conditions, not least, as Sked has noted, because the vagueness of the Austrian Constitution left room for conflicting interpretations of 'national equality'. For the Czechs, national equality meant equal standing for the Czech language 'in communication with as well as within the public service', that schools should 'teach Czech to all Czech children', and that Czechs should occupy 'the same proportion of posts in the civil service as the proportion of Czechs in the relative population'. Referring to the same constitutional principle of national equality, the Germans insisted on keeping German as the only official language for German areas of Bohemia. The tensions between Czechs and Germans escalated in 1897, when the Austrian Prime Minister, Baden, tried to win the Czechs' support by giving their language equal status with German as the language of administration in Bohemia and Moravia. This alienated the Germans even further from the Austrian imperial state and reinforced their pan-German convictions [131: pp. 230-5; documents on the language conflict between Czechs and Germans in the Bohemian parliament in 1902 can be found in: pp. 171-2].

Even in Austria itself, ethnic tensions became more marked in the decades before the outbreak of the First World War. In many Austrian cities that had experienced considerable ethnic immigration from the 1880s onwards - including Vienna, Graz, Salzburg, Innsbruck and Linz - a combination of assimilationist policies and active discrimination was designed to marginalise any languages other than German. In 1909 German was declared the only official language of government in Upper Austria [131: p. 225; 116: pp. 28-31; Beller in 104].

The official approach to the minority question was quite different in Hungary. Unlike the Austrian elite which acted as an imperial Hauptsache, after the Compromise of 1867 the Hungarian state began to develop a unitary nationalism on French republican lines. The Hungarian Nationalities Law of 1868 was inspired by the doctrine of the 'indivisible, unitary Hungarian nation'. Although it formally acknowledged the existence of different nationalities and made allowances for the use of the different languages spoken in the Hungarian part of the empire, the law was applied in such a way as to promote Hungarian language and culture at the expense of minority cultures. It came, in Sked's words, to be "applied in such a way as it constituted an instrument of Magyarisation" [131: p. 213]. Magyarisation - the cultural nationalism of the Magyar majority that dominated the state - was "motivated by a sense of cultural superiority" on the part of the dominant group. Its impact was particularly marked in education, where the laws of 1879,

1883, 1891 and 1903 made Hungarian the official language in state and confessional schools. Another pillar of Magyarisation was electoral politics. Magyars took over 80% of parliamentary seats, while Romanians, Slovaks and Serbs remained grossly under-represented. A law of 1898 determined that each town or village could have only one official (Magyar) name, to be approved by the Minister of the Interior. The tombstones of local cemeteries had to be engraved in Magyar [131: pp. 213-15: on the effects of Magyarisation, see also 120].

Not all minorities resisted Magyarisation. Portions of the German and especially the Jewish educated classes showed a marked tendency to assimilate to Magyar language and culture. Provided they agreed to acculturate, Jews could play a significant part in Hungary's political and economic affairs. Under Tisza, they could enter the state bureaucracy and become cabinet members [131: pp. 210-11]. As Mendelssohn writes in his superb account of the Jews' plight in inter-war Europe, 'the Hungarian ruling class of the prewar period was uniquely open to the ideology of Jewish assimilation - more so, certainly, than was the German ruling class, not to mention the Romanian, Polish, or Czech elites' [122: p. 89]. Even so, Hungary's state-building nationalism caused considerable resentment among the economically and culturally less advanced ethnic minorities in the border areas. This applied in particular to the Slovaks and the Romanians of Transylvania. Yet with the exceptions of the Serbs and the Croats, none of these groups managed to launch a successful nationalist movement before the First World War [131: pp. 216-22].

State-building nationalism and the fate of national minorities between the wars

The First World War and the destruction of the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires that brought it in its wake shifted the minority question to the centre of political attention. As the previous explorations have shown, the existence of minority populations within a region or state dominated by a particular ethnic group did not represent a new phenomenon - the Polish minority in the Prussian East or the Sudeten Germans in Bohemia spring to mind. Yet the creation of numerous new states on the principle of national self-determination dramatically increased the proportion of minorities in central and eastern Europe. Many of these states - and particularly Romania, Poland and
Yugoslavia — were as multi-ethnic or multinational as the empires that had vanished. Of the approximately 35 million minority inhabitants in inter-war Europe, only about one-quarter (i.e. around 8 million) lived in western Europe. More than 25 million lived in central and eastern Europe, and it is therefore only reasonable that a chapter on the relationship between nationalism and the minorities question focuses on this region [121: pp. 55–6].

Many students of inter-war Europe have argued that, given the great number of minorities and of ethnically mixed areas in East Central Europe, President Wilson's advocacy of national self-determination did inevitably spell disaster for the peace and stability of inter-war Europe [see, for example, 40: pp. 132–31]. While much can be said for this view, the heart of the problem was not so much the principle of national self-determination per se, as Miroslav Hiroch has reminded historians.

As an object of scholarly analysis, self-determination is neither 'good' nor 'bad'. Nor was the principle of national self-determination invented by President Wilson. In Eastern Europe, calls for self-determination had multiplied in the second half of the nineteenth century, often through 'willing' with the somewhat weaker claim to national autonomy, in the national movements of the Poles, Hungarians and Czechs. It is not to deny that it was the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and German empires in 1918 that lent an unprecedented force to these calls. [Hiroch in 14: pp. 65, 81–2]

Yet the problem, rather, was the way in which dominant nationalities in the newly created states chose to interpret and apply the principle of national self-determination. In the Fourteen Points, Woodrow Wilson proclaimed that 'all peoples and nationalities' had a 'right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak' [111: p. 113]. Yet as Hans J. Morgenthau wrote on the interpretation of these words in inter-war Europe: 'White men everywhere subscribed to the words of the Fourteen Points, it was particular nationalisms ... that infused their particular meanings into these words' [125: p. 271]. Thus if the implementation of this principle in the new states led to conflict and instability, it was because most of the numerically dominant groups within them subscribed to a hegemonic (rather than federalistic) kind of nationalism that showed little regard for minorities or even regarded them as a threat to the nation-state. In this nationalist vision, the state had to be identical with the national culture of the majority, which was defined mainly in linguistic terms. Because none of the states created (or enlarged) after the war was homogeneous in ethnocultural terms, all of them, to varying degrees — these policies were more marked in Poland and Romania than in Czechoslovakia, for example — witnessed state-driven cultural initiatives. Cultural autonomy, let alone political self-governance, was not tolerated within the state's territory. If minorities refused to assimilate, or sometimes even if they wished to retain their cultural identity, this was seen as a sign of disloyalty and a threat to the territorial integrity of the state [see 128: pp. 147–9].

While there is no denying that this integral nationalism was morally objectionable, it was fuelled, at least in part, by the irredentist nationalism of those states that had been militarily defeated. Thus the biggest benefactors among the successor states — Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania — came immediately under pressure from the major revisionist states — particularly Germany and Hungary, but also Russia — who sought to revive the territorial status quo. The armed clashes that followed the Armistice in 1918 and in some cases lasted until the early 1920s, among Poles, Ukrainians and Russians in Galicia, between Germans and Poles in Upper Silesia, between Romanians and Ukrainians in the Bukovina, between the Hungarian Red Army and the troops of the new Czechoslovak Republic and of Romania provided an early manifestation of the vicious circle unleashed by geopolitical turmoil, the nationalism of the new states and the revisionist ambitions of the defeated and territorially reduced states. This 'generalized Central European civil war of the immediate postwar years' provided a foretaste of the 'barely controlled emmities of the interwar period' [110: pp. 132–3].

Thus hegemonic nationalism, aimed as it was at cultural homogenisation through either forced assimilation or expulsion of minority populations, was in part a response to irredentist pressures. To acknowledge this is not to justify the kind of nationalism practised by the authorities of the newly created states: re-emergent Poland, Czechoslovakia, and massively enlarged Romania. In all of these states one nationality was dominant demographically and politically (though in the case of Czechoslovakia demographic majority was only achieved by constructing the hybrid nationality of 'Czecho-Slovak'), yet all were composites of nationalities rather than nation-states in the strict sense (see statistical tables in the Appendix). To be sure, there were attempts after the war to protect the rights of minorities. All in all, 14 agreements regulating the treatment of national and ethnic minorities were concluded between
1919 and 1923 between the Allied and Associated Powers and the states whose populations included substantial minority populations. These were Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Greece, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, Finland, Albania, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia [110: pp. 330–2].

But apart from stateless minorities such as the Jews, most self-declared champions of minority rights were motivated by an ill-disguised revisionist agenda. This applies above all to the defeated states that lost both territory and demographic substance: Germany, which lost Alsace-Lorraine, Pomerania and Upper Silesia; Russia, which lost Congress Poland; and Hungary, which lost 70 per cent of its territory and 60 per cent of its population, mostly to Greater Romania (see statistical tables in the Appendix). Weimar Germany under Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, for example, sought to prevent the loss of ethnic Germans living as minorities in the newly created states, particularly in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Stresemann clearly regarded it in Germany’s interest as a revisionist power to support German minorities living outside the Weimar Republic’s borders. This nationalist programme of supporting co-ethnics living outside the home territory enjoyed wide public support in the defeated states as such minorities were regarded as the living symbol and bridgeheads of revisionist claims. As Max Weber urged the German minorities in Poland and Czechoslovakia in December 1918: ‘He, who in the threatened German irredenta is not prepared to employ revolutionary methods and to risk scaffold and prison, should not in future be called a nationalist’ [84: p. 49; on German irredentism during the Weimar era, see also 110 and 64: pp. 112-34].

Nationalism was also the main cause for the rejection of demands to protect the rights of national and ethnic minorities. The big winners of the post-war settlement – particularly Poland and Romania – regarded such rights as a violation of their national sovereignty. They also considered them as a potentially destabilising force, a view that was shared by Great Britain, while France expected minorities to assimilate to the majority culture. What is decisive, however, and what determined the relationship between the three states we shall discuss in the following pages, is that all of them pursued a nationalist programme that rested on the following premises: that there existed an ethnonational core that had to be distinguished from the resident population (whether its members were citizens of the state or not) at large; that this ethnonational core legitimately owned the polity; that the state could not flourish as long as the ethnonational core did not predominate unambiguously in the cultural, linguistic, economic and political spheres of society; and that, where this predominance was indeed absent wholly or in part, specific action was needed to achieve it (this is based on 64: pp. 83-4). The fatal dialectic between the nationalising policy of states like Poland and Romania on the one hand, and the homeland nationalism of revisionist states like Germany or Hungary on the other, created the kind of nationalist resentment that characterised the inter-war period [110: pp. 344-5; 102].

Poland

Poland provides an apt illustration of these dynamics. Recognised as a ‘historic nation’ that had long enjoyed Western sympathy, Poland’s recreation at Versailles was supported by the Allies, not least because it was regarded as a ‘Western bastion inhibiting German expansion’ [128: p. 161]. But the new Polish state was not a nation-state in the strict sense of the term; throughout the 1920s the Poles supplied no more than around 69 per cent of the total population, with Ukrainians, Jews, Germans, Lithuanians and Belorussians providing substantial minority populations [see maps and statistical table in the Appendix]. The Germans lived mainly in the western regions, while the Belorussians and Ukrainians were concentrated in the east. The Jews, although they lacked a clear regional concentration, played an important part in the urban economy. In terms of their occupational position, the Belorussians and Ukrainians were overwhelmingly agricultural, the Jews commercial and artisanal, while the Germans were mixed [129; pp. 35-8; 128; pp. 160-6].

Despite the existence of substantial minority populations living in post-war Poland, however, both officially and unofficially the new Polish state was conceived of as the state of and for the ethnolinguistically defined Polish nation. The 1921 constitution reflected this national vision. Not only were the minorities excluded from the constitutional drafting process but the constitution was also highly centralist and insisted on the need for minorities to assimilate [129; p. 34]. To be sure, a glance at the political landscape of inter-war Poland reveals a variety of approaches and attitudes towards minorities. The political Right, which was allied with Roman Catholicism, was the staunchest proponent of an intolerant form of nationalism. It included the National Democrats, the Christian Democrats, and the National Labour Party, all
of which were strong in ex-Prussian western Poland, and the Flag. Peasant Party whose main constituency was the Polish peasantry of Galicia. For these groups, demands for national autonomy by minorities amounted to treason and justified a fierce response (129: p. 45; see also 122: p. 14). The most militant form of Polish state nationalism manifested itself in the fierce conflict between the Polish authorities and Ukrainian nationalists in eastern Galicia. It also found expression in the rejection of Jewish calls for cultural autonomy and in a series of home-grown anti-Semitic policies, particularly in the 1930s. As Rothschild has demonstrated in his masterly political history of east central Europe, exceptions to this intolerant approach to the minority question included the Liberation Party, the Peasant Party, the Socialists and the Fisudska movement (1129: pp. 31–41).

The so-called ‘school strike’ in Upper Silesia in 1926 demonstrates the degree of ethnic tension that the nation-building nationalism of the Polish state created. As indicated previously, Upper Silesia was a region in which Germans had formerly been predominant and the Poles subject to fierce (but largely unsuccessful) efforts at Germanisation by the Prussian state. After the war, the Polish educational authorities took measures designed to reduce the number of children attending minority schools as part of a programme of Polonisation. To this end, it conducted an enquiry among parents of children attending German minority schools. More than 8000 parents were interviewed. Based on the results, the authorities decided to disqualify 7114 children from attending such schools. This measure was taken after the parents of these children had either failed to take part in the official inquiry or because, when asked about the mother tongue of their children, they stated both Polish and German. This sparked a fierce response by German nationalists, the Deutscher Volksbund, which represented the Germans in Poland, protested to the League of Nations. In what amounts to a remarkable irony, given the Volksbund’s commitment to a strictly ethnic conception of nationality, its representatives argued that membership in a national minority was a matter of personal choice. Yet the League of Nations supported the Polish point of view that nationality was objective rather than subjective, and that language was the ultimate criterion of legitimate nationhood. Polish-speaking children were expected to attend Polish rather than German minority schools. The Volksbund retaliated by sending a petition to the Council of the League. This led to a compromise which determined that children whose only language was Polish were not entitled to attend minority schools, while those who could prove a reasonable command of German (even if it was their second language) would be readmitted to minority schools (the incident is well documented in 110: pp. 341–2, 102).

From the Polish nationalist perspective, the German national minority in Poland constituted a ‘fifth column’ because their loyalty tended to rest with Germany, a revisionist power. Ethic Germans were therefore increasingly perceived as unassimilable. From the mid-1920s onwards, the Polish policy therefore clearly revealed what Brubaker called ‘dissimilationist’ tendencies. In other words, rather than trying to assimilate the German minority, the Polish authorities pursued a strategy of more or less open exclusion. The measures adopted included the Polonisation of the civil service, the staging of anti-German demonstrations in the larger towns, the expropriation of German landlords, ethnic discrimination in business and the professions, and, increasingly, the implementation of strict mono-lingualism in public (including educational) institutions. Partly as a result of these measures, some two-thirds of the roughly 1.1 million ethnic Germans had left Poland by the mid-1920s, including 85 per cent of the urban population and 55 per cent of those employed in agriculture or related sectors (64: ch. 4). Those who remained in the ex-Prussian provinces of Poland well into the 1930s despite these discriminatory policies – thereby fulfilling, as Max Weber and others had asked them to, the function of an irredentist frontier group – divided politically into Nazi supporters (the majority), bourgeois-nationalist, Catholic and socialist groups (129: pp. 41–2).

**Romania**

Although Romania’s nationalist policies, not least in terms of the position taken towards minorities, was similar to that of Poland, Romania’s historical legacy was quite different. Unlike the Polish lands, which had been divided among Prussia, Austria and Russia in the late eighteenth century, Romania had been an independent principality from 1878, becoming a kingdom in 1881. But this former Romanian kingdom, which joined the Allies in late 1916 in the hope of territorial gain, emerged as a massively enlarged state from the peace settlements. In terms of its total population and territorial expansion, Greater Romania, as the new entity came to be called, was more than twice the size of the old kingdom. With a population of around 18 million in 1930 (half of which lived in the pre-war Regate core, consisting of the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia), Romania had become the second most
nationalism, which had its strongholds in the old kingdom with its French-educated bureaucratic elite and in Transylvania, regarded the minorities' efforts to maintain their culture and identity as a threat to the prosperity and integrity of the Romanian nation.

The number of primary schools more than doubled between 1918 and the end of the 1930s, as did the number of teachers; a network of committees was established at the local level, while the school system was standardised through the creation of 16 school districts. In terms of educational content, there was an increased emphasis on the teaching of the Romanian language, Romanian history, geography and civics, and the remaining non-Romanian schools were required to adopt this new curriculum. Although Romania's official, secular nationalism was also directed against the strong regional identities of ethnic Romanians – most obviously in Transylvania, where the Orthodox and Uniate churches continued to provide an alternative source of collective identity to the secular state – its main preoccupation was the Romanisation of minority cultures. In the Bukovina, for example, Greater Romania's smallest province in the north and formerly part of the Austrian state, the number of Romanian schools increased dramatically at the expense of Ukrainian and German ones. The Romanian authorities, in an attempt to circumvent the Minority Protection Treaty they had been forced to sign by the Allies, argued that the Ukrainians were 'Ruthenised Romanians who needed to be returned to their free Romanian identity' [119: p. 63].

The resistance that these attitudes and related policies provoked among the minorities only served to harden the stance of many policy makers and officials, leading to a vicious circle of tension and conflict. As a 1923 government report described the situation in Bukovina, a province that the Romanian nation-builders tried to cleanse of its Austrian cultural legacy:

The teachers from Region No. XIV, almost all of them raised in submission to the Austrian state, have started to realise that the Romanian state has a durability that no one can overturn. They have started to reconcile themselves to the idea of a Romanian state and they bow before the authority of this state, and accept all the measures the government takes even if they are not to the liking of any citizen in order to defend the prestige of this state and to remind everyone that one has obligations toward the state which one cannot evade. [Cited in 119: p. 78].

In the former Russian province of Bessarabia, too, the Romanian authorities embarked on a cultural project of Romanisation. In the mid-1930s
they began to sound the alarm bells after several school inspectors had detected reluctance among Ukrainians, Russsians and Jews to learn the Romanian language [119: pp. 117–20].

Transylvania presents a particularly interesting example because its ethnic Romanian population hardened in its nationalist resolve in the long struggle against Magyarisation that had only come to an end with Hungary’s defeat in the war – actively participated in the state’s cultural policy of Romanianisation. From the ethnic-nationalist point of view adhered to by the Romanian authorities, the demographic situation in Transylvania was highly critical. In 1910, the total population of Transylvania was 5,263,602. Of those, 53.8 per cent were ethnic Romanians, 31.6 per cent Hungarians, 10.7 per cent Germans, and 3.5 per cent Jews [119: p. 135]. The dominant cultural influence in Transylvania prior to the war had been Hungarian and German, with the Jews showing a clear preference for adopting the linguistic culture of either one of these two privileged groups. A mass exodus of some 197,000 Magyars to Hungary (i.e. about one-fifth of Transylvania’s Magyar population) after the Treaty of Trianon had been signed in June 1920 only served to increase the suspicion among Romanian nationalists that the Hungarians posed a potential threat to the Romanian state. The western border of Transylvania with Hungary thus witnessed one of the fiercest programmes of Romanian cultural nationalism. As Liezezanu notes in her excellent book on this subject: ‘In the war, Romanization was applied more harshly, in keeping with the memory of Hungarians as an overbearing elite and with the fear of Hungarian revisionism’ [119: p. 143].

Hence the pattern of nationalist conflict we encounter in Transylvania, played out between Romanian nationalists and a Magyar minority mostly loyal to the Hungarian state, is similar to that of the conflict between the Polish authorities and the German minority in the former Prussian provinces. In effect, then, the nationalist struggle in these regions led to a self-fulfilling prophecy insofar as each side saw their own prejudices confirmed by the actions of the other side. The Magyars in Transylvania and the Germans in Poland’s western provinces showed all the hallmarks of a frontier nationality, an attitude that was encouraged, where encouragement was needed, by the incendiaryism of a revisionist power. From the point of view of the exponents of the Polish and Romanian states, the attitude and actions of these minorities posed a severe threat that invited a cultural counter-offensive. Yet the constant pressure exerted by the Romanian and Polish states on these

countries, national minorities only served to reinforce the nationalist resolve of the Transylvanian Hungarians and the Germans in Poland respectively. They were locked in a vicious nationalist circle.

Czecho-Slovakia

One state that emerged from the post-war settlement contrasts in many respects rather markedly with the rest of eastern Europe, including both Poland and Romania. That state is Czecho-Slovakia. To begin with, Czecho-Slovakia was the most obviously manufactured of the ‘successor’ states besides Yugoslavia. The political union between Czechs and Slovaks, which formed the core of the new state, was the product of the tireless diplomacy of the politicians Tomaš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš. Czecho-Slovakia’s relative political stability was the result of strong presidential powers (and the strong leadership of T. Masaryk) and a coalition system that provided opportunities for all major parties. From 1926 onwards, for example, the Sudeten Germans, no loyal supporters of the Czecho-Slovak state, formed part of the government [136: p. 218].

Besides being the only functioning democracy in eastern Europe between the wars, Czecho-Slovakia was also the most industrialised and urbanised region of eastern Europe. The percentage of the population employed in the agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors was respectively 39.5, 33.8 and 5.78% in 1921, and 34.6, 34.9 and 7.43% in 1930. Of course, there was considerable regional variation. Bohemia was Czecho-Slovakia’s most advanced region in economic terms, followed by Moravia-Silesia, while Slovakia (whose population had been subjected to Hungarian rule and its Magyarisation policies since 1867) and Ruthenia remained heavily agricultural during the entire period (the figures are approximately 60 per cent for Slovakia and 66 per cent for Ruthenia). While illiteracy levels in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia decreased from around 3 to below 2 per cent between 1921 and 1940, they were higher in Slovakia (from 14.7 per cent to 8.16 per cent) and Ruthenia (50.03 to 30.88 per cent). These disparities in economic and cultural development are also manifest in the degree of urbanisation within the individual provinces [see 129: pp. 91–2, 117–18, 136: pp. 171–2].

However, like the other major beneficiaries of the peace settlements, Czecho-Slovakia was ethnically diverse, which caused problems both domestically and with respect to foreign relations. The inclusion of substantial national minorities living along its borders – over 3 million
Germans in the Sudetenland. 2.5 million Slovaks (although the Slovaks were not recognised as a minority in official censuses), 700,000 Hungarians in the south of Slovakia, 75,000 Poles in the economically important and fiercely contested region of Cieszyn in Silesia—meant that most of its neighbours harboured irredentist claims against Czechoslovakia from the moment its independence was proclaimed on 28 November 1918. Throughout the inter-war period, relations with Hungary, Poland and Germany remained marked by distrust and open hostility [129, pp. 78, 85-7; 107, pp. 132-4; for population statistics see Appendix].

Although the government’s official stance towards the aspirations of national minorities was not as repressive as that of its neighbours, the Czechs dominated the new state both politically and culturally. Czechoslovak nationality policy, although comparatively liberal on paper, was more ambivalent and contentious in practice. The roughly 2.5 million Slovaks (constituting 16 per cent of the total population), for example, were expected to adopt the cultural norms and values of the around 7.25 million Czechs, who made up 48 per cent of the total population. The ‘Pittsburgh Agreement’ (signed in May 1918 between Masaryk and Slovak émigrés in the United States), in which the Slovaks had been guaranteed autonomy within a future Czechoslovak state, was never implemented. In fact, the authorities’ refusal to recognise Slovak autonomy within the newly created state of Czechoslovakia (from 1920 onwards the hyphen was dropped in official usage) was a deliberate strategy to downdraw the fact that Czechs did not constitute a majority within the state. Czech officials had a strong presence in Slovakia, regarding themselves as colonisers of a backward region. Rather than assimilating Slovaks to dominant Czech culture, these measures provoked resentment among the local population and strengthened Slovak nationalism, which by the 1930s had become a recognisable force [see 128: pp. 149-34; see also statistical tables in the Appendix].

But the fiercest of all inter-ethnic conflicts in inter-war Czechoslovakia, and the one which came to pose a serious threat to the state’s stability, was that between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans. At the Paris Peace negotiations, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Beneš declared his government’s intention to create the Czechoslovak state on the Swiss consociational model, provided such a solution was commensurate with the conditions in the Czech and Slovak lands. In his speech before the National Assembly in Prague in December 1918, however, Masaryk chose a different tone. In this much-noticed address, he reminded the Sudeten Germans that they had once come as immigrants and colonists. He then added that the new government would not allow them to challenge Czechoslovakia’s territorial integrity. Masaryk’s statement must be placed in the context of the events that accompanied the declaration of Czechoslovak independence. After the republic had been proclaimed on 28 November 1918, the Sudeten Germans refused to accept its jurisdictional authority by declaring Deutschtätern and the Sudetenland as independent provinces of Austria. When it became clear that neither Austria nor Germany was in a position to lend active support to these claims, the Czech Legion troops occupied these regions in December [129; p. 79; 128: pp. 151-5].

Public symbols became a focal point in the nationality conflict between Czechs and Sudeten Germans. The so-called status war of the 1920s provides a particularly illuminating example of how nationalism triggered a struggle over the symbolic representation of the past. In the course of this conflict, statues of Joseph II were attacked and toppled by Czechs. The late eighteenth-century Kaiser Joseph II, a proponent of administrative centralisation, had antagonised many Czechs (as well as other Slavs and the Magyars) by declaring German the lingua franca of the monarchy. For the German nationalists in the Bohemian lands, meanwhile, Joseph II stood for past glory and German predominance in Bohemia. The monuments to Joseph II had begun to spring up thick and fast during the 1880s, during the period, that is, when Bohemia was experiencing a Czech national revival aided by rapid industrialisation, emigration and urbanisation. The fact that Joseph II was no nationalist—his decision to declare German the language of imperial administration was inspired by his programme of enlightened absolutism—mattered little to the Czechs. For them, Joseph II stood for the promotion of German ethnic dominance in Bohemia. The fact that the German minority in Bohemia openly praised Joseph II as a champion of the German cause in the Czech lands seemed to confirm this perception. As Wingfield observes in her stimulating article: ‘German nationalists thus appropriated the memory of Joseph II and interpreted his actions for their own ends, claiming the Volksgesetz as the emperor of the German Volk’ [139: p. 153]. Czech intellectuals were ambivalent in their judgement of Joseph II’s legacy. They acknowledged his educational reforms and were highly sympathetic to his achievements in such matters as religious tolerance and the abolition of serfdom. But they tended to resent him for his centralising and Germanising policies, which in their view had threatened their language and culture [139: p. 162].
The recorded attacks on monuments of Joseph II in northern and western Bohemia, most of which took place in 1919 and 1920, were not encouraged by the Czech authorities, though there is evidence that local officials remained remarkably passive [139: p. 150]. Most of these incidents took place on or around 28 October, when Czechs celebrated their national independence. A particularly notorious incident occurred in Brno in the summer of 1919. After a Czech crowd had knocked down statues of Joseph II, German nationalists responded by singing the nationalist song 'Die Wacht am Rhein'. Another notable event was reported from the town of Téger, where a statue had been knocked from its pedestal, only to be erected again by the German inhabitants, who then proceeded to drape the statue in black, red and gold. Some German demonstrators then headed for the town's recently opened Czech-language school, causing damage to the furniture and tearing up pictures of President Masaryk. This particular incident triggered off a nationwide protest, organised by the Northern Bohemian National Union, a national pressure group founded in 1885 to defend Czech interests in the German-dominated border regions of Bohemia. In all these instances, seemingly small symbolic provocations sufficed to spark a major nationalist conflict [139: pp. 150-1].

The Jewish minority and the emergence of Zionism

The previous explorations have examined the effects of nation-building nationalism on national minorities. Yet ethnic minorities such as the Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Sinti and Roma, or Jews were equally affected by the nationalist policies of states like Poland, Romania or Czechoslovakia. Unlike national minorities such as the Germans in Poland or the Hungarians in Romania, they could not migrate to a state where they constituted the majority. The situation of ethnic minorities, as cited Michael Hecner, was characterised by a 'limitation on exit' [114: p. 31]. It is in this context that nationalism provided an inspiration and a potential way out of the quandary of being a stateless minority in a Europe whose states subscribed to a nationalist agenda. Such nationalist ambitions could take either of two basic forms. The first consisted of a programme for cultural autonomy within a given state. The second found expression in calls for political self-determination. Ethnic minorities, including the Ukrainians, the Latvians and the Jews, had begun to develop such ambitions in the late nineteenth century, but it was not until the inter-war period that calls for cultural autonomy and/or for independent statehood gained wide currency among these groups.

The Zionist movement, which was officially founded at the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, proposed a national solution to the predicament of the Jews in central and eastern Europe. While a considerable literature has sprung up dealing with this manifestation of Jewish nationalism, the phenomenon has received rather little attention in general accounts of nationalism. This is surprising not just because Zionism cannot be understood outside the context of European nationalism, but also because few nationalist movements offer a better insight into the dynamics of inter-war nationalism and its effects on minority populations [on this see 133: p. xvii; 134: p. 363].

In more than one sense, Zionism was a product of European nationalism. For one thing, Zionists drew positive inspiration from the classic nationalist demands – expressed above all in the concept of national self-determination, but also in the claim to independent statehood. For another, Zionism was a response to anti-Semitic discrimination, violence and persecution, which was an integral part of inter-war nationalism in central and eastern Europe. Apart from these specific and largely contingent circumstances, Zionism also benefited from a cultural legacy that could easily be transposed into a modern nationalist idiom. Of particular importance was the concept of a shared homeland. The memory of an ancient Jewish kingdom, and of the expulsion of the Jewish people from Palestine, was a firm part of Jewish religious and historical legacy. Although religious scriptures and institutions played a decisive part in the preservation of this memory over several centuries, it was not confined to religiously observant Jews. This teleological vision of restoring the ancient state, while it did not create Jewish nationalism, provided fertile ground for Zionist agitators to develop a secular narrative in line with modern nationalist demands [see, for example, 132: p. 448].

The predicament of an ethnic minority in a context of nationalism

What sets Zionism apart from other nationalist movements is that historically Europe's Jews lacked both a single territorial affiliation and thus a legitimate claim to national homeland on the continent. Although Jewish communities were particularly numerous in the east, European Jewry had never been concentrated in a single territory but