

Defying Prejudice, Advancing Equality–1: Minorities in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union



Photograph: Richard Carter

Roma family in Suceag, Romania

Richard Carter
EveryChild

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EveryChild is an international non-governmental organisation that works to promote the right and need of every child to grow up in a family.



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FOREWORD

This report highlights the problems produced when people are considered strangers in the country of their birth.

Dr. Carter, whose report *The Silent Crisis* for EveryChild led to this further analysis, has looked at the problems faced by the forgotten citizens of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In doing so he has drawn on EveryChild's experience in working with children and families in the region.

His report makes it clear that being a member of a minority should not, in itself, create significant problems. However, children and families from minority populations in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union face prejudice and discrimination in all aspects of their daily lives. The severity of the impact caused by this discrimination, within the framework of the new economic reality in the region, is now palpable and debilitating.

EveryChild experience suggests that perhaps as many as twenty million children across the region have entered a cycle of deprivation as a direct consequence of discrimination based on their ethnic origin: they are the forgotten citizens of their countries.

Governments are warned that their efforts to promote the inclusion of those forced to the margins of society by economic hardship and discrimination have been insufficient. Addressing the concerns of poor and dispossessed children, families and communities is vital: the future stability of the region, and the future of Europe, depend upon it.

Having developed its special expertise working with the disadvantaged in eastern European and the former Soviet Union region over more than a decade, ECT makes it clear that social exclusion and discrimination were not unleashed by the collapse of the Soviet Empire. The problems are more profound than that. Overt discrimination is widespread and is not limited, as is generally perceived, to the region's large Roma population.

The whole of Europe can learn a lesson from this evaluation. From Ireland to Greece the issues are similar. Minority groups are faced with lower life expectancy and poor living conditions. Ethnic minorities everywhere continue to be hit first and hit hardest by each and every economic setback.

All the evidence indicates that children suffer most severely from the effects of poverty, and it is now becoming clear that minority group children suffer more than any other group. In central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union they are more likely to end up living on the street or being abandoned to the region's infamous residential institutions. The practical impact of generations of marginalisation is real and, if it is not addressed, the effects will escalate beyond our control.

We hope this report will make a valuable contribution to the vital task of alleviating the impact of discrimination on children and of the wider issue of poverty to which it is so closely related. We advocate a strategy that tackles the root causes, not just the symptoms, of poverty. A key component of this must be to expose the extent to which ethnic minorities have entered a spiral of deprivation as a direct consequence of discrimination against them.

The situation is not without hope. There are many locally-based organisations that have developed innovative and imaginative projects to enable minority communities to improve their life chances. Their projects draw on the belief that diversity is a strength and that **all** children must have the opportunity to be involved in the future development of their country.

Targeted projects that challenge prejudice, increase levels of education and employment are creating genuine chances to improve lives. Of course, they must be culturally appropriate, economically sustainable and undertaken with the support of the minority communities themselves, as is the case with any good development project.

EveryChild calls on governments, non-government organisations and the international community to engage earnestly in a battle to defy discrimination in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and beyond.

Together we must encourage greater harmony and equality – which represents an investment in the region's social and economic infrastructure to help enable a brighter future.

Robert Pritchett,
Chief Executive, EveryChild

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this report we attempt to gain an understanding of the nature of discrimination against minorities in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In so doing, we seek to demystify some of the most prevalent suppositions about minorities, in particular the view that the last decade has seen the inevitable re-emergence of ancient ethnic hatreds. We then set out to suggest ways in which prejudice and discrimination can be countered.

Part 1 of the report tries to develop an understanding of nationalism by examining the history of this phenomenon. We discuss the different theories of nationalism and, in particular, the debate between perennialism, which argues that peoples' ethnic identity has always existed, and the modernist school of thought, which argues that nationalism and ethnic identity are wholly recent constructs. We conclude that the latter arguments are the more convincing.

The discussion then turns to central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; we reject the argument that communism acted as a straightjacket on nationalism in the region and that, in consequence, when the old system collapsed, nationalist conflict was inevitable. We also reject the special case of this argument, which says that the rise of nationalism **caused** the collapse of communism. Instead, we argue that the break-up of the communist system left the newly-independent states with no history or tradition of democratic rule or civil society. The absence of any effective element of civil society meant that there was no focus for identity **but** nationality, which was the one thing that people were able to hang on to in a new and uncertain world. Furthermore, the conflicts over the sharing and distribution of scarce resources exacerbated the problems of the new countries, and these conflicts took on an ethnic colouring. Thus although it appeared to be the case that the resulting conflicts were about ethnicity, in reality they were not.

There is also concern in much of the region, notably in southern Russia and in Central Asia, about attacks on religious freedom. There is particular concern in the current climate that actions against Muslims are being taken under cover of the 'war against terrorism,' and that current events are being exploited by the more authoritarian governments in the region to reinforce their own positions.

Part 2 examines the nature of discrimination in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union now. We estimate that there are at least seventy million people in minority groups in the region, of whom some twenty million are children. Not all of these minorities are discriminated against, but the reality for most of them is that prejudice and its companion, discrimination, are cruelly prevalent throughout the region. This affects children with particular force, and we review the evidence for this. The most severe and noticeable effects on children are their over-representation in state residential care (the 'orphanages'), and their poor or non-existent access to good quality education – or frequently to *any* education at all. These problems affect the Roma population in particular, and their living conditions and prospects are a disgrace to civilised values.

Part 3 reviews, country by country, the situation of minorities now in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, discussing their numbers and outlining the main threats that they face from the majority populations. The aim of this, the longest part of the report, is to act as a resource for others who are already working, or who plan to work in the region. In this part we draw on as much of the published material – of which there is an enormous amount – as we have been able to assemble.

Finally, **Part 4** discusses the 'cycle of disadvantage' that represents the main problem that minorities have to cope with as an everyday part of their lives. In this cycle, poor education leads

to poor employment prospects, which in turn lead to poverty, poor living conditions and social exclusion. This, of course, results again in poor education, so that the cycle is closed. The problem is worsened by the feeling of hopelessness that the cycle of disadvantage engenders, and the whole sequence is fed by the prejudice and discrimination of the majority.

We go on in this final part to examine ways in which the cycle of disadvantage can be broken; this section, the most important in the report, contains our recommendations. Drawing on our own and others' experience of working in the region, we discuss a number of projects and approaches. Some are successful and some less so, and we try to use the lessons which can be drawn from these projects to set out some more general conclusions about how to tackle the evil of prejudice. We include a number of pointers to good practice which, we believe, can be used for the future. These include the following:

1. **Support from the outside** for minority groups is vital. Many of the minority communities are not only desperately poor, but they have temporarily mislaid many of the skills and abilities that they need in order to improve their condition. This is what the external world can offer them. Money can help, but technical and practical advice are frequently of much more long-term benefit.
2. Next, although money and technical support from the outside world are important, no project will succeed unless it is based on **the desire of the community itself for change**. The will to change must come from within, it cannot be imposed from the outside.
3. Any successful project must be based on **the genuine needs of the community**, determined by the people of the community themselves. Outside organisations can provide invaluable help, but they should not try to impose their own ideas about what will work and what won't.
4. Anyone working with minority groups must be prepared to experience **racism or other prejudiced attitudes** on the part of the majority community and, crucially, to be ready to **challenge** these attitudes. They must also be prepared to deal with these attitudes in project partners, since prejudice is deeply embedded in the societies where we work.
5. Project workers need to be alert to the possibility that **positive discrimination** will need to be exercised. This will inevitably cause difficulties on occasion: "Why are you bothering to help those Roma when there are so many poor Romanians?" one Roma community leader is often asked. But, as in the previous point, project workers must be prepared to challenge these kinds of views.
6. A further central point is the need to be prepared, to have **formulated the responses** needed to counter the kinds of arguments that are heard in the previous two points.
7. Project staff must be ready to confront the possibility of **their own prejudices**. Again, they are a part of the society that they are working in, and it is difficult to escape the effects of the conditioning that we have all received.
8. Finally, all project staff must be trained to treat prejudice and discrimination against minority groups not as an add-on to their 'real' work but as a central part of it. **Mainstreaming action on prejudice** in this way will help to ensure that it is always taken seriously and tackled appropriately.

These steps, if implemented carefully, can help to begin the process of defying prejudice and advancing equality for all in the societies of the region, whether minority or majority.

PART 1: MINORITIES AND DISCRIMINATION

What is a minority – and why does it matter?

Although, superficially, the answer to this question may appear obvious, in practice it has proved extremely difficult to define, in a watertight and legally satisfactory way, exactly who constitutes a minority and who does not.

In fact this problem has been an issue for so long¹ that many who have studied the question have preferred to ignore it or to by-pass it – or even to argue that a definition is not needed at all (Packer 1993 p.24). But, not least in order to establish an effective system of protecting minorities (Packer 1993 p.27), an intellectually coherent definition is essential. The history of attempts to establish such a definition is very long and it would provide an unnecessary diversion to discuss it here. A summary of the salient points is included as Appendix I.

The definitions that have variously been adopted cover some combination of one or more of the four key elements: (a) language, (b) ethnicity, (c) religion, and (d) culture and traditions.² But why is it necessary to define minorities at all? The problem is that disputes and arguments arise partly as a result of false perceptions but mainly because national governments are frequently loath to recognise the legitimacy of minorities since they fear the spectre of political disintegration.

One example of this includes what remained of Yugoslavia, which was simply unprepared to recognise the claims of the Kosovar Albanians because they were afraid that the province would secede. Another example is Greece, which does not accept the existence of its Macedonian, Turkish or Albanian minorities for much the same reason.

A further class of difficulties arises as a result of fears on the part of the minorities themselves. An example of this is that many Turkish-speaking Roma in Bulgaria refuse to accept classification as Roma. Bulgarians nevertheless still see them as Roma.

Finally, a further difficulty in the region covered by this report arises from different understandings of what a nationality is. In western understanding 'nationality' refers to citizenship, whereas in the countries of the former Soviet Union, the two concepts are quite separate. For example, a man living in Russia whose mother tongue was Ukrainian can hold Russian citizenship but his nationality would be considered as Ukrainian.³

However, for the purposes of this report, we do not need to follow a legalistic path in deciding what a minority is. Further, in view of EveryChild's focus, it seemed most appropriate to base our

¹ "In the United Nations even the general definition of a minority has been debated for more than 40 years, and consensus is still out of reach" (Khazanov 1995 p.97).

² Other factors have also been considered important. These include whether the group in question has a sense of its own identity, whether it has, implicitly or explicitly, expressed a sense that it wishes to preserve its identity, its relative size and its position in relation to the dominant group(s) in their country (cf Caportorti 1991 p.96).

³ For an excellent analysis of the Russian understanding of the word *narod* (meaning both 'nation' and 'people'), see Biryukov and Sergeev (1994), cited in Packer (1999 p.231).

approach on the wording used in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNICEF 1989). This states, in Article 30:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language. (UNICEF 1989).

This is the definition that will be used in this report.

It is important to note that 'race' is not one of the categories used here. The general view now, with the current understanding of the nature of genetic similarities between people of different ethnic origins, is that race is a meaningless term – except amongst a few extreme fringe groups.⁴ Michael Banton has argued that race refers to the categorisation of people, while ethnicity has to do with group identification: ethnicity is generally more concerned with the identification of 'us' whilst racism is more oriented towards the categorisation of 'them' (Banton 1983).

The only occasions on which 'race' is used to any significant effect now are in the debate on racism – and perhaps it should be abandoned there, too. A prime recent example of its unhelpfulness is in the UN Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban in September 2001, which became mired in the disagreement over whether Israel's treatment of the Palestinians could be regarded as 'racist' (McGreal 2001). The irony is, of course, that Jews and Palestinians are genetically so similar (McKie 2001) that, whatever else could be said of the Israelis' behaviour, it could not be described as racist.

Since, as noted above, there is considerable overlap between the different categories that delineate minority group status, the term 'ethnic minority' will be used here for convenience; it should be understood, though, that any or all of the constituent components are involved in any one example.

We did consider the possibility of including certain other groups: people with disabilities, for example or, particularly, gays and lesbians. However, strong though the case is for considering both these groups as minorities, we felt that their needs were too specific for inclusion here. The question of children with disabilities is considered in the second report in the current series (Sammon 2001).

Minorities in central/eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union

The conventional popular view of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union region is that ethnic conflicts are endemic and have existed since time immemorial – that the region is racked by "age-old ethnic hatreds." For example, John Major, when British Prime Minister, argued that it was only the 'discipline' of the Soviet Union that controlled the ethnic conflict in the old Yugoslavia, and "once that discipline had disappeared, those ancient hatreds reappeared and we began to see their consequences when the fighting occurred."⁵ A slightly more respectable version of this argument was that advanced by Samuel Huntington in explaining that the intermingling of ethnic affiliations as well as of Islamic, Orthodox and Catholic traditions in Yugoslavia were a 'cultural fault line' with an inherent potential for conflict (Huntingdon 1993).

⁴ For a useful discussion of the debate on race, particularly in recent times, see Kohn (1995).

⁵ See *Hansard*, cited by Malcolm (1996 p.4,) who includes a devastating deconstruction of this statement.

Furthermore it is argued that they were the primary cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union and, now that the old system has gone, there is nothing left to stop the different ethnic groups from warring indefinitely. Nationalism, in this view, will always be with us and it will always be an insoluble problem, especially in a region where 'tribal' conflicts are endemic. Croats have 'always' hated Serbs, who have always hated Croats – and both have always hated Bosnian Muslims; similarly with Russians and Chechens, Armenians and Azeris, and almost anyone and the Roma. What is the point in intervening with such people, when they have always been, and will always be at each others' throats?⁶

This report will argue that this view is profoundly mistaken, and that there is nothing inevitable or timeless about inter-ethnic conflict of the kind that we have been witnessing in, for example, the former Yugoslavia or the Caucasus. As Derluigan says: 'It is utterly wrong to follow the local nationalists, however numerous and vociferous, in claiming that the recent conflicts were just the re-emergence of age-old hatreds. Under normal circumstances the micro-conflicts (of which the macro-conflicts consist) would find resolution in daily life – even if that, in particularly dire instances, might involve the police. The impression of history repeating itself is produced by two factors: (1) the culturally-driven rationalisation of all kinds of conflict along the lines of traumatic historical memory; and (2) the path-dependent institutionalisation of ethnicity by modern national states' (Derluigan 2000).

The irresistible rise of nationalism

But to express this argument it is necessary first to examine the history of nationalism in a little detail to provide the theoretical background without which it is not possible to disentangle myth from reality. Nationalism – and its companion, ethnicity – is a subject with a massive literature. Many distinguished scholars have studied it, and there is room here to give only the briefest outline of the debate.⁷

Broadly, there are two sides to the debate: the 'perennialists' and the 'modernists.' The perennialists argue that nations are not recent creations but have existed in some sense – not always as explicitly as they do now – for many hundreds of years. Hastings, for example, claims that the existence of England as a nation dates back to the Venerable Bede in the eighth century (Hastings 1997). Smith, on the other hand, postulates a more generalised form of shared consciousness based on popular memories, symbols and myths (Smith 1986). Their arguments are different, but what they share is the notion that, at a time when no effective means of communication between communities existed, people could nevertheless share some kind of national consciousness with others whom they would never meet or even know of.

But what mechanism could such a shared consciousness utilise? How meaningful would be the concept of shared consciousness between, say, two people living in villages hundreds of miles apart, when simply to travel from one to the other would take days? Benedict Anderson attempts to get round this problem with the concept of 'imagined communities,' in which people who could not know each other were yet still able to share a culture, a history and a kinship (Anderson 1992). But how people could have been able to agree in any meaningful way the nature of their

⁶ For a savage indictment of the 'nothing can be done' school with particular reference to the former Yugoslavia, see Simms (2001).

⁷ The primary arguments for perennialism are set out in Hastings (1997), Smith (1986), and Anderson (1992), and for modernism in Gellner (1964 and 1983), Breuilly (1993) and Hobsbawm (1990). For a recent summary of the state of play, see Guibernau and Hutchinson (2001). More accessible, since they are both downloadable from the Internet, are (a) a public debate between Anthony Smith and Ernest Gellner (Mortimer 1995) and (b) the Nationalism Project, with a selection of quotations from some prominent scholars of nationalism (Zuelow 2001).

imagined communities is hard to see in practice: the hypothesis is unfalsifiable and, therefore, inherently unscientific and unreliable (Popper 1992).

In opposition to these arguments, the modern orthodoxy suggests that ethnic consciousness is a much more recent apparition and that the idea of “nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent ... political destiny, [is] a myth” (Gellner 1964). Indeed, rather than emerging from a cultural sense of national identity, it is nationalism itself that *creates* a sense of identity (Breuilly 1993). Hobsbawm argues that nationalism is an example of an invented tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), in which present-day concepts of ethnic identity are projected back into the past *as if they had always existed*. Furthermore, vertical (i.e., social class) divisions were much more important before the era of modern communications, and the peasantry saw themselves as having nothing in common with their landlords. What they might have had, also, is a *regional* identification: as late as the early twentieth century, Ukrainian peasants identified themselves not as Ukrainians but as Galicians, Bukovinians, Lemkos, etc (Reshetar 1952 p.322).

As a result of all this, this argument goes, until the earlier part of the nineteenth century (later, as we have seen, in Ukraine) there was no concept of national identity, except in politico-economic sense. ‘Nations’ such as England, France and Spain certainly existed, but more as political than as national entities.

One of the key elements in what makes up a ‘nation’ is language: religion and other factors are important, but without a common language it is difficult to conceive of a meaningful nation.⁸ Until relatively recently, the common people of most – if not all – countries had no common language and therefore no effective means of expressing a national identity. For example, the word for ‘Estonian’ only came into use in the 1860s; before that, the peasants of that land called themselves *maarahvas* (country people) (Hobsbawm 1990 p.48). Estonia had never been independent and, following the rule of the Teutonic Knights in late medieval times, the local nobility were in fact ethnically German. When the revival of Estonian culture began in the early nineteenth century, the *Kalevipoeg*, the epic poem of Estonian nationalism, was first written in German (Fowkes 1997 p.8).

Similarly, until the nineteenth century, Croats spoke three separate dialects, one of which, Štokavian, was also the major dialect of the Serbs. But “this situation could not be reconciled with the romantic belief that language was the most profound expression of national spirit. Obviously one nation could not have three spirits ...” (Banac 1984), so the Croats adopted Štokavian as a symbol of southern Slav unity. Under Tito, the promulgation of Serbo-Croat as one language was a very practical symbol of the unity of the country. But, after the collapse of the federation and the consequent independence of Croatia in 1991, the language is rapidly changing again. Many new expressions are being introduced, and old words, for example those for the months of the year, are being reintroduced or even invented.⁹ This time, of course, it is to signify its *difference* from Serbian and the identity of Croatia as an independent nation.

The key point here is that, although national languages existed as literary forms, in general there were no national *spoken* languages before the nineteenth century. The existence of many dialects was the norm rather than the exception, and it was only gradually that one form of the language took over from the others as the ‘official’ language, with all other forms relegated to inferior status (Dorian 1998). Furthermore, the emergence of national spoken languages frequently took place as the conscious acts of the early nationalists in order to produce a sense of national identity in the mass of illiterate people.

⁸ It is not, of course, impossible, as the example of Belgium shows us, but that country is not without its difficulties over language.

⁹ A Croatian friend of a colleague notices that, each time she returns, the language has changed yet again, with fresh words being imported or invented (Chris Rayment, personal communication).

As with language, so other characteristics of nationalist identity needed to be constructed. For example, the representation of Norway in the late nineteenth century was itself a series of constructions. “In many cases, the so-called ancient, typically Norwegian customs, folk tales, handicrafts and so on were neither ancient, typical or Norwegian,” and the ‘typical folk costumes’ that were worn at public celebrations were, in fact, designed by nationalists early in the twentieth century (Eriksen 1993, p.103).¹⁰

But is all this just an academic debate? What relevance has it for the very real problems of minority groups in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union? The essential point here is that nationalism is not an inevitable part of the natures of the people of the region, but a construct. It did not exist before the nineteenth century, and it will not necessarily exist forever more. That is not, of course, to minimise the problems that it has caused and is still causing, but what it does do is to destroy the argument that there is no point in doing anything about ethnic conflict ‘because it is in their blood.’

Nationalism in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union

As it did elsewhere in Europe, nationalism was in the ascendant when the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires broke up at the end of the First World War (Hobsbawm 1990). However, one argument goes, the imposition of communism acted as a straightjacket on nationalism, from 1917 in the case of Russia and from the later 1940s in the case of eastern Europe. But then, when the communist system collapsed in the later 1980s, nationalism was bound to break out again and, some argued, was actually the main cause of the break-up of the Soviet Union. This report will argue that this is a mistaken interpretation of recent events.

Here the conventional argument is that the sole effect on nationalism of the communist system was to suppress it. This produced the inevitable result that, when the old system collapsed, the virus of nationalism broke out again: in Antal’s somewhat lurid phrase, “when the bloody bandages of communism are unwrapped, they reveal the festering sores of nationalism.”¹¹ In other words, nationalism was there all the time, waiting for the removal of the straight-jacket of communism for it to break out again. Although there is an element of truth in this, the true picture is altogether more complicated than the simple hypothesis suggests.

Considering first the Soviet Union,¹² the history of the system’s treatment of ‘the national question’ goes back well before the 1917 revolution. The Tsarist regime treated its nationalities wholly inconsistently, promoting certain peoples at some times and others at different times (Suny 1992). Then, after the revolution, according to classical Marxist theory, nationalist divisions were regarded as inevitably less significant than class ones, and would anyway be eradicated by internationalism. Lenin followed this line at first, but later argued that all nations had a right to self-determination; after the revolution he introduced a federal system which was drawn largely along ethnic lines.

Stalin, however, was rather less tolerant of nationalism (Stalin n.d.) and, when he felt able, he centralised the state strongly whilst still preserving, more or less, the ethnic nature of the USSR’s constituent republics. In this structure, the ‘larger’¹³ nationalities were constituted as Soviet

¹⁰ Here one thinks particularly of the invention of the ‘traditional’ Scottish kilt in the nineteenth century (Trevor-Roper 1983).

¹¹ Josef Antal, former prime minister of Hungary in 1992, quoted (without source) by Richards (1999).

¹² For a concise history of nationality policy under the Soviet system, see Williams (1999).

¹³ That these were not based entirely on population size is demonstrated by the fact that, for example, the Tatars were more numerous than all the native speakers of the populations of all

Socialist Republics, whilst the 'smaller' ones had to make do with three lower levels: Autonomous Soviet Republics, Autonomous Regions and Ethnic Districts. Although the boundaries were nominally drawn along ethnic lines,¹⁴ many of them were arbitrary: for example, the Ferghana Valley was divided between Uzbekistan and what was then Kirghizia, leaving a very substantial Uzbek minority in Kirghizian territory.

Under Stalin, nationalism was suppressed and Russian culture extolled as the most advanced. "During the years of Stalinism, the Soviet Union most closely resembled the ideal type of empire – centralised, ruled by force and a unitary ideology, with the dominant nationality, the Russians, gaining a distinctly superior position in the state and in public perception" (Suny 1992 p.30). Even so, local national elites developed, and in almost all the republics (the only exceptions being Kazakhstan and Kirghizia) the titular nationalities were in the majority. Subsequently, under Stalin's successors, some liberalisation occurred and, by the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, each republic was governed by its the local nationality.

In fact, "the communist regime [in the Soviet Union] ... deliberately set out to *create* ethno-linguistic territorial 'national administrative units,' i.e. 'nations' in the modern sense, where none had previously existed or been thought of" (Hobsbawm 1990, p.166). Similarly, "the Soviet federal policy ... established an inseparable link between an ethnic group, its territory and its political administration ... These policies promoted a peculiar process of nation-building. On the one hand, the state imposed formal ethnic cohesion, created practically impenetrable barriers between different ethnic groups and established an administrative link between individuals and their nationality groups. ... On the other hand, the Soviet state developed effective mechanisms for controlling the composition and activities of local administrations and for preventing any ethnic community from acting as a unified entity in defence of its ethnic interests" (Zaslavsky 1992, pp.71-2).

Consequently, it is not sufficient to say that nationalism was simply suppressed: the main characteristic of the Soviet system was certainly repression, but it was essentially political rather than ethnic. Any suppression of nationalism occurred more because the authorities feared any movement that seemed democratic in character rather than because it was nationalist as such.

Of the remaining countries in the communist bloc in central and eastern Europe,¹⁵ the least homogeneous was of course (the former) Yugoslavia. Here, the Tito regime, whatever its other faults, did attempt to satisfy the nationality question by building into the system a whole series of carefully-judged balancing acts that prevented any one nationality from dominating the federation: "Tito's handling of nationalism could not be faulted. He gave each republic just enough autonomy to satisfy nationalist demands, without compromising the unity of Yugoslavia. His fundamental mistake was that he never managed a democratic succession ..."¹⁶

When the communist system did eventually collapse, it became possible again to discuss ethnic issues and nationalist aspirations. Indeed, it has frequently been argued that it was this very nationalism that *caused* the break-up of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia and placed severe stresses on other parts of the old Soviet bloc such as Azerbaijan and Armenia, Moldova, and Georgia, to name only a few. For example, in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's programme of reforms in the late 1980s "unleashed pent-up nationalism in the non-Russian regions" (Rezun 1992, p.3). Also, "nationalism became one of the most serious challenges to Gorbachev's survival" – and hence, by implication, that of the Soviet Union as a whole (Williams 1999, p.35).

three Baltic republics put together (Katz, Rogers and Harned 1975), and yet they formed only an autonomous republic.

¹⁴ In the first delimitation in 1924-25, some 85-95% of each of the largest Turkic groups were encompassed within their respective administrative units (Akiner 2000).

¹⁵ We have not included North Korea, Vietnam or Cuba in this analysis.

¹⁶ Milovan Djilas, quoted in Ignatieff (1994), p.37.

The theme of the material presented by Lapidus and Zaslavsky is “the forces that lay behind the rise of national movements which challenged, then destroyed, the stability and territorial integrity of the former Soviet state (Lapidus and Zaslavsky 1992). Finally, Fowkes’s book on the disintegration of the Soviet Union (subtitled *A study in the rise and triumph of nationalism*) opens unequivocally with the statement that “the subject of this book is the ethnic disintegration of the Soviet Union” (Fowkes 1997, p.1). These are typical examples; many others could be cited: the role of nationalism in the break-up of the Soviet Union seems to be a modern political paradigm.

We will argue that this paradigm is false. The evidence that is usually advanced for it lies almost entirely in the occurrence of ethnic conflicts in the period leading up to the disintegration of the union in 1991. The specific examples that are most frequently cited are: (a) in the Baltic states; (b) disturbances in Kazakhstan in 1986; (c) the revolt in Moldova which ended in the establishment of Transdniestrian republic; (d) ethnic conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno Karabagh; (e) conflict in Georgia with South Ossetia and Abkhazia and (f) inter-ethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks.

Examination of these examples, however, suggests a somewhat different picture: apart from the first one (and, arguably, with the second), they are not associated with any desire to secede from the Soviet Union. The example of the Baltic states does, indeed, concern a nationalist aspiration for independence, but this is very much a special case. All three Baltic states enjoyed independence from 1919 until they were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, so that their desire for independence can be understood on this basis. And the example of Kazakhstan concerned the resentment of local people at the replacement of a Kazakh high official by a Russian; there was rioting on a scale sufficient to concern the Soviet authorities, but the disturbances did not continue significantly after the authorities backed down.

All of the other cases mentioned concern conflicts *within or between* the Soviet Republics where they occurred; to take one example, that of the dispute over Nagorno Karabagh, this was a quarrel purely between Azerbaijan and Armenia. It is true that, its earliest stages, it involved fierce inter-ethnic conflict in Azerbaijan which was very harshly put down by Soviet forces, but it did not involve any specific desire to secede from the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, there is little evidence of a rise in popular nationalism in the Soviet republics. Ukraine provides an interesting example, which is related to its history.¹⁷ There, “the lack of an established tradition of Ukrainian statehood and the consequent sharp historical differences both between and within the Ukrainian regions” (Wilson 1997, p.194) was a significant factor. The western region of what is now Ukraine was, until 1919, a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; after a brief interregnum between 1917 and 1920, it became part of Poland and was only incorporated into the remainder of Soviet Ukraine after the Second World War. The eastern part, on the other hand, has traditionally looked much more towards Russia, and is heavily Russified. In religion, western Ukraine is predominantly Uniate, whilst the rest of the country is Orthodox. The result was that, in the 1980s, whilst the nationalist movement *Rukh* gained very considerable support in the western part of the republic, this was not mirrored in the east. Eventually, however, independence was obtained amidst the wreckage of the Soviet Union, but there are still tensions between the two parts and, in the east, some evidence of a desire to reunite with Russia.

Whilst there were, of course, nationalist pressures in the Soviet Union, and these undoubtedly played a small part in its break-up, they were by no means the main driver in this direction: instead, “nationalism was a response to rather than a cause of collapse.” (Breuilly 2001, p.44). It can be argued that, in fact, the Soviet Union was “not so much a nation state as rather a state of nations” (Waters n.d.).

¹⁷ For a recent history of Ukrainian nationalism, see Wilson (1997); for an excellent more general, partly anecdotal account, see Reid (1998).

What actually happened was that many of the expectations raised by Gorbachev's policy of perestroika were dashed when the economic situation deteriorated in the later 1980s; "the leaders of the more prosperous republics began to demand openly [for] more economic independence [but] economic liberalisation ... was impossible without a genuine political liberalisation." (Khazanov 1995 pp.32-3). When, subsequently, a new Union Treaty was proposed in 1990, it tried to bring back power too much to the centre. This was not acceptable to the leadership of the republics and, as pressure from them grew, the whole edifice collapsed like a house of cards. That this was not a democratic revolution is demonstrated by the fact that the leadership of most of the republics remained in the hands of the old communist *nomenklatura* – with the Communist parties hastily (and totally unconvincingly in most cases) rebadging themselves as national democratic parties.

It is highly significant that, when the break-up did take place, it occurred along administrative, not ethnic lines. Although the 15 republics of the Soviet Union were more or less divided ethnically, we have seen that these divisions were by no means precise.¹⁸ And yet, the boundaries of the fifteen new countries formed from the old Soviet Union follow precisely the boundaries of the fifteen constituent Soviet Republics of old.¹⁹

The case of Yugoslavia is similar to that of the Soviet Union in many ways, and yet the outcome was rather different. There, rather than the 'ancient ethnic hatreds' being the cause of the break-up, of the Yugoslav Federation, the rather more recent ethnic tensions²⁰ were harnessed by the Milošević regime to maintain power. The Yugoslav wars of the 1990s are more accurately seen not as civil wars but as aggressive wars of conquest, waged by Milošević in the cause of building a Greater Serbia (Woodward 1995).

A further significant point to make here is that the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia should be seen not solely as artefacts of the collapse of communism, but in a much wider context: that of the collapse of empires more generally. It is much more plausible to see the collapse of the system as unfinished business: the final stage in the process in which all the multi-ethnic empires of the nineteenth century were swept away. According to Milovan Djilas, "We communists were the last empire" (Ignatieff 1994, p.37).

After the First World War the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires collapsed, fragmenting into their constituent elements. The Tsarist Empire, on the other hand, remained – although with a different set of proprietors, who managed to avoid the fate of the other two empires by "[making] concessions to the nationality principle in the process or reconstituting state power" (Breuilly 2001, p.43). However, this only postponed the collapse of the empire, it did not, despite appearances at the time, prevent it altogether.

As Ignatieff points out, there were three great re-orderings of the nation-state system in Europe in the twentieth century: "at Versailles in 1918,²¹ when the new nations of eastern Europe were created from the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian, Turkish and Russian Empires; at Yalta in 1945, when Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill allocated the nation states of western and eastern Europe to two spheres of influence, and between 1989 and 1991, when the Soviet Empire and the communist regimes of eastern Europe collapsed" (Ignatieff 1994, p.8).

¹⁸ In Moldova, where the Transdnistrian region with its large Russian minority has been trying to secede, the population is by no means homogeneous: Moldovans represent around 65 per cent of the population (Järve 2001).

¹⁹ The only real exception was the attempted defection of Chechnya from the Russian Federation – but this can much more convincingly be regarded as a continuation of the Chechens' long history of trying to avoid what they regard as subjugation by Russia (Bennett 1998).

²⁰ These actually dated back only as far as the middle of the twentieth century: see, for example, Malcolm (1996).

²¹ The Versailles Conference actually opened in January 1919.

Looking over the longer term, we see that in 1820, more than half of the population of Europe belonged to ethnic 'nations' which either had no autonomy or were distributed between states with no interest in their national aspirations. However, after the First World War this proportion had dropped to around 7 per cent and, after the Second World War, to only 3 per cent (Krejčí and Velímský 1981). Now, after the ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia, this proportion must be even lower (it does not, of course, include most of the former Soviet Union, which would raise the figure considerably).

Nationalism resurgent

When the communist system did finally collapse, the countries of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union embraced democracy with varying degrees of enthusiasm. States such as Czechoslovakia, which had a history of democratic rule dating from between the two world wars, found this relatively easy; however, the economic collapse that accompanied the 'transition' to democracy exerted great strains on them (Carter 2000). Other states, which either had no history of genuine democratic rule (for example, Albania and Romania) or no recent history of independent existence at all (for example, Uzbekistan and Armenia), found it much more difficult. In these countries it was much easier for the previous communist rulers to portray themselves as democratic whilst simultaneously playing the ethnic card.

But why did this happen? To answer that question, we need to go back to the emergence of the nation state in Europe in the nineteenth century. The idea of the state, as the ultimate arbiter of economic and political relations within a given territorial area, took it as axiomatic that the state was coterminous with the nation (Stavenhagen 1994, p.12). The problem was that people of different ethnic groups were not conveniently arranged in neat self-contained areas, but were intermingled, more so in some areas than in others (e.g., in south eastern Europe) than in others (e.g., Czechoslovakia), but none of the emerging countries was even nearly ethnically homogeneous. The two main theories of political organisation proved quite unable to predict what actually happened. These were the liberal (which assumed that 'modernisation' would see the locally-anchored members of relatively closed, agrarian communities transformed into national and global citizens) and the Marxist (which assumed that class differences would overcome mere ethnic ones) (Stavenhagen 1994, p.12).

Instead, the ethnic concept of the nation clashed with, and largely overcame the civic concept (Black 1997, p.15). In the former, the state is controlled by the dominant ethnic group, with those who do not 'belong' relegated to, at best, a subsidiary role. This implies a biological rather than a contractual relationship as a basis for relations between citizens. Members of the same nation are assumed to share a fundamental bond even if divided by politics, whilst those 'not of our blood' are regarded as foreigners (Gebert 2000).

In the latter concept, on the other hand, the organising force is the rule of law over any given area, and anyone who lives there has equal rights regardless of their ethnic origin. In this model, ethnicity does *not* override citizenship, and the whole basis for relations between people is that what is valued is that they have many identifications and loyalties at once, of which ethnic identification is only one (Khazanov 1995, p.111). In practical terms, this means "moving away from identification with the nation towards identification with the state, i.e., away from a citizenship based on the fiction of ethnic identity towards one based on allegiance to the values of democracy." (Ignatieff 1994, p.76).

Where this vital element of civil society is missing, on the other hand, it is only too easy for an identification based solely on ethnicity to see 'us' and 'them' and, where resources are scarce, for the inevitable quarrels about those resources to degenerate into inter-ethnic clashes. "When the so-called centre, identified with the ethnic majority, is in sole control of natural resources, investments, subsidies, migration and economic policy, taxation, local budgeting, infrastructure and education, then, whether justified or not, the thought appears: 'we' are exploited and discriminated against, and 'we' would be better off without 'them'." (Khazanov 1995, p.10).

But when the communist system collapsed, there were no mechanisms for these different identifications to form. Konstanty Gebert uses a fine metaphor: "If one wants to translate from the language of Communism into that of democracy, one needs both to change the vocabulary and the grammar. But if one intends to translate from Communism into nationalism, all that needs to be changed is the vocabulary; the grammar, as it were, remains the same. And thus nationalism, not democracy, often took the relay from Communism, in the minds of many" Gebert (2000).

The problem was that there was little or nothing around which the identifications could be created. Instead, the new states of the region saw the rise of ethnic nationalism to fill the vacuum of doctrines and forms of collective action that were left by the collapse of the old system. Furthermore, "In eastern Europe, ethnic nationalism serves the general public as a moral compensation for economic backwardness, but political elites use it in power struggles, taking the political notion of 'nation' to an extreme in order to secure their power. In other words, they use ethnonationalism as a way of mobilising support and to establish absolute values of right and wrong, and as a result minorities and minority views are easily marginalised and suppressed. The long-term resolution of the problem of ethnonationalism thus depends on the progress made by East European countries in three related areas: modernisation, democratisation, and the promotion of civic identities" (PER 1995).

In democracies, the legitimisation of the state is more complicated because it requires citizenship rather than ethnicity as a unifying force: "From this perspective, the Chechnya crisis was an example of the failure to promote civic national identities in the Russian Federation, because the Chechens had not developed a sense of loyalty toward Russia" (PER 1995).

Similarly, in Ukraine, for example, although there is reportedly a consensus on the need to construct an inclusive nation around civic rather than ethnic features, the problem is that these civic features "are not likely to be sufficient to give great cohesion to the people of Ukraine. In part this is because civic features are inherently less likely to evoke an emotional attachment to the nation as ethnic and cultural features are. But also, the fact that the Ukrainian state is young and its political institutions are not very effective and certainly not very well respected means that relying on civic components of national identity is likely not going to be sufficient to bind the citizenry together. Thus, nation-builders in Ukraine must rely heavily on ethnic or cultural factors to unite the population. And here there are two main options in Ukraine that are popular and potentially viable. One might be termed an Ethnic Ukrainian National Identity, and the other an East Slavic National Identity" (Shulman 2001).

A counter example which illustrates the importance of non-ethnic ties in an area of great ethnic complexity is given by the governance of Dagestan. There, as we shall see later, the ethnic mix is astonishingly varied – fourteen ethnic groups are recognised by the constitution but there are many more – but ethnicity has not dominated the political organisation there. "Dagestan did not follow the road of ethnic division. Nationalism there did not feed separatism. Probably this happened because the true structure of the political forces that have taken shape there was based not on ethnic affiliation but on clearer identities rooted in the traditional political structures, the *jamaats*" (Kisriev 2000). The *jamaat* is a form of organisation based on clan rather than ethnic solidarity, and local *jamaats* form alliances with their neighbours and, in some cases, confederations of alliances.

This is not to argue that the *jamaat* system should or could be applied elsewhere: clearly, what works in one society may not work in another. What is needed is for states to develop their own civil society in the way that best suits their individual circumstances. In most countries of the former Soviet bloc, there was virtually no element of civil society or (with certain honourable exceptions) any tradition of democratic process. The increase in nationalism that we have witnessed in recent times is simply part of a process that would have occurred in any disintegrating system. In the new countries of the region, there was also little or no tradition of conflict resolution. Furthermore, the "former titular groups that are now the majorities in these new states try to dominate the non-indigenous, mainly Russian-speaking, populations ... these new majorities are mostly unwilling to concede anything to minorities, unless confronted with the threat

of violence” Kovács (1998 p.7).²² Indeed, that is precisely what has occurred in many of the countries that were formed in, for example, Africa after the break-up of the British and French Empires there. In other words, the rise of nationalism in the former Soviet bloc is a classic example of the decolonisation process and, hopefully, when the requisite conditions apply it will be much less significant as a divisive issue in the region.²³

Meanwhile, the problem of ethnic tensions is sharpened by conflicts over scarce resources. Furthermore, these conflicts frequently take on an ethnic colouring that disguises their true nature. In the process, this makes them seem less capable of solution because they can appear to relate to those ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ rather than to what they really are, which is arguments about the distribution and sharing of resources. A discussion of what were apparently ethnic conflicts in Africa, for example, concluded that

“it is not good enough to blame ethnic conflict in Africa on ‘ancient hatreds’, because the underlying cause is more likely to involve environmental degradation. On the surface, many conflicts do seem to revolve around ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic divisions, and these divisions will likely dominate the perceptions of the protagonists. Yet to gain a better understanding of the nature of these conflicts, we need to look beyond the easy excuse of ‘ancient hatreds’ and ‘tribal bloodletting’ to detect the underlying stress factors that help cause the fighting ... disputes are often sharpened or even triggered by glaring social and economic inequities - explosive conditions that are exacerbated by the growing pressures of population control, resource depletion and environmental degradation” (Renner 1996).

Renner goes on to point out that multi-ethnic societies do not necessarily result in conflict, citing the example of Tanzania, in which many different peoples (he lists seven) live together with little evidence of tension among them. As we saw with the example of Dagestan, ethnic conflict does *not* inevitably follow from ethnic diversity, provided the mechanisms exist to give people other means to identify with each other.

This is the subject of an interesting discussion by Schöpflin (2000) which reinforces the arguments above. He concludes that, whereas there are both positive and negative trends in inter-ethnic relations in Europe, “it is far too easy to concentrate on the pathology ... and to ignore the success stories.” He goes on to cite the process of European integration which, although it is slow and cumbersome, has resulted in the emergence of a European identity that “for certain purposes transcends the nation, the state and ethnicity.” Of course, conditions in the European Union are very different than those in the region in which we are interested in this report, specifically in the existence of a strong civic society. Schöpflin concludes by pointing out that:

“the adoption of democracy throughout Europe, even where its functioning is imperfect, establishes far greater space for innovation than before. New forms of knowledge and power can create institutions for minorities—give them voice—at both the local and the state-wide levels that can in itself be helpful. Besides, democracy helps to ensure that neither the majority nor the minority defines itself as homogeneous and the consequent heterogeneity creates spaces where inter-ethnic cooperation can take root. The emphasis here is on ‘can’; there is no automatic guarantee of success, but the potential is significantly greater than before 1989.”

That is a useful note on which to end this part of the report.

²² But it might be added that the characterisation of the Russian-speaking minorities being the ones with the most difficulties is not wholly borne out by the facts, as we shall see later on.

²³ For a very interesting discussion which explicitly compares the break-up of the Soviet Union with the fall of the Habsburg, Ottoman, British and French and German Empires, see Dawisha and Parrott (1997), and for another which compares the experiences of the British and French Empires with that of the Soviet Union, see Clayton (1997)..

PART 2: THE SITUATION IN THE REGION

Numbers of minority groups in the region

Now, following the collapse of communism and the break-up of the Soviet Union, as a result of the history that has been reviewed above, there are now minorities in every country. Exact numbers are difficult to obtain for a range of reasons that will be discussed in more detail later. However, a broad estimate, based on evidence on the proportions of the population who belong to minority groups (Trifunovska 2001) is that the total number in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is rather in excess of 70 million. On this basis, the number of children is around 20 million (**Table 1**). These numbers, it should be noted, are likely to be under-estimates.

Table 1: Central and eastern Europe and the CIS: Estimated numbers of population in minority groups

Region	Numbers of people in minority groups, beginning of 1999 (millions)	
	Total population	Children aged 0-17
Central and eastern Europe	18.9	4.6
Commonwealth of Independent States	53.2	14.9
Total for region	72.2	19.5

Sources: Trifunovska (2001), UNICEF (2000b) and author's calculations.

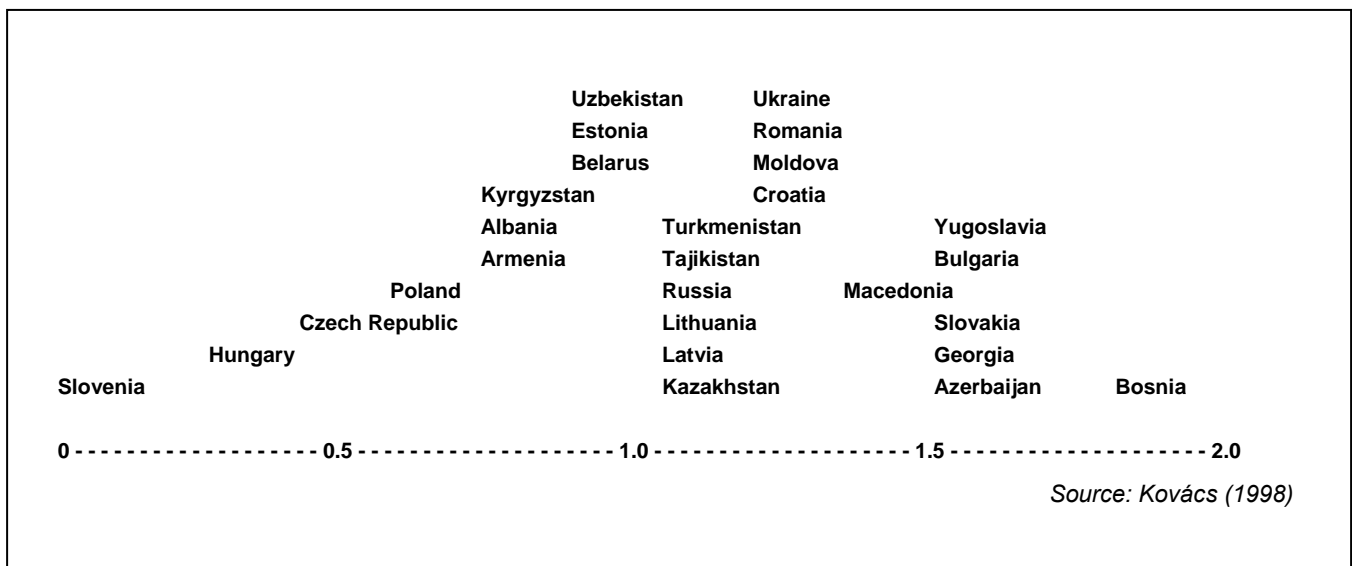
Of course, not all of these minority groups will be suffering discrimination. To take just one example, Russians are well-regarded in Bulgaria, largely for historic reasons: Russia is seen as the liberator of Bulgaria after helping the country to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. Similarly, in Lithuania, although there have been some tensions following independence, ethnic minorities make up a fifth of the population and many of these "have lived in Lithuania since ancient times and are considered original inhabitants" (MRG 1997, p.230). Finally, in Slovenia the (admittedly the very small) Hungarian and Italian minorities have collective minority and language rights incorporated into the constitution of the new state (MRG 1997, p.248).

There have been a number of attempts to classify ethnic relations in the region, notably in the Minorities at Risk project (Gurr 2000) and in work for the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (Kovács 1998).

The Minorities at Risk project attempts to measure the stress on inter-ethnic relations in a state by constructing a composite index which is intended to show the probability of different ethnic groups being involved in ethno-political protest or rebellion. Using the index in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the probability of such rebellion is adjudged to be high for Armenians in Azerbaijan and Russians in Estonia, for example, but particularly low for Roma everywhere. Whilst this may reflect the likelihood of political action by Roma, it does not realistically reflect the risk to them as expressed by the level of discrimination that they face, thus rather reducing the value of the index.

Kovács, on the other hand, attempts to group the nations of the region according to their 'ethnic climate', a composite scale calculated from five dimensions, including such factors as the levels of discrimination and the relative sizes of minorities. The different countries are then plotted on a one-dimensional scale, on which countries scoring less than 0.8 are described as 'inclusive,' those with values between 0.8 and 1.4 are 'ambiguous' and those with a score of greater than 1.4 are 'exclusive' (**Figure 1**). Although this does not produce any really major surprises – that Slovenia is at one extreme and Bosnia at the other is only to be expected – there are some definite anomalies. For example, Romania is classed as significantly better than Bulgaria, and intuitively this would seem to be hard to justify; the somewhat arbitrary nature of the values used in the analysis does raise questions about the validity of the approach used.

Figure 1: Position of countries on a scale of ethnic climate



Such approaches can help to give some illumination but, on the whole, they do not provide much genuinely objective material. The construction of such indices is, to a large extent, based on arbitrary assessments and weightings, and there is a common problem with this kind of approach. This is that, if the indicators give an 'expected' result, they are liable to be dismissed as telling us no more than we know already, but if they give an unexpected result, they call into question the methodology. Consequently, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that they tend to be of little more than academic value.

Discrimination against minorities: why we should be concerned

Although, as we have argued, some minorities are not discriminated against, this is much more the exception than the rule, and the picture for minorities generally is bleak. Throughout the region, anti-minority prejudice is endemic, vicious and blatantly expressed. Unfortunately, there are few if any systematic data collected on the effects of ethnic discrimination, partly because it is of its nature hard to pin down and partly through a lack of willingness to confront the issue in the region – at least on the part of those who are doing the discrimination.

Here it is necessary to emphasise that it is *discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity* that is the main problem, not the existence of the minorities themselves. It is possible frequently to read, for example, of 'the Roma question' or 'the Roma problem' – even in publications produced by Roma

activists.²⁴ The main cause of the problem, however, lies not in the minorities themselves but in the attitudes of those who discriminate against them; to argue otherwise is to indulge in victim-blaming. Marginalisation and discrimination are both serious problems (Stavenhagen 1994), but discrimination is the greater problem, not least because it reinforces the effects of marginalisation.

Thus far it is clear: the problems of discrimination are serious and widespread throughout central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. But why, the question may be asked, should an agency such as ourselves, whose aim is to work mainly with children, be especially concerned with this issue? The reason is that the effects of discrimination affect children the most, because children are a minority within a minority: “in the dominant society, the children of a minority must endure along with their parents the problems of social and cultural discrimination, and they are even more exposed to the risk of cultural dissolution” (Pace, n.d.).

In fact, the children of minority families are placed in double jeopardy. Firstly, the terrific increase in poverty and inequality that has affected the whole of the region since the collapse of communism (Carter 2000) has affected minority group families more than those from the majority. For example a World Bank study in Bulgaria concluded that the highest poverty rates were found among families with children, and that the incidence of poverty among ethnic minorities was higher still. The poverty rate among families with children was 15 per cent for ethnic Bulgarians, compared with 42 per cent for ethnic Turks and 76 per cent for Roma (Andrews 1995).

Secondly, children and families have been affected more than others in the minority groups: “As one scans Europe, it is striking how consistently ethnic minority groups are marginalized in virtually all national states ... the serious marginalisation of certain sections of a country's population who are socially defined as significantly different on the grounds of their culture, nationality or the colour of their skin, seems universal across Europe ... this applies to the ‘new democracies’ of eastern Europe as much as anywhere else (Pringle 1998, p.16).

Until recently, those involved internationally with ethnic minorities have given almost no attention to the specific and special needs of minority children, and neither have those working with children engaged with the special implications of cultural disadvantage and minority group status (Stavenhagen, quoted in Black 1997, p.14). Nevertheless, from what information *is* available, it is clear that there are serious problems to address for minority group children.

The most obvious issue in childcare is the problem of the overuse of the ‘orphanages’ – state residential institutions for the care of Roma children. Their over-representation in residential care in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is well-documented. “Institutionalisation of [Roma] children, particularly in eastern and central European countries, is a cause for concern ... data from individual countries bring out two alarming points: [Roma] children appear to be disproportionately over-represented in state residential institutions and, secondly, they are for the main part institutionalised in centres for mentally-disabled children” (Costarelli n.d., p.43).

In Romania, although the proportion of Roma in the population as a whole is in the region of ten per cent (see **Table 2** below), the proportion of children in the country's institutions was estimated to be 46 per cent (Children's Health Care Collaborative Study Group 1994); another estimate put it around 60 per cent (Zamfir and Zamfir 1996). The corresponding figure for Hungary was reported as 70 per cent (Kozma 2000), and half the children admitted to state welfare centres in 1987 were Roma (Puxon 1987). In Czechoslovakia in 1990, 50 per cent of children in residential institutions were Roma.²⁵ More recently, similar figures were reported for both the Czech and Slovak Republics (UNICEF 1997); even official statistics put the figure at 28 per cent (UNICEF 2001 p.110). Finally, in Bulgaria, research carried out in 1993/94 showed that well over half (55.6 per cent) of children brought up in mother and baby homes were of Roma origin (Antonova et al

²⁴ For a discussion of this point, see Vašečka (2000), pp.3-4.

²⁵ Struk (1990) quoted in Himes *et al* (1991).

1996). A further study showed that, although children from the Roma and other ethnic minorities form 13 per cent of the population, they made up 60 per cent of the babies placed in one urban Mother & Baby Home, and an average of 40 per cent of the children in the residential institutions in the study (ECT 1998). Furthermore, the situation in the region as a whole has worsened markedly since the collapse of the communist system (Tobis 2000).

I cannot begin to tell you how I felt

“When ... the baby got sick I took her to the hospital, where she spent a week. The doctors there treated me like the nurse had: they did not tell me anything, they just suggested to the [state authorities] that they take a look at my child. We went home again to Nyíradony, not knowing what was happening behind the scenes.

When we arrived home, a group of officials were waiting for us ... and there they together told me that they were taking my baby to the orphanage. Of course I told them that this was not possible, but here were so many police cars ... they took away my child ... I cannot begin to tell you how I felt.

– Ms M B, a Roma woman in Hungary whose children were removed without her consent (ERRC 2000a)

The primary reason for this lies in the attitudes of the non-Roma population: there is a widespread assumption that Roma parents are inadequate because they are (supposedly) feckless, and therefore that it is better *for the children* to be taken away from such malign influences and be ‘brought up properly.’ Of course, things are a little more complicated than this. It is clear that some Roma parents *do* make use of the system to care for their children: placing them in an institution in the winter, for example, because they do not have enough money to feed the child or keep them warm. But this is by no means confined to Roma families, evidence indicates (Carter forthcoming) that it is a recognisable and wholly understandable reaction to extreme poverty. It is just that poverty is more prevalent among Roma families than among the majority populations, and people notice it when Roma families do it because they are ready to think the worst of them.

Another complicating factor is the differing perceptions, in Roma and majority populations, of Roma childcare practices. Roma children appear to outsiders to be carelessly dressed, often dirty. Because they are usually poor, it is necessary for them to play a full part in the economic life of their community, and when they do not, they often run free. To outsiders, this seems like total neglect, hence the widespread supposition that Roma families do not look after their children properly. But they are frequently cared for – and cherished – by their extended families, not just their immediate parents, and all who write about the Roma comment on their obvious love for and delight in their children.²⁶ What is happening here is that the different perceptions of the situation, combined with a readiness of the majority population to believe the worst of the Roma, produce a distorted and, indeed, false view of them.²⁷

Data on other minority groups are much harder to obtain, and there is no systematic collection of ethnicity data (the data on Roma only exist because of particular concern about this group). One study by ECT of children’s residential institutions in Kyrgyzstan indicated that there was a significantly high proportion of children of Russian origin in care (ECT 2000), but otherwise the only evidence available is anecdotal.

²⁶ For an interesting discussion on this particular issue, see ní Shuinéar (n.d.)

²⁷ It is not, of course, only in childcare that these misperceptions produce difficulties: they occur in almost every area of social interaction between Roma and majority populations.

Of course, Roma (and other minority) children are not admitted to residential care *solely* because of their ethnicity: there is a complex of factors working here (Burke 1995). Partly it reflects the very severe conditions in which most Roma children are brought up: with the levels of poverty and consequent poor living conditions which so many have to endure, it is hardly surprising that families are not able to cope. But the overwhelming weight of the evidence is that ethnicity does play an extremely significant role in the decision to commit Roma children to institutions: the professional prejudices on the part of professional staff and the discrimination that is exercised against minority cultures are highly influential (Vitello 1992). So also are public anti-Roma opinion and the structures of the political systems that keep decisions to admit children at the local level but maintain responsibility for resource distribution at the level of government (Kozma 2000).

The other major area of childcare on which data are more readily available is education, and the picture here is just as bleak.²⁸ In central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Roma children “encounter widespread discrimination and rejection in public schools.” (Van der Stoel 2000, p.61). Worse, in some countries, children are systematically excluded from the educational mainstream. In the Czech republic, according to census data, the proportion of Roma aged fifteen or over who had achieved full secondary education in 1991 was 1.2 per cent of the relevant population, whilst the corresponding figure for the Czech population was 80.3 per cent (ERRC 1999, p.12). Roma are greatly over-represented in schools for children with learning disabilities. In the Czech Republic in 1989-90, 46.4 per cent of Roma children were in ‘remedial special schools,’ compared with only 3.2 per cent of non-Roma children: this means that Roma children are *fifteen times* more likely to be have been judged to have ‘intellectual deficiencies’ (ERRC 1999, p.22). The corresponding figure for Hungarian Roma children in special schools is 31 per cent (Puxon 1987).²⁹ In addition, Czech Roma are considerably over-represented in the ‘instruction centres,’ institutions for children who have come in contact with the law: the proportion of Roma children in these may be as high as 90 per cent.³⁰ There is also evidence that these practices are also prevalent in the Slovak Republic and Hungary (Van der Stoel 2000, p.74).

These deliberate examples of segregation are further reinforced by facto segregation: many schools are located in the separate Roma quarter of their town, and there are also frequently difficulties for Roma parents wishing to enrol their children in predominantly non-Roma schools. A common problem is posed by language: many Roma speak one or other dialect of Romani as their first language, rather than the national language – which is almost invariably the medium of instruction even in the Roma schools. These problems are often cited as the justification for segregating Roma children in schools³¹ – but this is usually just a cover providing a more socially-acceptable rationale for segregation (Fonseca 1996).

The lack of access to adequate education is probably the main factor in holding Roma children back. But Roma children are not the only minority affected by this kind of discrimination. For example, children outside the main ethnic group in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia all show much lower educational attainment than the majority, especially in Hungary (UNICEF 1998). Similarly, in Bulgaria, a World Bank survey found that whilst the proportion of ethnic Bulgarian children not attending school was five per cent, the figure for ethnic Turkish children was ten per cent. This was nothing like as high as for Roma children (which was 51 per cent) but was twice the figure for ethnic Bulgarians (Andrews 1995). In Georgia, Armenian, Azeri and ethnic Russian children were found to have difficulty keeping up with their classes because their

²⁸ Save the Children UK’s fine report on education and the Roma was published just as this report was being finalised (SCFUK 2001).

²⁹ Other reports put the Hungarian figure between 30 and 40 per cent (Kozma and Ilyes 1993) or between 30 and 50 per cent (National Education Institute of Hungary, cited in UNICEF Hungary 1998, p.386)..

³⁰ Fund for Threatened Children, cited in ERRC 1999, p.13.

³¹ See, for example, UNICEF Hungary 1998, pp.385-6.

Georgian was not good enough (UNICEF 2000). Finally, Russian-speaking children generally in the newly-independent states face difficulties in their education. Traditionally, as a direct result of Soviet policy, Russian-speakers had better access to education in the Republics than the majority populations. However, since independence and the replacement of Russian as the state language in most of the ex-Soviet states, Russophone children now often have to learn in the new language if they are to progress. Even in Russia itself, around half of the 89 regions of the Federation have minority populations of sufficient size to generate debate over which language should be used officially. In some of the regions, Russian is no longer used as the medium of instruction in schools (UNICEF 1998).

In a Hungarian primary school ...

“One day we laughed at the maths teacher in class. The maths teacher told Ms Ciboja, or form-teacher. She told us, 'You stinking little Gypsy whores, you're not in Tókert [the name of a large Romani settlement in Dömsöd]!' Everyone heard it - she said it in front of our whole class. Ms Ciboja said all sorts of other bad things about us and she slapped Anita, the other Romani girl in our class, in the face. Then she told us to go home. I didn't go to school for about a month after that- why should I? I won't go someplace where they humiliate me like that. The headteacher didn't know about the incident though, and the school wanted us to pay a fine because I didn't go. So my mother went to school and explained why I hadn't gone. Still, nothing happened to that teacher. She wasn't reprimanded and she never apologised. I started to go to school again, but I didn't go to Ms Ciboja's classes and they failed me because of absences.”

- Interview with Hungarian primary schoolchild in Cahn et al (1998)

The evidence then is powerful: children in minority groups face discrimination in childcare in general and in education in particular. In Part 4 of the report we put forward some proposals and action points to help rectify this situation, but next we analyse the position for minorities across the region as a whole.

PART 3: MINORITIES IN THE REGION: A RESOURCE

The following analysis presents, as far as the available information allows, the problems for minority groups in the region. Each country will be examined in turn, but first, certain groups, because they are present in more than one country or are otherwise notable, will be considered separately since they have common problems. These groups are: the Roma, Russians in the ex-Soviet states (the 'near abroad'), the 'formerly deported peoples,' Jews, religious minorities and, finally, Hungarians living outside Hungary.

The aim of this part of the report is that it should provide a resource for NGOs and other organisations working in the region and to act as pointer to where they are likely to encounter problems so that they are aware of the need to act appropriately.

(a) The Roma

Of all minority groups in the region, the Roma³² are undoubtedly the worst affected by prejudice and discrimination – in fact, this has been the case throughout their history. The literature on the Roma is huge and we can give no more than the barest indication here.³³

Present-day research accepts that the origin of the Roma lies in northern India, and that they migrated via Persia (around the ninth century) and Armenia, reaching the Byzantine Empire in the eleventh century. By the early fifteenth century they began to spread throughout eastern Europe (Fraser 1995, Crowe 1995), and by the sixteenth century their arrival had been recorded in Western Europe (Liegeois and Gheorge 1995).

Plus ça change ...

"The results of our investigations have allowed us to characterise the Gypsies as being a people of entirely primitive ethnological origins, whose mental backwardness makes them incapable of real social adaptation."

Dr Robert Ritter, head of the Racial Hygiene and Population Biology Research Unit of the German Ministry of Health, 1940 (Kohn 1995, p.178)

"Another thing we ought to take into consideration is an extended reproduction of the socially unadaptable [Roma] population ... Already children are giving birth to children – poorly adaptable mentally, badly adaptable socially, with serious health problems, who are simply a real burden on this society."

Vladimir Mečiar, Prime Minister, Slovak Republic, 1993 (Van der Stoep 2000)

³² Nomenclature for this people is itself an awkward area; most common names for them including *Gypsy* and *Țigane*, are regarded as derogatory. Most groups prefer the designation *Roma*: in the *Romani* language, *Rom* (plural *Roma*) is a person. In this report we use 'Roma' throughout, except where other sources are being directly quoted.

³³ See the section on Resources for more detail, but Fonseca (1996) gives a good general introduction to Roma life and history.

Their subsequent history varied greatly depending on the countries in which they lived, but a theme of marginalisation and discrimination was a common thread in their experiences (Ringold 2000). Other writers describe the policies adopted towards the Roma as consisting of the 'politics of negation,' consisting of a mixture of exclusion, containment and assimilation – or some combination of these three (Liegeois and Gheorge 1995, pp.8-10). At worst, as in the (now Romanian) provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, they were kept literally as slaves, winning their freedom only as late as 1856 (Fraser 1995, pp.57-59). Traditionally, they adopted a nomadic lifestyle, taking up craft occupations (metal workers, musicians) which were capable of supporting a life outside the mainstream of society. This also provided a form of self-protection.

The Nazi period was especially appalling, with what is now estimated at between one and one and a half million Roma being murdered in the *Porrajmos* (the Devouring) (Hancock 1989). In the communist period that followed, since state policies encouraged everyone to work, this represented a relatively happy time – despite attempts to assimilate the Roma population, particularly in Romania. But when the communist system collapsed, the Roma were the first to suffer and, since then, conditions have considerably worsened.

Cleansing our town

One of the questions the beauty pageant jury asked teenager Magdalena Babička a few years ago was: "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

"A public prosecutor," she replied, "so that I might cleanse our town of all the dark-skinned people."

The town to which she was referring was Ústí nad Labem, and the dark-skinned people were Roma. Magdalena received a hearty ovation for her answer.

Several years later, in the spring of 1998, the wall to separate off the Roma population was built.

- Nieuwsma (1999a)

Numbers of Roma

As a result of extensive under-recording, the official numbers of Roma in the populations of the region, as derived from census data, greatly underestimate the true figure. This under-recording occurs partly because many authorities are reluctant even to recognise the existence of Roma people – in Albania, for example, there was no category for respondents to declare themselves Roma – and partly because many Roma citizens prefer not to incur the risk of declaring their ethnicity. The result is that the official figures are extremely unreliable.

A rather more realistic recent estimate of the numbers of Roma in Europe is contained in figures produced in 1994 by the Gypsy Research Centre at René Descartes University, Paris;³⁴ they gave maximum and minimum figures which are considerably higher than the official estimates (Table 2).³⁵ Apart from the case of Albania, which we have already mentioned, the greatest discrepancies occur with the Czech and Slovak Republics, Macedonia and Romania. In those countries, the probable real numbers are between four and nine times higher than the official

³⁴ Cited in Liegeois and Gheorghe (1995) p.7.

³⁵ To give a further indication of the difficulty in obtaining accurate figures, the numbers reporting themselves as Roma in the 2001 Czech Republic census had reduced to 11,716 (report on Radio Prague, 5 July 2001). An estimate of the numbers of Roma in Latvia suggested that the true figure there is between 7,000 and 15,000 (Hernesniemi and Hannikainen 2000).

ones. Overall, for central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the total number of Roma seems likely to be somewhere between five and six million.³⁶ This compares with the official figure of under one and a half million – although some estimates put the total as high as ten million (Ram 2000). The countries with the highest proportion in their total population are the Slovak Republic, Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia, all with the proportion of Roma in their population at least as high as eight per cent.

Table 2: Roma in central and eastern Europe and the CIS: Estimated numbers and percentages of the total population

Country	Official census figures		Minority Rights Group Estimate			
	Numbers (000s)	Per cent of total population	Low figure		High figure	
			Numbers (000s)	Percent	Numbers (000s)	Percent
Poland	25.0	0.1%	50	0.1%	60	0.2%
Czech Republic	33.5	0.3%	250	2.4%	300	2.9%
Slovak Republic	84.0	1.6%	480	8.9%	520	9.6%
Hungary	143.0	1.4%	550	5.4%	600	5.9%
Slovenia	2.3	0.1%	8	0.4%	10	0.5%
Romania	409.7	1.8%	1,800	8.0%	2,500	11.1%
Bulgaria	313.4	3.8%	700	8.5%	800	9.7%
Albania	1.3	0.0%	90	2.7%	100	3.0%
Serbia and Montenegro	143.5	1.3%	400	3.8%	450	4.2%
Croatia	6.7	0.1%	30	0.6%	40	0.9%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	9.1	0.3%	40	1.2%	50	1.5%
Macedonia	44.0	2.2%	220	10.9%	260	12.5%
Russian Federation	152.9	0.1%	220	0.2%	400	0.3%
Lithuania	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	3	0.1%	4	0.1%
Latvia	8.0	0.3%	2	0.1%	3.5	0.1%
Estonia	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	1	0.1%	1.5	0.1%
Belarus	11.0	0.1%	10	0.1%	15	0.1%
Ukraine	47.9	0.1%	50	0.1%	60	0.1%
Moldova	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	20	0.5%	25	0.7%
Total	1,435.2	0.4%	4,924	1.5%	6,199	1.8%

Sources: Gypsy Research Centre [cited in Liegeois and Gheorghe (1995)],
UNICEF (2000b) and author's calculations

³⁶ Brunner (1996, p.87) 'ventures' a figure of 5.3 million.

Prejudice against the Roma

Roma people in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union suffer, almost universally, from the worst kinds of discrimination. Prejudice against them is virtually universal in the region, and is expressed in the most vicious terms: from verbal abuse through the most obvious and systematic discrimination in employment, education and housing to brutal assaults, even murder. The most outwardly liberal and respectable people make casually racist remarks in a way that we in the West now find shocking (see box below) – although it is not all that long ago that the sign ‘No Blacks’ was frequently to be seen outside cheap lodging houses and pubs in Britain.³⁷

Anyone will do

“Be careful of the Gypsies – or it perhaps it’s the Ukrainians, I don’t know.”

– *Otherwise respectable Prague woman, warning the author on pickpockets*

At its worst the prejudice consists of violent assaults, typically but by no means only by ‘skinhead’ youths. These are common in many countries, and the police reaction to such brutal attacks is frequently to ignore them – or even to arrest the victims rather than the perpetrators. This is fully documented in a very wide range of reports (see the Resources section for more details).

We have already described the effects of this prejudice on childcare and education, and here will consider four further areas: human rights, housing, health and employment.

Human rights

Human rights abuses of the Roma are extremely widespread; the most basic human right of all, that of the ability to live in safety, is threatened in many communities. Violent assault is common throughout the region; this is especially so in the Slovak Republic (ERRC 1997a), Hungary (HRW 1996a) and Romania (ERRC 1996), and abuse by police occurs routinely – often in collaboration with those who commit these assaults (ERRC 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 1998, HRW 1999). Furthermore, none of the countries of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation (Ram 2000), and political exclusion is the norm (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995, Barthel 2001).

Housing

Roma across the region are systematically denied access to public services, particularly decent housing, and face widespread discrimination in all areas; a recent study argues that this creates “a permanent underclass that will burden the fragile economies of states in transition” (Zoon 2001).

Housing conditions are almost universally bad: a Council of Europe study provides a good summary. “Lack of water and electricity, unhealthy dwellings, damp, lack of the most basic sanitary services (i.e., rubbish collection), pollution, overcrowding, quagmire conditions in winter as a result of non-existent surfacing/footpaths, the need to build shelters out of salvaged materials resulting in shanty-town appearances to which officials sometimes react by bulldozing what little people have (even though the dwellings may, thanks to extraordinary efforts, be

³⁷ Somewhat earlier, ‘No Irish’ signs were also frequent. But note that anti-Gypsy signs are still widespread, sometimes disguised under the supposedly neutral label ‘No Travellers.’

perfectly acceptable on the inside): all of this is characterised by conflict with the environment, increasing ghettoisation and lack of management at local level ...³⁸

In addition, many Roma are forced to live illegally on squatted land, because the registration procedures left over from the Communist period have not been changed. For example, most of the people living in the Roma community in Suceag, Romania, are there illegally because they have not registered with the local authorities; they *are* registered with the authorities in the towns where they originally came from but, because the land is squatted on, they cannot re-register. As they are currently registered elsewhere, the local authority for Suceag is able to deny all responsibility for them.³⁹

Health

The availability of systematic data is poor, but what figures do exist indicate a very bleak picture. Largely as a result of the bad housing conditions in which they are obliged to live, but also as a result of poor nutrition and lack of access to health facilities, Roma frequently have chronic health problems. In consequence, communicable diseases are frequent: hepatitis, tuberculosis and parasitic diseases are common, as are skin diseases such as eczema. Mortality is much worse than for the general population: on average, the life expectancy for Roma is at least ten years less than for the population as whole (Ringold 2000). Finally, professional attitudes to Roma patients are frequently highly prejudiced and based on gross stereotyping (see box).

Human rights – but not for all

“A gynaecologist has the right to do this without consent. On the one hand there are human rights, but on the other when you see how these Gypsies multiply you can see that it is a population of inferior quality.”

- Jiří Bioček, senior doctor, commenting on why he found it acceptable to carry out sterilisations without their consent on Roma women, quoted by HRW (1992).

Employment

Mostly as a result of discrimination, unemployment levels amongst the Roma population are very high. In Romania, for example, the International Labour Organisation found both direct and indirect discrimination. “Direct discrimination was based on presumed physical or moral characteristics, such as, for example, ‘Gypsies don’t like work.’ These generalisations have a racist character. They take concrete form ... in the allocation of Roma to the most arduous jobs with the lowest social status, in wage differentiation and difficulties with respect to promotion. Indirect discrimination occurs in training and access to employment certain Roma are marginalised because of their low incomes; consequently, their children are unable to receive the technical or vocational training provided by the education system.” (ILO 1991).

The cycle of disadvantage

All of these factors combine to produce a cycle of disadvantage that severely affects the Roma population in particular: “[the] welfare indicators point unfailingly to circumstances of extreme hardship and disadvantage” (Costarelli, n.d., p.47). The most blatant discrimination leads to very high unemployment (and, where there is work for Roma, their being marginalised into the worst and lowest-paid jobs), the resulting poverty and associated rotten housing lead to poor health and

³⁸ Liegeois (1994), cited by van der Stoep (2000) p.99.

³⁹ K Kerekes, personal communication.

access to public services, particularly education. And poor education leads back to high unemployment, which simply closes the cycle of disadvantage. There are ways out of this cycle, as we discuss later on in this report, but it is not easy, and for now, millions of people live in appalling conditions, almost entirely as a direct result of their ethnicity. Their condition is an affront to civilised values.

(b) Russians in the ‘near abroad’

As a result of the ‘Russianisation’ policies that were followed during the Soviet period, very many Russians and other Slavs went to live in the other republics.⁴⁰ Between 1930 and 1970, for example, millions of Slavs, predominantly Russian-speaking, settled in other parts of the Soviet Union in the hope of improving their economic and social status. In many cases, they were encouraged to move by the authorities in the hope that they would both increase the cohesion of the Soviet Union and develop the more ‘backward’ areas (UNHCR 1996). By the time of the last census in the Soviet Union in 1989, the total number of Russians living in what was usually referred to as the ‘near abroad’ was over 25 million, nearly one fifth of the population of the republics. The highest proportions were in Estonia, Latvia and Kazakhstan (all over 30 per cent) and Ukraine (over 20 per cent) (see **Table 3**). To these numbers might be added what may be many millions of Russian-speakers: people of other nationalities who use Russian as their native language (Baev and Kolstø 2001).

One of the peculiar consequences of the break-up of the Soviet Union was that many people could be in a majority in their own country but a minority in neighbouring ones. As a result, there is widespread discrimination against the Russian minorities in many of the ex-Soviet states. Driven often by economic resentment, prejudice affects many Russians – and they are faced with the decision on whether to stay and face it, or to return to a home; that their parents or grandparents may have left many years before.

After the break-up, there was a considerable level of migration of Russians ‘back’ to Russia itself. The latest available figures (final two columns of table 3) indicate that, in the period leading up to 2001, a total of 3.2 million Russians left Central Asia. The numbers leaving the other republics were very nearly exceeded by the number migrating *into* Belarus, so that the *net* total of Russians leaving the new republics was a little more than three million, almost 12 per cent of the Russians living outside Russia. The reasons for this migration are varied. The economies of all the countries in the region collapsed (Carter 2000); a number of armed conflicts broke out, particularly in central Asia and the south Transcaucasus; and some of the new policies being introduced in the newly-independent states caused concern to Russian-speakers (Molodikova 2001).

But were these factors of equal weight? The received view is that the policies like those on language, together with the rise in inter-ethnic tensions, were the primary drivers: for example, a report from UNHCR puts these two as the major factors (UNHCR 1996). However, evidence collected on migrants and potential migrants suggests that, with certain exceptions, the primary factors causing emigration have been that (1) the migrants tended to identify themselves, even ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as ‘Soviet people’ rather than citizens of the newly-independent republics,⁴¹ and (2) the influence of economic factors – the search for better-paid work, or even work of any kind (Molodikova 2001, IOM 1997). Underlying the latter was the

⁴⁰ And not only in the Soviet period: the Russian historian Kluchevsky, using evidence based on the study of population movements in over several centuries, argued that Russian history was the history of never-ending conquest (cited in Molodikova 2001). Also, in the pre-modern stage, emigration primarily consisted of Russian peasants in search of land, whilst in modern times it was workers and technicians moving to jobs in the growing industries there (Baev and Kolstø 2001).

⁴¹ Of a sample of potential emigrants from Latvia, only 6.8% thought of themselves as Latvian (Molodikova 2001).

general economic collapse which made so many employees redundant or, when they did keep their jobs, reduced their pay greatly. For example, formerly well-paid scientific and technical staff in Uzbekistan now earn as little as \$15 to \$20 a month (Degtiar 2001).

Table 3: Russians in the non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union, 1989-1999

	Number at the 1989 census (000s)	% in the total population, 1989	Number in 2001 (000s)	% in the total population, 2001
Lithuania	344	9.4%	304	8.7%
Latvia	906	34.0%	741	29.6%
Estonia	475	30.3%	416	28.5%
Belarus	1,342	3.2%	2,100	20.4%
Moldova	562	13.0%	500	11.5%
Ukraine	11,356	22.1%	11,200	21.8%
Armenia	52	1.6%	10	0.3%
Azerbaijan	392	5.6%	180	2.4%
Georgia	341	6.3%	260	4.9%
Kazakhstan	6,228	37.8%	4,500	30.0%
Kyrgyzstan	917	21.5%	290	6.5%
Tajikistan	388	7.6%	140	2.4%
Turkmenistan	334	9.5%	50	1.2%
Uzbekistan	1,652	8.3%	1,300	5.8%
Total	25,289	18.2%	21,991	15.8%

Sources: 1989 USSR census: Khazanov (1995, p.247)

2001 figures: Institute of the CIS (Zeynalov 2001)

This is not to say that the other factors are insignificant, and the refusal to grant citizenship to the Russian minority in the Baltic states, the policy of adopting the indigenous language as the official state language in the central Asian states in particular, together with a more tenuous feeling that they were no longer at home or welcome in the new states, have all had their effect.

As we have seen, these factors produced relatively high levels of migration 'back' to Russia: the qualification is needed because many of those who migrated were second or even third generation citizens of the new states. But although levels of migration were high in the five years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, these have tended to fall in recent years – and even, to some extent, to reverse. A number of Slav emigrants – and even a few of the ethnic Germans who received help in moving to Germany, have returned. A combination of difficulties in finding employment in their 'home' country, and of hostility to their return from the local population, has made some emigrants feel even less at home in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine than in the

countries that they had left. This leaves a poignant dilemma: “Where does their best hope for the future lie? Where do they feel least foreign?” (UNHCR 1996).

There is no easy solution to this problem, which is one that returning colonialists from all the old empires have been faced with. Should they return to a ‘home’ that they no longer recognise – or which recognises them – or stay in a country that was changing for ever and in which they would be marooned as a relic of former times?⁴²

(c) The ‘formerly deported peoples’

Between 1936 and 1952, in one of Stalin’s cruellest acts, many people were forcibly removed from their homes, transported in cattle trucks in journeys that could take up to a month, and dumped thousands of kilometres away in central Asia or remote regions in Siberia. Amongst the twenty major groups thus affected were, in a terrible and only slightly attenuated echo of the Holocaust, eight entire peoples (**Table 4**). As well as these entire peoples, large numbers of other Soviet Germans (843,000), Poles and Jews (over 400,000), Koreans (172,000) and other groups were deported; in all, over three million people were removed from their homes in the period from 1936 and 1952 (UNHCR 1996).

Table 4: Numbers of the formerly deported peoples

Nationality (date of deportation)	Numbers
Volga Germans (Sept 1941)	366,000
Karachai (Nov 1943)	68,000
Kalmyks (Dec 1943)	92,000
Chechens (Feb 1944)	362,000
Ingush (Feb 1944)	134,000
Balkars (Apr 1944)	37,000
Crimean Tatars (May 1944)	183,000
Meskhethian Turks (Nov 1944)	200,000

Source: UNHCR (1996).

The reasons for the deportations were varied. Some of the groups were accused of the specific crime of collaboration with the Nazis and others, more nebulously, of “a failure to provide leadership in a Bolshevik way for our struggle to successfully liquidate the consequences of the German fascist occupation” (Nekrich 1978). Others still, like the Meskhethian Turks who were never even occupied at all, were removed so that the border regions where they lived could be rendered ‘safe’ (Nekrich 1978).

Most of the deported peoples were ‘rehabilitated’ following Khrushchev’s speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956 and some, like the Balkars and the Kalmyks, returned home without particular difficulty. Others, however, like the Chechens and the Ingush, found their land and homes occupied by Russian settlers when they returned, causing problems which have still not been entirely resolved (see the section on the

⁴² Amongst others, the example of the *pièdes noirs*, the French settlers in Algeria comes to mind (Horne 1977); Paul Scott’s Booker Prize-winning novel *Staying On* explores with humour and perception the fate of the ‘orphans’ of the British Raj in India after 1947 (Scott 1977).

Russian Federation). And the Crimean Tatars, the Meskhetian Turks and the Volga Germans were only partially rehabilitated (the Germans not until 1964 and the Meskhetian Turks only in 1968); although their civil rights were restored, their autonomous republics were not re-established. The decrees establishing this said ominously that these peoples had 'taken root' in the republics to which they had been deported, forestalling the right to return home (Sheehy and Nahaylo 1980). Deep disillusion over this led to a movement for the Germans to return to Germany rather than to the Volga region; and by 1996, most had done so (UNHCR 1996).

The Crimean Tatars and the Meskhetian Turks, on the other hand, have tried to return to their ancestral lands, but have met with hostility and obstruction. The Crimean Tatars tried to return but, at least until the end of the Soviet regime, were harassed by mass arrests and re-deportations (Altan 1995). Although their situation has eased slightly since the Soviet Union's collapse, there are still many problems. The Meskhetian Turks, whose original homes were in southern Georgia were told, when they protested to the authorities in Moscow in 1956 or 1957 that they were now Azerbaijanis and they could 'return' to Azerbaijan (Sheehy and Nahaylo 1980). Some did so, to be nearer to their old homes, but the vast majority of them are still in central Asia. A draft law has been prepared by the Georgian authorities, but the problem is still far from being resolved (Mamulia 2001).

(d) Jews

Throughout eastern Europe and what was then the Russian Empire, the Jewish population, until well into the twentieth century, was the most significant minority – even with widespread emigration to western Europe and, especially, to the United States. But the appalling events of the Holocaust, followed by the establishment of the state of Israel and emigration there and to the West, has left the Jewish population of the region at a tiny fraction of its former level. It is difficult to obtain accurate figures, but the total number of Jews living in the region is of the order of one and a half million, most of them in the western former Soviet Union (**Table 4**). In no single country does the percentage of the population that is Jewish exceed 1.5 per cent.

Table 5: Percentage of Jews in central/eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union

Region	Percentage ¹
Central Europe	0.2%
South eastern Europe	<0.1%
Baltic states	0.3%
Western former Soviet Union	0.6%
Transcaucasus	<0.1%
Central Asia	0.2%

Note 1: Figures are of uncertain accuracy; some are from census data, others are estimates only.

Source: MRG (1997).

Anti-Semitism is still an ugly force in some countries in the region as we shall see, but on the whole, because of the very low numbers of Jews left in the population, the pressures of discrimination have been reduced somewhat. Which, of course is not the same thing as saying that they can be ignored.

(e) Religious minorities

All religions in the region were largely suppressed during the communist period, and in addition many religious buildings were either destroyed or converted into museums or otherwise used for secular purposes. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the system, religious freedoms have, in theory, been restored, but a number of problems have arisen across the region.

One such problem has concerned the return of the formerly-closed buildings to their original religious use. Although all such buildings should, in theory, be returned, many arguments have arisen with the current users, who are understandably concerned at losing access to properties that they may have been using for years. This has led to particular conflicts in Georgia (State Department 1999).

The Uzbekistan secret service spies on ... religion

An officer of the National Security Service (SNB, the former KGB) has accused the leader of the Baptist church in the town of Gazalkent of forging signatures on the church's stalled registration application. The application was lodged in January of this year, after an earlier application was refused, but the church is still waiting for the local administration to respond. Only one of the required 100 church members on the application turned out to be ineligible to sign as she was not an Uzbek citizen, Keston News Service has learnt, a fact the Baptist Union does not dispute. 'Why is the country's security service involved in such an insignificant, formal issue?' the Baptist Union has asked.

Keston News Service report 24 September 2001

Secondly, across the region, but most notably in central Asia and in Georgia, some Protestant religious groups (particularly evangelical ones) have suffered harassment from the authorities, mainly by their abuse of the laws on the registration of religions (see box).

Finally, and specifically in central Asia and the north Caucasus, many Moslems have been accused, justifiably or not, of being fundamentalist and have thus come into conflict with the authorities. This is likely to be exacerbated in the current climate of concern about terrorism.

No data at all are available on the likely numbers of people affected by these problems since such figures are simply not collected. It is, therefore, impossible to say how widespread or extensive these concerns may be.

(f) Hungarians living outside Hungary

In the mid-nineteenth century when the Hungarian state (then a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) stretched almost to Rijeka in the west and Belgrade in the south,⁴³ including Transylvania and present-day Slovakia (Duplain 1996), it encompassed almost all Hungarians. But then, when the Empire collapsed at the end of the First World War, the creation of the nationalist successor states under the Treaty of Trianon left many ethnic Hungarians living outside their nominal country. The effect was to reduce the population of Hungary from around 21 million to under eight

⁴³ Indeed, including the Dalmatian coast, it stretched as far south as Dubrovnik.

million, with around three million Hungarians living as minorities outside Hungary (see **Table 6** for recent figures).

Table 6: Numbers of Hungarians living outside Hungary in the 1990s

Country	Number ¹
Romania	2,000,000
Slovakia	600,000
Ukraine	160,000
Serbia	300,000
Croatia	<40,000
Total	c. 3,100,000

Note 1: Some of these figures are broad estimates – in some cases, under-estimates.

Sources: Marstein and Simonsen (n.d.) and Duplain (1996) and Liebich.

In general, partly because the Hungarians are present in relatively large numbers, and partly because Hungary has historically been the great power in the region, the Hungarian minorities have generally been regarded with great suspicion (Marstein and Simonsen n.d.). The majority populations have made problems for the Hungarians in Slovakia, Romania and Serbia in particular (but not in Croatia or Ukraine); these will be discussed under the individual countries.

(g) Central Europe

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the wide band of land across Central Europe, together with south eastern Europe and the western former Soviet Union, contained an extraordinarily rich mixture of cultures and ethnic groups. But the old world was swept away by the two world wars and the events that followed them, and much of the cultural richness of the region is now only a memory.

Nevertheless, many ethnic and other minorities do remain in the region and prejudice and discrimination survive undimmed.

Poland

Poland's minority population is very small (**Table 7**: but note that the numbers are only estimates) and, on the whole, there have been few problems in recent years.

National minorities in Poland were recognised in the constitution of 1997. Although there have been difficulties over definitions because of a differentiation between 'national' and 'ethnic' minorities, on the whole there have been few ethnic tensions (Łodziński 2001).

The Germans are the largest minority; many were deported from Silesia after 1945, and it is (some of) those who were deported, rather than those who remained behind, who have started to be an issue of concern in Poland, as some try to return to their original homes. Ukrainians make up the next largest group, and the Lemkos are a particularly interesting example. Their language is neither quite Polish nor quite Ukrainian; some consider themselves as Poles, others as Ukrainians, but either way there are now enough of them to support two summertime cultural festivals (Nieuwsma 1999b).

Table 7: Minority populations in Poland

Nationality	% of total population (1994 estimates)	% of total population (1990 estimates)
Poles	95.0 – 96.6%	97.6%
Germans	1.9 – 2.8%	1.3%
Ukrainians	0.9 – 1.3%	0.6%
Belarusians	0.5 – 0.8%	0.5%
Roma ¹	<0.1%	0%
Others	<i>Small numbers</i>	0%

Note 1: A considerable under-estimate: see section on Roma

Sources: 1994 estimates: MRG (1997)
1990 estimates: CIA (2001)

The history of Polish-Jewish relations is particularly complex and tangled;⁴⁴ before the Holocaust there were over three million Jews in Poland, but now their numbers are vastly less: possibly somewhere between 3,000 and 15,000 (Liebich 1992). More recently there have been a few small signs of a revival of Jewish culture – Poland's 'great ghost' – but also of its mirror image, anti-Semitism (Nieuwsma 1999b). A particularly complicating factor has been the decision of a small Catholic group to install a Christian cross at Auschwitz, and a combination of obtuseness and insensitivity by this group has caused great offence to many Jews.

Finally, the Roma: they are present in Poland in relatively small numbers – the extremes of the estimated numbers are a low figure of 16,000 and a high one of 65,000 (Liebich 1992) – but they face ugly prejudice as elsewhere. A recent opinion poll demonstrated this: over half the sample expressed dislike of Roma⁴⁵ and "Roma in Poland are treated as aliens ... and the word 'Gypsy' [in Polish] means someone who is a fraud or a thief" (Łodziński 2001).

Czech Republic

As it is with Poland, the Czech Republic's ethnic make-up is relatively homogeneous (**Table 8**). The Moravians, although technically a minority, are in fact more of a regional group than a separate ethnic entity. All of the remaining minority groups are well integrated (MRG 1997), and the inclusion by the *Minorities at Risk* project of the Slovak minority is very surprising. The exception is the Roma, whose situation is a very serious cause for concern.

Despite the country's ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Roma people in the Czech Republic are grossly discriminated against on many levels. The World Organisation against Torture was "gravely concerned about the overall human rights situation of the Roma in the Czech republic, and in particular with regard to the discriminatory practices the Roma face with regard to their enjoyment of all human rights" (Mivelaz 2001). Discrimination and prejudice against the Roma are widespread, particularly (but by no means exclusively) in northern Bohemia: it was in the northern industrial town of Ústí nad Labem that the infamous wall was built

⁴⁴ For a fine discussion of that troubled history, see Hoffman (1998).

⁴⁵ Although a similar proportion also expressed dislike of Ukrainians, Łodziński explains this on the basis of memories of fierce Ukrainian-Polish conflicts in the Second World War.

to segregate the Roma area from the delicate sensitivities of their Czech neighbours (ERRC 2000b). Local political representatives claimed the wall was to ‘protect’ the Roma, but few observers were fooled by this transparent excuse.

Table 8: Minority populations in the Czech Republic

Nationality	% of total population (1991 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Czechs	80.8%	—
Moravians	13.0%	—
Slovaks	3.0%	3.0%
Poles	0.6%	—
Germans	0.6%	—
Silesians	0.4%	—
Roma	0.3% ¹	2.6%
Others	1.3%	—

Note 1: A considerable under-estimate: see section on Roma

Sources: 1991 census: MRG (1997);
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

There are frequent violent attacks on Roma individuals by both private citizens and police (HRW 1999, Mivelaz 2001). In education, there is widespread evidence of exclusion of Roma children from mainstream education and their effective segregation in the so-called special schools: “according to reasonable estimates, Roma are *at least fifteen times* more likely to be placed in remedial special schools than non-Roma” (ERRC 1999; emphasis added). Housing is a particular concern, as is discrimination in labour relations: levels of unemployment are estimated at between 70 and 90 per cent (Barthel 2001).

Statistics on the health of different groups are not collected in the Czech Republic (or in the Slovak Republic either). However, what data are available from smaller-scale local studies indicate that life expectancies amongst Roma are of the order of 11 to 14 years lower than for the population as a whole. Similarly, the proportion of low birth weight babies in Roma mothers is around three times higher, and the rates of both infectious and of non-communicable diseases are also significantly higher (ECOHST 2000).

The citizenship law has been widely abused to deny citizenship to Roma – many came from Slovakia before the break-up and have been denied Czech citizenship, with serious consequences in loss of civil and political rights (HRW 1999). However, it is possible, though by no means certain, that the proposed revision of the Minority Law may help (Barthel 2001).

The Czech Republic is in the front rank of those states hoping to join the European Union, and pressure from the EU may induce the Czech government to take effective action to end these abuses (Powell 1994).

Slovak Republic

Apart from very small numbers of Germans and Rusyns,⁴⁶ who are said to have a relatively weak ethnic identity and have been subject to assimilation (MRG 1997), the two main minorities in the Slovak Republic are the Hungarians and the Roma (**Table 9**). Both of these groups are subject to discrimination.

Table 9: Minority populations in the Slovak Republic

	Number (000s) (1991 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Slovaks	85.7%	—
Hungarians	10.8%	10.8%
Roma	1.5% ¹	9.3%
Others	2.0%	—

Note 1: A considerable under-estimate: see section on Roma

Sources: 1991 census: MRG (1997);
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

The situation for Roma in the Slovak Republic is virtually identical with that in the Czech Republic (see previous section for details), except in some areas where it is, if anything, even worse. Violent, racially-motivated attacks on Roma are frequently denied (or the racist dimension of the attack is denied) by the authorities, and on other occasions the victims themselves may be blamed; assaults by the police are also all too common (ERRC 1997a).

Even allowing for under-reporting of the Roma population, the Hungarians are the largest minority. Because of the history of the region, their position in the Slovak Republic is not easy: Hungary was traditionally the dominant power and has a tradition of actively defending Hungarians who live in the surrounding countries (Nieuwsma 1999d). When the Slovaks had disentangled themselves from their dominant partners in Czechoslovakia, they felt free to assert themselves over the Hungarians, and the language issue became a significant one. What the *government* saw as policies to promote the Slovak language in the interests of building the new nation, the *Hungarians* saw as a direct attack not only on their language but also on their culture (Daftary and Gál 2000). Thus, although a new law to protect minority languages was passed in 1996, the government felt able to ignore it when it was inconvenient to them; there was also some very dubious gerrymandering of voting areas in order to dilute localised Hungarian majorities.

Subsequently, and after objections from the European Union, further laws were passed by the Slovak government that was elected in 1998. Following this, the position now does represent some improvement, but it is not ideal: “The mere existence of a law on the use of minority languages is positive in itself. It also represents progress compared to the situation after the adoption of [earlier laws]. However, it is a vague and hard to interpret legal text [and] the spirit of the law is questionable from several aspects ... it will not be used by the national minorities in their official contacts with local authorities” (Daftary and Gál 2000). Further pressure from the European Union may well be necessary.

⁴⁶ But see the section on Ukraine for more on the Rusyns.

Hungary

Hungary has one substantial minority, the Roma, and (recognised in the 1993 law on the rights of national and ethnic minorities) twelve others (**Table 10**). However, none of these, apart from the Germans, is present in any number: indeed, the Armenians, who are included in the law, numbered only 37 at the 1990 census (MRG 1997).

Table 10: Minority populations in Hungary

Nationality	% of total population (1990 census)	% of total population (other estimates)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Hungarians	97.9%	—	—
Roma	1.3%	2.4 – 7.8%	5.6%
Germans	0.3%	—	—
Croats	0.1%	—	—
Slovaks	0.1%	1.2%	—
Others	0.3%	—	—
Jews	—	1.0%	—

Sources: 1990 census and Other estimates: MRG (1997); 1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

Complaining to the Hungarian police

“Following an incident in which a non-Roma man shot at a group of Roma men, one of them, Pál Sztojka, complained to the local police. The following exchange was recorded on video:

Mr Sztojka: “I would like to make a complaint.”

Officer: “What the hell for?”

Mr Sztojka: “There was a shooting.”

Officer: “And you have not been shot dead? Too bad.”

...

Mr Sztojka: “There was a police officer there too.”

Officer: “There was a police officer there and he didn’t shoot you?”

The officer speaking on the video recording is also heard to threaten to beat Mr Sztojka about the head. He ultimately refuses to provide the statement to Mr Sztojka for signature or to give Mr Sztojka a copy of the written protocol, in contravention of Hungarian law.”

– ERRC letter to the Director of the Hungarian Police, 23 May 2001

Although the 1993 law is designed in theory to protect all the identified minorities, in practice the Roma face discrimination as elsewhere – though not, perhaps, at the same level. However,

relations with the police are not good, and there are many reports of police harassment and indifference (see box) and, indeed serious assaults (HRW 1996a).⁴⁷

Other problems for Roma reported by Human Rights Watch include discrimination in education, employment, and housing and the denial of access to public establishments. A typical example of the latter occurred when a Roma social worker went to take up a new job. “The doorman of the building asked me what I was doing there – and told me that the welfare office was already closed for the day. When I began to protest he told me to get lost. Then I told him I was coming to work – that I worked there. He called upstairs to make sure – only when they told him it was true would he let me in.” (HRW 1996a, p.105). If an employee can be treated thus, it is obvious how difficult it is for the clients of the service. That little has changed since the 1996 publication is shown in HRW’s annual report for 2001. “Most of the objectives in the Hungarian government’s medium term plan for Roma rights were unmet at the end of 2000, resulting in continued discrimination in employment, housing and education and police abuse of Hungarian Roma” (HRW 2001).

In contrast to the situation of the Roma in Hungary, the (still very small) Jewish community is showing definite signs of a renaissance – especially significant given the terrible history of Jews in the region. There is evidence that Jewish culture is reviving: “Everything has changed since 1989, Jewish life has re-awakened, especially among young people. They are going to the synagogue, joining Jewish youth groups, observing festivals, attending cultural events and going to Jewish schools.” But not everything is as encouraging: there are also signs of an anti-Semitic backlash, with desecrations of the Jewish cemetery and even the republication of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in 1998 (Nieuwsma 1999d).

There is little evidence of problems for the other Hungarian minorities (MRG 1997).

(h) South eastern Europe

The countries of south eastern Europe had a particularly complex ethnic mix, none more so than the former Yugoslavia. The conflicts of the decade since the collapse of the communist system have made the task of dealing with ethnic issues even harder. Furthermore, it is not yet clear that the conflicts are completely over, in view of the continuing tensions in Macedonia and between Serbia and Montenegro.

Romania

Romania’s two largest minorities are the Hungarians and the Roma; Hungarians have lived in Transylvania since at least the ninth century (HRW 1993a), and the Roma came to Romania between the tenth and eleventh centuries (HRW 1991a). Both approach ten per cent of the total population, the Roma being significantly under-represented in the 1992 census, the most recently undertaken; Hungarian sources claim their figures are also much higher (Table 11).

Both Hungarians and Roma have suffered from prejudice and discrimination. Hungarians played a significant part in the early stages of the revolution that brought down the Ceaușescu regime, and in the days immediately following the revolution there was great optimism that everyone’s human rights would begin to be respected (HRW 1993a). However, it was not long before this early optimism was disappointed, and latent tensions between the Romanian and Hungarian communities came to the fore; there was, for example, violent street fighting in the town of Tîrgu Mureș in 1990. Partly the tensions were rooted in the history of the last century as, following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, control of Transylvania moved back and forth between Hungary and Romania. There is an element of fear that this control might switch again, but these concerns have been partially alleviated by the signing of the bilateral treaty between Hungary and

⁴⁷ A somewhat more upbeat, not to say optimistic, description of a recent project to improve Roma-police relations is given on in a report from the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER 2000).

Romania in 1995, which in theory should have resolved any remaining territorial problems between the two countries; nevertheless, tensions remain. The situation is complicated by the fact that, in two counties northern Romania, Covasna and Harghita, Hungarians are actually in the majority (PER 2000b).

Table 11: Minority populations in Romania

Nationality	% of total population (1992 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Romanians	89.6%	—
Hungarians	7.1% ¹	8.9%
Roma	1.8% ²	9.3%
Germans	0.5%	—
Ukrainians	0.3%	—
Other	0.7%	—

Notes 1: A considerable under-estimate: see section on Roma

2: Unofficial estimates put the figure between 9 and 11 per cent (Illyes 1982)

Sources: 1992 census: MRG (1997);
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

Recent tensions have been exacerbated by the rise of the nationalist parties in Romania and, especially, by the election of Romanian nationalist mayors in a number of towns with substantial Hungarian minorities, notably that of Gheorghe Funar in Cluj.

Hungarians' existing concerns centre around a number of issues. Education is the chief of these, and specifically the teaching of the Hungarian language and of the history of the country, which many Hungarians argue is being wrongly taught as the history of Romanians rather than of Romania. Related to this is the importance of cultural issues, particularly in the manipulation of historical symbols. In Cluj, for example, Mayor Funar provocatively announced that Romanian flags would be placed around the statue of the Hungarian king Mátyás Corvinus, and forbade the advertising of Hungarian theatre and opera performances in Hungarian. There have also been other restrictions on the rights of minority Hungarians, interference with Hungarian language broadcasts and anti-Hungarian bias in some of the mass media (HRW 1993a).

More recently there have been a few signs that tensions are easing a little. In January, the Romanian parliament adopted the Local Public Administration Law, which grants minorities the right to use their mother tongue in contacts with authorities in areas where they represent at least 20 per cent of the population. Romanian nationalists planned a large demonstration against the law in Cluj in February 2001 which they claimed one hundred thousand people would attend. In the event, less than six thousand turned up – and they were mainly bussed in by the municipal authorities (Salat 2001). Also, an opinion poll carried out in May-June 2000 indicated that ethnic tensions were receding. For example, in Transylvania only one third of the Hungarians and less than one sixth of the Romanians thought that there was a situation of ethnic conflict between the two (MINELRES 2001a). On the other hand, there have been recent complaints about racial incitement: "Deputies from the parliamentary group of national minorities told journalists on 27 March that media attacks and incitement against minorities have recently intensified, and said Romania must bring its legislation in line with that of the EU and stiffen legal provisions against such crimes" (RFE/RL 2001a).

For Roma in Romania, things are much worse. Under the Ceaușescu regime the Roma suffered from assimilationist pressures, particularly from the 'systematisation' policy under which people living in villages were forcibly removed to concrete tower blocks and their villages destroyed – all for the purpose of ensuring that it would be easier for the state apparatus to control them more easily. However, the revolution brought much worse. "The single most dramatic change for Gypsies since the 1989 revolution has been the escalation of ethnic hatred and violence directed against them by the non-Gypsy population" (HRW 1991a, p.36).

Attacks have been widespread, and included violent assaults by miners and other groups in 1990-91. Many people were beaten and their houses burnt in these attacks, and the authorities failed to provide any protection against them or to prosecute the perpetrators. Such attacks were not confined to this early period: they continued through the 1990s (ERRC 1996). The police not only do nothing to prevent them or to investigate them, they also take part in a systematic campaign of harassment of their own. Abusive police raids targeted on the Roma communities, torture and ill-treatment of Roma victims of police abuse, as well as the unwarranted use of firearms by the police, are all reported with worrying intensity and frequency (ERRC 2001a).

Quite apart from these brutal and vicious attacks, Roma experience the most blatant discrimination in most aspects of life. This is so deeply ingrained in Romanian society that "the term *Țigan* is synonymous [in Romanian] with someone who is 'worthless and shiftless.' These attitudes ... are so pervasive that they blur ethnic distinctions. Romanians will refer to someone as a Gypsy because of certain behavioural characteristics, regardless of whether they are Gypsy or not" (Crowe 1991).

Living conditions for Roma are in most cases a disgrace to the twenty first century, with extremely poor housing and the lack of the most basic of services (see box).

Slums where Romanian Roma have to live

"Slums are areas of shacks and hovels, built on the outskirts of the city, where the majority of the inhabitants are Roma. Roma build the houses without authorisation on municipal or private land. Many families ended up living in these slums after the communist authorities demolished their houses to build industrial parks. Everyone is poor. Water sources are scarce. Where there is no electricity, residents have diverted power from existing lines. The unpaved roads are full of holes. Slums exist, without exception, in all cities visited by the author. Their populations range from a couple of hundred to more than a thousand. In all cases, the slums are located in the immediate vicinity of non-Romani apartment buildings and neighbourhoods, which have water, electricity, streetlights, and paved roads. The differences between the two communities are not only visible, but [are] also shocking. The slums have existed for dozens of years. Many residents said that they are tired of protesting against the inhuman conditions. As a rule, municipalities justify the lack of infrastructure within the slums by claiming that Romani dwellings are outside the city's jurisdiction, or that the residents do not have legal possession of the land, or that there is a lack of organization within the community, or, most simply, that there is no money in the local budget."

– Zoon (2001 pp.187-188)

The education system discriminates against Roma children, Roma are the least likely to be given jobs and the first to be laid off when times are bad, and even when they do get a job they are given the worst-paid and least pleasant tasks. The mass media employ the crudest stereotypes,

almost invariably portraying Roma as thieves or worse. Finally, as we have seen earlier, Roma children are vastly over-represented in the residential institutions (HRW 1991a, ERRC 2001a).

Bulgaria

Largely as a consequence of the period of Ottoman rule from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, Bulgaria has a complex and interesting ethnic mix. The official census in 1992 suggested that minorities made up around 15 per cent of the population (MRG 1997), but under-recording of the Roma and the fact that some groups were not even included on the census form mean that this figure is artificially low. Other evidence (MRG 1997, Gurr and Recktenwald 2000) points to a figure of more than 25 per cent (**Table 12**).

Table 12: Minority populations in Bulgaria

Nationality	% of total population (1992 census)	Other estimates	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Bulgarians	85.7%	—	—
Turks	9.4%	—	8.5%
Roma	3.7%	—	8.9%
Others	1.2%	—	—
Slav-speaking Muslims	—	2.9%	—
Macedonians	—	2.9%	—

Sources: 1992 census and Other estimates: MRG (1997); 1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

Apart from the Roma, whom we will discuss later, the largest of the minorities consists of the Turks, descendants of ethnic Turks who settled in what is now Bulgaria during the period of Ottoman rule.⁴⁸ During the communist period, however, they were affected by the policy of forced Bulgarisation: their religion was suppressed, they were banned from speaking Turkish in public places and they were forced to adopt Bulgarian names. This process reached its peak in 1989, when many of the minority were encouraged to leave; over 300,000 tried to do so. The Turkish government could not cope, and the resulting turmoil led eventually to the collapse of the communist government (Dimitrov 2001). Now, although suffering disproportionately from the economic meltdown in the 1990s (MRG 1997), the Turkish minority is recovering from these events.

The Bulgarian-speaking Muslims (often called *Pomaks*, though some believe this term to be derogatory) represent around three per cent of the population. They speak a Bulgarian that is heavily influenced by Turkish and Greek – as a result of which Bulgarians, Turks and Greeks all consider them to be a part of their own nations. There is also an element of historic prejudice in that, because they renounced Christianity, some regard them as outcasts or infidels, and this feeling is reinforced by folk memories of the 'Ottoman subjugation' (Jacobs 2001). In addition, in communist times the official belief was that they were supposed to have 'forgotten' that they were

⁴⁸ Some nationalists claim that the Turkish population of Bulgaria are really Bulgarians who abandoned their language and culture – rather as some Serbs assert that Bosniaks are 'really' only renegade Serbs.

Bulgarians. They needed, therefore, to be helped to regain their true identity; this reasoning has been used to justify attacks on them (Konstantinov 1997).

Thus the Pomaks, too, were swept up in the Bulgarisation process. Although these pressures were removed with the collapse of communism in Bulgaria, the ethnic identity of the Pomaks remains uncertain: many have redefined themselves as Bulgarians and/or converted to Christianity (MRG 1997, p.211).

The Macedonians also have difficulty in establishing their separate ethnic identity. Bulgaria has traditionally claimed that Macedonians are actually ethnic Bulgarians (MRG 1997, p.211), just as Greece claims that its northern Macedonian minority is not Macedonian.⁴⁹ As a result, their numbers are not known: the 1992 census figure was only 10,830, and other estimates claim as many as 250,000 (MRG 1997), but no-one knows the true figure. Macedonians have established political parties to represent them, but these have fallen foul of the article in the Bulgarian constitution that states that "political parties may not be founded on ethnic, racial or religious bases." There is also the problem, common in the region, that autonomy for minorities can be seen as the forerunner of attempts to redraw boundaries.

There are small Armenian, Russian and Jewish minorities in Bulgaria, but these do not seem to have suffered particularly from ethnic tension. In fact, Bulgaria has an honourable record with respect to its Jewish community: during the Second World War they were protected from the Holocaust (Crowe 1995, chapter 1).

Finally, we come to the largest minority, the Roma, and they present a particularly complex picture. Around half speak Romani at home, a further 20 per cent speak Turkish and around 14 per cent speak Bulgarian; many of the remainder speak Wallachian, a Romance language close to Romanian. The Roma community is further divided between Christians and Muslims, with the former slightly in the majority (Tomova 1995). The question that clouds the issue most is the question of self-identification: some Roma are happy to be so called, whilst others prefer to be called Muslims, Turks or Bulgarians. The problem is more complicated than at first appears, however. Some Roma regard themselves as the only true Roma and look down on the others as not real Roma at all; outsiders, on the other hand, see only Roma in both groups.

Similarly, Turkish-speaking Bulgarians are scornful of Turkish-speaking Roma who regard themselves as Turks: "The young ones are still Gypsies, however much they go on about being Turks. As for their language – you say they speak Turkish too. Well maybe, but they speak it coarsely, not like us ... No Turks talk like that, only Gypsies" (a Bulgarian quoted by Tomova, 1995, p.21).

There are no official figures for the breakdown of the Roma population, but an interesting survey carried out by the Bulgarian human rights group IMIR shows how the Roma community regards itself (Tomova 1995, chapter 2). Of the sample, two thirds said they were Turks, ten per cent said they were ethnic Bulgarians and five per cent identified themselves as Wallachians. When the two thirds who had said they were Roma were asked what subgroup they belonged to, the following breakdown was revealed: 'Bulgarian gypsies' 47 per cent, 'Turkish gypsies' 46 per cent, 'Wallachian gypsies' 5 per cent and Kardarashi/Lovari around 2 per cent. It is the latter group who have best preserved the traditional Roma culture and who tend to look down on the others as not true Roma.

However, regardless of how the different Roma groups and subgroups regard themselves, from the outside almost all are seen as Roma, and although the level of prejudice against them is not as blatant as it is in Romania, it is still bad. A recent poll of non-Roma Bulgarians found that less than one per cent could imagine themselves marrying someone of Roma origin, and less than ten per cent would welcome Roma neighbours next door (Nahabedian 2000). Indeed, a friend of this author said to her: "I hate them, I hate Gypsies ... because they are lazy, noisy, illiterate, dirty and stinking, because they are thieves and criminals."

⁴⁹ See section on Macedonia for more on this point.

The living conditions and life prospects of Bulgarian Roma are poor. Most live in virtual ghettos, their housing and health conditions are extremely bad: the latter were described as 'horrifying'... one of the most traumatic experiences of the team during this survey" by Tomova, 1995, p.55). They are subject to significant levels of police violence and brutality (HRW 1994 and 2001, ERRC 1997b) and discrimination in employment (HRW 1991b). Education is a central factor in all this: most Roma schools are in the ghettos and, despite heroic efforts by their (mostly Bulgarian) staff, the standard of education is poor. Relatively few Roma children speak Bulgarian, but that language is used as the medium of instruction in all schools. As a result of this and other pressures, very few even of the small numbers who complete their primary education go on to the next level. In 1992, 54 per cent of all Bulgarian children underwent secondary school education, and 20 per cent went on to higher education/college. The corresponding figures for Roma children were 7.8 per cent and 0.9 per cent (Tomova 1995, p.59). There have been attempts to improve Roma education: for example, the use of teacher assistants (Tomova 1995) and the bussing of children to schools out of the Roma neighbourhoods (Kramer 2001, Tagliabue 2001). So far these valiant attempts have been unable to make a significant difference; more systematic and better resourced work is badly needed.

Finally, there is evidence of attacks on religious freedoms (Cohen 2001). In 2000, a number of Islamic preachers were expelled from the country for preaching without a permit, unreasonable local restrictions on religious activities were reported and a number of peaceful meetings were forcibly broken up. A new Denominations Bill, which opponents said would constitute a serious infringement of religious freedoms, was considered by the Bulgarian parliament, but fortunately it was not passed.

Albania

Population data on Albania are old – the last census was held in 1989 – and reckoned to underestimate the numbers of ethnic minorities (**Table 13**). For example, it suggested there were no Roma at all in Albania, whilst more realistic estimates (Table 2) put the real figure between ninety and a hundred thousand. The Greeks make up the largest minority, even under the official figures, and the 'other estimates' figure for them in Table 13 is probably more accurate. Some Greek émigré organisations argue for a higher figure, but in view of Greek territorial claims on southern Albania, their figures need to be viewed with some caution (MRG 1997).

One of the smallest minorities, at least according to official estimates, consists of the Vlachs, or Aromanians: they speak a language related to Romanian, and in communist times were thought to have been almost completely assimilated. However, more recent evidence suggests that they still retain many elements of their original culture. Some estimate that there are as many as 200,000 (which would correspond to almost six percent), but this number appears to include those people who are descended from Aromanians and have been assimilated, so it is probably a considerable over-estimate (Schwandner-Sievers 1999).

There are further problems over the new census being held in 2001: Macedonians and Greeks are being urged to boycott the census since it does not offer them the option to record themselves as 'Macedonian' (Greek Helsinki Monitor 2001).

Some concerns exist over the Greek minority, exacerbated by fears of Greek claims on areas of southern Albania, and indeed there was some violence involving paramilitaries between ethnic Greeks and Albanians in the early 1990s (MRG Greece et al 1994, p.34). On the whole, however, minority rights are not a major issue (MRG 1997) – except, as so often elsewhere in the region, for the Roma.

Roma complain of violent assaults, and theft of land, by people from neighbouring communities; in these circumstances, the police do nothing to help. Indeed, assaults on Roma – even killings – by police as well as extortion of money, unlawful confiscation of property and hostage-taking have all been reported. In addition, municipal authorities exercise the usual discrimination on Roma

(ERRC 1997c). It seems that the coming of freedom to Albania has meant the freedom for some of the majority population to give full rein to their prejudices against the Roma.

Table 13: Minority populations in Albania

Nationality	% of total population (1989 census)	% of total population (Other estimates)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Albanian	98.0%	<90.3% – 90.8%	—
Greeks	1.8%	4.4%%	3.5%
Roma	c.0%	<2.9%	—
Macedonians	0.2%	1.2%	—
Vlachs	c.0%	1.0% – 1.5%	—
'South Slavs'	c.0%	<1.2%	—

Sources: 1991 census: MRG (1997);
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

Slovenia

There are a number of ethnic minority groups present in Slovenia, most of them in relatively small numbers (Table 14). The largest groups are Serbs and Croats, many of whom emigrated to Slovenia in the hope of a better life there.

Table 14: Minority populations in Slovenia

Nationality	% of total population (1991 census)
Slovenes	87.0%
Croats	2.7%
Serbs	2.4%
Muslims	1.4%
Others	0.5%
Unknown or undeclared	6.0%

Source: MRG (1997)

Although the law on Self-Managing Ethnic Communities of 1994 grants specific rights to the Hungarian and Italian minorities, these are small; the law does not grant the same rights to the other minorities, which are referred to as 'autochthonous ethnic communities' (MRG 1997 p.148). Concerns have been expressed about this, most recently in a report from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. "The Committee was concerned, among other things,

about the status of the Convention⁵⁰ vis-a-vis national legislation, especially ... that minority groups, such as Croats, Serbs, Bosnians and Roma, did not enjoy the same level of protection from the State party as the Italian and Hungarian minorities.” It added that the present legislation “did not seem to respond to all requirements of article 4 of the Convention, which were mandatory” (CERD 2000).

However, on the whole the criticisms of Slovenia in its handling of minority groups have been relatively mild.

Serbia/Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina

To write adequately about the present state of inter-ethnic relations in these three states of the former Yugoslavia⁵¹ in particular is very difficult in view of, firstly, the population exchanges ('ethnic cleansing') that have occurred and, secondly, the setting up of statelets like the Serb *Republika Srpska* and the Croat *Herceg-Bosna* on Bosnian territory. No recent population data are available, and the presence of large numbers of refugees is a further complicating factor. Many of these have been allowed to return home – but in theory only; in practice, most have been too afraid to do so. We will, therefore, consider these three states in one group.

The recent history of the former Yugoslavia is one of a series of wars: between Serbia/Montenegro and, successively, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosova, and it is not necessary to retell this history here. But the end result of these wars has been that there are now relatively few minorities in the three countries following the ethnic cleansing of the last ten years, at least compared with the position that obtained before the break-up of Yugoslavia.⁵² However, for the sake of completeness, we will record the figures that are available for these three (**Tables 15, 16 and 17**).

Serbia/Montenegro

Serbia itself has a substantial Hungarian minority (the Albanians recorded in 1991 were mostly in the then Yugoslav province of Kosovo), living mainly in the previously autonomous region of Vojvodina. Its autonomy was revoked by the Milošević regime in 1989, and many Hungarians fled the wars of the 1990s, not wanting to be conscripted into the fighting. But in April 2001 the newly-democratic government promised to restore autonomy to Vojvodina and to allow the Hungarians to use their native language and exercise their cultural and educational rights (RFE/RL 2001). Vojvodina has always had a rich ethnic mix: Serbs, Montenegrins, Hungarians, Croats, Romanians, Slovaks, Rusyns, Roma and others (PER 2000a), and the region has a history of tolerance and, together with the fact that the new government has acceded to the Framework Convention, the future looks somewhat more optimistic.

Conditions for Roma in Serbia/Montenegro are poor, as elsewhere in the region but, although there have been reports of attacks on Roma⁵³ the Minority Rights Group believes these to be isolated (MRG 1997, p.254). Nevertheless, ERRC reports attacks on Roma by Serbian refugees in particular (ERRC 2000c). Roma in Kosova are a particular concern, since the majority Albanian population (as in Macedonia) accused them of siding with the Serbs in the recent conflict (ERRC 2001b).

⁵⁰ The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

⁵¹ We have excluded Slovenia and Macedonia from this section since they were not affected directly by the ethnic cleansing that took place following independence.

⁵² For example, in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina now (excluding Republika Srpska), there is almost no community with a mixed Bosniak/Croat population (MRG 1998, p.24).

⁵³ See, for example, Humanitarian Law Centre (2001).

Table 15: Minority populations in Serbia/Montenegro

Nationality	% of total population (1991 census)	Other estimates	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Serbs	62.6%	—	—
Albanians ¹	16.5%	>19%	14.0%
Montenegrins	5.0%	—	—
Hungarians	3.3%	—	4.0%
Roma	1.3%	4.8% (est)	4.0%
Sandzak Muslims	—	—	1.8%
Croats	—	—	1.2%
Others	14.6%	—	—

Note 1: Mostly Kosova Albanians.

Sources: 1991 census and Other estimates: MRG (1997); 1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

Table 16: Minority populations in Croatia

Nationality	% of total population (1991 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Croats	78.7%	—
Serbs	12.0%	5.3%
'Yugoslavs'	2.2%	—
Muslims	1.0%	—
Hungarians	0.5%	—
Slovenes	0.5%	—
Roma	—	0.8%
Others	5.1%	—

Sources: 1991 census: MRG (1997); 1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

Also, since the conflict in Kosova in 1999 and the expulsion of the Serbian military, positions there have been sharply reversed. Before the conflict, the Albanian majority were heavily suppressed by the Serb minority (with support from the rest of Serbia), but now it is the Serbs who are in the difficult position. Some fled after the NATO military action, but there is no certainty about the number remaining. In the recent Assembly elections in Kosova, the main Serb party registered a total of over 11 per cent of the votes cast (OSCE 2001); this corresponded roughly to the proportion of Serbs in the population before the conflict. This result is encouraging in that, before the election, there had been talk in the Serb community of boycotting the election. It looks as though this talk had little effect on the outcome. There have been serious incidents in the last

year or so, particularly in the northern (and predominantly Serb) town of Mitrovica; the Serb population of Kosova feels very vulnerable (HRW 2001).

Table 17: Minority populations in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Nationality	% of total population (1991 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Muslims	43.7%	38%
Serbs	31.4%	40%
Croats	17.3%	22%
'Yugoslavs'	5.5%	—
Others	2.1%	—
Roma	— ¹	—

Note 1: Pre-1992 estimates put the Roma at around 100,000 (2.3% of the then population)

Sources: 1989 census: MRG (1997);
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

Finally, there is the question of Montenegro. There have been rumblings of the possible secession of Montenegro for some time, but the pro-independence party led by the Montenegrin president Milovan Djukanović obtained too narrow a victory in the recent elections for it to be likely to go ahead with the planned referendum on independence. In any case, the population seems fairly evenly divided over whether Montenegro should be independent (Daftary 2001b). The position of Serbs in an independent Montenegro can, therefore, be set aside for the time being at least.

Croatia

Since the death of its president, Franjo Tudjman, in 1999, the election of a new government has promised a better atmosphere for what remains of Croatia's Serbian population and, in fact, some thousands of Serbs have returned to Croatia (HRW 2001).

Conditions for the Roma of Croatia, on the other hand, are as bad as elsewhere, with poor or no access to education and employment, discrimination in the provision of state financial support and housing, and racist attacks (see box for an example).

Obstruction by local authorities

"The experience of the 420 Roma in Strmeč Prodravski illustrated the wider problems facing Roma communities. In May, local authorities in Varaždin county ordered the Roma to move from their settlement in the village after refusing to allow them to build more permanent dwellings and a water and electricity supply."

— Source: HRW (2001a)

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Before the break-up of Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina was regarded as a model of ethnic cooperation and multiculturalism. In the towns, in particular, there was a high rate of intermarriage – though this does not seem to have applied to the country areas, which were much more rigidly segregated (MRG 1997, p.206). But in any case, the wars with Serbia swept away most of this

world. Before the war, the population consisted largely of Muslims (Bosniaks – see box), Serbs and Croats (**Table 17**).

The emergence of the Bosniaks

In order to overcome the problem that both Serbs and Croats claimed the Muslim Slavs of Bosnia for their own, Tito's Yugoslavia progressively came to view them as a separate people. The change can be seen in the terms used in successive censuses:

- In 1948: indeterminate Muslims
- In 1953: indeterminate Yugoslavs
- In 1961: Muslims in the ethnic sense
- In 1971: Muslims in the sense of nationality
- In 1981: a separate nation of Yugoslavia

– Source: MRG (1998, p.16)

One serious concern in Bosnia-Herzegovina is the stability of the Bosnian-Croat Federation and the serious consequences of its possible collapse. Already there are serious tensions centred on the city of Mostar, the west bank of which is predominantly Croat and the east bank, Bosniak. It is too early to predict what will happen here.

Macedonia

Macedonia's largest minority is the Albanians; the 1994 census recorded them as making up 23 per cent of the population. However, the Albanian community disputes the official figures, and organised a partial boycott of the census; they claim that 30 per cent is a more accurate measure of their numbers (Daftary 2001a). Roma are recorded at barely more than two per cent, but this is also a low figure. Intriguingly, a few thousand people living in the south-western Macedonian towns of Ohrid and Stuga refer to themselves as 'Egyptians.' In fact, they speak Albanian not Roma and are unlikely to be Roma (ERRC 1998, p.34). Turks, Serbs, Macedonian-speaking Muslims and Vlachs (Wallachians) make up the remainder of the minority population (**Table 18**).

Table 18: Minority populations in Macedonia

Nationality	% of total population (1994 census)¹	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Macedonians	66.3%	—
Albanians	23.0%	22.9%
Turks	4.0%	—
Roma	2.3% ²	12%
Serbs	2.0%	2.4%
Others	4.7%	—

Notes 1: The next census was due to take place in October 2001.

2: A considerable underestimate.

Sources: 1989 census: MRG (1997);
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

The Republic of Macedonia declared independence from the former Yugoslavia in September 1991, but the country's birth was troubled. Neither Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria or Greece (the 'four wolves' of Macedonian folk memory) have historically accepted that there is even such a thing as a Macedonian identity. Greece, in particular, refused to recognise the new republic, claiming the ownership of the name and symbols of Macedonia on the basis that Philip of Macedonia and his son Alexander the Great, rulers of ancient Greece in the third century BC were really Greek. The full irony – and absurdity – of this claim is underlined by the fact that the third century BC Macedonians were probably ethnically Illyrian, the forerunners of the present day Albanians (Vaknin 1999).⁵⁴ The result was that Macedonia finally achieved independence only under the absurdly contrived title of 'The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (FYROM). In this report we will refer to it simply as Macedonia.

The largest minority, as we have seen, is the Albanian one, and there have been severe ethnic tensions between Albanians and Macedonians since independence. These erupted into violence in February 2001 (Daftary 2001b) and again in August (HRW 2001). There are a number of theories to explain why the violence erupted when it did (Daftary 2001b): some blame the leaders of the Albanian community for being ineffective in representing their interests in the face of government indifference or worse, others blame the Albanian paramilitaries for provoking conflict, others still see conflict as an inevitable result of growing tensions between the two communities. But whatever its immediate cause, there is no doubt that the Albanian community has grievances about its treatment by the majority. Although the European Union and other intermediaries have been acting to promote a ceasefire and, beyond that, a more lasting settlement, these grievances remain. The ECRI has concluded that serious problems remain: "[Macedonia] is still a society in which the issues of discrimination and intolerance are not adequately recognised and confronted. Despite some progress in this field, different ethnic communities still lead parallel existences, often having limited contact with each other and their relations are strained by negative stereotypes and mistrust. Furthermore, members of minority groups do not participate fully in public institutions at all levels of society." (ECRI 2001 p.4). Their report details a number of difficulties. Many Albanians and Roma (their numbers are uncertain but are in the tens of thousands) who are long-term residents of the country have not been able to obtain citizenship. The requirements to do so are arcane and expensive: the administrative fee required is \$250, a very large sum in the economic conditions in Macedonia. Education in minority languages is of poor quality, and the number of minority pupils who go on to secondary education is low – a common problem for minorities in this region, as we have seen. Unemployment is high, police violence disproportionately affects minorities and the media have exacerbated mistrust and fear between different ethnic groups.

For the Roma population all of these apply but to a significantly greater extent. Tensions between Roma and Albanians have been particularly high because many Albanians blame the Roma for siding with the Serbs in Kosova. Physical assaults by other groups and by the police, abuse by municipal authorities, and poor public services have all been reported (ERRC 1998). Unemployment is particularly high amongst the Roma: according to a government survey, the national unemployment rate is 32 per cent, but amongst the Roma it is over 70 per cent (ECRI 2001, p.13).

The problem in Macedonia is partly structural: the constitution and criminal code both acknowledge the existence of minorities and the right to use their own languages, but there is no specific anti-discrimination legislation in the fields of employment, housing and the provision of goods and services (ECRI 2001, p.8). But even if the requisite laws were in place, the will to implement them is still needed and, as we have seen elsewhere, this can also be a problem. But the main priority for Macedonia in the short term is to avoid further armed conflict.

⁵⁴ Vaknin says that "there is very little dispute among serious (that is, non-Greek, non-Macedonian and non-Serb) scholars that the Albanians are ... the descendants of the Illyrians."

(i) Baltic states

The three Baltic republics are different from the other Soviet successor states in that all three enjoyed a period of recent independent statehood – albeit short – from 1918 to 1940 (before that, their national consciousness developed only in the late nineteenth century).⁵⁵ All three have Slav minorities, considerable proportions of whom emigrated from pre-revolutionary Russia – some of them hundreds of years ago. As we shall see, the three states' handling of these minorities is rather different. This underlines a wider point, which is that it is a mistake (one that some Russians, for example, often fall into) to view the three Baltic states as a single entity. They are different states with different problems and different solutions for them (PER 1998).

Lithuania

Lithuania's only two substantial minorities are the Poles and the Russians – although there has been a slow drift 'home' of the latter. There are also smaller numbers of Belarusians and Ukrainians, as well as a very few of other nationalities (**Table 19**).

Table 19: Minority populations in Lithuania

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Lithuanians	79.6%	—
Russians	9.4%	8.7% ¹
Poles	7.0%	7.0%
Belarusians	1.7%	—
Ukrainians	1.2%	—
Others	1.1% ²	—

Notes 1: This figure agrees with that in Zeynalov (2001).

2: This figure includes Jews (0.2 per cent) (MRG (1997).

*Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)*

In 1989 the Lithuanian parliament adopted a liberal law (the so-called 'zero option solution') for Lithuanian citizenship: virtually all who applied were granted it (Løken Simonsen and Blakkisrud n.d.).⁵⁶ The result was to defuse the latent citizenship issue before it could arise seriously. On the whole there are few minority issues in Lithuania: for example, children from Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian families can all attend schools in the medium of their own languages (MRG 1997).

⁵⁵ It is, of course, true that, in the turmoil of the civil war which followed the collapse of the Tsarist regime some of the other states (eg, Ukraine and Azerbaijan) managed a very short period of independence, but this was so short that it hardly counts. And the historic independence of states like Georgia ended far back in the early nineteenth century.

⁵⁶ That it is not just Lithuania that has adopted a liberal law on citizenship is shown by the case of Moldova, which decided on independence to grant citizenship to *all* of its residents (Solonari 2000). At the time, the Slav proportion of Moldova's population was well over 25% (see table 25).

The only problem that has arisen is that there is some tension between Poles and Lithuanians in the Vilnius region. Partly this comes from old rivalries (Vilnius was historically regarded as a Polish city and, in fact, belonged to Poland from just after the First World War until the German-Soviet partition of Poland in 1939), but mainly its roots lie in economic causes. Poles have not benefited from the liberalisation of the economy and their unemployment rates are high (Schröder 2001), and these economic factors – as elsewhere in the region – have taken on an ethnic colouring. But, relatively speaking, the situation for minorities in Lithuania is good.

Latvia

Even with the recent emigration of Russians (by far the largest minority) and the return home of Latvian emigrés, the proportion of Latvians in the population is only a little over 50 per cent. The remainder of the population is made up of Slavs plus a considerable number of smaller nationalities (Table 20).

Table 20: Minority populations in Latvia

Nationality	% of total population (1994 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)	% of total population (2000 estimates)
Latvians	52.0%	—	57.6%
Russians	34.0%	34.4%	29.6% ¹
Belarusians	4.5%	—	4.1%
Ukrainians	3.5%	—	2.7%
Poles	2.3%	—	2.5%
Lithuanians	1.3%	—	1.4%
Others	2.4%	—	2.1%

Note 1: This figure agrees with that in Zeynalov (2001).

Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)
 1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)
 2000 estimates: Poleshchuk (2000)

The large Russian (and other eastern Slav) minority, the greatest part of whom came to live in Latvia in the Soviet period, have had a difficult time since the country's independence. Most came with poor knowledge of – and less interest in – Latvian language or culture, and during the Soviet period they saw no need to change this attitude. Upon independence, the new state's policy of restitution of the pre-1940 republic implied also the restitution of the pre-1940 citizenship law⁵⁷ – which had the automatic effect of excluding Soviet era settlers, and this has been a real problem ever since (Poleshchuk 2000).

Unlike Lithuania, Latvia (and, as we shall see, Estonia) applied rigid language tests to those who did not have the residential qualification but wanted to take up Latvian citizenship. In 1989, only one fifth of Russian speakers knew Latvian, so that citizenship was beyond reach for most of them. The result is that, even now, a quarter of the population of Latvia is stateless (FIDH 2001b).

⁵⁷ This law set out the main requirement of Latvian citizenship, which was that the applicant must have had residence in Latvia on or before the date at which the pre-war state ceased to exist.

There has been pressure from international organisations like OSCE and the Council of Europe, with some effect. The Parliamentary Assembly of the latter recently carried a resolution expressing the opinion that “Latvia has made substantial progress in honouring its obligations and commitments” on the European Convention on Human Rights and other European conventions. However, it noted that Latvia had still not adopted a law on the protection of national and language minorities or established a state body on minority affairs or done enough to encourage non-citizens to apply for citizenship (FIDH 2001a).⁵⁸

It is clear that this issue will take rather more goodwill to clear up than has been seen so far. Earlier this year, the Latvian government adopted a national programme on the ‘Integration of society in Latvia.’ This programme has as its goal the admirable aim of facilitating the establishment of “a democratic, consolidated civil society in Latvia, founded on shared basic values.” However, the document declares that the basis of integration is the readiness to accept the Latvian language as the state language (FIDH 2001b), which is really the cause of the problem in the first place.

There are also some rather more ugly undercurrents in Latvian society (see box below).

Discrimination in Latvia

Members of the Latvian neo-Nazi organisation *Perkonkrusts* (‘Thundercross,’ whom some in Latvia consider to be ‘freedom fighters’) carried out a series of explosions in Riga; one of the perpetrators was killed. They were sentenced to varied (but, in the circumstances, rather short) sentences, and almost all are now free following an amnesty. Andris Kiploks, one of the *Perkonkrusts* members, has applied to the European Court of Human Rights on the grounds that his 18 months’ sentence was ‘inequitable.’

By contrast, in November 2000 some young Russian-speakers, members of the National Bolshevik Party flew their party’s flag from one of Riga’s church towers; in the process they showed a lift operator a model of a grenade. There were no explosions, and no victims. One under-age member was sent to prison for 5 years, and two others for 15 years – for ‘terrorism.’ *Vesti Segodnya*, a local Russian language newspaper, commented that extremists are evidently discriminated against on the basis of their ethnic origin as well as their politics.

– FIDH (2001c)

Finally, a further minority issue concerns some subdivisions of Latvian. The official Latvian view is that Latgalian is not a separate language but simply a dialect of Latvian, whereas Latgalian speakers categorically deny this, pointing out that even the simplest words bear no resemblance to their Latvian equivalents (Coleman 2001). There is a danger that such attitudes to smaller languages amount to a kind of language imperialism and do nothing to help the speakers of those languages to retain their language and culture.

⁵⁸ For an interesting discussion of the language issue in Latvia and Estonia which argues that Russia has been using it to apply political pressure, see Dorodnova (2000).

Estonia

As with Latvia, Estonia's main minority consists of Russians and other eastern Slavs, the greater part of whom went to live in Estonia in Soviet times. There are only small numbers of other ethnic minorities (**Table 21**).

The situation of Russians in Estonia is much the same as it is for those in Latvia. In 1989, an even smaller proportion of Russians spoke Estonian in Estonia than spoke Latvian in Latvia: 15 per cent compared with 22 per cent (Poleshchuk 2000). Likewise, statelessness is a problem there also: 15 per cent of Estonian citizens have no nationality (Poleshchuk 2000).

Table 21: Minority populations in Estonia

Nationality	% of total population (1989 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)	% of total population (2000 estimates)
Estonian	61.5%	—	65.3%
Russians	30.3%	28.7%	28.1% ¹
Ukrainians	3.1%	—	2.5%
Others	5.1%	—	4.1%

Note 1: 28.5 per cent in 2001, according to Zeynalov (2001).

*Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)
2000 estimates: Poleshchuk (2000)*

Estonian bureaucracy and a child

A couple, both Estonian citizens, living in Kohtla-Järve adopted a three-year-old girl from the local orphanage, and they decided to submit an application for Estonian citizenship for the child. But citizenship was refused by the Citizenship and Migration Board, on the grounds that, although the birth took place in Estonia, the biological mother was not herself an Estonian citizen. The officials offered the alternative of naturalisation, but this would take at least 18 months and in any case the adoptive parents would first have to apply for a residential permit for the child.

The irony is that, if the child had been a foundling, there would have been no problem over her citizenship, but because the citizenship of the mother was known not to be Estonian, the bureaucratic rules were applied.

The parents are now referring the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

– *Smeritskaya (2000)*

As in Latvia, the pre-1940 citizenship law was re-enacted after independence, in this case in 1995. Under it, only those who themselves or whose parents had Estonian nationality before 16 June 1940 had a legal claim to Estonian citizenship. To gain it by naturalisation, again as in Latvia, a requirement was the ability to provide proof of knowledge of the language. Crucially, only those with citizenship can be recognised as members of a minority group, a consideration that excludes a very considerable part of the Russian-speaking population (Thiele 1999).

There are certain exceptions to these language and other requirements: they can be waived, for example, for stateless persons if they have lived in Estonia for at least ten years. But, in a truly Kafkaesque twist, holders of the old Soviet passport are excluded from this, even though the state to which the passport applies has not existed for over a decade!

To conclude on the case of both Latvia and Estonia, the challenge for both “is to abandon the utopian – and ultimately dangerous idea of constructing a ‘monoethnic’ state and begin the transition to a true civil society” (PER 1998, p.7).

(j) Russian Federation

Russia is a vast country spanning eleven time zones and covering more than one tenth of the land mass of the world; it is less a nation state than “a multi-ethnic, multi-religious multicultural state” (MRG 1997, p.296). In its total population of some 150 million, the ethnic Russians at 81.5 per cent are the overwhelming majority, with the next nearest groups, the Tatars, at under four percent; the other minorities are present in even smaller proportions (Table 22).

However, the figures in this table do not begin to give the full picture of the ethnic diversity of Russia. The total number of recognised nationalities at the 1989 census was over one hundred, covering an enormous range of languages, religions and cultures.⁵⁹ The range of numbers speaking the different languages is also huge, varying from millions down to the low hundreds, and many of the smaller languages are in danger of dying out altogether.

It is not possible or appropriate in a report of this size to attempt a comprehensive account of the different ethnic groups in Russia.⁶⁰ However, some idea of the complexity can be gained by dividing the main groups of non-Russians into two main areas: those who are defined by their religion, and those who are defined by their language. The religiously defined groups number some fourteen million, (Table 23a) and the linguistically-defined groups number just over three million (Table 23b). Both groups are spread all across Russia; most – but not all – have their own republics.

This division is, to a large extent arbitrary since the categories in the two tables overlap to some extent, and it also deliberately excludes all nationalities corresponding to the successor states of the Soviet Union. However, it does help to demonstrate the complexity of the ethnic make-up of the population.

As we have seen earlier, in Tsarist times not much attention was paid to the non-Russian nationalities, but under the Bolsheviks, an element of ethnic autonomy was introduced, with a formal hierarchy of ethno-territorial units. These were the Union Republics, which were nominally sovereign,⁶¹ the Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Regions (*oblasts*) and Autonomous Districts (*okrugs*).

This was all very fine in theory, but in practice it came up against a further complicating factor, which was that, instead of being disposed geographically in neat, self-contained packets, the smaller peoples (and, indeed, many of the larger ones) were highly scattered. Thus, although many of the larger groups do have their own nominal territories, many live outside these territories and many other, non-titular nationalities live within them. In fact, of fourteen identified administrative territories in Siberia in 1995, only two (the Tuvan Republic and the Aga Buriat Autonomous District) have a majority of their titular people. The remainder all have Russian

⁵⁹ In a more recent survey of the Russian Federation, no fewer than 172 ethnic groups identified themselves (Coleman 2001).

⁶⁰ For more details, see the chapter on the Russian Federation in the Minority Rights Group’s *World Directory of Minorities* (MRG 1997).

⁶¹ All of the Republics had, in fact, seats at the United Nations, even though the independence of Union Republics like Ukraine and Kazakhstan (to take only two examples) was wholly nominal.

ethnic majorities, and in some the titular nationality is present in extremely small numbers. The most extreme case is that of the Khants and the Mansi in their joint autonomous district, where they form only 1.4% of the population (Duncan 1995).

Table 22: Minority populations in the Russian Federation

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census) ¹	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Russians	81.5%	—
Tatars	3.7%	3.8%
Ukrainians	2.9%	—
Chuvash	1.2%	—
Bashkirs	0.9%	—
Belorussians	0.8%	—
Mordvins	0.7%	—
Chechens	0.6%	0.6%
Udmurts	0.5%	—
Maris	0.4%	—
Avars	0.4%	0.4%
Buriats	6.4%	0.3%
Ingush		0.2%
Karachai		0.1%
Kumyks		0.2%
Lezgins		1.7%
Roma		0.2%
Tuvinians		0.1%
Yakuts		0.3%
Others		—

Note 1: There was a micro-census in 1994 but the data have not been made widely available – and GosKomStat, the agency responsible, demanded the unfeasibly large sum of \$60 to provide the most basic breakdown of ethnic groups. We were not prepared to pay this amount for such basic information.

*Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)*

Table 23a: Minority populations in the Russian Federation: Religiously-defined groups

Religion	Language group ¹	Population in 1989 ²	Administrative location	Geographical location
Buddhists				
Buriats	Mongolic	417,000	Buriat Republic	N of Mongolia
Kalmyks	Mongolic	166,000	Kalmyk-Khalmg Tangch Republic	Lower Volga
Tuvans	Turkic	206,000	Republic of Tuva	N of Mongolia
Muslims				
Tatars	Turkic	5,500,000	Tatarstan (3.6m) and Bashkortostan (1.1m)	Lower Volga, W Urals
Bashkirs	Turkic	1,300,000	Bashkortostan (and Cheliabinsk, Orenburg)	W Urals
Chechens	Caucasian	899,000	Republic of Chechnya	N Caucasus
Ingush	Caucasian	215,000	Republic of Ingushetia	N Caucasus
Karachai	Turkic	150,000	Republic of Karachai-Cherkess	N Caucasus
Cherkess	Caucasian	51,000		
Kabardins	Caucasian	386,000	Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria	N Caucasus
Balkars	Turkic	78,000		
Adygei	Caucasian	123,000	Republic of Adygea	N Caucasus
<i>At least 30 separate groups</i>	Mixed – see Table 24	1,800,000	Republic of Dagestan	N Caucasus
Christians				
Ossetes	N Iranian	402,000	Republic of North Ossetia-Alania	N Caucasus
Chuvash	Turkic	1,800,000	Republic of Chuvashia (and Tatarstan, Bashkortostan)	Mid Volga
Shamanist				
Altai	Turkic	69,000	Altai Territory	S Siberia
Khakass	Turkic	79,000	Republic of Khakassia	S Siberia
Yakuts (Sakha)	Paleo-Siberian	380,000	Republic of Sakha-Yakutia	N E Siberia
Native peoples of the Russian Far North	Mixed – see Table 25		Various	N Siberia

Notes: 1: For explanation of language groupings, see **Appendix 2**

2: Census of the Soviet Union

Source: MRG (1997)

Table 23b: Minority populations in the Russian Federation: Finno-Ugric peoples¹

Language group	Population in 1989 ²	Administrative location	Geographical location
Karelians	125,000	Republic of Karelia	Bordering Finland
Mari	644,000	Republic of Mari-El	Middle Volga
Udmurts	715,000	Republic of Udmurtia	Western Urals
Mordvins	1,100,000	Republic of Mordovia	Middle Volga
Komi	336,000	Komi Republic	N W Urals
Komi-Permiaks	147,000	Komi-Permiak District	N W Urals

Notes: 1: There are other peoples without a specific homeland, but their numbers are relatively small

2: Census of the Soviet Union

Source: MRG (1997)

What this means in practice is that there is very great pressure on the smaller languages. The 1991 Act on the Languages of Russia, which enshrined the principle of linguistic sovereignty, was supposed to help to protect the smaller languages, but there are fears that this will turn out to be a delusion. It has since been watered down anyway, and the Russian-speaking majority has been unwilling to accept the equal rights of other languages. Russia has promised to sign and to ratify the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, but it is reported that few ethnic groups even know of the document's existence (Coleman 2001).

Yet another complication in the last decade has been that, with the loosening of the grip from the centre that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, tensions between the regions and Moscow have mainly centred around the control of resources. These tensions have, in many of the successor republics, taken on in part an ethnic colouring, but the core of the virtually all of disputes remains as an argument between the centre and the periphery. The main reason for this is that many of the administrations in the regions have stayed in the control of ethnic Russians (Duncan 1995).

Problems for ethnic groups in Russia

In Russia itself, racial prejudice is an ugly fact of life that people from the Caucasus in particular face on a daily basis. For example, explaining why she thought the people from the Caucasus fought against the Russians in the last century, one Muscovite said: "Because they're blacks. Violent, ignorant, savage, brutal. They're the same now as they were then, and they'll never change ... They have no culture and no civilisation." (Bennett 1998, p.6).

Because of the complexity of Russia's ethnic make-up, it is not possible here to give a comprehensive breakdown of the problems for every single ethnic group. What we *will* attempt to do is to give an indication of the scale and nature of the problems by examining three areas: (i) Russia and the Russians; (ii) the North Caucasus; and (iii) the Russian Far North.⁶²

(i) Russian and the Russians

When Russia was part of the Soviet Union, Russia's destiny was clear: it was to lead the 'younger brothers' of the USSR in building a new, Soviet identity. But now that identity is gone, never to return, and Russians are left wondering where they stand, what their identity really is. One way of resolving this question is, of course, to define what you are by what you are **not**: not Jewish, not

⁶² This is not to say, of course, that there are no problems for non-Russians in Russia apart from those in the North Caucasus or the Far North, as the examples of Kalmykia (Grin 2000) and Bashkortostan (Graney 1997) demonstrate.

Chechen, not Asian. Russian chauvinism has always been a strong element in Russian society, and there is much evidence that this, with its underlying current of racism, has resurfaced – driven, in part, by the pressures that have developed in the wake of the collapse of the Russian economy since 1991. Although there are no systematic official data,⁶³ there are enough reports of widespread harassment of and discrimination against ethnic minorities in Russia to make the issue one of serious concern.

Anti-Semitism has been widely reported, with violent attacks on Jews, defacement and desecration of Jewish cemeteries and other evidence of racial and religious hatred directed against Jews. A recent report documented in detail threats to Jews and other ethnic and religious minorities in 74 districts of Russia. It found that “While the most violent incidents declined in 2000, Jews continue to face an infrastructure of anti-Semitism, grassroots and official, that has solidified in several regions as local officials have allied themselves with communist, neo-Nazi, Cossack, Russian Orthodox and other anti-Semitic agencies. These forces act with near complete impunity, sending the message that neither the central nor local governments will adequately protect Russian Jews” (UCSJ 2001a).

Paralleling the increase in anti-Semitism has been the re-emergence of **Neo-Nazi** groups in Russia. One report has suggested that these groups may include as many as thirty thousand individuals (Tarasov 2001).

There have also been many reports of attacks on people from the **North Caucasus**, and particularly on Chechens – prompted, no doubt, by the on-going war in Chechnya and the associated violence, including terrorist bombings of residential accommodation outside Chechnya. A second report from the Union of Councils for Jews in the former Soviet Union details evidence of the ethnic persecution of Chechens from 26 regions of the Russian Federation (UCSJ 2001b). The report records harassment, biased reporting by local media and incitement to racial hatred. It concludes that “throughout Russia, there is a significant level of animosity directed towards all people from the Caucasus as inflammatory commentary ... and acts of violence ... demonstrate. Specifically anti-Chechen sentiments appear to be even more intense than that directed towards Caucasians in general ... The fact that anti-Chechen racism manifests itself violently, and that the state is unwilling to protect Chechen victims this racism, makes Chechens especially vulnerable” (UCSJ 2001b). The ‘war against terrorism’ has helped to make this kind of thing more respectable.

Prejudice at the highest level in Moscow

Mayor Luzhkov: “Now we have to take actions. We have to take them all out of Moscow. Everyone. The whole diaspora.”

Police officer: “Well, if you only allow us – I will certainly introduce terror on the streets.”

Mayor Luzhkov: “Yes. The whole Chechen diaspora – out of here.”

Police officer: “It’s about time we did that, Yury Mikhailovich. You’re right – it’s about time.”

Mayor Luzhkov: “We have warned them many times ...”

– UCSJ (2001b)

⁶³ These are in any case difficult to collect even in the best of circumstances, and especially when, as often happens, the authorities themselves are likely to deny the existence of the problems being complained about.

However, it is not only Chechens who have to undergo this kind of thing: discriminatory treatment against darker-skinned people from the Caucasus region is endemic in the Moscow region and in southern Russia. In particular, many Azeris and Armenians fled the conflict over Nagorno-Karabagh for temporary refuges in Russia which have since become semi-permanent, but face “terrorising identity checks and arbitrary detentions, beatings and harassment by police.” These state-sponsored attacks occur even on the refugees in what is supposed to be their place of shelter (HRW 1996b, p.14).

(ii) North Caucasus⁶⁴

It is clear from Table 23a just how complex the ethnic position of the North Caucasus is: in ancient times, the region was known as the ‘mountain of languages’ (Dzutsev 2001a). Because of the fragmented nature of the ethnic make-up of the region, we will need to examine each territorial unit separately; there are seven, which include a total of around four million people.

There are four underlying issues that affect, to a greater or lesser extent, all of the territories in this region. These are:

- the spillover effect of the war in Chechnya, which is still continuing at the time of writing. There has been relatively little actual fighting outside Chechnya itself (Dagestan being the main exception) but its baleful influence has been exerted over the surrounding area;
- the effects of on the general process of Russianisation that has been continuing since the Caucasus region was conquered by the Tsarist armies in the nineteenth century. This is perceived as a threat to the survival of many of the smaller languages – and even some of the larger ones;
- the general problems felt by the Russians in terms of their feeling disadvantaged in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russians seldom speak any of the local languages and there is a real danger of alienation – or worse – in the Russian population. In addition, the proportion of Russians working in key industries is high, and if they were to leave en masse there could be serious effects on the viability of those industries (a problem that is common to a number of the central Asian republics also, as we shall see); and, finally
- There is the issue of the redrawing of boundaries. This has not yet arisen overtly but it lies beneath the surface; if it were to emerge, it could cause serious problems, since the whole administrative structure could begin to unravel.

The seven territorial units are, working from west to east: Adygea, Karachai-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan.

The problem in **Adygea** is that of Russianisation: the Adygei form only around one quarter of the population, with the remainder predominantly Russian-speaking (Krag and Funch 1994). Many Adygei live outside their titular unit, there is also a small group of related people, the Shapsug, who live nearby, and a much larger diaspora (perhaps numbering two million) living in Turkey, Syria and Jordan. The Shapsug are a group of around ten thousand who are closely related to the Adygei (and to the Cherkess and the Kabardins) who live in scattered communities along the Black Sea in neighbouring Krasnodar territory. They fear the loss of their ethnic identity in their current isolated conditions. The pressures of modern life, including high levels of unemployment and alcoholism, cause many in the community to fear for its survival (Kanukova 2000).

⁶⁴ North Caucasus in this report is taken as the region traditionally inhabited by the native peoples to the north of the Caucasus Mountains.

Many Adygei in the larger diaspora⁶⁵ would like to return home to the North Caucasus, but the few exiles who have so far managed to return have met an unenthusiastic reception: the Russian press in particular hinting darkly about the dangers of being swamped by a mass return (Nagoeva 2001).

Kabardino-Balkaria is, to a large extent, an uneasy construct, being made up of Kabardins, who speak a Caucasian language, and the Balkars, who are Turkic. The latter, around 20 per cent of the population, are very much in a minority, so any return of the Adygei diaspora could cause problems for them. The Repatriation Act, passed recently in the Kabardino-Balkaria parliament, was strongly opposed by the Balkar representatives, who feared it was merely an attempt by the Kabardin majority to boost its numbers (Akbashev 2001). The Russians are the second largest group, after the Kabardins who make up around half. The main concern here is with the Russians, but so far they have not been leaving in any great numbers (Krag and Funch 1994).

Karachai-Cherkessia is another uneasy construct: the 130 thousand Karachai share power with the 40 thousand Cherkess, but the 28 thousand Abaza, who are closely related to the Abkhaz on the other side of the Caucasus Mountains, are left out altogether (Krag and Funch 1994). The other nationalities are also concerned about the possibility, as in Adygea and Kabardino-Balkaria, of the return of large numbers from the Adygei/Kabardin/Cherkess diaspora. The Karachai are also one of the formerly deported peoples, and grievances still remain over their restitution.

North Ossetia-Alania. The Ossetes are another people divided by what, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, has become an international boundary. In this case, the North Ossetes are separated from their southern relations across the Caucasus Mountains in Georgia. Refugees are one of North Ossetia's main problems: around one hundred thousand Ossetes fled across the border from the conflict in the south in the early 1990s (see Georgia section); other Ossetes returned from Central Asia where they, too remained after the 1944 deportation. Help was provided by both the Russian government and the international community, but the strain placed on North Ossetia, which has seen a population rise by over one sixth, has been considerable.

In addition, many Ossetes were placed in the Prigorodny district, which was originally part of Ingushetia but which, after the deportation of the Ingush in 1944, was reassigned to North Ossetia. Many (but not all) of the deported Ingush have returned, and naturally want to reoccupy their old homes, thus leading to a conflict which has an ugly ethnic dimension. There was serious violence there in October/November 1992, with over 500 people killed. The issue has still not been settled, indeed, tension has increased in part as a side-effect of the Chechen war (Blandy 1997).

A further cause of tension in North Ossetia is the issue of language. Ossetic (unlike most of the other languages in the North Caucasus, it is an Indo-European language derived from ancient Scythian, Sarmatian and other dialects) is under threat. Activists are pressing for local officials to sit an Ossetic language exam to ensure that the language is used within the bureaucracy – there is already a requirement that candidates for the office of President in North Ossetia must speak the language. Russian-speakers are concerned, and warn that adoption of the new proposal would lead to a mass exodus of Russians – a familiar scenario (Dzutsev 2001b).

The main problem in **Ingushetia** has been the influx of Chechen refugees from the war in the neighbouring republic and of Ingush from the disputed Prigorodny district (see previous section). This is of particular concern to the Ingush because of their very strong feelings over their lost land (Krag and Funch 1994).

The war in **Chechnya** overshadows all else in this republic, and it is hard to consider its problems until at least some resolution has been achieved. The condition of all peoples in this terrible war is equally bad (Politkovskaya 2001), and there are serious concerns that the Russian government

⁶⁵ 'Adygei' in this context means actually means anyone from the related Adygei/Cherkess/Kabardin group of peoples.

has been able to exploit its new relationship with the West to carry out its war on Chechnya even more vigorously.

As indicated earlier, the ethnic make-up of **Dagestan** is particularly complex, and it is worth examining the numbers in order to appreciate their full complexity. In an area of 50 thousand square kilometres (an area somewhat larger than Holland), there are around 1.8 million people in more than 30 ethnic groups speaking languages belonging to three different language families. However, fourteen groups between them account for 99 per cent of the population (**Table 24**) and these fourteen all play a part in the republic's governance. Perhaps because the republic *is* so complex ethnically, the constitution has built into it a series of safeguards to ensure that no one group can dominate the others. The supreme governing body is the State Council with fourteen representatives, one from each of the main ethnic groups, and the Peoples' Assembly is elected by a system designed to encourage voting across ethnic lines (Blandy n.d.).

Table 24: Dagestan republic: Ethnic groups and their population share, by language group

Language group	Ethnic groups and their share of the population ¹
N E Caucasian	Avars (28%), Darghins (16.2%), Lezgins (12.5%), Laks (5%), Chechens (4.5%), Tabasarantsy (4.7%), Rutultsy (0.8%), Agultsy (0.8%), Tsakhurtsky (0.3%).
Turkic	Kumyks (13%), Nogai (1.6%), Azeris (4.3%).
Indo-European	Russians (7.1%), Tats (0.4%).

Note 1: The source of the population details is not recorded, but it is probably the 1989 USSR Census.

Source: Kisriev (2000)

There have been three general groups of problems for Dagestan (the distribution of land, socio-political factors like increasing inequality and crime, and ideological factors, the most acute of which is the division between European and Islamic values) and two specific ones (concerning the Chechens and the Lezgins). The former we have considered elsewhere, the latter is the result, as with the Ossetes, of the existence of national boundaries where before there were only administrative ones. Thus the Lezgins are divided between Dagestan in the north and Azerbaijan in the south, and the Dagestani group feels vulnerable as it is isolated from the main power structures in Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan.

However, as a whole the republic has surmounted these difficulties despite (or, perhaps, because of) the ethnic mix, nationalism has so far not led to thoughts of separatism. This is because the strength of civil society in Dagestan, in the form of the traditional political structures, has been able to neutralise the deleterious effects of nationalism (Kisriev 2000).

(iii) Russian Far North

The latest available figures of any reliability for the indigenous peoples of what is now the Russian Far North are those from the last USSR Census in 1989. These are subject to qualification, but at least they give an approximate order of magnitude of the numbers. According to these figures, the total number of indigenous people in the USSR then was around two

hundred thousand. The numbers are shown in **Table 25**⁶⁶ and their geographic distribution in **Figure 3**.

Table 25: Numbers of Northern minorities at the 1989 Census

People	Numbers at the census
Nenets	34,665
Evenks	30,163
Khants	22,521
Evens	17,199
Chukchis	15,184
Nanais	12,023
Kuriaks	9,242
Mansi	8,461
Dolgans	6,932
All other peoples <5,000	45,013
All Northern peoples	201,403

Source: Vakhtin (1992)

The indigenous peoples live variously on hunting, fishing and reindeer breeding and, until the sixteenth century, they had no contact at all with Europeans. However, Russians started to explore the area east of the Urals in the 1550s, and within a hundred years their conquest of Siberia was complete. In its aims and methods, the Siberian conquest closely paralleled other colonisations like that of the 'New World' by the Spanish *conquistadores*, to name only one.⁶⁷ The main motivation of the colonisers was to seek wealth (in furs and precious metals), and they were not too concerned about the methods they used to gain it (see box). They did not care very much about what happened to the indigenous population: "contrary to commonly-accepted opinion within Russia ... the Russians demonstrated racial prejudice and treated their subject peoples no more kindly than did other colonial powers" (Vakhtin 1992, p.9).

⁶⁶ Note that the Yakuts and the Komi are not included here by convention, on the grounds that they are much larger than the others and they also have their own autonomous republics.

⁶⁷ In fact, it is impossible to read of the treatment of the indigenous peoples of Siberia without being forcibly reminded of the colonisation of the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australasia: see, for example, Hemming (1970), Hughes (1987) Thomas (1993) and Wright (1992).

Figure 3: Location of the indigenous peoples in the Russian Far North

Source: Survival International

Colonialists at work

"From [Russian explorer] Poiarkov, the [indigenous] Daurians were about to learn – as Siberia's natives further west already had – that no matter how much they gave or how readily they gave it, their Russian conquerors would demand more and devastate their villages if they failed to provide it. Certain that the Daurians were concealing silver ... Poiarkov tortured the people who had fallen into his hands. When their victims fled and left [the Russians] with no food at all, Poiarkov's men began to hunt the Daurians like wild game, shooting them and roasting their flesh over open fires."

– Lincoln (1994 p.65)

The economic exploitation of the native peoples and their land has continued to the present day, accompanied by widespread immigration of Russians, which upset the population balance. More recently, ecological disaster has been added to the other problems of the native peoples: industrial development and the methods used to extract and transport oil and the use of Siberia for nuclear tests have all played their part in destroying the traditional patterns of life of the native peoples. They now face the whole range of problems that are common to subject peoples everywhere: appalling living standards, poverty and ill health, alcoholism and the breakdown of traditional family patterns, as well as the loss of their language and culture.

It is impossible to exaggerate the extent of the environmental catastrophe that has enveloped Siberia. Land has been rendered useless by oil spillage and deforestation and rivers have been poisoned. For example, the River Ob used to yield more than one hundred and fifty tons of sturgeon every year, but now spilled oil has poisoned the fish and reduced the catch to virtually nothing (Lincoln 1994, p.398).

Levels of health are very poor: for example, in the early 1990s tuberculosis was five times as prevalent in Chukotka as in Russia as a whole, and the overall life expectancy there was sixteen to eighteen years lower than the national average (Vakhtin 1992). Forced relocations, prejudice against native peoples and the general effects of Russianisation have caused serious damage to native cultures; the threat to their languages is very severe. The policy of using Russian in schools contributed greatly to this threat: “teachers throughout the North began to exert pressure on the children with regard to their native languages. They were punished if they were heard to speak [in] other than Russian at school, and their parents were requested not to speak their native language at home” (Vakhtin 1994, p.18). This is a chilling echo of the treatment of Native American children in the USA (Wilson 1998)⁶⁸ and in Canada (Samson et al 1999) at around the same time.

The effect of these policies has been to produce a generation of children who know nothing of their parents’ culture or, especially, their language. In addition, the economic collapse that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union has hit the native peoples especially hard. Their future is bleak.⁶⁹

What do you want, old man?

“I don’t want anything,’ he says after a long silence. ‘Only my land. Give me my land back where I can graze my reindeer, hunt game and catch fish. Give me my land where my deer are not attacked by stray dogs, where my hunting trails are not trampled down by poachers or fouled up by vehicles, where the rivers and lakes have no oil slicks. I want land where my home, my sanctuary and graveyard can remain inviolable. I want land where I could not be robbed of my clothes or boots in broad daylight. Give me my own land, not someone else’s. Just a tiny patch of my own land.”

A Khanty man replies to his son – quoted in Stewart (1995)

(k) Western former Soviet Union

This section covers three former republics of the former Soviet Union: Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

Belarus

Russians form the largest minority in Belarus, their numbers having increased significantly in recent years through immigration from other former Soviet republics (**Table 26**).

Human rights concerns in Belarus have focussed on the authoritarian nature of President Lukashenko and there are very few minority issues in the country. Belarusian ethnic identity itself is rather weak, ensuring that ethnic nationalism has not been a feature of post-Soviet Belarusian society. Interestingly, the new Belarusian passport does not identify the holder’s ethnicity and,

⁶⁸ For example, a Native American woman recalled her experiences in school in the 1930s: “[I]f we talk Indian in the classroom, they’ll ... bend a ruler and hit you in the mouth, that really hurts but I keep forgetting ... I talk Indian, and that’s when they took me in a room and hit me ...” (Celene Not Help Him, quoted in Wilson, 1998 p.317).

⁶⁹ For a slightly less gloomy view of the prospects of the indigenous minorities of north western Russia, see Baev and Blakkisrud (n.d.).

although Belarusian has been made the official state language, a long transition period was incorporated into the new language law (MRG 1997).

Table 26: Minority populations in Belarus

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Belarusians	77.9%	—
Russians	13.2%	13.2% ¹
Poles	4.1%	4.1%
Ukrainians	2.9%	—
Jews	1.1%	—
Others	0.8%	—

Note 1: 20.4%, according to Zeynalov (2001).

*Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)*

Moldova

Moldova constitutes two-thirds of the region known historically as Bessarabia, then part of Romania but which became part of the Soviet Union in 1940.⁷⁰ Moldova has a very significant Russian and Ukrainian minority, with the Russians concentrated in the Transdnistrian region. The Gagauz, a Turkish-speaking group, make up the next largest group (**Table 27**).

The position of Moldova is complicated by geopolitical as well as ethnic considerations. In the Soviet period, Moldova saw extensive Russian immigration: between 1959 and 1985, Russian immigration proceeded at proportionally between two and two and a half times the rate of immigration into Latvia and Estonia.⁷¹ The two main areas of potential conflict are in the Transdnistrian region and in Gagauzia.⁷²

The Transdnistrian region, the area mainly (but not entirely) on the east bank of the Dniester river, is predominantly Russian-speaking (but not of Russian ethnicity) and, after Moldova became independent in 1991, the region declared itself independent of Moldova as the Transdnistrian Moldovan Republic, the PMR. There was some fighting, with the PMR supported by the Russian 14th Army, but the situation stabilised after a while. Despite intensive mediation by, amongst others, the OSCE (ECMI 1998a) it has not been entirely resolved. The PMR asserts its independence, whilst the Moldovan authorities steadfastly pretend the whole thing hasn't happened.

⁷⁰ To justify this, the Soviet ideologues constructed what Munteanu (n.d.) describes as a kind of 'goulash history' that was supposed to explain why Moldova should be taken away from Romania and incorporated in the Soviet Union.

⁷¹ Calculated from figures in Munteanu (n.d.)

⁷² For a summary of the issues at stake in both Transdnistria and Gagauzia, see ECMI (n.d.)

Table 27: Minority populations in Moldova

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)	% in the population, 2001
Moldovans	64.5%	—	
Ukrainians	13.8%	26.8%	
Russians	13.0%		11.5%
Gagauz	3.5%	3.5%	
Bulgarians	2.0%	—	
Jews	1.5%	—	
Others	1.7%	—	

Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)
 1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)
 2001 figure from Zeynalov (2001)

Meanwhile, also in 1991 the Gagauz, a group of “either Christianised and Bulgarianised Turks or linguistically Turkicised Christian Bulgarians” (MRG 1997, p.292) proclaimed a Gagauz republic in southern Moldova. This issue was, however, settled peacefully with the establishment of the *Gagauz Yeri*, a “national-territorial autonomous unit” (Järve 2001).

Now, Russian, Moldovan [i.e., Romanian] and Ukrainian have been established as the official languages of Transdnistria, and Gagauz, Russian and Moldovan as official languages in the *Gagauz Yeri* (Järve 2001). Despite continued concerns about secession (on the part of the PMR) and a possible union with Romania (on the part of the PMR and the *Gagauz Yeri*), the Moldovan government has followed the path of accommodation with its ethnic/language minorities. For example, like Lithuania, Moldova adopted the ‘zero option’ policy for citizenship, under which virtually any resident of the country could claim automatic Moldovan citizenship. This bodes well for minority relations in the future.

Ukraine

As is common to so many of the Soviet successor states, Russians are by far the greatest minority in Ukraine; between them, Russians and Ukrainians make up almost 95 per cent of the country’s population (Table 28).

The history of Ukraine, like that of Belarus, is inextricably entangled with that of Russia. The early state of Kievan Rus, which lasted from the ninth century until the thirteenth century, is regarded by Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians alike as constituting their historical origin. Many Russians regard Ukrainians as simply a subdivision of the Russian identity: southern Ukraine was known as *Malorossiia* (Little Russia) when it was first settled by Russians in the late eighteenth century. Likewise, many Russians do not accept Ukrainian as a separate language but regard it as little more than a dialect of Russian. So, although we have described the Russians as Ukraine’s largest minority, the true picture is somewhat more complicated than this suggests.

Table 28: Minority populations in Ukraine

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Ukrainians	72.7%	—
Russians	22.1%	22.0%
Crimean Russians	—	3.3%
Crimean Tatars	—	0.5%
Jews	1.0%	—
Belarusians	0.9%	—
Others	3.3%	—

Note 1: 21.8 per cent according to Zeynalov (2001).

*Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)*

Firstly, the Russian-speakers are not distributed evenly across the country; there are relatively few in the western part of Ukraine, but they are predominant in the eastern part (see **Figure 3**: the dark areas in the pie chart represent Russian-speakers, the light parts, Ukrainian-speakers). This reflects the history of the present-day country, in which the western part was historically part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire whilst the east was part of Russia. The result is that western Ukraine has traditionally looked towards central Europe as its cultural and political centre of gravity, whilst eastern Ukraine has looked in the opposite direction.

Russians in Ukraine, indeed, frequently reject being labelled as a minority because “many regard Ukraine not as an alien host country but instead as their legitimate homeland” (Recktenwald 2000). In fact, rather than dividing the population into Ukrainians and Russians, one writer has proposed a three-way distribution that expresses rather better the complex reality. Mykola Rybchuk suggests that the largest group is neither the Ukrainophone Ukrainians (at 25-30 per cent of the population) nor the committed Russians (30-35 per cent), but the least-defined, ‘swing’ group of both ethnic Ukrainians and Russians, both Russophone and Ukrainophone, “whose major characteristic is lack of [a] clear and stable identity” (Riabchuk 2001). Indeed, she cites one writer as rather nicely parodying those who fall into the third group as being “Soviet in the morning, Russian in the afternoon and Ukrainian in the evening – the order may change. It is impossible to predict now whether they will eventually opt for one fixed and mutually exclusive national identity” (Szporluk 1998).

Given this situation, the Ukrainian political elite has “with important exceptions, sought to foster a multi-ethnic and territorial sense of nationhood among the population” (MRG 1997). The exceptions will be dealt with in a moment, but for now it is relevant to point out that, because of the relatively restrained way in which minority issues have been handled in post-independence Ukraine, the likelihood of its disintegrating as a result of ethnic or regional divisions, as forecast by some, is in fact unlikely.⁷³ This is in spite of the uneven distribution of languages across the country as referred to above.

⁷³ See, for example, Goble (2000) for arguments in support of this assertion.

Language Affiliation
(1989 Census, per cent)

Ukrainian speaking
(Per Cent)

90 to 100
82 to 90
65 to 82
14 to 65

Ukrainian
Russian

0 75 150
Kilometers

Poland
Slovak Republic
Hungary
Romania
Moldova
Belarus
Russian Federation

Black Sea

Regions labeled on map: Volyn, Rivne, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Chernobyl, Vinnytsia, Kirovograd, Cherkassy, Kiyiv, Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Crimea Autonomous Republic.

What are the exceptions to the otherwise optimistic picture presented above? There are, in fact, three areas of concern. Firstly, despite the otherwise generally good relations between Ukrainophones and Russophones, there have been tensions, particularly in the western city of Lviv. As we have seen, the Ukrainophones are in a majority in western Ukraine, and Lviv in particular was always seen as the cradle of Ukrainian nationalism (Wilson 1997). Recently, tensions in Lviv came to a head when Ihor Bilozir, a well-known Ukrainophone composer, was fatally attacked by a group of Russophones who disapproved of his singing Ukrainian songs in a café. A month after this, the Lviv city council instituted a ban on the singing of Russian songs in public (Požun 2000). The issue was referred to OSCE but, at the time of writing, does not seem to have been resolved.

Secondly, two separate sets of problems have been causing concern in Crimea. Russian-speakers are very much in the majority there (see Figure 3); until 1954 it formed part of Russia, but in that year Khrushchev 'gave' it to Ukraine as a goodwill gesture. In the mid-1990s, after Ukraine's independence, there was a real danger for a time that the then administration in Crimea would attempt to secede in favour of union with Russia. However, the Russian nationalist movement there collapsed as arguments about economic reform and privatisation grew more important, but the issues remain. For example, Ukrainophones have found it difficult to organise teaching of Ukrainian in schools (MRG 1997) and there have been long and bitter arguments over the division of the old (and now hopelessly rusting) Soviet Black Sea Fleet. Although temporarily shelved, the argument remains in the background as a potential cause of conflict.

The other problem in Crimea concerns the returning Crimean Tatars, who were deported in 1944 (see earlier section). Around 250 thousand have returned, and a similar number are still in central Asia, also hoping to return, but their conditions are unacceptable. A recent report on their condition, submitted to the Council of Europe listed four main problem areas: (1) poor access to land – the equivalent of only one tenth of their original land holdings has been returned, and then only of the poorest quality; (2) low or non-existent levels of political representation and employment; (3) a refusal to recognise Tatar as an official state language (Russian and Ukrainian are the only ones so recognised); and (4) political repression, including the imprisonment of political demonstrators. These issues remain entirely unresolved.

Thirdly, two sets of problems again, but this time in Trans-Carpathian Ukraine. This region, as Podkarpatská Rus, became part of Czechoslovakia when that country achieved independence after the First World War, but in 1939 it was annexed by the Soviet Union and is now, in consequence, part of Ukraine. It is a small but proudly multi-ethnic region: it is worth recording that, at the time of the 1991 census, its extraordinarily diverse population consisted of: Ukrainians (78.4 per cent – but of whom as many as three-quarters may be mislabelled Rusyns), Hungarians (12.5 per cent), Slovaks (6 per cent), Russians (4 per cent), Germans (3 per cent), Romanians (2.4 per cent), Jews (2 per cent), Belarusians (2 per cent), Roma (1 per cent but probably an underestimate), and others (4 per cent) (Požun 2000).

One of the problems there concerns the identity of the Rusyns themselves. The Ukrainian state simply regards them as Ukrainian, so they are not only denied their minority rights, but – and we have seen this too often elsewhere in the region – they are not even granted recognition as a people in their own right. A recent international conference on inter-ethnic relations in Trans-Carpathia recommended a series of actions that would be necessary to guarantee the Rusyns' rights (ECMI 1998b). Interestingly, the Slovak republic treats its Rusyns and Ukrainians (they live mainly in the north east part of the country) as members of two different national minorities with all minority rights guaranteed by national legislation (Duleba n.d.).

The other problem concerns the Roma who, as in every other country in the region, are routinely and systematically deprived of their rights (ERRC 1997b). Roma make up between 0.9 and 2.5 per cent of the population, but this is complicated by unknown numbers of Roma identifying as Hungarians or Slovaks and by the widespread practice of seasonal working elsewhere in Ukraine or in Russia. The primary identified problem for Roma people has been the prevalence of police abuse: arbitrary arrests and detentions, beatings and the whole paraphernalia of police

harassment. This is not to say that there are no other problems (indeed, there are many) but that this represents the starting point, and until it is dealt with, conditions for Roma will not begin to improve. For example, as a result of discrimination by the local authorities, Roma cannot obtain the identity cards or residence permits, without which they cannot travel or be paid social benefits: In one area “about half the [Roma community] does not have identity cards and they can’t get them. When they go to the police station, they are told, ‘Get out of here, you stinking Gypsy.’” (ERRC 1997b, p.11).

Finally, problems for minorities in northern Bukovina, another far-flung province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which became Romanian between the wars but was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939. This was another region with a very rich ethnic mix: Anne Applebaum refers to the novelist Gregor von Rezzori writing of “the Romanian Hungarian Ukrainian Polish Jewish German essence” of its main town (now Ukrainian Chernivtsi, then the Austrian Czernowitz) (Applebaum 1994). There, the present-day Romanian minority, representing at least one fifth of the population of the surrounding region, are experiencing familiar problems in maintaining their language. Education is the particular flash-point: there is no Romanian language education in the state university in Chernivtsi – or anywhere else in Ukraine – and the only chance for Romanians to study in their own language is to travel to Romania. The issue is not made any easier by what appears to be the wilful insistence that the language in question is not Romanian at all but ‘Moldavian’ (Olaru 2000) – in fact the two are virtually identical. A further difficulty is that, as so often, the issue brings up questions about the territorial implications since Romania has raised the question of the 1939 border settlement (MRG 1997).

(I) The Transcaucasus

The three new nations of the south Caucasus (the North Caucasus is dealt with separately under the Russian Federation) have been struggling to establish themselves since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This region has historically been a strategically important zone, prey to great power rivalry, with Russia particularly concerned to strengthen its hold in the region. Since independence there have been a number of ethnically-based armed conflicts: between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabagh and within Georgia over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russian actions in these conflicts have raised concerns over whether Russia was simply exploiting ethnic difficulties to further its own interests (Nuriyev 2000). This factor underlies the consideration of minority issues in the three countries of the south Caucasus.

Armenia

Ethnically, Armenia is relatively homogeneous, with small Azeri, Kurdish and Russian populations at the time of the 1989 census, especially since most of the Azeri population was expelled after pogroms against Armenians in Azerbaijan in 1988 (**Table 29**).⁷⁴ Most of the Russian population has left, too, but more for economic reasons as elsewhere in the former Soviet republics; there are now only about 15,000 Russian citizens in the country (Komsomolskaya Pravda 2000).

The Kurdish minority is now the largest in Armenia, and concerns have been expressed that they may have inadequate representation both locally and nationally; the electoral system makes no allowance for minority representation (MRG 1997). Also, Kurds complain that no text books have been published in the Kurdish language for 20 years, and other minorities have said that there are difficulties in preserving their languages and cultures (MINELRES 2000b). The small Russian minority is worried about educational issues, since Russian-language schools have been closed and Armenian introduced as the state language.

⁷⁴ The figures in this table are the latest available; the first census in independent Armenia was due to be carried out this year (Karanian 2000).

Table 29: Minority populations in Armenia

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)
Armenians	93.3%
Azeris	2.6%
Kurds	1.7%
Russians	1.6% ¹
Unspecified others	0.8%

Note: 1 The figure for 2001 was reported as 0.3 per cent (Zeynalov 2001)

Source: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)

Finally, a number of religious minority groups, including some evangelicals, Jews and Bahá'í, complain of harassment following the Armenian Law on Religious Freedom and Religious Organisations. This law places what seem to be entirely unreasonable restrictions on religions other than the Armenian Apostolic Church (MRG 1997).

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan had moderate-sized Russian and Armenian communities at the 1989 census but, for different reasons (The Russians for economic ones, the Armenians because of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict), their numbers have fallen very considerably. There remain a number of smaller nationalities (**Table 30**).

The main minorities now are the Lezgins, the Talysh and the Kurds. The Talysh live on the border with Iran; they speak a north west Iranian language, and their concern to keep their culture alive has been exploited by anti-government groups. The Lezgins are a Caucasian mountain people, part of whom live in Azerbaijan, with the remainder living over the Russian border, in Dagestan. The Azeri numbers are probably an underestimate, since they have been subject to assimilation in Azerbaijan, whereas in Dagestan they have enjoyed more freedoms. Their main problem concerns conflict over land: many Azeri refugees from Nagorno-Karabagh have been resettled on Lezgin land, and this has exacerbated other concerns over culture and language (MRG 1997).

Finally, there were also concerns in the late 1990s over religious freedoms; Heydar Aliiev, the President of Azerbaijan has since made a statement committing the country to greater religious freedom (HRW 2001), but it remains to be seen whether this statement is translated into practical freedoms on the ground.

Table 30: Minority populations in Azerbaijan

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	% of the total population (1994 estimates) ¹	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Azeris	82.7%	71%	—
Russians	5.6%	—	2.5% ²
Armenians	5.6%	1.4%	2.3%
Lezgins	2.4%	4.0%	2.5%
Talysh	—	4.2%	—
Kurds	—	2.8%	—
Others	3.7%	—	—

Notes 1: Minority Rights Group state that these figures originate inside Azerbaijan and “should be treated with caution.”

2: 2.4 per cent according to Zeynalov (2001)

Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997);
1994 estimates in MRG (1997)

1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

Georgia

Armenians form the largest minority group in Georgia; Russians, following the emigrations of the last decade) and Azeris the next largest. Georgians themselves are, linguistically, a rather complex group: the 1989 census counted Ajarians in with Georgians, but in fact they are a Muslim group who speak a dialect of Georgian that is heavily influenced by Turkish and should therefore be counted as a separate minority. Two other subgroups of the main Georgian nationality are the Svans and the Mingrelians, who both speak languages related to but separate from Georgian but who use Georgian as their literary language.

There is also a substantial minority of Ossetians in Georgia, only about 40 per cent of whom live in South Ossetia (CHRP 1996). Finally, there are smaller numbers of Kurds and Pontic Greeks (who began to settle the region around the Black Sea two and a half thousand years ago (Ascherson 1995); the figures are set out in **Table 31**.

The Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts of the early 1990s have both now calmed down, but neither is yet fully resolved.⁷⁵ Their legacy is a large number of refugees (technically, internally displaced persons) but, even if these two conflicts and their effects were to be resolved, there would remain a number of issues for minority populations. These include the smaller nationalities (Russian, Armenian) which were scattered during the conflicts (Dale 1997).

Another thorny problem concerns the Meskhetian Turks and the Armenians living in southern Georgia. The Meskhetian Turks, as we have seen earlier,⁷⁶ were deported by Stalin in 1944. They came originally from the Meskhet-Djavakheti region of Georgia's southern border with Turkey and, after their deportation, their lands were occupied largely by Armenians – who

⁷⁵ Indeed, at the time of writing, there are indications that the conflict in Abkhazia may be re-igniting: see O'Flynn (2001).

⁷⁶ See the section on the Formerly Deported Peoples.

themselves had come originally from Turkey in 1918 to escape the pogroms there (Grigorian 2001). This now leaves a very difficult situation in that region. It is economically very underdeveloped, with its infrastructure in ruins (Sabanadze 2001) and the only significant local employer is the Russian military base. If this were to be closed, the local situation would rapidly deteriorate even further. Discussions are still proceeding over whether the Meskhetian Turks can return home, and the Georgian government has a very difficult choice to make – either way, ethnic tensions are likely to be raised.

Table 31: Minority populations in Georgia

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	% of the total population (1989 census) (MRG figures)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Georgians	70.1%	—	—
Ajarians		3.6 – 5.4%	5.8%
Armenians	8.1%	9.0%	—
Russians	6.3%	5.4%	4.8% ¹
Azeris	5.7%	5.4%	5.4%
Ossetians	3.0%	2.9%	3.2%
Greeks	1.9%	—	—
Abkhaz	1.8%	1.7%	1.8%
Ukrainians	1.0%	—	—
Others	2.1%	—	—

Note 1: 4.9 per cent according to Zeynalov (2001).

*Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997) and MRG (1997)
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)*

The problem is that, although Georgia has a long history and Georgians a strong national and cultural identity, this identity is not, in spite of its history – or perhaps as a result of it – wholly inclusive. “Georgia [needs] to remodel its ethnic conception of nationhood into a more civic and inclusive one. This requires not only proper legislation, but also consistent governmental efforts to disseminate civic ideals and turn the written laws into practice. This would increase the stake of national minorities in the Georgian state and make them feel as its integral and loyal parts” (Sabanadze 2001).

A further minority issue in Georgia is that of freedom of religion, and this has been of considerable concern of late. The problem concerns non-traditional religious groups: Protestant and evangelical groups, Jehovah’s Witnesses and even the Hare Krishna group; all have been suffering severe harassment and even physical assaults – which the police have failed to investigate. This situation has been exacerbated by the activities of ‘Father’ Basili, a defrocked Georgian Orthodox priest. This Basili and his supporters have carried out violent attacks on members of various religions that they disapprove of, and also attacked human rights activists and journalists when those accused at the assaults have been brought to trial. Security and court officers have refused to intervene, and on other occasions, police, sometimes masked, have attacked various religious groups. As with ethnic tensions, the government has been inactive in protecting minority believers (HRW 2001).

(m) Central Asia

The area of Central Asia that comprises the five ex-Soviet republics first began to be absorbed into the Russian Empire in the 18th century with the first incursions into modern Kazakhstan; the conquest had been completed by the late nineteenth century (Akiner 1997⁷⁷). The region was colonised by mainly Russian settlers, and this changed its ethnic balance away from the indigenous inhabitants. After the 1917 revolution, the Civil War and collectivisation of agriculture of agriculture began to change the pattern of life for the mainly nomadic population. For the first time, administrative structures were organised along mainly ethnic lines, with the setting up of the five titular republics in the National Delimitation of 1924-25.

However, although the republics nominally reflected the ethnic character of the region, in practice, large numbers of people lived outside the republic of their titular nationality. By 1989, the time of the last Soviet census, almost one fifth of the population of the five Central Asian republics lived outside the republic of their own nationality and, for example, almost a quarter of Tajiks lived outside Tajikistan (**Table 32**).

Table 32: Central Asia: Percentages of nationalities living in the different republics

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan	Outside Central Asia
Kazakhs	80.4	0.5	—	1.1	9.8	8.3
Kyrgyz	—	88.2	2.5	—	6.9	2.4
Tajiks	—	0.8	75.2	—	22.1	1.8
Turkmen	—	—	—	93.0	—	7.0
Uzbeks	2.0	3.3	7.2	1.9	84.7	1.0

Source: Author's calculations from the 1989 USSR census in Fowkes (1997)

After the five republics became independent, they all adopted inclusive citizenship laws that gave citizenship to all non-titular nationalities – but these were observed more on paper than in reality. In practice, in contradiction to the view that has been commonly expressed, it has not been the Slav minorities that have suffered from the tensions that resulted from the post-independence economic meltdown, but the smaller nationalities,⁷⁸ because they have been seen to be more directly in competition for scarce resources. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the general climate of feeling that they are now less relevant in the newly-independent states has encouraged many Slavs to leave.

Another post-independence issue that has seriously affected many people in most of the republics has been government antipathy to 'non-official' religions. During the Soviet period, despite the general suppression of religion, small numbers of official Muslim organisations were allowed to exist so that religion could be monitored by the authorities and kept carefully under their control. Since independence and the (nominal) freedom of religion that began to emerge,

⁷⁷ This Minority Rights Group publication has a concise history of the Central Asian region together with a republic-by-republic examination of current issues for minorities.

⁷⁸ For example, the Meskhetian Turks.

Islam enjoyed a revival and many smaller religious groups sprang up. At first they were neither officially recognised nor suppressed, but by 1992-93 the governments of the region had begun to crack down on them. Partly this was as a result of the perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalism and partly also it was because the authorities tended to retain their Soviet-era fear of groups that they could not control (ICG 2000). There is particular concern that the more authoritarian governments in the region are exploiting the 'war against terrorism' as a cover for repressive and intimidatory policies against their Muslim citizens

We shall see the effects of these crackdowns in the individual country sections that follow.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhs were in a minority in their own republic at the last Soviet census but, partly through emigration of other nationalities and partly because of their own higher rate of population growth (Akiner 1997), they are now just in a majority. The most significant minority groups are Russians and other Slavs, and Germans (**Table 33**).

There were nearly a million of the latter in 1989, but large numbers have been emigrating to Germany over the last decade and, for example, by 1994 their numbers had declined to somewhere around 600 thousand (Akiner 1997). Although current figures are not available, there may now be as few as 100 to 200 thousand.

Slav migration has been mainly from the southern part of the country, with some consolidation where the Russian population is mainly concentrated, in the north of Kazakhstan.

Table 33: Minority populations in Kazakhstan

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	% of the total population (1999 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Kazakhs	39.7%	52.4%	—
Russians	37.8%	30.0%	34.7%
Germans	5.8%	2.4%	3.1%
Ukrainians	5.4%	3.7%	—
Uzbeks	2.0%	2.5%	—
Tatars	2.0%	—	—
Uighurs	1.1%	1.4%	—
Belarusians	1.1%	—	—
Others	5.1%	6.6%	—

Note 1: 30.0 per cent according to Zeynalov (2001).

Sources: *USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997);
Kazakhstan census for 1999 from CIA (2001);
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)*

There have been a few reports of discrimination against minorities in Kazakhstan, notably in the small Uighur population (Akiner 1997), but on the whole, inter-ethnic relations have been relatively harmonious.

As in other countries in the region, the language issue has surfaced as a cause of some concern. In the 1990s a number of government decrees made Kazakh the official language of state institutions, but these have only been token gestures since Russian is the dominant language in government and business; only about a third of Kazakhs speak their own language fluently. “The root of the problem is that ethnic Russians are unwilling to embrace Kazakh, although this appears to be changing ... a recent poll of young people showed that since 1994 there has been around 6 per cent growth in the number of [them] who’ve acquired a command of the language. At the same time, Russian-speakers say that if Kazakhs themselves show no keenness for their language why should they bother to learn it?” (Umbetaliyeva 2001).

Even the head of administration in the office of the Kazakh president has been reported as saying that they will not be able to convert their paperwork to Kazakh “in the near future” (IEI 1999). In these circumstances, it is difficult to see the language decrees becoming a serious problem for non-Kazakh speakers for some considerable time.

Religious groups have reported problems, and there is evidence of government intolerance of non-traditional religions (HRW 2001).

Kyrgyzstan

At the 1989 census, Russians were the largest minority in Kyrgyzstan, but the large numbers leaving in the last decade have reduced them to less than a third of their previous level. Uzbeks, mainly in the south of the country, now make up the most significant minority (Akiner 1997) (**Table 34**).

There is some evidence of tensions between Russians and Kyrgyz since independence, with reports of ‘confrontations’ between the two in recent years, and it is possible that the situation is worsening (Akiner 1997).

EveryChild has some evidence that the numbers of Russian children in state residential institutions is rather higher than their proportion of the population would warrant (ECT 2000). It is not clear whether this results from anti-Russian attitudes in the authorities, or from the emigration of parents and other potential family carers.

However, the main divisions in Kyrgyzstan are the mainly clan-based divisions between north and south of the country, and the ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south. There were violent clashes over land redistribution between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the Osh region in 1990, and the legacy of the riots at that time still lingers on. Uzbeks make up about half of the population in Osh (Kyrgyz Republic 2000) but their participation in government structures has been restricted. There are few Uzbeks working in the Osh city administration, and none amongst the judges or prosecutors at any level in the local legal system. And although Uzbek traders have traditionally dominated the southern Kyrgyzstan bazaars, it has been reported that they have become the targets of resentment among the local (Kyrgyz) population (Khamidov 2001).

There is also evidence that artificial political barriers are being placed in their way: for example, Anvar Artykov, an ethnic Uzbek, was disqualified as a presidential candidate in 1990 after failing a language test (Grebenshchikov 2001b). And also on Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, there is evidence that official attacks on ‘unofficial’ Muslims bear hardest on the Uzbeks in the south of the country: “Kyrgyz officialdom increasingly distinguishes between officially-sanctioned Islamic institutions and those independently-formed mosques and schools which are seen as difficult to control” (ICG 2001).

Table 34: Minority populations in Kyrgyzstan

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	% of the total population (1999 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Kyrgyz	52.4%	64.9%	—
Russians	21.5%	12.5%	18.0% ¹
Uzbeks	12.9%	13.8%	12.9%
Ukrainians	2.5%	1.0%	—
Germans	2.4%	0.4%	—
Tatars	1.6%	0.9%	—
Kazakhs	0.9%	0.9%	—
Dungans	0.9%	1.1%	—
Uighurs	0.9%	1.0%	—
Tajiks	0.8%	0.9%	—
Others	1.9%	1.6%	—

Note 1: Only 6.5 per cent according to Zeynalov (2001).

*Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997);
Kyrgyzstan census for 1999 (Kyrgyz Republic 2000)
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)*

Another cause of problems is the existence of seven enclaves in Kyrgyz territory. These, the largest of which is Sokh, with an area of 325 square kilometres (an area the size of the Gaza Strip) and a population of 43 thousand, are predominantly Tajik but belong to Uzbekistan, and are separated from the main body of Uzbek territory by some distance. The enclaves were established in the 1920s at the National Delimitation as purely administrative entities, long before the possibility that the republics would become independent nations. But now, with tensions increasing between Kyrgyz and Uzbek governments over the distribution of resources (specifically, gas and water supply), they raise significant issues (IRIN 2001).

Finally, the Uighurs, a Turkic Muslim people displaced from China. Their presence in the Central Asian republics (but mainly in Kyrgyzstan) dates from the 1940s, when China absorbed East Turkestan into the province of Xinjiang: tens of thousands of Uighur refugees fled to what was then Soviet Central Asia. There are now around 50 thousand Uighurs in Kyrgyzstan, but they have never integrated with the local population, and intermarriage is almost non-existent. There are no Uighurs in parliament or other major institutions, and many in the Uighur community feel that they are being deliberately kept out. The Kyrgyz government is nervous of alienating China, its much larger and more powerful neighbour, and the Uighurs have been branded as Muslim extremists in what is a transparent attempt to curry favour with the Chinese (Grebenshchikov 2001a).

Tajikistan

Russians were present in Tajikistan in substantial numbers at independence but now most have reportedly left the country (IOM 1997). Uzbeks make up almost one quarter of the population now (Table 35).

Table 35: Minority populations in Tajikistan

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Tajiks	62.3%	—
Uzbeks	23.5%	23.5%
Russians	7.6%	3.5% ¹
Tatars	1.4%	—
Kyrgyz	1.3%	—
Others	3.9%	—

Note 1: 2.4 per cent according to Zeynalov (2001).

*Source: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)
1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)*

Although relations between Russians and Tajiks were generally good, most of the Russians who settled there left directly because of the civil war that took place in the 1990s (MRG 1997). The war was primarily a conflict between the pro-communist old guard and a coalition of democratic and Islamic forces, but it soon took on a series of other dimensions, one of them ethnic (Simonsen n.d.). Tajiks have long been suspicious of the Uzbek minority, which is concentrated in the north of the country, for reasons dating back to the National Delimitation (which left large numbers of Tajiks in Uzbekistan – see the section on that country below). Although generally not serious, these suspicions were exacerbated by the civil war. A peace process has now brought the war to an end (CR 2001) and the ethnic situation has quietened down; there are, however, still occasional outbreaks (Simonsen n.d.).

Finally, in a policy on language followed in the other republics, Tajik was adopted as the official state language as early as 1989. Russian was, however, given the status of the language of inter-ethnic communication and there seem to have been few problems over language in Tajikistan (Soros Foundation 1999).

Turkmenistan

Turkmen make up three quarters of the population, with substantial Uzbek and Russian minorities (**Table 36**).

Apart from a little uneasiness about the general Turkmenisation of public life, the Russian minority has been rather more comfortable there than in other countries in Central Asia. Russian is recognised as an official language alongside Turkmen and, although some Russians have left since independence, their numbers were relatively small (Akiner 1997).

There has been some religious repression; the 1997 amendments to the Law on Religion have, as elsewhere, banned non-official religious denominations, with their adherents facing confiscation of religious materials, sacking from their jobs and imprisonment. Likewise, some Protestant denominations have faced official harassment (HRW 2001).

Table 36: Minority populations in Turkmenistan

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	% of the total population (1996 census)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Turkmen	72.0%	77.0%	—
Russians	9.5%	6.7%	6.7% ¹
Uzbeks	9.0%	9.0%	—
Kazakhs	2.5%	—	—
Others	7.0%	7.3%	—

Note 1: Only 1.2 per cent according to Zeynalov (2001).

Sources: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)

Turkmenistan census for 1996 in Reuters (2001)

1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

Uzbekistan

Uzbeks form a greater proportion of the population of their republic than in any of the other Central Asian republics, except for Turkmenistan. The largest minorities are Russians though as elsewhere they have been leaving the country) Tajiks and Kazakhs; there are substantial numbers of other minorities (**Table 37**).

As elsewhere, the numbers of Slavs have been declining over the past decade; those remaining are concentrated in key industries: Russian-speakers make up about 15 per cent of the total population but 70 to 80 per cent of specialists in engineering, electronics and other high-technology industries (Degtiar 2001).

There have been problems for a number of smaller nationalities. Many Tajiks in their traditional cities of Bukhara and Samarkand have been forced to register as Uzbeks (Græger and Kolstø 2001). After ugly riots in 1989, tens of thousands⁷⁹ of Meskhetian Turks, one of the formerly deported peoples and who were not rehabilitated until as late as 1968, had to be evacuated to Azerbaijan for their own safety. The position of the remaining 30 thousand or so is still uncertain (Akiner 2000). Another of the formerly deported peoples, the Crimean Tatars, are still present in some strength in Uzbekistan but are reportedly keen to return to their original homes; some international aid has been promised to help this (Akiner 1997).

The position of the Karakalpaks, a largely Turkic people living to the south of the Aral Sea, is interesting (Akiner 1997). It has approximately equal numbers of Karakalpaks, Uzbeks and Kazakhs. Karakalpakstan is semi-independent, with its own government and institutions within the state of Uzbekistan: it has its own Constitution and Parliament and the government is headed by a Council of Ministers. The region has suffered particularly severely from the ecological disaster of the Aral Sea.

⁷⁹ The reported numbers of those affected vary between 30 and 70 thousand.

Table 37: Minority populations in Uzbekistan

Nationality	% of the total population (1989 census)	% of the total population (1996 estimate)	Minorities at Risk (1998 estimate)
Uzbeks	71.4%	80.0%	—
Russians	8.3%	5.5%	5.5% ¹
Tajiks	4.7%	5.0%	4.7%
Kazakhs	4.1%	3.0%	—
Tatars	2.4%	1.5%	—
Karakalpaks	2.1%	2.5%	—
Crimean Tatars	1.0%	—	—
Koreans	0.9%		—
Kyrgyz	0.9%		—
Ukrainians	0.8%		—
Others	3.4%	2.5%	—

Note 1: 5.8 per cent according to Zeynalov (2001).

Source: USSR census for 1989 in Fowkes (1997)

1996 estimate: CIA (2001)

1998 Minorities at Risk estimates: Gurr and Recktenwald (2000)

'Freedom of religion' in Uzbekistan

"Police regularly harassed and threatened relatives of men convicted of religious offences, while arresting the relatives of men being sought, and threatening to hold them until the suspects turned themselves in or were captured. Police arrested twenty-three-year-old Nilufar Hokimova and twenty-one-year-old Nafisa Aboskhodjaeva, who were sentenced to six years in prison for 'Wahabism' and alleged anti-state activity when they attempted to leave the country following the arrest, torture and conviction of their husbands."

— *Human rights developments in Uzbekistan, HRW (2001)*

However, the most serious minority issue in Uzbekistan concerns freedom of religion. As in other Central Asian republics,⁸⁰ Islam enjoyed a revival in post-independence Uzbekistan. But by 1992 the authoritarian Uzbek government was already suppressing what it saw as an Islamic opposition. It seems that the authorities, like others in the region, were unable to distinguish between Islam as a religion and Islam as a political movement, and the result was a kind of 'demonisation' of Islam (Zviagelskaya 1995). The government did, however, distinguish sharply between the semi-official religious administration dating from Soviet times, and all other manifestations of Islam, and police actions began against anyone they disapproved of. People who belonged to unofficial mosques – or who simply dressed in a manner that indicated devotion to Islam – were subjected by the police to forced shaving of their beards, harassment, arrests and beatings.

⁸⁰ See the section of Kazakhstan, for example.

By 1997, the crackdown had become a massive campaign resulting in thousands of arrests, and when the President was nearly assassinated when a number of buildings were bombed in 1999, the campaign became even more brutal, and the government attributed the bombings to an international Islamist conspiracy. As elsewhere in the region as a whole, worries about Islamic fundamentalism (often referred to, usually misleadingly, as 'Wahabism' after a sect of Saudi Arabian origin) became inextricably entangled with fears of any uncontrollable elements in the newly democratic states. Now thousands, possibly tens of thousands⁸¹ of people were arrested without trial and held in special camps (ICG 2001). 'Unregistered religious activity' is now a crime in Uzbekistan, and those with dissenting views are regarded as enemies of the state. Independent Muslims practising their religion face arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, unfair trials and prison sentences for violation of the laws on religion and for alleged 'anti-constitutional activity' (HRW 2001). Most recently, at the International Helsinki Federation General Assembly meeting in November 2001, the IHF tried to draw the international community's attention to the "drastically deteriorating human rights situation" in Uzbekistan (IHF 2001).

That concludes this description of the state of minority groups in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. We go on to examine ways of tackling the kind of problems that we have been describing.

⁸¹ Reports vary considerably: government reports claim only a couple of thousand arrests; whilst more neutral sources say that, although "no accurate figures are available for those arrested for their association with unofficial Islam in Uzbekistan ... the capacity of the internment camps is thought to be about 70,000" (ICG 2001).

PART 4: DEFYING PREJUDICE, ADVANCING EQUALITY

The previous parts of this report have accepted that nationalism and ethnicity have presented – and will continue to present – many problems in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It has, however, argued that these problems are not the product of ‘age-old ethnic hatreds,’ since these are a convenient fiction that has been used mainly to excuse the fatalistic (and self-interested) belief that ‘nothing can be done.’ But what **can** be done? The purpose of this, final part of the report is to argue that the undoubted problems resulting from ethnic tensions can and must be tackled.

But before we can begin to set out the kinds of approach that can be used, it is first necessary to set out the structural nature of the problems that exist for minorities, and especially for their children.

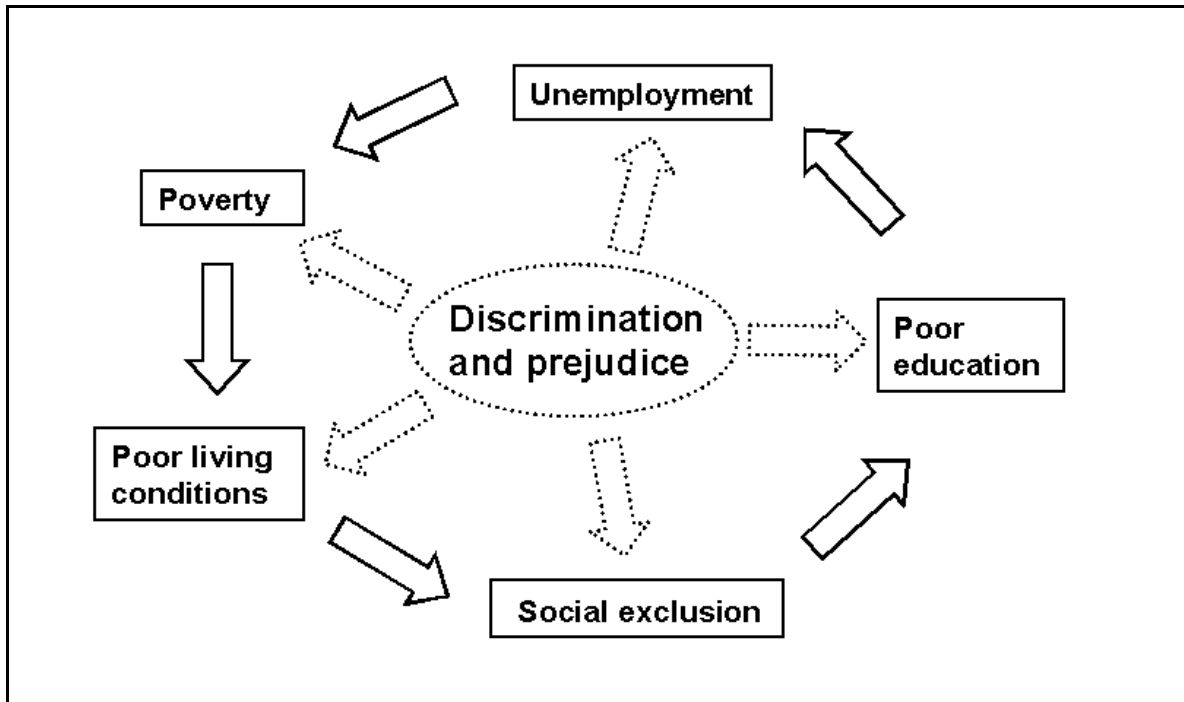
The material presented in the previous parts of the report have made it clear that, simply by being part of a minority, people can suffer from a series of disadvantages. The threat of the loss of their culture and language are an everyday concern for minorities all across the region. Two factors are at work here. Firstly, there is what is at best, a lack of concern for minorities and at worst, a blatant prejudice against them and, secondly, educational policies are widely adopted that help to provide a young generation unable to speak their parents’ language. Combined, these two factors present a serious threat to the continued existence of minority languages in particular. After all, at a time when even the continued existence of major languages like French and even English can be brought into question by serious commentators,⁸² the fate of ‘smaller’ languages must be highly questionable.

But this is not the only threat that many minorities face: in addition, they also have frequently to struggle with a whole nexus of social and economic problems solely as a result of their ethnicity or other minority status. These problems are particularly acute for Roma communities in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, but they are certainly not confined to these communities.

The problems consist of a series of inter-linked problems in a circular process which amounts to a cycle of disadvantage, in which one disadvantage reinforces the next, which reinforces the next, and so on until the cycle is closed and repeated again.

Viewing the cycle from the point of view of the child, social exclusion leads to the lack of an adequate education. This, which often includes such basic problems as the inability to read and write and lack of knowledge of the majority language, means that the young person has little or no chance of gaining worthwhile employment. This, in turn, leads to poverty, which leads on to poor living conditions, with all their attendant problems: poor housing, lack of sanitation or clean water supply, poor access to public services, poor health conditions (high infant mortality, low levels of vaccination coverage, poor nutrition, chronic health problems that go untreated, reduced life expectancy) and serious social problems (alcoholism, domestic violence, child abuse and family breakdown). These are reinforced by the prejudice and discrimination that overlay the whole process, leading back, inexorably, to social exclusion – and so the cycle is closed (see **Figure 4**). How can it be broken?

⁸² Historian and Académie Française member Alain Decaux has warned that the French language risks becoming obsolete in the 21st century, overwhelmed by a bastardised English which has itself been ruined by neologisms and barbarisms (Jeffries 2001).

Figure 4: The cycle of disadvantage**Breaking the cycle of disadvantage**

There are two general directions from which to attempt to break this cycle: from the top down, and from the bottom up. The former tends to involve working with national or regional structures or organisations: to improve the educational system for minority group children, for example to work with the majority population to try to reduce the effects of discrimination on minority workers' employment prospects, to improve access to better quality housing, health care and public resources, to alleviate the effects of social problems, and so on. All the evidence from studies of social deprivation indicates that the key area for successful intervention is in education. If minority children are able to improve their basic educational levels, their ability to gain a job – and when they do, for it to consist of more than menial tasks – is significantly improved and, consequently, their ability to enjoy an improved standard of life is enhanced.

But there are significant barriers in the way of achieving this aim. Firstly, language: this is the clearest difficulty facing many minority children. Sometimes the minority language is used in schools but, more frequently, the medium of teaching in schools is the language of the majority, and this leaves minority children at a serious disadvantage. If they cannot understand what they are being taught, they will obviously be unable to learn. A number of schemes have been tried to overcome this obstacle, including the use of assistant teachers who are fluent in the language of both majority and minority, pre-school and kindergarten programmes, homework assistance and tutoring programmes, etc. A number of such programmes have been tested in a major research project that was commissioned recently by the OSI; the findings overall are that such programmes make a significant difference to both the children's school performance and their attendance records (OSI 2001).

Secondly, there is a diffuse but even more far-reaching problem: the attitude of the children's parents to education. Often, the parents take the only too understandable view that there is no point in learning anything in school because there is no chance of their getting a proper job anyway. This applies even more often to girls than to boys, who therefore suffer a double

disadvantage, reinforced in some communities by pressure on children to marry at a young age. This is a particular issue in many Roma communities, where it is culturally acceptable for children to marry as young as 12 or 13 (Fonseca 1996). Pressures of this kind are much harder to overcome. Some work is being done, for example in outreach programmes to persuade parents of the importance of their children's continued education; although some successes have been recorded, this is not an area where immediate results are likely to be achieved (OSI 2001).

But behind even these problems there are two others. Firstly, finding the money and – even harder because of the miasma of prejudice that overlays the whole area – gaining the commitment of the responsible authorities. These, of course, belong almost exclusively to the majority population, and the combination of a shortage of resources and a lack of will make this particularly difficult. There are ways of influencing the behaviour of the authorities, particularly through the pressure that can be brought to bear via international agreements on the rights of minorities. For example, many countries in the region have signed the Framework Convention (see **Appendix I**), and they are in theory obliged to follow certain policies to alleviate or remove altogether the effects of discrimination against minorities. But an only too frequent problem here is that there can be a very large gap between what a national government has signed up to, and what local or even national-level officials are prepared to do in practice.

Another powerful influence, which can be applied specifically to those countries which are preparing for accession to the European Union, is to establish as one of the conditions of accession that the governments concerned take appropriate, and adequate and verifiable action to improve the conditions of their minorities. This can be effective but if it is applied too rigorously there is a danger of a backlash that will adversely affect the very minorities it is designed to benefit. An example of this is in Romania, where some have complained that it is all the fault of the Roma the country is making such slow progress towards accession:⁸³ a clear example of blaming the victim rather than the perpetrator.

The second underlying problem of action from the top down is that its effects will only work through in the very long term. In education, for example, the work with children now will only bear fruit with the next generation, and that means that it will be twenty years or so into the future before real change can occur through this route. Meanwhile, the effects of the cycle of disadvantage continue to work through. Clearly, work at this level must continue, but it must be recognised that its effects will not be immediate but can be expected only in the long term. It is important to take a pragmatic attitude to reform and to be prepared to adapt policies to suit circumstances, not to take an unduly rigid line. An example of this is given by Hungary, which has made real efforts to improve inter-ethnic relations with its minorities. These have not been entirely successfully with its Roma people, as we have seen, but nevertheless, genuine efforts have been made. But the point we wish to make here is that the Hungarian experience has taught them to aim toward management rather than resolution: "While we can provide general traffic rules, we must accept that there will always be bad drivers."⁸⁴

But it is also important to work at the lower level, from the bottom up. Here there is more scope for individual action by NGOs and other parts of the emerging elements of civil society in the region to tackle all of the elements that we have identified as forming the cycle of disadvantage. We will include a few examples here to draw out some important lessons, but there are many others; that they are not included should not be taken as a judgement of them.⁸⁵

⁸³ "It's you Roma who are stopping us from joining the European Union," Romanians say to Josif Kovaci, leader of the Roma community in the northern Romanian village of Coltau (personal communication with the author).

⁸⁴ Remark by historian Attila Pok at a conference on nationality policy (PER 1992).

⁸⁵ See particularly, (1) Spolu (2000) for a series of participatory projects with Roma communities in eastern Europe, and (2) the *Diversity in Action* project (e.g., Biró and Kovács 2000) and its quite invaluable database of innovative practice (Kovács n.d).

An education project

Apart from the many schemes actually in schools, like those for assistant teachers and other support mechanisms which we referred to earlier, there is the question of working in the wider community. Other organisations than national or local administrative structures can also be effective in breaking down the barriers that have been set up by discrimination. It is vital to set up as many links as possible across ethnic lines. The separation of peoples – and this applies particularly but by no means exclusively to Roma communities, only reinforces the ‘us and them’ attitude. The fear of ‘the other’ is only strengthened by separation from, and thus ignorance of the true nature of different ethnic groups. Consequently, any action which helps to build and strengthen links between different groups will, if managed properly, only be beneficial.

A very interesting example of this kind of approach is provided by a Pax Christi project in Poland and Lithuania (PCI 2000). This project consisted of a series of activities carried out during 1996 which were specifically directed towards “understanding differences, including those of perception and interpretation of history” – arguing that this was essential for different minorities to work together successfully. Different groups were targeted: youth workers, teachers, journalists and, of course, young people themselves, with the aim of promoting mutual tolerance and respect towards minorities. In schools, the project organised drama and essay competitions and held a ‘tolerance camp’ to bring young Polish and Lithuanian people together, and human rights seminars and action days (also involving pupils) were organised with teachers. Finally, work with journalists involved a series of workshops that concentrated both on exchanging journalists’ experiences of working in the minority press and on developing their practical skills.

All of which sounds fairly standard for this kind of exercise, but what is particularly impressive about this work is that, when it came to measuring its impact, the organisers were admirably clear-headed and realistic. Some evaluations of this kind, keen to emphasise the positive aspects of their work, can be rather over-optimistic, but the PCI project did not fall into this trap. Nevertheless, it is clear that, albeit on a small scale, the project did contribute to real advances in inter-ethnic understanding. For example, it reported that “During the action day at Šalcininkai, the seven representatives of the local police department were among the most active participants. As they were the whole day without [their] uniform, many participants didn’t even know they were working together with the police. This fact was only announced at the end of the day, to the astonishment of some of the participants.”

The project report identifies a series of needs for work in both Poland and Lithuania and, specifically, with young people at the cross-border level. It ends by saying: “too often the minorities ... stay within their own communities or hide the fact that they are members of a minority. They should be encouraged to express themselves as members of a minority and to take an active part in all sectors of society.” These are common sentiments in studies of this kind and, although admirable, are often no more than pious hopes. What sets this project aside from this is that it worked at the practical level to develop the kind of understanding between communities that is what is needed. It is clear that the organisers were under no illusions that they had solved the problems that they were dealing with, but were determined to make a start at grass-roots level.

Unemployment

The Roma community in Coltau, in northern Romania, started a brick-making plant that was aimed at providing gainful employment for the community. Making bricks is relatively easy: the raw materials were readily to hand, only needing to be dug out and formed into the simple rectangular shape of bricks. This was a labour-intensive but low-technology task that was ideally fitted for the community, since the level of skills of the workers there was not high but the level of unemployment was. So the labour force needed was available, and it was keen to work, and the moulds needed to form the bricks manually were purchased with a grant from a German group. This project had the added advantage that it was the community’s own, and it would retain any profits that were made.

Although the bricks were easy to make, drying them was not. There was little land available to spread the bricks out so that they could dry in the air, and in any case a spell of bad weather would have made the air-drying process difficult. In addition, the manual process of making bricks did not give a sufficiently high level of quality control. Finally, the oven that was available was not good enough for the task. As a result, not enough bricks of a sufficient quality could be made, and the enterprise failed. If the equipment – specifically, a machine for drying the bricks quickly and an improved oven – had been available, the project might have succeeded, but there was not sufficient money to purchase them.

What are the lessons from this exercise? Perhaps the obvious one is that the project could have been planned better. It seemed attractive because the labour was available, but the appropriate machinery was not. Bricks could be made, but neither in sufficient quality or quantity to enable the community to compete with firms outside; better project planning would have revealed this from the outset. Presumably there was no technical expertise available to the community of the kind needed to do project planning.

Poor living conditions

In the village of Suceag, in central Romania, the Roma community is, as so often in this region, situated at the edge of the town. The Roma section has no running water, and in fact the only water available is an open spring about 800 metres away at the bottom of the valley. Everything has to be carried up by hand to the houses, and in addition there is the danger that the spring will be contaminated with sewage, with the consonant risk of disease. There is a fresh spring across the other side of the valley, and a project by *Fundația Română pentru Copii Comunitate și Familie* (FRCCF) is being planned to set in place a pipe to carry water from this directly to the community. Mainly for reasons of economy, the external money for the project will pay only for the actual materials for the pipeline itself and the standpipe that would be installed for the community's use. The project is negotiating with the people from the community to supply the labour, which would be a good way of involving them in the process, providing the element of ownership and community participation that are an essential part of such projects. The community has not yet agreed to participate in this way. Many Roma communities are so beaten down that there is little community spirit. Families will work for their own but trust is a commodity in such short supply that it is often hard for people to be able to decide to band together for the common good. There is also the problem that (because of the level at which the spring is located) the water supply can only be taken part way up the valley. Families who live at the top of the valley would still have to carry water some distance up the hill from the standpipe. They argue that they would in consequence be little better off than before, and that those living lower down would benefit but that they would not: so why should they get involved?

At this point, the problems are unresolved, but they do illustrate a number of valid points. Firstly, the value of the project is undeniable: clean water that is more accessible than the present unsafe water must represent a gain for the community. But because of tensions and mistrust *within* the community, as things stand at present the project cannot go ahead, and work is needed to try to resolve these tensions and help build up mutual trust. Minority communities are not homogenous groups and cannot be approached as such. They are as diverse and varied as any social group. Too often there is an assumption that members of a minority community will display a greater degree of solidarity and sense of community than other social groups. However, members of minority groups are as human as any group and as likely or unlikely as any other humans to participate in community projects. Projects which are working to ensure community participation need to develop a range of techniques in community facilitation/mobilisation.

The second project in this section concerns the provision of a health centre for the Roma community in the town of Rakitovo, Bulgaria. Here CCFGB, a British NGO, has refurbished and equipped a walk-in health centre for the community, which provides medical examinations as well as advice on health education, nutrition, contraception and sexual health. It is staffed part-time by three doctors, plus a team of community health workers recruited from the community and trained for this specific project; they provide the main health advice. The primary aim of the project is to

improve the interface between the Roma community and mainstream health services. Whilst the materials for the physical surroundings are being provided from outside, it is being built with local labour; the ongoing costs once it opens should be provided by the local municipality.

The value of the project is clear: the health problems in the community are severe, and the local health services are situated at a considerable distance and are not accessible to the Roma. This project will provide a service for the community that is located nearby and, at least as far as the community health workers are concerned, will provide work for community members. It is also good that the people who attend the clinic for advice are seen by people who are Roma themselves and so are likely to be much more understanding of their particular problems.

The only question concerns whether the local municipality will pay for the ongoing costs of the clinic: a sustainability issue. They have said that they will, but there is always the possibility that they could renege. But the project planners are optimistic, and this possible problem apart, the project has many features that recommend it as a model of its kind.

Poverty and Social exclusion

Poverty is experienced in a variety of ways – it is made up of two factors: firstly, a combination of low income, poor health and lack of economic opportunity and, secondly, a lack of voice in the political process. Social exclusion is an all-embracing area that actually takes in poor housing, denial of access to public services and so on, and if this can begin to be tackled, the cumulative effect on the other factors will begin to make real change in peoples' lives. But what does it mean in practice? The experience of Roma communities gives one of the starkest examples of social exclusion. Of course, other minority communities have similar experiences, but the sheer consistency with which Roma are treated, together with the extent of the poor conditions in which so many are obliged to live, mean that their conditions are often the worst of all minorities in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Many, if not most Roma communities are situated on the edges of the towns and villages in which they are located. The streets are unpaved and unlit, the houses poor and overcrowded, there is rarely adequate sanitation or water supply, and, because of restrictions left over from the communist period, many communities are living there illegally, with little real hope of being able to regularise their position. They are, in consequence, not eligible for what social benefits are available and, because there is very little work they either have to travel long distances to work or make what living they can from occasional fruit picking, scavenging and so on. There are few if any health facilities and the schools, as we have seen, are below standard. But it is the combination of these conditions, the attitudes of non-Roma people to them and the nature of Roma society itself, which tends to be self-isolating, which cuts the people of the community off from the mainstream of life outside. Even to venture into the centre of the town is to risk abuse, accusations that they are only there for thievery and, often they receive harassment and beatings. Such conditions add up to a particularly severe form of social exclusion.

An example of successful work with social isolation is given by a project in Asenovgrad, Bulgaria. The Roma community there is typical of its kind: a poor quarter on the edge of the town, but work by the Bulgarian NGO Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation (IEHR) has begun to show people how their lives can be improved. It is essential to state at the outset that there is still a very long way to go in this work, but it is the first step that is the crucial one.

The project started with a series of meetings in the community to find out what the community itself needed. At the same time some basic sociological data collection was carried out; the purpose of these two steps was that whatever was to be done would grow out of local perceptions of need. The early stages of work by the community were led in the traditional way, by the men, who were not even prepared to allow their wives to take part. Intriguingly, the IEHR project team was led by a woman and, although this was a cause of considerable suspicion at the beginning, through discussion the men were eventually persuaded that this problem was their own. This part of the project needed a careful balance: between, on the one hand challenging the community's values and on the other, being careful not to impose external ones. It was agreed

that the project would train ‘social assistants,’ drawn from within the community itself, to provide advice and support to anyone in the community who needed it. They would work with the social workers from the municipality – which was already enthusiastic about helping and had been involved from the start. But this brought up another problem: the community was not keen on the idea of having women from the community working alone, so a further decision was taken to recruit social assistants in husband and wife pairs. So this is what was done, with training provided by the municipality, and the further decision taken to locate them in a Social Information Centre.

But where should this centre be located? The obvious choice would be to put it in the community itself, as near as possible to the people it was to serve – this was the solution adopted in the case of the Rakitovo Health Centre, discussed above. But in fact the interesting decision was taken, after much discussion, to set up the centre *outside* the Roma quarter, in a symbolic move to attempt to escape from the ghetto mentality and to show that Roma, too, were a part of the wider community. This explains the name that the project was given: Anti-Ghetto. The advantage of placing the centre in the town itself was, however, more than symbolic, in that it encouraged more and more people from the Roma community to go into the town. Previously, they would have had few reasons to go there, and if they did, as we saw above, they would have been accused of being there for dubious purposes anyway. But now they had an obvious reason for going there, and, even more than establishing their right to do so, it gave people the confidence to begin to take up a more normal, inclusive life instead of staying cocooned in the safe but deprived conditions of the ghetto.

Lessons for the future

The projects that we have described are all specific to the areas and problems that they were designed to address. However, a number of important lessons emerge from them that are more generally applicable, and these will give us some pointers to the future, to provide some help for organisations that are attempting to tackle the effects of prejudice against minorities.

1. The first lesson that emerges from these studies is that **support from the outside** for minority groups is important. Many of the communities are not only desperately poor, but have temporarily mislaid many of the skills and abilities that they need in order to improve their condition. This is what the external world can offer them. Money can help, but technical or practical advice are frequently of much more long-term benefit.
2. The second lesson that emerges from these studies is that, although money and technical support from the outside world are important, no project will succeed unless it is based on **the desire of the community itself for change**. The will to change must come from within, it cannot be imposed from the outside.
3. Any successful project must be based on **the genuine needs of the community**, determined by the people of the community themselves. Outside organisations can provide invaluable help, but they should not try to impose their own ideas about what will work and what won't. This, of course, is standard development practice, but it needs to be applied even more strongly to work with minority communities.
4. Anyone working with minority groups must be prepared to experience **racist or other prejudiced attitudes** on the part of the majority community and, crucially, to be ready to **challenge** these attitudes. They must also be prepared to deal with these attitudes in project partners, since the kinds of prejudice that we have been discussing are deeply embedded in the societies where we work.
5. Project workers will always need to be alert to the possibility that **positive discrimination** will need to be exercised. This will inevitably cause difficulties on occasion: “Why are you bothering to help those Roma when there are so many poor Romanians?” one community leader is often asked. But, as in the previous point, project workers must be prepared to challenge these kinds of views.

6. An important point is the need to be prepared, to have **formulated the responses** needed to counter the kinds of arguments that are heard in the previous two points.
7. Project staff must be ready to confront the possibility of **their own prejudices**. Again, they are a part of the society that they are working in, and it is difficult to escape the effects of the conditioning that we have all received.
8. Finally, all project staff must be trained to treat prejudice and discrimination against minority groups not as an add-on but as a central part of their thinking. **Mainstreaming action on prejudice** in this way will help to ensure that it is always taken seriously and tackled appropriately.

A checklist of recommendations

Lastly, we provide a short list of six relevant actions, based on the recommendations of a UNICEF conference on the children and families of minorities (Black 1997), that will help to ensure that none of the above steps are neglected. The steps described here are, of course, standard ones in international development practice, but the emphasis here is on the identification of areas where ethnic or other minority issues arise. This is also a part of mainstreaming action to counter prejudice.

The six actions are:

1. In any project work, **analyse it** to determine whether minority issues arise, assembling any baseline data that set out the position at the start of the project.
2. Make sure that you **plan** your work **with the minority groups** themselves: their participation is essential for the project to be accepted as their own. This should include all stages of the project, but especially its objectives.
3. **Implement** any project in equally close conjunction **with the minority groups**. For the same reason that their participation in planning the project was important, so is their playing a full part in its implementation.
4. Check the progress of the project against the **specific objectives for minorities** that you set in the planning stage, and use the information you collect to evaluate how successful the project is in meeting these objectives.
5. **Wider advocacy work**: the aims of the project should stretch beyond its immediate objectives and encompass broader issues like establishing positive aspects of the minority group in question. It should not be about 'helping victims' but providing assistance to people who deserve it because they have the right not only to be treated equally but to retain their own culture.
6. Ensure that any help provided from the outside is **sustainable**. If it is not, then when (as will inevitably happen at some point) the outside organisation has to withdraw then all the benefit from the project is liable to be lost. Worse, if the support has been in the form of support payments, there is a serious danger that a dependency culture will have been created.

CONCLUSION

This report has addressed the very serious issues of prejudice and discrimination against minorities in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.:

We have discussed the history of nationalism both from a theoretical viewpoint and as it applies to central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. We argue that nationalism is a relatively recent phenomenon and that the popular view of 'age-old ethnic hatreds' emerging from the straightjacket of communism is not only a myth, it is a dangerous myth – because it has been used too often as an excuse for doing nothing. Nationalism is not inevitable, and the removal of communism was neither the cause nor the effect of nationalism. What has been happening in the region is that, with new nations emerging which have no history of independence or democratic government, ethnicity has been seized upon by both rulers and ruled to act as a unifier for the new countries. This situation has been exacerbated by struggles over scarce resources – which have taken on an ethnic colouring, which has made them seem as if they were ethnic conflicts where they were not.

We went on to examine the nature and extent of discrimination against minorities in the region, with particular regard for the position of children. Everywhere in the region, poverty and inequality have increased, and minority groups have suffered – and not just ethnic minorities; but other groups, particularly religious groups. The most serious prejudice has been aimed at the Roma throughout the region, and they have suffered very seriously. However, it is not just the Roma who have suffered, and it would be a serious mistake to assume that other groups were not also affected. Nevertheless, it is true that the Roma have suffered the most sustained and severe discrimination in all areas of their lives.

Next, we have reviewed the situation country by country throughout the region. The aim of this part of the report has been to provide a readily available resource reference for workers in the region. It lists the main minorities, using the latest available data, and highlights areas where the chief concerns have been expressed.

Finally, we have discussed the cycle of disadvantage that affects so many minority groups, and examined ways in which the cycle can be broken by looking at a number of projects. We conclude with a series of lessons for the future and a checklist of recommendations. If these lessons are applied in full to a project, there is a good chance that it will succeed in its aims. But without employing all of them, failure will certainly follow.

As we have shown, the effects of prejudice and discrimination are so serious and widespread that this must not be allowed to happen. It is of vital importance for the whole of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that the problem is tackled.

APPENDIX I: INTERNATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF MINORITIES⁸⁶

Attempts to define a minority go back as far as the end of the Thirty Years' War in the 17th century (Hannum 1990). The importance of this lies in the need for an independent, legally-viable measure for situations in which governments deny the existence of minorities – as with, for example, the Slavophone minority in Greece.

More modern attempts at a definition start with the end of the First World War. The setting up of the new nation states in central and eastern Europe from the wreckage of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian Empires was not easy, in view of the largely non-homogeneous nature of the populations of that region. The system that was adopted by the League of Nations in attempting to resolve difficulties was essentially subjective, relying on the self-identification of the people concerned (Thornberry 2001, pp.48-49).

The approach adopted by the United Nations after the Second World War, on the other hand, was based on individual human rights, and this is the general approach that has been adhered to ever since. There has been a succession of instruments, each containing different definitions of minorities; it is not necessary to detail them all here, but it is worth listing the main ones.

Taking them chronologically, they are:

1. **UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (1965).**

Article I said that "'racial discrimination' shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.'

The full text is available at: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_icerd.htm

2. **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966).** Article 27 said that "in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language."

The full text is available at: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm

3. **Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).** The signatories (all countries except for the USA and Somalia) agreed (Article 29) that "the education of the child shall be directed to [amongst others] The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own."

The full text is available at: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm>

⁸⁶ For a clear introduction to this subject see Packer (1993, 1999), Caportorti (1991) and Thornberry (2001). The *International Legislation Handbook*, part of Save the Children UK's report on Roma education, also has an excellent, detailed account of the legal frameworks produced by: the UN, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (SCFUK 2001, Volume 3). Finally, see the material on the European Accession Monitoring Program site (<http://www.eumap.org/library/overview/minority>).

4. **UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. (1992).** This was a much more detailed declaration, starting with this in Article 1 that “States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.” It then went on to set out the responsibilities of states in ensuring that their minorities actually had the rights specified.

The full text is available at: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_minori.htm

5. **Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (June/July 1990).** This has the least prescriptive of the definitions used, in that it leaves it to the individual to determine whether he or she belongs to a minority:

“(32) To belong to a national minority is a matter of a person’s individual choice and no disadvantage may arise from the exercise of such choice.”

It is also worth recording the detailed provisions of the Document, since these set out in excellent detail what exactly minorities should be entitled to:

“Persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. In particular, they have the right

(32.1) to use freely their mother tongue in private as well as in public;

(32.2) to establish and maintain their own educational, cultural and religious institutions, organisations or associations, which can seek voluntary financial and other contributions as well as public assistance, in conformity with national legislation;

(32.3) to profess and practise their religion, including the acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue;

(32.4) to establish and maintain unimpeded contacts among themselves within their country as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States with whom they share a common ethnic or national origin, cultural heritage or religious beliefs;

(32.5) to disseminate, have access to and exchange information in their mother tongue;

(32.6) to establish and maintain organisations or associations within their country and to participate in international non-governmental organisations.”

The full text is available at: <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/hd/cope90e.htm>

6. **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995).** This refers throughout to persons belonging to national minorities – but without trying to define them at all – though the responsibilities of national governments are set out in some detail.

The full text is available at: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/157.htm>

APPENDIX II: LANGUAGE CLASSIFICATION

The range of languages spoken on central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is extremely wide. Here we list some of the languages spoken, grouped by broad language family. It is not intended to be a complete list, the aim of this appendix is simply to give an idea of the range of linguistic variety of the region. For further details, see the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of language* (Crystal 1987) or the *Dictionary of languages* (Dalby 1998).

Language families	Sub-groups	Examples of languages in the group
Altaic	Turkic	Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Azeri, Tatar, Bashkir, Altai, Chuvash, Tuvan
	Mongolian	Buriat, Kalmyk
	Manchu-Tungus	Even, Evenki, Nanai
Caucasian	N W Caucasian	Abkhaz, Cherkess, Adygei, Kabardian
	N E Caucasian	Avar, Agul, Dargwa, Lak, Lezghian
	Kartvelian	Georgian, Mingrelian, Svan, Laz
Indo-European	Balto-Slavic	Baltic: Lithuanian, Latvian
		Slavic: Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Macedonian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Bulgarian
	Romance	Romanian (Moldavian), Aromanian (Vlach, Wallachian)
	Albanian	Albanian
	Indo-Aryan	Romani
	Armenian	Armenian
	Iranian	Tajik, Ossetian
Uralic	Finno-Ugric	Estonian, Magyar, Karelian, Mordvin, Udmurt
	Samoyedic	Nenet, Enet, Nganasan
Paleo-Siberian		Yakut, Chukchi, Kuriak

Sources: Crystal (1987) and Dalby (1998)

APPENDIX III: RESOURCES

There is a vast range of resources available to the student of ethnic and other minorities, most of them available on the Internet. The list below is by no means comprehensive; only a few will be mentioned here – but they represent an excellent starting point.

World Directory of Minorities

This publication from Minority Rights Group (MRG 1997) is an absolutely essential resource; it lists, for every country in the world, the numbers of minorities and outlines the main problems that they have to cope with. The current edition was published some four years ago now, but it still represents the most comprehensive single source of data on minorities. It was a vital starting point for this report, and without it our job would have been very much more difficult.

Journals

The ***Central Europe Review***, a fortnightly journal of central and east European politics, society and culture can be found online at: <http://www.ce-review.org/index.html>

The journal ***Nationalities Papers***, published for the Association for the Study of Nationalities, is the only one which deals exclusively with all non-Russian nationalities of the former USSR and national minorities in Eastern and Central European countries; details can be found at <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/carfax/00905992.html>

The Association for the Study of Nationalities publishes a quarterly journal ***Analysis of Current Events***: <http://www.baylor.edu/SEES/ACE.htm>

The Information and Analytical Center (Sweden) publishes ***Central Asia and the Caucasus*** in both English and Russian versions: <http://www.ca-c.org/journal-table-eng.shtml>

The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University publishes the ***Central Asia Caucasus Analyst***: see <http://www.cacianalyst.org/>

There are also many newsletters published over the Internet – see particularly **MINELRES** below, but also the regular newsletters on the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia from the **Institute for War and Peace Reporting**.

Web sites

There are very many websites with valuable information; the chief ones are:

Association for the Study of Nationalities: <http://www.nationalities.org/>

Eumap, the European Accession Monitoring Program: (<http://www.eumap.org/library/overview/minority>). The Program's Minority Rights resource pages, when they are fully constructed, promise to provide an invaluable source of material at: http://www.eumap.org/new_library/Index/000/000-30

European Centre for Minority Issues: <http://www.ecmi.de/doc/index.html>

European Commission against Racial Intolerance: <http://www.ecri.coe.int/>

European Roma Rights Center: <http://www.errc.org/>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>

Institute for War and Peace Reporting: http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?home_index.html

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights: <http://www.ihf-hr.org/index.htm>

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs: <http://www.iwgia.org/>

Keston Institute: <http://www.keston.org/>

Minority Rights Group International: <http://www.minorityrights.org/>

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe: <http://www.osce.org/>

Open Society Initiative: <http://www.osi.hu/>

Project on Ethnic Relations: <http://www.per-usa.org/>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/>

Survival International: <http://www.survival-international.org/>

UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre (formerly the International Child Development Centre):
www.unicef-icdc.org/

Finally, the **MINELRES-L**. (Minority Electronic Resources) **mailing list** provides the link to a network of resources on minority human rights and related problems of the transition period in Eastern and Central Europe. It is absolutely invaluable, as it provides regular information from an enormous range of sources. It is a member of **COMIR**, the Consortium of Minority Resources, which provides links to over a dozen relevant sources of information, some of which are listed above. MINELRES-L can be found at <http://www.riga.lv/minelres/>

Bibliographies

There are a number of published bibliographies; here are three:

A good **general bibliography on ethnic relations in eastern Europe** is the one by Feischmidt (2001), which lists publications, with abstracts, in themed order.

Bibliography on eastern Europe (including Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova) from Columbia Univ:
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/sipa/REGIONAL/ECE/bibliographies2001/nationalism.pdf>

For **Roma** specifically, a useful bibliography is provided by Fonseca (1996, pp.307-315). There are other, more detailed bibliographies on the Roma, but Fonseca's is one that is readily accessible, at least to readers in the UK.

GLOSSARY and ABBREVIATIONS

AIM: Alternativna Informativna Mreža (Alternative Information Network).

CCFGB: The Christian Children's Fund of Great Britain.

CERD: UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

CHRP: Committee for Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities of the Parliament of Georgia.

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States (see **Geographical groupings** below).

CR: Conciliation Resources.

CRC: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

ECT: the European Children's Trust.

ECMI: European Centre for Minority Issues.

ECRI: European Commission against Racial Intolerance.

ECOHST: European Centre on Health of Societies in Transition.

ERRC: European Roma Rights Centre.

FIDH: Latvian Human Rights Committee.

Framework Convention: Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (see Appendix I).

FRCCF: Fundația Română pentru Copii Comunitate și Familie ().

FRSIPC: Foundation for Research and Support of the Indigenous Peoples of Crimea.

Geographical groupings: the following groupings are used in this report for what used to be referred to as the Communist Bloc:

- a) *Central Europe:* Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. The last of these is not normally included in this group but in South Eastern Europe; however, its economy and outlook is so much closer to theirs than to the other countries in South Eastern Europe that it is more logically included in the Central European group.
- b) *South Eastern Europe:* Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, plus (sometimes) Macedonia and Croatia; but consistent and reliable data on the states of former Yugoslavia are so sparse that the latter two are often not included, and Bosnia/Herzegovina and Serbia/Montenegro not at all.
- c) *Central and Eastern Europe:* states in (a) and (b) above.
- d) *Baltic states:* Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
- e) *Western Former Soviet Union:* Belarus, Moldova, the Russian Federation (although this also includes regions, like the Russian Far East, that are very definitely not 'western', but the data for Russia cannot be disaggregated) and Ukraine.
- f) *Transcaucasus:* Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.
- g) *Central Asia:* Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- h) *The Commonwealth of Independent States:* states in (e), (f) and (g).
- i) *The Former Soviet Union:* states in (d) (e), (f) and (g).
- j) *Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (often referred to here simply as 'the region'): states in (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f) and (g).

HRW: Human Rights Watch.

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

ICG: International Crisis Group.

IEHR: Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation.

IEI: International Eurasian Institute for Economic and Political Research

IHF: International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights.

ILO: International Labour Organisation.

IOM: International Organisation for Migration.

IMIR: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (Bulgaria).

IRIN: Integrated Regional Information Networks (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

IWGIA: International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs

IWPR: Institute of War and Peace Reporting.

MINELRES: Minority Electronic Resources.

NATMINET: Minority News from Romania.

OSI: Open Society Institute.

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

PCI: Pax Christi International.

PER: Project on Ethnic Relations.

PMR: Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic (*Pridnestrovskiaia Moldovskaia Respublika*).

UCSJ: Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

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Roma settlement, Patarât, Romania

Defying Prejudice, Advancing Equality–1: Minorities in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union

This report is one of a series produced for EveryChild, a development agency working in this region. It examines the serious problem of prejudice and discrimination against minorities in the former Soviet bloc. It discusses the history of nationalism both from a historical viewpoint and as it applies now in the region, and examines the nature and extent of discrimination against minorities, with particular regard for the position of children. It reviews the situation country by country throughout the region, providing a valuable reference resource for those who work or plan to work there. It discusses the cycle of disadvantage that affects so many minority groups, and examines ways in which the cycle can be broken by looking at a number of projects. It concludes with a series of lessons for the future and a checklist of recommendations.

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