CONCLUSION

The violent ethno-national conflicts which blazed across Soviet Union and East Europe after the communist debacle has thrown the issue of ethnic minorities - their problems, demands and rights into sharp relief. From this study of one such ethnic minority - the Hungarians of Romania, Slovakia and Serbia the following observations may be made.

Firstly, East Europe suffers from a chronic problem of aggrieved minorities. The complicated ethnic composition of the region defy easy solution. The states created after World War I from the ruins of the great empires were a handiwork of the Versailles Settlement and application of the reigning politico-moral principle of the time - 'national self-determination'. But not all nationalities were blessed with states. Strategic consideration of big powers and sheer extent of ethnic co-existence did not allow for uniform application of the principle. The Hungarian minority problem was a specific outcome of post World War I Settlements. Hungarians were reduced from the ruling nation to minorities in neighboring, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia. This had two repercussions - one, it was doubly diffi-
cult for Hungarians and Hungary to come to terms with this reality and two, they were easy targets of states set to build nations, to settle old scores.

Secondly, after World War II these regions rapidly came under communist rule. The communist governments, however, enjoyed little legitimacy. To overcome this weakness they relied heavily on nationalism which means that the minority question continued unsolved. Moreover, the skeleton measures that were initiated on and off, lacked meaning given the general absence of freedom and liberty that these systems suffered from. Communism also in a way perpetuated ethnic identity. Katherine Verdery has rightly characterized socialist system as system of controlled scarcity in which it was always a struggle to get certain commodities. This caused informal networks of supply to form which were usually ethnically identified. This was because in a situation of scarcity one helps those closest to one and they naturally tend to be of the same ethnicity.

Thirdly, in the end of 1980s this region experienced profound changes. The communist systems were ripped apart and experiments with democratic development began. Resolving Hungarian minority problem is an issue of immense importance today for Romania, Slovakia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is the touchstone for the test of democracy.
Solutions to the minority problem will depend on how successfully these states fulfil the criteria of 'formal' and 'substantive' democracy. Borrowing Robert Dahl's list of formal criteria we may say that the 'procedural minimal conditions' are - inclusive citizenship, rule of law, separation of powers, elected power holders, free and fair elections, freedom of expression and alternative sources of information, associational autonomy, civil control over the security force.

So far as Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Hungary are concerned apart from the incomplete implementation of rule of law, and civilian control of armed and security forces, for the most part procedures are in place.

The substantive aspect of democracy like a rights bearing culture, political participation, responsible media, active local government are, however, yet to take root.

Fourthly, the problem is that to tide over uncertainty and hardship which accompany such fundamental systemic change that these societies are undergoing political elites are tempted to extol the nation and its virtue. In East Europe 'nationalism', 'nation' are defined in ethnic and linguistic terms, which necessarily excludes significant number of minorities who reside in the state. In other words, extoling and talking in terms of Romanian, Slovakian
or Serbian nation would exclude the Hungarians residing within their boundaries.

Such a connotation of 'nation' also makes Hungary's interest and involvement unavoidable. Minority questions, thus, one could say are politically sensitive because the direct and fundamental way they touch upon established ideas about the ideal model of state, about the relation between state and nation, and about the relationship between state, nation and citizen.

Fifthly, the international arena is critically important for helping to ensure that states and minorities interact productively and peacefully. Given the overriding concern of all East European States to integrate with Euro-Atlantic Structures, as NATO and European Union, the West plays a singularly important role in resolving minority issues of the area. A generous treatment of minorities is what the West insists on as a hallmark of democracy. The West's insistence, however, does not arise out of philanthropy. It is simply because the NATO does not want to import security problems and EU does not want to include a group of states hostile towards one another. So far as the Hungarian minority issue is concerned, the presence of Hungary has repercussions on interstate and regional level.
The Hungarian minority problem, we believe, will not disappear overnight. The way these states perceive of themselves as a nation has to be reconciled with the idea of minority with clearly defined rights. Pressure from the West is no doubt crucial to contain animosities but a meaningful solution to the problem will be easier if these states realise that they have more in common with each other than with the West. Sinking their differences and coming together they will be in a better position to bargain with a developed West for greater concessions and commitment to the region.

Sixthly, today no state can survive and prosper in isolation and, therefore, they have to conduct their external and internal relations guided by accepted international standards. State borders in this sense have become more permeable. So far as treatment of minorities are concerned there are a host of international covenants and agreements that guide states. Overall one can say that most of such human rights conventions and agreements define minority rights' in the narrow sense. In general they amount to rights of individual to non-discrimination, cultural development and religious freedom in addition to freedom of speech, assembly and organisation. Specific rights to minorities as collective entities have yet to find an unam-
biguous pronunciation in international documents.

However, when individuals are singled out for discrimination and persecution for being part of a particular group some form of protection for the group may be necessary. At the Eurasian level resolutions and agreements of OSCE and Council of Europe of late makes at the most tentative attempts to recognise collective minority rights. But these are generally interpreted by implementing states as the rights of individuals to engage in group activities. The CSCE meeting in Geneva in July 1991, stressed the importance of non-governmental organisations in resolving ethnic conflicts and promoting tolerance.

Since all governments work under certain domestic compulsions and constrains such efforts at non-governmental level may be useful to thaw sensitive issues. A significant development to protect minority interests and contain minority generated tensions was, as noted, the establishment of the office of OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities. The office has been doing commendable work to generate and increase trust and confidence between the Hungarian minority and the majority in respective states. It also monitors the efforts of states to fulfil obligations undertaken.
Seventhly, the Hungarian in all the three states have organised themselves effectively, fought elections and entered representative bodies at national and local level. They play an important role in drawing international attention to the problems and demands of this group. What strikes one is that despite the slow response of the concerned states and encouraging presence of Hungary they have not resorted to violence. The Hungarians may be criticized for impatience but that impatience has not erupted to violence.

Eighthly, so far as interstate relation is concerned ethnicity, one can say, does not colour all issues. Hungary may have been passionately irredentist in the inter war years but contemporary Hungary, preoccupied as it is with problems of economic and democratic reconstruction, does not dream of recovering its lost territory and people. Thus Hungary has readily agreed to border guarantee clauses in bilateral treaties with Romania and Slovakia. Moreover inspite of pronounced majoritarian policies as Slovak language law, Romanian education law, Romania's amended penal code, attempts to redraw district boundaries so that none could boast of an Hungarian minority - complete breakdown of dialogue and cooperation between Hungary and these countries has not occurred. Defense and military agreements
were signed between Hungary and her neighbours even at the time Antall's primiership, who was a more vocal defender of Hungarian minority interests.

Ninethly, for states that have groups with major and long established divisions political scientists have suggested the formula 'consociationalism'. Mojaritarian policies they argue are a clear prescription for disruption. Instead attempts should be made to draw all the different segments of the polity into the decision making process through elite representation - a kind of grand coalition based on consultation between all groups, a veto power exercised by all groups over major issues affecting them, a proportionate sharing of state expenditure and patronage, substantial autonomy for each groups and above all no major winners or losers.

Arguing from an exactly opposite point, some political scientists have criticized the assumption that the main­tenance of homogeneous ethnic segments make accommodation between them easier. The attempts to solidify ethnic groups in separate constitution segments they argue is a dangerous strategy. Rather the aim should be to break down ethnic cohesion by including inter-ethnic cooperation and inter-ethnic competition.
Considering the present attitude of the majorities in the three states studied here considerable concessions and tolerance would be required for either methods to be successfully implemented.

As the Hungarian ethnic consciousness is strengthened by linguistic differences attempts to break down cohesion of such groups would be difficult unless the majority is inclined to learn and cultivate the language. If on the other hand breaking down cohesion amounts to only the minority learning the dominant language, it is a prescription for assimilation. Horowitz, has, correctly observed that failures to deal with ethnic conflict does not derive from lack of knowledge as to what to do or from an unalterable human nature, but from deficiencies of political will. So far as the situation of the Hungarians are concerned the 'political will' of the states on the whole still appear to be inclined to keep them in a state of subordination.

Tenthly, the Hungarian minorities' demand for autonomy at personal, territorial and local level is an issue on which the minority and majority are completely at odds. Hungarian minorities their representatives and the Hungarian government, officials, bureaucrat and academicians in Hungary are all one in citing the successful example of autonomy implementation in Spain and South Tyrol.
maintaining their own schools and furnishing lessons in their own language have clear support in international documents. Where minorities possess meagre resources to resuscitate their cultural, educational and religious life international accords encourage 'affirmative action' or 'reverse discrimination' initiated by states.

The record of Romanian, Slovak and Serbian states to grant these rights and take such 'affirmative action' is not too encouraging. These states must realise that ignoring such demands overtime may erode the confidence of minorities in them and give rise to more radical demands.

However, while each government needs to ensure a wide array of minority rights minority leaders must also abide by specific obligations to the state. As a general principle, minority leaders need to recognize the state's constitutionality and territorial integrity. Ethnic cultural and religious pluralism should be allowed to flourish but it cannot be allowed to fracture and undermine a democratic polity. Minority leaders also have to shoulder responsibility of strengthening emerging liberal democratic systems. Incessant demands on nascent democracies and opposing government on all counts on the grounds that collective rights remain incomplete may jeopardise such experiments and trigger an authoritarian turnaround.