Faculty Publications and Presentations   Helms School of Government

1997

Ethnic Politics in Eastern Europe

Stephen R. Bowers
Liberty University, srbowers2@liberty.edu

Recommended Citation

Bowers, Stephen R., "Ethnic Politics in Eastern Europe" (1997). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 199.
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov_fac_pubs/199

nuclear weapons will be carried out in Ukraine and Belarus by their governments – with Russian participation and the joint supervision of all the States of the "Commonwealth".

The article underlines continued disagreements on the future of the existing conventional forces: their size, subordination, armament and deployment. However, a possible compromise might emerge involving the creation of a "task-force" led by the temporary Commander-in-Chief, Marshal of Aviation Yevgeni Shaposhnikov, with the aim of producing a plan – in the two months he has at his disposal in that post. This aims to separate those conventional forces which have "supra-national" tasks, and therefore could come under some form of Central Command, from purely national forces now coming into being independently – as decreed in Ukraine from 3 January 1992. More agreement was reached on the future of the former KGB Frontier Guards: they are now to be placed under their own Commander-in-Chief, Colonel-General Kolinichenko, as a separate command in agreement with the appropriate Republics.

Finally, the article poses the question: "will those responsible for solving our defence problems really work hard for responsible solutions relevant to the "Commonwealth", or will they just engage in endless talk?" We cannot answer this question yet. But in defence matters as well as in the political, economic and social demands of a new system of government in newly-independent states trying to build upon the ruins of the former dictatorship of the Communist Party, the Nomenklatura and the Secret Police, is there a place for a word of optimism? It is, hopefully, possible that as the new entities face their problems, some of them intensified by national independence, the virtues of some form of inter-dependence may make their appearance. For example inter-dependence could have a role in dealing with food production and distribution; in electricity, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the oil and gas industries; and in the struggle against crime, drug enforcement policies, and against the remnants of the old system in corruption and "mafia-like" operations for the benefit of the few. The severity of the climate, especially in the north and the east, could also play a part in bringing former colleagues who for the time being have become nationalist enemies, together again for their own good and that of their peoples. Loose association could emerge on these topics: and such co-operations, if it succeeded in civilian and economic areas, could be extended into the defence field. Russia – and her neighbours – have in the past been through a "time of troubles" – and certainly are doing so again today. Might this not lead to a genuine search for improved co-operation between the independent states on these problems – motivated by a real desire to shield their populations from the disastrous effects of allowing this present "time of troubles" to continue for too long?

Ethnic Politics in Eastern Europe

Stephen R. Bowers

The eruption of full-scale war in Yugoslavia in 1991 sounded an alarm about the dire consequences of ethnic conflict throughout this once communist party dominated region. Organised warfare between Croatians and Serbians, producing an estimated 6,000 deaths by January of this year, raises serious questions about the future of East Europe's post-communist order. Yet, fighting in Yugoslavia is not the only indication that in post-communist Eastern Europe ethnic strife is increasingly the focus of political confrontations. Violent clashes between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania, ethnic tensions between Bulgarians and that country's Turkish minority, secessionist movements in Czechoslovakia, irredentist demands on regions of a disintegrating Soviet Union, and a rising tide of anti-Semitic sentiments throughout the region are testimony to the fact that ethnicity is going to be a routine concern of post-communist politics in Eastern Europe.

WHAT IS ETHNIC POLITICS?

It is important to note at the outset that ethnicity cannot be described as the single common denominator of politics in any of the East European states. Even in Yugoslavia, the most severely and bitterly fragmented nation in this region, there are other factors driving political debate. In every country people are playing roles that are independent of their ethnic identities. Yet, ethnicity permeates a wide variety of issues. Education is one of the best examples of this as conflicts over the language of instruction constitute one of the most ethnically divisive issues in Eastern Europe. Violent disputes in Romania after the 1989 revolution often called attention to this question as the Hungarian minority fought against what it saw as Romanian encroachments on the operation of Hungarian language schools, especially in the country's many Hungarian communities. During the 1991 elections, Bulgaria's Movement for Rights and Freedoms, an ethnically Turkish based party, called for a boycott of schools as a way of protesting against a decision by the Bulgarian legislature to revoke a law which had allowed the optional study of Turkish in public schools. The parents of Bulgarian school children had called for a boycott to protest about the introduction of optional Turkish classes.[1] In ethnically divided states issues ranging from education to land reform can quickly become ethnic disputes if group interests appear to be at risk.

Issues which have taken on an ethnic "flavour" fall into that category referred to as ethnic politics. Political issues and activism may be described as ethnic when conducted within the context of an ethnic community or as an expression of ethnic interests. In connection with this, there are several other concerns which relate either directly or indirectly to ethnicity. Among the

most prominent is nationalism. As is discussed below, nationalism, in its most basic and philosophical sense, is a sentiment supposed to have been submerged by four decades of "internationalist" rule in Eastern Europe. Cultural concerns also figure prominently in ethnic politics. While not synonymous with ethnicity, most ethnic groups claim distinctive cultural traditions and practices. Policies affecting those cultural expressions of ethnicity produce a disruptive and often violent brand of ethnic politics. Finally, religion, another frequent component of ethnic identity, also touches on questions that can be described as ethnic politics. All of these concerns were raised by Todor Zhivkov's treatment of Bulgaria's large Turkish minority during his years of absolute authority. As a result of his policies, ethnic Turks were denied the right to speak or study their native language, to maintain Islamic religious practices, or to honour Turkish traditions. In 1989 an estimated 100 Turks were killed in clashes with authorities and, eventually, over 300,000 Turks, most of whom were agricultural workers, emigrated to Turkey, thus adding to Bulgaria's international embarrassment while also placing severe strains on its economy. Ahmed Dogan, leader of Bulgaria's Turkish based political party, characterised Zhivkov's anti-Turkish policies as genocide.[2]

One might ask why the term ethnic politics should be used in this context instead of the more common term ethnic conflict. Describing this phenomenon as ethnic politics is meant to imply that conventional ethnic conflict has taken a more organised form and has gone beyond the level of disorganised or sporadic confrontations. A street fight between rival ethnic groups is merely conflict; when groups organise parties to oppose each other, it is politics.

NATIONALISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

The key element in the foundation of the modern state is nationalism, a passionate popular identification with the state based on territory, language, culture, and a sense of being unique as a people. Traditionally governments have encouraged nationalism because its existence strengthens the state especially in time of war when troops inspired by nationalistic fervour fight with an intensity that makes them far stronger than might otherwise be the case. With the proliferation of nation-states in modern times, the correspondence between the nation – what might be thought of as an ethnic concept – and the state – a legal entity – has become a loose and imprecise one. Consequently, nationalism, thought of as the right of a people who feel that they have a common nationality also to have a state that matches their nationality, became a triumphant philosophy of the 20th century.

For the communist party states of Eastern Europe, nationalism was a troubling concept because, in Marxist-Leninist terms, it was a "bourgeois principle" that expressed itself in isolationist and warlike tendencies. Under the force of mandatory internationalism, almost any expression of nationalism was prohibited. For East Europeans, communism was by its very nature anti-national and feelings of nationalism were suppressed by governments allied with the Soviet Union. As the USSR promoted Soviet interests in Eastern Europe, it often did so at the expense of the local regimes which, because of

their acquiescence in Soviet policies, came to be viewed as anti-national. Soviet efforts to solidify their control over the region, measures that involved both political and military interference, exacerbated a virulent nationalism among people who all too often had been traditionally anti-Russian long before the arrival of Soviet troops at the end of the Second World War.

The complexity of East European nationalism is further enhanced by the fact that throughout the region there are numerous groups distinguished by language, culture, and an enduring sense of their uniqueness. Because of this strong sense of identity, they have resisted amalgamation into the regional and national units alongside which they have been forced to coexist. For many of these people, the correspondence between nation and state has been extremely fragile. Not surprisingly, there are numerous conflicts about the existence of nations when those nations, at least in part, may have been products of the will of foreign governments. Czechoslovakia, for example, emerged as a state in 1918, not simply as a result of the will of Czech and Slovak diplomats, but also because of decisions made by the victorious powers after the First World War. International conferences held in the United States at Cleveland and at Pittsburgh produced the agreements that created the state of Czechoslovakia. According to Czechoslovakian President Vaclav Havel and others, these agreements have not been observed, thus raising legitimate questions about the present structure of the state.[3] Perceptions such as these have generated a brand of ethnic politics that has had a disruptive impact on the political development of the region since the revolutions of 1989.

Outsiders' awareness of East European ethnic politics was sharpened by the realisation that four decades of communism had failed to eradicate the national consciousness of minority groups. This failure is especially striking because communism was, if anything, characterised by an unflagging commitment to the notion of internationalism and the removal of the so-called "false-consciousness" of nationalism. Yet, in spite of pressures by regimes that set out to create a "new socialist man" who would identify with his class, the party's leadership, and the leadership of the USSR, nationalism, in its most brittle and even violent expressions, endured. The Slovak situation is typical of much of Eastern Europe. According to one account, since the revolution Slovakia has experienced an "avalanche of awakened national awareness" that is sweeping Slovakia toward secession from the Czechoslovakian Federal Republic.[4] Elsewhere in Eastern Europe there has been a proliferation of movements and parties founded on some notion of ethnic exclusiveness. Thus, with the end of socialism, it is nationalism that stands amid the ruins of communist party systems that promised to eliminate the phenomenon of nationalism. In this new environment, the de-stabilising influence of ethnic tension has emerged as a dominant political and social factor.

WHY HAS ETHNIC POLITICS APPEARED NOW?

An important question for consideration is why has ethnic politics emerged as such an important factor in Eastern Europe at this particular time? Several points are crucial in explaining this phenomenon. One of the most important is the

failure of the East European regimes established after the Second World War to develop a sense of legitimacy. By considering how most of the communist regimes were established in Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War, we get a clear picture of governments coming into existence as expressions, not of popular will, but of Soviet policy. Throughout the region, leaders were installed in office after having spent the turbulent war years in Moscow where they acquired blatant Soviet orientations on most issues of national development. It is, therefore, not surprising that the governments of Eastern Europe were generally regarded as devoid of legitimacy. For that generation of leaders, the key to survival was the cultivation of Moscow rather than meeting the demands of a local constituency. Todor Zhivkov of Bulgaria and Walter Ulbricht of the German Democratic Republic are among the best illustrations of this important and eventually fatal flaw.

As one considers the failure of the old communist order, it is important to note that the new post-communist order is experiencing some significant disappointments and that these setbacks often promote a greater ethnic consciousness as an element of popular anxiety. Since the collapse of communist power in Poland in 1989, non-communist administrations, pursuing "shock therapy" as a way of re-structuring the economic system, have generated considerable opposition. In the parliamentary elections on 27 October 1991, it became obvious that popular discontent was beginning to have some electoral impact. While the Solidarity "establishment" emerged victorious in those elections, there were some surprisingly strong showings by other parties. One of the most successful of those minor parties was the Confederation for an Independent Poland which received 7.5 per cent of the popular vote and won 10 per cent of the seats in the 460-member *Sejm* and four seats in the 100-member Senate. Founded in 1979 by Polish journalist Leszek Moczulski, the Confederation is Poland's oldest non-communist party. The Confederation's programme shows the appeal of Polish nationalism among many voters. Often accused of anti-Semitism and xenophobia, the Confederation has long advocated Polish sovereignty and defended the rights of ethnic minorities while also supporting nationalist independence movements in the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Baltic states. Moczulski has frequently denounced the Germans whom he fears are buying an excessive amount of property in Poland. The Confederation was joined by the Catholic Action party, another strong minor party which received 8.7 per cent of the vote, whose programme calls for promotion of Polish "national" values and a close co-operation between Church and state. Other parties with sympathetic views fared well in those elections as, according to some reports, the bloc of Christian parties – the Centre Citizens Accord, the Catholic Election Campaign, and the Christian Democratic Party – emerged as the most successful of the post-communist parties. Even the post-communist left, utilising, according to their critics, a variety of "extremist, . . . demagogic slogans", did fairly well in the campaign.[5] Together, the success of these parties indicates that ethnic concerns and related themes can assume a significant role if those parties credited with forcing the communists out of office fail in delivering the economic benefits sought by most voters.

A second reason for the appearance of ethnic politics is the failure of the international order of which the East European communist party states were components. The weakness of that international system was such that each regime was eventually forced to stand on its own. Economic problems alone would have been sufficient to produce a fatal weakening of the USSR's Eastern European system. As the Soviet leadership came to recognise that the burdens of an international empire were beyond Soviet economic capabilities, a reconsideration of the USSR's commitments to Eastern Europe became inevitable. With Mikhail Gorbachev's renunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine and that doctrine's assertion of international responsibility for national affairs in Eastern Europe, the pressures upon the region's governments could not be endured. Many of those pressures were Soviet-generated. One of the most important was the USSR's inability to continue subsidies, both direct and indirect, to the economies of East European nations that were members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Consequently, East Europeans began to face rising energy costs that eroded the fragile basis of their economic well-being. In addition, the USSR's demands that its allies adopt reform measures that matched those of the Soviet Union placed weakened leaderships under additional political strains. Soviet sponsorship of Egon Krenz as a replacement for an ageing and obstinate Erich Honecker in the German Democratic Republic and Kremlin support for Petar Mladenov's Bulgarian coup helped set the stage for the revolutions that transformed Eastern Europe into an arena in which ethnic politics could flourish.[6]

East European nationalism, the driving force behind ethnic politics, is a function of tradition and the natural desire of a people to define themselves as a community. In this sense, ethnicity retains a contemporary utility for an Eastern Europe entering a post-communist era. Throughout the region one hears expressions of a desire to "rejoin" Europe, a Europe that has moved ahead of its eastern neighbours both economically and politically. Yet, the prospects for full and formal membership in bodies such as the European Community and the Council of Europe are limited, thus forcing East Europeans to place primary stress on their ethnic communities. They recognise that their political survival will be a function of an ability to consolidate a domestic consensus rather than a product of international ties.

As Eastern Europe's communist order is being replaced by a new one, ethnic strife may be an unavoidable by-product of change. Studies of the process of modernisation have established the proposition that such an event, with its demand for new behavioural patterns, produces ethnic conflict.[7] The systemic transformation of Eastern Europe is bringing profound changes not only in avenues for social advancement but also threats to the benefits that people have accumulated under communist regimes. The latter have usually been those of a more mundane and less spectacular nature such as retirement and housing benefits. As citizens began to see the new order as one in which old assumptions about social security were challenged, it was inevitable that the resultant stress would produce fears that would impinge on ethnic relations. In such an environment, nationalism is often transformed into hostility against ethnic minorities.

The strength of an ethnic identification is intensified by the absence of other

unifying forces. The absence of real political parties during four decades of the dominance of the communist parties has left East Europeans without the institutional supports that might enable them to organise for effective collective action. In a similar fashion, churches in Eastern Europe, with the notable Polish exception, have not emerged as key actors in the post-communist era. In much of the region, clerical leaders have specifically disavowed political activism, thus surrendering the political battlefield to others. Romania's Timisoara Society, founded by religious activists in the city most associated with Romanian revolution, illustrates the difficulties that East European church leaders have had in transforming religious activism into political involvement. One of the country's most respected groups, the Timisoara Society resisted suggestions that it assume responsibilities for participation in the Romanian political process.

The appearance of ethnic politics in Eastern Europe is, at least in part, a result of the elites who are replacing the leadership of the old order. Many of the region's new leaders survived the repression of the communist era as exponents of the interests of their particular ethnic community. Few East European parties illustrate this better than Bulgaria's Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), a well-organised, Turkish-based party that is the third largest block in the Bulgarian parliament. Efforts by Bulgarian authorities legally to ban the MRF from participation in Bulgarian politics, an effort to placate Bulgarian nationalists, resulted in international pressure on the government. When the Bulgarian Supreme Court confirmed the MRF's registration for the October 1991 elections, it sparked protests by various Bulgarian nationalists who oppose the MRF's political involvement.[8] In a similar fashion, Romanian Gypsies have also mobilised themselves as a political force and have become active participants in that country's political process.

Finally, the emergence of vocal nationalism can be explained as a normal function of essentially free systems which allow individuals and groups to express their fears and frustrations and organise themselves in response to those anxieties. The collapse of governments which required "civility" between people who harboured traditional animosities toward each other has, as one would expect, been marked by an outpouring of long suppressed prejudice. For many people, racial and ethnic slurs, like pornography, are simply expressions of a new-found freedom.

SOURCES OF ETHNIC TENSION

There are several key sources of ethnic tension in Eastern Europe. Resentment of living under the rule of old adversaries is one of the most common and is intensified by memories of harsh methods associated with communist regimes. This resentment is further fuelled by the perception that policies of the central government, both in the communist and post-communist eras, aimed at a dilution of the group's cultural and ethnic identity. This was especially the case in Bulgaria during the mid-1980s as will be discussed below. An additional source of tension is the belief of numerous ethnic groups that they are superior

to others, especially those rival ethnic groups with whom they share territory or under whose rule they must live. Finally, ethnic tension is generated by the perception of many of East Europe's larger ethnic groups that they have carried an undue burden in providing for the development of their nations while the smaller and perhaps poorer groups have become more or less "welfare" cases. Conversations with Czechs speaking of Slovaks frequently reveal this tendency.

One of the most common features of ethnic politics is political activism by members of a particular ethnic group who see themselves as victims of their government's policies. This activism generally aims at moving governments to redress wrongs by implementing new policies. A second element of ethnic politics has a historical justification and attempts to establish territorial claims on the basis of determining who occupied a particular region at some time in the past. The Transylvanian and Ruthenian disputes illustrate this tendency. A third key element of ethnic politics is the cultural defence of group values such as language, educational rights, and customary dress. The general emphasis of ethnic politics is on the collective rights of groups as distinct from individual rights.

The emergence of ethnic politics in Eastern Europe tests basic assumptions about the impact of social cleavage on the intensity of political hostility. As G. Bingham Powell, Jr. observed in his study of Austrian politics, members of "pure or cumulative cleavage groups, separated from their political opponents by lines of social class, religion . . ." and other status indicators tend to develop a deeper sense of "political hostility". Such individuals see opposition groups as "alien" and their relative isolation encourages the persistence of old grievances and fears over long periods of time and, with changing circumstances, leads to the development of new conflicts to supplement the old ones.[9] Throughout Eastern Europe there are ethnic groups that exhibit the characteristics noted by Powell and their continued and even strengthened existence has become a central factor in post-communist politics in the region.

East European nationalism has been further complicated by the fact that the region's borders do not clearly demarcate the diverse peoples of this part of Europe. Ethnic groups find themselves in overlapping communities with those people whom they regard as bitter historical enemies. The case of Transylvania illustrates this. As part of Romania, it has a large Hungarian population. Within Transylvania, Hungarian and Romanian communities are so interspersed that it is impossible to determine what is "Hungarian Transylvania" and what might be viewed as "Romanian Transylvania". The bloody clashes in Tirgu Mures in 1990 demonstrated the bitterness of Hungarian–Romanian contacts in this region. How so much of Eastern Europe arrived at such a condition can be seen from an examination of what happened to Hungary following the collapse of a powerful Hungarian state in the 19th century. It lost most of its territory, shrinking from 325,000 square miles to just over 90,000 square miles, losing its coast to Croatia, while its population dwindled from almost 21 million to less than 8 million. Many ethnic Magyars found themselves living outside Hungarian borders in Romania, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere, a situation which has persisted until the present day.[10]

The complexity of East Europe's problems has been heightened by the existence of dispersed peoples such as Gypsies, Jews, Germans, and Hungarians. These groups have historically generated both fear and prejudice among those who suspected the loyalty of such "foreign" elements. The Second World War and its aftermath did much to reduce the German and Jewish presence, but Gypsies remain as one of East Europe's most important ethnic groups. As such, Gypsies represent a continuing challenge to most East European political and social systems. The problems of the Gypsy communities place severe strains on the social systems of the nations in which they reside and their very presence is a source of fear for many people who complain that in their nation's new atmosphere of freedom they are afraid to go out on the streets at night because of Gypsies whom they see as threats.

While the rest of Europe has also experienced ethnic tensions, East Europe continues to suffer from problems that have been relieved elsewhere on the continent. Unlike Western Europe, East Europe has not been blessed with strong systems that enjoyed the economic, political, and cultural power required to transform ethnic groups into subordinate elements of larger political orders. Consequently, ethnicity represents a challenge to East Europe that was long ago overcome by the more stable, prosperous West Europeans.

In an earlier time, East Europe's ethnic mosaic contributed to the rise of communism just as it now threatens to inhibit the reconstruction of the old communist systems. In the inter-war period, support for communist parties was concentrated among people who felt that they had been treated unfairly and were the targets of discrimination. For example, communist voting was high among the Magyar population that lived outside Hungarian borders and represented a protest among ethnic injustice. The persistence of bitter ethnic animosities that aided the rise of communism constitutes one of the greatest threats to the region's struggling democratic orders. As East Europe passes into its first post-communist decade, there is reason to fear that the ethnic conflicts that promoted the establishment of communism may inhibit the growth of democratic orders.

As the process of democratisation began in Eastern Europe, the region's ethnic conflicts intensified and became the focus of greater public scrutiny. Under communist systems, the official commitment to law and order kept ethnic disputes under control. Those who voiced ethnic frustrations and hostilities felt the full force of communist police power. Consequently, East Europe could bask in the deceptive glow of an ethnic harmony that was more apparent than real. Problems were not dealt with by the governments: the problems and those who called attention to them were suppressed. East Europe's ethnic peace was misleading and was the product, not of genuine harmony, but of brutal enforcement by leaders who proclaimed that the "new socialist man" had outgrown the false consciousness of particularist nationalism.

EAST EUROPE'S ETHNIC MOSAIC

All countries in East Europe have significant minorities, a fact that makes each nation vulnerable to the disruptions of ethnic politics while two nations, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, are classified as multinational because of the absence of a clearly dominant ethnic community. The most ethnically homogenous are Poland (95 per cent Polish), Hungary (93 per cent Hungarian), and Albania (93 per cent Albanian). The largest minority groups are the Hungarian community in Czechoslovakia (4 per cent nationally but 12 per cent in Slovakia); the Turkish minority in Bulgaria (11 per cent nationally); the Hungarians in Romania (8 per cent); and the Albanians in Yugoslavia (8 per cent nationally although most of them are in the Kosovo province where they constitute a clear majority).[11]

Yugoslavia's ethnic diversity is further complicated by the existence of a large Moslem community which constitutes 9 per cent of the national population. Bulgaria's difficult ethnic situation is exacerbated by the presence of Slavic Moslems known as Pomaks who make up 2 per cent of the country's population. Originally, both the Yugoslav Moslems and the Bulgarian Pomaks differed from their national majorities only in terms of religion. However, as a result of discriminatory state policies, they eventually developed a distinct national consciousness and became yet another component of East Europe's ethnic problem.

Gypsies, as noted above, are another important element of East Europe's ethnic mosaic. Although rarely even counted as a distinct ethnic group until recently, there are large numbers of Gypsies throughout the region. Of Yugoslavia's population, almost 4 per cent are Gypsies; of Romania's, about 5 per cent; of Hungary's and Bulgaria's, almost 7 per cent each. The Gypsy community in Czechoslovakia comprises about 5 per cent of its population and the one in Albania makes up almost 3 per cent of the national community. Poland has only about 20,000 Gypsies, less than 0.1 per cent. Regionally, the Gypsy population is growing fastest of all ethnic groups. Their problems are growing with equal rapidity; their isolated lifestyle, numerous health problems, a low literacy rate, and extensive criminal activities give the Gypsy community an unfavourable image among the general population. Given a deep-seated anti-Gypsy bias throughout most of Eastern Europe, there is an understandable reluctance on the part of many census respondents to describe themselves as Gypsies. Consequently, the generally accepted figures for the Gypsy populations probably underestimate their real numbers.

MAJOR ETHNIC CONFRONTATIONS

The existence of such ethnic diversity has created numerous opportunities for conflict in Eastern Europe. In his examination of ethnic conflict in this region, Vladimir V. Kusin has identified four major ethnic confrontations.[12] The first is in **Yugoslavia** where the survival of this multinational state is threatened by bitter conflicts between Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Hungarians, and Albanians. The intensity of Yugoslavia's ethnic strife, well before the outbreak of war in 1991, was reflected in the existence of independent military organisations

throughout the country. By 1991, Slovenia had an army of 21,000 while the Croatian military force consisted of 35,000 well-armed men. Before open, organised hostilities began, violent attacks on neighbouring ethnic groups had become a routine feature of life in this nation which was often seen in structural and ethnic terms as a copy of the Soviet system.[13]

A second major ethnic confrontation is taking place in the **Czechoslovakian Federal Republic**, the region's other multinational state. Since the fall of its communist system, Czechoslovakia has been locked in a constitutional crisis produced by Czech–Slovak disputes. As a result, Czechoslovakia's federal system is under great pressure from a growing separatist movement in Slovakia. Separatist tendencies in Slovakia can be seen upon entering the country at Slovak crossing points which often fly the Slovak national flag rather than that of Czechoslovakia. Less subtle expressions of ethnic tension are seen in the threats of the "Slovak Republican Army" to destroy the dykes along the Danube river in order physically to destroy their ethnic rivals.[14] The political battle for Slovak independence is actively supported by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the Slovak National Party and also enjoys the support of many deputies of the Christian Democratic Movement.

Growing unemployment and rising inflation, coupled with the disintegration of the Civic Forum group, have intensified confrontations between rival groups that have little love for the Czech and Slovak union.[15] The debate over the future of the Czechoslovak nation has steadily polarised a nation suffering from an economic crisis that has eroded popular confidence in the domestic policies of the government. According to a survey in September 1991, 78 per cent of the citizens of the CSFR describe themselves as dissatisfied with their living standards. The level of dissatisfaction was highest – 88 per cent – in Slovakia. These concerns were matched by a declining level of popular trust in national institutions, including the Czechoslovak Army which, as recently as 1980, enjoyed the support and confidence of 48 per cent of the national population. More recent surveys show the level of trust in the army declining from 25 per cent in 1987, to 10 per cent in 1990 and, finally, 7 per cent in 1991.[16] Against this background of domestic discontent, there is growing support for the creation of an independent Slovakia. According to an October 1991 survey by the Institute for Public Opinion Research, popular support for maintaining the federation had fallen to 52 per cent in Slovakia in contrast to 70 per cent support for the federation in the Czech Republic. Surveys indicate support for completely independent Czech and Slovak military organisations by 20 per cent of the Slovak population but only 3 per cent of the Czech population.

While advocates of Slovak secession still constitute a minority, it is a vocal and often disruptive minority. On 29 October 1991, a Bratislava celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the Czechoslovakian state was broken up by hecklers who chanted "Enough of Havel" and threw eggs at the Czechoslovak president. The chairman of the Slovak National Unification Party, Jan Veselovsky, boasted that the incident was the "beginning of the end of the government coalition as well as a major defeat for President Havel".[17] Slovak politicians unwilling to support independence are facing

increasing pressure to join the secessionist movement. Those rejecting such a position are, in the words of one Bratislava newspaper, "plain traitors" who hide behind the "constitutional law on sovereignty".[18] Opponents of Slovakian independence routinely denounce "Slovak extremists" who have adopted the old communist slogan – "He who is not with us is against us!" – and enriched it with the references to the "final solution" so often spoken of by the pro-Nazi separatist Slovak People's Party. Rita Klimova, the CSFR ambassador to the United States, has complained that in the turbulent Slovakian political environment there are increasing "manifestations of anti-Semitism".[19] A national referendum on the future of the Czechoslovakian state, more and more the subject of official discussion, is widely seen as an event that could promote unrest throughout the nation and would certainly produce an even wider polarisation of public opinion.[20]

Bulgaria is the site of another dramatic ethnic confrontation. In this Balkan country, national harmony has been disrupted by disputes between the 1 million strong Turkish community and Bulgaria's majority. A turning point in Turkish-Bulgarian relations came in 1984–85 when Todor Zhivkov's government led a forced assimilation campaign that resulted in the exodus of approximately 300,000 Turks. During the campaign, Turks were denied such forms of national expression as wearing traditional forms of dress, speaking their language in public, and giving their children Turkish names. Eventually, many Turks returned as a result of US mediation that led to closer positive Bulgarian–Turkish relations on this issue. Yet, in spite of more enlightened post-communist policies, the dispute has persisted. Even the question of whether or not to designate Bulgaria as a "binational" state in recognition of the large Turkish minority has become a divisive political issue.[21]

Finally, **Hungarian activism** – which has taken several forms, some provocative and some not – has been the focus of strife in Transylvania as well as eastern Slovakia and Yugoslavia. Educational concerns are a common expression of Hungarian activism and efforts to maintain Hungarian elements in local school curriculums have led to clashes with other groups. Such educational disputes fuelled ethnic violence in Tirgu Mures in 1990 when Hungarian-supplied textbooks were cited as having inspired anti-Romanian sentiments. It has also touched Ukraine where there is a large Hungarian minority in the Zakarpatskaya Oblast. The activities of ethnic Hungarians from the West, many of whom have travelled to Romania in an effort to assert what they see as Hungarian "collective rights", placed strains on relations between local Hungarians and the Romanian majority. In Yugoslavia, the major political party of Vojvodina's ethnic Hungarians is working to achieve cultural autonomy and minority self-rule, both central concerns of Hungarians throughout the region.

There are several other distinct reflections of ethnicity as a political phenomenon in Eastern Europe. One of the most important is the proliferation of organisations to represent the interests of various ethnic groups. For example, in **Romania** shortly after the revolution, Romanian Gypsies created the Democratic Union of the Romanies as part of an effort to alter conditions of the Ceausescu period when Gypsies were ignored and denied

the official ethnic group status. The formation of the Democratic Union signalled the end of the Gypsies' traditional acceptance of anti-Gypsy bias in Romania.[22]

A corresponding organisational effort has been made on behalf of Romania's ethnic Germans. The problems of ethnic Germans gained attention in 1990 when emigration to Germany had reached an all-time high and in German areas of Transylvania entire villages were abandoned as residents exercised their rights to emigrate. The German communities remaining in Romania have, as a result, difficulties in maintaining traditional social structures, their religious communities have been devastated, and they are having problems in preserving the German school system because of shortages of both teachers and students. In 1990, approximately one half of Romania's 200,000-member ethnic German community, attracted by the vision of German prosperity in contrast to Romania's continuing desperate situation, emigrated to the Federal Republic. In 1991, despite appeals from both Bonn and Bucharest for the Germans to stay in their Romanian communities, the exodus continued. As part of an effort to improve the lot of ethnic Germans in Romania, Dr. Karl Singer helped to organise the Democratic Forum of Germans, a group whose present membership numbers 25,000. Minority "stabilisation programmes", an effort to offer incentives to stem the flow of Germans from Romania, have thus far had little impact on the exodus.[23]

Ethnically based political parties, very close in structure and function to the interest groups noted above, are another expression of ethnic politics. The first congress of the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (HDUR) in April 1990 signalled the willingness of ethnic minorities to participate in politics as representatives of their national group. At its congress in Oradea, a Romanian city just 10 miles from the Hungarian frontier, the group announced its intention to place members in over three dozen legislative races in the 1990 Romanian elections. As an indication of the determination of Hungarian-Romanian citizens to avoid political isolation, much of the HDUR's leadership supported the ruling National Salvation Front, a move that angered many HDUR supporters and prompted the HDUR president to offer his resignation.[24] Bulgaria's Movement for Rights and Freedoms, discussed below, is the third most powerful political party in the Bulgarian parliament and further evidence of the success of ethnically-based political parties.

As ethnically-based political movements generate a high level of activism by formerly suppressed ethnic communities, there is a growing and natural reaction against their political involvement. For political forces hostile to the concept of democracy, the anti-minority tendencies of many East Europeans present not only an important electoral opportunity but also a chance, perhaps, to doom the region's democratic experiments to failure. In Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the successor to the old Bulgarian Communist Party, has effectively played an anti-Turkish card in both the 1990 and 1991 election campaigns.[25]

The appearance of ethnically-based political parties as well as other parties that utilise ethnic themes has also aroused considerable opposition among those who express genuine concern for the future of democracy in Eastern

Europe. Bulgarian legislation banning ethnic political parties, supported by the Union of Democratic Forces, has been motivated not only by anti-Turkish feelings but also by fears of an ethnic polarisation that could cripple democratic development in Bulgaria. This concern is often reflected in opposition to the notion of collective minority rights in contrast to individual rights. Deputy Senate President Vasile Mois expressed his opposition to the collective rights concept with his assertion that only by treating minority concerns in a calm, restrained manner could a nation avoid an exacerbation of "sensitive" concerns. Excessive public debate, he maintained, simply provides "free advertisements" for those who would generate ethnic strife.[26]

In Romania two growing political parties, the *Romania Mare* (or Greater Romania) Party and the *Vatra Romaneasca*, are demonstrating the political potency of popular anxieties about the process of change. The *Romania Mare* Party, with a membership of approximately 100,000, is associated with the weekly journal *Romania Mare*, one of the country's two most popular periodicals. Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the party's president, enjoys the distinction of having been sued for libel 90 times in just one year as a result of inflamatory articles written for *Romania Mare*. Along with the paper's editor Eugen Barbu, Tudor was closely allied with both Ceausescu and the Securitate, Ceausescu's dreaded secret police. Following a lengthy period of cordial relations with Romania's National Salvation Front, the paper broke with the government after former ally Prime Minister Petre Roman, concerned about Romania's international image, denounced the paper as a "racist and chauvinistic" publication that should be banned. Consequently, Tudor declared that Roman, as Romania's first Jewish Prime Minister, was incapable of hearing the "voice of the blood" heard by ethnic Romanians concerned about the country's explosive situation. The Greater Romania Party ideology calls for a more positive evaluation of the country's communist period and denounces Romania's historical enemies who seek the country's dismemberment. Hungary, of course, is regarded as the most dangerous historical enemy although the international community in general is viewed as anti-Romanian. The party also declares that there are internal "occult forces, . . . supported and manipulated from abroad" who support foreign adversaries. Ethnic minorities, in particular Hungarians, Jews, and Gypsies, are described as part of the anti-Romanian conspiracy. The party programme calls for the creation of a government-sponsored Committee for the Investigation of Anti-Romanian Activities. In the view of the *Romania Mare* Party, the task of "national reconciliation" can only be accomplished by ethnic Romanians although minorities who are willing to denounce other ethnic minorities are given a place in party programmes. Through its youth organisation, the *Romania Mare* Party hopes to forge a new generation committed to the ideals of a Romanian "national socialism".[27] *Vatra Romaneasca* (or Romanian Hearth) utilises similar themes and has worked with the *Romania Mare* Party. *Vatra* first attracted attention in March 1990 when it was credited with sparking the riots in Tirgu Mures. *Vatra*, closely connected with Ceausescu's Securitate, has worked to exploit Romanian fears that Hungarian demands for cultural autonomy are part of a campaign to strip Transylvania from Romania.[28]

Frequent concerns about ethnic conflict have been expressed by Romanians alarmed by growing political extremism. In November 1991, the Romanian paper *Romania Libera* issued a demand for the General Prosecutor's Office to "deal with" the *Romania Mare* Party, not because of any "spectacular organisational events" for which it might have been responsible, but because it "has practised fierce extremist journalism". This kind of journalism, according to *Romania Libera*, has "permitted domestic and foreign circles . . . to talk about the revival of Iron Guardism . . . and about anti-Semitism in Romania. . . ." Even the Romanian Parliament has joined the chorus and in a Parliamentary resolution formally denounced extremism of any kind.[29]

Voting in elections in Eastern Europe has been increasingly reflective of ethnic boundaries. Studies of a Polish electoral campaign in Upper Silesia in 1990 indicated that the vote for the "German" candidate corresponded to the share of the population that avows its Germanic origins and was limited to ethnically German electoral districts.[30] Ethnic voting has been especially pronounced in elections in Czechoslovakia where both Slovaks and Hungarians have used the electoral process to press their demands against the central government. Czechoslovakian electoral laws have recently been drawn in such a way as to discourage ethnic voting but the existence of numerous grievances perpetuates this pattern. Many politicians openly encourage voting along ethnic lines, insisting that there is an "ethnic obligation" to do so. In Bulgaria, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms has consistently demonstrated the cohesion of an ethnic community as certain districts are almost totally dominated by a party which is a distinct minority at the national level, winning only 7.5 per cent of the vote in the 1991 elections.[31]

The rise of ethnic politics has brought about numerous movements for, at a minimum, cultural autonomy and, eventually, minority self-rule. Hungarians have been especially active in this regard and in Serbia, acting through the Democratic Community of Vojvodina, have initiated a programme that is an attempt to counter the republic's new constitution which severely limits provincial self-government. Yugoslavia, in the period before its civil war began, was torn by movements of this nature as the Croatian Serbs, Moslems of southern Serbia, Serbs of Herzegovina, and the Albanians pursued a variety of programmes for self-determination.[32]

ETHNIC CONFLICT AS AN INTERNATIONAL FACTOR

Relations between the nations of Eastern Europe, as well as with those outside the region, have been affected by the increased activism of the area's many ethnic groups as ethnic conflicts have assumed an international form. International relations have been affected in at least two ways. One is through the relatively passive, self-protective responses of nations concerned about preserving their interests in the face of events outside their borders. When ethnic unrest in Yugoslavia escalated in 1991, raising the prospect of widespread violence, even warfare, throughout the nation, the Hungarian government responded by placing reinforcements on its border with Yugoslavia. Additional police guards were placed in border settlements in order to keep

"armed men on the other side of the border". The government also designated sites for refugee camps and initiated planning for compulsory visas for Yugoslavs wishing to enter Hungary. Consideration was even given to closing stretches of the Yugoslav-Hungarian border. Long delays at many border crossings had, for all practical purposes, the effect of closing stretches of the frontier.[33] Another Yugoslav neighbour, Romania, expressed its concern for Balkan stability during this time by placing the Romanian Army on alert. In making this announcement, Romanian Defence Minister Major General Constantin Nicolae Spiroiu expressed his concern that Yugoslavia's inter-ethnic conflicts might threaten the stability of the entire Balkan region.[34]

A second way in which international relations have been affected by ethnic conflict has been the growing tendency of governments to address – perhaps even challenge or threaten – the leaderships of other nations in an effort to resolve ethnic concerns. This is often done in a confrontational manner. When the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania staged a congress on the Transylvanian issue in the Hungarian town of Eger, there was a series of protests by the Romanian legislature. As the conference delegates raised questions about the legal status of Transylvania, Romanian legislators declared that the meeting constituted a threat to the inviolability of Romania's frontiers. One member of the parliament, Augustin Botis of the National Salvation Front, demanded that the Romanian government should "penally punish those who disregard the national feeling" of Romanians by participating in conferences such as the Eger meeting. Others demanded that the Hungarian government take steps to prevent such "desecrations of Romanian dignity" in order to protect the "already highly fragile relations between Hungary and Romania. . . ." Romanian relations with both Poland and Hungary suffered in August 1991 when an obscure, apparently neocommunist Polish magazine, *Sens*, published an article that outlined plans for a Central European economic integration programme that included Transylvania but not the rest of Romania. Many Romanians accused the Hungarians of using their close relationship with the Polish government as part of a campaign to dismember Romania.[35]

The Yugoslav civil war has raised the prospect of foreign intervention, often motivated by ethnic concerns, in this conflict. The Serbian government's insistence that Serbia must come to the aid of all Serbs, including those who live under an "oppressive" Croatian government, illustrates the destructive capacity of this tendency as well as growing confusion over the question of what is a nation.[36] The plight of Bulgarian refugees has generated equally intense concerns by organisations seeking to protect their interests. In October 1991, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Union of Macedonian Societies issued a proclamation that it could not remain indifferent to the "threats made by Serbian chauvinists to occupy Macedonia and turn it into southern Serbia." Declaring that Macedonia was not alone in its struggle for freedom, the proclamation announced that the region would "be given support by patriotic Bulgarians all over the world". Events in Yugoslavia have prompted widespread denunciations of the communist regime's policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of neighbouring states because of perceptions that this meant neglecting the sufferings of Bulgarians living in

Yugoslavia. According to Bulgarian accounts, those displaced Bulgarians have lived in an anti-Bulgarian atmosphere "for decades". In spite of its expressions of concern, the Bulgarian government denies reports that it has been sending weapons into Yugoslavia.[37] Another Yugoslav neighbour, Albania, has expressed concern for the fate of its ethnic compatriots who are endangered by Yugoslav developments. On 7 October 1991, the Albanian leadership publically linked the Yugoslav crisis with developments in Kosovo and expressed concern about the southern drift of Serbian-Croatian fighting. Underscoring a fear of military incursions, the Albanian Army was placed on alert status along the Albanian–Yugoslav frontier. The Albanians have recognised Kosovo's declaration of independence and are using Albanian diplomacy in an effort to secure greater international recognition of Kosovo's full sovereignty.[38]

With growing concerns for displaced ethnic minorities now a common feature of most European foreign policies, the concept of non-interference in the internal affairs of another state seems to have been displaced by greater attention to minority rights. Reflecting German fears for the welfare of ethnic Germans in Romania, the Bonn government has, since the fall of Ceausescu, insisted that long-term German aid for Romania is dependent not only upon the democratisation of Romania but also upon Romania's treatment of its minorities. While the German government has maintained its "open door" policy toward ethnic Germans wishing to come to Germany, it has offered cultural and humanitarian aid in an effort to improve the lives of those who elect to remain in Romania.[39]

Diplomatic recognition is another instrument that has appeared during the Yugoslav crisis which some might regard as "intervention". The question of Hungarian recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, given Hungary's geographic proximity to Yugoslavia, has been one of the most important concerns. Balazs Horvath, chairman of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the largest of the Hungarian governing parties, stated in October that his party supports not only immediate recognition of the secessionist republics but believes the government should use all its international influence to secure general recognition of Slovenian and Croatian independence. Movements of Yugoslavian federal troops in the vicinity of the Hungarian frontier have threatened Hungary's diplomatic position.[40] The matter of recognition, according to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, has been approached with considerable caution as the Hungarian government will extend diplomatic recognition to Slovenia and Croatia only after the EC nations make a positive decision. Hungary's caution has been motivated by a desire to maintain political and economic relations with Serbia and to protect the position of the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina. Croatian overtures to the Polish government brought an equally cautious approach. The Polish authorities, evidently adopting a position comparable to that of most European nations, indicated to the Croatian Foreign Minister that Poland planned to recognise Croatia and would offer the Croatians humanitarian assistance in the form of medicines.[41]

While the violence of Yugoslavia's civil war has had an impact on several nations of the region, Bulgaria's treatment of its ethnic Turkish minority has

poisoned Bulgarian–Turkish relations for years. Territorial conflicts of the 19th century, coupled with negative historical impressions produced by five centuries of Ottoman rule, have led most Bulgarians to view Turkey as their greatest enemy. For many Bulgarians, the large Turkish minority is an unpleasant reminder of those centuries of Ottoman domination. Throughout much of the past decade, the presence of over 1 million Turks in Bulgaria, many of whom were dispersed throughout the nation rather than congregated near the border with Turkey, raised the spectre of a Turkish invasion in order to "protect" this minority. Memories of the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus when a Turkish minority was also an issue have given the Turkish "threat" the appearance of reality. Widespread coverage in the Bulgarian media of the anti-Islamic remarks made by Bulgaria's Prime Minister Dimitar Popov in 1990 underscored the official distrust of many Bulgarian officials toward Turkey, the Turkish government, and Turkish traditions. Continuing incidents along the Bulgarian–Turkish border have heightened both popular as well as official fears of a threat to the nation's security.[42]

More recent developments in Bulgarian–Turkish affairs, in particular the October 1991 election results, have demonstrated the international sensitivity of this situation. Following the election, a spokesman for the Movement for Rights and Freedoms accused the Greek press and the Greek Foreign Ministry of "intervention" in Bulgaria's internal affairs. The specific actions constituting "intervention" were comments in Greek publications and a statement by the Greek Foreign Ministry expressing Greek fears of a deterioration in relations with Bulgaria because of the rising parliamentary influence of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, an organisation described by the Greeks as an "ethnic Turkish party". A declaration by the Turkish Foreign Ministry speaking of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms as "compatriots" was cited in the Greek statement as evidence of the party's ties to Turkey.[43]

Even old disputes have often returned to haunt new regimes as they attempt to formulate foreign policies that reflect contemporary needs. In the fall of 1991, talks between the German and Czechoslovakian governments were disrupted by the question of how the Sudeten German minority was treated by the Czechoslovakian government at the end of the Second World War. On the eve of the meeting between Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Czechoslovak Finance Minister Vaclav Klaus, Egon Lansky, spokesman of the CSFR Foreign Ministry was quoted as having said that the German government realised that the Sudeten Germans deserved their treatment and that there was no question of compensation for those who lost their property. Following initial reports of this statement, Lansky insisted that he had been misquoted and that he had always felt that the Sudeten Germans had been illegally deprived of their property.[44]

In some cases governments have dealt with sensitive ethnic issues without assuming the confrontational tone of Bulgarian–Turkish or Hungarian–Romanian relations. Yugoslav–Romanian contacts over the issue of Yugoslav minorities in Romania illustrate a non-confrontational mode of diplomacy. During a state visit to Yugoslavia in 1990, Romanian President Ion Iliescu agreed to a Yugoslav proposal for changing the position and rights of Yugoslav

minorities in Romania. Both the preservation of cultural traditions as well as resettlement were considered during Romanian–Yugoslav talks on this question.[45] This relatively successful excursion into ethnic diplomacy raises some hope that ethnic ties between the nations of Eastern Europe might at some future date become an instrument for promotion of positive relations or, at the very least, that problems can be managed without confrontation.

These expressions of ethnic politics have been made possible by the entry into governments of advocates of ethnic causes and concerns. In the communist era, this phenomenon was virtually unknown because the Soviet Union's domination of those governments worked to suppress nationalistic expressions and protests. As loyal Marxist-Leninists, officials knew they should suppress expressions of concern over the fate of fellow-countrymen living within the borders of their East European allies. Non-interference was the watchword of "socialist" foreign policies and subordination to Moscow meant that the Soviets would have the final word on most cross-border ethnic concerns. Now, governments are increasingly under the control of people who feel an obligation to respond to popular concerns, including ethnic ones. Moreover, given the genuine popular feelings surrounding ethnic sensitivities in Eastern Europe, it is not surprising that individuals who were ethnic activists when the communists were in power have now risen to political prominence. As communist regimes worked to limit real political activism by forcing participation through officially approved organisations, "real politics" was increasingly limited to the underground activities of ethnic groups bound together by linguistic, cultural, and historical ties.

THE SOVIET CONNECTION

The East European situation, difficult enough by itself, has been aggravated by the continuing deterioration of the Soviet Union, a process which once again demonstrates the international dimensions of ethnic politics in Eastern Europe. There are several points of contention. First, there is a vocal Polish minority in Lithuania that has called for a "Polish national-territorial zone". As the Baltic situation began to unravel in 1991, their demands became more pronounced. Poles constitute 7.7 per cent of the population of Lithuania with approximately 160,000 members of the Polish community living in Vilnius. Lithuania's Poles feel that they have been discriminated against by the government's abolition of the Polish local councils in areas dominated by the Polish minority and that they are threatened by plans to enlarge Vilnius' city limits, thus diminishing Polish influence in the city. Because of the Poles' concerns for their fate in an independent Lithuania, many Lithuanians suggested that Poles were pro-Soviet, preferring to be Soviet citizens rather than Lithuanian citizens of Polish descent. Such accusations simply added to the Polish minority's already uncomfortable position. In an effort to relieve ethnic tensions between Lithuanians and Lithuanian-Poles, a Polish–Lithuanian declaration was formulated in October 1991 by the foreign ministries of Poland and Lithuania. The declaration makes provisions for each nation to

care for the cultural and religious aspirations of minorities and to ensure that they have education in their native languages. Lithuanian Supreme Council Chairman Vytautas Landsbergis supplemented the declaration with his assurances that the government did not regard the Polish minority as being pro-communist.[46]

Second, there is the existence of irredentist problems along the USSR's western border. The most volatile of these today is in the Moldovan Republic, formerly known as the Moldavian Soviet Republic. Ethnic strife in Soviet Moldovo has affected Romania through its cultivation of pan-Romanian tendencies. The formation in 1990 of the "Pro Besarabia si Bucovina" cultural association in Romania, a group that seeks the "national integration of the spiritual, cultural, and artistic values of the Besarabian and Bucovinian Romanians in the Daco-Roman space", is one indication of Romanian interest in this area. Romanian denunciations of the "imperialist occupation of the Republic of Moldovo" in January 1991, are another expression of Romanian aspirations. The resolution of a joint session of the Romanian parliament on 24 June 1991, a condemnation of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the territorial adjustments that it brought, put the Romanian legislature on record as condemning the territorial status of Moldovo. A few days later an international conference in Chisinau, the Moldovan capitol, documented and denounced the consequences of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. In September 1991, following Moldovo's declaration of independence from the USSR, former Prime Minister Petre Roman described the area as "one of the oldest Romanian areas" but insisted that the question of unification with Romania would have to be answered by the citizens of Moldovo themselves.[47] Romanian interest has, in many respects, been reciprocated by the Moldovan government. Well before the failed Soviet coup, the Moldovan legislature officially encouraged the residents of Moldova to stage joint cultural events with neighbouring Romanian towns and to celebrate Romanian national holidays.[48] Separatist movements by the republic's other ethnic groups, Russians, Ukrainians, and the Gagauz, have escalated an already tense situation and raised questions about whether Romania, a likely future nation-state home for Moldovo, wants to have a large Russian as well as a small Turkish minority. Many felt that the activism of Moldovo's minority might have been the result of KGB involvement in the republic before the 1991 coup attempt.

Another irredentist situation, the dispute over Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, pits Czechoslovakia against the Ukraine. As the Ukraine moved toward independence from the Soviet Union, there were new expressions of concern about the fate of those former Czechoslovakian citizens now living in Ruthenia, a part of the USSR since 1945. The population of this region numbers approximately 1,200,000 people, 750,000 of whom are Ruthenians. The rest are Hungarians, Germans, Romanians, and Slovaks as well as some immigrants from Russia and the Ukraine.[49] Recent documentation of the abuse of human rights in Ruthenia and the Ukraine's refusal to recognise Ruthenia as a nation have led to efforts by many Ruthenians as well as Czechoslovakians to raise demands that the Prague government approach Soviet authorities about the Ruthenian situation. The demands of the Ruthenians are being advanced by

the Society of Carpathian Ruthenians which, early in 1991, led a delegation to Prague in order to present a petition to the Czechoslovak government. The fundamental demand presently advanced regarding Ruthenia is that it be allowed to conduct a referendum as the first step toward establishment of an independent republic. Ruthenians have also expressed a desire to be Roman Catholics once again, now a legal possibility, after years of being forced into membership of the Orthodox Church. A similar relationship exists between Hungary and the Soviet Union because of the large Hungarian minority in the area. The Hungarian government has recently opened a Hungarian Consulate in Ruthenia and is encouraging Hungarian economic investments in the region.[50]

Finally, the liberalisation of Soviet emigration laws, well underway by early 1991, raised the prospect of thousands of Soviet citizens flooding into both Eastern and Western Europe in search of a better life. If the deterioration of the Soviet economy and the collapse of the Soviet state continue, this tendency could severely strain the weak social service systems existing in East Europe and further weaken the region's struggling democracies. Should that economic decline be matched by political disorder, the refugee problem could threaten every state on the Soviet periphery.[51] Anxiety about the USSR's situation was demonstrated by Soviet soldiers, many of whom resisted returning to the USSR as the Warsaw Pact military arrangements were terminated. When Soviet troops were withdrawing from Hungary, Poland, and Germany, many soldiers attempted to remain in those nations rather than face the uncertain prospect of life in their homeland.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

In a very general sense, most East European communist party regimes suffered from serious intellectual and philosophical shortcomings when dealing with ethnic issues. Being unable to build on nationalism as a source of legitimacy, they consistently underestimated the roles of nationalism, ethnicity, and all that went with it. Communism as an ideology failed to unite the many different "nations" of Eastern Europe but, because the regime refused to acknowledge the persistence of distinct national identities within their nations, no alternative programmes or proposals were advanced. Consequently, the post-communist regimes must now deal with a phenomenon that West Europeans faced long ago and attempt to resolve the challenges of nationalism that takes several different forms in most East European nations.

Social mobility is a key concept in studies of the development of nations and makes possible the upward advancement of individuals from one group to another. Such mobility gives a successfully developing society a vitality that promotes growth. Ethnicity, however, is a static phenomenon to which the concept of mobility does not apply. Given the importance of ethnicity in East Europe, the prospects for political and social development are seriously limited. As citizens are generally unable to change ethnic affiliations, their advancement is likely to come only as a group and, more often than not, at

the expense of other groups seen as rivals. Such a condition sharpens social tensions, inhibits the peaceful evolution of society and encourages an obsession with collective rights at the expense of individual rights.

There is considerable support for the Hungarian government's approach in dealing with national minorities. The Hungarian Constitution does not characterise individuals in terms of ethnic affiliation but deals with them as citizens who enjoy no special benefits, simply the rights and obligations of any Hungarian citizen. In discussing this approach at a joint meeting between Romanian and Hungarian Social Democrats in Budapest, Constantin Avramescu, deputy chairman of the Romanian Social Democratic Party, said minority problems can be dealt with only after the establishment of "real democracies", systems in which rights are assigned on an individual basis rather than on a group basis.[52] While such an approach misses those ethnic concerns which focus on cultural or community values, matters requiring group treatment, it does facilitate mobility by allowing citizens to advance as individuals rather than simply as group members.

In addition to the existence of sharply defined ethnic groups, there is an absence of overlapping group memberships in Eastern Europe. The trade unions and other professional associations of the communist period rarely brought the members of different ethnic groups together in any meaningful sense. Consequently, there are few successful shared experiences that create a sense of community that might serve to elevate popular consciousness above narrowly defined concerns that correspond to ethnicity.

Eastern European ethnic groups suffer from a social and political isolation that generates ethnic antagonism. As Eastern Europe's borders have been stripped of their barbed wire and the armed guards who in the past prevented movements across those frontiers, thousands of ethnic Hungarians have fled Romania in order to be reunited with fellow Hungarians. At the same time, ethnic Germans are leaving East Europe in search of opportunities in a reunited Germany while Romanians are speaking of the common bond between Romanians of Besarabia, Bucovina, and Romania itself. Debates about who is really Hungarian or Romanian and whether or not Czechs have really exploited Slovaks are serving to further isolate from each other the groups who share common East European homelands.[53] Ethnic migrations have become commonplace as groups attempt to avoid living in close proximity to those other people who are viewed as enemies.

While the situation is difficult, it would be worse if there was a coincidence of ethnicity and economic, political, or social status. Such an occurrence is relatively uncommon as deprivations have generally been shared by members of all of East Europe's ethnic groups. Throughout the Ceausescu period in Romania a common reply to charges of the government's mistreatment of the Hungarian minority was to observe that Ceausescu's regime mistreated everyone regardless of ethnic heritage. In a similar but more positive fashion, Poland's bishops issued a pastoral letter in 1991 dealing with the issue of anti-Semitism, something that had been noted in Poland's presidential election campaign. In their letter, the bishops insisted that it was wrong to blame the Jews for the excesses of Stalinist officials because both Poles and Jews had

served in the Stalinist security forces in Poland and Poles as well as Jews had been victims of that system.[54] More recently, the economic difficulties of the reconstruction period seem to have been felt more or less equally by members of all ethnic groups.

Finally, it is indisputable that Eastern Europe is fragmented by ethnic politics. The crucial question, however, is what is the impact of such a fragmentation? Viewing the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the growing pressures for a breakup of the Czechoslovakian nation, the region's only true multi-ethnic nation, encourages an assumption that the fragmentation produced by ethnic politics may inevitably lead to the further fragmentation of Eastern Europe's state structures. Yet, this trend may not be regionally pervasive. Outside Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, while there are strong ethnic tensions, there is substantial support for maintenance of the territorial status quo. Bulgaria, for example, torn by bitter ethnic strife that has worked its way into political discourse, enjoys a leadership that is working against separatist tendencies. Ahmed Dogan, the leader of Bulgaria's Turkish-based Movement for Rights and Freedoms, has declared his party's opposition to all demands for creation of separate states or autonomous regions. According to Dogan, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms is concerned not only about the Turkish minority but also about the other minorities that make up the Bulgarian people. Describing his party's membership as "loyal Bulgarian citizens", Dogan declared the party's commitment to guaranteeing the "sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Bulgaria. The Movement's most basic demand, he has stated, is "recognition of the Turkish minority as a constructive force" helping Bulgaria to become part of the European community, something which is necessary in the development of "pluralism and genuine democracy".[55] Ethnic strife is also conditioned by the lack of cohesion apparent in some ethnic group structures. According to a recent account of the three Hungarian political groups operating in Slovakia, the "Hungarian parties often hate each other more than the extreme right wing and the communists". The Hungarian press in Slovakia has also split and cannot arrive at a common interpretation of the most basic questions about the future of Czechoslovakia.[56] In a similar fashion, the Hungarian movement in Romania is divided over interpretations of what constitutes Hungarian interests in that country. Romania's Hungarians have adopted strategies which vary widely according to whether they are acting as a national minority or as a local majority. In cases where they constitute a local majority, Hungarians have often adopted discriminatory policies against those Romanians finding themselves a minority in Hungarian communities.[57] Such tactical and programmatic diffusion diminishes the prospect that ethnic groups will form cohesive forces that will lobby effectively for autonomy or separatism.

Much of contemporary interest in East European ethnic conflict is motivated by a concern for the prospects of widespread violence in Eastern Europe, perhaps along the lines of the Yugoslav model for social and political deterioration. As noted above, there are strong forces working for moderation in development of an approach to minority tensions. Yet, there are forces committed to a violent approach to ethnic problems, forces which may enjoy

support from the as yet unaccounted for remnants of Eastern Europe's secret police apparatus.[58] The widespread availability of explosives in much of Eastern Europe means that many of the instruments of violence are available. Recent Czechoslovakian reports have revealed that Semtex, a Czechoslovak-made explosive popular with terrorists, is particularly easy to obtain because of the very poor record-keeping practices of many enterprises. Several individuals in possession of large quantities of Semtex have recently been arrested in Czechoslovakia.[59] The widespread availability of Soviet arms, many abandoned or sold as the Soviet military leaves Eastern Europe, is another indication that the weapons of violence are available to groups inclined toward such actions. The self-proclaimed Slovak Republican Army is one group that openly and without reservations advocates violence toward its enemies. In 1990 this organisation declared its intentions to fight for Slovak rights, "to liquidate the irredentists, the Hungarians, all enemies of the Slovaks, and the renegade Slovaks. . . ." Declaring its readiness to "use force when necessary", the Slovak Republican Army threatened to destroy the property of Hungarians in Slovakia, to pollute the Danube and the lower reaches of Slovak rivers with chemical and bacteriological materials, and to destroy Hungarian goods shipped into Slovak markets.[60] A threat of more organised violence was issued by the Greater Romania Party when it responded to an ethnic Hungarian demand for a referendum on self-determination for the Szeklerland, a Hungarian region in Romania. According to the Greater Romania Party, any threat to Romanian territorial integrity will be met by a Romanian invasion of Hungary.[61]

In the revolutions of 1989, nationalism – complete with all its assumptions about the importance of the ethnic community – was a positive force in helping produce a popular rejection of the notion of East European membership in a Soviet empire. In most states of the region, nationalism, for a time, was an important unifying element, something which helped bring a people together against unpopular, Soviet inspired regimes. Few scenes illustrated this better than Romanians and ethnic Hungarians standing together against Ceausescu's security forces in Timisoara in December 1989. However, once the revolutions were accomplished, nationalism's role changed as citizens began a painful examination of the foundations of their political systems. Ethnic divisiveness replaced the national cohesion briefly enjoyed by communities which were reasserting their long suppressed national, ethnic or cultural identities.

There is a common Western tendency to assume that all problems are in search of a solution. Yet, in the case of East European ethnic strife, there are many problems that do not lend themselves to a clear resolution but require consistent, long-term management. Ethnic conflict is likely to be a permanent feature of the regional political landscape and, perhaps, the most optimistic future is one in which the leaderships of Eastern Europe learn not how to eliminate ethnic strife but how to live with it.

NOTES

[1] Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (Sofia), 2109 GMT, 1 October 1991

[2] William Echikson, "Bulgaria Pays Little Heed to Glasnost When It Comes to Minorities", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 20 June 1989, p. 6 and *Foreign Broadcast Information Service – East Europe*, Daily Report, 7 October 1991 p. 5.

[3] "Conservations at Lany", Ceskoslovensky Rozhlas Radio Network, 1315 GMT, 29 September 1991.

[4] *Narodna Obroda* (Bratislava), 18 September 1991, p. 7.

[5] "What Coalition Will Form a Parliamentary Majority", *Slowo Powszechne* (Warsaw), 28 October 1991, pp. 1–2.

[6] *The Washington Post*, 11 November 1989, p. A1.

[7] Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development", *American Political Science Review* (September, 1961), pp. 493–514.

[8] "Election News", *Demokratsiya*, 27 September 1991, p. 1.

[9] G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Social Fragmentation and Political Hostility*, (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 29–30.

[10] Hans-Georg Heinrich, *Hungary: Politics, Economics, and Society* (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1986), pp. 23–35.

[11] *The World Factbook 1990* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1990), pp. 2, 43, 76–77, 107, 133, 249–50, and 327.

[12] Vladimir V. Kusin, "The Ethnic Factor", *Report on Eastern Europe*, 9 November 1990, pp. 34–38.

[13] "Text of Warning", *Narodna Armija* (Belgrade), 17 January 1991, p. 4.

[14] *Kapu* (Budapest), No. 6, June 1991, pp. 47–48.

[15] *New York Times*, 16 December 1990, p. A12.

[16] "A Slight Increase in Optimism", *Hospodarske Noviny* (Prague), 25 September 1991, p. 2 and *Foreign Broadcast Information Service – East Europe*, Daily Report, 4 October 1991, p. 12.

[17] *Foreign Broadcast Information Service – East Europe*, Daily Report, 1 November 1991, p. 5.

[18] "Editorial", *Narodna Obroda* (Bratislava), 18 September 1991, p. 7.

[19] Jan Mlynarik, "Who Jumps Higher?", *Lidove Noviny* (Prague), 25 September 1991, p. 3 and "Incorrect Translation", *Lidove Noviny* (Prague), 30 October 1991, p. 4.

[20] *Slovensky Dennik* (Bratislava), 25 September 1991, p. 1.

[21] "The Danger of the Breakdown of the Nation and the State Has Not Passed" (text). Sofia *Duma*, 28 February 1991, p. 4, *FBIS Daily Report – Eastern Europe*, 15 April 1991, pp. 6–7.

[22] Dan Ionescu, "The Gypsies Organize", *Report on Eastern Europe*, Volume 1, No. 26, 29 June 1990, pp. 39–40.

[23] Radu Ciobotea, "Are the Germans Coming Back?", *Flacara* (Bucharest), 30 July 1991, p. 9 and Dan Ionescu, "Countdown for the German Minority", *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 37, 13 September 1991, pp. 32–37.

[24] Judith Pataki, "Ethnic Hungarians Contest Romanian Elections", *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 22, 1 June 1990, pp. 40–42.

[25] *Demokratsiya*, 27 September 1991, p. 1.

[26] Lajos Sike, "Hungary Is Dealing With the National Minority Issue According to European Standards", *Romaniai Magyar Szo* (Bucharest), 14 November 1991, p. 3.

[27] Michael Shafir, "The Greater Romania Party"; *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 46, 15 November 1991, pp. 25–29.

[28] Dennis Deletant, "The Role of Vatra Romaneasca in Transylvania", *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 1 February 1991, pp. 28–37.

[29] Valentin Constantinescu, "Without Delay – Prohibition of Extremist Parties, a Priority of Romania's Democratic Political Activity", *Romania Libera*, 13 November 1991, pp. 1, 2 and Mariana Cernicova, "Consensus, Compassion, Culpability?", *Renasterea Banateana* (Timisoara), 13 August 1991, p. 1.

[30] Thomas Urban, "Polish-German Relations in Upper Silesia Still Marked by Distrust", *Suddeutsche Zeitung* (Stuttgart), 14 March 1991, p. 10.

[31] Khorizont Radio Network (Sofia), 16 October 1991, 1900 GMT.

[32] Milan Andrejevich, "Vojvodina Hungarian Group to Seek Cultural Autonomy", *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 41, 12 October 1990, pp. 43–44.

[33] "Compulsory Visas for Refugees", (text). Budapest MAI NAP, 5 May 1991, p. 5, *FBIS Daily Report – Eastern Europe*, 9 May 1991, p. 17.

[34] "Army on Alert", *Adevarul* (Bucharest), 10 May 1991, p. 1.

[35] "The Present and the Future of Transylvania", (text). ROMPRES in English, 2141 GMT 7 May 1991, *FBIS Daily Report – Eastern Europe*, 8 May 1991, p. 29 and Dan Ionescu, "Transylvania and Romanian-Polish Relations", *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 41, 11 October 1991, pp. 24–26.

[36] "Vojvodina Assembly Assails Croatian 'Terrorism'", (text). TANJUG in English, 1733 GMT 9 May 1991, *FBIS Daily Report – Eastern Europe*, 10 May 1991, p. 28.

[37] Marin Raykov, "Who Will Defend Bulgaria's Western Border Areas?", *Demokratsiya* (Sofia), 4 October 1991, p. 5.

[38] *Foreign Broadcast Information Service – East Europe*, Daily Report, 8 October 1991, p. 9.

[39] Radu Ciobotea, "Are the Germans Coming Back?", *Flacara* (Bucharest), 30 July 1991, p. 9.

[40] "The MDF Favors Recognition of Croatia and Slovenia", *Nepszava* (Budapest), 4 October 1991, p. 4. In October 1991, the Yugoslav military leadership requested the Hungarian government to allow 2,500 federal troops to withdraw from Slovenia through Murakeresztur on Hungarian territory.

[41] TANJUG (Belgrade), 2151 GMT, 19 November 1991 and PAP (Warsaw), 1400 GMT, 18 November 1991.

[42] *Duma* (Sofia), 21 July 1990, p. 1.

[43] Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (Sofia), 1822 GMT, 23 October 1991.

[44] *Foreign Broadcast Information Service – East Europe*, Daily Report, 3 October 1991, pp. 10–11.

[45] *Report on Eastern Europe*, 9 November 1990, p. 36.

[46] *Foreign Broadcast Information Service – East Europe*, Daily Report, 7 October 1991, p. 16.

[47] Andreas Unterberger, "The Entire European Stability is Threatened", *Die Presse* (Vienna), 21–22 September 1991, p. 3.

[48] *Moldova Socialista* (Kishinev), 5 July 1990, p. 1.

[49] "Interview with Agata Pilatova", *Lidove Noviny* (Prague), 23 October 1991, p. 3.

[50] Jaromir Horec, "Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia Wants to Join Europe", *Lidove Noviny* (Prague), 25 October 1991, p. 8.

[51] *Report on Eastern Europe*, 9 November 1990, p. 36.

[52] Laszlo Roxin, "Romanian Social Democrats in Budapest", *Uj Magyarszag* (Budapest), 2 October 1991, p. 4.

[53] Celestine Bohlen, "Ethnic Rivalries Revive in East Europe", *The New York Times*, 12 November 1990, p. A12.

[54] Anna Sabbat-Swidlicka, "The Bishops Address the Issue of Anti-Semitism in Poland", *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 15 February 1991, pp. 17–19.

[55] Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (Sofia), 1347 GMT, 7 October 1991 (FBIS, 9 October 1991, pp. 8–9).

[56] Istvan Leko, "Every Knife Would Flick Open", *Respekt* (Prague), No. 41, 14–20 October 1991, pp. 7–8.

[57] Andras Szocs, "There Is No Danger of a Possible Split", *Nepszabadsag* (Budapest), 11 November 1991, pp. 1, 3.

[58] "Interview With Police Chief Maryska", *Lidove Noviny* (Prague), 29 July 1991, pp. 1–2.

[59] "Poorly Maintained Semtex Records", *Mlada Fronta Dnes* (Prague), 30 October 1991, p. 1.

[60] "Text", *Kapu* (Budapest), No. 6, June 1991, pp. 47–48.

[61] *Foreign Broadcast Information Service – East Europe*, Daily Report, 16 October 1991, pp. 25–26.

FURTHER READING

J. F. Brown, *Surge to Freedom: The End of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.

The Collapse of Communism: By the Correspondents of The New York Times, New York: Times Books, 1991.

Misha Glenny, *The Rebirth of History: Eastern Europe in the Age of Democracy*, London: Penguin Books, 1990.

Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Steven K. Pavlowitch, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and Its Problems 1918–1988*, Colombus: Ohio State University Press, 1988.

Nestor Ratesh, *The Entangled Revolution*, New York: Prager Publishers, 1991.

Sharon L. Wolchik, *Czechoslovakia: Politics, Society, Economy*, New York: Pinter Press, 1991.