of ethnic Germans had many roots – including geopolitical considerations, revenge, ethnic hatred, and, last but not least, resentment and greed. In the end, more than 200,000 ethnic Germans were expelled to make room for the hundreds of thousands of Hungarian refugees and expellees from the neighboring states. Democratization after 1945, a process that moved in the direction of communist takeover of power and complete sovietization of political, social, and cultural life, completed the process of state-building, which had begun in the nineteenth century. The large Kingdom of Hungary, which had been one of the most multiethnic countries in Europe before 1914, became one of the smallest and ethnically most homogeneous countries on the continent.

Notes

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5

INTERWAR ROMANIA

Enshrining ethnic privilege

Roland Clark

Writing in 1925, the ultranationalist poet Nichifor Crainic said that on 6 August 1917 at Mărăşeşti "our soldiers, with improvised equipment, threw themselves into battle. They held their weapons like a shepherd holds his crook and, defenseless peasants that they were, charged the murderous machine of civilization." "That glorious moment," he wrote, "was the beginning of Romanian democracy."[1, 2] In reality, by 1917, Romanian soldiers were neither ignorant nor defenseless. Nor did this victory mean that their opinions suddenly mattered politically. But myths surrounding peasants and the Battle of Mărăşeşti did underscore social, political, and economic discourses for the next 20 years. Romania had waited until August 1916 to enter World War One, cultivating diplomatic relationships with both the Triple Alliance (Romania's traditional allies against Russia) and the Triple Entente (which promised significant territorial gains). The need for secrecy while negotiations continued meant that it was not able to build up its army and so its troops entered the war untrained and without adequate equipment. Support promised by the Entente against the Bulgarian, Austro-Hungarian, and German armies failed to materialize, and German troops occupied Bucharest by December.[3] British officials did their best to destroy Romania's oil and grain reserves, but Norman Stone estimates that once these fell into German hands it "made possible the Germans' continuation of the war into 1918."[4] So disgusted were the other Entente powers with Romania's rapid defeat that they did not invite the prime minister, Ion I. C. Brătianu, to a strategy meeting in Rome in January 1917 and then ignored him when he invited himself to a follow-up meeting in Petrograd later that month.[5]

Transylvania's Hungarians and Saxons welcomed the German reconquest of Transylvania, but anti-German sentiment was widespread among ethnic Romanians in early 1917.[6] Romanian officials discovered containers of anthrax

and glanders at the German legation the day they declared war, sparking fears that Germany intended to launch biological attacks. The bombing of Bucharest, the large numbers of refugees, and the requisitions imposed by the occupying forces on a population already living at the level of subsistence further exacerbated hostility toward the Germans.[7] Moreover, most Romanian soldiers were conscripts and fought with the knowledge that the state had taken few measures to look after their families and property while they were at war.[8] To make matters worse, first cholera and then typhus decimated the Romanian armies that winter, the latter reaching epidemic proportions. By April 1917 the government was so terrified of mutinies that it promised land redistribution and universal male suffrage as soon as the war was over.[9]

With French help, Romania reconstructed its armies between January and July 1917. By late summer they were properly trained, well-armed, and eager for battle. After almost 11 months on the defensive, on 22 July 1917 Romanian and Russian troops began bombarding the German Ninth Army along a 22-mile front at Mărăşti, in eastern Romania, forcing the Germans to launch a counteroffensive without adequate preparation. The subsequent battle near the village of Mărăşeşti left 27,410 Romanians, 25,650 Russians, and 17,000 Germans dead, wounded, captured, or missing.[10] Despite the heavy losses, the German offensive had failed and Romanian soldiers discovered that with the proper equipment they were more than a match for their German and Austro-Hungarian counterparts. The famous "virgin of Jiu," a decorated war heroine by the name of Ecaterina Teodoroiu, met her death leading an attack at Mărăşeşti, and soldiers of the 32nd Regiment won renown for throwing off their equipment and fighting with only the shirts on their backs.[11] The poet Octavian Goga wrote

> The soldier who triumphed at Mărăşeşti showed the world what these people from the Danube are capable of. The legends about the superior courage of those from Berlin evaporated before the villagers from Târgovişte who charged in their shirts … surrounding themselves with an aura of classical bravery that seems as if it came straight out of the most glorious pages of the Greco-Roman annals.[12]

Snubbed at the peace conferences despite the transient victories of 1917, Brătianu's government nonetheless had the opportunity to realize its territorial ambitions by force of arms. The "Old Kingdom" had been formed through the union of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia in 1859, adding Northern Dobrudja in 1878 and Southern Dobrudja in 1913. After World War One, Romania gained Transylvania, the Banat, Crişana, Bukovina, and Bessarabia. The autonomous Moldavian Republic proclaimed in January 1918 called on Romanian military support, as did the Romanian National Council in Czernowitz when it sought independence for Bukovina from the Austro-Hungarian Empire in October.[13] In April 1919, Béla Kun's

attack on Romanian troops in the Apuseni Mountains provided an excuse for Romania to advance farther into Hungary, overthrowing Kun and annexing Transylvania. Two-thirds of the Banat passed into Romanian hands following a peaceful settlement in July 1920.[14] Suddenly in control of large numbers of Jews, Hungarians, Saxons, Swabians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Serbs, and other minority groups, Romanian elites struggled to establish ethnic Romanian dominance over more than twice the number of inhabitants while also restraining widespread rural dissatisfaction.[15]

Universal male suffrage

Even though the war helped people to identify with the nation, it did not generate meaningful bonds between citizens and the state. People often simply ignored official attempts to commemorate the war dead, preferring local memorials and private rituals to state-sanctioned holidays and cemeteries.[16] King Ferdinand had promised the Romanian soldier in December 1916 that "fighting for national unity, he is also fighting for his own political and economic freedom (*pentru dezrobirea lui politică şi economică*)."[17] But the state that emerged from the war was neither united nor particularly democratic.

Romanians had enjoyed limited male suffrage since 1864, but politics relied heavily on patronage networks and royal support. The king appointed a government to organize elections; that government appointed its own prefects and local officials who then ensured that it was elected, using bribery and force whenever necessary. Only twice during the interwar period (1919 and 1937) did a party with a "governmental dowry" fail to win an election.[18] In 1917, the Liberal Party extended the vote to all adult male citizens in order to

TABLE 5.1 Romanian population by ethnicity in 1930

Ethnicity	Population	Percentage
Romanian	2,138,917	58.1
Jewish	496,375	13.6
Hungarian	406,955	11.1
German	192,879	5.3
Russian	125,190	3.4
Ruthenian/Ukrainian	55,289	1.5
Bulgarian	45,293	1.2
Roma	40,775	1.1
Other (less than 1%)	149,386	4.1
Total	3,651,059	100

Source: Sabin Manuilă, *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decemvrie 1930*, Vol. 2 (Bucharest: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1930), pp. xliv–xlv.

garner support for its plans to break up the old landed estates. The 1923 constitution enshrined universal male suffrage, adding that only men over the age of 40 could vote for the Senate.[19] It nonetheless took time to standardize the system, with majoritarian representation being retained in Transylvania and Bukovina until 1926 while the rest of the country used proportional representation.[20] The appearance of entirely new constituencies had a significant impact on electoral politics: 83% of deputies elected in November 1919 were in parliament for the first time.[21] Romanian democracy survived until February 1938, when King Carol II disbanded parliament and declared a royal dictatorship.

During the interwar period, as they had prior to 1918, feminists consistently supported nation-building projects and formed charitable organizations as a way of contributing to a society that excluded them from formal political power. After 1929, highly educated women, female state employees, war widows, decorated war heroes, and female leaders of civic organizations could vote in local elections, but most women had to wait until 1939 before receiving the right to vote. Married women did not even receive civil rights until 1932.[22] Female suffrage followed a decades-long feminist struggle that received at best patronizing recognition from those in power.[23] In a rare debate over women's rights in 1921, one senator remarked that "it is true that we must be concerned about the life of the *state*, but it is no less true that we must also concern ourselves with that of the *nation*." He continued that, just as the village "is the basis of the state, *woman* is the basis of the nation." As a result, "a woman must first of all take care of her children and raise them to be good citizens."[24]

Elites were skeptical about the population's ability to participate in national politics. Dimitrie Drăghicescu, a leading Liberal, commented sarcastically in 1922 that peasants were "good soil for politics, in the hands and carts of other classes."[25] Only 69.2% of Romanian men could read and write according to the 1930 census, but this does not mean that they were politically illiterate.[26] Villages were generally just as politically diverse as the general population, and rural voters expressed interest in what political parties would do for them rather than in ideological manifestos. A patronizing sociological study of the village of Ghigoeşti in Neamţ county from 1938 wrote that

> passionate in politics, they know no other ideology or behavioural norm than the right of the legendary fox. Personal interests overrule the most beautiful principles … More than 50% … mostly vote for the incumbent party, or they vote according to impulse, trying new groups, and this not according to the party's principles, but from the desire to see something new, what the others are like who haven't yet been in power.[27]

The Conservative Party was the first victim of extended suffrage. Having relied heavily on patronage networks, it had no organizational structure in place to

facilitate electoral campaigning and no broad constituencies within the electorate.[28] The National Liberal Party had dominated prewar politics and was well situated to dominate interwar politics as well. It did not rely on any one class for support, did particularly well in rural areas, and attracted people who voted in favor of existing governments in the hope that they would reward loyalty. It won the largest number of votes in 5 out of the 10 general elections held during the interwar period.[29] The National Liberals had been led by Ion Brătianu from the 1860s to the 1880s, and during the interwar period it was dominated by his sons, Ion I. C. (Ionel), Vintilă, and Dinu. Benefiting from their longevity in power, the National Liberals cultivated particularly close connections to leading industrialists and bankers, managing the economy to advance their own business interests.[30]

The first party to win an election under the new system was the Romanian National Party, led by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod. The National Party of Transylvania had represented Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and it quickly reorganized as the Romanian National Party after the war, creating local branches in rural areas led mostly by priests, primary school teachers, notaries, and wealthy villagers.[31] As a result, most Transylvanians voted for it in the elections of November 1919. Vaida-Voevod formed a "parliamentary bloc" together with the Peasant Party and the Bessarabian Peasant Party. Created in December 1918 under Ion Mihalache's leadership, the Peasant Party enjoyed the support of most of rural Moldavia and Wallachia.[32] Ethnic Germans from Transylvania established their own party but also joined the parliamentary bloc after the elections.[33] Under the leadership of elites from the newly acquired territories and with the backing of new voters from the Old Kingdom, the parliamentary bloc set out on a program of radical changes, including agrarian reform, restricting the role of the gendarmerie, and extending protection for tenants of rental properties.[34] King Ferdinand intervened and forced new elections, which were won overwhelmingly by General Alexandru Averescu's People's Party. Averescu had become a national hero during World War One and used his popularity to create a following that drew together remnants of the Conservative Party and veterans enamored of the "Averescu myth," while remaining more palatable to the Liberals than the Peasantists were.[35]

Land reform and industrialization

Despite having campaigned on a conservative platform, Averescu's veteran support base compelled him to introduce the program of land redistribution promised by the king in 1917. Former serfs had received some land when Mihail Kogălniceanu's Liberal government abolished feudal obligations in 1864, but it was not enough to live on, forcing them to continue working for their old landlords as wage laborers in a system the socialist writer Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea labelled "neo-serfdom."[36] Rural dissatisfaction erupted

in the form of a country-wide rebellion in 1907 that devastated the properties of large landowners and involved widespread attacks on Jews.[37] Any government that would have refused to redistribute land would have committed political suicide. Dietmar Müller writes that, as part of Averescu's 1921 reform, "approximately 6 million hectares of land were appropriated, of which roughly 3.6 million hectares of farmland, 950,000 hectares of pasture, [and] 490,000 hectares of forest, were distributed by 1927 to roughly 1,368 million families."[38] Those who received land had to follow "compulsory farming plans" that dictated how the property was to be used.[39] Only married men, war widows, and orphans had the right to receive land, and there was a widespread belief that people were not allowed to sell the land they received. Evolving administrative structures in rural areas also meant that village elites benefited disproportionately from the reforms.[40]

A great deal of land changed hands, but farmers still lacked access to the credit they needed to modernize their farms, and the government kept agricultural prices low to prevent inflation.[41] Inflation was a genuine problem. The Germans had issued large numbers of banknotes during the occupation of 1917–1918, and the Romanian government in exile issued more banknotes from Moldavia during the same period. Inflation increased even more after the war ended because of the challenges of introducing a single currency in the new territories.[42] None of this made it easy to maintain a stable economy in the wake of such a massive redistribution of property. As David Mitrany noted in 1930, the result was

> an enormous legal change, but only a very moderate economic change. Production is, on the whole, carried on by the same men with the same means as before. Broadly speaking, it has been not so much a change from large-scale to small-scale farming, as a change from farming by small tenants to farming by small owners.[43]

A Liberal campaign against Averescu induced him to resign in December 1921, and the National Liberal Party held power for most of the next seven years. Once back in government, the Liberals introduced a new constitution in 1923 and electoral reforms in 1926 that reduced the power of opposition parties and gave extra powers to the prime minister at the expense of parliament as a whole.[44] Alongside constitutional reform, the Liberals pursued a policy of industrialization "through ourselves alone" (*prin noi însine*). Romania remained primarily agricultural until after World War Two, although factories had begun to replace peasant cottage industries in some areas since the middle of the nineteenth century.[45] The first petrol distillery was built at Ploieşti in 1857, and the first derrick sank in 1861. Oil became increasingly important as the global industry developed, and major American, German, and French investors established operations in Romania between 1904 and 1906.[46] Romanian industrialization began in earnest after 1887.[47] The country had eight cotton-weaving

mills by 1911, employing about 2,000 people, primarily in Bucharest. Postwar expansion meant an increase in the size of factories more than in their number. More than twice the number of people worked in factories in 1930 compared to 1900, while the number of factories actually decreased.[48] The Liberal governments of the 1920s restricted access to foreign loans and imports, arguing that firms should be Romanian-owned and Romanian-financed, and that the majority of their employees should be ethnic Romanians.

A handful of major Bucharest banks with close ties to the Liberals financed industrialization. By 1925, 50% of their long-term loans were in industry.[49] On paper, the results were impressive. Between 1924 and 1928, production levels in manufacturing grew by 188% and in mining by 189%. Oil production also rose in leaps and bounds, from 968,000 tons in 1918 to 5,800,000 tons in 1930.[50] Dietmar Müller points out that the temporary boom of the early 1920s was driven by inflation and government stimulus, however, and production costs far outweighed profits.[51]

Industrialization also meant that new forms of labor contracts had to be negotiated, new political solidarities developed, and new everyday cultures formed through which Romanian workers made sense of their lives. Prior to the invocation of a worker-exploiter conflict, labor disputes had been framed as competitions between groups of workers. Manufacturing had been organized through guilds from the eleventh century onward, and guilds continued in Romania until 1945, although anti-guild legislation in 1873 wrote their declining influence into law, and twentieth-century guilds were feeble relics of their medieval forebears.[52] Guilds emphasized the cooperation between masters and journeymen in the production of manufactured goods, and this form of organization promoted vertical, regional, and trade-based ties rather than class-based ones. The regulation of labor in Romania in the second half of the nineteenth century took place at the request of small-scale craftsmen, not as a result of agitation by wage-earners, who did not find their political voice until just before World War One. Trade legislation from 1902 confused guilds, corporations, and unions, and the last of these first began to take shape after a 1909 law gave legal basis to professional associations.[53] Manifestos of the Social-Democratic Party from 1912 bemoaned the lack of labor organization and emphasized the importance for workers to form unions.[54]

Workplace legislation relating to safety, hygiene, and child labor was introduced in Romania in the last years of the nineteenth century, and many issues were not addressed until after World War One. Roughly one-third of the workforce was female, and, while rural women looked after children while working at home, the phenomenon of urban women entering factories and having to leave their children in preschools created fears that industrialization and the financial independence it provided women might be harmful for children.[55] Labor laws in 1921 and 1929 regulated and expanded technical education, establishing new hierarchies and professional standards for tradesmen and industrial workers.[56] Collective conflicts involving industrial workers were

an increasingly common occurrence in the early twentieth century. In 1910, unions were involved in 15 boycotts, 107 strikes, and 3 lockouts.[57] Collective conflicts rose dramatically once workplace legislation was introduced in 1920, culminating in a wave of countrywide strikes in September and October.[58]

Workers experienced workplace legislation and laws governing collective conflicts as novelties and were at first unsure of how to negotiate them. The Regional Inspectorate of Labor in Timişoara scolded the carpentry union from Caransebeş in 1923, reminding them that they had to respect legislation and fill out the proper paperwork when they engaged in industrial action.[59] Most industrial action throughout the interwar period focused on gaining collective contracts and on forcing employers to respect both the law and the contracts that they had previously signed with workers. Workers unions adopted traditions from French Marxism, and thus had a decidedly socialist tinge to them.[60] Unions repeatedly expressed solidarity with the struggles of workers elsewhere in the country, and even engaged in sympathy strikes when the occasion called for it.[61] But unions did not represent the majority of workers. By 1930, only 50% of railway workers in Cluj were members of a union.[62]

A cursory examination of archival records pertaining to Transylvanian factories suggests that ethnic tensions may have played a role in some places but not in others. The annual reports of local trade organizations in Transylvania, for example, were usually published in three languages and gave statistics about the multiethnic nature of their membership with no hints of tensions between members.[63] Records of labor disputes from the region rarely make mention of ethnic tensions either among the workers or between workers and management, but cases do exist.[64] A petrol refinery in Târgu-Mureş was run by Jewish managers from Maramureş who threatened to import Jewish workers from Maramureş in 1932 if their workers did not give up their right to collective contracts.[65] Another dispute, this time at the Holy Cross Factory in Vlahuţa in 1930, involved a Czech manager who could speak neither Romanian nor Hungarian and who refused to pay workers for long periods of time, in addition to charging exorbitant prices at the canteen from which they were obliged to buy their food.[66] Both of these cases revolved around economic issues, but the fact that the ethnicity of the managers was repeatedly mentioned in administrative records of the dispute suggests that workers were quite capable of framing their problems in ethnic terms when it suited them.

Industrialization and the limits of the 1921 agrarian reform meant that none of the major parties managed to gain the support of the rural population, although all claimed to speak on behalf of "the peasantry." The 1930 census listed 72.3% of Romanians as "exploiters of the soil" and another 9.5% as involved in some form of industry.[67] These people were celebrated by elites but rarely had much of a political voice. Before 1821, words like *norod* or *prostime* were commonly used to refer to the rural masses, but *prost* became an increasingly pejorative term during the nineteenth century, gradually taking on its current meaning of "idiot." After 1821 the word *ţăran* – the

Romanian equivalent of peasant – became common both as a sociological category and as an idealized group of people whose values and lifestyle embodied the nation. *Țăran* also had negative overtones, however, and most rural people called themselves *săteni* (villagers).[68] From the 1890s onward nationalists in particular claimed to value *țărănimea* (the peasantry) as the "true" Romanians, celebrating them during the interwar period through "traditionalist" literary and artistic movements.[69]

In 1936, the economist Virgil Madgearu argued that despite the significant differences between agricultural laborers, small proprietors, and other *țărani*, they effectively behaved as a single class because all shared the same aspirations to become independent producers able to employ others.[70] Social stratification increased in rural areas during the interwar period, however, and agricultural laborers quickly turned against *chiaburi* (*kulaks*) as "class enemies" once socialist collectivization began in 1949.[71] Far from all *țărani* engaged primarily in agricultural labor. Of the 586 "laborers" who lived in the village of Dragomirești in Argeș county in 1941, for example, only 128 worked in agriculture.[72]

Working people would have found it difficult anyway to place themselves firmly within one sociological category or another if they worked at more than one job. Roughly 6% of Romania's working population in 1930 reported that they had two major professions. Of those who reported having a second job, 45% listed their secondary occupation as being in agriculture, 30% in industry, and 5% in commerce/credit.[73] Even people who worked full-time in industry often had their primary ties in the village. A lack of housing near the factory meant that many workers lived in their villages and travelled long distances to work each day, or else slept in overcrowded shelters. A 1933 report from the Inspectorate of Labor in Ploiești reported that some workers travelled 15–20 km on foot to get to work, and that they preferred to do this rather than sleep in the miserable conditions available near the factory.[74] The everyday reality of living and working across the urban/rural divide reinforced a linguistic tendency to group farmers together with industrial workers as part of the working poor (*muncitori*). Worker solidarity was based not on one's relationship to the means of production, but on access to capital – all categories of workers felt exploited by the wealthy financiers and landowners, and thus often made few political distinctions between agricultural and factory labor.

Winning over the provinces

While struggling to win the votes of working people, Bucharest elites also sought to extend their control over the new territories. It was not a foregone conclusion that the culture and political ambitions of the Old Kingdom would dominate interwar Romania. Florian Kührer-Wielach notes that in 1918 Transylvanians saw themselves as pioneers, and even redeemers, expecting to bring their economic resources and political traditions to their poorer

neighbors in Wallachia and Moldavia. They envisaged "a pluralistic, multi-national state with *Romanian* hegemony and under *Transylvanian* leader-ship."[75] Bucharest Liberals had other ideas. They intended to shape the new territories in their own image, limiting pluralism and ethnic diversity as much as possible. Government documents laid out plans to cultivate "moral values and patriotic sentiments" in the new territories, using Romanian schools and Churches staffed by personnel from the Old Kingdom.[76] Romania began sending teachers and books into Bessarabia even before the union of the ter-ritories was officially agreed, and many more followed over the next decade.[77]

A series of laws between 1924 and 1928 introduced far-reaching educa-tional reforms that standardized the school systems from the various terri-tories while equipping Romanians for life in a modern industrial state.[78] The Liberal minister of education, Constantin Angelescu, explained that

> the school must everywhere provoke a freshening of the spirit; to awaken the national consciousness to Romanian life and culture and to solidify the spiritual unity of all Romanians. Only by enlightening and strength-ening the national consciousness can we boost the kin's vital powers and [power to] resist all the assaults from without and within, and ensure the endurance of our dominion in the Kingdom's new boundaries.[79]

The introduction of universal male suffrage provoked complaints that most Romanians were not "ready" to participate in the running of the country, complaints that were answered by the expansion of tertiary education and the elevation of experts and professionals to a privileged social status. Intellectual work became a national duty and gave low-level bureaucrats remarkable authority over those who relied on them.[80] Other experts hoped to shape the nation according to the standards of their disciplines. Sociologists catalogued and analyzed the rural population both in order to make policy recommen-dations about development, pronatalism, or education and to prove the legitimacy of Romania's claims to the new territories.[81] Public health officials bemoaned poor sanitary conditions and encouraged racist interventionist policies to prevent epidemics.[82] Eugenicists such as Iuliu Moldovan argued for a new constitution that "must place the biological interests of the family above those of the individual and the biological integrity of the human capital above the interests of material property."[83] Above all, in 1929 the government expanded the powers of the Siguranţa, or secret police. First established in 1908, the Siguranţa worked closely with the gendarmerie to monitor sub-versive activities, including extremist political groups, religious minorities, and the activities of minority ethnic groups. The Siguranţa's remit extended sig-nificantly beyond punishing criminals. Rather it worked to prevent threats to the nation-state by infiltrating and harassing groups it suspected did not fully embrace the state's ideology.[84]

As Mariana Hausleitner points out, in interwar Romania modernization was simultaneously nationalization. In Bukovina the state allowed the Jewish, Ukrainian, and German minorities less and less autonomy as the 1930s went on.[85] In Bessarabia, Romanian officials saw any attempt at Jewish cultural organizing as proof of communist agitation.[86] Similarly, police consistently identified Hungarian cultural associations in Transylvania as evidence of irredentism.[87] After a two-month tour of the country, an American investigative commission in 1928 concluded that "a hideous campaign of intimidation and brutality was being carried on against the Jewish citizens of the state, its motive being a mixture of arrogant intolerance and ignorant hatred."[88] Ethnic minorities quickly learned to articulate requests for local autonomy in ways that affirmed Romanian nation-building projects. Communities that failed to do so effectively were marginalized and denied access to state resources.[89] Acceptance came at the price of assimilation for these communities. Roma, for example, benefited from state resources only to the extent that they owned land and entered state institutions such as schools and Churches.[90]

The central idea driving reforms and nation-building in the new provinces was that ethnic Romanians from the Old Kingdom were now in control of the state. Not everyone was enthusiastic about this idea. Bucharest elites saw nation-building projects as ways to *raise* the level of civilization in the new territories, but Transylvanians perceived this "levelling" as a distinct step *down*.[91] Romanian elites in Transylvania responded to attempts at centralization by promoting Alba Iulia as an alternative to Bucharest in their discourses about the nation and by subtly discriminating against people from the Old Kingdom.[92] Romanian teachers sent to Bessarabia faced hostility from their local colleagues and were challenged by students who did not speak Romanian well. Many schools simply ignored aspects of the state-mandated curriculum.[93] A French report from May 1919 explained

> south of Kishinev the majority of the population is plainly hostile to the Romanians [and] Russian is their language and interest. The small Romanian element there is represented by poor peasants who are themselves hardly well-disposed in favor of their compatriots. The rest – Jews, Bulgarians, Russians, German settlers – detest and despise the Romanians.[94]

Romanian troops had vandalized and expropriated Ukrainian schools when they entered Bukovina in 1918, insisting that they promoted irredentist agendas. The government permitted minority schools, but after 1924 they had to teach the national literature, history, geography, and civics curricula using the Romanian language.[95]

Minority students were at a distinct disadvantage when sitting for the baccalaureate exams that would get them into university. One student newspaper asserted in 1925 that 80% of students failed the exams, and examiners from the Old Kingdom could use the oral section of the exam to fail minority

students who had done well in the written sections. The Peasantist politician Romul Boilă from Transylvania claimed that the exams "cut the future of young lives from the annexed provinces."[96] In 1926, an angry Jewish student from Cernăuți named David Fallik harassed one of the examiners who he believed had intentionally failed him. Upset that a Jew should be allowed to attack a Romanian, a university student named Nicolae Totu shot and killed Fallik. Totu was a member of the antisemitic National Christian Defense League (LANC[97]) and argued successfully at his trial that the murder was justified because Fallik "struck a teacher, and in striking a teacher he had struck the state itself."[98] Totu's acquittal was one of many instances in which juries sided with ethnic Romanians who had publicly injured or killed members of ethnic minorities. In doing so, they affirmed that ethnic Romanians enjoyed certain privileges, such as easier access to education, better funding for their churches and cultural associations, the right to have their history and culture celebrated publicly without arousing police suspicion, and even the right to kill members of minority groups under special circumstances.[99]

Religious diversity

The state's support for Romanian ethnic privilege can be seen in religious policy during the interwar period. In 1919 the minister for public education and religions, Vasile Goldiș, argued that the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR[100]) must be the only official Church in the country: "The state must not be allowed to become multi-confessional, as those people suggest who are promoting the destruction of the moral order with their most pernicious ideas and theories."[101] The BOR had become a state institution following the unification of Wallachia and Moldavia in 1859, and it gradually lost more and more autonomy over the following decades.[102] The status of other Churches became a particular problem when large numbers of Roman Catholics, Eastern-Rite Catholics, and Protestants became Romanian citizens after 1918. Whereas the BOR had been the only "dominant" Church according to the 1866 constitution, the 1923 constitution added "and the Eastern-Rite Catholic Church comes before other religions."[103] Contesting the rights of non-Orthodox Churches was a way for the BOR to define its own position vis-à-vis the state.[104] Interwar Church leaders complained that the state was persecuting it by secularizing BOR property and tolerating other Churches, but government ministers pointed out that the BOR still received generous grants and more financial support than any other Church.[105]

Emperor Leopold I had established the Eastern-Rite Catholic, or Uniate, Church in Transylvania during the late seventeenth century as a way of subordinating Orthodox Christians to Rome – and to the Holy Roman Empire – without substantially changing beliefs or practices. Minor differences between Eastern-Rite Catholic and Romanian Orthodox Churches *had* developed by the twentieth century, especially in terms of their corporate identities, but

TABLE 5.2 Romanian population by religion in 1930

Religion	Population	Percentage
Orthodox	2,223,965	60.9
Jewish	520,004	14.2
Roman Catholic	377,303	10.3
Reformed Calvinist	179,978	4.9
Eastern-Rite Catholic	167,430	4.6
Lutheran	95,377	2.6
Muslim	36,829	1.0
Other (less than 1%)	50,153	1.4
Total	3,651,039	100

Source: Sabin Manuilă, *Recensământul general al populaţiei României din 29 decemvrie 1930*, Vol. 2 (Bucharest: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1930), pp. xcvi–xcvii.

Eastern-Rite Catholics had been enthusiastic leaders of the Romanian national movement in Transylvania and felt entitled to membership in the nation as Romanians *and* as Eastern-Rite Catholics.[106] The BOR argued that Eastern-Rite Catholics were actually wayward Orthodox, and must rejoin the BOR if they expected any rights within Greater Romania. Eastern-Rite Catholics responded that, while they accepted that every Church should seek converts,

> there is nonetheless an enormous difference between peaceful "missionary activity" through argument and illumination, winning souls through persuasion with the power of the truth and good works, … and demagogy, disturbances, organised with money and axes, envy and chicanery, with illegal interventions of the public authorities, as some dominant conquistadors (*conchistadori*?) seeking cheap immortality understand it.[107]

Roman Catholics too argued that they could be "good Romanians" even though they were not Orthodox. Leading Orthodox commentators such as Nae Ionescu disagreed, maintaining that Orthodoxy and Romanian ethnicity – and with it, ethnic privilege – were synonymous.[108] Roman Catholicism represented internationalist values that Orthodox nationalists found deeply suspect.[109] Hostilities culminated in debates surrounding the 1927 Concordat with Rome, in which the Romanian state acknowledged and regulated the two Catholic Churches inside its borders. Romanian metropolitans protested vigorously against the concordat, arguing that it permitted the Catholics too many bishops, too many churches, too much land, and too much public money, given the number of believers.[110]

Compounding the BOR's struggles with established Churches was the exponential growth of "neo-Protestant" churches such as Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostals, and Brethren. Unlike the established Lutheran and Reformed Protestant Churches found in Transylvania, neo-Protestant Churches appeared in the late nineteenth century and spread throughout the country. Many neo-Protestants were former Orthodox Christians, and the BOR responded by encouraging the state to harshly persecute neo-Protestant groups, some of which were never officially recognized as Churches during the interwar period.[111] The rise of neo-Protestantism also occasioned schisms within the BOR itself, as individual reformers imitated neo-Protestant methods and theology only to be themselves cast out of the Church.[112]

Alongside its disagreements with other Christians, the BOR attacked both Freemasons and Jews. Orthodox writers "exposed" Freemasonry from the early 1920s onward, culminating in an official condemnation of it by the Holy Synod in 1937. Romanian Freemasonry was officially dissolved by the state 10 months later.[113] Antisemitism was widespread in modern Romanian society.[114] Antisemitic organizations were first established in 1886, and the first explicitly antisemitic political party in 1910.[115] Nineteenth-century antisemitism was associated primarily with atheists and free-thinkers, but the scientist Nicolae Paulescu introduced it into Christian circles in the early twentieth century, and by the interwar period most BOR newspapers expressed antisemitic views at some time or another.[116] Large numbers of priests joined right-wing and fascist political parties, and senior Church figures attacked Jews in their sermons and writings.[117] As both an ethnic and a religious minority, Jews proved to be an effective target for the BOR and other Romanian nationalists seeking to secure Romanian ethnic privilege within the nation-state.

The rise of fascism

The introduction of universal male suffrage raised the expectations of hundreds of thousands of Romanians that their voices and interests would be represented in the country's parliament. The failure of the major parties to win the hearts and minds of voters gave opportunities to parties on the far right and the far left. The Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 and the establishment of the Comintern in March 1919 split Romanian socialists between those who were willing to work together with the Bolsheviks and those who preferred independence. The majority decided in favor of collaborating with the Comintern at a party congress in May 1921, which marked the formal establishment of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR[118]). Police arrested the congress delegates soon after they had reached this decision, however, and persecuted the PCR harshly until the end of World War Two. Despite waves of strike action in 1920 and 1933, police harassment ensured that the PCR never became a significant force in Romanian politics.[119]

   Fascism too had a halting start because of police persecution. Two fascist movements appeared in Romania during 1921/1922, both influenced by Mussolini's success in Italy.[120] The Liberals immediately banned fascist organizing, and by 1924 most fascists had joined A. C. Cuza's National Christian Defense League.[121] A professor of law at the University of Iaşi, Cuza had a long history of antisemitic organizing, but his party blossomed in the wake of antisemitic student riots that engulfed the country's major universities in December 1922.[122] The number of students enrolled at university increased dramatically following the war, and universities were unprepared for the sudden influx of generally ill-prepared students. Crowded dormitories and inadequate facilities in libraries and laboratories contributed to widespread student dissatisfaction, which culminated in demands for numerus clausus legislation limiting the number of Jewish students at university. The student movement continued throughout the interwar period, working together with LANC to inject a rabid antisemitism into Romanian politics. Several student leaders, including Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, were involved in highly publicized court cases for murder and treason. Codreanu and 5 of his colleagues were arrested in October 1923 for plotting to assassinate 10 or more prominent Jews and then, in October 1924, Codreanu murdered the police prefect in Iaşi. The students readily admitted their guilt in both cases, but both times were acquitted because of their "patriotic" motives.[123]

   Student violence and various publicity stunts kept LANC in the newspapers throughout the 1920s, with a rhetoric that combined economic antisemitism with attacks on political corruption and inefficiency. Personal rivalries split LANC's leadership in 1927. Accusing Cuza of "politicianism," Codreanu and his supporters established a new movement called the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Just as Cuza had cultivated ties with prominent antisemitism elsewhere in Europe, Codreanu advertised his affinities with Mussolini and Hitler as models for the movement. During their first few years, legionaries worked on attracting students and disillusioned LANC supporters to their ranks with rhetoric about youth, purity, and spirituality. They began propaganda marches through isolated rural areas in November 1928 and a sustained campaign to attract factory workers in early 1933. In 1930, Codreanu established a paramilitary wing of the Legion known as the Iron Guard. The Guard was banned in 1933 but the name stuck and became synonymous with that of the Legion.[124]

   Legionaries won two by-elections in August 1931 and April 1932, and they managed to attract the support of young intellectuals thanks to the patronage of Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu – two influential ultranationalist publicists. These intellectuals quickly set about developing legionary ideology with a focus on youthful purity and anti-politicianism, and the hub of the movement shifted from Iaşi to Bucharest. The authorities tried to restrict the Legion's ability to contest the national elections of December 1933 and legionaries met force with force. Fearing the Legion's popularity, the government had scores of legionaries arrested only a couple of weeks before the

election. Angry that they had not been allowed to compete fairly, the legionaries assassinated the new Liberal prime minister, Ion Gh. Duca. Most of the movement's leadership stood trial for Duca's murder, but only the three assassins were convicted.[125]

Codreanu reorganized the Legion in 1934, creating the Everything for the Fatherland Party as a separate political wing. He published his memoirs as a political manifesto in 1935 and established a large network of summer work camps, presenting the Legion as a grassroots movement committed to strengthening the nation through voluntary labor, physical fitness, self-discipline, and a puritan morality. Legionaries continued to threaten public figures with assassination and still attacked Jews during this period, but celebrated violence less than during the period prior to 1933.[126] The 1930s provided more opportunities for women to get involved in fascist politics, and large numbers of women joined the Legion. Fascism encouraged unmarried women to become politically active without compromising their conservative Christian values and allowed married women to engage in political activism alongside their husbands and brothers.[127]

Codreanu's new focus paid dividends, and his party won 15.6% of the vote in the national elections of November 1937. Unwilling to allow Codreanu to take power, the king appointed a National Christian Party (PNC[128]) government led by A. C. Cuza and Octavian Goga. The PNC introduced harsh antisemitic measures while also violently attacking legionaries. King Carol II, who had been on the throne since 1930, used the violence between Cuzists and legionaries as an excuse to declare martial law and a royal dictatorship on 10 February 1938. Codreanu disbanded the Legion a little less than two weeks later. He was arrested for libel soon after, then convicted of treason before being killed by the authorities in November 1938. Following harsh persecution that left hundreds of leading legionaries dead, the survivors either fled to Germany or went into hiding.[129]

The demise of democracy in the 1930s

Romanian democracy had been in trouble long before the royal dictatorship. Having undermined democratic processes through the electoral reforms of 1926, the increasingly unpopular Liberals managed to hold on to power with a couple of short breaks until both King Ferdinand and Ionel Brătianu died in 1927. Winning 77.8% of the votes in the national elections of 1928, the National Peasant Party swept into government led by Iuliu Maniu, who represented the middle-class wing of the party, and Ion Mihalache, who represented rural voters. Once in power, the Peasantists shifted the focus of the economy from investment in industry to promoting agriculture through affordable loans to small-scale farmers. They did not implement the more radical redistribution of land they had been promising since 1921, however, and increasingly lost the support of rural voters. They became, as a contemporary saying went, "a party without peasants."[130]

The National Peasantists also revoked the protectionist tariffs introduced by the Liberals, encouraging foreign investment at a time when Europeans were least interested in such ventures – during the early stages of the Great Depression.[131] Discussions with other Balkan states between 1930 and 1933 succeeded in establishing preferential trade deals with Romania's neighbors but did not produce the economic union some had been hoping for, which aimed at giving these predominantly agricultural states greater access to the global economy.[132] Nor did international conferences during these years involving agrarian states across Eastern Europe succeed in improving Romania's ability to sell its agricultural products on the world market.[133]

Industrialization achieved very modest successes during the interwar period, but by 1929 Romania was able to import mostly partially fabricated goods for the limited domestic market and to finish the processes in the country – something that had not been possible a decade earlier.[134] The Depression hurt industry the most, causing widespread unemployment as demand for Romanian oil evaporated. Agriculture too suffered and the interest rates on loans increased dramatically following the collapse of several major banks. The problems of two bad harvests in a row were compounded as the factories needed fewer raw materials and the cities consumed less in the wake of higher food prices.[135] Major strikes broke out on the railways and in the oil refineries in February 1933.[136] Fascists recruited heavily among workers during the Depression, arguing that ethnic minorities were taking Romanian jobs.[137]

But it was the return of Prince Carol in June 1930, not economic problems, that brought down the National Peasantists. Carol had left the country in 1925 and separated from his wife, Princess Elena, in order to pursue an affair with Magda Wolf, a woman of Jewish heritage better known as Elena Lupescu. When King Ferdinand died in 1927, he was succeeded by a regency council, which ruled on behalf of Carol's son, Prince Michael. In 1930, Carol, who had been excluded from the royal succession in January 1926, returned to Romania. The prime minister, Iuliu Maniu, welcomed Carol's return, but only on the condition that he renounce Lupescu and reconcile with his wife. Carol refused and Maniu resigned. Parliament proclaimed Carol as king the following day; King Carol took the royal oath on 8 June 1930. Maniu soon returned to office but resigned again in October once Lupescu joined Carol in Romania and it became clear that Maniu and Carol could not work together because they disagreed over who should run the country – the king or the prime minister. By December 1930, senior politicians were speculating that King Carol II intended to establish a royal dictatorship. Instead, he assembled an advisory board of his favorites known as the "camarilla," which helped shape official policy and appointed its members to government posts. As members of Carol's camarilla, Lupescu and prominent (ethnically Jewish) businessmen such as Max Auşnit and Aristide Blank became the focus of antisemitic and anti-corruption attacks in the press while enriching themselves through shady government contracts. The image of Jewish corruption

that surrounded the camarilla fueled the rise of far-right parties and encouraged politicians such as Alexandru Vaida-Voevod to adopt fascist slogans and programs.[138]

The state was the largest consumer of heavy industry, investing a large amount of money in products produced by companies owned by those close to the centers of power.[139] In 1933, the "Skoda" scandal broke out, revealing the corruption of senior politicians, including Iuliu Maniu. The scandal involved corruption at a Czech armaments company that was contracted to produce weapons for the Romanian army. Fiscal irregularities were discovered, the weapons were found to be overpriced and of poor quality, and Romanian military secrets were discovered in the hands of Czech businessmen.[140] The "Skoda Affair" was closely followed and editorialized in most Romanian newspapers, and it helped to discredit the country's political elite, fueling claims that no politician could be trusted. Struggling to negotiate a working relationship with King Carol, Romania had nine governments between June 1930 and November 1933, eight of which were National Peasantist. Coupled with the National Peasantists' inability to form a stable government, the Skoda Affair brought the Liberals back into power, with that party winning 51% of the votes in the national elections of December 1933.

Legionaries assassinated the prime minister, Ion Gh. Duca, only a few days after he took office, passing the reins of government to Gheorghe Tătărescu. The banks that had sustained the "old" National Liberal Party of the 1920s had collapsed during the Depression, causing a shift within party politics. By 1933, the influence of the Brătianu family was restricted primarily to the party apparatus, while "young" Liberals such as Tătărescu controlled the cabinet.[141] Less and less interested in parliamentary procedures, between 1934 and 1938 Tătărescu sought to concentrate decision-making power in the cabinet itself, bypassing parliament as much as possible.[142] Less subtle than Liberal economic policy had been in the 1920s, Tătărescu's government increasingly abandoned any pretense about its ties to industry. It increased import duties four times between 1932 and 1937 as well as investing directly in industry, offering subventions to individual companies, and legalizing cartels.[143]

While several of Romania's neighbors were turning toward a German-oriented foreign policy, the Liberal minister for foreign affairs, Nicolae Titulescu, set to work reinforcing a pro-French alliance in East Central Europe. Romania had been a member of the Little Entente since 1921, together with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, but in February 1933 Titulescu and his counterparts signed a "pact of reorganization" that strengthened the alliance in the event of German aggression. A new treaty with the Soviet Union followed, then a new alliance with Yugoslavia, Turkey, and Greece against Bulgaria. Titulescu strongly supported the League of Nations, and the League's failure to curtail Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia revealed how weak his carefully negotiated system of alliances actually was in the face of Italian or German aggression. Italy responded to Titulescu's hostility to the Abyssinian

campaign by no longer importing oil from Romania. Italy had been a major market, and the extent to which the Soviet Union was willing to interfere in the domestic politics of its allies became increasingly clear with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Humiliated by the weakness of the League of Nations and suspect because of his pro-Soviet foreign policy, the king forced Titulescu to resign and sent him into exile in the summer of 1936.[144]

The nationalist press strongly criticized Titulescu's pro-French foreign policy, arguing that it subordinated Romanian interests to those of humanitarianism, Freemasonry, communism, and world Jewry.[145] King Carol maintained an official policy of nonalignment until 1940, but trade ties brought Romania and Germany closer together from 1936 onward.[146] Shifting foreign policy and the growing popularity of fascism encouraged other politicians to embrace fascist politics. In 1934, Mihail Stelescu left the Legion to establish the Romanian Crusade, a fascist party purportedly financed by the king, which fizzled out soon after the legionaries murdered Stelescu in 1936.[147] The former National Peasantist prime minister, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, formed the Romanian Front in 1935. It staged fascist-style rallies and marches, argued for a closer relationship with Italy and Germany, used slogans such as "Romania for the Romanians," spoke of the need for a "national reawakening," and attacked "the reprehensible Romanian tolerance for foreigners."[148] Also in 1935, three leading antisemites – Nichifor Crainic, A. C. Cuza, and Octavian Goga – formed the National Christian Party as an umbrella ultranationalist party. Cuza and Goga soon expelled Crainic and campaigned on the core issues that had sustained LANC during the 1920s.[149] Despite their shared values and occasional efforts at cooperation, legionaries, Crusaders, Vaidists, and Cuzists regularly clashed in street battles, cultivating a culture of violence and muscular masculinity.[150] King Carol also took advantage of fascism's popularity by establishing a youth organization known as *Strajă Țarii* (The Sentry of the Country) modeled on the Hitler Youth and the legionary Blood Brotherhoods. Swearing "Faith and Work for Country and King," young sentries wore uniforms, attended summer camps, and performed voluntary labor for charitable causes. What *Strajă Țarii* lacked in popular appeal it made up for with generous scholarships and access to jobs.[151]

Under three dictators

The national elections of December 1937 marked the end of the National Liberal Party's time in power and the rise of the far right. The PNC's six weeks in government were most notable for the sudden increase in antisemitic legislation, some of which was revoked by its successors following international protests. Goga and Cuza revoked the citizenship of Jews who had been naturalized since World War One, and began the process of removing Jews from the civil service, expropriating Jewish-owned factories, preventing Jews from obtaining permits to sell alcohol, and banning Jewish newspapers.[152] These laws

reflected a consistent antisemitic agenda for which Cuza had been agitating since the 1890s, but they could be implemented only in an environment characterized by the collapse of democracy, hysterical racism, and the dominance of Nazi Germany in East Central Europe. Public celebrations of antisemitism accompanied these laws, including attacks on individual Jews, the closing of Jewish cultural associations, and forcing Jews to keep their shops open on the Sabbath.[153] Attacks on Jewish businesses caused financial chaos as production was halted and banks temporarily stopped issuing loans.[154]

King Carol II abolished the parliamentary system in February 1938 but kept many of its bureaucrats in place. Codreanu noted that most of the mayors and prefects under the royal dictatorship were Liberals or Liberal sympathizers, and the communist Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu writes that Carol's regime financed the same heavy industry that had flourished under Tătărescu.[155] Carol took firm measures against the Legion, but when the National Liberal and National Peasantist parties refused to dissolve, he allowed them to remain intact, albeit without the possibility of contending elections or carrying out propaganda.[156] He also took measures to limit regionalism by redrawing regional boundaries and appointing royal representatives tasked with "controlling and governing all public, administrative, economic, and social activity in the region."[157] Ethnic irredentism was firmly dealt with and the government pursued a strict policy of Romanianization.[158] Carol appointed the Orthodox patriarch, Miron Cristea, as his first prime minister. Keeping in mind that Iuliu Maniu had publicly refused to consent to seeing Carol become king because of his affair with Elena Lupescu, the patriarch was careful never to comment on Carol's love life.[159]

The last of Carol's governments, led by Ion Gigurtu, included a number of individuals sympathetic to Nazi Germany, including 3 legionaries and 13 Cuzists. In office from 4 July to 4 September 1940, it brought antisemitism back onto the official agenda.[160] Carol's minister of justice, Ion V. Gruia, described the legal policy under Gigurtu, while displaying the garbled logic and jargon characteristic of the period, as follows:

> For new realities, new rules of law. What constitutes the organic reality of the state is the Nation … From an ethical standpoint, this means a spirituality based on origin, i.e., the same ethnic origin. The national state cannot be achieved except through the nationalization of the professions. The inner life of professions – original and autonomous – is contained within the limits of the National State.[161]

In August 1940, Carol introduced a set of laws classifying Jews according to their religious practices or those of their parents, their membership of "the Jewish community," or having "Jewish blood." The government divided Jews into three categories in order to institutionalize antisemitic laws. Those who had (1) been naturalized before 30 December 1918, (2) families whose fathers

had fought in the Romanian army, and (3) others were exempt from the harshest of restrictions. The others had their rights to work or own businesses severely curtailed and found themselves having to do "community service" (*muncă de interes obştesc*). On that day, Jews also lost the right to marry Romanian citizens or to escape persecution by converting to Christianity.[162]

German expansion caused a number of borders to be revised in late summer 1940. Romania lost Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to the USSR in June; Romanian soldiers massacred local Jews while they retreated, including in one pogrom in Dorohoi in which over 200 people died.[163] Adding insult to injury, Romania then lost northern Transyvlania to Hungary in August, and Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria in September. Following large-scale protests, Carol abdicated in favor of his son Michael, who immediately appointed General Ion Antonescu as prime minister, alongside the new leader of the Legion, Horia Sima, as deputy prime minister. The National Legion-ary State, as it was known, was an explicitly fascist regime. Antonescu and Sima allied the country firmly to Nazi Germany and institutionalized a cul-ture of popular violence against Jews. They practised strict censorship of the press and created a parallel police force in which groups of legionaries carried out vigilante justice in the name of the state, including murdering their poli-tical enemies who had been imprisoned under Carol. Legionaries appointed themselves to public office, from the highest to the very lowest, and domi-nated public spaces with flags, marches, rallies, and music.[164] The new regime extended existing legal restrictions on Jewish worship and economic activities to include limits on actors, pharmacists, and doctors. On 5 October 1940, the state began "Romanianizing" Jewish property and businesses. Newly appoin-ted commissars ensured that no business employed more than its fair share of Jews and oversaw the systematic confiscation of Jewish real estate.[165]

The strained relationship between the Legion and Antonescu broke down in January 1941, when Sima launched a failed rebellion against the general. Legionaries carried out a brutal pogrom in Bucharest during three days of rebellion, arresting and torturing hundreds of Jews, devastating and looting synagogues, shops, and homes, and executing scores of people in the pro-cess.[166] Antonescu's regime arrested and harassed known legionaries from this point on, driving some into exile and effectively ending the Legion's influence on Romanian politics but leaving others free to participate in anti-Jewish actions as soldiers or bureaucrats under Antonescu's command.[167] The gen-eral's military dictatorship then began a more systematic program of exclud-ing Jews from public life through economic restrictions, deportations, forced labor, and mass murder, measures justified whenever possible by appeals to public law.[168] Antonescu invited advisors from the Nazi Reich Security Main Office (RSHA[169]) to help shape Jewish policy, and the recommendations of Gustav Richter, an SS officer attached to the German legation in Bucharest, guided Antonescu's legislative and bureaucratic approach to the Holocaust.[170]

Antonescu's government used baptism certificates and "certificates of nationality" issued by town halls to distinguish between Jews and citizens, causing a great deal of confusion and controversy in the process.[171] Certificates of nationality impacted other minorities as well, forcing groups such as the Csangos, Hungarian-speaking Catholics in Moldavia, to prove that they were "of Romanian origin" – a task that was frequently difficult if not impossible.[172] Throughout Antonescu's time in office, newspapers and radio equated Jews with Bolsheviks and described them as a mortal threat to the Romanian nation.[173] Between 1941 and 1944 the state organized Jews aged between 18 and 50 into labor brigades and forced them to carry out "community labour."[174] Failure to carry out orders satisfactorily resulted in beatings, solitary confinement, or extra duties.[175]

As they had done during the 1930s, Dr. Wilhelm Filderman and the Federation of Jewish Communities resisted Antonescu's antisemitic measures through legal challenges, frequent petitions, and communal support groups struggling to help both deportees and those who remained at home. Individuals also attempted to sabotage the Romanianization process through fraud, bribery, preemptively selling property to gentiles, or stalling the transfer of their properties.[176] Antonescu dissolved the Federation in December 1941, establishing the Jewish Center in its place, which functioned as a Romanian *Judenrat*, with all appointments to leadership positions having to be approved by Antonescu.[177] Those Jews who were able fled the country in difficult conditions with the support of Zionist groups and other Jewish associations.[178]

Ethnic cleansing

Romania began its attack on the Soviet Union as part of Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941. Four days earlier, Antonescu had ordered the evacuation of rural Jews in the region between the Siret and Prut rivers and had instructed the authorities in Galaţi to concentrate the city's Jews into a ghetto.[179] In Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, the army evacuated 40,000 people by 31 July 1941, "cleansing" 441 villages and small towns, and killing up to 14,850 people in a pogrom in the city of Iaşi that ended with thousands of Jews being forced into tightly packed "death trains," where many died from heat, thirst, and starvation.[180] The pogrom itself took place on 29–30 June and was a disorganized and gruesome affair involving local antisemites, police, and soldiers.[181] Tens of thousands of Jews fled before the Axis advance. Including those who were deported or conscripted into the Red Army, roughly 140,000–150,000 Jews from Bessarabia and northern Bukovina were living in the Soviet Union by February 1942. Between 35,000 and 45,000 of them did not survive the war.[182]

As the Romanian army advanced through Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, soldiers, gendarmes, German Einsatzgruppen D units, and local antisemites rounded up and murdered Jews in village after village, killing between 43,500 and 60,000 people during the month of July 1941.[183] Both regular

soldiers and members of designated "death squads" (*echipe de execuţii*) carried out the murders.[184] A number of massacres were also instigated and carried out by locals without the involvement of soldiers or gendarmes. In some instances, perpetrators had been or were affiliated with antisemitic organizations such as LANC, the Legion of the Archangel Michael, or the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, while others had been encouraged to attack Jews by observing decades of antisemitic policies implemented by the Romanian state.[185] Locals and bureaucrats competed with one another for the plunder of Jewish property.[186]

In late July 1941, the Romanian army organized Jews from northern Bessarabia into convoys and herded them across the River Dniester, only to have them sent back by German officers on the other side. Murder, plunder, rape, or death from hunger and disease took their toll on the roughly 32,000 Jews involved, and, in mid-August, the small number of survivors were eventually interned at the Vertujeni camp.[187] During August 1941 the authorities established transit camps at Vertujeni, Mărculeşti, Edineţi, and Secureni as well as at several smaller sites. Supervised by the gendarmerie, but without any provision for food, shelter, and medicine, the deplorable conditions in the camps meant that scores of people died each day, their bodies thrown into mass graves.[188] Romanian troops occupied Chişinău (as Kishinev was now called) on 16 July and soon massacred roughly 10,000 Jews. They concentrated the remaining Jews into a ghetto, where they were plundered, used for forced labor, and deported piecemeal across the River Dneister before the ghetto was liquidated on 30 October 1941.[189]

Further deportations became possible once the Tighina convention of 30 August 1941 gave Romania control of the territory between the Dniester and Bug rivers, which was renamed Transnistria. On Antonescu's orders, the Romanian authorities immediately began evacuating the Bessarabian transit camps and ghettos as well as deporting Jews from southern Bukovina and Dorohoi county. Many more Jews died in the process.[190] It was illegal for Jews to convert to avoid deportation, and those who converted to Romanian Orthodoxy or to Protestantism were deported for breaking the law. The small number of Jews who converted to Catholicism, however, remained alive thanks to the efforts of the papal nuncio Andrea Cassulo and to the Romanian authorities' hope that the pope might intervene on their behalf should the tide of war turn against them.[191] Resistance to deportation also came from Traian Popovici, the mayor of Cernăuţi, who argued against the deportations on the grounds that they were an unnecessarily barbaric solution to the Jewish problem; he exempted large numbers of Jews he designated "economically useful." Antonescu suspended the deportations on 13 November 1941, and so these people were able to remain in the ghetto another few months until deportations resumed in early June 1942.[192]

Whereas most Jewish deportees came from Bessarabia or Bukovina, Jews were deported from throughout the country if police identified them as communists.[193] Similarly, the regime interned and sometimes deported non-Orthodox

Christian groups, including Inochentists (a millennialist group from Bessarabia), Jehovah's Witnesses, and Baptists.[194] In May 1942, Antonescu gave the order to begin deporting Roma, initially targeting itinerant communities and those so poor that decision-makers deemed them a burden on or a danger to society. Gendarmes relied on vague eugenicist arguments about "public health" in selecting who should be deported, and targeted people from throughout the Old Kingdom. The regime claimed to be "settling" Roma in Transnistria, but it confiscated their horses and wagons and denied them food or the possibility of work. Large numbers of people died from hunger, cold, and disease in the winter of 1942/1943. The deportation of Roma continued until October 1942; and, of the 25,000 Roma deportees, an estimated 11,000 perished in Transnistria.[195]

Conclusion

The extent to which the mass murder of between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews, as well as other victim groups, was the logical conclusion of the previous 20 years of Romanian history is an open question. It is nonetheless possible to trace a number of historical threads connecting the "democracy" won at Mărăşeşti with the mass murders of 1941 to 1944.

First, the failure of the ruling elites to successfully convince the majority of Romanians that politicians had their best interests at heart encouraged voters to turn to extremist alternatives such as LANC and the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Romania failed to develop a democratic political culture that the majority of citizens believed in and wanted to see succeed.[196]

Second, nationalist rhetoric from 1848 onward had promised Romanians that ethnic privilege would accompany democracy and independence. Interwar Romanian democracy was premised on an exclusionary ethnic nationalism that had as its logical end result the elimination of other groups found on Romanian territory.[197]

Third, the incorporation of the new territories into Greater Romania normalized the idea that the state had the right – even the duty – to homogenize the population linguistically, religiously, and culturally. When officials organized population exchanges and ethnic cleansing during World War Two, they were following a similar logic to that which had inspired their predecessors over the past 20 years. It was no accident that most of the violence during the Holocaust took place in Bessarabia and Bukovina – two regions that had been the focus of some of the most intensive nation-building projects of the interwar period.[198]

Fourth, by 1941 the nationalist message that had formed the core of the school curriculum throughout the interwar period had produced a new generation of elites who believed strongly in the idea of Romanian ethnic privilege. Concerted efforts by state-builders to ensure that only ethnic Romanians received positions of authority in the new territories created a culture of chauvinism and entitlement that reached its pinnacle in wartime Romanianization policies.[199]

Fifth, the role of the Orthodox Church in legitimating and enforcing ethnic nationalism helped nationalists to justify the exclusion of minorities. As the representatives of sacred truths, priests, metropolitans, and the patriarch encouraged Romanians to believe that ethnic privilege was a divine right and that theirs was a holy struggle against enemies of the nation. Support from the missionary priests in Transnistria made the process of mass murder much more palatable for the perpetrators.[200]

Sixth, the focus on industrialization that dominated interwar economic policies produced a state that worked seamlessly together with the sorts of heavy industries that flourish during wartime. While parliamentary politics could no longer guarantee substantial spending on heavy industry by the late 1930s, authoritarian regimes allowed a continuation of the status quo for large industrialists. Industrialization also alienated rural voters who turned to fascist groups, such as the Legion, which promised to represent their interests more steadfastly than the Bucharest elites had.[201]

Seventh, the authoritarian tendencies of the National Liberal Party under Brătianu and Tătărescu and the failure of successive National Peasantist governments, together with the institutionalization of corruption first by the National Liberals and then by Carol's camarilla undermined any pretense that Romania was a democracy. Romanians were well prepared for authoritarian rule by the time Carol II declared his royal dictatorship.[202]

Finally, the failure of the League of Nations and Titulescu's system of alliances to guarantee the country's territorial integrity through peaceful diplomacy legitimated calls for diplomacy by strength of arms. The rise of Nazi hegemony in East Central Europe made it easier for fascist and right-wing parties to take power across the region. Ethnic cleansing was not the inevitable consequence of the Battle of Mărășești, but it was a phenomenon a long time in the making.

Notes

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6

INTERWAR BULGARIA

Populism, authoritarianism, and ethnic minorities

Christian Promitzer

At the end of September 1919, the Bulgarian prime minister, Aleksandar Stamboliyski[1] (1879–1923), having participated at the Peace Conference in Paris, returned to Sofia and gave a speech:

> We are coming back with a cadaver … Bulgaria is the only country now to which are applied the principles of barbarism and not the principles of Wilson; Bulgaria is the only country whose national problems were disregarded and which lost parts of its living body … We are going back to where we were 40 years ago. And they are putting us back after we have wasted all our national wealth for our national unity, after we shed the blood of 500,000 men of the most vital part of the population and after we experienced moments of hope that the civilized world, while proclaiming through the mouth of such a great man as the president of the United States such bright and humane principles, that this civilized world might really understand the cries and strivings of a small but heroic people and forgive it its intentional or unintentional errors and with readiness will satisfy its demands and by doing so will consolidate peace in the Balkans forever. But alas! The civilized world remains with its old tattered garb beneath which crackles the hellish fire of the animal and barbaric spirit.[2]

In order to understand this verdict, which would hover over Bulgaria during the interwar years, some clarifications are necessary: Bulgaria was a relatively young state; it had been founded in 1878 as a result of the Russian victory over the Ottoman Empire; until then, Bulgaria had been an Ottoman province for almost half a millennium. The Peace Treaty of San Stefano of 3 March 1878 assigned to the new state most of Macedonia, parts of eastern

Serbia, and parts of Ottoman Thrace. But Austria–Hungary challenged the treaty, and the Congress of Berlin some months later would revise its provisions, reducing this "Promised Land" to the modest scale of an autonomous petty princedom with large parts of the ethnic Bulgarian population remaining outside its borders.

From that time forward, the country's elites had been in a state of national expectation, hoping to acquire the lands promised at San Stefano. In 1908, Bulgaria gained full independence from the Ottoman Empire, and its prince, Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, who had ruled the country since 1887, became king. By that time, Bulgarian contemporaries believed that the liberation of the Bulgarian populations in the provinces of Macedonia and Thrace that were still under Ottoman rule was only a matter of time. However, in fall 1912, when Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria declared war on the Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarian army had to fight on two different fronts. Its bulk was engaged on the Thracian front to the east, while it could deploy only a small portion of its troops at the western theater of war, where the Serbian and Greek armies gained the high ground vis-à-vis the Ottoman detachments. Thus, after the victorious outcome of this First Balkan War the Bulgarian portion of Macedonia would be much less than the allies had promised the Bulgarian government before the inception of hostilities.

At that time, the Bulgarian elites had good reasons to consider the Slavic portion of Macedonia's population to be ethnic Bulgarians, while Serbia treated them as southern Serbs, and Greece used religious and historical argumentations to lay claim to that portion of the region's population that belonged to the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece. To realize its ambitions for Macedonia, in summer 1913 Bulgaria initiated hostilities against its former allies Serbia and Greece, thus launching the Second Balkan War. However, after initial success, Bulgaria suffered total defeat, since Romania and the Ottoman Empire intervened against it and encircled the country from the northeast and southeast. Hence, the Bulgarian territorial gains of the First Balkan War in eastern Thrace and Macedonia were partly lost, while Romania came into possession of Southern Dobrudja, a region that had been an essential part of Bulgaria since 1878.

The Bulgarian elites considered the results of the Second Balkan War a national catastrophe. Consequently, during World War One, the country's government would choose the side of the Central Powers, Germany and Austria–Hungary, since they promised Bulgaria the acquisition of the lost Macedonian booty. Indeed, after Serbia's defeat in fall 1915, Germany and the Habsburg Empire ceded the administration of Serbian Macedonia to Bulgaria. For some months in 1918, Bulgaria also came again into repossession of Southern Dobrudja – specifically, after the defeat of Romania, with whom the Central Powers had been likewise at war since 1916. However, this increase in territory would prove short-lived. The collapse of the Bulgarian army at the Macedonian Front in September 1918, against the combined power of the Entente troops, would initiate the breakup of the Central Powers' forces in all battle zones.

With the defeat of 1918, the dreams of regaining the national greatness of the San Stefano borders had been reduced to shambles. The Peace Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (27 November 1919) deprived Bulgaria of Macedonia, as well as of its coastal strip on the Aegean Sea and Southern Dobrudja. With this, the Bulgarian authorities had to deal with at least 250,000 refugees from these regions, who were crowded into internment camps, squatting in the houses of former non-Bulgarian inhabitants who had left the country, or living on the streets. Moreover, Bulgaria had to pay reparations each year in kind and in currency to Romania, Greece, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (hereafter SHS[3]). The whole scheduled sum amounted to 25 billion gold francs, which was about one-fifth of the national wealth. Only at the Lausanne Conference of 1932 would the reparations finally be suspended for the defeated countries of World War One.[4]

The Bulgarian nation showed all the signs of a deep crisis of collective identity. The consequences of defeat formed the contours of an unwelcome reality that provoked resentful and melancholic overtones. The historian Nikolay Poppetrov even speaks of "a collapse of ideas and imaginations about the future," which led to a "a sudden drop of confidence in parliamentary life and mechanisms as well as in the political parties."[5]

This assessment raises some serious questions about the reasons why the defective, but still working parliamentary system of prewar Bulgaria did not work anymore. The story of interwar Bulgaria starts, accordingly, with the government of the Agrarian Union (1919–1923). Strikingly, its program of reform constituted an exceptional counterpoint of "left populism" vis-à-vis all succeeding governments of interwar Bulgaria. Fascism figures as the third theme of this chapter; specifically, the Marxist interpretations of "fascist" rule offered by the Communist Party of Bulgaria and its leader Georgi Dimitrov (1882–1949) will play an important part in this chapter, as well as the discussion of this topic by Bulgarian and Western historiography.[6] The last part will deal with the issue of Bulgarian refugees from the neighboring countries and Bulgaria's ethnic minorities.

Chronology

In late September 1918, the defeated Bulgarian troops, retreating from the front, staged a revolt not far from the capital of Sofia, asking for the punishment of the politicians responsible for the war and proclaiming Bulgaria a republic. Aleksandar Stamboliyski, a gifted orator and leader of the Bulgarian National Agrarian Union, joined the rebels. Due to his pacifism he had spent the war years in prison together with other members of his party. The government was able to crush the revolt; King Ferdinand, however, abdicated a few days later in favor of his son Boris III. After an amnesty, Stamboliyski was again on the political scene and gained a relative majority in the elections of August 1919, so that he and his party were able to form a coalition cabinet.

Already in spring 1920 Stamboliyski called for snap elections. The Agrarians just missed gaining an absolute majority. In order to promote his reform program, Stambolyiski annulled the mandates of a dozen deputies. In a quasi-revolutionary style, the Agrarian government now espoused its prerogative over parliament, thrust aside the other parties, and commenced a far-reaching agrarian reform.

In foreign relations, the Agrarian government needed stability in order to realize its program of social reforms in the country and to safeguard the chances for the return of the Bulgarian refugees to their homesteads. This necessitated a moderate foreign policy, and – instead of revisionism – a focus on the protection of the Bulgarian minorities beyond the borders. The League of Nations rewarded this behavior by admitting Bulgaria as a member state. However, Article 19 of the covenant of the League did not exclude peaceful revisionism – which was a further motive for Stamboliyski to pursue a policy of rapprochement with Bulgaria's neighbors.[7]

The Agrarian government was already preparing to replace the Tarnovo constitution of 1879, when on 9 June 1923 it was brutally overthrown in a coup masterminded by a group of conspirators from the army, the so-called Military Union. The conspirators were supported by the bourgeois parties and the intelligentsia, since Stamboliyski's government had characterized elements of the former political elite as the culprits of war to be arrested.[8] The putschists consisted of social strata that had been uprooted by the war and were alarmed by the left-leaning measures of the Agrarian government, which allegedly had betrayed the country at the peace conference, specifically in regard to Macedonia. Some of the plotters were members of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), which had its territorial base, with state-like structures, in the district of Petrich in the southwestern corner of the country. The IMRO also resented Stamboliyski for having recently signed an agreement with the Kingdom of SHS that could be understood as entailing the abandonment of Bulgaria's revisionist claims to Macedonia. Soon after the coup, an IMRO gang captured the fugitive prime minister, tortured and murdered him.[9]

A right-wing government replaced that of the Agrarians. Its first head was Aleksandar Tsankov (1879–1959), a professor of political economy at Sofia University and former Social Democrat who believed in a strong and anti-liberal government. The parties that had supported the coup merged into the so-called Democratic Alliance. It was supposed to form the backbone of the regime, but soon turned out to be a crumbling amalgamation with several wings. In September 1923, Tsankov's government was able to quell a communist uprising. Consequently, the election of the new Bulgarian parliament in November took place in an atmosphere of fear. Tsankov's Democratic Alliance gained almost two-thirds of the deputies, while Agrarians and communists together scored less than 15%. In 1924, the incoming parliament passed the *Law for the Protection of the State*, banning the Communist Party. In retaliation, communists bombed St. Nedelya Church in Sofia on 25 April 1925,

killing about 200 members of the political and military elite. In the aftermath, the Military Union liquidated about 450 party members and sympathizers without trial.

In the sphere of interstate relations, Tsankov was impaired by the continued activities of IMRO in Greek and Yugoslav Macedonia. A Bulgarian–Yugoslav agreement directed against the Soviet Union and the communist threat therefore could not be realized.[10] Following the murder of one of its soldiers, the Greek army invaded Bulgaria on 22 October 1925 and occupied several villages. After the Bulgarian government protested at the League of Nations, the Greek government had to withdraw its troops and provide compensation for the moral and material damage.[11]

The media in Western Europe covered the excesses after the assault on St. Nedelya Church, with the result that Western banks refused to provide loans to assist the Bulgarian refugees.[12] In early 1926, King Boris, together with Atanas Burov (1875–1954), a prudent politician within the Democratic Alliance, replaced Tsankov with the moderate Andrey Lyapchev (1866–1933). The League of Nations now mediated the badly needed refugees' loan.[13] Lyapchev headed the government until June 1931, promulgating an amnesty and dissolving the Military Union. Before the parliamentary elections of 1927, Lyapchev allowed the foundation of the "Workers' Party" as the legal organization of the communists.

During the last year of Lyapchev's incumbency, the Great Depression had already had negative effects in Bulgaria. The indebtedness of the farmsteads and the extensive tillage due to the low level of agricultural technology made the situation of the peasantry worse. The government introduced a state monopoly on external trade with domestic cereal products. This provided for the peasants to be paid almost 50% above world market prices.[14] As for foreign policy, the start of Lyapchev's incumbency was marked by an assault on the part of IMRO in the town of Strumica in Yugoslav Macedonia. Thereupon, Romania, the Kingdom of SHS, and Greece sent a joint note to the Bulgarian government registering an urgent demand for the containment of armed groups. Bulgaria and Greece concluded an agreement on financial compensation for Greeks resettled from Bulgaria and Bulgarians resettled from Greece.[15] In several bilateral conferences from February 1929 until February of the following year, Bulgaria and the Kingdom of SHS, which in October 1929 renamed itself Yugoslavia, negotiated the facilitation of border traffic and the abolition of cross-border ownership of agricultural land within 10 kilometers from the border.[16]

In 1931, the People's Bloc, a coalition of centrist parties with the most influential fraction of the now segmented Agrarian Union, won the elections and ended the rule of the Democratic Alliance. From the beginning, the new government had to deal with internal strife and competition. Meanwhile, the economy fostered the polarization of the political climate. In the 1932 election to the city assembly of Sofia, the Labor Bloc, an affiliate of the Workers' Party, won the majority of seats. After that, the Sofia district court annulled most of the Labor

Bloc's mandates, while the majority of the parliament, acting on the basis of the 1924 Law for the Protection of the State annulled the mandates of the Workers' Party.[17] Meanwhile, Tsankov had left the Democratic Alliance together with its right wing, setting the right wing up as the National Social Movement (Narodno Sotsialno Dvizhenie, hereafter NSD). This anti-parliamentary party sympathized with the Nazis.

The coalition of the People's Bloc was not able to develop a coherent foreign policy. The anti-Bulgarian Balkan Pact concluded by Greece, Turkey, Romania, and Yugoslavia on 9 February 1934 was a setback for any further Bulgarian attempt at peaceful revision.[18] King Boris meanwhile succeeded in establishing himself as a factor in foreign relations.[19] In 1933 and 1934, he and Yugoslav King Aleksandar met each other several times: While the Yugoslav head of state asked that IMRO be disbanded, Boris in turn raised the issue of minority rights for the Bulgarians in Vardar Macedonia and in the "Western outskirts," i.e., Pirot and Tsaribrod (today's Dimitrovgrad) in eastern Serbia. The meetings remained without result, but they contributed to a relaxation in the relations between these two countries.[20]

With the support of the revived Military Union, Colonel Damyan Velchev (1883–1954), who had already been active in the 1923 putsch, launched a fresh coup on 19 May 1934, overthrowing the parliamentary government; this also preempted Tsankov's planned "March on Sofia," after the example of Mussolini. This time the plotters collaborated with the small political circle *Zveno* ("Link") of Kimon Georgiev (1882–1969). Zveno considered the multiparty system outdated and favored authoritarian rule. It did not promote itself as a possible regime party, however. Rather it advocated a government of experts without parties and was therefore the Military Union's ideal partner.[21] Georgiev became prime minister. His new government disbanded his own organization together with all other parties and the parliament as a whole. This entailed the suspension of the Tarnovo Constitution of 1879, since the new authoritarian government ruled by decree and imposed press censorship. It replaced local self-government with central administration and the trade unions with a united organization under state control. The regime established diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union and promoted rapprochement with Yugoslavia by suppressing IMRO.[22] The murder of Yugoslav King Aleksandar on 9 October 1934 in Marseille by an IMRO member, however, destroyed any hope of warmer relations with Yugoslavia.[23]

After the suppression of the parties and in view of the petty social base of Zveno's members, King Boris exploited the situation to aggrandize his power, dismissing Georgiev in January 1935.[24] Within a relatively short period, the King imposed a series of different persons as prime ministers. Each time, the selected person approximated the King's personal views more closely, while the influence of the Military Union decreased until it was dissolved in early 1936. In November 1935, the King appointed Georgi Ivanov Kyoseivanov (1884–1960) as prime minister; he would serve for several years.

In the period between the dismissal of Georgiev and the end of 1936, the King's governments occasionally included single representatives of the banned political parties, even from the NSD. But the handpicked pro-monarchist nonparty experts were always in the absolute majority within the cabinet.[25] In 1936, the leaders of five former parliamentary parties asked the King to restore the Tarnovo Constitution and to lift the ban on their political organizations. This resulted at least in an easing of censorship and of the prohibition of public meetings.[26]

In this period, Fascist Italy's increasing levels of confrontation with Yugoslavia induced Belgrade to consider how to safeguard its eastern flank in the event of war. This was the reason for the Yugoslav–Bulgarian Perpetual Friendship Pact of 24 January 1937.[27]

In 1937, Kyoseivanov called for elections on a regional level and in 1938 on a national level to endow his rule with a certain legitimacy. No party-lists, only individual candidates, could stand for election. The opposition held fewer than 40% of the seats in the new chamber, while the government organized its supporters in the so-called "majority of the house." A side effect of Kyoseivanov's orientation toward the electorate was the introduction of suffrage for married women or widows with children.[28]

Meanwhile, the Yugoslav–Bulgarian Pact had weakened the Balkan Pact. This would open the door to the Salonika Agreement, which Bulgaria and the states of the Balkan Entente signed on 31 July 1938. The accord was a non-aggression pact that abolished the arms restrictions that had been imposed on Bulgaria at Neuilly-sur-Seine.[29] The Munich Agreement of 30 September 1938 led to the transfer of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia to the Third Reich (described in Chapter 3). This annexation led to the appropriation of other parts of Czechoslovakia by Hungary under the First Vienna Award of 2 November 1938 (described in Chapter 4). Both transactions formed a welcome precedent for Bulgarian revisionism in regard to Southern Dobrudja.[30]

At the turn of the year 1939/1940, Kyoseivanov organized snap elections, again without the participation of party-lists, in order to strengthen the pro-German orientation in foreign policy.[31] By use of police control and other manipulative measures, the government secured an overwhelming majority, leaving the opposition with fewer than 15% of the seats. In February 1940, Bogdan Filov (1883–1945), minister of education, replaced Kyoseivanov as prime minister. Thereafter, the Bulgarian government would soon abandon the policy of neutrality and decide to strike up an alliance with the Third Reich.

Agrarian populism

The rule of the Bulgarian National Agrarian Union, which lasted about three years (1920–1923), was an outstanding period of social reform in interwar Bulgaria, which, at the time, shared in the general crisis of capitalism. Immediately after the war the increase in the cost of subsistence in Bulgaria

was one of the highest among European countries.[32] The social reformism the Agrarian Union wanted to promote was therefore colored by the needs of overcoming the economic hardships of the peasants, with their share of about 80% of the Bulgarian population, and the misery of the refugee masses in the country. At the core of the Agrarian program were the terms "people's rule" and "peasant democracy," which might seem to be incompatible with parliamentary elections respected the first principle, the second one lodged sovereignty only in the peasants.[33]

The corporatist concept of the Agrarians would ultimately have resulted in the replacement of the parliamentary system, based on universal male suffrage, with a corporatist system. Other elements that went beyond traditional Bulgarian parliamentarianism included the notion of a "peasant dictatorship," the principle of the imperative mandate, which made deputies dependent on the will of their voters, and the abolition of a proportional vote for the parliamentary elections of April 1923 that brought the Agrarians a crushing majority.[34] The corporatist model of the Bulgarian regime may remind one of the Italian Fascist concept of corporatism, but it belonged to a different tradition: its base was the peasants as the overwhelming majority in Bulgarian society. Peasant democracy was supposed to be a model that was organized from the bottom up, with committees in individual villages. This may rather be compared with the Soviets or workers' councils in Russia (albeit with peasants replacing the workers). All these elements show that the rule of the Agrarian Union and the central personality of Stamboliyski as its leader were somewhere in the middle between parliamentarianism on the one hand and the Russian workers' councils on the other. One has also to refer to the important role of the central party organization and of its local branches as well as to the Orange Guard as the party militia.[35]

Instead of going into detail about the measures adopted by the peasant government, I mention only the introduction of compulsory secondary education, and of a compulsory labor service for men and women, which was meant to support the agrarianist utopia of cooperative labor. Initially it also included weapons training, since the aforementioned Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine limited the use and the size of the regular army. The government also strengthened agrarian cooperatives and, by ample use of its slogan of "labor property," initiated a huge land reform.

The essence of "labor property" was the principle that the state ought to provide a peasant with enough property for direct use in order to sustain himself and his family.[36] Originally, this had been the case after the demise of Ottoman rule in Bulgaria, which had brought the large-scale landholding of Muslim owners to an end, so that a relatively equal distribution of land had come into being, at least temporarily. But population growth in the course of the next decades would soon lead to the increase of dwarf estates due to the principle of the equal division of landed property among members of the next generation. The demographic growth that increased the demand for land also

boosted the land prices. Thus, the piecemeal sale of land became attractive, but only members of the wealthier class could afford to make such a purchase – which consequently led to the reestablishment of large-scale landholdings. This had been the situation before the eruption of World War One.[37] After its end, a quarter of a million mainly rural refugees led to a need for the further redistribution of landed property. The Bulgarian historian Marko Dimitrov has recently suggested that giving land to the incoming refugees, rather than to existing small landholders, was the main point of the agrarian reform.[38]

After extensive discussion, the government of the Agrarian Union established a state land fund in 1920. All the land of absentee owners above four hectares was confiscated. All other landholders were allowed either a maximum holding of 30 hectares of arable land per household, if they cultivated the land themselves, or a maximum of 10 hectares, if they did not cultivate it themselves, while different ceilings were valid for wooded and pastureland. Everything beyond these thresholds would be incorporated into the state land fund for redistribution to the landless and dwarf-holders. Reimbursement for the confiscated estates was based on the average local market price prevailing between 1905 and 1915 and paid in a degressive mode, which meant that a large-scale landowner would get relatively less compensation the more "excess" land he owned. There were legal and illegal outlets to escape confiscation: a large landowner could retain his property, if he promised either to change over to fruit or vegetable production or to turn the land over to a manufacturing plant; bribery of officials was also an option.[39]

In 1921, the second stage of the land reform was introduced: about one-eighth of the land of the monasteries, and also properties of agricultural banks or the state itself which were not cultivated, were added to the state land fund. Rural laborers, landless peasants, and dwarf-holders could buy land at 20% above the average local market price between 1905 and 1915 in installments over a 20-year period. Despite hopes that it would accumulate about 230,000 hectares, the state land fund had disposed of only 82,000 hectares when the Agrarian government was toppled. By that time about 76,000 families had acquired (additional) land to make a living, while 18,000 families had been directly settled on state land.[40]

After the coup of 9 June 1923, the land distribution of the Agrarians was stopped, and 23,000 hectares were returned to the former owners and the monasteries. With the Law on Labor Farms of 1 August 1924 the Democratic Alliance introduced its version of agrarian reform, which retained the maximum holding of 30 hectares, although relaxing that limit for estates was managed in an exemplary way so that their maximum was increased to 150 hectares, while families with more than 4 members could expand the maximum by 5 hectares per each additional family member. In this way, about 42,000 hectares could be accumulated, but the fund was supplemented by state and communal land, so that the whole amount of land available for distribution was about 300,000 hectares by 1927. The agrarian reforms had

the consequence that the average landholding decreased from 6.96 hectares in 1908 to 5.40 in 1934. After the end of the second wave of land redistribution there was a minor third wave in the years between 1935 and 1940, when each of 40,000 families acquired 0.11 hectares on average.[41]

Finally, one has to address the strained relationship between the Agrarians and the Orthodox Church: Stamboliyski considered the role of the rural clergy an impediment to the modernization of the villages via secular education. The confiscation of monastery lands for agrarian reform and the governmental takeover of the building of the Sofia Theological Seminary for the newly founded Agricultural Faculty were other reasons for the strained relationship between the government and the higher echelons of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.[42] The Agrarian government was not against the Church, however; rather, it demanded its reform. In 1920, the parliament passed a law calling for a new constitution for the Bulgarian Exarchate, which would foster grassroot initiatives within the Church. Against the temporizing resistance of the bishops this measure indeed instigated a process of reform within the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and produced a new constitution, but, due to the coup of 9 June 1923, it would not be ratified by the secular authorities.[43]

Rise and fall of "long fascism"

In the early 1960s, the German historian Ernst Nolte caused a stir by his publishing intriguing studies on different types of fascism. He was among the first Western historians to offer an assessment of the significance of the Bulgarian putsch of 9 June 1923, which he compared to the March on Rome conducted by Mussolini's Fascist followers on 30 October 1922 and Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch in Munich on 8–9 November 1923. According to Nolte, the Italian and German incidents marked the birth of two different kinds of fascism. As for the Bulgarian coup, however, he rejected the suggestion that it should be seen as having been "fascist."[44]

However, Bulgarian historiography during the communist period (1944–1989) described as "fascist" not only the 1923 putschists but also all subsequent Bulgarian governments up to 9 September 1944. The author of this interpretation is none other than Georgi Dimitrov, who was one of the leaders of the communist insurrection in Bulgaria in September 1923. After the failed uprising, Dimitrov went into exile and started to work for the Communist International in Moscow. Among his comrades, he would come to be highly respected for having successfully defied the forged indictment for arson in connection with the Reichstag fire of 27 February 1933. Thereafter, Dimitrov would lead the illegal Communist Party of Bulgaria from Moscow, where he also acted as head of the Communist International. During the Moscow trials of 1936–1938 he organized, or at least participated in, the persecution, arrest, conviction, and execution of Bulgarian comrades who were actually his competitors.[45] In December 1945, he returned to his home country after more than 20 years of absence. Dimitrov became

prime minister of Bulgaria in November 1946. Everything he said would obtain, so to speak, an indisputably authoritarian character. One has to keep these circumstances – personal absence, but political intervention from outside – in mind, to understand how Dimitrov came to the assessment that fascism in Bulgaria had lasted for about two decades. In two speeches in 1946 and 1947, Dimitrov mentioned this interval.[46] Also the first paragraph of the 1947 constitution of the Bulgarian People's Republic explicitly mentioned "the fight of the Bulgarian people against the monarcho-fascist dictatorship."[47]

A brief look at recent Bulgarian history reveals that during these 20 years a homogeneous "fascist" regime had not existed. It would be difficult to explain the fact that Lyapchev's government was voted out democratically in June 1931, or the motives of the "fascist" group that successfully toppled another putative "fascist" regime in May 1934. Dimitrov was apparently aware of the weaknesses of his narrative, and, in a speech in December 1948, he mentioned a "breakthrough in the front of the fascist dictatorship in the summer of 1931," by which he apparently meant the elections of 1931.[48]

The fact that Dimitrov himself had suggested the 1931 breakthrough offered a loophole in the official narrative. From the late 1960s, individual Bulgarian historians would use it to develop their own interpretations of the interwar period, which deviated slightly from those of the regime. They emphasized the lack of a fascist mass party, the strong role of King Boris after 1935, and the retention of parliamentary institutions. They consequently raised doubts about the "fascist" character of the governments between 1923 and 1940.[49] Finally, only the governments of Bogdan Filov (1940–1943) and Dobri Boshilov (1943–1944), who collaborated with the Third Reich and its allies, remained as "fascist" ones.

Historians from other socialist countries, such as the Hungarian Miklós Lackó, assisted their Bulgarian colleagues in their endeavor. Lackó preferred to speak of "fascisization" instead of "fascism" and, with respect to the Balkans, mentioned that "[t]he still very homogeneous rural structure of these societies resisted a broader expansion of fascism."[50] Among Bulgarian historians, Vladimir Migev, in particular, took over Lackó's more flexible wording, claiming that the Balkan variant of fascism "is characterized by a weaker degree of fascisization and a considerable mix of dictatorial and purely fascist elements (at least until World War Two)."[51] In 1990, after the end of the communist regime, Migev published his most intriguing account of the succession of authoritarian regimes in Bulgaria. He concluded that no single regime in Bulgaria from 1923 to 1944 had been fascist, although all of them were authoritarian to varying degrees, with the regime of Zveno as the most authoritarian one. The tendency toward fascisization, however, increased with the start of World War Two in the Balkans.[52]

From "fascist" regimes to fascist movements

Fascism in interwar Bulgaria was also an issue for Western historians, beginning in the 1960s. But the Western literature on this topic is not so substantial,

as one might have expected; among the global or at least Europe-wide surveys of fascist movements one can find several that, although otherwise covering southeastern Europe, omit Bulgaria, possibly because they consider the fascist phenomena in Bulgaria to be too insignificant.[53]

Ernst Nolte was among the first to treat the Bulgarian case in a comparative perspective. He pointed to the fact that, in the 1920s, fascism could have established itself more easily in Bulgaria than in the adjacent countries due to its defeats both in the Second Balkan War and in World War One. The weak bourgeoisie, IMRO, and the military, whom Stamboliyski's government had altogether suppressed, formed a critical mass, which was finally triggered in the 1923 coup. The doings of Tsankov's government during these events and in the following two years were "an inventory of atrocities." But it was still not fascist, since Tsankov "ruled against a parliamentary minority with a parliamentary majority (admittedly achieved by terrorist methods)."[54] In their 1980 accounts of fascism, Julian Linz and Stanley Payne, the latter again in his history of fascism of 1995, and even Roger Griffin in 1991, followed the trail that Nolte had blazed. Roger Griffin identifies as two pre-conditions for the rise of a significant fascist movement after 1918 "a severe structural crisis" and "a vigorous völkisch [illiberal nationalist] subculture" inherited from the nineteenth century.[55] However, where traditional conservative forms of politics were thriving, many naturally remained true to them rather than taking a leap into the unknown world of revolutionary, modernist politics promised by fascism.[56] Contrary to Nolte, Griffin sees in fascism a profound *anti-conservative* drive to move beyond the present chaotic, disembedded state of the world toward a new order, which will provide new sources of meaning, purpose and transcendence, at both the individual and the communal level.

As for Zveno, Nolte calls its regime "authoritarian."[57] Wolf Oschlies agrees with Nolte in this regard, but points to numerous commonalities with Italian Fascism, due to the fact that Zveno was striving for a "national rebirth" under an authoritarian government.[58] With regard to the Bulgarian governments, both of Georgiev and of his successors, Nolte holds the opinion that they believed that they were offering only makeshift solutions.[59] The German historian Joachim Hoppe in this context lucidly refers to a "state order deliberately kept in a state of limbo."[60] According to Julian Linz, the authoritarian governments of the King "pre-empted and later prevented the emergence of an appealing fascist movement."[61] Stanley G. Payne argues that the "right-wing royalist dictatorship … largely resisted the trappings of fascism,"[62] thereby following "the standard 'Balkan model' of a rightist authoritarian system under the crown."[63] Like Admiral Miklós Horthy's Hungary and Marshal Józef Piłsudski's Poland, it was a limited authoritarian regime "that preserved certain liberal and parliamentary forms."[64] Roger Griffin shares this opinion, because the Bulgarian regime (as many others in East Central Europe) lacked "an 'extra-systemic' revolutionary movement, … [and] native fascist movements, such as the mimetic Nazi group led by Tsankov, got nowhere," when being confronted with "an authoritarian (and superficially fascistized) regime from above."[65]

The sociologist Michael Mann characterizes the regime of King Boris in Bulgaria from 1935 onward as a semi-reactionary authoritarian regime undertaking only "limited modernist moves."[66] In his history of fascism, the German historian Wolfgang Wippermann describes the "royal dictatorships" in the Balkans[67] – employing a peculiar term that the German historian Holm Sundhaussen had introduced[68]– as *Bonapartist*.

How did Bulgarian historiography since 1989 deal with these insights? Its main protagonist is certainly Nikolai Poppetrov, who before 1989 had already evaluated Western literature on the authoritarian systems in the interwar Balkans. He considers the 1923 plotters a heterogeneous group that included true adherents of early Italian Fascism, those who, like Aleksandar Tsankov, wanted to establish a reduced democratic order under strong control of a right-wing government, and also those who wanted to reinstitute the old bourgeois parties in a parliamentary system. Considering these diverse tendencies, Tsankov's government exhausted itself in the annulment of most of the Agrarian legislation. With regard to the repression and reciprocal murders and assaults of the Right and the Left up to 1925, Poppetrov characterizes the situation of as "civil war in practice."[69]

In his biography of Atanas Burov, Zhoro Tsvetkov describes the former's inner strife in view of the coup which he had actually welcomed. Burov knew that the coup involved "dirty work," but he rejected the brutal style of Tsankov.[70] Valeri Kolev in turn describes how Tsankov's government purged the city and municipal councils of mayors and representatives from the ranks of the Agrarian Union and – after the crushing of the uprising in September 1923 – also of communists. The provisional commissions, appointed by the government, replaced the legal self-governing bodies for almost a year, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs further on also purged these commissions of members of those parties, which – like the Social Democrats and some smaller bourgeois parties – had meanwhile withdrawn their support from Tsankov's government.[71]

According to Poppetrov, the voting out of the Democratic Alliance in 1931 allowed a renewed strengthening of authoritarian tendencies. Thenceforward, the supporters of these tendencies sought a "genuine" authoritarian government that would get rid of left-wing currents and restore the unity of the nation.[72] The various difficulties of the government of the People's Bloc gave those tendencies an additional boost, with Zveno as the most energetic, albeit not the strongest one among them.[73]

Poppetrov classifies the regimes after the coup of 19 May 1934 up to World War Two as *authoritarian*. They attempted to modernize the administration and to revive the economy by state intervention, but they did not take on fascist traits. Even when they celebrated a publicly cultivated kind of nationalism, they tried to marginalize open revisionism and racism.[74] In the words of Stoyan Nikiforov (1888–1945), who in 1938 was minister of trade, industry, and labor, "that which we create, is neither a dictatorship, nor Fascism or Hitlerism: it is an improved and guided democracy."[75]

Governmental influence on social life, especially in the field of culture, was significant. The regime welcomed the Orthodox Church as a supporter of the nation, state, and monarchy and took care to arrange for obligatory religious and moral instruction in the schools. Reversing the grassroot operations of the Agrarians in the early 1920s, the government prompted the Church to change its internal organization moving from the principle of "*izbornost*," i.e., the election of a bishop by a collective organ of the Church, toward a presentation of the candidates for eparchies by the Holy Synod to the government for selection. But in this respect the government did not find supporters even among the bishops.[76]

The regime was not homogeneous, however. In 1936, the minister of justice, Dimitar Peshev (1894–1973), the person who in 1943 would be preeminent in preventing the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews to the extermination camps, was engaged to introduce voluntary civil marriage, but failed due to the opposition of the clergy.[77] Until the onset of World War Two the regime at least allowed a certain freedom of speech, which was reflected in the public statements of actors, former politicians, and scholars against antisemitism and racial theories.[78]

Attempts of the regime to found a single political party failed in the long run, because the government tended to quell all political activities and thus regarded even sympathetic activities as suspicious.[79] With the outbreak of war in September 1939 the course of the regime would harden: It started to supervise schools, associations, and cultural organizations more strictly and, in 1940, it strengthened its control of the younger generation by establishing the state youth organization *Brannik* ["Fighter"].[80]

If the Bulgarian regimes after 19 May 1934 were, altogether, only "authoritarian," what is left of the notion of "fascism"? Actually, the focus of Bulgarian historiography since 1989 has changed from "fascist" regimes to fascist political movements. These movements competed with each other, were partly autochthonous foundations and partly, even if only by name, imitations first of Italian and later of German fascism.[81] Poppetrov divides their activities into three periods:

1. The period of early fascism or proto-fascism, when organizations propagated ideas they had taken over from Italian Fascism. Their social base consisted of reserve officers from the middle class who shared wartime experiences.
2. The years from the second half of the 1920s until the coup of 19 May 1934, which brought along an ardent development of fascist organizations, were already partly influenced by Nazism. Reserve officers still played an important role, but increasingly also grammar school pupils and students likewise did so.
3. The development of ideologically fully fledged fascist movements during the authoritarian governments in the second half of the 1930s that were socially dominated by the younger generation and some intellectuals.[82]

Out of 11 formations that Poppetrov considers to be important for the history of fascism in Bulgaria, one has to mention at least 4 of them:

1. The political circle Zveno: it could be characterized as pseudo-fascist. Originally it was an elitist think tank that aimed to counsel the government of Andrey Lyapchev from a radical viewpoint, which included modernization of the administration, education, economy, and agriculture, as well as support for the poor, raising the national spirit with the help of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, fighting against "*partizanstvo*" (a derogatory term for the party system), and coming to terms with Bulgaria's neighboring states.[83] Zveno had only a few hundred members. It borrowed from Marshal Józef Piłsudski's authoritarian model in Poland, Kemal Atatürk's regime model in Turkey, and even from the Soviet Union, due to the strong role of the state apparatus in regard to modernization of the economy. From Italian Fascism, Zveno borrowed the idea of corporatism and of state intervention in order to mediate between labor and capital as well as the rejection of parliamentarism and political parties. But the Zvenari opposed the idea of a mass party and likewise of a Duce or Führer and did not even promote active revisionism.[84]

2. Alexandar Tsankov's NSD of 1932, by contrast, tended toward becoming a mass party. It declared its sympathies with Italian Fascism and German Nazism but claimed originality for itself. Antisemitism did not play a significant role. It demanded an economic democracy that would replace class struggles. In the local elections of 1933, the party won about 10% of the vote and allegedly possessed almost 200,000 members in 1934.[85]

3. After the coup of 19 May, the nonparty regime, within tight boundaries, allowed the existence of far-right formations. Their membership consisted mainly of pupils and students. The regime repeatedly banned these groups when necessary, but these formations continued to exist in a semi-legal way. This shows the regime's uncertainty as to how to deal with them. They represented both a possible ideological pillar and a certain danger, since they were under the influence of Nazi Germany. One of them was the Legionary movement, which had its roots in the late 1920s and was the first organization to espouse pronounced antisemitic ideas. By the end of the 1930s it would comprise about 75,000 members.[86]

4. Another formation was the Alliance of the Fighters for the Progress of Bulgarianhood (Sayuz na ratnitsite za napredaka na balgarshtinata). Founded in 1936, the Fighters were clearly oriented toward the Third Reich. Consequently, they asked for the exclusion of Jews and other "aliens" from Bulgarian society. In 1939, they had more than 12,000 members.[87]

This incomplete representation of the Bulgarian discussion about fascist groups has one drawback. It does not reflect the concept of *generic fascism*,

investigated by Roger Griffin and Emilio Gentile among others. While the latter characterizes homogenizing totalitarianism and fascist self-representation as a political religion, bringing its "sacralisation of politics" into the foreground, Griffin underscores its revolutionary character by its combat against "the allegedly degenerative forces of contemporary history (decadence) by bringing about an alternative modernity and temporality (a 'new order' and a 'new era') based on the rebirth or palingenesis of the nation." Both authors thereby underscore the modernist character of fascism.[88]

Situated on the periphery of Europe in an overwhelmingly agrarian society, interwar Bulgaria offers a rich example to show the practicability of this concept of fascism. Actually, James Frusetta and Filip Lyapov have dealt with it. Frusetta, who has researched the ideology of three fascist organizations, namely the NSD, the *Legionaries* and the *Fighters*, claims that "Bulgarian fascists adapted and adopted a traditional view of national identity and the nation-state in Bulgaria."[89] Consequently, "a Bulgarian national fascist ideology was never clearly articulated." The "national revolution" they offered, was unclear and scarcely distinguishable from the concepts of the regime, so that they could not be a real challenge for it. This drawback had to do with the fact that the concept of modernity was still not finished in Bulgaria, so that a fascist quest for an "alternative modernity" was not indicated. Thus, despite the invocation of "national rebirth," even the most extreme organizations put the continuation of the nineteenth-century national renaissance, rather than the realization of revolutionary aims, in the foreground.[90] Lyapov, in turn, even stresses the anti-modernist stance of the Bulgarian far right – which is also in conflict with the approach of generic fascism.[91]

Another circumstance should not be overlooked. The legitimate questioning of the simplified contexts of Soviet theories on fascism may go too far in neglect of the dark sides of capitalism in a country of the European periphery. It is evident that in the Bulgarian context emerging radical right-wing formations and authoritarian regimes were foremost intent on banning left-wing organizations of the working class and the peasants and ousting the country's Muslim minorities. This happens during a deep crisis, not only of the political system (liberal democracy), but also of capitalism (exploitation of wage labor and small landed property).

The refugees …

The issue of minorities in interwar Bulgaria is closely connected with the 250,000 Bulgarian refugees. For the Bulgarian public "the refugee presence served as a constant reminder of national failure because Bulgaria lost territories, perceived as part of the national homeland, to all of its neighbors." But on the other hand, it soon became clear that "[t]he refugee question functioned as a potent symbol of national unity and martyrdom."[92]

According to official figures, from 1919 up to 1928, about 107,000 Bulgarian refugees arrived from Macedonia, specifically 86,572 from Aegean or Greek Macedonia and 20,323 from Vardar or Yugoslav Macedonia.[93] For the period from 1912 to 1926 other tallies reveal that 11,104 of the refugees originated from the "western outskirts" of Bulgaria, i.e., the former Bulgarian districts of Bosilevgrad and Tsaribrod, 42,308 from the western or now Greek part of Thrace, 62,998 from the eastern or Turkish part of Thrace (whereby most of them had left this region already by the end of World War One), and 27,912 from Dobrudja, which was under Romanian control.[94] These figures, together with those on Macedonian refugees, came to about a quarter of a million people (about 55,000 families) and corresponds with the number of 221,191 refugees (or 51,931 families) that the Bulgarian government had counted by 1925, when it applied for the refugee loan at the League of Nations. One has to keep in mind that not all of those who had immigrated to Bulgaria asked the government for support or achieved a status as refugees; so the actual number of immigrants was much higher and probably amounted to 300,000 to 500,000 people according to internal assessments of the Bulgarian government.[95]

The decision to ask for an international loan was the result of the understanding on the part of the Bulgarian government about the futility of trying to solve the issue of refugees through bilateral agreements with its neighboring countries.[96] The loan was mediated by the League of Nations, which also supervised its execution. Because of the efforts of Foreign Minister Burov, the League in 1928 granted a second loan of about £5 million for infrastructure from which the refugees also benefited.[97] In regard to the first loan, Romania, Greece, and the Kingdom of SHS had declared their consent provided only that "in principle, the land chosen for new settlement should be a considerable distance (50 kilometers) from any frontier of the three neighboring States."[98] Although this demand was not fully respected, more than a third of all refugees found a new home in southeastern Bulgaria and were concentrated in the district of Burgas at the Black Sea.[99] According to Bulgarian sources, at least 72% of the refugees did not have the means for subsistence and settlement. These were mainly former peasants who constituted the majority of the refugees. A *General Direction for the Accommodation of Refugees* took care of the allocation of farmland, which originated from state, communal, and uncultivated properties as well as from Turks and Greeks who had left Bulgaria. The government furthermore organized an action program for the drainage of swamplands, so that it could allocate altogether 100,000 to 110,000 hectares to refugees.[100]

The principle of population exchange, first in a voluntary and then in a compulsory way, was considered justified according to international law because it was thought that the ethnic homogenization of states would ease tensions between the majority populations and ethnic minorities. Thus, simultaneously with the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine, the Bulgarian and Greek governments signed a Convention Respecting Reciprocal Emigration of Minorities on 27

November 1919. During the rule of the Agrarian Union this convention did not have much effect; there was little pressure on the Greeks to leave, since their transfer would have curbed the influx of ethnic Bulgarians from Aegean Macedonia and western Thrace.[101] But in the years 1924–1925 most members of the Greek minority were compelled to leave Bulgaria. Between 1920 and 1926 altogether about 50,000 Greeks emigrated, so that their share decreased from about 1% in 1920 to 0.2% or 10,564 (of whom 4,146 had Greek citizenship) in 1926.[102]

The whole process had ramifications that went beyond Greek–Bulgarian relations. It was the indirect consequence of the Greek defeat in its war with Turkey in 1919–1922. This "Asia Minor catastrophe" induced population transfers of 1.2 million Eastern Orthodox persons from Turkey and of about 350,000–400,000 Muslims from Greece. Partly post hoc, the Treaty of Lausanne of July 1923 would confirm the legality of this forced mass migration. The quantitative disparity between Greek and Muslim refugees led to a shortage of housing in Greece, which in turn induced the Greek authorities to enact repressive measures against its domestic Bulgarian minority, so that they would be compelled to leave their homesteads and take refuge in Bulgaria. This, in turn, induced the Bulgarian authorities to apply reciprocal measures against their domestic Greek minority with the aim of offering the empty Greek homesteads for the Bulgarian refugees.[103] From the mid-1920s on, the rest of the Greek communities in Bulgaria would pursue the course of "ethnic mimicry" and assimilation.[104]

…and Bulgaria's domestic minorities, 1919–1940

Among the variety of the other ethnic minorities in Bulgaria – Turks, Roma, Pomaks, Jews, Armenians, Gagauz – the Turks and Pomaks, both of whom are Muslims, are especially important for understanding interwar Bulgarian politics.

During the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 and thereafter, several hundred thousand Turks and other Muslims had left the country. The main settlement areas of the remaining Turks were in the eastern parts of the country. Formally, the Congress of Berlin of 1878 guaranteed freedom of religion for all inhabitants. In 1909, after Bulgaria had become independent the previous year, a convention with the Ottoman Empire regulated the issue of the muftis and of the chief mufti as the highest Muslim religious and juridical authorities.[105] Most of the time, representatives of Turkish origin were elected on the tickets of Bulgarian parties into the National Assembly; due to their passivity and support for the incumbent cabinet they were called "the government dowry."[106]

Census data from 1920 show that of the 4,846,971 inhabitants, at that time 542,904 (or 11.2%) were Turks in terms of language, or 520,339 (or 10.7%) in terms of declared nationality.[107] In 1919, before the Peace Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine, the legal status and the relations between the Muslim community

TABLE 6.1 The religious communities in Bulgaria, 1920–1934

Years	Total population		Orthodox		Muslims		Catholics		Protestants		Israelites		Armenian Gregorians		Others	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1920	4,846,971	83.81	4,062,097	14.25	690,734	0.70	34,072	0.12	5,617	0.89	43,232	0.22	10,848	0.01	371
1926	5,478,741	83.40	4,569,074	14.41	789,296	0.74	40,347	0.12	6,735	0.85	46,431	0.46	25,402	0.03	1456
1934	6,077,939	84.93	5,128,890	13.51	821,298	0.75	45,704	0.14	8,371	0.80	48398	0.39	23,476	0.03	1,802

Source: Detelin Luchev, "Problemat za veroizpovedanieto v balgarskata etnostatistika v perioda 1881–2001.g.," *Balgarska etnologiya*, Nos. 2–3 (2007), pp. 32–33.

councils, which administered the charitable religious foundations (*vakıfs*), and the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Relations and Religious Affairs were modernized.[108] The government of the Bulgarian Agrarian Union promoted a positive policy toward the Turkish minority, something that was essentially different from the policies of its predecessors and successors. The Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine had obliged the Bulgarian government to protect the rights of its minorities and more than 80% of the Turks were peasants and therefore belonged to the Agrarians' target group. The government provided support from the state budget, using credits, for the 1,715 private Muslim schools with their 60,000 pupils, by prompting the municipalities to contribute their share and with an enhancement of landed school funds. It established an inspectorate for Turkish schools and provided for the foundation of a short-lived Turkish Teacher Training School as well as for the Nüvvap School for the training of deputy muftis in the town of Shumen.[109]

According to a recent study, the Agrarians pursued a different course with regard to land redistribution, however. They foresaw the sequestration of several Muslim properties and consequently allocated them to Christian refugee families from Macedonia and Thrace. While the Agrarian government only started this process, the subsequent government of the Democratic Alliance would bring it to a head. This, in turn, would boost the emigration of Muslims to the Republic of Turkey, which would continue up to the end of the 1930s.[110]

Although the number of Turks in absolute figures increased at the next censuses of 1926 – with 608,000 speakers of Turkish and 577,552 ethnic Turks (10.4%) – and of 1934 – with 618,268 persons (10.2%) by Turkish language and 591,193 persons (9.7%) with Turkish identity – their relative share decreased slightly due to emigration.[111]

In the period immediately after the 1923 coup, the relations of the Bulgarian authorities with the Turkish minority were dependent on the condition of the remnants of the Bulgarian minority in Turkey. This also included the means of repression such as cutting funds for Turkish schools, settlement of Bulgarian refugees on Turkish properties, and the prevention of the return of Turks who visited Turkey.[112] Three years after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey (in October 1923), the Bulgarian parliament ratified a bilateral Turkish–Bulgarian agreement on mutual friendship, which secured the protection of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria.[113] At that time, several Kemalist sports clubs mushroomed across Bulgaria. They merged into a joint association in 1926 and became known as the *Turan* society. Besides the organization of sports events, this new society cared for the intellectual education of the Turkish youth and promoted the ideas of Kemalism. Similar to the Slavic Sokol movement its members were uniformed.[114] The association had good contacts with the Turkish Republic and was also engaged in the propagation of irredentist aims among the Turkish and Pomak communities in Bulgaria.[115]

But the positive semblance of this development was deceptive. In fall 1931, the First National Congress of Turks in Bulgaria was held in Sofia. It took place

TABLE 6.2 The population of Bulgaria by ethnic identity, 1920–1934

Year	Total population	Bulgarians		Turks		Pomaks		Roma		Jews		Greeks	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1920	4,846,971	4,036,056	83.27	520,339	10.74	87,729	1.81	98,451	2.03	43,209	0.89	42,074	0.87
1926	5,478,741	4,557,706	83.19	577,552	10.54	102,351	1.85	138,844	2.46	46,558	0.85	10,564	0.19
1934	6,077,939	5,072,608	83.46	591,193	9.73	110,322	1.82	149,385	2.46	28,026	0.46	9,601	0.16

Note: For 1934 the number for the Bulgarians is the combination of those with Bulgarian as mother tongue and of Orthodox belief, while it is only the mother tongue in the case of the Jews and Greeks.

Sources: Detelin Luchev, "Problemat za maychniya ezik v balgarskata etnostatistika v perioda 1881–2001 g. Edin entnologichen prochit," *Balgarska etnologiya*, Vol. 4 (2007), pp. 63–64; Detelin Luchev, "Priznakat narodnost/natsionalnost v balgarskata etnostatistika v perioda 1881–2001. g.," *Balgarska etnologiya*, No. 4 (2007), pp. 48–52; Detelin Luchev, "Etnografiya i demografiya … i problemat za 'normalnata kombinatsiya' (ili kak se definira 'balgarskoto' v balgarskata etnostatistika," *Balgarska etnografiya*, No. 1 (2008), p. 17; Ali Eminov, *Turkish and other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), pp. 81, 112; and Mihail I. Ivanov, "Pomatsite spored balgarskata etnodemografska statistika," *Naselenie*, Nos. 1–2 (2012), pp. 163–197.

under the auspices of a second bilateral treaty on neutrality, reconciliation, and arbitration that Bulgaria and Turkey had signed some months earlier in Ankara.[116] The congress had a serious agenda: it treated several cases where Bulgarian inspectors had closed down private Turkish schools and replaced them with public Bulgarian ones. Thus, of the 1,712 Turkish schools under the Agrarian government only 949 remained under the government of the Democratic Alliance; most of the schools were closed beginning in the 1925/1926 the school year. In other cases, the authorities reduced the school funds. The Congress consequently asked for the reopening of Turkish schools. It also dedicated itself to the introduction of the Latin alphabet, according to the example of Turkey, which – due to the efforts of the Turkish Teacher organization – had already begun some months earlier against the opposition of the conservative exponents among the Turkish minority and the Bulgarian Ministry of Education.[117] Another issue was the expulsion of Roma from the administration of the Muslim Community Councils, leaving them solely Turkish.[118]

The Bulgarian government had sent a welcome address to the Congress but shelved the Turkish demands. The new government of the People's Bloc became increasingly wary, since traditionalist Turkish groups started to denounce the Kemalist movement.[119] In 1932, the authorities prohibited the annual congress of Turan, and made also difficulties for its 1933 Congress.[120] The deterioration of the atmosphere became clear, when the government did not renew the expiring treaty of neutrality, reconciliation, and arbitration with Turkey in 1933.[121]

The Zveno government already pursued anti-Turkish measures actively: it banned the Turan Society, searched for weapons in Turkish villages in eastern Bulgaria, executed strict control of the Muslim religious communities, and, in 1,971 settlements, enforced the replacement of Turkish names with Bulgarian ones.[122] In response, the Turkish foreign minister, Tevfik Rüştü Aras (1883–1972), warned the Bulgarian chargé d'affaires in Paris: "Nobody should forget, nor should you forget that Bulgaria is a Turkish–Bulgarian state, because one quarter of its population is Turkish."[123] Although he exaggerated the share of the Turkish minority, the statement was a striking proof of how much relations with Turkey had worsened.

The Bulgarian authorities feared that the more educated the Turks became, the more they would adhere to Kemalism. This was certainly true for most of the Turkish teachers.[124] The government therefore supported the more conservative part of the Turkish communities against the secular nationalists and carried out further repressive measures, such as the ban of Turkish newspapers. Kemalists in Turkish school councils were dismissed and replaced by confidants of the anti-Kemalist and traditionalist Chief Mufti Hüseyin Hüsnü Effendi (1882–1941).[125] As a concession to the Chief Mufti the government further reintroduced the old Arabic script in the Turkish schools. It also introduced instruction in the Bulgarian language, while instruction in Turkish language was reduced. By the 1936/1937 school year,

only 545 Turkish schools – less than a third of their number under Agrarian rule – remained in Bulgaria.[126] The new Bulgarian teachers for the Bulgarian language wrote reports about the situation in the local Turkish communities and sent them to the police, while organizations from the Bulgarian far-right provoked riots against local Turkish communities.[127] This resulted in an increase in the emigration of Turks in the second half of the 1930s: while from 1923 to 1933 about 100,000 Turks left the country, almost the same number of people (97,000 persons) did so between 1934 and 1939.[128]

The visit of a Bulgarian school inspector in a Turkish school in the district of Kardzhali in the south showed just how successful the Kemalists were even under these conditions; when the inspector routinely asked the children: "Who is our Tsar?," instead of the expected answer "King Boris," they unanimously responded "Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk]!"[129] At the insistence of the Turkish embassy in Sofia, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education in April 1938 finally reintroduced compulsory education in the Latin Turkish script.[130] One can only assume that this was a precondition for Turkey's approval of the Salonika Agreement that year. At least for the moment, the bullying of the Turkish minority would be stopped.

The second Muslim minority, the Pomaks, spoke Bulgarian and therefore enjoyed a different fate; their linguistic relationship made assimilation easier and more welcome than was the case for the Turks. Their focus of settlement was the Rhodope Mountains to the south and in the Lovech province in central Bulgaria. During the Balkan Wars, about 200,000 of them had been subjected to forced mass baptisms. The census of 1920 counted 87,729 persons with the "Pomak" national identity and 93,953 Muslims with Bulgarian as their native tongue, constituting 1.8–1.9% of the whole population, while the census of 1926 listed 113,064 Muslims with Bulgarian mother tongue (2.1% of the whole population) and 102,351 with the national identity "Pomak" (1.9% of the whole population).[131] At the time of the Agrarian government, most Pomaks considered themselves part of the Muslim community and akin to Turks. Consequently, their schools belonged to the network of private Turkish schools, run by Turkish teachers and with instruction in Turkish language. After 1924, the Pomaks were increasingly included in the Bulgarian public school system with Bulgarian teachers who were active propagators of the idea that the Pomaks were part of the Bulgarian nation.[132] However, local Bulgarian authorities' discrimination against the Pomak population thwarted these pro-Bulgarian strategies.[133] These strategies would become clearer in the 1930s, when Bulgarian promoters started to favor the term "Bulgaro-Mohammedans" rather than the designation "Pomaks,"[134] while at same time the conservative wing among the Bulgarian Turks and the Kemalist tendency also tried to win over the Pomak population to their respective causes.[135]

According to the census of 1934, 134,125 Muslims spoke Bulgarian (2.2% of the whole population), while according to ethnic identity they amounted to 110,322 persons (1.8% of the whole population).[136] After 19 May 1934 the

authorities tried to promote the assimilation of the Pomaks, by declaring that they were welcome within the Bulgarian nation "on a linguistic and 'racial' basis" despite "their foreign names and clothes [i.e., fez, turban, and veil]."[137] Initially, the state did not intervene in their Islamic religion and even took responsibility for the translation of the Koran into the Bulgarian language. With that, the authorities tried to convince the Pomaks of their Bulgarian identity via the cultural umbrella organization Rodina [Motherland] that wanted to remove "everything non-Bulgarian in the soul and life of the Bulgaro-Mohammedans."[138] It consequently organized "voluntary" campaigns of de-veiling of women and de-fezzing of men.[139] In the long run, it was indeed able to neutralize the influence of the conservative Turkish tendencies and cause the Kemalist movement to disappear.[140]

In retrospect, it seems clear that, of all the Bulgarian interwar governments, the Agrarian government was the most inclined to improve the situation of minorities. At least in the field of education, the Agrarian government achieved a slightly higher success in reducing illiteracy among the country's minorities than other successor governments. Thus, literacy in the Bulgarian language increased from 8.7% in 1920 to 12% in 1926 to 14.5 % in 1934 among the Turks and from 3.8% (1920) to 6.5% (1926) among the Pomaks. In the same period, literacy in general grew in Bulgaria from 52.7% in 1920 to 59.6% in 1926, reaching 66.6% in 1934, whereby not the ethnic Bulgarians (1920: 50.9%; 1926: 54.4%; 1934: 67.2%) but the Jews (1920: 69.0%; 1926: 71.3%; 1934: 75.7%) had the highest literacy.[141]

Conclusion

I have tried, in the foregoing pages, to fathom the interwar entanglements and clashes of Bulgarian right-wing and left-wing movements by evaluating both Bulgarian and foreign literature on interwar Bulgaria. I have also offered some reflections as to why democracy could not be secured in Bulgaria.

Actually, Bulgaria experienced two peaceful changes of government in that period, namely in 1919 and 1931. Each time a military coup violently brought down the government. Compared to the prewar era, which had seen only a few political assassinations, the interwar period showed all the features of a pronounced crisis-ridden country and political murder took a high number of victims. The rival movements of the Left and the Right emerged in a situation that was characterized by the total evanescence of the prewar optimism of Bulgarian irredentist nationalism. In the recollection of a Bulgarian nationalist, the humiliating conditions of the Peace Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine represented the third deceit of his country after the cancellation of the 1878 Treaty of San Stefano and the defeat of the Second Balkan War. This feeling of depression was reinforced by the massive influx of Bulgarian refugees from Macedonia and the loss of the Aegean provinces, which in turn exacerbated the position of ethnic minorities in the country.

The government of the Agrarian Union, in turn, did not put national, but social issues in the foreground. Bulgaria was an overwhelmingly agrarian state with a peasant majority in a country still in the beginnings of industrialization and on the periphery of the world economy. It was not excluded that the Agrarians would finally question the role of their country within the entire capitalist system – but on a different basis from that which contemporary communists or Marxists would have used. The bourgeois parties realized the possible danger of the Agrarian ideas and concluded a Faustian pact with far-right elements from the military, which were a product of the lost war.

The subsequent governments were differently positioned on a scale between authoritarian approaches toward moderate liberal versions of parliamentary democracy, but none of them was really stable. Several ironic contradictions mark these regimes, as one can observe in the fact that the Democratic Alliance, which once prohibited the communists, readmitted them during the incumbency of Lyapchev, while the subsequent government of the People's Bloc, which claimed to be more democratic than its predecessors, tried to get rid of them again. This lack of principle is also valid for Aleksandar Tsankov who, as president of the Bulgarian parliament, sent a message of greeting to the First Turkish Congress in 1929,[142] although he was otherwise not known for being squeamish when dealing with adversaries. It was ironic that the Zvenari abolished themselves and the political parties, not knowing that this move would make it easy for the King to replace them with his partisans, thereby validating Zveno's principle of a political system without parties but at Zveno's expense.

With respect to Muslim minorities one can see that, after the relatively tolerant policy under Agrarian rule, the subsequent bourgeois governments gradually developed a differentiated policy of domination that fully crystallized after 19 May 1934. The government's strategy of divide and rule allured the conservative part of the Turkish communities with promises and assured it as the regime's favorite, but actually it only played off religiously conservative Turks against the secular Kemalists in order to contain the whole Turkish community within an imagined premodern, backward, and rural surrounding. As for the Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks, the regime welcomed modernism and secularism, since they opened the way to assimilation and to the integration of this community into the Bulgarian majority population by gradually depriving them of their Ottoman and Islamic traits. One can claim with a degree of certainty that none of the approaches of the successor governments of the Agrarians would have let the minorities and their elites decide independently about their destinies.

Another question that needs at least a partial answer is why the Bulgarian government, after the outbreak of World War Two, decided to join the Axis and consequently to become dependent upon the Third Reich. Staying neutral in view of the unfolding successful German strategy of *Blitzkrieg* in the initial phase of World War Two seemed to be an option with unpredictable consequences. By

contrast, the requirements of risk assessment in the sense of *Realpolitik* appear to have induced the Bulgarian elites to join the victor of 1940, since that policy appeared to promise the realization of the nationalists' revisionist aims. The existence of an authoritarian regime in Bulgaria by itself did not predetermine a quasi-natural alliance with the Third Reich. One could point in this respect to the example of Francisco Franco's rebel forces, which had obtained military assistance from the Third Reich and Fascist Italy during the Spanish Civil War, and yet Franco did not join the Axis states in their war against France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. The Bulgarian regime was not only authoritarian, however; it had Germany as its most important trading partner, and the German presence in the cultural sphere was also important.[143] But even these circumstances were not decisive for the chain of decisions that led Bulgaria into the Axis camp. A more voluntary approach to this issue reveals two other factors that one has to consider: first, Hitler's initial success by way of robust diplomacy up to September/October 1938 and then on the battlefield from September 1939 until the fall of France in June 1940; and, second, the German example in the outgoing 1930s showing that there was the possibility of realizing revisionist aims – a possibility that had been sealed for two decades.

A last thought. In considering the reasons why interwar Bulgaria could not escape authoritarian rule, there are certainly several factors to consider. First, as Sabrina Ramet showed in the introduction to this volume, the East Central European societies had little or no experience with democratic institutions and, accordingly, only Czechoslovakia managed to maintain a democratic system until 1938. Second, the presence of radical right groups gnawed at the system from within. Third, the economic problems, which were greatly intensified in the wake of the world economic crisis that struck in late 1929, nourished those parties and groups promising to address the immediate needs of people through strongarm rule. And fourth, in the case of Bulgaria, just as in the cases of Hungary and Albania, the conviction among most people that the country had been treated unjustly, and not only in terms of territorial losses, fed an irredentism not compatible with stable democracy. The development of authoritarian rule and the creeping and finally open discrimination against minorities were not only dependent on political preconditions and events as they have been dealt with here. They were also a consequence of perceptions by elites, opinion leaders, and the public at large. These perceptions formed ways of thinking, stereotypes, and mentalities, and inscribed themselves into the institutions of the national state, whether in the educational system, the military, or the organization of public health, or elsewhere. The Bulgarian defeats in the Second Balkan War in 1913 and in the course of World War One shaped the mainstream Bulgarian mind in such a way that the corresponding nationalism became both defensive and wary. The immediate period after World War One and again the incumbency of Andrey Lyapchev were periods of "scrutiny," "mistrust," and "fear."[144] These protracted feelings of defeat and debasement, which cannot be reduced to the loss of territories, created a negative energy that manifested itself in a so-called "Bulgarian melancholy,"

which was mainly a collective grievance of the elites and the small urban middle classes.[145] The decrease in the birth rate, which happened during the two decades between the two World Wars, in turn contributed to the bleak coating of Bulgarian nationalism.[146] All these elements led to an introspective mood that induced a number of Bulgarian authors to assess the national character and the place of the Bulgarian nation between the East and the West.[147] For a small group among the Bulgarian intelligentsia this road even opened the way for radical thinking in terms of the degeneration of their nation as well as of eugenics and racial theories, which they considered available tools for national rebirth.[148] Such ideas in this period led to an effective biologization of national belonging and confirmed the rejection of ethnic minorities, especially those of Muslim origin, as filthy and unhealthy components of the national self.[149]

Notes

1   For the transliteration of names and references in Bulgarian from Cyrillic orthography into the Latin alphabet I use the "Streamlined System" developed in Bulgaria, which was adopted by the United Nations in 2012. It does not allow for unambiguous mapping back into Cyrillic, but is easier to read for those not capable of Bulgarian, while people with knowledge of Bulgarian will have no problem to trace back the original Cyrillic spelling. See "Romanization System in Bulgaria," at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/10th-uncsgn-docs/econf/E_CONF.101_12_Romanization%20System%20in%20Bulgaria.pdf [accessed on 18 July 2019].
2   "From the speech of Al. Stamboliyski delivered at the Meeting of the parliamentary group of the Agrarian party after the Bulgarian delegation to the Peace conference in Paris came back," in M. Voynov and L. Panayotov (eds.), *Documents and Materials on the History of the Bulgarian People* (Sofia: Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1969), pp. 418–419. [Translation modified for reasons of grammar, syntax, and style – CP.]
3   From the Serbo-Croatian, Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata, i Slovenaca.
4   Stefan Troebst, *Mussolini, Makedonien und die Mächte 1922–1930*. Dissertationen zur neueren Geschichte 19 (Cologne, Germany, and Vienna: Böhlau, 1987), pp. 39–41, 44–45; John R. Lampe, *The Bulgarian Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London, and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 61–62; Valeri Kolev, "Balgarskite reparatsii sled Parvata svetovna voyna, 1919–1932," in Vitka Toshkova, Vasilka Tankova, and Nikolay Poppetrov (eds.), *Istoriyata – profesiya i sadba. Sbornik v chest na 60-godishninata na chlen-korespondent D. ist. n. Georgi Markov* (Sofia: TANGRA TanNakRa, 2008), pp. 271–278; Kostadin Grozev, "Balgarskite ikonomisti na krastopatya mezhdu evropeyskata teoriya i balkanskata praktika (1919–1939)," in Kostadin Grozev and Todor Popnedelyev (eds.), *Moderniyat istorik: vaobrazhenie, informiranost, pokoleniya* (Sofia: IIK Daniela Ubenova, 1999), p. 59.
5   Nikolay Poppetrov, *Fashizmat v Balgariya: Razvitie i proyavi* (Sofia: Kama, 2009), pp. 11–12.
6   Roumen Daskalov, *Debating the Past. Modern Bulgarian History: From Stambolov to Zhivkov* (Budapest, and New York: Central European University Press, 2011), pp. 87–143 on the Agrarian Union, and pp. 145–222 on Bulgarian fascism.
7   See G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, "Territorial Revision and Article 19 of the League Covenant," *International Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 6 (1935), pp. 818–836; for a closer

examination of the term "peaceful revisionism" see Stefan Troebst, *Zwischen Arktis, Adria und Armenien. Das östliche Europa und seine Ränder. Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mitteleuropa* 53 (Cologne and Weimar, Germany, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2017), pp. 124–126 and Rumyana Preshlenova, "Ot iredentizam kam defanziven natsionalizam: Balgariya sled Parvata svetovna voyna," in Rumyana Ilieva Preshlenova et al. (eds.), *Maski dolu! Natsionalizmat na Balkanite prez XX vek* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2018), pp. 201–243. On the Agrarian foreign policy see John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899–1923* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 424, 434; R. J. Crampton, *Aleksandŭr Stamboliĭski: Bulgaria* (London: Haus Publishing, 2009), pp. 73–109; and Lyudmil Yordanov Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya 1919–1944* (Sofia: Ivray, 2015), pp. 27–58. On the Bulgarian relationship with Turkey up to 9 June 1923, see Dimitar Gyudurov, "Balgaro-turskite otnosheniya i maltsinstveniyat vapros (1919–1928)," *Godishnik na departament "Istoriya" NBU*, IV (2009), pp. 28–49.

8 See Voyn Bozhinov, *Upravlenieto na devetnadesetomaytsite 19 May 1934–22 Yanuari 1935 godina* (Sofia: IK "Arka," 2017), pp. 20–22.

9 See Plamen Tsvetkov, *Bolshevizam, Natsionalsotsializam, Fashizam: Obshtoevropeyski i balkanski aspekti na problema*, 2nd revised edition (Varna, Bulgaria: Zograf, 2000), pp. 226, 240, 245, 248; on the history of IMRO from 1919–1934 see Troebst, *Mussolini*, pp. 88–128; Tsvetana Micheva, "On the History of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (1928–1934)," *Bulgarian Historical Review*, Vol. 37, Nos. 1–2 (2009), pp. 80–97.

10 Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya*, pp. 59–65.

11 See Martyn Housden, *The League of Nations and the Organization of Peace* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 129–131.

12 See Dimitar Kosev, *Vanshnata politika na Balgariya pri upravlenieto na Andrey Lyapchev* (Sofia: Zahari Stoyanov, 2014), pp. 18–20.

13 Ibid., pp. 23–48; Troebst, *Mussolini*, pp. 41–43; Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya*, 86–89; and Iwan Batakliew, "Bevölkerungsverschiebungen, Wirtschafts- und Siedlungspolitik Bulgariens, besonders nach dem Weltkriege," *Leipziger Vierteljahresschrift für Südosteuropa*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1939), p. 43.

14 Grozev, "Balgarskite ikonomisti," pp. 64–66.

15 Kosev, *Vanshnata politika*, pp. 51–52, 60–73, 143–145; and Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya*, pp. 97–99.

16 Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya*, pp. 97–99, Kosev, *Vanshnata politika*, pp. 143–145; and Lyudmil Spasov, *Balgariya, velikite sili i balkanskite darzhavi 1933–1939 g.* (Sofia: SD "Gabi-91," 1993), p. 9.

17 Rositsa Stoyanova, "Upravlenie na Narodniya blok," in Georgi Markov et al. (eds.), *Istoriya na Balgariya*, Vol. 9: *Istoriya na Balgariya 1918–1944* (Sofia: TANGRA TanNakRA, 2012), pp. 271–273.

18 Spasov, *Balgariya, velikite sili*, pp. 27–32.

19 Ibid., p. 15.

20 Ibid., pp. 8, 16–17, 25–27; and Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya*, pp. 110–114, 117.

21 See Ilcho Dimitrov, *Balgarskata demokratichna obshtestvenost, fashizmat i voynata 1934–1939*, 2nd edition (Sofia: Universitesko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," 2000), pp. 16–18; and Bozhinov, *Upravlenieto na devetnadesetomaytsite*, pp. 87–92.

22 Bozhinov, *Upravlenieto na devetnadesetomaytsite*, pp. 134–144.

23 Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya*, pp. 114–117, 120–123.

24 On the system without parties see: Vladimir Migev, *Utvarzhdavane na monarho-fashistkata diktatura v Balgariya 1934–1936* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BAN, 1977), pp. 37–41; and Dimitar Dudzhev, *Grad na dve epohi. Istoriya na obshtestvenite grupi v balgarskite gradove v sredata na XX vek* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," 2005), pp. 47–53

25 See Dimitrov, *Balgarskata demokratichna obshtestvenost*, pp. 66–67, 147–151.

26 Ibid., pp. 130–146, 163–164, 185–188; and Tsvetkov, *Bolshevizam*, p. 249.

27 Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya*, pp. 142–146.

28 Nurie Muratova and Kristina Popova, "Dimensions of Women's Voices. Following on the Documentary tracks of the First Women's Participation in Elections in Bulgaria (1937–1939)," in Kristina Popova et al. (eds.), *Women and Minorities Archives, vol. 1: Ways of Archiving* (Sofia – Vienna: SEMARSh, 2009), pp. 133–155; and Krasimira Daskalova, *Zheni, pol i modernizatsiya v Balgariya, 1878–1944* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," 2012), pp. 320–334.

29 Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya*, pp. 142–155; and Elżbieta Znamierowska-Rakk, "Bulgarian Territorial Revisionism and Bulgaria's Rapprochement with the Third Reich," in Marina Cattaruza, Stefan Dyrof, and Dieter Langewiesche (eds.), *Territorial Revisionism and the Allies of Germany in the Second World War: Goals, Expectations, Practices* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), p. 111.

30 Vladimir Zlatarski, *Rayhat i tsarstvoto: germanskoto prisastvie v Balgariya 1933–1940 g.* (Sofia: Avangard Prima, 2014), pp. 216–217, 220–222; and Znamierowska-Rakk, "Bulgarian Territorial Revisionism," pp. 111–112; Spasov, *Balgarskata diplomatsiya*, pp. 156–169; and Spasov, *Balgariya, velikite sili*, pp. 93–104.

31 Ilcho Dimitrov, *Ochevidtsi i izsledvachi* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," 2005), p. 397.

32 See Grozev, "Balgarskite ikonomisti," p. 57.

33 See Roumen Daskalov, "Agrarian Ideologies and Peasant Movements in the Balkans," in Roumen Daskalov and Diana Mishkova (eds.), *Entangled Histories of the Balkans. Vol. 2: Transfers of Political Ideologies and Institutions* (Leiden, Netherlands, and Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2014), pp. 295–299.

34 Daskalov, *Debating the Past*, pp. 93–95, 105–107; and Valeri Kolev, "Likvidirane na obshtinskoto samoupravlenie ot pravitelstvoto na Demokraticheskiya sgovor (Yuni 1923–May 1924)," in *Moderniyat istorik*, p. 123.

35 Daskalov, *Debating the Past*, pp. 107–108, 120–125.

36 Bell, *Peasants in Power*, p. 163.

37 See Dimo Vladov, "Der wirtschaftliche und soziale Strukturwandel im bulgarischen Dorf nach 1945," in Franz Ronneberger and Gerhard Teich (eds.), *Von der Agrar- zur Industriegesellschaft*, Broschüre XIV (Darmstadt, Germany: Hoppenstedt, 1968), pp. 2–3.

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7

THE KINGDOM OF DIVERSITY AND PATERNALISM

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/ Yugoslavia, 1918–1941

Stipica Grgić[1]

The creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (1918–1920)

In the tumult of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy's demise, a group of hetero-geneous politicians from present-day Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzego-vina formed a National Council – a body empowered to look after the interests of the South Slavs of the collapsing Habsburg state. Only a few weeks later, the National Council sent a delegation to Belgrade. The purpose of their hastily arranged journey was to secure a union with the Kingdom of Serbia. The delegation that went to Belgrade in 1918 had no official recognition, much like the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, the fleeting state unrecognized by the Entente Powers, which the National Council had established as a temporary step on the path toward full union of all South Slavs.

The Kingdom of Serbia's government had, since the start of World War One, emphasized that it was fighting "a war of liberation and unification for all Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes."[2] At the end of 1918, the Kingdom of Serbia was a small state that enjoyed considerable honor and prestige thanks to its heroic efforts against the Central Powers. On this basis, its political leaders judged that the time had finally come for it to take on the role a South Slav Piedmont, i.e., just like the small Italian state, the Serbs would become the unifiers of the South Slavs. This idea, which was also linked to another that foresaw all Serbs living within one state, had been the Kingdom of Serbia's political goal during the years that had preceded the Great War.[3] At the end of November 1918, it had expanded its territory after ad hoc Allied political assemblies decided, by accla-mation, to unite Vojvodina and Montenegro with Mother Serbia.

Although many Austro-Hungarian citizens had gone off to the battlefields in 1914 convinced of the Central Powers' victory, the reality was that, by mid-1918,

the monarchy was taking its last breaths. The unwillingness of the Austrian and Hungarian power holders to allow the state's further federalization and, indeed, their attempts to prevent the spread of nationalist ideas among its other nations had already driven these nations into resistance against the political establishment during the *fin de siècle*. Some politicians and intellectuals from the territories of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina who had accepted the idea of South Slav commonality fled Austria–Hungary and formed the Yugoslav Committee in Paris in 1915. This committee propagated the idea of the dismantlement of Austria–Hungary and the creation of a new state comprising South Slavs from the moribund Habsburg state and from the then-independent Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro among the Entente Powers.

Demographic losses, the economic difficulties caused by the war, the destruction that occurred within the territories of Serbia and Montenegro due to the Central Powers' occupation (1915–1918), and new ideas of national self-determination that had emerged, e.g., the recognition of the existence of a right to statehood for nations such as the Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks, came to a head in 1918 when the Entente Powers' victory had become inevitable. The map of Europe after this war needed to change.[4]

Croatian and Slovenian politicians were very concerned that the territory formally under the control of the National Council was gradually being taken over by Entente troops, primarily those of the Kingdom of Italy. It was for this reason that unification was hurried, so that as much of the population and territory as possible would remain in the new kingdom of the South Slavs. Due to the position of the Kingdom of Serbia as a victor state, it needed to gain international recognition quickly, as was similarly the case with the young Polish and Czechoslovak republics, so as to secure its external borders but also its internal stability.[5]

On 1 December 1918, the regent, and later king, Crown Prince Aleksandar, who until 1921 led the state in the name of his elderly father Petar I, received the National Council delegation and, upon its request, declared the state's unification as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.[6] This state, with its three national names, stretched out over an area of 248,666 square km. It was located at the crossroads of Central and Southeastern Europe. Across the Pannonian plains and the Dinarides, it reached up to the Alps and was lapped by the Adriatic Sea for several hundred kilometers.[7] The 1921 census of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes counted 11.98 million residents, of whom approximately 2 million were not Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, or members of any other branch of South Slavs. By the time of the next census in 1931, the state, which in 1929 had changed its name to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, had 13.93 million residents.

For many intellectuals, 1918 Yugoslav unification was an act of idealism, but the future of the newly established state was shrouded in fog. The unification was presented as the culmination of the idea of South Slav commonality, which

TABLE 7.1 Population of Yugoslavia by ethnicity (1921)[8]

Ethnicity	Number of inhabitants	%
Serbs and Croats	8,911,509	74.36
Slovenes	1,019,997	8.51
Czechoslovaks	115,532	0.96
Ruthenians	25,615	0.21
Poles	14,764	0.12
Russians	20,568	0.17
Hungarians	467,658	3.90
Germans	505,790	4.22
Arnauts (Albanians)	439,657	3.67
Turks	150,322	1.26
Romanians (*Cincars, Vlachs*)	231,068	1.93
Italians	12,553	0.11
Others	69,878	0.58
Total	11,984,911	

TABLE 7.2 Population of Yugoslavia by religion (1931)[9]

Religion	Number of inhabitants	%
Serbian Orthodox Christians	6,785,501	48.70
Roman Catholics	5,217,847	37.45
Muslims	1,561,166	11.20
Protestants	231,169	1.66
Jews	68,405	0.49
Other Christians	68,152	0.49
Others	1,798	0.01
Total	13,934,038	

had emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century among the three named nations' intellectual elites. The idea of creating a common South Slavic land or *Yugoslavism*, fueled by liberal and national concepts, had developed on cultural and political levels by 1918.[10] Although there had been earlier contact between the political and cultural representatives of the Croats and Slovenes and those from the Kingdom of Serbia, a detailed agreement about what form the common state of South Slavs should take after the Great War was not discussed until unification itself.[11]

What connected Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and encouraged them to establish their Kingdom in December 1918 was not just an awareness shared by the elites about the desire to create a Yugoslav state due to cultural and other commonly held similarities, but also a combination of external conditions. One of the South Slav nations' important connective elements was a fear of shared enemies. Specifically, all of the states that surrounded the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes had pretensions to parts of its territory. Given that these were in some cases larger, national states, many believed that only a strong Yugoslavia could guarantee the common survival of the individual Serb, Croat, and Slovene nations. International recognition of the country at the Paris Peace Conference was achieved only in 1919, and over the subsequent years attempts were made to bridge the "centuries of separation"[12] that continued as a result of the economic, judicial, educational, and many other social differences between the new kingdom's component parts.

In the decades that had preceded the creation of the common South Slav kingdom, but also at the time of its existence, various intellectuals attempted to further develop concepts of a single Yugoslav race, i.e., a common anthropological origin (Jovan Cvijić), a mutual Yugoslav "psychology" (Vladimir Dvorniković), language and literature (Aleksandar Belić, Pavle Popović), the foundations of art (Ivan Meštrović) and shared foundations of their past (Ferdo Šišić, Stanoje Stanojević).[13] These concepts did not manage to take root among ordinary citizens. Interwar Yugoslavia

> saw national identity construction in the Yugoslav region dependent on explicitly as well as implicitly evoking "race." This Yugoslavia's identity was caught between Serb/Croat/Slovene ethnopolitical identities separate enough to be included (until 1929) in the unified Kingdom's first official name and the state's need for a unifying collective ideology around "South Slav" ethno-linguistic commonalities.[14]

Due to the differences in their historical development, but also alternative understandings of the concept of their own ethnicity across various parts of the state, citizens remained rather divided.

Yugoslav society was marked by a number of divisive stratifications, e.g., between village and city dwellers, the rich and the poor, men and women, and so forth. For instance, due to gender stereotypes, women's suffrage was not introduced. Women in Yugoslavia were afforded poorer education and their access to the highest positions was obstructed in informal ways. Furthermore, women tended to receive salaries 20% lower than men for performing the same jobs.[15]

The majority of industry was to be found in the territories of Slovenia, continental Croatia, and Vojvodina. But a considerable part of it, especially in Serbia, had been destroyed in World War One. There were private enterprises in the western parts of the country, as well as a privately owned banking sector that, in spite of the wartime crisis, had survived and could to an extent

finance the market with loans. The state itself invested considerably more means and guaranteed greater loans for the postwar regeneration and investment in some less-developed areas, while other regions that were also lacking investment, such as Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina, were for the most part overlooked.[16]

Due to the development of a primary and secondary school network in the northern and western parts of the state, dating back to the nineteenth century, there were more educated people in those regions than in the southern and eastern parts of the country. According to official Yugoslav statistics, 72.9% of the population of Bosnia (Vrbas Banovina) and 62.3% of the population of southern Serbia (Morava Banovina) were still illiterate in 1931. By contrast, in Slovene territories only 6.8% of the population were illiterate.[17] Many Yugoslav cultural workers and particularly scientists, such as the physicists Mihajlo Pupin and Nikola Tesla and the Nobel Prize-winning chemists Vladimir Prelog and Lavoslav (Leopold) Ružička,[18] developed their careers abroad, and were exceptions rather than poster boys for the Yugoslav education system, which had only three relatively small universities, located in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana.

The declared aim in the field of education for all governments up until 1941 was the fight against illiteracy. This was understood as the first step toward modernization, but also as a chance to "ideologically mold" the pupils "in the national spirit."[19] Over the course of the years that the Yugoslav kingdom existed, the number of elementary schools grew from 5,610 to 8,359 and number of students increased from 650,000 to 1,393,422.[20] Nevertheless, the Education Ministry's budget, which amounted to 7% of the entire state budget, was still too low for the state to effectively resolve all of the educational problems that existed.[21] Health care for citizens was also bad. The poor primary health care system relied on a small number of educated physicians, while the construction of a hospital network within the state was delayed. The alarming number of deaths from tuberculosis and infant mortality came as little surprise.[22]

The total mileage of paved roads was negligible. There were only 17,420 passenger and freight vehicles in the state in 1940.[23] The state-owned railway network was somewhat more developed in Slovenia and continental Croatia, but in the central, eastern, and southern parts of the country this was less the case. Although the state had invested considerable resources in constructing new railway lines, one of the main characteristics of Yugoslavia was its internal unconnectedness, whereby "whole regions remained on a distant periphery, detached from each other in communicative, political and geographic senses."[24]

There were also considerable inequalities in how financial contributions were made between the various parts of the state. Due to legislative inconsistencies, as well as the criteria for taxation and the lack of well-kept land registries, between 1918 and 1928 it was not uncommon for peasants in Vojvodina and Slovenia to pay several times as much tax as their counterparts in Serbia and Montenegro.[25]

Differences existed as to whether Yugoslavism should be conceived as a federal union or as a unitary state; there were also disagreements about what

the authority of the monarch should be.. In Austria–Hungary, Croats and Slovenes had experienced a prolonged period under the Habsburgs, with rule by the empire's "father figure," Franz Josef, meaning that they were accustomed to having a leader who was a strong but detached individual who could bring about change within the state. Among Serbs, there was not such a strong sense of attachment to the individual character of the ruler as there was to the monarchy as the core of Serbian statehood.[26]

The lack of knowledge of those governing as to how they could connect the disparate parts of the state through a suitable balance of sticks and carrots contributed to the creation of an ever-expanding gulf. In addition, national differentiation, at least between the three titular nations that had given their names to the state in 1918, had reached an advanced stage by 1928.[27] In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, none of the three nations wanted to relinquish their names or identities.

The political panopticon of the parliamentary period (1919–1928)

In the eyes of many interwar Yugoslav ideologues, in the absence of an internal revolution that would create a community, it was necessary to create a common judicial and institutional framework as soon as possible after unification. This was not nearly as controversial as the question as to which methods should be used and in which direction the young kingdom should be built. For this reason, many Yugoslav intellectuals and politicians held the belief that, upon unification, previous institutions and divisions should immediately be left behind and that they should work on constructing homogeneous state institutions that would guarantee the survival of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes as a new state in postwar Europe.[28]

The leading politicians who held the main roles after 1918 had passed through their formative period during previous decades and, for the most part, continued in much the same way as prior to Yugoslav unification. Politicians from the former territories of Austria–Hungary, for instance, used the tried and true method of obstructing state institutions and harsh public criticism of those in power, while, upon reaching positions to govern the state, they often showed themselves to be neither consistent nor constructive.[29] Political leaders from the territory of what had been the Kingdom of Serbia entered into the common state expecting to maintain the positions they had held up until then, or even expand their jurisdiction. For the most part they had not thought about how to satisfy the other nations, or the other social and political groups, within the state. Quite the contrary, they persecuted some of their political opponents, such as communists, and deliberately postponed the introduction of women's suffrage indefinitely.[30] There was also considerable discord over other development priorities. For instance, whether a laissez-faire or state interventionist approach should be taken to the economy, what should be done about education, how agrarian reforms should be enacted, etc.[31]

Prior to the adoption of the first state constitution, the foundations for the institutionalization of a politics of state centralism and national unitarism were laid. The concept of a federal state stood in opposition to this and many politicians, particularly Croat, Slovene, and even Muslim politicians emphasized how federalism was more appropriate for the complex state that Yugoslavia turned out to be. This would have involved the construction of institutions with varying degrees of autonomy and legislation for individual parts of the state's territory.[32]

Centralist forces in the initially fragile Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, emboldened by the victory in the war, took over the reins of leadership in the state and sought to brandish a firm hand. In 1920, the first electoral law was passed, which was more liberal than earlier regulations had been, now giving all adult men the right to vote. But the first elections for the Constitutional Assembly were an indicator of the deep divisions across the society's various elements and also proof that in this state there were not only multiple political conceptions of how it should be organized but also different political conceptions along ethnic lines as well.[33] One after the other, all the state's main parties adopted ethnic programs, along their national lines, even those that represented a program of national unitarism.[34]

The highest number of seats in the Constitutional Assembly was claimed by the newly established Democratic Party (*Demokratska stranka*). It was supported by many politicians and intellectuals from various parts of Yugoslavia who had previously fought for a single Yugoslav state. Passing through a period of division and cooperation with nationally defined parties, in the end it became one of the strongest opposition parties in the Serbian part of the state and tacitly accepted the idea of Yugoslavia as a federation.[35]

The party that claimed the most seats at parliamentary elections in 1923, 1925, and 1927, and had taken only one seat less than the Democratic Party in 1920, was the People's Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*). Established as a progressive party for the Serbian nation in 1881, it effectively became the state's most powerful party. Led by Nikola Pašić from 1881 to 1926, the party had espoused integral Yugoslavism, but within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia it increasingly took on the profile of a Serbian national party. Propagating the construction of a modern and centralized Yugoslav monarchy in 1921, along with other parties, it forced through a centralist constitution, which came to be called the *Vidovdan Constitution*[36] because it was adopted on St. Vitus Day – *Vidovdan*. In the years that followed, the party's leaders most frequently achieved a mandate to form a government, usually along with other parties that were given particular ministerial roles and concessions. While many of those at the top of the party offered their services to the regime of the dictatorship during the 1930s, the party's rank and file remained in opposition, cooperating from 1936 to 1941 with the other democratic opposition parties against the Stojadinović and Cvetković cabinets.[37]

The party that secured the third largest bloc of seats in the 1920 election was the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička partija Jugoslavije*), having been established in 1919 with the unification of various socialist groups that had been active prior to 1918. The party advocated the abolition of the monarchy and the construction of a classless society. After a series of successful and unsuccessful assassinations of prominent state officials, its activity was banned at the end of 1920. Subsequently, all Yugoslav governments sought to suppress the spread of communist ideas and, until 1941, persecuted members of the Communist Party. Burdened by this suppression and by internal ideological divisions, prominent members of the party often fled to Moscow under the protection of the Comintern. Through purges, the Comintern would repeatedly remove the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which had on several occasions changed the party's attitude toward the national question in Yugoslavia and the methods that could be used to come to power.[38] It was only at the end of the 1930s that such internal struggles were resolved with the return from Moscow of the party's future general secretary Josip Broz – Tito. Support for the Communist Party of Yugoslavia grew secretly in the years preceding World War Two.[39]

The Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*) was, for a long time, the strongest legal opposition group in the state and, likewise, the party that the majority of Croats supported at elections. It started operating in 1904 among the peasant population of continental Croatia, emphasizing how it would fight to maintain its national distinctiveness and, simultaneously, through modernization, create an organized stratum of prosperous landowners out of them. During the kingdom's monarchist era, the party, while changing its name slightly,[40] continued its political mobilization and politicization of the entire Croatian nation, spreading its activities to other regions that were inhabited by Croats.[41] Other parties with a Croatian national designation, such as the clerical Croatian People's Party (*Hrvatska pučka stranka*), the civic Croatian Community (*Hrvatska zajednica*), and the nationalist Croatian Party of Rights (*Hrvatska stranka prava*), from which the Ustaša movement would later be formed, failed to achieve the results that they had hoped for at the elections. The majority would merge with the Croatian Peasant Party at the start of the 1930s.[42]

Apart from the periods of 1925–1927 and 1939–1941, when it formed governments with other parties and thus gave legitimacy to the authorities, the Croatian Peasant Party found itself in opposition throughout Yugoslavia's interwar years. Indeed, with the decision by the party's leaders that their elected representatives should abstain from participating in parliamentary business, they sought to give the impression that Croats did not recognize either Yugoslavia's monarchical framework or its centralist constitutions – the Vidovdan (1921) and later the September constitution (1931). Between 1918 and 1939, the Croatian Peasant Party strove without success to engage the governments of other European states in order that they might exert pressure

on Yugoslavia's power holders to bring about the state's federalization.[43] After the assassination of King Aleksandar, the Croatian Peasant Party was the only Croatian national party that would renew its political activities and, through various methods, ranging from acts of passive resistance to the creation of special organizations that competed with state institutions, continue to show concern for Croatian interests.[44] Until 1939, the Croatian Peasant Party emphasized that it was fighting to achieve the right of Croats to autonomous development within Yugoslavia, which it understood would resolve *the Croatian question*.[45]

Of the other parties that claimed a larger number of votes in the 1920, 1923, 1925, and 1927 parliamentary elections, one may mention the Slovene People's Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*), which advocated a national and federalist and also conservative politics. Led by members of the Roman Catholic clergy from Slovenia, the party regularly came into conflict with Slovene liberals. Although Muslims did not have a clearly defined basis for a nation to connect them, they mostly clustered around the Yugoslav Muslim Organization (*Jugoslavenska muslimanska organizacija*). It began in 1919 as a party that brought together citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina on a confessional basis. In the first few years after the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, individual houses or entire Muslim settlements were burned to the ground. Several thousand were killed in the process and their land was seized. Muslims in general were to a degree considered second-class citizens during monarchist Yugoslavia's first few years.[46] The Yugoslav Muslim Organization therefore fought for the religious, administrative, and educational autonomy of Muslims, and against attempts to submerge them religiously in the then-institutionally and culturally developed nations with more deeply rooted senses of collective identity. From the middle of the 1920s, the party began to expand its activities into other regions in which Muslims lived, such as Sandžak, Kosovo, and Montenegro.[47]

Some parties, such as the Yugoslav Muslim Organization and the Slovene People's Party, at least formally supported the federal concept of the state through cooperation with the larger, centralist parties in government. The People's Radical Party and the Democratic Party, as the two strongest centralist parties, which often took turns leading the state but could not form majority governments on their own, were interested in such cooperation, promising coalition partners certain territorial concessions and ministerial positions, usually those of lesser significance. This would give the People's Radical Party or the Democratic Party key ministerial roles to enable them to enact their ideas. Examples of such centralist-federalist political hydras include the Radical-Radić government (involving a coalition of the People's Radical Party and the Croatian Peasant Party) of 1925–1927 and the so-called Four-Way coalition (involving a coalition of the People's Radical Party, the Democratic Party, the Yugoslav Muslim Organization, and the Slovene People's Party) of 1927–1928.[48]

With the adoption of the first constitution in 1921, conflicts between alternative conceptions championed by the strongest parties led to an internal state crisis. In the early 1920s, supporters of the People's Radical Party and the Democratic Party clashed with federalists, particularly the Croatian Peasant Party. It was the People's Radical Party in particular that insisted on new internal regional administrative divisions for the country. Thirty-three counties (*oblast*) were created: they were small enough that not one for them could become a platform for national mobilization, and they were opposed to the demands of federalists wishing to maintain the old territorial divisions that had existed before the Vidovdan Constitution, because they could be a source of "acute ethnic tendencies."[49]

Until 1928, political parties had sought to mobilize voters by highlighting their differing outlooks on concepts such as the monarchy or republicanism, centralism or federalism, and national unitarism (Yugoslavism) or some kind of autonomy, at least for constituent nations (Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes). The problems could not be solved by the relatively frequent parliamentary elections – 1920, 1923, 1925, and 1927. As a rule, the same larger parties, that generally addressed voters along national lines, always took the most seats in the parliament, but never enough to govern the state on their own for a significant amount of time. In the first ten years of existence for the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, there would be 23 different governments, which toward the end of the 1920s were increasingly minority governments.[50]

All the parties that found themselves in government showed clear signs of incompetence and an inability to work with the basic democratic process, i.e., the system by which the opposition is a corrective to the work of those governing. Due to the delicate balance of power in parliament, reforms in all areas were delayed. Parliamentary debates were bypassed by governments that, instead, led the state through a myriad of particularly complicated regulations that were themselves transient, given that ministers often changed them. Every governing coalition, but also every opposition, lacked the necessary understanding of the parts of the state beyond those that directly interested them, and the shortage of state finances to effect any reforms in a predominantly agrarian country was clear.[51]

During the 1920s, the opposition wanted to mobilize citizens, who had increasingly lost faith in state institutions, for resistance. Problems started immediately in the initial years of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, when the government decided to replace the old Austro-Hungarian crowns (*krone*) with new *dinars* at an unfavorable exchange rate of four to one. Authorities also revoked a collective contract that had been signed with railway workers. An additional early problem was its decision to carry out an inventory and stamping of livestock held in private ownership, so that the livestock could be requisitioned in the event of any future armed conflict. This provoked unrest in the western parts of the country.[52]

Parliament, as well as the media, served as the framework for conflicts between those in government and those in opposition. Apart from allegations of leading the country in the wrong direction, the most bile was spilled over accusations of corruption, racketeering, nepotism, and abuse of power. Without a clear system of controls, and within the context of a state that was still being constructed, it was not just low-ranking officials who took advantage of their positions. Corruption and nepotism scandals were commonplace, sometimes with current or former ministers being publicly accused.[53] In order to increase their standing and wealth, those in power would often cultivate links with wealthy people, both domestically and abroad, exploiting the country's natural resources. Prime Minister Nikola Pašić's response to accusations made in parliament that his son Rade was involved in a multimillion dinar misappropriation of state funds involving the purchase of sugar for the army has gone down as a classic example of nepotism: "What can you do? He's a kid who loves sugar!"[54]

Through their accumulated wealth, those in high positions gave money to their party projects and directly distributed it as subsidies, sometimes alongside giving jobs in the civil service, so as to purchase the favor of as many potential voters as possible.[55] This created a parasitic bureaucratic system, dependent upon the will of those in power.

The country lacked educated personnel to manage it effectively. This was especially the case given that so many former Austro-Hungarian officials emigrated after 1918, and those who were employed did not actually have the necessary skills to replace them, while "obedience, rather than knowledge, became the basic quality."[56] Although some order was temporarily established during the 6 January Dictatorship (imposed in 1929), corruption remained a general feature of Yugoslavia's political and administrative system right up to April 1941. The years up to 1933 saw the gradual return of the "traditional Serb custom of interference on the part of the politicians in the duties of the civil functionaries, who were thus compelled to serve the party rather than the State."[57] Ministers failed to oversee their subordinate officials, and there was likewise a problem with "universal poverty […] which has had an inevitably disastrous effect on public and private morality."[58]

The rise in dissatisfaction among the common citizens, regardless of their nationality, by the end of 1920s was clear, because

> the Vidovdan system was objectively illegitimate, in that it failed to establish the rule of law, to protect individual rights, to build an atmosphere of tolerance and fair play, to support real equality, and to guarantee the neutrality of the state in matters relating to religion, language, and national culture.[59]

Over time, the constant political conflicts and mutual accusations grew into a full-blown crisis for the system, expanding beyond politics into an intranational

crisis. This was mostly because Croats refused to accept the concept of a centralized state in which they would hold a subordinate position, referring to this concept as Greater Serbia. Along with this, they used old stereotypes and established new ones.

> Serbian political, economic and military hegemony, the repressive state apparatus, exclusively Serbian officers, the cultural backwardness of the Serbs, the unjust taxation and building other parts of the country by robbing the former Habsburg lands became part of the political rhetoric and slowly shaped the opinions of those who were dissatisfied.[60]

Conversely, there were also stereotypes about Croatian hatred of Serbs, Croatian separatism, etc.[61]

The national conflicts in the 1920s were thus manifested as politically conditioned violence between citizens, which marked the whole Yugoslav interwar period. Sabrina Ramet is right to conclude that "the ethnic politics syndrome," which developed during the period of Vidovdan parliamentarism, was a "by-product and reflection of this underlying problem of system illegitimacy and dysfunctionality." In other words, "it was the dysfunctionality of the system that generated the national question," rather than the other way around.[62]

Between 1927 and 1928, parliament saw more and more verbal clashes and even physical confrontations. This all came to a head in June 1928 when one of the People's Radical Party's members, Puniša Račić, stood at the parliamentary rostrum and used a revolver to shoot five representatives of the Croatian Peasant Party. Three of them, including the party founder and charismatic leader Stjepan Radić, died as a result. This led to several bloody confrontations between the police and demonstrators on the streets of Croatian towns over the following months.[63] The Croatian Peasant Party refused to participate in parliamentary work until it was established who was responsible for the assassinations and a process of state reorganization began, while Yugoslavia's other residents were concerned about the government's ability to overcome this crisis. In terms of foreign policy, supporters of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, primarily France and Great Britain, were also worried about the internal instability of the country.[64]

By the second half of 1928, the situation was getting out of control and one suggested solution involved a so-called amputation, whereby the western parts of the state would simply be let go. This would have restored the Kingdom of Serbia, expanded with parts from today's Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia. Another option was to form some sort of nonpolitical government that would have held enough authority to lift the country out of its crisis. Not a single person held the requisite confidence of all political agents to serve as such a savior/prime minister.[65]

After the resignation of the short-lived government of Anton Korošec, the only non-Serb to have had the honor of serving as prime minister at any time between 1918 and 1941, King Aleksandar gathered all the influential politicians to individual talks with him in the royal court with the aim of solving the crisis.[66] During the fragile first ten years of the monarchy, King Aleksandar had assumed a role as the state's chief political arbiter. He used prerogatives granted to him by the Vidovdan Constitution to intervene regularly and openly in political and social life. He often personally relieved and appointed ministers, prime ministers, and, indeed, whole governments; and, when the situation became too hot to handle, he called new elections. In truth, he frequently replaced governments when there really was no other solution to the political crisis. At the start of 1929, Aleksandar understood that the state's leading politicians were not prepared for compromise and were deeply disappointed with each other. They were truly split along national and political lines, meaning that there was scant will for cooperation within formally centralist or federalist groupings, and thus there was no functioning system for running the state.[67]

From the 6 January Dictatorship to Yugoslavia's break-up (1929–1941)

On 6 January 1929, King Aleksandar announced that the negotiations he had conducted over the previous days at the royal court with the political representatives of all the state's larger parties had failed. Later, he justified this by emphasizing how not one single invitee saw a way to work with any of the others, which was, in reality, intended to mask the fact that the dictatorship had, by this point, been prepared for several weeks or even months. In his proclamation on 6 January, the King held parliamentarianism, which he noted had also been his ideal, responsible for all the negativity that had befallen the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes by 1928. He stressed: "The time has come, when there can no longer be a mediator between the people and the King."[68] In the declaration of what would be known as the 6 January Dictatorship (taken from the date), King Aleksandar abolished the Vidovdan Constitution, dissolved parliament, and formed a government headed by General Petar Živković, who was charged with solving the massive problems and finding a more functional way to lead the state.[69]

The majority of prominent politicians responded to the declaration of a dictatorship with silence. This was not just a sign of efforts to come to terms with the king's actions. Many of them believed that, by declaring the dictatorship, the king and the government, which was answerable only to him, would solve the problems precisely in accord with their own proposals, which they had advanced over the previous weeks. Centralists believed that it was only through a greater concentration of power at the center that the state crisis could be solved, while federalists thought that the foundations for a future

federal reorganization should be laid. Despite this, the then-political parties were formally banned during the dictatorship's first weeks and their leaderships found themselves either under police surveillance or in prison.[70] Over the next few years, this severed the links between the now outlawed parties and their voters and forced parties into alternative and secretive operation.

The dictatorship, which the ruler and his government had described as a short-term solution, until the situation in the state would be quickly sorted out, instead passed several hundred laws in the next couple of months to strengthen its position. Many of them could not pass through parliamentary debates during the previous period because of the disputes they had provoked between the parties. New criminal, taxation, and educational regulations reinforced state centralism. In October 1929, the state changed its name and now became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. At the same time, a new administrative division of the country was introduced. The 33 *oblasts* were replaced by 9 so-called *banovinas*, which were intended, with their names taken from the main rivers that flowed through the state, to emphasize national unity and, with borders that cut through ethnic territories, to prevent any particular national or federal interests from being asserted within these units.[71] The dictatorial regime placed itself above the will of all citizens, behaving paternalistically toward them. Strict censorship and police violence from the outset prevented people from calling the regime a dictatorship.

For his first government, King Aleksandar called mostly upon the current crop of politicians who maintained good relations with the royal court, primarily from the People's Radical Party, the Democratic Party, and the Slovene People's Party. This was problematic, given that it meant that the state continued to be governed through the same centralist methods, although now without the citizens having a share in government. The famous sculptor and friend to the king, Ivan Meštrović, told the monarch that he did not have confidence in the ministers who were supposed to bring domestic peace and prosperity, pointing out how the government "looks as though somebody tries to introduce Christianity by bringing in a Muslim hodja to run the apostolate."[72]

The foundations for building a united state and nation, two concepts that the regime saw as equivalent,[73] were not Yugoslav but rather were national, e.g., Serbian, Croatian, Slovene. State authorities tried to present some national symbols as Yugoslav while downgrading the state's three constituent nations, literally demanding that they be treated as *tribes* of a single Yugoslav nation. Throughout the whole existence of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia, ordinary citizens, particularly Croats although also Serbs, Slovenes, Muslims from Bosnia-Herzegovina, et al., tended to look distrustfully upon all manipulation of their ethnic and national symbols and any attempts to integrate them into the identity of the newly established Yugoslav community. Furthermore, each religious confession, in its imprecise and imperfect way, took on various roles in the process of shaping nations and some national minorities. In this respect, Croats and Slovenes were associated with Catholicism, Serbs with their own Serbian Orthodox Church, and Bosnian Muslims with Islam.

A good example of this can be seen in attempts at the start of the 1930s, to turn St. Sava's Day, 27 January, into a state school holiday, by emphasizing the elements of the Orthodox Serb saint's struggle as reflecting common interests. While the organization of school celebrations of St. Sava's Day resulted in fiascos in Muslim, Croatian, and Slovene areas of the state, since they were taken by many as a sign of covert Serbianization under the guise of Yugoslavism, in Serbian areas they were attacked for having taken the celebration away from the ecclesiastical sphere, inserting it into the schools for the sake of secularization and the promotion of Yugoslavism.[74]

Indeed, in various ways, through open or passive resistance, organized or individually, ordinary citizens baulked against such attempts to build a Yugoslav identity.[75] The pointlessness of regime's plans is summed up remarkably well in the words of one witty, unnamed supporter of the Croatian Peasant Party: "You can't make a single child by decree, but King Aleksandar reckons he can make a whole nation that way."[76]

The period of the dictatorship entered a second phase after the King declared the so-called September or Imposed (*Oktroirani*) Constitution in 1931. This further solidified a politics of state and national unity and affirmed centralization. Immediately following this, under restrictive regulations, parliamentary elections were held in which only those candidates who supported the regime could stand. The elections were thus a one-horse race, but for the regime the fixed results were presented as receiving the people's unanimous support.[77] After that, the royal court finally formed a party of the regime, later named the Yugoslav National Party (*Jugoslavenska nacionalna stranka*), which all of the regime's supporters could enter.

The dictatorship tried to construct a unified nation primarily by a reliance on the army, police, and educational and cultural bodies, such as the Sokol youth gymnastic movement, at the same time overhauling the curriculum in the elementary schools and suppressing the traditional names of Yugoslavia's regions – Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, etc. – and creating the aforementioned new patchwork of regions named for rivers.[78] But, due to the severe effects of the economic crisis that had hit Yugoslavia since 1930 and the undemocratic methods of governing, the regime had gradually given up financing many of the projects through which it would have simultaneously built a modern Yugoslav state and nation. Old problems once again resurfaced. British diplomats in 1933 noted how "the feeling of resentment against the Serbian clique in the government and the centralization of Belgrade has grown […] and confidence in the King has diminished."[79]

The dissatisfaction of ordinary citizens with the state's dysfunctional economic and democratic development grew and was manifested ever more publicly toward the middle of the 1930s. Confrontations with the forces of the regime, who were charged with "keeping order," started to escalate. Some citizens joined secret and not-so-secret organizations that sought to bring about the regime's violent demise. Apart from the communists and old separatist organizations,

such as the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (Внатрешна Македонска Револуционерна Организација), other new ones were set up at the start of the 1930s, including the Ustaša – Croatian Revolutionary Movement (*Ustaša – Hrvatski revolucionarni pokret*) (formed in 1931). Under the leadership of Ante Pavelić, the Ustaša formed camps in Hungary and Italy to train its members, who were then sent back into Yugoslavia to carry out acts of terrorism aimed at destabilizing the state.[80] Other nongovernmental armed formations included the Serb nationalist Četniks formed in 1903 (which split into two groups in 1924); the centralist-oriented Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA), established in 1921; the Serbian National Youth (SRNAO), formed in 1926; the Croatian National Youth (HANAO), set up in response to the establishment of SRNAO;[81] and the Croatian Peasant Defense (HSZ), set in motion in 1936 on the orders of Vladko Maček.[82] All of these armed formations viewed themselves as defensive in character. The terrorist methods of the Ustaša came to a head in the French city of Marseille in October 1934 when Vlado Chernozemski, an agent of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, acting in collaboration with the Ustaša, assassinated King Aleksandar. After this, on account of public condemnation, for the most part they froze their activities.[83]

Despite the death of its leader, the dictatorship and, for that matter, Yugoslavia did not collapse immediately. A three-member Regency, which, according to the deceased king's will, governed the state in the name of his juvenile son, King Petar II (1923–1970), understood that it was necessary to take a more conciliatory approach within the state. Prince Pavle, Aleksandar's cousin, soon assumed the leading role in the Regency.[84] He wanted to entrust the running of the state to a person who could solve the plethora of economic problems and attract the then-opposition to cooperate with the regime through dialogue. He took a chance on the economic expert and, until then, formally opposition politician, Milan Stojadinović, who would govern the state as prime minister from June 1935 to February 1939.

Immediately prior to installing Stojadinović in power, the first relatively free elections for the national parliament were held in May 1935. Although they were still burdened by a mutual distrust stemming from the 1920s, the opposition leaders, some of whom, like the Croatian Peasant Party's Vladko Maček, had only just been released from prison, were forced to stand together on a common opposition ticket throughout the whole country on account of restrictive electoral regulations. This collective candidacy afforded citizens an opportunity to show just how dissatisfied they were. Despite the regime's electoral violence and manipulation of the ballot box results, the plan worked to some extent. According to official results, the regime's Yugoslav National Party garnered about 60.6% of the vote, while the so-called *United Opposition*, composed of the Croatian Peasant Party, the Independent Democratic Party (*Samostalna demokratska stranka*), the Yugoslav Muslim Organization, the Democratic Party, and the Agrarian Party (*Zemljoradnička stranka*), took

37.7% across the state, with the few remaining percentages being shared by other political groups.[85] The problem, however, was that the electoral law was drafted so that any electoral list with over 50% of the popular vote automatically received three-fifths of the seats in parliament and participated in apportioning those that remained. Consequently, those in power took 303 seats, while the opposition received just 67.[86]

Despite the regime's violence, the actions of the opposition around the time of the 1935 election were an indication that the regime, although retaining almost all of the dictatorship's restrictive laws, was now prepared to apply them somewhat less stringently and permit certain changes. The democratization of political life was limited over the following years, not least because the opposition parties once again chose to abstain from parliamentary work for a considerable period, pointing out that by doing so they were withholding recognition from the system established after 1929.[87] In spite of this, their attempts to initiate changes, and thus attract voters, became clearer over the next few years.

The new prime minister, Stojadinović, received his mandate from Prince Pavle immediately after the regime's electoral victory in 1935. His first move was to establish a new regime party, the Yugoslav Radical Union (*Jugoslovenska radikalna zajednica*). The Yugoslav Radical Union was stitched together from former parliamentary parties that had, until then, been in opposition to the dictatorship. Alongside Stojadinović, the representative of the People's Radical Party and later self-declared leader of Serbs, the new Yugoslav Radical Union government included representatives of the former opposition parties that were considered strongest in the Slovene and Muslim ethnic categories. Anton Korošec (Slovene People's Party) and Mehmed Spaho (Yugoslav Muslim Organization) became deputy prime ministers and vice presidents of the new party.[88]

The remainder of the opposition described their former colleagues' accession to the regime as a betrayal of the struggle for a democratic state. Within the Croatian public sphere, Yugoslavism was criticized with increasing openness, often without any sound argument, as a cover for the Serbianization of the state and a Serbian exploitation of the rest of the country. Nevertheless, this did not prevent the Croatian Peasant Party from attempting to make links with other, predominantly Serbian opposition parties. Together they stood firm, demanding democratization and the federalization of Yugoslavia.[89]

The parliamentary elections in December 1938 turned out to again be a turning point. Although Stojadinović's government had brought a certain degree of economic stability to the state, it came at the expense of coming increasingly under the wing of Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany. Both wanted greater control over Yugoslavia, an economically weaker and politically suggestible small country in Southeastern Europe. Toward the end of the 1930s, Yugoslavia increased its exports to the Third Reich, whose preparations for war needed to be fed.[90] The economic and political problems in all European states during this period contributed to an increase in authoritarianism,

and so many of them sought a way out of the various crises that were affecting them by hoping for strong-arm rule to take control. Stojadinović himself stopped emphasizing his Francophile and Anglophile attitudes and his desire for the gradual democratization of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as he had done at one time. Instead he increasingly took on greater authority over the state's domestic and foreign policy. He also presented himself as a guarantee of Yugoslavia's stability.[91] For this reason, the parliamentary elections of 1938 offered a promising framework for strengthening his own position. On the other hand, the parties of the United Opposition thought that they could finally draw attention to the state's problems and push for change through these elections.[92]

From recommencing operation in 1935, through to the elections in 1938, the Croatian Peasant Party in particular passed through a transformative phase, changing from a simple political party into a Croatian national movement. It was the only party to rebuild its activities in Croatia. It increased in membership and became a national movement, with a number of organizations that it formed in order to improve the rights of women and workers, and the economic, cultural, and social situation of everyday citizens in Croatian-inhabited lands.[93]

Given a choice between freedom and certainty, many ordinary citizens in Yugoslavia in the uncertain times leading up to World War Two picked more certainty and less freedom in the 1938 elections, accepting all restrictions as the normal recipe that had lifted many of the world's countries out of economic, political, and even national crises at that time. The results of those parliamentary elections in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia gave the governing Yugoslav Radical Union 54.1% of the vote, while the United Opposition took 44.9%. However, these elections were an indicator of the divisions between Yugoslavia's nations. Among Croats, the United Opposition, in which the Croatian Peasant Party held a prominent role, achieved almost absolute plebiscitary support. The Yugoslav Radical Union received the majority of its votes in regions inhabited by Serbs, Muslims, and Slovenes, though somewhat less among Serbs outside Serbia. Due to Stojadinović's good relations with their organizations and their motherlands, national minorities, above all the Germans, Hungarians, and Albanians, also helped the Yugoslav Radical Union with a further 400,000 votes.[94]

Stojadinović judged that the 1938 elections strengthened his position, more so by the unjust distribution of seats giving him 306 representatives in parliament, whereas the opposition took just 67. The Regency, however, considered this to be a close-run result, especially alongside accusations that the results were fixed and evidence that Stojadinović's increasing authoritarianism could provoke a new wave of internal unrest. For this reason, the Regents decided in February 1939 to bring Stojadinović down and to install one of his former ministers, Dragiša Cvetković, as the new prime minister.[95]

Cvetković came to power promising a politics of reconciliation and the start of negotiations with the Croatian Peasant Party, which were intended to result

in some sort of agreement that would satisfy all of the significant national-political actors within the state. Given that the Yugoslav Radical Union looked out for the interests of the Serbian, Slovene, and Muslim parts of the population, it still needed to attract the only party that operated in Croatian lands.[96] Cvetković hoped that, through the Croatian Peasant Party's entry into government with the Yugoslav Radical Union, the national tensions that had often fueled interethnic violence over the previous decades would be reduced. After Germany reached Yugoslavia's border by annexing Austria (the *Anschluss*) in 1938 and Italy conquered Albania in early 1939, Yugoslavia needed stability. Cvetković was prepared, with the Regency's authorization, to offer the creation of a self-governing unit to the Croats, without accepting the Croatian Peasant Party's initial demand for the entire state's reorganization along federal lines.[97] Negotiations between Cvetković and Maček, together with their political and legal aides, lasted for months, and were not without tensions. Nevertheless, they finally resulted in an agreement that satisfied the most basic demands of the Croatian Peasant Party.

With the signing of the Cvetković-Maček Agreement on 26 August 1939, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia should have achieved stability. By carving out a part of the territory from what formally still remained a unitary state, a single large self-governing unit inside Yugoslavia was created, encompassing approximately 26.5% of the state's territory and 28.9% of its total population. This Banovina of Croatia, in which 70% of the population consisted of Croats and 20% of Serbs, had considerable legislative, governmental, and judicial autonomy. Under the agreement, the representatives of Croatian Peasant Party entered into the governing coalition, forming the Cvetković-Maček government, named after the prime minister and the head of the Croatian party, who now became deputy prime minister.

This agreement, however, was reached too late, less than a week before the Third Reich launched its attack on Poland, initiating World War Two. It needed time for political, national, and economic problems to be addressed, both within the Banovina of Croatia and across the rest of Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia did not have this time. Immediately after the Banovina of Croatia was established, various opponents to the Cvetković-Maček Agreement made themselves known. Parties that remained in opposition justifiably criticized the agreement, because it did not initiate the process of the state's full democratization. For Croatian nationalists, the Agreement was unacceptable because it did not grant Croatia independence and because not all Croatian-inhabited lands were included within its scope. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia saw the Banovina of Croatia as being based on an agreement contracted between the Croatian and Serbian bourgeoisie, without any care for the real interests of workers and peasants. Supporters of Yugoslav centralism emphasized how the Agreement destroyed state homogeneity and opened up a Serbian question within the state, which could only be resolved by forming an autonomous unit in which all Serbs

would live.[98] The Cvetković-Maček government, governing without parliament, which had again been suspended, put off further state restructuring while World War Two continued in Europe.

Due to the increasing pressure exerted by Germany, the Cvetković-Maček government relented on 25 March 1941 and signed an agreement with Berlin, adhering to the Axis Pact. The government claimed that this was no more than a formal confirmation of Yugoslavia's neutral status. But coming after the capitulation of its protector, France, and on account of the rationing of products and food, on 26 March 1941 anti-government protests broke out in several cities, brandishing the slogan "Better a war than a pact! Better the grave than to be a slave!"[99] The army, one of the pillars of Yugo-unitarism, but split for some time among the officers between Germanophiles and Anglophiles, decided to intervene. On the night of 26–27 March, with some encouragement from British diplomats and the British secret service, high-ranking Anglophile officers carried out a coup. The Regency and the Cvetković-Maček government were ousted. The cabal declared the still juvenile King Petar II to be of age, trying thereby to gain legitimacy for their subsequent actions. All the ministry buildings were quickly occupied by the putschists, while all the ministers and officers whose loyalty was doubted were taken into custody. A new government was put together by General Dušan Simović and, after a couple of days' reluctance, the Croatian Peasant Party joined it, along with some other politicians who had been in opposition to Cvetković's cabinet.[100] Although the Simović government stressed that Yugoslavia wanted good relations with Germany, making assurances that this coup was an internal Yugoslav matter, upon hearing news of the coup, Hitler made the decision that same day that his troops should be sent into Yugoslavia and Greece.[101]

Yugoslavia was not ready for war. The Third Reich made a surprise attack on 6 April 1941 and, without an effective defense plan, Yugoslavia became yet another European country that offered minimal opposition to the Wehrmacht. Yugoslavia capitulated on 17 April 1941. King Petar II and his government fled to London. The territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was carved up. Italy, Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria annexed parts of its territory, and local minority members of their nations received a de facto privileged status in the new puppet states created by Hitler and Mussolini– the so-called Independent State of Croatia, headed by Ante Pavelić, leader of the Ustaša movement, and the Government of National Salvation in Serbia, initially under a so-called government of commissars headed by Milan Aćimović, but later headed by General Milan Nedić, who accepted the post of prime minister on 29 August 1941.[102]

Not long after the break-up of Yugoslavia, multiple resistance movements began operating, although they did not share a consensus concerning how Yugoslavia should be organized after victory in the war. The largest resistance movement was led by the communists, under Josip Broz Tito. This was a Yugoslav-wide resistance movement embracing all anti-fascist forces. They

redefined Yugoslavism during the war "as the ideal of unity among free and equal South Slavic peoples and as the best means of their mutual survival."[103] The other major resistance movement was the royalist *Četniks*, headed by Colonel (later General) Draža Mihailović, who advocated the restoration of the Yugoslav monarchy but with a more pronounced Serbian influence over the country.[104] The war ended in May 1945, leaving an estimated 1,027,000 Yugoslavs dead as a result of combat action, according to Croatian demographer Vladimir Žerjavić. He has estimated that about 530,000 of these were Serbs, 192,000 Croats, and 103,000 Muslims (Bosniaks), with the remaining 202,000 war dead being members of other groups, including Jews.[105]

Economic and demographic problems

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia was an extremely agrarian country, with the majority of residents working in the primary sector. With around 76.5% of the population living off agriculture in 1931, 140 residents per 100 hectares of the cultivated land and 141 residents per 100 heads of livestock, Yugoslavia could be counted among the least developed countries in Europe at the start of the 1930s.[106] The ways of cultivating the land and life in general in agricultural regions were similar to the methods of cultivation employed in the Middle Ages, as the use of machines, artificial fertilizers, and crops that gave higher yields were negligible. Given that only 46.2% of the country's surface area could be cultivated due to the soil profile and that, of this, 88.3% of land holdings were under 10 hectares in size, rural economies were generally unable to produce a market surplus efficiently.[107] From the small amount of money that the average peasant received from selling any surplus, he had to pay taxes and purchase other supplies necessary for survival. Many small peasant families suffered from malnutrition.

The situation of the peasants was diverse across Yugoslavia's various regions. In Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia peasants were free in a political and economic sense, but in some parts, peasants still maintained feudal obligations vis-à-vis the owners of the land where they lived. It was only in 1921 that the majority of Bosnian peasants became owners of the rural land. So-called *Colonate* relations were formally terminated in Dalmatia in 1930, while serfdom as such (*čifćiije*) ended in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo between 1931 and 1933. The land was finally given to the peasants who had cultivated it until that point. The end of the process of agrarian reform was meant to be reached by the Law on the Liquidation of Agrarian Reform of 1931.[108] However, some holders were given the right to retain large estates, while the fund of distributed land in some regions was relatively small. The further systematic disempowerment of the owners, whereby the land was handed over to the ownership of local peasants, stopped, particularly where religious institutions and the foreign landed gentry were concerned, because of an alleged fear of spreading unrest in the villages.[109]

In some of the country's regions, such as parts of Montenegro and Herzegovina, there had never been any industry, and there was also a negative ratio of residents to the amount of cultivated land necessary to feed them.[110] For these reasons, the state attempted to relocate whole families from the regions where they were barely surviving to less inhabited areas, especially Kosovo and Macedonia, through so-called internal colonization. During the 1920s and 1930s, there were many objections from various sides about this process, even though it brought a far better life for many in their new surroundings. The authorities were often accused of favoritism along party or national (Serbian) lines. Also, little attention was paid to educating the new arrivals so that they could adapt to their lives in their new surroundings or to promoting harmonious relations with the existing population.[111]

Due to all of the outlined problems in agriculture, there was a channeling of the population out of the villages and into the towns, with individuals hoping for jobs in industry or in the service sector. Unfortunately, especially in the age of the Great Depression, which began in Yugoslavia in 1930, impoverished towns were full of people from the villages who had often been unsuccessful in their job hunting efforts.[112]

Yugoslavia was a poorly industrialized country, in which the largest factories were spread mostly among the towns north of the River Sava – in particular, Ljubljana, Maribor, Zagreb, Osijek, Novi Sad, and Belgrade, whereas it was less developed in towns south of the river, with the exception of large towns such as Split, Sarajevo, and Niš. Apart from that, when we look at figures about power usage and the use of machines, we can see that Yugoslav technology was behind the European average. It favored the food, timber, and textile industries, primarily because the materials were cheap, with products that could be quickly sold or exported.[113] Mining only took place in certain parts of Slovenia, Serbia, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the majority of the mines were in foreign ownership.[114]

The number of workers in industry in percentage terms relative to the whole population was small. From 1918 to 1941 there were only 200,000–300,000 employees here.[115] The increase in the number of jobs, however, did not match the demographic rise in the state's population. Although Yugoslavia had an abundant, cheap workforce, serious industrialization was not achieved by 1941, due to the lack of necessary capital, the cost of raw materials for production, and also a lack of effort by the government.

Neither hours nor salaries were regulated by law. These usually depended upon individual contracts between the worker and the employer.[116] Workers' wages were low, without provision for health care or pensions. The average industrial worker in Belgrade in 1921 earned $2–3 per week, while the minimum salary in the United States at the same time was $16 per week.[117] The state authorities sought to outlaw union activities, which they deemed undesirable, especially those with communist tendencies, arrested their leaders, and then formed their own unions, through which they could control the workforce directly. This only strengthened the image of communists as fighters for workers' rights.[118]

After the inception of the Great Depression, it was the banking sector, along with construction and industry, that was hardest hit by the crisis, forcing many large and small banks to close. That pushed many factories, tradesmen, and farming businesses into bankruptcy. The state jumped in to fill the vacuum, adding capital to the banks under its control – thus becoming a direct creditor to businesses.[119] Beginning in 1935, the regime started nationalizing or at least taking greater control of some branches of the economy. These steps, combined with identifying new markets for Yugoslav goods plus a couple of productive years for agriculture, brought a gradual economic recovery to the state during the period of Milan Stojadinović's government.[120]

The poor development of agriculture and a lack of jobs in other sectors induced a wave of emigration from Yugoslavia. Although there was also emigration for political reasons, whether due to sympathies for communism or Croatian, Macedonian, or any other separatist movement, most emigrants left the country for economic reasons. They hoped that in their new surroundings, even with their low level of education, they could still earn good wages and send part of their earnings back to support their families.[121]

Emigration during the interwar period continued the emigration patterns from the end of the nineteenth century, which had begun in certain regions, particularly today's Croatia, Vojvodina, and Slovenia. According to official statistics, between 1919 and 1939, 195,934 persons left Yugoslavia to head overseas, usually to the Western hemisphere, and, of them, 87,800 returned,[122] while from 1927 to 1939, 132,144 citizens of Yugoslavia emigrated to other European countries and 82,279 returned.[123] Nevertheless, there was a problem with non-registered, illegal migration, meaning that the Yugoslav diaspora numbered around 743,000 people by 1925.[124] Ideally, emigration was made to the United States, but after a quota system was introduced in 1924, it was more common for Yugoslav citizens to move to South America, Canada, Australia, France, and Belgium. With the start of the Great Depression, some of the aforementioned countries shut their borders. By the end of the 1930s the Third Reich emerged as a more attractive destination, given its need for an expanded workforce as it prepared for war.[125]

Yugoslav authorities even offered institutional support to those who left in search of their fortunes. Especially during the 1930s, given the extent of the emigration, their economic and political potential became important. Recognizing that "Pittsburgh is [now] the fourth largest Yugoslav city in the world according to population,"[126] the authorities tried to engender a spirit of Yugoslav unity in them. However, the processes of national differentiation were too advanced in these emigrants for them to think of themselves as Yugoslavs, rather than as Serbs and Croats. In the United States there were 15 major Yugoslav associations in 1931, yet only 2 of them used the word "Yugoslav" in their names. "The others called themselves Slovenian, Croat, Serb or Catholic. By far the largest associations were the 'Croatian Fraternal Union,' the 'Slovenian National Support Union' and the 'Krain-Slovenian Catholic Union,' which claimed 92,000, 63,000 and 34,000 members respectively."[127]

Yugoslavia's interwar economic politics meant that there had been a lack of progress toward modernity. Apart from that, the differences in economic development between regions within the state did not shrink and the percentage of the population living on or below the poverty line did not change significantly.

The poorly developed economic sector was dependent upon the good will of foreign buyers purchasing Yugoslav products and semi-processed goods, and also on loans, which helped the Yugoslav state and its economy to function normally. Yugoslavia was the second most indebted European state (after Greece).[128] More powerful states protected their own and their citizens' interests through diplomatic pressure.[129] Without the necessary financial means with which to successfully manage its state, the government relied for the most part on France, a country that had become an important creditor and also political protector of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/ Yugoslavia before the rest of the world. Although regimes with a firm hand gained popularity in Yugoslavia during the 1930s, many politicians and intellectuals highlighted the models that their state should follow, viz., parliamentary democracies such as Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, and France. Interwar Yugoslavia especially emphasized its eternal friendship with France, created during the common war effort of 1914 to 1918.[130]

The status of national minorities

Monarchist Yugoslavia did try to become a developed European state. As such, it generally supported all positive regulations that protected the rights of national minorities and their right to be equal to those from the majority population. In reality, the Yugoslav authorities, under pressure from the great powers and feeling deep resentment, agreed to sign the 1919 Paris Peace Conference minority rights treaty, emphasizing that their state had its own legal framework for protecting minorities.[131]

The various national minorities' attitudes toward the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918 differed in various ways. The authorities, who had fought for international recognition of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes at the Paris Peace Conference, felt that some regions, particularly those that were ethnically mixed, would prove difficult to consolidate. The authorities of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes wanted to have as many South Slavs as possible within the new state, the borders of which they sought to expand at the expense of those that were defeated in the Great War. They feared the strength and organization of certain minorities, especially those that could demand particular revisions to the state borders, which had been freshly drawn and were thus fragile. This fear was not unfounded, as there was a strong resistance of various insurgent armed groups, often referred to as bandits – for instance among some Montenegrins who wanted to defend Montenegrin statehood.[132]

Until the mid-1920s, there was often conflict between the authorities and the population that identified as Macedonians, Turks, and Albanians. The areas of Kosovo and Metohija, Sandžak, and Macedonia (known as North Macedonia only since June 2018) came under the control of the Kingdom of Serbia in 1912, only to be lost again during World War One. The brutality of the new Yugoslav authorities in the first years after the war was the subject of many complaints, while, on the other hand, so-called *Kachaks* (derived from *kaçmak*, Turkish *outlaw*) threatened the non-Albanian population. The authorities faced a headache not just from pro-Albanian banditry but also from the activities of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, which, at that time, was aiming to create an independent Macedonia under Bulgarian protection. The authorities of the young Kingdom often armed the local pro-Yugoslav *Četnik* groups to fight the insurgents, and, when things were getting out of control, they sent regular army troops to engage with the Macedonian, Albanian, and Montenegrin insurgents.

In Macedonia (referred to as "Southern Serbia" at the time), and particularly Kosovo, the authorities accepted an almost missionary role. In their eyes, it was necessary to bring modernization and culture to the region, as well as ideologically orient the population to the idea that they were an integral part of Yugoslavia.[133] They were, however, not too choosy about the means and methods. Bulgarian and Albanian-sounding surnames were Serbianized. The official language of administration and education became Serbian. Albanian- and Bulgarian-speaking teachers were persecuted and their secular and religious schools (*mektebs* and *medreses*) were replaced with Serbian schools. The whole school curriculum was supposed to prove a direct link between their own language and history and those of Serbia.[134]

Armed resistance in those parts of the kingdom, with limited success, lasted until the mid-1920s. While the Turks either eventually accepted the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes as their state or emigrated in the war's aftermath to the newly established and generally pro-Yugoslav Republic of Turkey, it is safe to say that relations with Albanians, the third largest minority in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia remained largely disturbed throughout the country's existence.[135] The agrarian reform process that lasted in these regions during the 1920s and 1930s, in which the fertile land was largely confiscated from local residents and granted to the mostly Serbian and Montenegrin colonists, did not help the process of building common bonds. In a politically and economically unfavorable environment, some Muslims – ethnic Albanians and Turks – sold their properties and joined the 200,000–300,000 strong emigration, especially from the areas of today's Kosovo and Sandžak, that moved to Albania and the Republic of Turkey during the interwar period.[136]

Thanks to their help in the Great War and in then maintaining good relations with their representatives during the interwar period, Yugoslav authorities looked upon some minorities more positively than they did, for example, upon those with whose motherlands Yugoslavia did not have good relations. Some of

the more welcome national minorities, such as Slovaks, Czechs, Ruthenes, and even Turks, got their voting rights sorted out by the time of the first elections in 1920. In the next few years some minorities, such as the Czechs and Slovaks, opened their own schools, libraries, and cultural, banking, and health care institutions.[137] Thus, the Czechs, like members of some other groups, asked "Yugoslavs not to look upon them as rivals but as honest support for the good of their state," while advising their members not to forget or be ashamed "that they are Czechs, because the worst thing to be is an apostate."[138]

In some parts of the state, the coexistence of the Yugoslav majority peoples and the local minority became problematic. In Slovenia, local German speakers resisted the creation of monarchist Yugoslavia and some pro-Austrian demonstrations, such as Maribor's Bloody Sunday (*Marburger Blutsonntag*) in January 1919, were put down by force.[139]

At the Paris Peace Conferences there were attempts to correct the borders according to the wishes of the residents themselves. In October 1920, under the supervision of the League of Nations, albeit only in the zone under Austrian control, the so-called Carinthian plebiscite was conducted. Possibly due to strong pro-Austrian propaganda, a considerable part of this zone's Slovene population voted to stay in Austria (59% in total).[140] The border, which between 1918 and 1920 was pulled back in Carinthia and Styria for the most part, survived the periods of both Yugoslavias and has become today's Slovenian–Austrian border.

In the especially multiethnic Vojvodina, in which there lived a great many minorities – including Germans, Hungarians, Romanians (and so-called Aromanians, i.e., *Cincars, Vlachs*), Slovaks, Ruthenes, and Czechs – whose collective number exceeded that region's South Slavs (primarily Serbs but also Croats), the ideologists of Yugoslav unity feared "foreign influences" that could stoke interethnic violence and the loss of territory. Given that a considerable part of that region had been under Hungarian rule until the end of World War One, it was thought necessary to curb the political engagement of Hungarians and Germans, the nations whose combined numbers gave them the strength to advocate publicly the idea that the territory should become part of independent Hungary. It was the same with Romanians and Aromanians, who could push for a change of the eastern borders of the state toward Romania, a country that had, like the kingdom, finished the Great War on the side of the victors.[141]

At the end of 1918, the army of the Kingdom of Serbia entered Vojvodina, i.e., Banat, Bačka, and Baranja, superseding the Hungarian authorities and raising the question of how the borders between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, Romania, and Hungary would be drawn. Elections were hastily held for a Great People's Assembly, which met in Novi Sad in the fall of 1918. The members were largely elected from among the Slavic population, i.e., Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, Ruthenes, and Czechs, who supported unification with the Kingdom of Serbia, whose army had secured the borders, in the future

monarchist Yugoslavia. By contrast, the non-Slavic minority simply did not get the chance to decide where and how it would live, with just 6 Germans, 1 Hungarian and not a single Romanian being among the 757 assembly members that accepted Vojvodina's unification in November 1918.[142]

Along the Adriatic coast, in the fall of 1918, the main challenge, as already noted above, was the threat coming from the Kingdom of Italy, also a victor in the Great War. Italy enjoyed the status of a great power at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, where it refused to recognize the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes until it, in return for Italian recognition, received all of the territories that Great Britain and France had promised Rome in 1915 in the Treaty of London, as compensation for entering the war on their side. By the end of 1918, Italy's troops had seized land from Austria–Hungary, against whom they had fought, and not from a Yugoslav state that had only just been created.[143] On the basis of historic right, which for Italy stretched back to ancient Rome, but also the ethnic identity of the inhabitants, which was largely ambiguous for some territorial claims, Italy finally more or less recognized the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and demarcated its borders with it in Rapallo in 1920, once it received almost the whole of Istria, many of the eastern Adriatic islands, and the city of Zadar and its surroundings, until then the capital of the Habsburg province of Dalmatia. In 1924 the city of Rijeka (Fiume) was also formally granted to Italy.[144]

After Benito Mussolini came to power in Rome (1922), the Italian rhetoric that declared the eastern Adriatic region to be important for spreading Italian civilization intensified. Some 370,000 mostly Slovenes and Croats remained in Italy, and their rights were subsequently reduced. Italy tried to foster a sense of endangerment among its national minority within the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, numbering 12,553 in 1921, which, following military intervention in 1941, would then be used to justify the annexation of other parts of today's Montenegro, Croatia, and Slovenia. During the 1920s and 1930s Mussolini adopted a carrot-and-stick policy toward Yugoslavia, granting certain concessions, which often benefited Italy, but also reaping as much benefit as possible by exerting various pressures, for instance by helping the Ustaša movement, which used terrorist tactics in its attempt to destroy Yugoslavia and create an independent Croatia.[145] Yugoslavia soon accepted the rules of this game, which meant that relations between the two states would often change from cordial to tense from one month to the next.[146]

The Yugoslav authorities sought to control some minorities, especially those that had not been so consumed by the process of national differentiation, for example Macedonians, Albanians in Kosovo, and also Roma, a minority that has become the subject of serious research only in more recent times. Due to ethnic mimicry, i.e., declaring themselves along the same lines as the majority population, but also the distorted methodology of both censuses in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia (1921 and 1931), it can be presumed that there were around 70,000 Roma living in the country. The authorities often

employed forceful methods to convert the Roma to a sedentary lifestyle and other means to incorporate them into society.[147] The vast majority of Roma, one of the most rejected minorities, persecuted by other nations and lacking their own protector-state, together with Jews and Serbs, would suffer mass extermination during World War Two.[148]

As the next World War approached, some minorities now became undesirable. Jews had moved above all to the Yugoslav territories mostly during the nineteenth century. By the time of the interwar period, they were largely integrated into the majority Yugoslav nations. Most Jews viewed themselves as a religious minority and loyal citizens of the Yugoslav state. They tried to maintain good relations with all regimes, offering their support to state integration.[149] Although there was a certain amount of antisemitism in society, which was visible in the press at the time, particularly among Roman Catholics, it was only at the end of the 1930s that Yugoslavia began to institutionalize antisemitism through legislation, for example by passing laws that limited Jewish access to some state services and to free enrollment to universities. During World War Two, around 80% of the prewar Yugoslav Jews would perish.[150]

Formally, the largest minority in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was the Germans, with about 4.2% of the population, i.e., approximately 505,790 members. The great majority of them lived in the lands of today's Slovenia, Slavonia in Croatia, and Vojvodina in Serbia. The number of Germans in Yugoslavia was in decline during the first half of the twentieth century, due to the departure of the Germanophone administration after 1918, now an undesirable former ruling elite from Austria–Hungary, as well as to lower birth rates and the influences of Slovenianization in Slovenia, Croatianization in Croatian areas, and Magyarization and Serbianization in Vojvodina.[151] The position of the Germans was relatively unfavorable after 1918 compared with earlier periods, which is understandable because they had gone from being those in control to those who were controlled, without any real access to decision-making. Nevertheless, most held on to their property, schools, and societies, at the center of which was their cultural association, the Swabian-German Cultural Association (*Schwäbisch-Deutscher Kulturbund*).[152]

Hungarians, who also remained in Yugoslavia as a national minority until 1941, mostly inhabiting Vojvodina, likewise lost many of the privileges that they had previously enjoyed. Ordinary village folk who stayed in Yugoslavia until 1941 were often discriminated against for not speaking the "state" language. The demands of the few Hungarian-elected representatives for greater autonomy, particularly in education, and the inclusion of Hungarians in the process of agrarian reforms usually fell upon deaf ears, sometimes because of their own poor organization and on other occasions due to obstruction by the authorities.[153]

During the 1920s Yugoslav authorities sought to prevent minorities, including the Hungarians, Germans, and Romanians, from freely selecting their own representatives, not just for the state parliament, but sometimes also for municipal

councils. Hungarian, German, and Romanian parties, often suspected of irre-dentism and espionage, began to be formed from 1922 onward. They all advocated political and cultural equality, while German political groups in Slovenia and Vojvodina also focused on demands for equal educational and economic rights.[154] Realizing that it would be difficult to achieve their goals without participating actively in politics, during the 1920s minority Slovak, German, Hungarian, Romanian, and Turkish parties began to seek power at the local level and through pre-election coalitions with larger governing parties. This could guarantee that individual minority representatives would be chosen for the National Assembly or the realization of some lesser local concessions if the candidate from a future ruling party was elected with the help of votes from a particular minority.[155] During the 1930s, members of minorities would generally look to the regime parties, especially the Yugoslav Radical Union, to adopt policies favorable to them, although in some cases they did vote with other parties that promised them concessions, such as the Croatian Peasant Party.[156]

The political life of minorities was frozen in time during the 6 January Dictatorship. Publicly, it was possible to offer support only for a unified state and nationally integrated politics, and so influential minority politicians either cooperated directly with the royal court or sought cooperation with the opposition. An integrated state politics, which was intended to create one Yugoslav nation in the state, was particularly at work during the 6 January Dictatorship, not only in the planned integration of the South Slav nations into one nation,[157] but also, albeit much more subtly, in creating Yugoslavs out of the members of national minorities. Through the clearer application of the 1928 Law on Citizenship, which required that all citizens declare them-selves mono-nationally as Yugoslavs, members of national minorities who wanted Yugoslav citizenship had to renounce their other citizenships.[158]

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, especially during the 6 January Dictatorship, passed a whole series of laws and regulations with which it supplemented international treaties and thus guaranteed the unhindered development of minority ethnic groups within its territory. In particular, we can pick out a series of laws through which the state authorities regulated the position of various reformist Christian communities, Muslim communities, and others. Although these laws spoke about autonomy, they afforded more room to the authorities to directly or indirectly control the actions of national minorities that were also confessionally different from the majority nations.[159]

Nevertheless, the signing of the Concordat with the Vatican, through which the rights of the state's second most numerous religious community were intended to be regulated, turned into another domestic conflict. The unifica-tion of the Orthodox community into a single Serbian Orthodox Church had been carried out in 1920, with the encouragement of the state, which gave it an unofficial status as Yugoslavia's primary ecclesiastical community. After 15 years of negotiations, the text for the 1935 Concordat between Yugoslavia and the Vatican was finally agreed upon and signed on 25 July 1935. The

concordat, which Stojadinović's government presented to the National Assembly for ratification only in July 1937 (passed on 23 July), was supposed to improve relations with the Roman Catholic hierarchy within the state. Due to sharp resistance from the Serbian Orthodox Church that grew into demonstrations against the government and parliament on Belgrade's streets, and the death of the Orthodox Patriarch Varnava for which the government was blamed, the ratification process was never completed. This left the impression that the position of the Orthodox and Muslim population was settled, thanks to their legally grounded status, while for many the resistance to the concordat's ratification was just another example of the open Orthodox–Catholic, Serbian–Croatian dispute, which was not only religious but also national.[160]

Immediately following the limited return of political party life in 1935, all political groupings in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but especially the ruling Yugoslav Radical Union and the United Opposition, tried to attract minorities to their respective sides. Parallel to the political construction of good political relations between Yugoslavia and the Axis powers under Prime Minister Stojadinović, policies vis-à-vis the German, Italian, and also Hungarian national minorities inside Yugoslavia also improved. A politics of Yugoslav appeasement continued for both foreign policy and domestic politics until 1941.[161]

The best example is the German national minority. This minority's status had already started to gradually improve with the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Weimar Germany. Yugoslavia's economic recovery at the end of the 1930s was partly linked to how its agricultural and other products had by this point made their way onto the German market, and Germans in Yugoslavia slowly became in many ways a privileged national minority. As each year passed, Germany took ever greater control of the Yugoslav economy and also its policies, seeking various concessions for the German state and its so-called *Volksdeutsche* ("Germans in regard to race"). Officially, Nazi Germany wanted to encourage all members of its minority to be organized into the *Kulturbund* and other similar cultural-economic-political organizations, and thus fall under its control.[162] Although these organizations were not especially well organized, and did not exert so many demands upon Yugoslav authorities as their equivalents in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania, they still played a significant role in everyday political life right up until the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's destruction in 1941.[163]

Conclusion

From its creation in 1918 until its dissolution in 1941, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia remained relatively poor. Its unification was carried out quickly, when it was unclear how in practice the everyday coexistence of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and others within the state would work. Monarchist Yugoslavia was a predominantly agrarian country, with limited industrial capacities, which were major problems in terms of infrastructure and political cohesion,

dependent on foreign credits. Until its break-up, it failed to become what most of its citizens had hoped for – a modern state, with sound economic foundations and democratic processes that could redefine its citizens, regardless of their diversified nationalities, as true shareholders of power.

Due to good relations during World War One and the early years of the interwar period, some national minorities, such as Czechs and Slovaks, had a better status than others, such as the more numerous Germans and Hungarians, who were watched by the Yugoslav authorities with a degree of suspicion, afraid for the fragile borders of their young kingdom. Nevertheless, the political representatives of all national minorities, which accounted for about 15% of the total Yugoslav population, usually helped all the Yugoslav governments, hoping for certain concessions for their peers at the local level. Some of them, such as members of the Yugoslav Jewish population, went through a period of national binding with the larger national groups, and they viewed themselves as loyal citizens of the country.

Soon after unification, conflicting visions of Yugoslavia within the political elites began to appear. The outlines of the political crisis, i.e., the centralist–federalist conflict, began increasingly to be transformed into an ethnic conflict, especially between Serbs and Croats. In 1929, King Aleksandar used the weaknesses of the until-then parliamentary political discord and proclaimed his dictatorship, promising to achieve state and national unity, and the economic and cultural progress of the country. Yet, under the burden of the economic crisis, the dictatorship only generated a new wave of dissatisfaction, with repeated calls for democratization and for the federalization of the state year after year. A partial federalization was achieved only in the week prior to the inception of World War Two, when in 1939 the Croatian autonomous regional unit, the Banovina of Croatia, was created within the borders of formally still unitary Yugoslavia. But this was too little too late to turn the wheel of fate of the country.

Translated from Croatian by Edward J. Alexander

Notes

1 I am deeply grateful to Sabrina Ramet for her advice and feedback on earlier drafts of this chapter.
2 Dragovan Šepić, "The Question of Yugoslav Union in 1918," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (October 1968), p. 29. See also Vesna Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia: A Transnational History* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 84.
3 Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, p. 89.
4 Ibid., p. 64.
5 Milada Paulová, *Jugoslavenski odbor (Povijest Jugoslavenske emigracije za svjetskog rata od 1914. – 1918.)* (Zagreb: Prosvjetna Nakladna Zadruga, n.d. [1924]), pp. 41–56; and Dejan Djokić, *Nikola Pašić and Ante Trumbić: The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes* (London: Haus Publishing, 2010), pp. 53–54.
6 Full text in: *Jugoslavija: 1918–1988: tematska zbirka dokumenata*, edited by Branko Petranović and Momčilo Zečević (Beograd: Rad, 1988), pp. 135–138.

7   Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije, 1918–1988*, Vol. 1: *Kraljevina Jugoslavija 1914–1941* (Beograd: Nolit, 1988), p. 35.

8   *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 31 Januara 1921 god* (Sarajevo: Državna štamparija, 1932), pp. 2–3.

9   During the 6 January dictatorship, an era of national integralism, the population census of 1931 asked citizens only about their religion. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate, for example, how many of the Roman Catholics would have identified themselves as Croats, Slovenes, Germans, et al.. *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 31 Marta 1931 godine*, Vol. 2 (Beograd: Državna štamparija, 1938), pp. VI–VIII.

10 Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 21–29.

11 Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, p. 104.

12 Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, pp. 88–89.

13 The latter two have been criticized for such efforts, especially in the second half of the 1930s. Dinko Tomašić, *Kritika rasne interpretacije političke historije Hrvata i Srba* (Ljubljana: Jugoslovanska tiskara, 1937), pp. 2–7.

14 Catherine Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 136–137.

15 Sergije Dimitrijević, *Privredni razvitak Jugoslavije: Od 1918. do 1941. godine* (Beograd: Visoka škola političkih nauka, 1962), pp. 101–102.

16 Smiljana Đurović, *Državna intervencija u industriji Jugoslavije 1918–1941* (Beograd: ISI, 1986), p. 180.

17 *Definitivni rezultati* popisa stanovništva od 31 Marta 1931 godine, Vol. 3 (Beograd: Državna štamparija, 1938), pp. 3–12.

18 Dusko Doder, *The Yugoslavs* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), p. 204.

19 Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, p. 326.

20 Alex N. Dragnich, *The First Yugoslavia: Search for a Viable Political System* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), pp. 71, 142.

21 This meant that until 1939/1940 the state allocated less than 1 dinar per year (the price of one loaf of bread) for the illiterate population. Ljubomir Ž. Petrović, *Jugoslovensko međuratno društvo u mreži vlasti* (Beograd: ISI, 2009), p. 180.

22 Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, pp. 82–85.

23 Marko Miljković, "Sajmovi automobila u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji kao mjesta promidžbe nacističke Njemačke," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2013), pp. 305–325, at p. 311.

24 Senka Babović-Raspopović, *Kulturna politika u Zetskoj banovini 1929–1941* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, 2002), p. 19.

25 Boris Kršev, *Finansijska politika Jugoslavije 1918–1941* (Novi Sad, Serbia: Prometej, 2007), p. 115.

26 Ivo Pilar, *Uvijek iznova Srbija* (Zagreb: Consilium, 1997), p. 56.

27 Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 203.

28 Ibid., pp. 101–102.

29 Pilar, *Uvijek iznova*, pp. 49–51.

30 Jelena Petrović, *Women's Authorship in Interwar Yugoslavia: The Politics of Love and Struggle* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 32.

31 Branislav Gligorijević, *Parlament i političke stranke u Jugoslaviji (1919–1929)* (Beograd: ISI, 1979), p. 290.

32 Gligorijević, *Parlament i političke stranke*, pp. 279–280.

33 Hrvoje Matković, *Povijest Jugoslavije (1918–1991–2003)*, 2nd expanded edition (Zagreb: Naklada P.I.P. Pavičić, 2003), pp. 90–93.

34 Gligorijević, *Parlament i političke stranke*, pp. 293–294.

35 Desimir Tošić, *Demokratska stranka 1920–1941* (Beograd: Službeni list Srbije i Crne Gore, 2006), pp. 16–28, 77–78.

36 It was named after the date of its parliamentary adoption, 28 June, which had strong symbolism. On that date in 1389 the famous Kosovo battle took place, after which the medieval Serbian kingdom disappeared under the Ottomans, but it was also the date of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination, which, in 1914, triggered the First World War.

37 Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. 81, 242.

38 Jože Pirjevec, *Tito i drugovi* (Zagreb: Mozaik knjiga, 2012), pp. 32–33.

39 Ibid., pp. 102–103.

40 The party was founded in 1904 as the Croatian People's Peasant Party. In order to emphasize the struggle against monarchism, and for the Croatian autonomy, in 1920 it changed its name to the Croatian Republican Peasant Party. In 1925 the party gave up on its five-year politics of abstinence from the parliament, accepted the monarchy, and became a coalition partner in the government. On that occasion, a new name was introduced – the Croatian Peasant Party.

41 Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization 1904–1928* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 160–161.

42 Ivana Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba diktature kralja Aleksandra 1929–1935* (Beograd: ISI, 2006), p. 281.

43 Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, pp. 191–199

44 Suzana Leček, "Priča o uspjehu – strategija i metode političke borbe Hrvatske seljačke stranke (1918–1941)," in Hrvoje Petrić and Zorislav Lukić (eds.), *110 godina Hrvatske seljačke stranke* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2015), pp. 27–48.

45 Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005* (Washington, D.C., and Bloomington, Ind.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 105.

46 Ibid., p. 49.

47 Zlatko Hasanbegović, *Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija 1929–1941* (Zagreb: Bošnjačka nacionalna zajednica, 2012), pp. 19–22.

48 Jure Gašparič, *SLS pod kraljevo diktaturo* (Ljubljana: Modrijan založba, 2007), pp. 46–50.

49 "If such [federal] units were formed within the borders of 'historical provinces,' then the Serbs would be divided, broken up and marginalized in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Vojvodina." Because of the support they had predominantly among Serbian people, the Radical and the Democratic Party fought for the concept of a unitary state that mentioned the possibility of stronger local autonomy, but which was not contrary to the intentions of the strong, unitary state. Branislav Gligorijević, "Unutrašnje (administrativne) granice Jugoslavije između dva svjetska rata 1918–1941," *Istorija 20. veka*, Vol. 10, Nos. 1–2 (1992), pp. 27–34, at p. 28.

50 Dragnich, *The First Yugoslavia*, p. 71.

51 Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*, p. 73.

52 Banac, *The National Question*, pp. 222–224, 248–260.

53 For a description of a series of corruption affairs, see Zvonimir Kulundžić, *Politika i korupcija u kraljevskoj Jugoslaviji* (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1968).

54 Kulundžić, *Politika i korupcija*, p. 226.

55 Alan Fogelquist, *Politics and Economic Policy in Yugoslavia, 1918–1929* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Global Geopolitics Net, 2011), pp. 259–260, lulu.com.

56 Petrović, *Jugoslovensko međuratno društvo*, p. 181.

57 *Yugoslavia: Political Diaries 1918–1965*, edited by Robert Jarman, Vol. 2 (Slough, UK: Archive Editions, 1997), pp. 399–400.

58 Ibid., p. 400.

59 Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p. 76.
60 Dobrivojević, *Državna represija*, pp. 35–36.
61 Olivera Milosavljević, "Stereotipi o drugima kao opravdanje (argument) nacionalizma. Primer: srpski intelektualci o Hrvatima," in Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac (eds.), *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara*, Vol. I (Zagreb: Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, 2000), pp. 23–34, at p. 29.
62 Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p. 76.
63 Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*, pp. 57–67.
64 Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, pp. 238–242.
65 Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*, p. 61.
66 Gašparič, *SLS pod kraljevo diktaturo*, pp. 53–56.
67 Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*, p. 73.
68 As quoted in *Jugoslavija: 1918–1988*, p. 313.
69 Gašparič, *SLS pod kraljevo diktaturo*, p. 54.
70 Dobrivojević, *Državna represija*, pp. 221–223. As a good example of an intellectual and politician who, because of his consistent resistance to authoritarianism, ended up in jail during the 1930s on several occasions, one should mention Dragoljub Jovanović (1895–1977). He was a Belgrade university professor and one of the leaders of the Agrarian Party. His lengthy memoirs have been published only recently. See Dragoljub Jovanović, *Sabrana dela u 16 knjiga*, Vols. 1–16 (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2008).
71 Ramet, *Three Yugoslavias*, p. 81.
72 Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1993), p. 186.
73 Dejan Jović, *Jugoslavija – država koja je odumrla* (Zagreb: Prometej, 2003), p. 108.
74 Pieter Troch, *Nationalism and Yugoslavia: Education, Yugoslavism and the Balkans before World War II* (London, New York: I.B. Taurus, 2015), pp. 155–157.
75 Troch, *Nationalism and Yugoslavia*, pp. 141–164; and Leček, "Priča o uspjehu," pp. 27–48.
76 Vladko Maček, *Memoari* (Zagreb: Dom i svijet, 2003), p. 126.
77 Dobrivojević, *Državna represija*, pp. 77–78.
78 Pieter Troch, "Yugoslavism Between the Two Wars: Indecisive Nation Building," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 38, Issue 2 (March 2010), pp. 233–235; and Matković, *Povijest Jugoslavije*, pp. 172–177.
79 *Yugoslavia: Political Diaries*, p. 398.
80 Dobrivojević, *Državna represija*, pp. 281–283.
81 Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*, p. 296.
82 Ramet, *Three Yugoslavias*, pp. 101–102.
83 Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*, p. 237.
84 Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, p. 146.
85 Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*, pp. 246–247.
86 Dobrivojević, *Državna represija*, p. 93.
87 Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*, p. 247.
88 Gašparič, *SLS pod kraljevo diktaturo*, p. 267.
89 Dejan Djokic, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 163–170.
90 Jacob B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis: 1934–1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 102–105.
91 Dragnich, *The First Yugoslavia*, p. 109.
92 Bojan Simić, *Propaganda Milana Stojadinovića* (Beograd: INIS, 2007), pp. 243–245.
93 Ramet, *Three Yugoslavias*, p. 101; and Leček, "Priča o uspjehu," p. 35.
94 Djokic, *Elusive compromise*, pp. 185–188.
95 Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis*, p. 134.
96 Matković, *Povijest Jugoslavije*, pp. 202–204.
97 Ramet, *Three Yugoslavias*, pp. 105–106.

98 Ibid., pp. 209, 211.
99 "Bolje rat nego pakt! Bolje grob nego rob!," Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis*, p. 259.
100 Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis*, pp. 274–276.
101 Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p. 110.
102 Latinka Perović, "The Serbs and Serbia in Modern History," in Latinka Perović et al. (eds.), *Yugoslavia from a Historical Perspective* (Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2017), pp. 220–270, at p. 253; and Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, pp. 129–130.
103 As paraphrased in Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 231.
104 Ibid., p. 514.
105 Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p. 161.
106 Jozo Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 309.
107 Petrović, *Jugoslovensko međuratno društvo*, p. 23.
108 Zdenka Šimončić-Bobetko, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Hrvatskoj 1918–1941* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 1997), p. 291.
109 Mira Kolar Dimitrijević, *Radni slojevi Zagreba od 1918. do 1931* (Zagreb: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta Hrvatske, 1973), p. 42.
110 Banac, *The National Question*, pp. 270–271.
111 Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics*, pp. 278, 329–330.
112 Ibid., p. 331; and Kolar Dimitrijević, *Radni slojevi Zagreba*, pp. 71–74.
113 Zdenka Šimončić-Bobetko, *Industrija Hrvatske 1918. do 1941. godine* (Zagreb: AGM, 2005), pp. 16, 54–57.
114 John R. Lampe and Marvin R. Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550–1950: From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 517.
115 Šimončić-Bobetko, *Industrija Hrvatske*, p. 16.
116 Kolar Dimitrijević, *Radni slojevi Zagreba*, pp. 288–289.
117 Aleksandar R. Miletić, *Journey under Surveillance: The Overseas Emigration Policy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in Global Context, 1918–1928* (Beograd: INIS, 2009), p. 81.
118 Bosiljka Janjatović, "Povijesna literatura o sindikalnom pokretu u Hrvatskoj između dva rata," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1970), pp. 149–159. Unfortunately, there is no recent research written after the collapse of Socialist Yugoslavia that specifically focused on the position and rights of the workers in Monarchist Yugoslavia.
119 Dimitrijević, *Privredni razvitak Jugoslavije*, pp. 71–72.
120 Ibid., p. 180.
121 Miletić, *Journey under Surveillance*, p. 149.
122 Većeslav Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine* (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1968), p. 51.
123 Ibid., p. 62.
124 Miletić, *Journey under Surveillance*, p. 98.
125 Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, pp. 261–267.
126 Ulf Brunnbauer, "Emigration Policies and Nation-Building in Interwar Yugoslavia," *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2012), pp. 602–627, at p. 610.
127 Ibid., p. 611.
128 Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, p. 61.
129 Dimitrijević, *Privredni razvitak Jugoslavije*, pp. 77–85.
130 Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*, pp. 100–104, 126, 137–139.
131 Zoran Janjetović, *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva: nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918–1941* (Beograd: INIS, 2005), pp. 137–138.
132 Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, pp. 47–48.
133 More in Vladan Jovanović, *Slike jedne neuspele integracije: Kosovo, Makedonija, Srbija, Jugoslavija* (Beograd: Fabrika knjiga, 2014).

134 Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p. 47.

135 Janjetović, *Deca careva*, pp. 113–116.

136 Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, pp. 46–49. These resettlements were sometimes regulated by bilateral agreements. For instance, in the 1930s, the Yugoslav government proposed and Turkish government accepted the plan to relocate some 200,000 Albanian Muslim emigrants from Yugoslavia to Turkey. See Banac, *The National Question*, p. 301.

137 Vlatka Dugački, *Svoj svome: Češka i Slovačka manjina u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2013), pp. 411–413.

138 Ibid., p. 124.

139 Giuseppe Motta, *Less than Nations: Central-Eastern European Minorities after WWI*, Vol. 1 (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 220.

140 Bogdan Krizman, *Vanjska politika jugoslavenske države 1918–1941* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1975), p. 17.

141 Janjetović, *Deca careva*, pp. 120–126.

142 Ibid., pp. 126–128.

143 John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There was a Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 114.

144 Krizman, *Vanjska politika*, pp. 176–177; Djokić, *Nikola Pašić and Ante Trumbić*, p. 150. This city and important port was not part of the territory promised to the Italy by the London Treaty. Rijeka was originally supposed to become an independent city-state under the protectorate of the League of Nations, but in 1919 was occupied by Italian "volunteers" led by nationalist writer Gabriele d'Annunzio. After the Italian army expelled d'Annunzio, they retained Rijeka under their direct control. Only in 1924 the monarchist Yugoslavia signed a treaty and renounced their rights to Rijeka.**

145 James H. Burgwyn, *Empire on the Adriatic: Mussolini's Conquest of Yugoslavia 1941–1943* (New York: Enigma, 2005), pp. 6–9.

146 Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p. 158; and Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis*, pp. 186–187.

147 Danijel Vojak, Bibijana Papo, and Alen Tahiri, *Stradanje Roma u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj 1941–1945* (Zagreb: Romsko nacionalno vijeće i Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, 2015), p. 21.

148 Ibid., pp. 56–57.

149 Milan Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918–1941* (Beograd: ISI, 2008), p. 80.

150 Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry 1932–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 349–352.

151 Philip W. Lyon, "After Empire: Ethnic Germans and Minority Nationalism in Interwar Yugoslavia" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2008), pp. 15–18.

152 Goran Beus Richenbergh, *Nijemci, Austrijanci i Hrvati*, Vol. 1 (Zagreb: Synopsis, 2010), p. 137.

153 Denis Njari, "Mađari istočne Slavonije između dvaju svjetskih ratova," *Scrinia Slavonica*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2016), pp. 261–300, at p. 297.

154 Janjetović, *Deca careva*, pp. 178–179.

155 Ibid., pp. 178–195.

156 Dugački, *Svoj svome*, p. 195.

157 Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs*, p. 251.

158 Dugački, *Svoj svome*, p. 186.

159 Hasanbegović, *Jugoslavenska muslimanska*, pp. 128–130.

160 Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p. 179.

161 *Zapisi na smrt osuđenog volksguppenführera Altgajera*, edited by Petar Đurić (Beograd: Informatika AD, 2018), pp. 189–195.

162 Ibid., pp. 234, 251.

163 Beus Richenbergh, *Nijemci*, pp. 142–161.

8

INTERWAR ALBANIA

Bernd J. Fischer

When a group of intellectuals, tribal leaders, and former Ottoman officials proclaimed the independence of Albania in November 1912, they were motivated in part by fear. They were afraid that, unless Albania established some separate political identity immediately, Albanian-inhabited lands would be divided among the participants of the First Balkan War. They were afraid, too, that in 1912 Albania was little more than a geographic expression with few of the prerequisites for the establishment of a unified European nation-state. Many of the necessary preconditions generally associated with unity were lacking. There was no centralization of any kind, no religious or linguistic unity, no leadership of a traditional social class, no foreign intellectual stimulus, and not even widespread discontent with foreign rule.[1] Indigenous Albanian circumstances and conscious Ottoman policy had created a people divided. Regionally and to some extent linguistically, Albanians were divided between the Tosks in the south and the Gegs in the north; there were four major religious groups, including Sunni and Bektashi Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians. Social and economic disunity was fostered by the coexistence of three conflicting stages of civilization, the mountain clans in the north, the feudal beys in the south, and the more educated and urbanized, but generally unarmed, population of the Hellenic and Catholic fringes.[2]

So, Albania's founding fathers were right to worry. Although the fledgling state was saved from the belligerents fighting the Balkan wars – by the support of Italy and Austria–Hungary, who hoped to block Serbian access to the Adriatic – the issue of the construction of a viable nation-state was certainly in doubt prior to World War One. The war itself changed little in that regard, however. The Peace of Paris, which ended the war, left Albania truncated with fully half of its population in the newly constructed Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (to be renamed Yugoslavia in October 1929). One result

TABLE 8.1 Composition of the population of Albania by religion (based on 1927 estimates)

	Percentage
Muslims	69.3
Orthodox	20.4
Catholic	10.2
Protestants and Jews	0.1

Source: Orjan Sjoberg, *Rural Change and Development in Albania* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), p. 62.

of the division of Albanian speakers was that the new state of Albania, with its population of just over 800,000 people, was home to very few minorities. Almost 96% were Albanians, 2.4% Greeks, and 1.3% Macedonians. So, the nationality issue was much less serious than in the rest of the Balkans – but irredentism became a major concern and remains one today.[3]

Other problems, however, were legion. The war saw Albania occupied by no less than six foreign armies, which did little to foster the unity that Albania required. Arguably, when the war ended, Albania faced perhaps the most serious problems found in any European state. Apart from the issue of unity, Albanians suffered from a unique *Weltanschauung*, a legacy of the Ottoman Empire that included a strong distrust of government and the city, coupled with a cleverness employed to cheat the authorities, a practice that was considered not only completely normal but admirable. Five centuries of Ottoman domination had adversely affected the economy as well, creating none of the necessary bases for modern economic development. In the early 1920s over 90% of the population was engaged in either agriculture or animal husbandry,

TABLE 8.2 Composition of the population of Albania by nationality (based on 1945 statistics)

Nationality	Population numbers	Percentage
Total	1,122,044	100
Albanians	1,075,467	95.8
Greeks	26,535	2.4
Italians	2,851	0.3
Slavs	14,415	1.3
Others	2,776	0.2

Source: Kosta Barjaba, "Recent Implications of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Albania," in *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (1995), p. 80.

and yet only 9% of the land was arable.[4] Industry was either nonexistent or of the handicraft variety. Mineral resources were ignored, and transportation facilities were primitive. On the few roads that did exist, wheeled traffic was possible only during the summer months. Albania had entirely missed the railroad age and would not have its first functioning train until after World War Two. The country's entire rolling stock in the early 1920s consisted of three miserable old Fords left behind by an American relief mission.[5]

When Albania emerged from World War One it was occupied by the British, Italians, and French in Shkodra in the north, the Serbs in the east, and the French and Greeks in the south. The Italians, who in 1917 had unilaterally declared a protectorate over a united Albania, occupied the rest of the country. A provisional government had been set up in Durrës in 1918 led by Turhan Pasha, a prominent landowner. The primary concern of this regime was to save the country from partition, similar to the principal goal of Albania's original government constructed in 1912. The Turhan Pasha government, however, commanded little respect, and failed to gain international recognition because it was essentially controlled by the Italians who, in exchange for their sponsorship, received valuable oil and asphalt concessions.[6] Recognizing that the provisional government was little more than a puppet, a group of Albanian clan leaders and landowners decided to convene a congress at Lushnjë to organize an independent temporary government to deal with the threat posed by foreign troops on Albanian soil. The congress, under the presidency of Suleiman Bey Delvina, but dominated principally by the young chief of the Mati tribe Ahmed Zogu, adopted the so-called Lushnjë Statutes in February 1920.

Zogu was the logical choice for the number two spot in the cabinet, that of minister of the interior, on the strength of the number of armed men he controlled, which proved to be the indispensable feature of postwar Albanian politics. As Tirana, the provisional capital, was close to Mati, Zogu and his retainers became the unofficial protectors of the congress. As minister of the interior, Zogu took control of the police and gendarmerie and became commander-in-chief of the Albanian armed forces, although there was little in the way of an organized force at the time, other than his own retainers of some 2,000 men.[7]

Zogu moved rapidly with his first military move to take Shkodra in the north after the inter-allied occupation of the city ended in March 1920. The Serbs apparently planned to occupy the city but were forestalled by the quick action of Zogu.[8] Shortly thereafter the government successfully settled part of the southern problem by signing a temporary protocol with Greece calling for the status quo to be preserved and postponing a permanent agreement for another time. The major problem, of course, remained since the Italians were still in control of most of the country. Despite their vast military superiority, the Italian position was actually rather tenuous. The government in Rome was faced with demoralized troops in Albania who were suffering from malaria and were becoming easy prey to leftist agitators. At the same time,

the Albanians themselves were beginning to move against Italian troops. The Italians eventually withdrew to Vlorë where Zogu collected a ragtag force comprised of government troops, tribesmen, villagers, and townspeople to confront them. There was considerable fighting but when Italian reinforcements refused to board troopships and dockhands refused to load supplies, the Italian government was forced to negotiate a withdrawal. The Albanians congratulated themselves on having defeated a major European power. Zogu did nothing to dispel this false impression, realizing that a reputation for military invincibility would be of considerable use in the advancement of his career.

With extensive new political capital, Zogu threw himself into Albanian politics. Although Albania's general condition was by no means stable, the immediate crisis was over and the Albanian leadership was left in a state of relative peace, allowing the Albanians to resume struggling among themselves within the curious political system constructed by the Congress of Lushnjë. The system, as it worked out in practice, was a combination of the principality constructed by the great powers in 1912 and traditional tribal autocracy. The principality was declared in abeyance, in part because the prince, whom the powers had designated as Albania's first ruler, Wilhelm of Wied, had fought on the German side during World War One. The prince's power was to be exercised by a four-man council of regency, one from each of Albania's four major religions. Once chosen, this body saw to the appointment of a prime minister, a cabinet, and a 37-person senate, which technically controlled the government. In reality, however, because of an easily manipulated electoral college system, the senate was made up entirely of minions of those few tribal leaders and patriots who had called the congress. The first prime minister, Suleiman Bey Delvina, served as a figurehead while the real power rested with cabinet positions, like Zogu's, which had been divided among the major chieftains based upon the firepower each could muster. That this modified principality system was flawed and did not conform to the realities of Albanian political life seems to have escaped only the few. Indeed, most of those who supported its construction at Lushnjë considered it little more than an expedient to facilitate a temporary truce among the tribes.

Once the outside threat was gone, the principality system rapidly came apart, due primarily to one of its greatest flaws – it contained no provision for the arbitration of old tribal animosities. Ultimately, it appears that each chieftain was willing to continue paying homage to Western ideals of democracy by observing the parliamentary methods of opposition only as long as success by these means was anticipated. Once it became clear that not everyone could lead, political compromises designed to avert violence began to break down. Albania was shaken by coups and upheavals motivated primarily by the refusal on the part of the tribes to bend to central authority.

It was in this atmosphere that Zogu was to demonstrate his remarkable talent for intrigue and violence. Zogu used his accumulated military and political capital as early as November 1920 to engineer the fall of the Delvina government,

hoping to advance his own position in the ensuing crisis.[9] But Zogu had perhaps been too successful militarily and the frightened regents turned to Ilias Bey Vrioni, a major landowner from the south. In response Zogu helped to form a vague political grouping called "the clique." Although it is difficult to determine who was involved in this group at any given time, since there did not seem to be any particular criteria for membership and since the kaleidoscopic combinations, unions, and disintegrations are rather difficult to follow, the purpose of the group seemed clear enough. It was basically opposed to those in power, whoever they happened to be, and its primary aim was the acquisition of power and wealth for its own members by any means available.[10] Although the organization itself foundered on the rock of the Kosovo issue – the dispute being whether to push for irredentism immediately or wait for some stability in Albania, with Zogu supporting the latter position – Zogu managed to hold enough of the group together to destroy the Vrioni government. But Zogu, with his reduced clique, was forced to settle for the position of minister of war in a regime headed by Pandeli Evangjeli, an Orthodox Christian from Korça. Evangjeli survived a scant two months before he was required to resign by one of the regents who sent a body of armed men to Evangjeli's bedroom, awakening him with the muzzles of their guns. The prime minister prudently resigned and fled the capital on horseback.[11]

Zogu, who had been off campaigning against insurgent tribes in the north, marched on the capital, deposing those who had deposed Evangjeli, and established a puppet prime minister while further consolidating his own support. The exiled Kosovar chieftains still objected to Zogu's lack of enthusiasm for irredentism, and the small Western-educated intelligentsia feared Zogu as an unscrupulous, undereducated mountaineer prone to despotism. Zogu was left with only the feudal beys of the center and south and the remaining northern chieftains to whom he could appeal. His first move in this direction was to sign a marriage contract to marry the daughter of Shevqet Bey Verlaci who, although an elderly dandy, was of considerable importance because of his wealth.[12] With regard to the chieftains, Zogu resorted to the time-honored tradition of "peace money," a method used by Austria, Serbia, and Montenegro to influence the clans. Chieftains of major tribes were accorded the rank of colonel in the army and paid on a regular basis. Each month large groups of heavily armed highlanders would descend on the capital and collect their gold on warrants issued by the War Department. These payments appeared in the budget as army allowances since, technically at least, the chiefs were being paid to maintain a certain number of irregular troops in reserve at the expense of the government.

In reality, of course, the chieftains were being paid simply to refrain from attacking the government. In return for their gold, the tribal leaders declared recurrent *besas* (similar to a pledge of honor) that set aside blood feuds for a prescribed period of time. In addition, the chiefs took an oath to Zogu personally, rather than to the country, a concept that was still basically foreign to most northern leaders; Zogu was recognized as an over-chieftain and the chiefs

subsequently looked to him personally for their money. The system had many disadvantages. Zogu was often put in a position where he was required to arbitrate between two tribes, gaining the enmity of at least one. Even so, the system would eventually work and became one of the mainstays of Zogu's long rule.

In the short term, however, Zogu's relationship with the chieftains caused him considerable difficulty. While the official bribery of the "peace money" system was successful in many areas, the Kosovars in exile and domestic irredentists could not be so easily bought. To deal with these recalcitrant elements, Zogu introduced several innovative policies. One was the collection of weapons from those tribes on whose loyalty he felt he could not rely. It was a bold move. The importance of guns to the mountaineers should not be underestimated since they represented their means of livelihood on the one hand and freedom, honor, and the only protection against personal and foreign enemies on the other. A rifle was part of a mountaineer's dress. While this policy would eventually work, in 1922 it was partially responsible for one of the many armed revolts as insurgents marched on the capital. While the entire government fled to Elbasan to the south, Zogu, demonstrating considerable personal courage, remained to defend Tirana with only his personal retainer. He would certainly have been overwhelmed had it not been for the personal intervention of the British minister Sir Harry Eyres who convinced some of the rebels to withdraw. Zogu constructed a military court and speedily had some 32 rebel leaders executed, bringing down on his head many blood feuds.

The government of Xhafer Bey Ypi was reconstituted with Zogu remaining the power behind the throne. Ypi was perhaps a poor choice and his reappointment was a demonstration of one of Zogu's great personal failings – his inability to judge his followers objectively, and his penchant for rewarding loyalty long after the people concerned had demonstrated serious incompetence. Ypi, though loyal, was a man of very limited intelligence who was overly suspicious and a bad judge of character. He was unable to hold his cabinet together and generally had no knowledge of what was going on in his ministries; nor did he seem to care. He shied away from work and did not bother to take the time to discover the facts before he made a decision. Consequently, his decisions were hasty, impulsive, and invariably misdirected. By December, the government had ceased even to command the fear of the people, which it had so carefully nurtured through repression, terrorism, and even torture.[13] Zogu hoped to avoid a serious crisis by personally assuming control of the government. On 16 December 1922, at the age of 27, Zogu replaced Ypi as prime minister while retaining the crucial position of minister of the interior. With the exception of a six-month period in 1924, Zogu would remain the leading figure in Albania, in one capacity or another, until ousted by Mussolini in 1939.

Zogu had learned a great deal in these first two years of participation in Albanian national politics. He came to the realization that he was particularly well-suited for Albanian politics. His ability at intrigue was superior, his military prowess, in terms of strategy and in terms of attracting supporters,

was established. Indeed, it was clear that he was one of just a few Albanians competent enough to play a role on the national scale. The problems he faced were the same as those Albania had faced in 1920. While the various tribal groups had clawed at one another from 1920 to 1922, all of Albania's problems had simply been obscured. Once the dust had settled, these difficulties became much more visible.

Zogu's motivation as the new head of government, as it was to remain until he was ousted, was that of an opportunist – Zogu was principally concerned with remaining in power. But that, of course, required some unity and stability. So, not for the first time and not for the last, Zogu's and Albania's needs seemed to coincide. This conferred on Zogu the legitimacy of a nationalist, something of which he would become an ever more ardent proponent as it became clear that the survival of his power base depended on it. During his tenure as prime minister, which lasted about a year – a remarkable achievement itself under the circumstances – he hoped to continue the process of power consolidation. His strategy included financial corruption in order to enrich himself. What concerned his opponents and his allies alike, however, was that he was using his personal wealth to consolidate and increase his own prestige. To this end he began to call for a revision of the Statutes of Lushnijë. It was clear to all that Zogu's goal here was the construction of a somewhat more authoritarian system to end the political chaos that reigned in Albania. The principality had by this point been completely overwhelmed by Albania's Ottoman heritage. The administration was overburdened with officials who had little or nothing to do but to oversee the massive corruption that had continued from Turkish times. Albania's first governments had been intolerant, oppressive, and violent, and they were accused of, and were most likely guilty of, numerous assassinations and attempted assassinations. All of this frightened investors and international bodies without which Albania would never be able to lift itself out of its economic morass. Zogu hoped to serve his own quest for power and provide for some stability in the state by either scrapping the system entirely or at least reorganizing it along more authoritarian lines – something that might have been more appropriate for Albania in the 1920s.

Zogu's goal of political centralization had the effect of centralizing and galvanizing the opposition – nothing more easily united Albanians in opposition than an attempt to remove regional or personal independence. Those who actively opposed Zogu included the Kosovars, who still did not appreciate his lack of enthusiasm for an aggressive policy vis-à-vis Yugoslavia, and a growing number of his former allies. Local army commanders and police officials turned against Zogu, creating a cabinet crisis. Zogu played for time by accepting a curious compromise. Zogu retained his position of prime minister but relinquished the critical interior ministry and was forced to broaden his cabinet to include some of his enemies. The position of minister of the interior, and here is the curious feature of the agreement, was rotated on a weekly basis with each member of the cabinet assuming the post for seven days. While this was

meant to be only a temporary measure until the national elections a few months away, the natural result of this was that the entire tenure of each successive minister of the interior was spent in dismissing officials appointed by his immediate predecessor. But the election, punctuated by extensive political violence and numerous assassinations, proved to be inconclusive.[14]

While Zogu was desperately attempting to form a new government, he himself narrowly escaped assassination. On 24 February 1924, as he was walking up the steps of parliament, he was shot several times by Beqir Walter, a supporter of one of Zogu's political rivals. Zogu, wounded in the hand and thigh, staggered into parliament, gun in hand, and made it to the government bench. The scene in parliament was understandably tense; most of the deputies seemed to recognize the danger of an open gunfight since everyone present was armed. Shooting continued in the forehall between Walter and the followers of Zogu. Walter then locked himself in the bathroom and commenced singing patriotic songs as he shot through the doors. After the assailant was finally subdued, Zogu from his bench announced in a loud voice, "Gentlemen, this is not the first time this sort of thing has happened. I ask my friends to leave it alone and deal with it afterwards."[15] Zogu had possibly prevented wholesale carnage within the assembly hall.

Zogu was temporarily sidelined, in part because he needed time to recover and in part because Albanian blood feud custom required that he not leave his house until the outrage was avenged. Under the circumstances, Zogu felt it best to relinquish his post as prime minister, after convincing the regents to appoint his prospective father-in-law Shevqet Verlaci to take his place. But the government was unstable and unable to address Albania's myriad problems effectively. Discontent in both the north and the south grew. This unrest was fanned by the irredentists, who hoped to eventually replace Zogu with someone more concerned with unifying Albania and Kosovo. All of this growing opposition to Zogu was brought together by the murder of Avni Rustemi on 5 May 1924. Rustemi, whom Zogu blamed for the attempt on his life in February, was a leader in Bishop Fan Noli's Democratic Party. Zogu was clearly behind the murder.

The Democrats withdrew from parliament, declaring that no opposition deputy was safe in Tirana. Military and gendarmerie commanders, as well as some of the principal northern chieftains, joined Noli and the Democrats and

TABLE 8.3 Results of the constituent assembly election of 1923 (the last generally fair election in Albania until 1990)

Liberal Opposition	39 seats
Zogu and the Clique	44 seats
Independents	19 seats
(Zogu was able to persuade some of the independents to join him and thereby secured a majority)	

Source: Robert C. Austin, *Founding a Balkan State: Albania's Experiment with Democracy* (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2012), p. 36.

declared open revolt. The government declared general mobilization on 1 June but soon found that there were few left to mobilize. The prime minister resigned and, of the four members of the Council of Regency, one resigned and three fled. Most of the government fled to Italy. Once again Zogu was the last to remain, hoping to recreate the conditions that had allowed him to come to power in 1922, but it was too late. On the afternoon of 9 June 1924 Zogu called on the citizens of Tirana for support, but it soon became clear that they would not die for Zogu. As the 7,000 troops commanded by the insurgents closed in on Tirana, Zogu with his retainers withdrew. Following some light fighting between Zogu's force and the troops of several northern chieftains, Zogu was obliged to withdraw into Yugoslavia.

While Zogu was in Belgrade, Fan Noli, a Harvard University graduate and founder of the Albanian Orthodox Church in America, organized a government. Noli produced an idealistic program for radical land reform along Western lines, thereby raising the hopes of the peasantry while frightening the conservative landlords.[16] The landlords need not have worried however, since Noli's reforms were never implemented. The only tangible results of Noli's plans were the alienation of the peasants, who had their hopes raised and dashed, and the alienation of the landlords, who were given an idea of what Noli would have done, had he been able to. Noli's experience was another lesson for Zogu in what not to do in Albania. It soon became clear that those who had assisted Noli in ousting Zogu had little more than their fear of Zogu in common. Noli was faced with a cabinet crisis within a matter of weeks. Zogu, in the meantime, was not idle. He quickly put together a military force consisting of his own retainers, loyal tribes, Yugoslav troops and a contingent of White Russians from Baron Pyotr Wrangel's now defunct army. By late December 1924, Zogu was marching back to Albania. Because of Noli's inability to rally the capital, Zogu captured Tirana by Christmas.[17]

Zogu moved quickly to liquidate those who had opposed him, and using the "peace money" system, bought off those who had remained neutral. The momentary dearth of opposition afforded him the opportunity to construct a government more in line with his own plans and more in step with the realities of Albanian political life. By 1924, Zogu had significant evidence to suggest that the parliamentary principality, which the Great Powers had constructed in 1912, was ill-suited to local conditions. The failure of Fan Noli provided further evidence that not only was the system not working but also that Albania might actually have been worse off following its imposition. Western-oriented parliamentarianism had not only failed to create the basis for stable internal development but had added another dimension, that of politics, to the already alarming level of indigenous violence.

With many of his enemies dead or in exile, Zogu was presented with a unique opportunity to create an autocratic regime. While he had often declared that this was exactly what he would do if given the opportunity, once absolute power lay within his grasp he backed away and accepted only qualified authority for several reasons. Zogu's somewhat truncated education led him to believe that Europe

would react with hostility to anything but a representative form of government. He also assumed that only if he restrained his desire for unqualified authority could he attract the bureaucrats who had served in the previous regime.[18] He correctly assumed that it would be a serious mistake to alienate anyone with administrative experience. But despite these fears, he knew that in order to survive, significant changes in the structure of the Albanian political system were necessary.

Zogu proceeded with vigor. Aware that he needed to legitimize his position as quickly as possible, he reconvened the Constituent Assembly elected in 1923 – though naturally without the troublesome opposition. Meeting at the end of January 1925, this body replaced most of the Statutes of Lushnjë with a republican constitution that outwardly looked very much like the American version, including a bicameral legislature. Zogu was elected president. The major difference, of course, was that the Albanian version left almost all of the power in the hands of the president, who was elected for seven years and served as both head of government and head of state. He completely controlled the cabinet and senate, whose members he appointed and dismissed at will. He commanded the armed forces, controlled the administration, and had the sole right to initiate changes in the constitution. He also had significant control over the assembly. He was given an unrestricted veto over the laws it passed and was able to dissolve the assembly and call for fresh elections at will, which he could and would influence if necessary. This left only the courts in a position of partial independence, although Zogu did control judicial appointments.[19]

The Constituent Assembly, clearly on Zogu's initiative, also instructed the president to institute a series of measures meant to aid in the establishment of stability. The 5,000-man army, which had become a hotbed for politicians and had been a major source of opposition of Zogu, was replaced by a smaller less formal militia. This would allow Zogu, with his personal retainer of 2,000, to be personally one of the most powerful military figures in Albania.[20] The Constituent Assembly also issued a decree law that officially was designed to combat treasonable propaganda. The real purpose, however, was to allow Zogu to imprison persons against whom evidence sufficient to satisfy the courts had not been found.[21] This law, by overriding the ordinary process of justice, gave Zogu greater power than the constitution would allow.

In another move toward stability, Tirana, which had been proclaimed the provisional capital by the Statutes of Lushnjë became the permanent capital. Because of its proximity to Zogu's tribal area of Mati, the decision afforded Zogu a sense of security. It was not the obvious choice, being little more than a large Muslim village of less than 20,000 in 1925. It consisted primarily of a bazaar used for hanging offenders of the peace, four mosques, several barracks, and a number of legations. Tirana gave the appearance of a gold rush town in the late nineteenth-century American West, with its saloons, gambling casinos, and ever-present guns and gun belts. A rickety Ford progressing slowly along the muddy, unpaved, unlit streets was the only sign of the twentieth century.[22] The buildings of the town were rather unostentatious. Most of

them consisted of old shanties interspersed with the occasional small villa belonging to some landowner, many of which were in such a state of disrepair as to give the visitor the impression that the whole town had been recently under shell fire.[23] Two such unassuming buildings, dating back to Turkish times, became the presidential office building and Zogu's residence in which Zogu, arrayed in his white uniform with gold epaulets, received guests.

Zogu hoped that this new republican structure would facilitate stability, but opposition soon began to surface. Some of it was motivated by the simple lust for power and some of it was the result of sheer desperation in light of the appalling economic problems faced by much of the population. The first serious threats came from within Zogu's own entourage and extended family, which indicated that Zogu had not yet learned how to attract both responsible and loyal administrators.[24] Six months after he became president, Zogu was faced with two attempted coups, one engineered by the president of the Senate and the minister of finance, and the other by Zogu's brother-in-law Ceno Bey, the minister of the interior. Although both attempts had some tribal support, they were both easily overcome, followed by the usual violent repression. Zogu's brother-in-law was later assassinated in Prague, probably on Zogu's orders.[25]

While these two attempts were easily put down, they did provoke a number of further assassination attempts and uprisings. The numerous attempts to murder Zogu were instigated primarily by the ever-growing number of exiles who had fled the country as a result of earlier unsuccessful attempts to topple the regime. Many of these people were financed by foreign powers, usually Italy, which, under Mussolini, hoped to avenge the humiliation of Vlora in 1920. Zogu survived these attempts but he did become highly security conscious. He became his own prisoner, spending most of his time shut away in his overheated office chain-smoking cigarettes. He received his meals from his mother who sent them in a guarded locked box from her villa that was situated across from his. On those rare occasions when he did leave his residence he did so usually in the company of his mother – since the shooting of women in blood feud killings was proscribed – and always with the protection of a detachment of cavalry consisting of men from his own Mati tribe.[26] The American minister noted how the atmosphere at Zogu's villa very much resembled the closing days of tsardom in St. Petersburg, when Nicholas II took his few outings in similar fashion.[27]

But these occasional assassination attempts and minor revolts were not his only problems. In 1926, Zogu faced a widespread revolt financed by Mussolini that constituted the first serious threat to his regime. Rumors began as early as February that émigré groups, primarily in Italy, were plotting to foment a large insurrection during 1926. The conspirators played on the discontent that perpetually existed at the various levels of Albanian society. The more well-to-do Muslims of the south resented their political eclipse, and the common people resented Zogu's drafting of labor to build roads, as well as

the continuing state of poverty in which they found themselves. Many of the Geg tribesmen – not Zogu's clan or among his allies – resented his attempt to disarm them and to stamp out brigandage. On 20 November 1926, insurgent tribes advanced on Shkodra driving five companies of government militia before them. Zogu moved quickly, transferring large bodies of militia and supporters from central to northern Albania until he was able to concentrate nearly 10,000 fighters and several batteries of mountain guns against the insurgents. The Geg chieftains could not compete against Zogu's overwhelming firepower. By 2 December the insurrection had been crushed and the insurgents driven into the hills.[28]

Despite the fact that the revolt ended so quickly, Zogu was aware of how serious it had been and moved quickly to attempt to ensure that it would not happen again. The first priority was to remove the insurgents themselves. He sent his minister of the interior, Musa Juka, to the north to conduct swift and severe reprisals. Juka burned a number of villages and constructed a special police court, which engaged in large-scale hangings and imprisonment, even sentencing to death a number of Catholic priests who had confessed to leading revolutionary bands. But Rome interceded, putting Zogu in a rather awkward position, for if he had reprieved the priests who had openly confessed their guilt, he would have been attacked by Muslims who remembered that some years before he had hanged several Muslim clerics for complicity in a revolt. When the British minister added his voice in support of amnesty, Zogu lamented "But I do so much want to hang them as they deserve."[29] The dilemma was resolved by a typical Zogu compromise – he commuted the sentences of the two guilty priests but in order to satisfy the domestic demand to hang a priest, Zogu quickly produced one whom few knew had been arrested, and hanged him.

Zogu's second but perhaps even more important priority was to remove the source of all of this instability, which he correctly assumed had to do with Italian financial support for the ever-increasing Albanian exile community, as well as continuing domestic economic and political problems. Rome routinely subsidized Albanian exiles as a means by which to pressure Zogu and to buy some influence should Zogu be killed or overthrown and replaced by one of these exiled leaders. Zogu was also aware that financial support from an interested neighboring power was the only means by which to solve some of Albania's severe economic problems and lead to further political stability. Turning to Italy for political and economic support was the obvious choice. The League of Nations had been approached and was not interested. Zogu was indebted to Yugoslavia for its aid in 1924 and he did not trust Belgrade in any case. Italy was a leading state, shared no borders with Albania, had strategic interests in Albania and was reasonably financially sound and willing to underwrite and support the small but chaotic Albanian economy. Italy, however, was home to most of Zogu's exiled enemies. In terms of domestic reaction, Zogu realized that he could always fall back on the legend, which became more fantastic with age, that if matters ever reached crisis proportions, the Albanians could easily expel the Italians as they had done in 1920.[30]

Zogu had been negotiating with the Italians since 1924 and, in 1925, he secured a substantial loan in the form of the Society for Economic Development in Albania (SVEA), an Italian government-controlled development company, which was to build an Albanian infrastructure. Zogu, however, resisted a military and political agreement that the Italians wanted until the revolt of 1926 when Zogu was in dire need of cash to maintain political support and to mobilize and equip his bands. On 27 November 1926, while the fighting was still in progress, Zogu signed a Pact of Friendship and Security with Italy, which likely netted Zogu some 20 million lire and guaranteed the political status quo in Albania in exchange for Albania's foreign policy independence. In the words of the German minister in Albania, Zogu understood that the "hand that cannot be hacked off must be kissed."[31]

But this agreement had not gone far enough and Zogu continued to face political upheavals throughout 1927, encouraging him to sign a Second Pact of Friendship in November 1927. This was a defensive military alliance through which Italy essentially gained control of the Albanian militia forces by becoming both quartermaster and trainer. Still, Zogu received important concessions in return. Mussolini agreed to stop the financing of and break contact with Zogu's most important exiled enemies, including the Kosovar leader Hassan Bey Prishtina, whom Zogu would soon have killed. Perhaps even more important for Zogu, the Italians agreed to allow him to assume the throne that not only served his vanity but, Zogu was convinced, would help create the political stability he had sought for so long. Zogu, having broken his engagement with Verlaci's daughter, also asked for a suitable wife from the House of Savoy, preferably Princess Giovanna.[32] Although Mussolini had agreed to this last request as well, he soon let it drop since Boris of Bulgaria began courting her soon after the agreement was signed. It is doubtful that Mussolini ever brought the matter up with Italian King Victor Emmanuel II since the king would likely not have approved, considering Zogu to be little more than the better bandit.[33] Regardless of the failed marriage plans, Zogu had received his ultimate reward.

Zogu tells us that the concept of monarchy had intrigued him from an early age. He greatly admired Napoleon and Julius Caesar, both of whom had created a monarchy out of a republic. Zogu maintained, as well, that, following his trip to Rome that he made when returning to Albania from Vienna after World War One, he had determined that Caesar was the greatest incarnation of the political man. Zogu explained how he would sit amid the ruins of the Roman forum and dream of the glories of ancient times and about the possibility of bringing them back to life.[34] Others have suggested that the decisive event influencing Zogu in the direction of monarchy may have been his observing the pomp and ceremony surrounding the coronation of Emperor Karl in Austria–Hungary in 1916. That Zogu began laying the groundwork for such a change beginning in 1924 or even earlier was clear to many. His penchant for white uniforms with epaulettes has already been mentioned. This was followed by the wide dissemination of his likeness on stamps and buildings. His name

and initials appeared everywhere, including on the side of a mountain above Shkodra.[35] A crucial component in this process was the notion of continuity – Zogu claimed that he was merely rebuilding the monarchy as founded by the fifteenth-century Albanian hero Skanderbeg. He emphasized the connection – both had risen from relative obscurity to rule Albania at a young age. Zogu went so far as to rewrite medieval Albanian history to include a marriage connection between Skanderbeg's sister and one of Zogu's ancestors. Once he became king, Zogu adopted the helmet of Skanderbeg as the symbol of the nation, with "AZ" superimposed.[36]

With Italian support for the change secured, Zogu, who still believed that such a move would be of critical interest to Europe, began sounding out foreign and domestic opinion and laying the constitutional groundwork. To Zogu's surprise, the Yugoslavs and the British, although neither was particularly enthusiastic, announced rather disingenuously that it was not the habit of their governments to interfere in the internal affairs of other states. From the rest of Europe, Zogu received answers of benevolent disinterest.[37] As with his constant worry about foreign opinion, Zogu was continually concerned about superficial legality. He therefore took great pains to ensure that the change was constitutionally correct. Since parliament could not alter the republican constitution, Zogu convinced its members in June 1928 to pass an organic law providing for their own dissolution and the election of a special Constituent Assembly. Albanian electoral politics during the republican period was much less lively than it had been during the principality and in this case consisted of a few simple steps. First, a few dozen possible opposition candidates were arrested and general political meetings banned. By virtue of the indirect nature of the election process, only the 1,200 members of the electoral college actually voted and, since they were all chosen by the government and paid, not a single member of the new Constituent Assembly, whose vote was not safe for Zogu, was returned.[38]

Zogu also required some local enthusiasm to convince skeptics of the unanimity of his people. His first move in this direction was his acceptance in December 1927 of the title "Savior of the Nation."[39] Next Zogu decided that the unquestioning support of the cabinet was necessary. Although it is unlikely that any of the members of the government would have opposed Zogu, thereby jeopardizing their positions and perhaps their lives, since the dismissal and reorganization of the government could be done with ease, Zogu manufactured a cabinet crisis resulting in the resignation of the entire cabinet. Within 24 hours a new cabinet was formed, which was quickly christened the "Marionette Cabinet," because its members appeared to be merely a collection of puppets in the hands of Zogu.[40]

Having taken these steps, Zogu and most of his advisors assumed that their job was done intending simply to wave the crown in the faces of the people once the Constituent Assembly had met at the end of August 1928. Foreign Minister Hysen Bey Vrioni convinced Zogu that the people needed at least to

be informed and Zogu seems to have grudgingly agreed. Kosta Cekrezi, the editor of the Albanian *Telegraph*, was instructed to write a series of news editorials supporting the monarchy, which, since Albania still suffered from close to 90% illiteracy, probably had only limited impact. This was followed by a series of carefully staged "spontaneous demonstrations" that, by the end of August, had reached feverish proportions. The Assembly was inundated with telegrams urging it to suppress a form of government alien to the traditions of the Albanian people. Zogu was satisfied – although, as the American minister noted wryly, "any reasoned observer of Albanian affairs would know at once that the people of the country, if consulted, never had any knowledge of having been approached."[41]

The Constituent Assembly duly met in late August 1928 and as expected unanimously resolved that "the illustrious crown of the historical Albanian throne is offered to the Savior of the Nation under the title of Zog I, King of the Albanians." Zogu abandoned his Turkic name of Ahmed, along with the "u" from Zogu. Zog accepted the crown in a short ceremony followed by three days of celebration, during which "spontaneous demonstrations" abounded. Every house in the capital was adorned with the obligatory garland of green while the demonstrations continued. As the three-day period wore on, the organization of these outbursts became more and more obvious while claims of spontaneity became more and more ridiculous. Foreign reaction, except for Italy, was initially somewhat negative, not because of the act itself but because of the title "King of the Albanians." The Yugoslavs, who, of course, possessed a large Albanian minority in Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro, interpreted this as a signal for a future irredentist campaign, but extended recognition so as not to play into the hands of the Italians, and did so even before Britain and France. The only serious problem came from Mustafa Kemal of Turkey, who was exasperated with Zog's betrayal of the republican form of government and refused to recognize the regime.[42] Among the common people, who were not directly involved, the reaction when it could be discerned was not surprising. Either they did not react at all because it really did not affect them, or, as the British minister suggests, they were cynically indifferent.

On becoming king, Zog proved himself strong enough to push through a project over the heads of an apathetic people and wise enough to wait for a moment when the internal situation was propitious and no complications with neighbors were likely to ensue. He must be given credit for the change itself, as it was basically a wise move. It could be argued that an Albanian republic was an anomaly, whereas a monarchy with its pomp and ceremony could be better understood by people who were accustomed through the ages to owe allegiance to a chieftain or a pasha. The argument that a throne conveys the idea of permanence and continuity and that these attributes are particularly desirable in the government of a country that had been torn by internal feuds and external jealously, as had Albania, cannot be ruled out. While it is true that tribal allegiance to Zog was strikingly personal, the

creation of the monarchy allowed the king time to either change the attitude of the chieftains or decrease their influence. Zog gained in prestige in his own land by the assumption of the royal title, despite the fact that the change resulted in a few smiles in Europe, which had seen so many thrones totter and fall. The move was a step in the direction of general stability.

The 1928 monarchical constitution[43] corrected what Zog saw as the flaws of the presidential constitution and left all of the power, not just most of it, in the hands of the chief executive. Although it seemed outwardly democratic, on close examination Zog was given virtually unrestricted legislative, judicial, and executive power. While indirect elections continued to be held, political parties were declared illegal and the parliaments that resulted were made up of placemen who occupied themselves in voluminous debates on issues about which Zog was indifferent. When Zog, who had the exclusive right to initiate legislation, sent something down, parliament would immediately take up the issue, pass the bill unanimously, and then quietly fade back into insignificance. Zog's judicial powers were also significantly enhanced. Under the presidency Zog had been able to control the judiciary only through appointments and intimidation. Now, judicial decisions were pronounced and executed in his name, doing away with what little independence the courts may have had. The primary source of his power, however, came by virtue of his executive prerogatives, which he shared with no one. He was careful not to create an aristocracy, except for his sisters, who became royal princesses, in part because Albania could not afford to support an aristocracy and in part because he was not interested in the competition. And ultimately, he had none, except perhaps for the Italians who increased their control over Albanian foreign policy, its economy, and its army. What Zog created was essentially a reasonably stable, traditional, non-ideological, authoritarian regime in which he even allowed limited political reform provided that his own position was not threatened in the process. While most other Balkan states that adopted a similar form of rule also included certain elements of fascism, Albania did not, primarily because fascism was associated with Italy, and Italy quickly developed into Albania's greatest nemesis.

So, what did Zog do with his monarchy? During his 11 years as king, his principal concern was for the maintenance of his own power. As we have seen, he recognized that this was possible only through political and economic stability fostered by some degree of national unity. This realization, and the policies initiated to achieve these goals made Zog something of a modern nationalist, although many would likely disagree. Because of his opposition to Kosovar irredentism, Zog was condemned then, and in some circles is still now. Zog's attitude toward Kosovo remained pragmatic. He believed that, given Albania's struggle for stability and its limited resources, it was simply foolish to provoke the Yugoslavs. There were, of course, other considerations. From an internal political standpoint Kosovar irredentism also made little sense for Zog. Many of the northern chieftains, with claims and often holdings in Kosovo, and the

Kosovar chieftains themselves, were Zog's bitter rivals. The inclusion of their lands and their retainers in the Albanian state would only have threatened Zog's position. But the international arguments were compelling enough. Had Zog pursued an irredentist policy, he would either have faced a Yugoslav invasion or at least have become completely dependent on the Italians for military protection. In either case, Albanian independence and Zog's position would have been jeopardized.

Zog continued to work for internal unity. With the political obstacles removed by the end of politics as we know it, he could turn his attention elsewhere. We have seen that, even prior to acquiring the power of the crown, Zog had initiated the process of integrating the northern tribesmen into the national life of Albania by reducing blood feuds and disarming parts of the population.[44] Another priority was religion, which remains something of an issue even today. While Albanians have never been considered religious zealots, the presence in Albania of four major religions – Sunni Muslims, Bektashi Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians – allowed for considerable foreign influence and constituted yet another divisive element in Albanian society. Zog hoped to institute some degree of domestic control of Churches and elevate religious leaders who espoused Albanian unity. Partly as a result of Zog's efforts, Albanian Muslims officially separated themselves from outside control in 1923.

While the Orthodox and Catholic adherents constituted less than 30% of the population, because of the nature of the Churches, control for Zog proved to be more of a challenge. With regard to the Orthodox Church, Zog built on the work of Bishop Fan Noli, who had been responsible for convening a congress in Berat in 1922. Following considerable dispute, the Congress declared the Albanian Church to be autocephalous and asked the patriarch in Istanbul for official recognition. The patriarch was hesitant, first because Greek influence in Albania would be threatened as a result and second because Albania lacked a proper hierarchy. Once he had come to power Zog acted forcefully and found two bishops, unfortunately of questionable character and legitimacy, and had them consecrate three new bishops, thereby creating the needed five-man synod. The patriarch, however, refused to grant recognition until April 1937 when some of the more objectionable bishops were removed.[45]

Zog's greatest challenge, however, came from Albania's smallest religious community, the Catholics, who were considered the most suspect because of their obvious connection with Italy. Recognizing that total separation was impossible, Zog chose to try to reduce the Catholic Church's influence in Albania. As an example, in the hope of reducing the practice of shooting faithless wives, as well as decreasing the influence of the Catholic Church, Zog instituted a new civil code, which called for civil marriage and divorce. The Archbishop of Shkodra and the papal nuncio objected strenuously, but were told by Zog in no uncertain terms that any priest who took his objections too far would soon be provided with a tree with adequate strength to support his weight.[46] While the Catholic Church in Albania respected Zog's

power for the most part, one of the unfortunate results of his somewhat authoritarian approach was to contribute to widespread Catholic collaboration with the Italians following his ouster.

While Zog's own education can only be described as truncated, he was clever enough to recognize that the key to modernism, unity – and therefore stability – rested with the youth of Albania. While much of the older generation could likely never be weaned from tribalism and feudalism, with proper education the youth could construct a new Albania. The development of an adequate educational system became a high priority. When Albania gained its independence, the educational system was in its infancy, in part because of the centuries-long Ottoman ban on Albanian-language schools. When Zog came to power, even the language was inadequate for literary and educational purposes. The vocabulary was underdeveloped, and the different dialects spoken in the north and south had not yet been merged into a national language.[47] While Zog did not address all of these deficiencies, he did build schools and attempted to establish some state control over those schools that were run by foreigners. By the time of the Italian invasion in 1939, there were 633 elementary schools and 19 intermediate schools, up from 580 and 13 respectively in 1930.[48] While Albania would not found its first university until 1957, during the Zog years an increasing number of Albanians were sent abroad for higher education. But since the illiteracy rate in Albania in 1939 remained very high, all of this progress can only be considered a very limited success.

A series of further initiatives afforded Zog even less success, in part because of the increasingly subversive influence of the Italians. Zog attempted to foster unity through the improvement of Albania's rather primitive transportation and communications infrastructure. He acquired loans for the purpose of improving this from the Italians but, given the nature of the restrictions on these loans, most of the new roads were built to Italian military specifications – in other words they were built in the direction of Yugoslavia and Greece as opposed to in the interests of domestic needs. Nevertheless, by 1939 it was increasingly difficult for northern tribes to retreat to their mountain fastnesses and simply ignore the central government in Tirana. Zog's police and tax collectors were given access to areas of Albania hitherto isolated not only from the rest of Europe but from the rest of Albania as well. Zog also hoped to use the army, which under the monarchy was expanded beyond its militia base, as a means not only to enforce government policy but as a social and cultural melting pot, requiring recruits from different parts of the country to serve together in the same units. This might have been more successful had Italian trainers not subverted a good number of these recruits and turned them into potential collaborators.

Zog's greatest failure, however, was in the economic sphere. That economic development could lead to political and general stability was clear – that Albania's general economic situation changed little during the years of Zog's various regimes is also clear. Grinding poverty was still widespread. Certainly,

Zog cannot be saddled with all of the blame for this deplorable situation. The Italians, who by 1939 directed much of Zog's financial policy, were not particularly interested in a prosperous Albania, which would of course have reduced Zog's dependence. Zog could also go only so far with such crucial policies as land reform because of his dependence on the leaders of Albania's traditional society, the chieftains, and the great Muslim landowners. But Zog must take the major portion of the responsibility. He did not seem to understand the magnitude of Albania's peasant problem; nor did he seem to have a clear grasp of economics in general. Perhaps more importantly, he seemed completely unable to find people who did. Zog was not a good judge of people and did not know whom to trust. Because of his inability to choose competent advisors, younger more able people were kept in the background leaving the Albanian economy, and Albanians in general, at the mercy of unreconstructed Ottoman bureaucrats.

All of this helps to explain why there were so few Albanians ready to defend Zog when his political end came. By 1938, Mussolini's foreign minister (and son-in-law) Count Galeazzo Ciano had come to the conclusion that Italy would never achieve its goal of complete dominance over Albania while Zog remained on the throne. In a sense, Zog's defense of Albania's independence against the Italians sealed Albania's fate. Ciano, who became somewhat obsessed with Albania, argued for an Italian invasion of Albania, by employing rank exaggeration and flattery and by playing on Mussolini's fears. The Duce hesitated, always afraid of making major decisions, but then became enraged when the Germans occupied Prague in March 1939. Following an all-too hasty-mobilization, Italian forces invaded Albania on 7 April 1939. The operation itself was a bungled affair, best described by Filippo Anfuso, Ciano's chief assistant, who accompanied the count on his flight over the battle zone for campaign metals. Anfuso noted "If only the Albanians had possessed a well-armed fire brigade, they could have driven us back into the Adriatic."[49]

But Zog had very little support and did not behave well. The Italians were faced with almost no resistance and were able to overrun the entire country in a matter of days, held up only occasionally by their own incompetence. The Albanian army, numbering perhaps 8,000, had been thoroughly subverted by Italian trainers and as a result was of little use to either side. King Zog, following a rather pathetic personal plea to Mussolini, appealed by radio to his subjects to fight the Italians until the last drop of blood was shed. Within hours he fled to Greece, carrying large sacks of gold, bribes that Mussolini had provided over the years. After years of sparring with the Italians, it is possible that Zog had simply had enough – the manner of his flight, however, left a rather negative impression. With their country invaded and their king gone, most Albanians resigned themselves to the inevitable.

The evaluations of Zog range from Zog as demon to Zog as national hero. Zog's wife Queen Geraldine described him to this author as a twentieth-century Napoleon.[50] Victor Emmanuel II, who became King of Albania following

Zog's flight, called him a bandit, and French Premier Eduard Daladier saw him as little more than a gangster. Albanian communist historiography, which tended to view almost everything in black-and-white terms, condemned him roundly as a tyrannical feudal oppressor and ascribed anything positive that happened during his reign, to someone else. Indeed, there is much about Zog that should be criticized both personally and in terms of his policy. Once Zog became king, a certain complacency set in and he lost the gift of energy that had characterized his earlier years. He seemed to become mentally sloppy, still capable of determined and obstinate action but no longer capable of thoughtful consideration of ways and means to deal with resulting difficulties. This was a particular problem because the system he constructed made him constitutionally unable to delegate authority in most cases. The entire weight of the administration, therefore, rested on his shoulders, a burden that he often found too heavy – having neither the constructive ability nor the knowledge required to deal with every situation.[51] At the worst of times he resembled a small-sized, extravagant, indolent, potentate surrounded by a group of hangers-on who exploited him and whom he was unable to shake off. While all of these criticisms are fair, they do not give us a complete picture.

The criteria often used to judge politicians is to determine whether or not the people were better off at the end of an administration than they had been at the beginning. On the surface, in a material sense, it would certainly seem as if Albanians were not much better off in 1939 that they had been in 1922. The population was still overwhelmingly peasant-oriented with industry in 1938 accounting for only 4.4% of the national income.[52] Agriculture and stockbreeding methods remained primitive as well because what little capital Albania had was not used efficiently. Transportation and communication were still very difficult. In 1939 there were no railroads and only approximately 500 miles of roads, generally in a state of disrepair. Because of Albania's primitive transportation system and the negative effect this had on agriculture and industry, extensive importing was necessary. Not only did Albania import all of the needed manufactured goods but large quantities of wheat, corn, and rice were still being imported to meet the basic needs of the people. Export values still had not exceeded 50% of import costs.[53]

Social conditions remained almost as primitive as economic conditions. Impoverished peasants were still ruled over by feudal Muslim landlords. Only four towns, Tirana, Durrës, Shkodra, and Vlora, in any way resembled a European city. General living conditions were poor everywhere; the people suffered from a bad diet making them vulnerable to disease. Public health services were nonexistent and education was still rudimentary. In 1939, 85% of the population was still illiterate, the highest rate in Europe.[54] While some small improvement was made, serious social problems remained.

But something had been gained, even if often intangible. Zog's most tangible achievement was the establishment of at least limited political stability. He was clever enough to realize that in the construction of his state he could not

simply copy political forms, which might have been applicable elsewhere, without taking indigenous political realities into consideration. The curious state Zog constructed provided him with the centralization necessary to forcibly reduce the chaotic lawlessness of the highlands and to begin to bring the divergent elements of the country together. The independence that the northern tribes had enjoyed for centuries was to a considerable extent curtailed. Many were forced to give up their weapons, significantly reducing brigandage and the blood feuds. By the 1930s the central government was recognized in most parts of the country, allowing Zog's administration to collect taxes and draft recruits for the army, something that would have been considered impossible immediately following World War One.

Zog's most important contribution, however, was less tangible. He created an environment that was conducive to the growth of an Albanian national consciousness, a process that is still ongoing. Ekrem Bey Vlora, the Albanian author and diplomat, suggested that out of the chaos of tribes and feudalism, Zog created not just a state, but also a nation.[55] While this may be something of an overstatement, there is some truth here. Zog did construct a state apparatus that resulted in centralization and some stability. His resistance to Italian attempts to violate Albanian political sovereignty and territorial integrity demonstrated not only his will to survive but also the level of his own nationalism. His struggle with Italy provided a focus, even if it was a negative one, for growing nationalist sentiment. Zog also effectively used the myth of Skenderbeg,[56] the 15th century Albanian national hero, and by adopting his helmet as a symbol, Zog managed not only to help found a national ideology but also to extend it to his own person. When Zog came to power, local pride was more important than national identity. While what Zog did may not have come close to the level of creating a nation, he certainly facilitated movement in that direction. Those who succeeded him as leaders and resumed the effort of nation-state construction had their task made somewhat simpler as a result of the steps toward the development of Albanian nationalism for which Zog was responsible.

Notes

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5 Marcel W. Fodor, *Plot and Counterplot in Central Europe* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937), p. 96.
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56 Skenderbeg has become the principal Albanian national hero, having united a number of Albanian princes in the 15th century in the struggle against the Ottomans.

9

THE PEASANTRIES AND PEASANT PARTIES OF INTERWAR EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

Robert Bideleux

During the interwar years, peasant households made up more than half the population of each of the East Central European countries and major sub-regions, except in the semi-industrialized Czech Lands. The peasant parties were arguably the most distinctive, interesting, and constructive political and social movements that gradually expanded and "matured" in most parts of East Central Europe between the establishment or expansion of nation-states in this region in 1918–1920 and the gradual emergence of increasingly repressive and brutal communist regimes in these same countries between 1943 and 1948.

However, there has been a long-standing tendency for Western (and some East Central European) liberal, conservative, and Marxist historians of East Central Europe to portray the region's peasants and peasant parties rather patronizingly, even condescendingly, and to dismiss their ideologies, programs, policies, and mentalities as naive, essentialist, backward-looking, impractical "romantic utopianism," or wishful thinking. Especially in the West, relatively few academic historians and other analysts and commentators have treated East Central European peasants and "peasantist" parties, ideas, and programs as seriously and respectfully as they have deserved. In 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels rather unflatteringly remarked that Europe's bourgeoisie "has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life."[1] Later, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*,[2] Marx somewhat disparagingly compared peasants to a sack of potatoes. These unfortunate comments helped to set the tone for subsequent Western urban liberal and Marxist disdain for East European peasantries and peasant parties, together with their most widely prevalent ideas, policies, and programs.

By contrast, this chapter not only offers more sympathetic, unprejudiced, and respectful portrayals of interwar East Central Europe's peasantries and

peasant parties, it also argues that the principal programs, policies, and perspectives advocated by these parties were considerably more practical, moderate, viable, interesting, non-coercive, rewarding, and humane than the principal alternative socioeconomic ideas, programs, and policies that liberals, conservatives, and Marxists promoted (both at the time and subsequently) as panaceas for the problems that afflicted interwar East Central Europe's largely peasant societies. Most liberals and Marxists sought or advocated relatively large-scale, rapid, costly, overcrowding and polluting capitalist industrialization and urbanization, partly in endeavors to absorb the region's allegedly large "rural population surpluses" into urban–industrial expansion, whereas most conservative estate owners and officials endeavored to uphold the socioeconomic and spiritual status quo. This region would arguably have become a less violent, repressive, impoverished, downtrodden, and conflicted place, as well as more "appropriately developed," if the East European peasant parties' policies, programs, and priorities had prevailed.

Comparative data on the East Central European peasantries

In 1930, over half of East Central Europe's population depended on "own-account" farming. The major exceptions to this norm within this region were the semi-industrialized Czech Lands (which hosted East Central Europe's most educated peasant farmers) and Hungary (where farm laborers and their families made up c. 39% of the agrarian population). (see Tables 9.1 and 9.2).

The data in Table 9.3 indicates that, even after widespread land reforms during the 1920s, the share of all land held by farms exceeding 100 hectares in size was still 39.6% in interwar Czechoslovakia, 40.9% in interwar Hungary, at least 30% in interwar Poland, and 27.7 % in interwar Romania. By contrast, farms exceeding 50 hectares in size occupied a mere 1.6% of all land in Bulgaria, and only 9.6% of all land in Yugoslavia. Peasant farms were thus strongly predominant in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

Tables 9.4 and 9.5 indicate that, by Western standards, most farms in interwar East Central Europe were indeed small: under 3 hectares apiece in Hungary and Romania; and under 5 hectares apiece in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. British and North American writers on East Central Europe often present (or appear to regard) this as highly abnormal. However, the size distribution of East Central European farms was in fact intermediate between the numerical preponderance of slightly larger peasant farms in France and Ireland, and that of even smaller peasant farms in Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany, Japan, and Korea (see Table 9.5). Moreover, although East Central European peasant landholdings were almost invariably made up of multiple strips or parcels, this was the case in most predominantly peasant societies. Consolidation was still the exception, rather than the norm. Although

TABLE 9.1 Population dependent on agriculture (% of total, by country), 1910–1950

	1910	1930	1950
Czechoslovakia	41	33	36
Hungary	67	51	50
Poland	76	60	53
Romania	80	72	73
Bulgaria	82	75	74
Yugoslavia	82	76	76
Albania	90+	85+	74
Relevant comparators Eire	60	53	46
Portugal	60	46	46
Spain	56	50	50
Greece	50	48	48
Italy	58	44	42
France	43	29	29
Japan	60	48	46

Sources: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen, 1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), p. 223; and Ivan Berend, "Agriculture," in Michael Kaser and E. A. Radice (Eds.), *The Economic History of Eastern Europe, 1919–1975*, Volume I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 204.

average grain yields per hectare were somewhat lower in most of the East Central European states than in the UK, Ireland, Germany and Japan, they were similar to those in France and Italy, and well above those in Spain, Portugal and Greece (see Table 9.6).

Although parts of East Central Europe had less farmland per agricultural inhabitant than France and Germany, in this regard most of the region was considerably better placed than Ireland, Southern Europe and Japan (see Table 9.7).

Although mortality rates were generally higher in East Central Europe than in Germany and Ireland, they were either similar to or lower than those in France, Southern Europe, and Japan. Furthermore, although infant mortality rates (which are widely regarded as relatively reliable indicators of how healthy a country's conditions of life are) were generally higher in East Central Europe than in Germany, France and Ireland, they were broadly similar to those in Southern Europe and Japan (see Table 9.8).

One of the most enduring refrains in socioeconomic analyses of interwar East Central Europe has been the claim that most of the region suffered from relatively large and highly problematic 'rural population surpluses' (see Table 9.9). However, this claim is disputed in the penultimate section of this chapter, particularly in note 92.

TABLE 9.2 Landholders and laborers (% of the agrarian population)

("Landholders" here refers to proprietors, tenants, sharecroppers and other "own-account" farmers. "Laborers" refers to landless or virtually landless hired agricultural workers. People who combined "own-account" farming and wage work are classified according to their main livelihood.)

	Landholders	Laborers	Date
Czechoslovakia	85	15	1930
Hungary	61	39	1930
Poland	85	15	1931
Romania	86	14	1913
Bulgaria	99	1	1934
Yugoslavia	91	9	1931
Relevant comparators			
European Russia	95	5	1900
Greece	95(t)	5(t)	1929
Italy	70	39	1931
Spain	69	31	1966**
Portugal	55	45	1930
France	72	28	1929
Germany	78	22	1933
Ireland	79	21	1929
Japan	84	16	1929
Korea	94	4*	1937

Source: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen, 1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), pp. 229–230.
*The remaining 2% comprised kademins (nomadic firefield cultivators).
** It seems unlikely that these proportions had changed greatly since the 1930s.

TABLE 9.3 Distribution of farmland (%) among farms of different sizes, by country, c. 1930

	Under 2 ha.	2–5 ha.	5–50 ha.	50–100 ha.	Over 100 ha.
Czecho-slovakia	1.6	13.9	41.2	3.7	39.6
Hungary	10.9	9.2	33.5	5.5	40.9
Poland	3.3	13.0	41.3	Over 50 ha.: 42.4%*	
Romania	12.8	15.2	39.8	4.5	27.7
Bulgaria	5.3	24.7	68.4	Over 50 ha.: 1.6 %	
Yugosla-via	6.5	21.5	62.4	3.2	6.4

Source: Ivan Berend, "Agriculture," in Michael Kaser and E. A. Radice (Eds.), *The Economic History of Eastern Europe, 1919–1975*, Volume I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 154.
* This figure includes the 16.6% of the total area that was corporate property.

TABLE 9.4 Distribution of farm households (%) by size of farm (in hectares), c. 1930

	Under 2 ha.	2–5 ha.	5–50 ha.	50–100 ha.	Over 100 ha.
Czechoslovakia	26.5	43.8	29.0	0.4	0.5
Hungary	71.5	12.5	15.1	0.4	0.5
Poland	30.3	33.4	36.0	Over 50 ha.: 0.3%	
Romania	52.1	22.9	24.2	0.4	0.4
Bulgaria	27.0	36.1	36.8	Over 50 ha.: 0.1%	
Yugoslavia	33.8	34.0	31.8	Over 50 ha.: 0.4%	

Source: Ivan Berend, "Agriculture," in Michael Kaser and E. A. Radice (Eds.), *The Economic History of Eastern Europe, 1919–1975*, Volume I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 154

A major strength of East Central European peasant agriculture was its comparatively high per capita production of staple foods (see Tables 9.10 and 9.13).

Although interwar East Central European diets remained comparatively high in carbohydrates, this broadly resembled other societies that remained heavily dependent on peasant agriculture up to the 1930s and beyond (see Table 9.11).

As in most other parts of Europe (including Russia), East Central European livestock holdings were severely reduced during World War One and its turbulent aftermath. Nevertheless, they had largely recovered by 1927 and held up comparatively well during the depressed 1930s (see Table 9.12).

East Central European peasant diets were becoming more varied, as per capita consumption of red meat, poultry, vegetables, white bread, fruit, coffee, tea, sugar, and beer was generally increasing.

Moreover, then as now, East Central European diets were widely supplemented by a considerable amount of largely unrecorded gathering of nuts, berries, and fungi, as well as hunting (often poaching) of birds and other wild animals in the region's still extensive forests, woodlands, and marshlands. Czechs and Poles were also eating significant per capita quantities of fish (albeit far less than the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the French).

Peasants in interwar East Central Europe were also buying steadily growing quantities of increasingly mass-produced and inexpensive washable clothing, footwear, metal tools and utensils, kerosene lamps, and kerosene, even though such goods were often heavily taxed. Indeed, East Central European light industries were growing mainly on the basis of the rising per capita consumption of such products (mostly by peasants). As was very typical of the early stages of capitalist industrialization in both Europe and Asia, consumer goods appear to have made up 50–80% of manufacturing output in the East Central European countries between the 1880s and 1950.[3]

TABLE 9.5 Distribution of farm households (%) by farm size (in hectares): Eastern Europe in comparison with Western Europe, Russia, Japan and Korea

	0.5 ha.	1.0 ha.	2.0 ha.	3.0 ha.	5.0 ha.	10.0 ha.	20.0 ha.	Average farm size (hectares)
Czechoslovakia								
1930	14.5	26.4	43.0	-	70.4	-	95.7	5.9
Hungary								
1895	22	-	-	54	73	(88)	-	8.9
1935	(35)	-	-	68	(84)	(92)	-	6.1
Poland								
1921	-	-	33.9	-	64.6	87.1	96.7	-
1931	-	-	26.0	-	64.6	-	-	-
Romania								
1930	-	18.6	-	52.1	74.9	92.0	97.5	6.0
Bulgaria								
1926	-	11.9	24.3	36.3	57.0	85.0	97.6	-
1934	-	13.5	27.0	40.2	63.1	89.3	98.5	-
Yugoslavia								
1931	8.0	16.8	33.8	-	67.8	88.3	97.1	4.3
Relevant comparators								
Greece								
1929	-	37.6	59.3	72.7	87.0	95.9	98.7	4.1
Italy								
1930	15.7	30.6	-	63.3	77.0	89.6	96.1	6.7
Spain								
1930	-	76.8	-	-	95	98		
France								
1929	-	25.6	-	-	54.5	72.6	87.5	11.6
Eire								
1929	13.6	17.4	22.2	31.5	41.4	64.2	80.0	15.4
Germany								
1933	36.6	44.2	54.2	-	70.6	83.4	92.7	8.7
Japan								
1930	34.6	68.9	90.8	96.4	-	-	-	0.9
Korea (North and South)								
1938	34.8	63.3	83.0	93.9	-	-	-	1.5
European Russia			2.2 ha.	5.5 ha.	10.9 ha.	21.8 ha.	-	-
1905*	-	-	4.7	23.3	77.9	89.4		11.1

Source: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen, 1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), pp. 238–242.
* Peasant "allotment land" only.

TABLE 9.6 Average grain yields (tons per hectare), by country, 1909–1913 and 1934–1938

	1909–1913	1934–1938
Czechoslovakia	1.4	1.7
Hungary	1.3	1.5
Poland	1.1	1.1
Romania	1.2	0.9
Bulgaria	1.1	1.2
Yugoslavia	1.2	1.4
Albania	-	1.3
Relevant comparators		
Russia/USSR	0.8	0.7
Greece	0.9	0.9
Italy	1.2	1.6
Spain	1.0	1.1 (1931–1935)
Portugal	(0.7)	0.8
France	1.3	1.5
Germany	1.9	2.2
Ireland	2.3	2.4 (Eire)
Japan	2.7	3.0 (1931–1935)
Korea	-	1.5

Source: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen, 1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), pp. 251–252.

TABLE 9.7 Farmland per agricultural inhabitant, by country, 1891 and 1928

	Cropland		Pasture and meadow	
	1891	1928	1891	1928
Czechoslovakia	-	1.3	-	0.5
Hungary	0.9	1.3	0.6	0.4
Poland	-	1.0	-	0.3
Romania	-	1.1		0.3
Bulgaria	(1.2)	0.9	(1.0)	0.1
Yugoslavia		0.7		0.4
Relevant comparators				
Portugal	0.7	-	-	-
Spain	1.4	1.7	0.9	1.5
Greece	0.7	0.8	1.9	0.4
Italy	1.0	0.9	0.4	0.4
France	1.8	2.1	0.6	1.0
Germany	1.4	1.6	0.5	0.6
Eire	-	1.0	-	2.2
Japan	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0

Source: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen, 1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), p. 237.

TABLE 9.8 Mortality rates by country (various years, 1909–1913 to 1933–1935)

	Deaths per 1,000 inhabitants			Infant Mortality (% in year 1)		
	1909–1913	1926–1928	c. 1933–1935	1907–1911	1926–1928	1937
Czechoslo-vakia	(20)	16	13.5	(20)	15	12.2
Hungary	24	17	14.8	21	18	13.4
Poland	(23)	17	14.2	-	15	13.6
Romania	25	21	18.7	22	20	17.8
Bulgaria	24	18	15.4	16	15	15.0
Yugoslavia	(24)	20	16.9	16	15	14.1
Relevant comparators						
Ireland	17	14	12	9	7	7.3
Portugal	20	19	17.2 (a)	-	14	-
Spain	23	19	16.3 (a)	16	13	-
Greece	-	16	16.9 (a)	-	14	12.2
Italy	20	16	13.7 (a)	15	12	-
France	18	17	15.5	13	10	7.0
Germany	16	12	11.3	18	10	6.4
Japan	21	19	-	15	14	-

(a) 1933

Sources: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen, 1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), p. 225; Brian Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics* (London: Macmillan, 1975); and Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Balkan States: 1. Economic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 134.

TABLE 9.9 Estimates of rural "surplus population" (% of rural population), by country, c. 1930

	Wilbert Moore	Nicholas Spulber
Czechoslovakia	11.7	13
Hungary	2.9	18
Poland	29.4	24
Romania	23.1	20
Bulgaria	35.7	28
Yugoslavia	38.8	35

Sources: Wilbert E. Moore, *Economic Demography of Eastern and Southern Europe* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1945), pp. 71–72; for Nicholas Spulber's estimates, George D. Jackson Jr., *Comintern and Peasant in East Europe, 1919–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966, p. 13).

TABLE 9.10 Grain and potato output per inhabitant (grain equivalent, kg. per year)

	1909–1913	1934–1938	1948–1952
Czechoslovakia	-	511	553
Poland	-	607	782
Hungary	6650	720	653
Bulgaria	545	503	470
Romania	880	571	387
Yugoslavia	469(a)	542	405
Albania	-	(175)	199
East Central Europe	605	586	553
Relevant comparators			
Southern Europe	276	292	235
Russia/USSR	555	520	549
Portugal	-	214	201
Spain	400	410(b)	293
Greece	-	200	219
Italy	274	285	250
Eire	633	522	620
France	514	465	417
Germany	595	556	322 (West), 497 (East)
Denmark	852	604	1065
Japan	270	246	224

Source: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen,1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), p. 250.
(a) Serbia (b) 1931–35

Admittedly, many peasants, especially farm laborers, largely or completely missed out on these rising consumption standards. The impoverished peasantry in Galicia (formerly Austrian Poland) suffered acute Malthusian population pressures on their meager landholdings. Prior to the radical land redistribution in 1919–1921, much of Romania's rapidly expanding population (82% of whom were peasants in 1912) were ruthlessly exploited by rapacious tax collectors, traders, moneylenders, and *arendaşi* (intermediaries between the big landlords, who owned nearly half the land, and their increasingly impoverished and mal-nourished tenants). Malthusian population pressures, combined with the above-mentioned rapacity of the *arendaşi*, tax collectors, traders, and moneylenders, fueled major Romanian peasant rebellions in 1888 and 1907, the brutal sup-pression of which resulted in approximately 1,000 and 11,000 peasant deaths, respectively.[4] In 1910, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855–1920), a Ukrai-nian-born Jew (original name: Solomon Katz), who had moved to Romania after being exiled to a Tsarist penal colony on the White Sea and went on to

TABLE 9.11 Grain and potatoes as percentages of total human calorie intake (by country), mid-1930s and mid-1960s

	Mid-1930s	Mid-1960s
Czechoslovakia	55	48
Poland	71	52
Hungary	70	49
Bulgaria	76	64
Romania	72	65
Yugoslavia	75	64
Albania	-	68
Relevant comparators		
USSR	76	57
Portugal	60	63
Spain	57(early 1930s)	46
Greece	61	50
Italy	65	47
Eire	50	37
France	51	34
Denmark	33	28
Japan	76	64

Source: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen,1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), p. 247.

become the most prominent Marxist in pre-1914 Romania, aptly characterized the agricultural system in 1880s–1900s Romania as "neo-serfdom" in an influential book entitled *Neoiobăgia: Studiu economico-sociologic al problemei noastre agrare* (*Neo-Serfdom: A Social and Economic Study of Our Agrarian Problem*). (Dobrogeanu-Gherea's ideas are incisively presented and analyzed by Joseph Love.[5]) In addition, many relatively remote mountainous areas had suffered from several centuries of environmental degradation, due to endemic overgrazing by sheep and goats, deforestation, soil erosion, and rural depopulation, especially in the Balkans and Ruthenia. Such factors had contributed to large waves of East Central European emigration to North America from the 1880s to the early 1920s.

Nevertheless, such pockets of severe poverty remained the exception rather than the rule. The highlands were relatively sparsely populated. Most East Central European peasants lived in the more fertile and commercially integrated lowland areas that, between the 1860s and the late 1930s, underwent considerable intensification of agriculture. On average, therefore, East Central European per capita livestock holdings and per capita output of staple foods remained comparatively high and stable (see Tables 9.6, 9.10, 9.12, and 9.13).

TABLE 9.12 Livestock holdings per 100 inhabitants (by region), 1913–1939

		Cattle	Sheep and goats	Pigs	Horses	Asses and mules
Eastern Europe	1913	32	48	21	10	-
	1927	29	43	20	10	-
	1939	28	41	21	10	-
Relevant comparators						
Southern Europe	1913	16	74	10	3	5.4
	1927	17	69	13	3	5.9
	1939	16	64	14	2	4.9
Europe	1913	29	45	21	6	-
(without	1927	28	40	20	6	-
Russia/USSR)						
	1939	27	37	21	6	-
Russia/USSR	1916	43	84	15	23	-
	1927	46	91	16	21	-
	1938	38	61	19	11	-

Source: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen,1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), pp. 254–255.

The "Green Rising": the rise of East Central European peasant parties, 1900s–1930s

The proletariat was not the only "rising class" in post-1917 Europe. From Ireland to the Urals, there was also a great groundswell of peasant parties and movements, which was aptly named the "Green Rising."[6] Numerous "accelerators" were at work: the so-called "national awakenings" of self-consciously peasant nations in Ireland, Scandinavia, East Central Europe, Russia's "Baltic Provinces," and Ukraine; the pivotal roles of the peasantry in the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917; the growing politicization of peasantries during and after the Great War; the spate of radical land reforms in East Central Europe, Russia, and the Baltic Littoral between 1917 and 1925; the intensification of electoral competition between rival political parties; and the potent international appeal of Russian agrarian socialism (the latter mainly among Slavs and Romanians).

During the 1890s and 1900s major peasant-based mass movements and parties emerged in Austrian Poland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, and Romania, and also in the Russian Empire, Scandinavia, Ireland, France, and Southern Europe. In 1907, a huge peasant revolt erupted in Romania, partly inspired by the massive peasant revolts that had occurred in the Russian Empire in 1905–1906.[7]

TABLE 9.13 Domestic availability of livestock products (kg. per person, by country), 1934–1938

	Meat (including offal)	Fish	Milk (including milk products; milk equivalent)
Czechoslovakia	33	5	150
Poland	26	4	120
Hungary	36*	1	152
Bulgaria	22	1	120
Romania	18	2	125
Yugoslavia	23	0.3	120
Relevant comparators			
Portugal	23	30	70
Spain	28	25	70
Greece	20	10	75
Italy	20	8	88
Eire	55	6	229
France	52	11	154
Germany	51	12	160
Denmark	75	18	249
Japan	4	35	9

Source: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen, 1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), pp. 256–258.
* Excluding offal

From 1906 to 1914, inspired in part by the trailblazing development of farmers' cooperative networks in Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Germany in the 1880s and 1890s, peasant cooperatives experienced mushroom growth in most of Europe's peasant societies. By 1914, substantial proportions of Czech, Polish, Bulgarian, Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, and Romanian peasant households were members of cooperatives (see Table 9.16).[8]

The rise of East Central Europe's peasant parties was part of a broader gradual emergence of *mass parties* right across Europe between the 1880s and the 1920s, mainly in response to gradual extensions of the right to vote in elections to national and local representative institutions. These expansions of the franchise culminated in the introduction of either universal adult suffrage or at least universal adult male suffrage across most of Europe after World War One, largely as a result of government promises to the many millions of Europeans who had served in armed forces and/or participated on "the home front" during that "total war."

The expansion and mobilization of mass parties was being further reinforced by the strong (albeit erratic) growth of national and class consciousness, ethnic and

class conflict, and dramatic increases in educational provision and adult and teen-age literacy (see Table 9.14). Indeed, it was almost inevitable that the widespread adoption and gradual implementation of compulsory elementary schooling and the widespread development of cooperative societies and networks from the late nineteenth century onward, followed by the widespread adoption of universal adult or adult male suffrage in post-1917 Europe, would disproportionately stimulate the political consciousness and mobilization of the peasantry. As the hitherto least conscious and least politicized social order, which was being transformed into a social class,[9] Europe's peasantries stood to gain the most from these develop-ments – precisely because they were starting from exceptionally low bases, yet still far outnumbered the much more developed "middle class"/bourgeoisie and the more easily organized urban "working class"/proletariat.

TABLE 9.14 Educational enrolments and adult literacy rates (% of total population)

	In schools	*In higher ed.*					*Literacy rates*
	c. 1887	c. 1914	c. 1928	c. 1938	c. 1914	c. 1938	c. 1939
Czechoslo-vakia	-	16*	16	17	-	0.17	96
Poland	-	12*	14	14	-	0.14	80
Hungary	12	14	16	11	0.06	0.11	93
Bulgaria	9	14	12	16	0.05	0.16	70
Romania	2	10	12	14	0.08	0.13	(65)
Yugoslavia	(3)	8*	10	10	-	0.10	(60)
Albania	-	-	-	7	-	0.04	(15)
Relevant comparators							
Russia/ USSR	3	6	12	18	0.08	0.42	87
Eire	12	16	18	17	-	0.18	90
Portugal	5	5*	6	7	0.02	0.09	52
Spain	11	9	11	11**	0.10	0.21	75
Greece	6	13*	12	15	0.04	0.11	65
Italy	11	11	11	14	0.08	0.19	80
France	15	15	11	17	0.11	0.13	96
Japan	7	13	13	17	0.02	0.23	(90)

Source: Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development* (London: Methuen, 1985; 2nd edition, Routledge, 2014), p. 227.
*1922 **1935

Peasants were emerging as a conscious class with specific social, economic, and political interests and aspirations. These were often articulated on behalf of the peasantry by members of the intelligentsia. Liberal and Marxist critics have often portrayed this as a particular weakness or deficiency of peasant parties, but it mirrored the similarly prominent roles of members of the intelligentsia in articulating the social, economic, and political interests and aspirations of the bourgeoisie and urban workers. The very gradual dissolution of serfdom in Eastern Europe between the 1780s and the 1870s, the slowly increasing availability of rural schooling, growing contact with the slowly expanding ranks of the rural intelligentsia (including village teachers, doctors, and local government personnel) and the rural industrial proletariat (often railway workers and miners), the eye-opening experiences provided by increasingly universal military service and occasional employment in the towns, the widening of peasant horizons by expanding transport systems and national market integration, and the growing awareness and resentment of the persistence of long-standing peasant disadvantages as well as new ones that were being generated by the development of capitalism, gradually "awakened" peasants to the growing need to defend their interests and organize themselves politically and economically in Europe's increasingly open and competitive economic and political environments.

Peasantist movements were also reaping the harvest of the momentous nineteenth-century romantic, folkloristic, ethnographic, philological, "völkisch" and Slavophile "rediscoveries" or "reinventions" of vernacular peasant cultures. These had begun to bridge the chasms that had largely divorced elite culture(s) from popular culture(s), especially since the Enlightenment.[10] Interwar East Central Europe experienced a Russian-style "movement to the people" by so-called "village-explorers," ethnographers, agronomists, folklorists, and composer-ethnomusicologists – notably Béla Bartók (1881–1945), Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967), and George Enescu (1881–1955). There was also a corresponding change in peasant attitudes to rural clergy, village schoolteachers, and intellectuals. "The village now wanted service, not direction, and priests and teachers could retain their influence only in so far as they helped their villagers to work out their problems in their own way."[11] All of this went hand-in-hand with the rise of vernacular languages and literatures in long-submerged peasant nations or proto-nations (Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Finnish, Ukrainian, Czech, Slovak, Croat, Serb, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Albanian, Slovene, Macedonian, and Irish). These linguistic-literary "revivals" helped to shift the rural balance of power in favor of the hitherto downtrodden peasantries and to throw the alien landed elites onto the defensive.

The growth of industry and towns and the steady extension of education and cheap transport, far from "de-peasantizing" the countryside (as was anticipated by early Marxists), had expanded the scope and the rewards for

TABLE 9.15 Parliamentary representation of East European peasant parties

Percentage shares of votes cast in parliamentary elections

Poland

	February 1919	November 1922	March 1928	November 1930
PSL Piast	8.1	13.7	8.0	
PSL Wyzwolenie	18.5	13.0	14.7 (including the Stronnictwo Chlopskie)	
Piast + Wyzwolenie + Stronnictwo Chlopskie				17.3

Czechoslovakia

		April 1920	November 1925	October 1929	May 1935
Czech Agrarian Party	Cz. and Sl. Agrarian Party	9.7	13.7	15.0	14.3
Slovak Agrarian Party	German + Magyar Farmers Party	3.9	8.0	5.4	3.6
German Farmers Party	(Slovak People's Party)	3.9	(6.9)	(5.7)	(6.9) (a)

(a) includes allies

Yugoslavia

	November 1920	March 1923	February 1925	September 1927
Croatian Peasant Party	14.3	21.8	22.3	15.8
Serb & Slovene Agrarian Party	9.4	7.6	4.8 (b)	5.9 (b)
Slovene People's Party + Croat Clerical Party	7.0	5.8	5.0(c)	5.9 (c)

(b) Serbs only; (c) Slovenes only

Romania				
National Peasants' Party	December 1928	78	December 1937 (rigged election)	20.4
Bulgaria	August 1919	March 1920	June 1931	
Agrarian Union (d) % of seats	31.0	38.2	26.6 (d)	Peasant Union
Hungary		Share of parliamentary seats (%)		
(Independent Smallholders Party)		April 1935	May 1939	
		(10.2)	14	

Source: Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Wars*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974, pp. 47, 49, 63, 65, 69; 102, 110, 116, 126; 174, 181; 215, 219, 223, 229; 301, 310; 334, 335, 340, 346; 174, 181.

intensive small-scale livestock-rearing, dairy farming, horticulture, viticulture, and arboriculture. As emphasized from 1898 onward by Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), the pioneer of "revisionist" Marxism, major trends in the development of capitalism were granting new leases of life to increasingly commercialized and intensified peasant smallholder agriculture and some crafts, thereby shrinking the large "reserve armies" of cheap, vulnerable, and therefore largely docile labor on which the expansion and profitability of large-scale agriculture had depended.[12] The European farms that were most severely squeezed by the large decline in international grain prices between 1873 and the late 1890s were the large estates that depended on abundant supplies of cheap wage labor to produce grain on a large scale for international markets. This was encouraging the landlord classes in European Russia and parts of Eastern and Southern Europe to sell off or lease land to the peasantry and/or intermediaries (such as the notoriously exploitative Romanian *arendaşi*) at accelerating rates between the 1870s and 1914. The differential impact of World War One on different categories of farmers further intensified the relative decline of the Russian and East Central European landlord classes. Those peasant households that grew mainly food crops to meet their own households' needs (using their own unwaged family labor) were less adversely affected by declining grain prices, while the poorest rural households that were normally net purchasers of grain actually benefited from falling grain prices.[13]

Alexander Chayanov (1888–1937), the outstanding Russian theorist of the peasant mode of production, cogently argued in the 1920s that profit-maximizing and profit-oriented theories of economic behavior (which presupposed the existence of clearly identifiable and quantifiable distinctions between rent, interest, wages, and profit) were inapplicable to peasant farms and other enterprises that were wholly or largely reliant on unwaged family labor. In the early twentieth century, such farms (which he aptly referred to as "family labor farms") comprised c. 80%, 90%, and over 65% of the agrarian workforce in East Central Europe, Russia, and Southern Europe, respectively (see Tables 9.2, 9.4, and 9.5).[14] In capitalist enterprises based on wage labor, the variable factors (resources) that entrepreneurs sought to combine in ways that would maximize returns on the capital employed were land and labor. But within "family labor farms", in Chayanov's view, land, capital, and outside earnings were the variable factors that household heads would rationally try to combine in ways that would most effectively meet their families' consumption and saving needs using the family labor at their disposal, which was largely determined by family size, age structure, and (at the margin) by subjective trade-offs between additional household income and additional leisure. Moreover, because hired agricultural laborers had little incentive or motivation to undertake work or initiatives beyond what was required and enforced by their employers or overseers, farms based on hired labor incurred considerable supervision and managerial costs that did not arise among more self-reliant,

motivated, and flexible smallholders who could reap more fully the fruits of their own labor. Such considerations largely explained (i) why peasant farms wholly or largely reliant on unwaged family labor often found it worthwhile to engage in activities that entrepreneurs running capitalist farms would have found unprofitable; (ii) the relative "tenacity" of peasant farmers during periods when the prices of staple agricultural products were falling or depressed, most conspicuously from 1873 to 1896 (and again in the 1930s); and (iii) why in some areas (especially the Russian Empire, but also parts of East Central Europe) the peasants were not merely holding their own but steadily gaining ground relative to the large landed estates.[15] In contrast to *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899) by Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924), Chayanov also crucially argued that the characteristic life cycles of peasant households, the various tendencies for prosperous peasant households to break up (often as a result of unexpected deaths, or because some household members decided to set up farms or households of their own), and the tendencies for the poorest and richest peasants to move to towns, all helped to promote relative socioeconomic homogeneity within peasantries (rather than cumulative class differentiation within peasantries, as argued by Lenin).

East Central European peasant parties and movements

The major peasant parties and movements in interwar East Central Europe saw themselves as collective participants in shared struggles to replace societies dominated by the powerful vertical hierarchies integral to capitalism and "feudal" landlordism with more democratic and egalitarian societies that would generate greater space, roles, empowerment, and equality of opportunity for independent peasant proprietors. Peasantries were also increasingly *concerting* their activities and/or pooling resources *voluntarily* (i.e., not as a result of capitalist or communist coercion) in credit, marketing, and food-processing cooperatives. The "natural" class-based constituency for peasant parties and "peasantist" programs was still considerably larger than the class-based constituencies for liberalism and orthodox Marxism (whether social democratic or communist). However, all of these class-based movements and ideologies faced mounting competition from nationalist and fascist mass movements that were successfully appealing to people in all social classes. Most of East Central Europe's peasant parties saw and presented themselves as radical left-of-center parties, although almost all believed that land should belong to those that tilled it and therefore tended to be somewhat wary of socialist and communist parties. In addition, there were substantial parties that combined strong pro-peasant orientations with strong Roman Catholic ecclesiastical influence and/or leadership – very effectively in Slovenia and Croatia and rather less effectively in Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. However, coming under serious threat in 1918–1919, landed oligarchies successfully reestablished hegemonic dominance over government and the rural sector under Admiral Horthy's

counterrevolutionary regime in Hungary (1920–1944), under the increasingly reactionary and authoritarian *Sanacja* ("Regeneration" or "Purification") regime in Poland (1926–1939), and under the repressive regimes headed by Ahmet Zogolli (from 1928 "King Zog") in Albania (1922–1924 and 1925–1939). Even in Poland and Hungary, however, the hitherto relatively divided and ineffectual peasant parties eventually united (in 1931 and 1939 respectively) in support of more radical peasantist programs, which began to lay the foundations for their very short-lived political victories in these two countries in 1946–1947, prior to the forcible imposition of communist rule.

Bulgaria was the archetypal East Central European peasant society. It produced a peasant party that became paradigmatic for the region. When Bulgaria gained autonomy in 1878 (after almost five centuries of Ottoman control), there was a radical redistribution of landholdings from (mostly Muslim) Turkic landlords to the largely Bulgarian peasantry.[16] The Bulgarian national *vŭzrazhdane* ("renaissance") had been spearheaded by grassroots movements that promoted Eastern Orthodox Church schools, which assiduously promoted Bulgarian language, literature, history, and national consciousness among ethnic Bulgarian peasants as well as townspeople.[17] The long-enduring constitution adopted in 1879 enfranchised all (sane) males over the age of 21 and committed the nascent Bulgarian state to universal provision of elementary schooling. These provisions were intended to empower the peasantry and in some respects this was achieved, as reported in Edward Dicey's aptly named book, *The Peasant State: An Account of Bulgaria in 1894*.[18] Nevertheless, increasingly burdensome excise and land taxes and pervasive corruption, clientelism, and racketeering generated mounting peasant unrest during the 1890s. This resulted in the establishment of 250 local peasant organizations between 1896 and 1899 and culminated in the establishment of a nationwide Bulgarian Agrarian Union (BAU) as a loose federated occupational organization (resembling trade unions) in 1899–1900.[19] After winning 23 seats in the 1901 parliamentary election, the BAU was reorganized as a more centralized and disciplined political party and renamed the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU).[20] After failing to win any seats in the 1903 parliamentary election, from 1904 to 1907 BANU regrouped and developed a more comprehensive program under the growing influence of Aleksandar Stamboliyski (1879–1923). With Stamboliyski as leader, BANU received 11% of the votes cast in the 1908 parliamentary election and again won 23 seats. Thenceforth, Stamboliyski acted as "the people's tribune" and the chief critic of the rampant corruption, cronyism, trafficking, and militarism that beset Bulgarian society under Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, a German prince who was adopted as the prince of formally autonomous Bulgaria in 1887 and had himself proclaimed king of Bulgaria in 1908. Stamboliyski campaigned vociferously for a republic, female suffrage, full civil liberties for all citizens, proportional representation, regional and local autonomy, election of officials, a progressive income tax, further redistribution of land, the imposition of limits on the

maximum size of landholdings, a ban on usury, increased public spending on rural education, health care, and cooperatives, abolition of the state monopolies on the sale of salt, matches, and other necessities, and large reductions in spending on the military, the monarchy, the civil bureaucracy, and subsidies to big industrialists.[21] Stamboliyski was also the leading critic of Bulgaria's participation in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 and World War One and of the deplorable ways these wars were conducted; he was imprisoned for having spoken out. When it became obvious to all that Bulgaria's participation in these wars had been recipes for disaster, King Ferdinand was ousted and the way was cleared for Stamboliyski to become prime minister. Yet even then he waited until he and his party could do so on his own terms.

Sadly, in view of this long "high principled" build-up, Stamboliyski's Peasant Union government (which ruled from October 1919 to June 1923, initially in coalition with others) became the major exception to the moderate, democratic, and non-violent precepts and orientations of most of the peasant parties in interwar East Central Europe. Stamboliyski regarded "the city" and its inhabitants as "sinful and parasitical," and his actions "often degenerated into a brutal … externalization of hitherto frustrated peasant resentments."[22] His fascistic paramilitary Orange Guard became the scourge of the urban bourgeoisie and other political opponents and rivals, while he appeared "less interested in benefiting the peasants than in harassing the other classes."[23] Stamboliyski and many of his active supporters were killed in 1923, in the course of a military coup that was actively supported by a vengeful urban bourgeoisie and ultranationalists. The only substantial achievements of the Stambolyski regime were a very egalitarian land reform (partially reversed by his successors in 1924); a more enduring expansion of rural education, cooperatives and credit facilities; an enduring system of compulsory national labor service (in place of military service); and the displacement of private grain merchants by a state grain corporation, although this proved to be a very mixed blessing.

Stamboliyski perpetrated his excesses in the name of a peasantry that comprised approximately 75% of the population. However, even though the 1920 and 1923 elections were marred by widespread Orange Guard violence and intimidation, his Peasant Union actually obtained only 31%, 38%, and 52% of the votes cast in the 1919, 1920, and 1923 parliamentary elections, respectively.[24] Clearly, large parts of the Bulgarian peasantry did *not* support Stamboliyski. Moreover, for a time his excesses damaged the reputation of East European peasantism. The whole sorry affair was a demonstration of the dangers of basing political movements on class hatred and megalomania, rather than a discredit to the peasantry per se.

The Czechoslovak Agrarian Party, commonly known as the *agrárníci* (the "agrarians"), grew out of the 1905 union of the Czech Agrarian Party (founded in Bohemia in 1899) with the Czech Agrarian Party for Moravia and Silesia (founded in Moravia in 1904). This became the largest Czech party in the elections to the Austrian parliament held in 1907 and 1911. Renamed the

Republican Party of the Czechoslovak Countryside in 1919, it was joined by many members of the Slovak National and Peasant Party in 1922. The peasant-oriented moderate centrist Agrarians won 9.7% of the votes in the 1920 parliamentary election, 13.7% of the votes in the 1925 parliamentary election, 15% of the votes in the 1930 parliamentary election, and 14.3% of the votes in the 1935 parliamentary election. This made it the largest party in every Czechoslovak parliament, and the leading partner in every Czechoslovak government, from April 1920 to September 1938. Indeed, the Agrarians became "so strongly organized, so deeply entrenched in the provincial and local government apparatus, so thoroughly involved in the co-operative and banking systems" that they became the quintessential party of government, "indispensable to any and every cabinet coalition," without selling out their predominantly peasant clientele.[25] From 1919 to 1933, the Agrarians were led by Antonin Švehla (1873–1933), who insisted that the party should represent all sections of the rural population (from smallholders and artisans to big landlords) under the slogan: "The countryside – one family." Švehla, who served three full terms as prime minister, led the five-party cartel that dominated Czechoslovak politics. After Švehla's death in 1933, Rudolf Beran (1887–1954) was elected leader. However, the most dynamic and interesting Agrarian was the pro-peasant Slovak federalist Milan Hodža (1878–1944), who first emerged as a champion of Slovak agrarianism while he was deputy leader of the Slovak National Party before World War One. In 1921 he co-founded the International Agrarian Bureau ("the Green International"), headquartered in Prague. As prime minister of Czechoslovakia from 1935 to 1938, he was a leading proponent of collective security, the federalization of Czechoslovakia, and a federation of East Central European states to resist fascist encroachments. He resigned and went into exile following the treacherous betrayal of Czechoslovakia by Britain, France, and Italy at Munich in September 1938, but continued to promote East Central European peasant parties and a federation of East Central European states.[26] However, Rudolf Beran, who leaned to the right and served as prime minister in 1938–1939, brought the Agrarians into some disrepute by acquiescing in the further dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by the Third Reich.

The Agrarians were largely a Czech party. The development of a specifically Slovak peasant party was inhibited both by the decision of many peasant-oriented members of the Slovak National and Peasant Party to join the mainly Czech Agrarians in 1922, and by the relative dominance maintained in Slovakia (from the 1925 parliamentary election onward) by the conservative nationalist Slovak People's Party, founded and led from 1913 to 1938 by the Roman Catholic priest Father Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938). This party's share of the votes cast in parliamentary elections was 34.3% in 1925 and 28.3% in 1929, and its "autonomist" alliance with the smaller Slovak National Party obtained a 30.1% share in 1935. The Agrarians (Slovakia's second largest party) obtained only 17.4%, 19.5%, and 17.6% of the votes cast, respectively, in the same three parliamentary elections, even though

Slovakia remained a largely peasant society.[27] The Agrarians' support in Slovakia was partly limited by their perceived dependence upon (and, hence, subservience to) the Czechs and Prague.[28]

Until 1928, interwar Romania was dominated by the National Liberal Party, which was committed to highly corrupt forms of oligarchy and economic nationalism, designed to inflate the profits of Romanian industrialists by protecting them from foreign competition and to bring Romania's extractive industries (especially oil) under the control of Romanian investors (so-called "nostrification"). Its main slogan was "By ourselves alone." These policies alienated Romania's main foreign investors and trading partners, who, in retaliation, conducted damaging commercial and financial boycotts against Romania. However, the National Peasant Party (the NPP, formed by a merger between the Peasant Party and the Romanian Nationalist Party in Transylvania in 1926) won 77.8% of the votes cast and 348 of the 387 seats in the December 1928 parliamentary election, which was one of the freest in Romania's modern history.[29] The NPP election platform aroused great hopes of a new era of increased justice and prosperity for the Romanian peasantry, by promising to curtail the corruption, peculation, extortion, and protectionism that had enriched industrialists, officials, and intermediaries to the detriment of most of the population (especially the peasantry) under the preceding National Liberal Party governments, to reduce spending on the military and the bloated civil bureaucracy, and to foster rapid further expansion of rural education, health care, extension services, and peasant cooperatives.[30]

NPP thinking was influenced by the Russian peasant-oriented agrarian socialism, commonly referred to as "populism," which was promoted in Romania by Constantin Stere (1865–1936).[31] Stere was born into a landlord family in Russian-ruled Bessarabia (now Moldova), but was arrested and deported to Siberia for engaging in nationalist agitation. After escaping from Siberia, Stere went to Romania, where he became a professor of law and later rector of Romania's first university in Jassy. From 1893 onward, Stere was also a vigorous promoter of ideas developed by Russia's agrarian socialists, commonly known as *narodnichestvo* or "populism," albeit adapted to Romanian circumstances. In a series of articles entitled "Social Democracy or Populism," published in his own Jassy-based monthly journal *Viaţa Românească* in 1908, Stere argued that it was irrational for a poor, capital-deficient peasant society such as Romania to try to develop large-scale capitalist industries in competition with those of already well-established capitalist industrial powers. He accepted that capitalism had already penetrated Romania (including its agriculture and craft industries) and believed that the world had become divided into a highly developed capitalist core and a poor and dependent periphery (anticipating the core-periphery theories and theories of "unequal exchange" developed later by Latin American "structuralists" and "dependency theorists"). He contended that these developments were further impoverishing the rural populations in the world's agrarian peripheries, which were increasingly dependent on the production of primary commodities for export to the more

industrialized capitalist countries, and that the only viable and moderately promising way out of this poverty trap was to redistribute the large landed estates among the peasantry and to promote state-supported enhancement of education, infrastructural development, and intensification of peasant agriculture.[32]

In interwar Yugoslavia, initially constituted as the triune Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, strong peasant-oriented parties and movements had already emerged among the Croats and Slovenes while they were still under Austrian rule. However, these parties made only very limited inroads into the Serbian nationalist stranglehold on central government, although they managed to establish significant de facto local autonomy for their predominantly Croatian and Slovene peasant constituencies, amid obdurate Serb dominance of the increasingly centralized Yugoslav state.

A Croatian People's Peasant Party (the HPSS) was founded in 1904 by Dr. Antun Radić (1868–1919), a philologist and pioneer of Croatian ethnography, and his younger brother Stjepan Radić (1871–1928). The HPSS aspired to autonomy for Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia within the Habsburg Empire, which it sought to transform into a tripartite Austrian–Hungarian–Slav state. In 1918–1920, led by the charismatic but mercurial and unpredictable Stjepan Radić and his younger brother Pavle Radić (1880–1928), the HPSS campaigned for the creation of a democratic and decentralized confederal Yugoslavia. In February 1919 the HPSS leaders drafted a petition to the Paris Peace Conference, seeking international support for "a neutral Croat peasant republic."[33] Moreover, Stjepan Radić "understood the concerns of the peasantry and made their concerns his concerns."[34] The HPSS won 58 Croatian seats in the 1920 parliamentary election, making it the second largest party in the triune kingdom's parliament. The party then renamed itself the Croatian Republican People's Party (the HRSS), advocating extensive autonomy within the triune kingdom and the establishment of a republic of Croatia. In 1927, the party softened its stance and became the Croatian Peasant Party (the HSS), aspiring to rule in coalition with either of the two dominant Serbian parties. But in 1928 both Stjepan and Pavle Radić died of gun wounds inflicted by a Serbian radical ultranationalist in the Belgrade parliament chamber. Stjepan Radić's potent and unrelenting criticism of Serb dominance within the triune kingdom (based on the Serbian Radical Party, the Serb monarchy, and Serb dominance of the army and the police) resulted in his being widely regarded as a "tribune of the people" – and not just among Croats. As the Montenegrin communist-turned-dissident Milovan Djilas (1911–1995) put it: "Radić, though only the leader of the Croatian peasantry, appeared as the vigilant conscience of the entire country," while his death turned him "into a martyr for liberty in the eyes of all honest people."[35]

Stjepan Radić and the Croatian Peasant Party drew much inspiration from a book by Rudolf Herceg (1887–1951), entitled *Die Ideologie der kroatischen Bauernbewegung* (*The Ideology of the Croatian Peasant Movement*, Zagreb: Verlag Rudolf Herceg und Gnossen, published in 1923). Like Marx, Herceg

argued that all history was the history of class struggle. Unlike Marx, he saw the peasantry as the class most able to establish just and humane government, because "the peasant's way of life engendered a desire for all progressive measures."[36] Stjepan Radić's brief and ill-considered affiliation with the Soviet-sponsored Krestintern ("Peasant International") in 1924 and his successive ill-starred coalition pacts with the Serbian nationalist Radical Party in 1925–1926 caused some confusion and loss of support within his own constituency.[37] Nevertheless, after Stjepan Radić's death, the HSS remained by far the largest party in Croatia and Dalmatia under the more stable and pragmatic leadership of Dr. Vladimir "Vladko" Maček (1879–1964), who negotiated extensive regional autonomy for Croatia in 1938. However, this privileged and asymmetrical bilateral deal (exclusively for Croatia) aroused resentment among Yugoslavia's other nationality groups (including some Serbs), who felt "sold out" by their erstwhile ally in joint campaigns for a federalized Yugoslavia. In the meantime, discontented Croatian nationalists found a home in Fascist Italy, collaborated in the assassination of King Aleksandar in Marseilles in October 1934, and, when Axis troops dismembered Yugoslavia in April 1941, returned to Croatia to set up the quisling "Independent State of Croatia."

The conservative and strongly Roman Catholic Slovene People's Party was consistently the largest party in interwar Slovenia. It grew out of a successful Christian social movement and a network of peasant cooperatives and credit unions (modeled on the German Raiffeisen banks), organized by the energetic Catholic priest Dr. Janez Evangelist Krek (1865–1917).[38] Throughout the interwar era, ably led by Dr. Krek's disciple Dr. Anton Korošec (1872–1940), this right-wing, Church-dominated party remained remarkably successful in consciously educating Slovene peasants to pursue and defend their own interests by increasingly effective and collaborative means, through the party's affiliated networks of credit and marketing cooperatives and other affiliated associations.[39] These successes preempted the development of more left-leaning peasant parties in interwar Slovenia.

A Serbian Agrarian League was founded and led from 1919 to 1923 by Mihailo Avramović, who "had distinguished himself as an organizer of cooperative activities."[40] Led by Jovan Jovanović Pižon from 1923 to 1939 and Branko Čubrilović from 1939 to 1945, it continued to prioritize practical work among peasants and cooperatives, but made no significant inroads into the hold of the Serbian nationalist Radical Party and the Democratic Party on the political loyalties of the Serbian peasantry. A more radical National Peasant Party was established by Dragoljub Jovanović (1895–1977) during the 1930s, but it too failed to weaken the grip of the Radical Party and Democratic Party duopoly.

Turning to Poland, an electorally significant and peasant-oriented People's Party (Stronnictwo Ludowe), led by Bolesław Wysłouch (1855–1937), was established in Galicia (the Austrian-ruled sector of partitioned Poland) in 1895, in order to politically mobilize and represent the relatively impoverished peasantry of Galicia. Renamed the Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo

Ludowe, or PSL) in 1903, it came to be led by Jakub Bojko (1857–1945) and Jan Stapiński (1867–1946).[41] However, this party underwent a damaging split in 1913 and was superseded by two mutually mistrustful parties – the Polish People's Party "Piast" (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe "Piast," founded in 1914), and the Polish People's Party "Wyzwolenie" (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe "Wyzwolenie" ["Liberation"] founded in 1915). These two main peasant-oriented parties played prominent roles in Poland's "First Republic" (1919–1926). The smaller but more radical PSL "Wyzwolenie" (most of whose deputies represented formerly Russian-ruled areas) was led by Stanis-ław Thugutt (1873–1941), who served as Poland's minister of internal affairs in 1918–1919 and as deputy prime minister in 1924–1925, before backing a coup d'état headed by the charismatic, nominally "socialist", but increasingly conservative Polish statesman Marshal Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935) in May 1926. The PSL "Piast," the larger but more conservative of these two parties, drew its main support from formerly Austrian-ruled areas and was led by Wincenty Witos (1874–1945). Witos, who became a pivotal political broker, served as prime minister in 1920–1921, in 1923, and from 10 to 12 May 1926 (only to be overthrown by Piłsudski). These parties were formally reunited from 1920 to 1923, but the reunion was very querulous and quickly broke down. In 1925 there was a substantial secession from PSL "Wyzwolenie," which was evolving into an anti-clerical bourgeois liberal party, to form a more authentic Peasant Party (Stronnicko Chlopskie).[42] These divisions and the resurgent hegemony of the Polish nobility over Polish politics and public life seriously obstructed effective political mobilization and representation of the Polish peasantry. Indeed, the limitations of the land reforms enacted in 1920 and 1925 "can be linked to the failure of populist parties to become the leading parties in the 1st Republic."[43] After Piłsudski's coup on 12 May 1926, political power was monopolized by his increasingly right-wing and author-itarian *Sanacja* ("Regeneration"/"Purification") regime until September 1939, when Poland was carved up between Germany and the Soviet Union. In 1931 "all the politically active peasant groups united in a single Peasant Party," which (from 1931 to 1937) orchestrated major peasant demonstrations (espe-cially on Whitsun holidays) and a series of peasant "strikes" (boycotts, refu-sals to buy from or sell to the towns) and standoffs with the authorities, demanding the restoration of parliamentary democracy and (from 1935) "expropriation of the large estates without compensation for their owners."[44] By then, however, the repressive capabilities and reflexes of the *Sanacja* regime and the Polish nobility were strongly entrenched. Full political revival of the reunified Peasant Party was delayed until 1945–1946, only to be nipped in the bud by Soviet *force majeure* in 1946–1947.

Peasant movements did emerge in the Kingdom of Hungary from the late 1890s to 1914. However, they were weakened by endemic divisions between radical proponents of expropriation of landlord estates (as advocated by Sanodia Csizma in 1896), and supporters of more gradual, piecemeal reform

advocated by István Szabó de Nagyatád (1863–1924), who founded a National Smallholders and Agrarian Workers Party in 1920. The counterrevolutionary authoritarian regime headed by Admiral (Regent) Miklós Horthy (1868–1957) from 1919 to 1944 bought off the ineffectual Smallholders' Party and its mostly prosperous supporters with "vague promises of eventual land reform."[45] The Horthy regime then continually dragged its feet and enacted only a very meager redistribution of land. Subsequent attempts to revive Hungarian peasant radicalism (particularly during the 1930s) were hobbled by memories of the ferocious White Terror that followed the defeat of the short-lived national Bolshevik revolution headed by Béla Kun (1886–1938) in 1919, by the ensuing reestablishment of landlord hegemony over Hungarian society and politics, and by de facto disenfranchisement of the peasantry.[46]

The relationship of the peasant parties of interwar East Central Europe to so-called "populism" and "neo-populism"

Before proceeding further, we need to clarify the relationship of the peasant parties considered in this chapter to the increasingly disparate phenomena categorized as "populism" or "neo-populism," since these parties and their ideas and policies are widely referred to as "populist" or "neo-populist." On the whole, for reasons discussed more fully elsewhere, these terms are much too problematic and open to misunderstanding and misuse to be analytically useful.[47] This chapter therefore makes the least possible use of these terms, and then only within quotation marks.

One of the first major uses of the labels "populism" and "populist" was as strongly pejorative umbrella terms for the peasant-oriented agrarian socialist movements and ideologies that emerged in late tsarist Russia – most notably in seminal early writings by Russian Marxists, led by Piotr Struve (1870–1944) and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924).[48] These radical agrarian movements and ideologies had clearly visible impacts on, links to, and affinities with the ideas and thinking of some (but not all) of the peasant parties in interwar East Central Europe.[49] A term (or terms) that could capture or express most of these impacts, links, and affinities would indeed be useful. "Peasantism" and "peasantist" probably come closest to qualifying for this role, although they are somewhat ungainly. The one characteristic that the diverse phenomena analyzed under the rubric of "populism" appear to have in common is a Manichaean tendency to see "the people" (who in many countries and languages used to be equated with "the peasantry") as major embodiments of "goodness" and "virtue," in contradistinction to elites, who are perceived as embodying self-serving, corrupt, and nefarious characteristics. However, although most of the peasant parties in interwar East Central Europe did occasionally promote and use such dichotomies, similar propensities have long existed in many other kinds of political parties.

Peasant party programs

Representatives of peasant parties and movements in Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece met in London in July 1942 to produce a major synoptic joint statement of their policies and objectives. It began thus:

> Believing, in the words of the bible, that we are all members of one body, we maintain that the raising of the peasant's standard of life is the necessary precondition for the progress of the whole nation … The main basis on which a sound and progressive agricultural community can be built up is that of individual peasant-owned farms. We do not, however, believe that the peasant can live in isolation, and we recognize the desirability of voluntary co-operation in land cultivation.

They called for measures to curb land speculation and the mortgaging and distraint of farmland, in order to protect the peasant "against dispossession or alienation of his land." To overcome fragmentation, peasant landholdings "must be consolidated … either by voluntary co-operation … or by machinery set up by the law." In the peasantist view,

> The strength of the peasantry depends on the strength of their common institutions as much as on their ownership of the land … The peasants themselves should control marketing, credit, and the supply of agricultural equipment by their own institutions, democratically organized.

Cooperative organization "should be extended to factories for processing agricultural produce, to the markets of the products thus made, to village communities engaged in special types of production and to the promotion of agricultural education." In overpopulated rural areas,

> Industries, so far as possible on a co-operative basis, are required to provide the necessary employment. They should be mainly devoted to the processing of local agricultural or forest products. We are convinced that, by these measures, we can raise the standard of living of peasants and avoid excessive concentration of production in large towns.

This joint statement also envisaged national and international regulation of agricultural procurement prices, as well as the development of comprehensive health care, sanitation, housing, rural banking and insurance, rural electrification, irrigation, drainage, water conservation, hydroelectric power, fertilizer and equipment supply, and seed and livestock improvement schemes. Wherever possible, state support would be combined with local and cooperative control and initiatives by the peasants themselves.[50]

Voluntary, democratic intra-village cooperation was expected to address every need of village life, but collective agriculture on the Soviet model was rejected because of its regimentation; its subordination of peasant needs and interests to the needs, aspirations, and priorities of townspeople (primarily officialdom, the bourgeoisie, and industrial workers) and to communist parties, states, and central planning agencies; and its often aggressive or predatory suppression of peasant autonomy, freedom, initiative, rituals, and values.

Vladko Maček, the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party from 1928 to 1945, declared that peasants would not happily accept forms of rural collectivism that would "turn the peasant into a serf of the state," especially in countries where they had only recently been liberated from serfdom. In his view, "it is possible to turn the village into an economic unit. Every peasant holding produces partly for the needs of the peasant family and partly for the market." The former "should remain the business of the peasant family," but the latter was evolving

> towards co-operative production as a common concern of the village as a whole. Where there is a lack of land, new possibilities of earning a livelihood must be created within the village, ranging from home industries to village factories. But the peasant's connection with the land must not be severed, he must not be driven from the soil.[51]

The multiple setbacks for East Central European peasant parties during the 1930s

The fortunes of peasant movements and democracy were closely intertwined in interwar East Central Europe. Both were under recurrent threat from the fascist and/or royalist authoritarian right as well as from the Marxist left. The Romanian-born writer David Mitrany (1888–1975), who became an influential "apostle" of East Central European "peasantism" in the English-speaking countries before attaining even wider influence as a major pioneer of "functionalist" theories of world government and international economic integration, argued that the peasant parties and the cooperative movement represented the highest and most authentic expressions of popular and intelligentsia aspirations.

> All the Peasant parties believed that the shortcomings of small-scale production could be mended by co-operative arrangements. It is not too much to say indeed that they had in mind a cooperative society, equally distinct from the Liberal capitalist society as from the collective society of Socialism.[52]

Unfortunately, except in relatively liberal Czechoslovakia, peasant parties were gradually excluded from East Central Europe's ruling coalitions during the 1920s and especially the 1930s. Despite the peasants' numerical preponderance in most East Central European societies, peasant parties

undeniably suffered inherent disadvantages. Most peasants were still poor, uneducated, diffident, and relatively difficult to organize and politically mobilize. Educated, resourceful, and younger peasants were those most likely to migrate to towns or the Americas, although their levels of education were steadily rising and rates of rural exodus were decelerating.

In East Central Europe, the severe decline in primary commodity prices and export revenues and the resultant collapse of tax revenues scuppered schemes of radical democratic social reform by imposing widespread financial defaults, bankruptcies, and largely unavoidable austerity programs. For example, export revenues fell by 73% in Romania, 60% in Hungary, and over 56% in Poland between 1929 and 1934.[53] The direct impacts of the Depression on peasant household incomes were even more severe. Adjusted for changes in the cost of living, in 1932–1933 the average real incomes of peasant households were "only 67% of the 1913 level in Hungary, 66% in Poland, 47% in Yugoslavia, and … 30% in Romania."[54]

Thus, the great hopes and expectations of radical reform that had helped Romania's National Peasant Party to win 77.8% of the votes cast in the December 1928 parliamentary election were dashed by the serious economic crisis-cum-contraction and massive public revenue reductions resulting from the collapse of Romania's export earnings and agricultural incomes in 1929–1932. However, the premature resignations of National Peasant Party prime ministers in 1931, 1932, and 1933 occurred mainly for noneconomic reasons – namely, a constitutional crisis consequent upon the sudden return of Romania's exiled King Carol II (who was bent on establishing his own personal rule), and factionalism and splits within the National Peasant Party.[55]

The 1930s Depression also greatly intensified interethnic tensions, irredentism, and social and political polarization, creating fertile breeding grounds for the growth of both urban and rural fascism. To their credit, however, most of the East Central European peasantist parties nevertheless endeavored to uphold the democratic principles enshrined in their official statutes and programs, although "this steadfastness in conduct, this [relative] unwillingness to sully their democratic principles, also meant that the peasant parties were unable to check the spreading reaction, while reactionary forces everywhere never hesitated to wreck them by corruption or violence."[56]

Some prominent peasant party politicians, most famously Aleksandar Stamboliyski, Stjepan Radić, and Romanian ex-finance minister Virgil Madgearu, were murdered. Others, such as Wincenty Witos and the former Romanian prime minister Iuliu Maniu, were eventually imprisoned. The peasant parties in Hungary, Bulgaria, and Poland took many years to recover from the "White Terror" following the overthrow of Béla Kun's Bolshevik regime in August 1919, from the bloodbath during and after the overthrow of Aleksandur Stamboliyski's regime in June 1923, and from Marshal Józef Piłsudski's coup in Poland in May 1926, respectively.

However, the political and economic setbacks during the 1930s and the ordeals suffered during World War Two forced East Central Europe's peasant

parties to undertake intense self-examination and self-renewal. Historically, peasants have often been great "passive resisters." During World War Two, however, East Central European peasants demonstrated extraordinary capacities for *active* resistance against oppressive fascist and ultranationalist regimes. Indeed, peasants provided the backbones of the major Balkan resistance movements, although Poland's big resistance movements received broader-based support from more diverse social groups.[57] Peasant parties in Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria emerged from these experiences considerably strengthened and provided the main (albeit doomed) resistance to the communist takeovers in these countries from 1945 to 1947.[58]

Evaluations of the policies and orientations of the East Central European peasant parties, and an outline and rebuttal of the main criticisms that have been levelled against them

Partly because the motivations and rationales of the interwar land reforms were more political than economic, these reforms have been widely perceived to have embodied numerous inadequacies that condemned them to political and social as well as economic failure. For example, Sarahelen Thompson contended that

> Land reform in Eastern Europe during the interwar period did not bring prosperity to the peasantry … Man-land ratios … changed little or [even] fell slightly by 1930 because agrarian reform did not relieve rural over-population … The major effect … was to hasten slightly the structural transformation of agriculture.[59]

Nancy Cochrane argued that the 1920s land reforms "failed on the whole to alter significantly the structure of agriculture" and that

> most … governments failed to follow up the land reforms with the institutions or infrastructure needed to support the new farmers … Extension services throughout the region were virtually unheard of … To the extent that the reforms of the 1920s failed to improve conditions for the rural population, it was because this necessary support was lacking.[60]

Hugh Seton-Watson claimed that the owners of the new or newly expanded landholdings lacked the requisite technical knowledge and equipment to make an economic success of them, while "the new governments paid little attention to the improvement of agriculture or the assistance of peasant owners until the World Depression forced these tasks upon them."[61]

During the postwar recovery and relative prosperity of 1924–1927, wealthier peasants took out loans to improve their lands, while poorer peasants also borrowed money "in order to buy food in the critical period … before

the harvest, when their supplies from the previous harvest had run out … Loans were made at a high rate of interest, particularly those made by money-lenders."[62] Even before the onset of the 1929–1933 Depression, East Central European agriculture faced intense competition from lower-cost grain-exporting countries outside Europe, whose grain could be brought to London or Hamburg by sea more cheaply than from East Central Europe.[63] When agricultural exports and crop prices started falling in 1928–1929 (due to the global overproduction of staple crops), "this enormously increased the burden of these debts, since the peasant now received half as much for his products as earlier, while … his debt remained the same."[64]

Most Western liberal analysts have long blamed the problems of East Central European agriculture specifically on the preponderance of small-scale peasant farming. Hugh Seton-Watson's negative assessments of the "parcellizing" effects of the 1920s land reforms and peasant farming as such were supported by Wilbert Moore,[65] the Political and Economic Planning group,[66] Doreen Warriner,[67] Nancy Cochrane,[68] and Richard Crampton.[69] There have long been similarly negative judgments on the implications of the predominance of small-scale peasant agriculture in Marxist analyses, notably by Ivan Berend and György Ránki.[70]

However, while there were some serious deficiencies in East Central European agriculture between the wars, these need to be kept in proportion. In 1934–1938, per capita grain and potato output in interwar East Central Europe was nearly double that for Southern Europe; about 25% above that of France; about 5% above that of Germany; and only 3% below that of Denmark (see Table 9.10). In 1934–1938, moreover, East Central European grain yields per hectare were on average roughly on a par with those in France and Southern Europe (Table 9.6), and already by 1909–1913 they had comfortably exceeded average grain yields in the Americas.[71] Furthermore, per capita holdings of livestock in interwar East Central Europe remained similar to those of Europe as a whole (excluding the Soviet Union) and exceeded those of Southern Europe (see Table 9.12).

Contrary to widespread claims that agricultural performance and technology were superior in countries where larger-scale farming prevailed, grain yields per hectare were not significantly higher in Hungary, Poland, and Romania (where between 28% and 41% of land was held by landholdings exceeding 50 hectares in approximately 1930) than in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, where 98% and 90% of farmland (respectively) were held by farmers with less than 50 hectares apiece (compare Tables 9.3 and 9.6).

Both the 1920s and the 1930s saw considerable diversification away from "monocultural" grain production into more labor-intensive and remunerative crops and livestock products.[72] Even though some of these gains were partly reversed under the damaging impact of the 1930s Depression, which caused significant reductions in cultivation of industrial crops such as sugar beet and oilseeds,[73] there was nevertheless some further diversification and intensification of East Central European peasant and estate agriculture even during the 1930s.[74]

In interwar East Central Europe, grain yields per hectare and degrees of rural poverty were relatively "scale neutral." It would be as misleading to try to blame the serious agricultural underperformance and/or rural poverty on the preponderance of peasant smallholdings in interwar Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Romania, as it would be to try to blame such problems on the high incidence of very large landholdings in interwar Hungary and Poland.

Nor can one simply blame such problems on the effects of relatively high population growth. Admittedly, other than in semi-industrialized Czechoslovakia (albeit not Slovakia and Ruthenia), the amount of farmland per agricultural inhabitant in each East Central European country was falling as population rose; and by 1930 each of these countries had considerably less farmland per agricultural inhabitant than did much more urban-industrial countries such as Germany, France, the UK, or the Netherlands.[75] However, the crucial point is that, with higher levels of education and agricultural technology, all of the East Central European countries would have been easily capable of sustaining their rising agricultural population densities, which were comparable to those in countries as diverse as the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, and Finland.[76]

Fundamentally, rural poverty in interwar East Central Europe resulted mainly from (and mainly took the form of) long-standing social and cultural deprivation and neglect. High proportions of the predominantly rural inhabitants of interwar East Central Europe were suffering from glaringly inadequate public provision of education, health care, sanitation, and clean tap water, as well as from a prevalence of unhygienic housing and lifestyles. Educational deficiencies made it harder for the region's poorer peasants "to understand the importance of hygiene or to make the best even of the scanty resources of food that are at their disposal."[77] Moreover,

> [t]he majority of smallholders live in such wretched hovels that even the best hygiene experts would have difficulty in making much of them. One bed will hold six or seven persons, including children. In parts of Bosnia and other poor regions the cow or the pig sleeps in the same room as the family.[78]
>
> The living conditions of the Hungarian rural proletariat are similar to those of the smallholder class of neighbouring countries. Families are packed into small, unhygienic rooms. Some have their own tiny houses, others are crowded together in barracks provided by the estate.[79]

In Bucharest, one can visit a museum of traditional peasant dwellings gathered from various parts of Romania. They look exotic and picturesque in their theme park setting, but many of them are distressingly small, dark, cramped, fire-prone, and poorly insulated, while some clearly used to be little more than crudely covered "holes in the ground." Even though major advances were being made, interwar East Central Europe (especially the

Balkan Peninsula) still had some of Europe's lowest literacy rates (see Table 9.14), some of its highest rates of infant mortality (see Table 9.8), and high incidence of diseases such as tuberculosis, typhoid, scarlet fever, smallpox, diphtheria, and whooping cough.

   In 1934, Hessell Tiltman reported that the Bulgarians, whose agriculture was almost completely dominated by peasant smallholdings, had "discovered the vital truth that the key to the future prosperity of agrarian nations is to be found in education and then more education."[80] Indeed, the knowledge and skills needed to transform Bulgaria

> from a predominantly corn-growing nation to a variety of … more lucrative forms of cultivation had been supplied by an agricultural education system which is equal to that existing in any other European country. This system has at its apex the Faculty of Agriculture … of the University of Sofia and includes four agricultural high schools, fifteen practical agricultural schools (seven or eight of which are reserved for women), thirty winter schools for adult peasants and a network of agricultural continuation schools, of which in June 1933 110 had already been opened out of 800 projected. These continuation schools will, when completed, cover every large village and town throughout the country. Every child who has completed … primary school is obliged to attend an agricultural continuation school for two terms of four months each. During these terms, held in winter months, boys are given instruction in modern methods of farming with special reference to the type of cultivation predominating in the region where the school is situated, while girls are taught home-making, cooking, sewing, care of children, and the rudiments of hygiene.[81]

As a result, Bulgarian peasant lifestyles were undergoing vital transformations.

> The Bulgarian people have been "lifted off the floor" … The poorest Bulgarian peasant today generally has his land, his house, some pieces of furniture and his self-respect … And with this psychological trans-formation the health of the people has improved. The death rate, though still high, is falling … The peasantry live in modern two-roomed dwellings, often built of designs supplied by the state, and their animals are housed separately. The earth floors have been replaced by brick and wood. There are windows that open … Many … now sleep on beds and eat sitting at tables. Separate plates for each person have replaced the old communal bowl. Electric light, even, has come to some of the villages."[82]

Thus, even during the 1930s Depression, there were patches of light amid the gloom.

However, if (as argued here) educational and technological deficiencies were the main causes of rural poverty and poor agricultural performance in interwar East Central Europe, land reform *on its own* could not eliminate or even substantially reduce such problems. Even where landed estates were extensively expropriated and redistributed among the peasantry, most peasant smallholdings were only augmented by between 10% and 35%, and the benefits were rapidly canceled out by rural population growth.[83] Thus, land reforms could at best offer temporary palliatives for peasant "land hunger."

However, as has been emphasized in much of the literature on interwar East Central Europe, the main significance and the most important motives and consequences of the region's major land redistributions were more political and social than economic. These were indeed short-term palliatives, hastily concocted to defuse peasant "land hunger" and social unrest in the wake of the First World War and the Russian Revolution of 1917.[84] There was also a widespread feeling among the educated classes that

> as the peasantry had borne the brunt of the war, and had proved itself in the greatest crisis yet known in human history to be in fact the backbone of the nation, it deserved to be given its share of the wealth of the nation. This thought was to override all other arguments.[85]

By breaking (or at least diminishing) the power of the old landlord class, radical land redistribution helped to reduce major long-standing impediments to effective peasant organization, cooperation, and self-help. All but the most "enlightened" landlords had tended to obstruct anything that might shift the rural balance of power in favor of the peasantry. Significantly, numerous studies have similarly emphasized the pivotal roles of radical land redistributions in breaking the power of the landlord class to obstruct peasant enterprise and inclusive broad-based economic development in Japan (1870s and 1947–1949), South Korea (1947–1950), and Taiwan (1949–1953).[86] Conversely, the failure of all South American states to carry out radical land redistributions prior to the onset of large-scale industrialization was one of the reasons why those states failed to achieve inclusive and broad-based economic development, and a major reason why they were so hugely outperformed by Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.[87]

Nonetheless, the most effective and durable means of reducing rural poverty and inequality were to be found neither in land reform nor in industrialization but in the significant expansion of rural education, agronomic assistance, and other measures designed to enhance the capacity of the peasants to help themselves. For, other than in the Czech lands, East Central Europe's industrial sectors were not yet large enough to be capable of absorbing large rural labor surpluses (even if these industries had

developed much more rapidly than they did). East Central Europe's key educational advances lay in the establishment of free, compulsory, and universal schooling in rural areas, which had developed rapidly since the 1870s or 1880s. By 1938, other than in Albania, school enrollments as a percentage of the total population were mostly on a par with those in Western Europe (see Table 9.14). Considerably more was achieved on this front than analysts such as Hugh Seton-Watson, István Berend, and Györgi Ránki, Doreen Warriner, Sarahelen Thompson, and Nancy Cochrane have cared to admit, although many of the measures adopted necessarily took time fully to bear fruit. Centuries of social and cultural deprivation and neglect could not be rectified overnight.

To be sure, it remained widely believed that peasants did not need much education on the grounds that the supposed simplicity of peasant agriculture put a low premium on formal knowledge and training. For many liberals and Marxists, moreover, an "educated peasantry" appeared to be a contradiction in terms. Classifying people as "peasants" was almost synonymous with calling them uneducated, ignorant, or irredeemably mindless, conservative, or "backward-looking." Many landlords, industrialists, and officials also feared that higher levels of education would enable and encourage peasants to organize, think for themselves, challenge "authority," and lobby for legislation and resources. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches feared that higher levels of education would encourage peasants to question a wide range of profoundly reactionary Church dogmas. Even David Mitrany was ambivalent. He regarded "improved education" (alongside improved transport and administration) as one of the three crucial prerequisites for raising the standard of rural life. Yet he also claimed that

> hitherto such education as has been provided has on the whole rather weakened the village. It has done little to adapt the peasants to life and farming in scattered rural communities, and it has tempted the abler of the young villagers away to the towns and to the professions. This has had the additional result that most of the countries of the region were burdened with a restless intellectual proletariat.[88]

Nevertheless, Europe's most educated peasantries were also its most healthy, dynamic, and prosperous ones. From the 1850s onward, semi-vocational Danish "folk high schools" demonstrated that peasantries could become well educated while still being peasant farmers, and from the 1880s onward Danish dairy farming and bacon-processing cooperatives provided role models for peasantries and peasant parties across Europe,[89] as did the cooperative "people's banks" and credit unions organized by Franz Herman Schulze-Delitzsch (1808–1883) and Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen (1818–1888) during the 1850s and 1860s in Germany.

Substantial proportions of the Swedish, Finnish, Irish, Austrian, French, Czech, Slovene, Croatian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Baltic, and Polish peasantries, among others, had followed suit.[90] Educated peasants became increasingly receptive to new implements, technologies, cropping practices, seed varieties, building and fencing materials, and ideas about sanitation and about human and animal hygiene. They were also more responsive to peasant parties, agricultural cooperation, and new forms of finance, marketing, food-processing and political lobbying, bringing increased access to rural services and agronomic assistance, and bypassing or squeezing out the most ruthless and manipulative middlemen.

It also needs to be emphasized that, until the "Sovietization" of East Central Europe from 1948 onward, the major advances in European peasant farming were *rarely* based on large-scale agricultural mechanization and heavy use of chemical fertilizers. The large-scale machinery pioneered on large American and British farms during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was mostly far too big, expensive, and/or unsuitable for use on peasant smallholdings. Likewise, the relatively expensive chemical fertilizers and pesticides pioneered by Prussian and West European chemical industries were used relatively sparingly on peasant smallholdings (other than for the cultivation of fruit, vegetables, and industrial crops in close proximity to large urban–industrial conurbations), partly because it was comparatively unremunerative to use them to cultivate the relatively low-return grain crops on which most peasant farms were obliged to concentrate – especially in areas far removed from major urban–industrial markets.

Instead, the main advances in European peasant agriculture prior to the post-1945 decades were based on changes in cropping patterns, including the introduction of new crops (such as root crops and legumes), new higher-yielding seed varieties, and improved farm tools and other small-scale equipment. Receptivity to these forms of agricultural innovation was partly a function of farm size and wealth, but it was mainly a function of farmers' levels of education and their ability to find out about newly available seed varieties, crops, tools, and small-scale equipment, for example by reading seed and equipment catalogues, newspaper advertisements and farmers' magazines. Raising levels of education was thus the masterkey to overcoming peasant poverty and "backwardness."

The expansion of peasant membership of agricultural credit and marketing cooperatives (itself closely correlated with rising levels of peasant education and consciousness) also helped to increase peasant awareness of the new farm tools, seed varieties, crops, and agricultural techniques. Just as significantly, perhaps, rising levels of education led to increased awareness of the importance of personal hygiene, as well as the need to regularly change and wash clothes, to boil drinking water, to clean up water supplies, to drain unsavory, disease-ridden bogs and ditches, to develop safe

ways of using or disposing of "night soil," and to house livestock separately from humans.

From the 1920s to the 1960s, however, most economic liberals and Marxists had forcefully argued that even the most marked intensification of agriculture could have only partially alleviated the agrarian problems of interwar East Central Europe. In 1950, for example, Doreen Warriner contended (as did many liberals and most Marxists) that an effective and comprehensive solution to East Central Europe's problems depended mainly on achieving rapid large-scale industrialization, especially as the scope for large-scale emigration (the previous main "safety valve") had been drastically curtailed by the adoption of ever-tighter immigration restrictions in the USA from 1924 onward and in Canada, Australia, and parts of Latin America during the 1930s. In particular, Warriner argued that rapid large-scale industrialization was the only effective way to remove so-called "surplus population" from the villages, increase aggregate demand for higher-value farm products, and increase the supplies of crucial modern inputs into agriculture, especially machinery, equipment, and chemical fertilizers and pesticides.[91]

> By the nineteen-thirties a large proportion of the peasant population was "surplus" – in the sense that it could have left the land without reducing agricultural production. The size of this surplus population cannot … be exactly estimated, since it took the form of half-employment for most of the farm population. But the various estimates that have been made agree that it was large, amounting to between one-quarter and one-third of the total population on the land. The pressure

TABLE 9.16 Number and membership (by household) of agricultural cooperatives, 1937

	Credit cooperatives		Supply and marketing cooperatives		Consumer cooperatives	
	Number	*Membership*	*Number*	*Membership*	*Number*	*Membership*
Czechoslovakia	6,080	1,440,784	2,579	486,385	816	805,544
Hungary	1,008	421,507	2,435	746462	3	127,428
Poland	3,736	816,007	5,176	1,082,551	1,976	373,516
Romania	4,638	905,420	1,906	219,207	106	29,063
Bulgaria	1,899	216,538	1,640	202,256	154	84,449
Yugoslavia	4,283	414,645	3,204	233,939	138	86,983
Comparator:						
Greece	4,327	193,901	1,621	56,989	-	-

Source: Political & Economic Planning (PEP), *Economic Development in S.E. Europe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 154–155.

of population on the land meant that small farms were divided into ever smaller units. Methods of farming remained primitive, because the peasants were too poor to invest in machinery and livestock, and of necessity kept most of their land under grain … For this widespread poverty the only remedy would have been industrialization. But to this the obstacles were shortage of capital and the lack of an internal market due to the poverty of the peasants … Peasant poverty therefore created a vicious circle.[92]

However, one can turn the tables on such arguments, which more or less equate agricultural advance with the increased use of chemicals and large-scale machinery supplied by large-scale, city-based industrialization. Other than in the relatively highly industrialized Czech lands, the rapid large-scale and town-centered industrialization advocated by Warriner, orthodox Marxists, and most Western liberal commentators on interwar East Central Europe could only have partially relieved the region's agrarian problems. More effective and comprehensive solutions had to include the promotion of dispersed, small-scale, labor-intensive industrialization (based mainly on consumer-oriented light industries) in addition to the intensification of agriculture and universal provision of education, health care, social services, and public utilities, as advocated by almost all of the East Central European peasant parties: first, because capital, industrial skills, and "know-how" were indeed in very short supply; second, because it was bound to take a decade or more for East Central European industrial sectors and urban infrastructures to become large enough to become capable of fully absorbing the rural "population surplus" (especially as most industries were intrinsically more capital- and skill-intensive than agriculture); and third, because (in such circumstances, regardless of whether carried out under capitalist or communist auspices), the economic and human costs of rapid, large-scale, capital-intensive and energy-intensive industrialization and urbanization almost invariably tended to be massive and to bring about enormous human dislocation, hardship, suffering, and high death rates – witness the experiences of the USSR from 1928 to the late 1950s, much of East Central Europe from the late 1940s to the late 1950s, China from 1950 to the late 1970s, and North Korea since the 1950s, as well as the rapid large-scale capitalist industrialization and urbanization in large parts of Latin America, North Africa, and South Asia from the 1940s to the 1990s. High proportions of Latin Americans, North Africans, and South and East Asians now inhabit what Mike Davies has aptly characterized as the *Planet of Slums*.[93] Massive dislocation, privation, overcrowding, pollution, hardship, insecurity, predatory racketeering, and social polarization and atomization still persist for hundreds of millions of inhabitants of these areas.

Conclusion

From the 1920s to the 1960s, many Western liberal as well Marxist industrializers ceaselessly put forward strikingly dogmatic claims that large-scale, spatially concentrated, capital- and energy-intensive industrialization was an essential prerequisite for attaining effective and sustainable economic development, full employment, and eventual enjoyment of the fruits of modernity. However, the lopsided emphasis on rapid, large-scale, city-based and capital- and energy-intensive industrialization favored by East Central European dictators, "orthodox" Marxists and Marxist-Leninists, economic nationalists, military interests, and some influential Western development economists[94] has on the whole proven to be a colossally costly, traumatic, divisive, and dirty mistake (in social and environmental as well as narrowly economic terms), for which East Central Europe is still paying a very high social, economic, and environmental price. Furthermore, inasmuch as many of the large-scale, capital-intensive producer-goods industries that began to be artificially promoted and heavily protected by ultranationalists during the later 1930s (and were even more forcefully developed at breakneck speed and enormous human, economic, and environmental cost by communist regimes from the late 1940s to the early 1980s) have subsequently severely contracted or even almost totally collapsed (in many cases irretrievably), the enormous human and economic resources and sacrifices involved in their creation have largely gone to waste. Thus, *enormous costs have been incurred largely in vain*. Nevertheless, even after the colossal costs and waste had become glaringly apparent, some Marxists continued to dogmatically insist on the need for such priorities and patterns of development, in implicit or explicit rejection of the *sounder* (and not just more humane) priorities and forms of development favored by most peasant parties in most predominantly peasant societies.[95]

For the East Central European peasant parties (as well as for their ill-fated Russian counterparts[96]), the overriding priority from the 1920s to the late 1940s was to promote the development of peasant agriculture and rural industries in situ, instead of forcing millions of peasants to move from their existing homes in already established villages to increasingly grim, overcrowded, congested, and polluted industrial conurbations. The paramount issues were not whether or not to promote industrialization *tout court*, but rather what types and tempos of industrial development should be prioritized so as to promote balanced and mutually beneficial development of the rural and the urban sectors in tandem. Almost all the East Central European peasant parties very rationally, hardheadedly, and humanely believed that, in predominantly peasant societies, the economic priorities and patterns of economic development pursued ought to be geared primarily to meeting the basic needs of the peasantry, not only because peasants made up most of the population, but also because this would foster relatively symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationships between the agricultural and the urban–industrial sectors.

Agricultural sectors would then provide markets, raw materials, and some "surplus" manpower for steadily expanding and relatively dispersed, small-scale, labor-intensive light industries that mostly used agricultural raw materials and looked mainly to fulfil the needs of the largest category of inhabitants/consumers – namely, the peasantry. Such industries would also provide much-needed expanding markets as well as desirable industrial inputs for East Central European agriculture.

In the event, all of East Central Europe's communist regimes built up large-scale, spatially concentrated, capital- and energy-intensive "smoke-stack" industries at enormous costs (draconian regimentation and economic austerity, substantial loss of life, massive environmental degradation, and huge human hardship and sacrifice), and herded millions of peasants from their (often forcibly collectivized) villages into overcrowded and heavily polluted new towns and cities. Yet, during the 1990s, most of the industrial enterprises that had been built up by the communist regimes severely contracted, laid off most of their former employees, and in many cases closed down completely, because their products and technologies were obsolete, surplus to domestic requirements, and largely unexportable. This provided painful confirmation of Hugh Seton-Watson's soundly humane contention in 1945 that there was "no need for industrialization in Eastern Europe to lead to the vast unhealthy urban agglomerations that exist in the West."[97]

This chapter therefore concludes that East Central Europe's predominantly peasant societies would on the whole have been much better off if, instead of being subjected to very costly and draconian large-scale, capital-intensive, energy-intensive, and spatially concentrated patterns of industrialization (whether under communist or capitalist regimes), they had been ruled by governments headed by peasant parties committed to relatively gradual, dispersed, decentralized, smaller-scale, consumer-oriented, and less coercive and capital- and energy-intensive patterns of industrialization, bringing universal education, health care, social services, and modern public utilities (particularly electricity, gas, telephones, radio, and television) to the region's great preponderance of villages and small semi-rural towns. This would have involved much lower infrastructural and construction costs, much less environmental degradation and social hardship, and much less dislocation, atomization, and polarization than the alternatives championed by both orthodox Marxists and Western liberals. The peasant parties' priorities would have helped East Central Europe's peasant majority to attain more immediate, durable, and unmitigated enjoyment of the most valuable fruits of development, while mostly remaining freestanding, independent proprietors in homes of their own in already established villages and small semi-rural towns, instead of being herded into large, very drab, soulless, overcrowded, Spartan, tacky, and polluted industrial conurbations, which were built at vast, misconceived, and unnecessary cost to society as a whole.

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92 Warriner, *Revolution in Eastern Europe* [note 67], p. xii. In addition to offering supposed "justifications" for the draconian industrialization strategies adopted by almost all communist regimes, these claims that there were huge rural "population surpluses" in interwar Eastern Europe (which allegedly could be alleviated only by very rapid industrialization and could allegedly be removed without detriment to agricultural production) played key roles in many of the initial formulations of Western and Third World "development economics" during the 1940s and 1950s. It is therefore important to point out that, in her Introduction to the second edition of her outstanding book *The Economics of Peasant Farming* (London: Frank Cass, 1964; first published in 1939), Doreen Warriner acknowledged that the assumptions and methodologies that she and others had used to estimate the size of the alleged "population surpluses" in interwar Eastern Europe had been faulty and had considerably overstated the magnitude of these (supposedly large) rural "population surpluses" (pp. xxv–xxxi). Unfortunately, these misperceptions misled much of the 1940s–1950s generation of "development economists" into advocating unnecessarily draconian industrialization policies, while greatly overestimating the magnitude of the "population surpluses" on which these depended and seriously underestimating the negative impacts of large labor outflows on agricultural sectors. Indeed, as early as the 1950s, East Central European economies were suffering more from labor shortages than from (greatly exaggerated) "labor surpluses," while rapid removal of labor from agriculture contributed to the hardships and setbacks resulting from the glaring failure of East Central European agricultural productivity to rise by the large percentages predicted by the region's communist regimes between the late 1940s and the 1970s.

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AFTERWORD

Stefano Bianchini

Assessing the democracy-building process in interwar East Central Europe and the causes of its failure is not an easy task. Indeed, a high level of complexity marked developments across just 20 years. The reconstruction of the key policies, challenges, events, and trends in the region has been the main focus of the chapters of this book. The authors approached the topic either by analyzing the situation in their respective countries or by stressing transnational and cross-cutting interactions. In so doing, they have persistently highlighted the variety of nuances and interpretations that are still debated by scholars, in the media, and in political arenas. Thus, in the lines that follow I will try to capture some long-lasting regional dynamics (with their far-reaching consequences) that characterized the East Central European painful, and limited, process of democratization in the interwar years.

On the one hand, as emphasized in the book, several factors need to be considered. First and foremost, the perspective of democracy-building depended to a large extent on the clash between increasingly radical social demands and the fierce resistance to them. Additionally, the potential implementation of democracy suffered from the long-lasting confrontation of local and international economic interests, the diversities of cultural and psychological postwar legacies and the wide spectrum of political orientations (from reactionary to revolutionary activisms), which powerfully came to light at the end of World War One.

On the other hand, these factors were deeply affected by the (largely unexpected) geopolitical upheavals that occurred during the last year of the war. Furthermore, and to make the picture more complicated, even the end of the hostilities varied remarkably, according to the circumstances. Formally, as is known, scholars have associated the end of World War One with 11 November 1918. However, this was not true for East Central Europe, where military

actions were prolonged, in a number of situations, at least until 1921, if not 1923. Consequently, most of their eastern borders were not defined during the Paris Peace Conference, but only later, as a consequence of new peace treaties signed bilaterally by the parties involved.[1]

Moreover, unlike Western Europe, whose borders changed little (with the exception of the United Kingdom, which plunged into a bitter war in Ireland from 1919 to 1921), the whole East Central European map was radically modified after 1918. De facto, no state that had existed before 1914 survived, apart from Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania, whose territories were adjusted. Four East Central European and Near Eastern empires dissolved, new countries emerged (Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, without speaking of Finland and the three Baltic republics), Romania more than doubled in size, while Hungary became independent, but under very constricted borders. A few other territories experienced a short-lived independence, such as the Italian Regency of Carnaro (Fiume) annexed to Italy in 1920, the Soviet Slovak Republic, quickly incorporated into Czechoslovakia, or the West Ukrainian National Republic, absorbed by Poland (with other similar cases in the territory of the defunct Russian Empire and in Anatolia).

This profound transformation was, unmistakably, the outcome of the war, which wiped out the memory of the "La Belle Époque," an era that started in the late 1870s. Marked by urbanization, innovations in art, scientific and technological advances, and comprehensive progress in social, cultural, and economic terms, it also had a dark side, with growing social inequalities, collective discrepancies, the expansion of imperialism with a precarious (and confrontational) balance of powers. In the end, a few years of ferocious hostilities triggered an extraordinary change accelerator, and the world has never been the same again.

Such a transformative acceleration affected in particular East Central Europe, as the result not only of war fatigue, stemming from the seemingly endless military campaigns,[2] their brutality, and the high number of casualties, but also from the popular impact produced by two main political aspirations. Indeed, their origins were rooted in the public and sometimes illegal debates of the previous decades, but their profiles acquired a peculiar strength from 1917 onward. These aspirations were connected to the desires for self-determination and land redistribution to the benefit of small landowners, freed serfs, and farmworkers.

Nurtured mounting plots, various conspiracies, and riots for a long time and debated in a variety of circles, demands for self-determination were ignited Europe-wide by Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Ilych Lenin, as soon as the Russian revolution erupted, and they were epitomized by his "Declaration of the rights of the peoples of Russia" of 2 (15) November 1917. The document unequivocally declared the right of secession and was implemented, without delay, by Finland whose independence was formally recognized by Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin on 18 (31) December 1917.[3] In the fall of the same year, in the USA, President Woodrow Wilson had established the

House Inquiry to determine conditions and criteria for ethno-national borders in Europe, respecting – in his view – the rights of peoples as a crucial prerequisite for a stable peace. Sharply advised against the notion of self-determination by his secretary of state Robert Lansing and his Western Allies, Wilson did not include the word in his famous 14 points of January 1918, but mentioned it soon thereafter in an address to Congress, because of his deep concern about the impact of Bolshevik ideas – especially that they could overflow into Central Europe, taking advantage, in particular, of the ethno-national fragility of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this event, the possibility that desires for independence could transmit both socialist ideas and a revolutionary feeling in an exhausted Europe, encouraged the US president to outline, by contrast, an alternative approach to the rights of nations, regardless of British, Italian, and French fears about the effects on their respective colonial empires.[4]

Similarly, the decree on land, issued by the Bolsheviks on 26 October (8 November) 1917 as soon as they took over power in Petrograd, was immediately perceived all over Europe as a dangerous threat to the stability of the existing social systems as well as to the Allied and Central Powers' war efforts, since the majority of the soldiers were peasants. Tired of fighting, and attracted by the potential redistribution of lands, especially in East Central Europe where large estates still dominated the countryside, most of the conscripts could have been encouraged to desert in droves, affecting the social control of the militarized elites of the belligerent countries. The growing role of peasant parties, some of them led by pacifist leaders (as in the Bulgarian case) could have contributed to multiply defeatist behaviors, even if these parties were not inclined to interact or cooperate with the Bolsheviks.

Alarmed by the acceleration of these events, Europe's warring governments came to fear revolutionary scenarios, where alternative options relating to new geopolitical arrangements or radically social instances, or both, could have produced uncontrollable turbulence and disorder, seriously affecting the power of the landed aristocracy and the financial and industrial bourgeoisie. By contrast, military life, with its authoritarian and hierarchical organization, including the exemplary shootings of deserters, appeared to be, at least potentially, a fascinating dampening solution for reactionary circles. In particular, extreme right movements, together with some conservative components of European politics, felt encouraged by the long war experience, which had affected the prewar civil organization of society. Therefore, they were convinced that its implementation deserved to be explored.

It was against this pressing background that the East Central European institutional framework suddenly, and quickly, collapsed at the end of 1918. Assertive national elites demanded the establishment of new states by suggesting a variety of plans, often mutually conflicting (I will come back to this issue later). At the same time, the risks of revolutionary uprisings were indeed real, despite the beginning of a civil war in Russia. Consequently, at the end

of 1918, both the winning and vanquished alliances were facing a deeply different context in comparison to their expectations. A mix of thoughts marked their behaviors: from euphoria to disillusionment, from triumphant feelings to fears, from resentments to punishments, from animosities to feelings of indignation. As a result, while a new geopolitical order was designed during the Paris Peace Conference, although with little consensus among the participant delegations and limited, if not irritating results, it is appropriate to raise the question about what forms of democracy-building could have been initiated under these conditions in East Central Europe.

This is, in fact, a crucial issue that, to a large extent, needs to be explored in detail, viz. the weaknesses of the democracy-building experience in the area of our scrutiny and, at the end of the day, the reasons for its short length.

A few decades later, the famous sociologist Joseph Schumpeter, discussing the construction of democracy, made a distinction between the minimalist and maximalist perspective of this concept.[5] Other authors later contributed to develop this articulation, as for example Karl Schmitter, Georg Sorensen, Robert Dahl, and Larry Diamond.[6] Basically, the minimalist approach was restricted to free and fair elections with the possibility for the population to check how political power and governance would be implemented, avoiding wrongdoing if possible. By contrast, the maximalist approach encompassed more substantial democratic procedures beyond the electoral dimension, by reinforcing inclusive political participation, the respect of civil and social rights, the guarantees for liberties and minority rights, and a high level of competition.

Sociologists and political scientists have discussed this topic for decades.[7] Although this is not the place for further theoretical investigations, the general setting of such an important debate is useful for understanding the dynamics and limitations of the parliamentary systems in interwar East Central Europe. In particular, the complexity of the historical background sketched above highlights why, to a large extent, the countries under scrutiny limited their interwar efforts to the minimalist approach, though not without further restrictions and authoritarian solutions in the years to come.

In fact, scrolling through the pages of this book and looking comparatively at the chapters' narratives, one can easily understand why, once multiparty elections were provided and at least a male suffrage applied, the democracy-building process failed to consolidate its institutions. Stabilization, whatever the word might mean, occurred in the whole region only after 1923. This was the year when all revolutionary attempts across Europe were (at least temporarily) crushed with (1) the failure of the communist uprisings in Bulgaria and Hamburg, (2) the overthrow of the most radical peasant reformist government with Stamboliyski's murder, and (3) the end of the Greek–Turkish war in Anatolia and Eastern Thrace, which led to the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923) and a negotiated ethnic cleansing between Greece and Turkey (although, this last event is geographically marginal to the area analyzed within this book, its regional legacy is nonetheless relevant).

Moreover, the chaotic developments that marked the first years after the formal conclusion of World War One were not necessarily linked to social uprisings only. Certainly, the fear that the Bolshevik revolution could spread to Central Europe was nurtured by the Spartacist uprising in Germany, the soviet republics in Hungary and Slovakia, the surprisingly good electoral results of the Yugoslav communists in 1920, the Red Biennium in Italy, and finally the decision of Marshal Mikhail Nikolayevich Tukhachevsky to cross the Curzon line in the war with Poland, assuming that the Red Army would have inflamed again the revolutionary spirits in Central Europe, while in Moscow a passionate 2nd Conference of the Comintern was taking place.[8] Still, all these attempts failed, leaving the Bolsheviks isolated, despite their victory in the Russian civil war. However, the fear of communism did not diminish at all in East Central Europe, whose governments – with few exceptions – banned the communist parties and controlled the unions, because they were suspected of being under the influence of communists or even seeking to replace the party by surreptitious means.

Moreover, the alarm of the ruling classes was quickly extended to any potential risk of social change, which involved the peasant movements as well, since the demands for agrarian reforms with the redistribution of land affected the great landowners, the aristocracy (particularly in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania), and also the traditional prewar party system.

In fact, the introduction of the general suffrage, even when limited to the male component of society, could have potentially transferred the political control of the parliament to newly established mass movements and, among these, the peasant parties. In particular, the programs of the latter (although often mutually incompatible) advocated a leading role in the society by appealing to a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. This approach was, in essence, based on the alleged moral integrity of the rural world, a control of nature with environmental protection, and self-sufficiency stemming from the prioritization of agricultural production. In other words, peasant parties outlined a "rural predominance" over the urban areas and the banking and insurance services, as well as the development of industrialization, which should have been in harmony with the needs of the countryside.

Rarely, as stressed in the chapters of this book, did the peasant parties manage to come to power, and when this happened it did not last for long, with the exception of Czechoslovakia. However, the peasant parties created their own "Green International" on Stamboliyski's initiative. And even if this organization acquired a certain vitality only at the end of the 1920s, the Bolsheviks felt themselves encouraged to establish the "Krestintern," the so called "Red-Green International," in order to compete, and possibly replace, the "Green International," particularly after Stamboliyski's assassination.[9]

Despite the ideological reluctance on the part of communist activists, the "New Economic Policy" in the USSR gave popularity to the worker–peasant alliance put forward by Karl Berngardovich Radek and, later, Nikolay Ivanovich Bukharin.

Consequently, some contacts between the two movements occurred in the middle of the 1920s, particularly when the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, Stjepan Radić, paid a long visit to the USSR, had his party join the Krestintern, and praised the Soviet agrarian law in public statements and articles. The ambiguity of the Bolshevik–Agrarian relations came to a zenith when the Soviet leadership, with whom Radić frequently met during his trip, offered him the leadership of the Krestintern. The proposal did not lead to anything, however, since Radić's national agenda did not meet the social priorities of Bolsheviks (whose activists continued to give vent to their ideological prejudices against the countryside), but once home, he was immediately arrested. After roughly a year in prison, his release in July 1925 occurred when he distanced himself from the Bolsheviks, abandoned republicanism, and softened the radical program of his party. At that point, he could also be included in the government.[10]

As a result, despite their predominant anti-communist orientation or, at least, their advocacy of an autonomous and self-directed role, the peasant parties in East Central Europe, with their mass organization and their radical demands for agrarian reforms at the beginning of the 1920s, represented a source of serious concern for the bourgeoisie, the still-alive aristocracy, the landowners, the financial capital and also, in some cases, the religious hierarchies. Inevitably, the prewar elites and the urban middle-class conformists expressed growing mistrust of such popular movements. Their conservativism quickly radicalized, even at the expense of affecting state governance, with consensus about the state institutions sharply declining among the populations, when inclusive democratic policies were abandoned or rejected as reactions of fear against the revolutionary movements occurred between 1919 and 1923. In a variety of situations (for example in Hungary, in Yugoslavia, in Bulgaria, and Romania) right-wing extremism flourished. The phenomena of "White Terror" and squad violence added fuel to social insecurity. Meanwhile, nostalgia for the military hierarchical order intensified among reactionary and conservative forces, who started to see it as a useful tool for controlling mass consensus. Italian fascism, and particularly its corporatist ideology, soon became an additional source of inspiration.

Admittedly, under these conditions, it was virtually impossible to proceed with the consolidation of democratic institutions, once the minimalist approach to democracy-building was initiated. Since the beginning, in fact, the limitations to the development of democracy stemmed not solely from fears of uncontrolled mass movements, potential revolutions, and "social disorder," but also from other factors that contributed to this outcome.[11]

For example, the relevance of war trauma is mentioned in this book. Peace trauma should be added, since not only the memory of conflict brutality, but also the postwar arrangements of borders and new state recognitions were perceived differently by national elites and local populations, encouraging opposite feelings, that is mutual animosities and, in particular, resentment against national minorities or unconfident feelings toward ethnic majorities.

Furthermore, the uncertainties of the borders and territorial delimitations prolonged a sense of insecurity that had become rooted during the war years. In addition, antagonistic state-building projects were supported by different elites, who were consequently attracted by alternative forms of governance.

The postwar upheavals required, for example, the establishment of standardized laws and regulations, new compatibilities in the communication systems, a reorganization of local and national services, in order to replace the fragmentation of the preexisting social, administrative, and a new infrastructural framework. However, the new governments (often provisional, sometimes recently elected) were expected to provide channels for managing these potentially conflicting needs in a productive way, under new geopolitical structures. This behavior would have also implied an enhanced dialogue with national minorities, in order to achieve a solid confidence in the new institutions, and to apply in some cases a policy of reconciliation, therefore overcoming the legacies of the war.[12]

Nevertheless, and despite either the recommendations included in a number of specific treaties signed at the Paris Peace Conference or the enforcement provisions ascribed to the newly established "League of Nations," the fear of instability and the risk of domestic conflicts persuaded the ruling and self-proclaimed winning elites of East Central Europe to make the best choice for the futures of their respective countries by implementing centralist administrations.

As a result, regardless of their political systems, whether republican or monarchical, the advocates of Czechoslovakism, the Serbian parties in Belgrade, the parties in the Romanian Regat, and a significant portion of the Polish leadership in Warsaw drew inspiration from France, Italy, and, basically, Western Europe. Consistently, federal options as well as administrations based on regional devolution or cantonal experiences were rejected. Centralization, however, provoked disappointment in sections of the population and reinforced the aversion of minorities, who were expecting equal treatment and inclusiveness. Furthermore, the decision was made quickly, and implemented as quickly, because, in different cases, state borders were still undefined and the disbanded conscripts were often coming back home with their own weapons. In revolutionary times, centralization ultimately appeared to be a convincing lever for stabilization. However, in embracing centralism, those ethnic groups that were still hoping to avoid minority status became unexpectedly citizens of new states, without guarantees for local, autonomous management. The sense of discrimination quickly took root, affecting the reliability of the new constitutional arrangements.

In other words, the controversy over the system of governance, which dates back to the immediate postwar period, is to be seen through different lenses. First, as noted, the debate inflamed the new nation-state perspective of East Central Europe as soon as the brutality of the military conflict was over. Second, the international and local uncertainties contributed to reinforce the centralist option. Third, this orientation had a negative impact on minorities

and their rights perceptions, encouraged domestic dissatisfaction, raised tensions with neighbors and worsened the opportunities of reconciliation, particularly when minorities belonged to a "vanquished nation" (or were perceived as such). This was, for example, the case with the Hungarians in Romania and Czechoslovakia; the Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians incorporated into Poland; the Macedonians (considered Bulgarians in Sofia) and the Albanians in the Kingdom of SHS;[13] and the Germans in Czechoslovakia. Even the reference to the names of the "three South Slav tribes" did not hinder the perception of some circles in Belgrade that the Serbs were the "real winners," while the peoples incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and specifically the Croats, had to be regarded among the losers.

Additionally, the will to maintain control over mass movements and the choice in support of the centralization option were not the unique consequence of postwar uncertainties and the cause of democracy-building weaknesses. The profound disagreements about the border proposals of the Paris Peace Conference played a crucial role either in encouraging alternative strategies about the substance of the state-building definition, or in paving the way to irredentist claims, once again under the influence of the Italian policy of the "mutilated victory."[14]

Since the nineteenth century, in fact, opposite geopolitical arrangements were cherished by revolutionary spirits committed to fight for the freedom of nations. For example, relevant personalities imagined the restoration of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the establishment of a Danubian federation, and/or a common state of the South Slavs (Bulgarians included). However, these programs were opposed by other intellectuals who supported alternative ethno-national projects, sometimes affected by antisemitism, and whose focus was particularly related to the implementation of a "healthy national egoism" by pursuing the independence of Poles, Lithuanians, Croats, and Romanians together with the assimilation of minorities or their emigration.[15] This cultural and historical background of conflicting visions of the "national future" came powerfully to light during World War One and determined the immediate postwar agendas.

So, as M. B. B. Biskupski noted in Chapter 2 in this volume, while Roman Dmowski advocated an ethno-Polish centralized (and antisemitic) state, Józef Piłsudski by contrast elaborated a wider plan, called "Intermarium" or "Promethean," aimed at restoring the territory of the eighteenth-century Commonwealth as a broader (and possibly decentralized) state, together with Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine.[16] The project was, however, rejected by the national movements of the other potentially interested countries. Consistently, this discrepancy lay at the origin of the brutal Polish wars against Lithuania, Western Ukraine, and, in the end, also against Soviet Russia. Finally, the project failed, despite the Polish victory against the Red Army in the battle for Warsaw and the incorporation of extensive eastern territories and ethnic minorities into Poland with the Treaty of Riga in 1921. As a result, a centralized Poland was established,

meeting in this sense the expectations of Dmowski. However, interwar Poland was ethnically diversified, with a number of minorities, reminding one in some way of the heterogeneity of the Polish state before the partitions that had inspired Piłsudski's nationalism.

Meanwhile, and differently from Poland, the South Slav monarchy avoided a war among its ethnic components, but not the tensions that emerged as soon as the kingdom was proclaimed. The federalist perspective supported by Ante Trumbić (the first minister of foreign affairs of the kingdom, who signed the Corfu Declaration) together with the republicanism and the autonomy advocated by the Croatian Peasant Party, led by Stjepan Radić, confronted the centralist preferences of the Serbian political parties in Belgrade during the debates at the Constituent Assembly. This polarization marked the domestic relations for the whole interwar period, as described by Stipica Grgić in his contribution to this volume. In particular, the deadlock situation provoked by the assassination of Stjepan Radić in 1928 and the lack of consensus about the future of the country confirmed by the king during his meetings with the leaders of the parties paved the way to his authoritarian coup.

Furthermore, the South Slav kingdom had to cope with the dissatisfaction of the territorial arrangements that concerned Macedonia (called at the time "Southern Serbia") with Bulgaria and the Albanians of Kosovo. Actually, the Macedonian issue was at least temporarily regulated by Aleksandar Stamboliyski through the 1923 Treaty of Niš. As for the Albanians of Kosovo, they had limited opportunities for action (either in the case of reducing discrimination or, more radically, to strengthening relations with Tirana). This was mainly due to the chaotic situation that predominated in Albania, whose traditional lack of any kind of unity and persistence of tribal autocracy made centralization an arduous process to be achieved, but also a prerequisite for institutional consolidation. The process, however, was additionally complicated by the ambiguous relations that Zogu established with the Belgrade government and, later, Italy, as described by Bernd Fischer in Chapter 8 in this volume.

A similar, uneasy confrontation between centralization and autonomy was tried in Transylvania by Romanians and Hungarians, as soon as King Ferdinand validated the Alba Iulia Declaration. This declaration was a unilateral document in support of the unification with the Regat, which was signed only by Romanian leaders from the regions of the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire, regions that had previously belonged to the Hungarian St. Stephen's Crown. Despite the principles included in the third article in support of minority rights and national freedoms, the Hungarians of Transylvania were culturally and politically unprepared to accept the status of minorities, considering the privileges they had enjoyed in the Habsburg Empire. And, in fact, the confrontation between the two ethnic groups worsened quickly, affecting their coexistence. In more recent times, scholars from both sides have admitted that the third article was implemented only to a limited degree, if at all, with far-reaching consequences for the future coexistence within "Great Romania."[17]

Crucially, the vast territorial "amputations" of Hungary and Bulgaria were perceived in both Budapest and Sofia as unfair and unmerited, imposed by the winners at the Paris Peace Conference. In reaction, these territorial changes generated wide feelings of humiliation and anger. As a result, as soon as the respectively Soviet and peasant revolutionary movements were annihilated, irredentist claims sharply intensified and the appeal for treaty revision dominated their foreign policy agendas. The subsequent conservative/authoritarian regimes, which seized and held power de facto almost until the end of World War Two in both countries – even though Bulgaria had a second opportunity, after 1919, to rely on a peaceful change of government in 1931 – nurtured such a deep resentment toward their neighbors and the outcomes of the Paris Conference that their international behavior was severely affected. A poisoned political atmosphere marked, therefore, the relations in the whole Danubian–Balkan basin and unquestionably contributed to facilitate the growing influence of fascist culture in the 1920s and the penetration of Nazi Germany in the 1930s.[18]

To sum up, the interwar situation of East Central Europe at the beginning of the 1920s was characterized by great disorder. Many factors provided a weak basis for state-building and consolidation. Briefly, they can be recalled as follows: war and peace traumas; conflicting (and illusory) territorial projects on the part of local leaderships; protracted military operations; irredentist demands and perceptions of insecurity; opposing aspirations with respect to systems of governance; dissatisfaction with one's minority status; and revolutionary hopes or fears – partly connected to the Bolshevik challenge, and partly deriving from the unknown impact of male suffrage (in countries were illiteracy was still predominant) or from the introduction of the general suffrage in some other situations (such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic republics, and Soviet Russia). As a result, the potential for democracy-building was doomed to be constrained from the beginning given the persistence of a minimalist approach.

Furthermore, as noted above, even the minimalist approach did not last for long. Authoritarian regimes were soon imposed. Actually, one or more coups occurred between 1920 and 1934 (for example, twice in Romania and Bulgaria, as reported in Chapter 5 by Roland Clark and Chapter 6 by Christian Promitzer). In most cases, political parties were banned and parliaments disbanded. Subsequently, however, some conservative and right-wing organizations were allowed to operate (in Bulgaria even a pro-communist party), elections occurred (although unfair and not free or only partially free), while the parliament was basically serving the directives of the ruler. To a certain extent, the mechanism of governance and the organization of power after the coups reflected the Italian Fascist experience, whose social pattern and internal affairs were in some measure appreciated as a convincing mechanism of stabilization and securitization. Applied in a variety of situations, this happened even when Mussolini's foreign policy was criticized or firmly opposed by some of the East Central European countries.[19]

Czechoslovakia, by contrast, represented an exception, to a large extent. Nonetheless, even in this case, the centralized system of governance prevailed. Moreover, Czechoslovakism, as a predominant political culture that promoted the Czechoslovak language and determined the institutional organization of the country, actually reinforced and legitimated the Czech role in the management of power, ignoring Slovak demands for autonomy. Furthermore, this had a negative effect in the minority policies pursued, particularly vis-à-vis the Germans and the Hungarians, but also as regards the Ukrainians/Ruthenes, who did not perceive the new country as an inclusive environment. Rather, they felt marginalized. Interestingly, the grievances of ethnic groups occurred within a democratic republican framework, based on a multiparty system with regular free elections and the legal participation of the communists. Paradoxically, however, the enduring concentration of the decision-making process within a coalition of five parties became, in the end, an important source of weakness of the political system, rather than a stabilizing factor. In fact, it contributed to raising a sense of institutional inflexibility, which generated, in turn, a sharp confrontation with minorities, polarizing mutual perceptions of threats and demands of security. Ultimately, Hitler's exploitation of such a situation – with the support of Mussolini and the liberal Western powers – led to the failure of both democracy-building and state-building in Czechoslovakia.

However, the Czechoslovak partition of 1938–1939 had far-reaching consequences, far beyond the local issues of borders and minority inclusion strategies. The way the country was forced to dissolve strengthened the belief, in all of East Central Europe, that minorities were, in essence, "Trojan horses" that neighboring kindred states could easily manipulate to achieve their irredentist claims. This conviction was furthermore reinforced by the fact that the minority treaties, determined at the Paris Peace Conference, were signed by (or "imposed on," as they were actually perceived) East Central European successor states only, while the Western European powers were not subject to their clauses. As a result, the newly established states assumed that their sovereignty was limited from the beginning and that minorities represented the main limiting factor. Under these circumstances, local antisemitism strengthened or germinated in a remarkable fashion. Subsequently, the Nazi manipulation of minorities, pursued through imposed "arbitrations" or even extermination policies, reinforced the conviction that minorities manifested a "natural lack of loyalty." The extremist flourishing of this feeling also explains why collaboration in the implementation of the Shoah could rely on enthusiastic ethno-national supporters during World War Two. In the end, after World War Two, leaders came to the conclusion in many European contexts, that "at least" ethnic cleansing and people's deportations or expulsions were "in a way politically justified," in order to guarantee security through "national homogeneity." The provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne were a patent precedent. And similar territorial reapportionments were, in fact, recorded in 1944–1946 and again in the 1990s.

Still, coming back again to the interwar period, other factors contributed to the failure of democracy-building in the area of our scrutiny. As is frequently reported by the authors of this book, the impact of the 1929 crisis played a key role, not only economically, but also politically. On the one hand, the placement of agricultural products on Western markets became increasingly problematic for the still predominantly rural countries of East Central Europe. Furthermore, export contraction was followed by a radical decline of Western loans and investments. In addition, peasant indebtedness had contracted in previous years, but, when the postwar economy seemed to recover, it became unsustainable and the impoverishment of the countryside worsened quickly. All that occurred when dictatorships were already in place in almost all the states of East Central Europe. However, as noted above, parliaments were still operating, albeit within the limitations imposed by the authoritarian domestic context.

Under these circumstances, as paradoxical it may sound, on the initiative of members of the Greek parliament, a series of conferences of Balkan countries was launched, drawing inspiration from the ideas of Aristide Briand, who suggested in 1929 that a European federation be established to foster international solidarity and economic development across the countries. In harmony with this spirit, delegations from Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, and Turkey, despite their disagreements, met in Athens in October 1929, in Istanbul in 1931, in Bucharest in 1932, and in Thessaloniki in 1933.[20] The main goal was to support a customs union and to implement a regional market. Therefore, they pressured their respective governments to harmonize the rules and the agreements bilaterally signed since 1926 between some of the countries, eventually extending their validity further to the whole peninsula. Under this framework, a Balkan Chamber of Commerce was founded on 27 May 1932 and a regional network of bilateral trade agreements was concluded by 1934.[21]

Basically, the effort was to develop a shared blueprint for building an association with membership from parliaments (although not exclusively),[22] whose main interest would have been to find a way out from the impact of the 1929 crisis in the Balkans. Nonetheless, the ambitions were broader compared with what they had been at the beginning, when the potential of a Balkan Union was discussed in Greece in 1929 during the 27th Universal Congress of Peace. However, the idea included a cogent political perspective where minority rights would have played a key role. Not surprisingly, Bulgaria, in particular, raised this issue as early as at the first meeting, while Yugoslavia was reluctant to discuss protective measures. Ultimately, the Bulgarian delegation decided to leave the third conference because the minority question was not properly addressed. Subsequent meetings occurred in Sofia and other capitals to achieve a convergence that, in the end, allowed the summoning of a fourth conference in Thessalonica. Once again, however, all these efforts could not last for long. The minority issue remained a crucial "apple of discord" even in

a formally unofficial framework, as the Balkan conferences were, reaffirming in this sense how problematic the path to reconciliation and recognition of equality was.

Consequently, the mutual lack of confidence among the countries of East Central Europe was an additional factor that contributed to the deterioration of the regional environment, weakening state-building and annihilating the minimalist democracy-building, if and where it was still alive. Furthermore, this situation paved the way for the competitive interference of the great powers.

To sum up, minority status, irredentist demands, territorial claims, and external threats aggravated the sense of insecurity. In 1934 Nazi Germany and Poland signed a non-aggression pact that raised the alarm in Prague. At the same time, the Balkan conferences lost their collective meaning as soon as Bulgaria and Albania were excluded from the Balkan Entente, which was perceived both in Sofia and in Tirana as an aggressive act against their hopes to carry out a "peaceful revisionism."

At the end of the same year Hjalmar Schacht, Hitler's newly appointed minister of economics, suggested to SouthEast European countries an exchange of agricultural goods for German agro-industrial equipment. The *Neuer Plan*, as it was called, was submitted as a "generous offer" to help these countries deal with the effects of the 1929 crisis and the limited results achieved by the regional trade agreements. The Balkan governments accepted the proposal, which actually turned out to be a huge fraud. Germany in fact systematically postponed the implementation of the Plan's provisions, spending its resources on the country's rearmament rather than meeting the agro-industrial expectations of Southeastern Europe.[23] Meanwhile, Italy was able to intensify its penetration into Albania, despite the (weak) resistance of King Zog, and therefore to establish the potential for further expansion in the Balkans.

At that point, however, East Central Europe was at the mercy of the right-wing extremism of Nazism and Fascism, both domestically and internationally. Not surprisingly, their political culture and praxis inspired the actions of paramilitary forces, for example in Austria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, as well as in the Sudetenland, threatening the last appearances of a parliamentary system, even when it was just a mere façade.

In the end, once the *Anschluss* (unification) with Austria was achieved by Hitler in March 1938 and the Munich Agreement was signed in September 1938, the quarrelsome countries of East Central Europe became tightened by a grip that left no chance for them to resist and survive. Under these conditions, as the Hungarian scholar István Bibó effectively summarized in the title of one of his famous books, the misery of the small East European states patently showed how powerless their institutions were to offer any potential for democracy-building and state consolidation.[24] Inevitably, instead, they succumbed to the external, and more powerful, oppressive regimes, suffered new partitions and/or compromised themselves, by supporting Nazi Germany and its policies, including the extermination of Jews, Roma, and political opponents.

In sum, the East Central European leaderships devoted all their efforts over two decades either to consolidate or to affect the postwar geopolitical framework, muddling authoritative and consensual institutions with authoritarian regimes and dictatorships. Truly, their main aim was to preserve social conformity and the power of the prewar ruling classes. Consequently, they pursued domestic and international divisive policies, fearing the far-reaching effects of mass societies, which were, however, marking the development of modernity. As a result, the failure of democracy-building in this region was, to a large extent, the unavoidable outcome of the political blindness of leaders, who implemented – in one form or another – exclusive rather than inclusive policies, looking at the past, rather than investing in the future. In the end, their uncertainties and reservations about how to cope with the comprehensive implications of modernity generated a lack of political and institutional courage, paving the way not only for the annihilation of democratic developments in the region, but also for their World War Two postwar social and political neutralization.

Notes

1 Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End 1917– 1923* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2016).
2 It should be remembered that military campaigns in the nineteenth century were predominantly short-lived events. Therefore, the great majority of conscripts (mostly peasants) did not have any memory of seemingly endless wars.
3 Vladimir Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Rights of Peoples to Self-Determination," *Vorbote*, No. 2 (2016). See also Iurii Garushiants, "The National Programme of Leninism", in Henry Huttenbach and Francesco Privitera (eds.), *Self-Determination. From Versailles to Dayton. Its Historical Legacy* (Ravenna, Italy: Longo, 1999), pp. 31–47.
4 See Allen C. Lynch, *Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of "Self-Determination," as Applied to Habsburg Europe*, in Huttenbach and Privitera, *Self-Determination*, pp. 15–30; Derek Heather, *National Self-Determination: Woodrow Wilson and his Legacy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); A. S. Link et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979)
5 Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper; 1942), p. 381.
6 Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What democracy is … and is not," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Summer 1991), p. 78; Larry Diamond, "Defining and Developing Democracy," in Robert A. Dahl, Ian Shapiro, and José Antonio Cheibub (eds.), *The Democracy Sourcebook* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2003), p. 36; Georg Sørensen, *Democracy and Democratization – Process and Prospects in a Changing World* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 12–13; and Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 3.
7 Roger King and Gavin Kendall, *The State, Democracy and Globalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); David Held, *Democracy and Global Order. From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Adam Przeworski, *Sustainable Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

8 Norman Davis, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919–20* (New York: Vintage, 2003); Mikhail Agursky, *The Third Rome. National Bolshevism in USSR* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986).

9 Stefano Bianchini, *Eastern Europe and the Challenges of Modernity* (Oxford, and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 85–93

10 Ivan Mužić, *Stjepan Radić u Kraljevini SHS* (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1988); and George D. Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant in Eastern Europe 1919–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

11 Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945).

12 Classic studies are: R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – and After* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974).

13 Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata, i Slovenaca, or Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

14 H. James Burgwyn, *The Legend of the Mutilated Victory. Italy, the Great War and the Paris Peace Conference 1915–1919* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993).

15 Stefano Bianchini, *Liquid Nationalism and State Partitions in Europe* (Cheltenham-Northampton, UK: Edward Elgar, 2017), pp. 25–29.

16 Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium: The Land between the Black and the Baltic Seas* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2012).

17 Larry L. Watts and Vladimir Ionaş, *Romanian Minority Policy and the 1918 Alba Iulia Resolution* (Bucharest: Roundtable on Ethnic Relations, 2019), pp. 50–52.

18 Compare James Burgwyn, *Il revisionismo fascista. La sfida di Mussolini alle grandi potenze nei Balcani e sul Danubio 1925–1933* (Milan, Italy: Feltrinelli 1979) and Thomas Ambrosio, *Irredentism: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001).

19 Jerzy W. Boreisza, *Il fascismo e l'Europa Orientale. Dalla propaganda all'aggressione* (Bari, Italy: Laterza, 1981), pp. 38–90.

20 Stefano Bianchini, *Sarajevo: le radici dell'odio* (Rome: Edizioni associate, 2003), pp. 208–209.

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22 Ibid., pp. 132–133.

23 Bianchini, *Eastern Europe*, pp. 80–81.

24 István Bibó, "The Miseries of East European Small States", in István Bibó and Iván Z. Dénes, *The Art of Peacemaking. Political Essays by István Bibó* (Yale, Conn.: Yale Scholarship Online, 2015).

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