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0521838371 - Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority
Protection, 1878-1938 - Carole Fink
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Defending the Rights of Others

When the Cold War ended between 1989 and 1991, statesmen and scholars reached back to the period after World War I when the victors devised minority treaties for the new and expanded states of Eastern Europe. This is the first study of the entire period between 1878 and 1938, when the Great Powers established a system of external supervision to reduce the threats in Europe's most volatile regions of irredentism, persecution, and uncontrolled waves of westward migration. It examines the strengths and weaknesses of an early stage of international human-rights diplomacy as practiced by rival and often-uninformed western political leaders, by ardent but divided Jewish advocates, and also by aggressive state minority champions, in the tumultuous age of nationalism and imperialism, Bolshevism and Fascism, between Bismarck and Hitler.

Carole Fink is Professor of European International History at The Ohio State University. She has written *The Genoa Conference: European Diplomacy, 1921–22* (1984), which was awarded the George Louis Beer Prize of the American Historical Association, and *Marc Bloch: A Life in History* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), which has been translated into five languages.

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Defending the Rights of Others

THE GREAT POWERS, THE JEWS, AND INTERNATIONAL
MINORITY PROTECTION, 1878–1938

CAROLE FINK

The Ohio State University



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To my students

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Preface

“... There once was a time when we deplored criminal acts.”¹

After the Soviet empire disintegrated between 1989 and 1991, there were immediate comparisons with the period after World War I when four empires collapsed and a belt of new and enlarged polyglot states emerged in Eastern Europe between Germany and Russia.² As succession states were formed and dissolved in the 1990s, and as peoples stuck on the “wrong side” of new borders were once more vulnerable to persecution, violence, and ethnic cleansing, Mikhail Gorbachev and others recommended the re-institution of the special treaties written in Paris in 1919 to protect minority rights.

This book elucidates the history of international involvement in the minorities question between 1878 and 1938. During that tumultuous sixty-year period, the Great Powers grappled with this thorny problem in Eastern Europe, spreading a mantle of protection over specific populations considered at risk either because of a past history of persecution or a recent transfer of sovereignty. Before World War I, the international system was developed primarily to protect the Jews in the new Balkan states; in 1919, more elaborate guarantees were placed over 25 million Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Albanians, and others who fell within the new frontiers of Eastern Europe.

1. Albert Einstein to Stephen Wise (handwritten), Princeton, Jan. 5, 1937, American Jewish Historical Society Archives, Stephen S. Wise Papers (hereafter abbreviated as Wise followed by the microfilm reel numbers) 74–68.
2. Michael Burns, “Disturbed Spirits: Minority Rights and New World Orders, 1919 and the 1990s,” in Samuel F. Wells Jr. and Paula Bailey Smith, eds., *New European Orders, 1919 and 1991* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996), pp. 42–61.

How did the international community define these minorities? It was fairly simple in 1878, when religion was still the main identifying element. However, by 1919, the existence of national minorities, which included formerly dominant groups along with long-subject peoples, was also recognized. To avoid the explosive term “national,” with its politically dangerous overtones of failed or future claims to self-determination, the Paris Peace Conference adopted the descriptive formula of “race, language, and religion” to subsume all the possible characteristics of a minority.³ Moreover, the peacemakers took pains to deny a group identity to minorities, identifying their new charges either as “persons” belonging to such groups or as “inhabitants who differed from the majority population in race, language, and religion.” As this book shows, these cautious formulations not only failed to protect Eastern Europe’s “unmeltable” minorities but may also have worsened their plight.

Although most of the world’s minorities were excluded from international protection during this period, their existence undoubtedly shaped the minority treaties and their implementation. Every great power ruled heterogeneous, restive populations and was sensitive to their demands for equality, increased rights, autonomy, and even independence. Moreover, as magnets for the bulk of foreign immigrants from Eastern Europe, the liberal democracies, Great Britain, France, and the United States, were as alert to the domestic as to the diplomatic repercussions of international minority protection.

The era covered by this book falls into three parts. The first, an age of European and global empires and emerging Balkan states, commences at the 1878 Congress of Berlin and ends with the Great War; the second centers on the diplomacy of the Paris Peace Conference; and the third, dealing with the world’s first minorities system devised by the League of Nations, ends with its destruction at the Munich Conference in September 1938.

By 1878, the Great Powers had accepted responsibility for imposing minority protection on all new and expanded states in order to maintain order in Eastern Europe. Britain and France, facing a rising domestic clamor over abuses to religious and national minorities in the East, also feared that a mass exodus westward would produce dire economic, political, and social consequences. At the other end of Europe the newly independent and expanded Balkan states in 1878, joined by those carved out of the four defeated empires between 1919 and 1923, resisted these attempts to limit their sovereignty and groaned over the taint on their national honor. Above all,

3. Articles 86 and 91, Treaty of Versailles.

they protested the dual standard that enabled “older” outside powers to interfere in their internal affairs while rejecting a universal minorities system.⁴

The much-contested Paris Peace Conference stands as a watershed in the history of minority rights and is the central part of this book. In 1919, a new era was supposed to dawn in European and world politics. The peacemakers devised an international system that included history’s first collective human-rights treaties under the guarantee of the League of Nations, an endeavor that set a model, both negative and positive, for future international efforts.⁵

Looming always in the background were the threats of abuse and irredentism from states that styled themselves minority champions. Before 1914, there were the pan-Slav politicians of tsarist Russia who, claiming to speak for the Slavs and Orthodox Christians, meddled repeatedly in Balkan politics while also pursuing anti-Semitic and Russification policies inside their realm.⁶ During World War I, it was Wilhelmian Germany that preached a pan-Germanic mission to cover its annexationist policies in the East while practicing intolerance within its own borders. In the 1920s, it was Weimar Germany that ardently championed its lost population but failed to establish a liberal minorities regime at home. And, after 1933, it was the Third Reich, fiercely racist in its domestic policies, but expansionist abroad, that delivered the coup de grâce to an already-frayed international minorities system.

The most ardent nonstate proponents of international minority protection during this period were the Jews of Western Europe and the United States. During this crucial period of Jewish history, marked by turmoil and misery in Eastern Europe, the emigration of huge numbers to the United States and smaller ones to Palestine, and the growing religious and national divisions in the Jewish world, three generations of intercessors moved onto the stage of world diplomacy as advocates for their endangered coreligionists, often with fateful consequences.⁷

This is not the first book to investigate the international dimensions of the minorities question in Eastern Europe. In 1934, the distinguished English historian and analyst of ethnic and religious questions in Eastern Europe,

4. The most recent defense of the Minority States’ position, and an ardent one it is, is Peter D. Stachura, “National Identity and the Ethnic Minorities in Early Inter-War Poland,” in Peter D. Stachura, ed. *Poland Between the Wars, 1918–1939* (Houndmills/London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 60–86.

5. Carole Fink, “The Minorities Question at the Paris Peace Conference,” in Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman, and Elisabeth Glaser, eds. *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 249–74.

6. Before World War I, Russia’s stance was emulated by Italy, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece, all claiming the mission of liberating their captive people in either the Habsburg or the Ottoman empires and all, except for Italy, noticeably intolerant of their own minorities.

7. Carole Fink, *The Jews and Minority Rights During and After World War I* (Cape Town University, South Africa: Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, 2001), Occasional Paper No. 3.

Carlile Aylmer Macartney, published his magisterial study tracing the history of minority protection from medieval Europe to the modern period, with special emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁸ Several earlier works had provided extensive detail on the minorities question at the Paris Peace Conference.⁹ In 1933, Oscar I. Janowsky published his still-valuable Columbia University doctoral dissertation on the role of Jewish nationalists in the drafting of the minority treaties¹⁰; three years later in Berlin, Kurt Stillschweig augmented the story by analyzing the Jews' participation in the League of Nations system.¹¹ Except for Janowsky, who had access to unpublished Jewish records, all these authors based their studies on printed sources. During World War II, Jacob Robinson's collection¹² and Pablo de Azcárate's semiofficial account¹³ evaluated the interwar system and vainly anticipated its revival.

As the Cold War descended on Eastern Europe, there were a few critical appraisals of the minority treaties and their implementation, most notably by Tennent H. Bagley (1950),¹⁴ Innis L. Claude (1955),¹⁵ and Erwin Viefhaus (1960),¹⁶ but none drew on new or unpublished materials. After the opening of the German diplomatic records came two studies of the Reich's minority policies¹⁷; and the opening of the League of Nations' archives in the 1970s enabled two critical investigations of its interwar system.¹⁸

8. C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1934); 2nd ed. (London: Russell & Russell, 1968).
9. Among them, Jacques Fouques Duparc, *La protection des minorités de race, de langue et de religion: Étude de droit des gens* (Paris: Dalloz, 1922); Dragolioub Krstich, *Les minorités, l'état et la communauté internationale* (Paris: Rousseau, 1924); and Nathan Feinberg, *La question des minorités à la conférence de la paix de 1919–1920* (Paris: Rousseau, 1929).
10. Oscar I. Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898–1919)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933).
11. Kurt Stillschweig, *Die Juden Osteuropas in den Minderheitenverträgen* (Berlin: Jastrow, 1936).
12. Jacob Robinson et al., *Were the Minorities Treaties a Failure?* (New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs of the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress, 1943).
13. Pablo de Azcárate, *League of Nations and National Minorities: An Experiment*, trans. Eileen E. Brooke (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945). Azcárate was a former League Minorities Director.
14. Tennent H. Bagley, *General Principles and Problems in the International Protection of Minorities: A Political Study* (Geneva: Imprimeries Populaires, 1950).
15. Innis L. Claude, *National Minorities: An International Problem* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).
16. Erwin Viefhaus, *Die Minderheitenfrage und die Entstehung der Minderheitenschutzverträge 1919* (Würzburg: Holzner, 1960).
17. Carole Fink, *The Weimar Republic as the Defender of Minorities, 1919–1933: A Study of Germany's Minorities Diplomacy and the League of Nations System for the International Protection of Minorities* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1969); Helmut Pieper, *Die Minderheitenfrage und das Deutsche Reich, 1919–1933/34* (Hamburg: Institut für Internationale Angelegenheiten der Universität Hamburg, 1974).
18. Christoph Gütterman, *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Völkerbundes* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1979); Christian Raitz von Frentz, *A Lesson Forgotten: Minority Protection Under the League of Nations: A Case of the German Minority in Poland, 1920–1934* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999).

In sum, until 1989, the broad subject of international minority protection fell into relative obscurity, leaving many gaps and some myths about this sixty-year period. Since the fall of Communism and the creation of a new order in Eastern Europe, almost every treatise on international minorities protection has reserved at least an introductory chapter to its history, either as a model or a cautionary tale. Based on older works, these chapters and essays lack documentary evidence and rigorous analysis of a complex diplomatic practice before World War II.¹⁹

Thus this is the first book to examine international minority protection over a long period and in a broad compass. Based on archival research in eleven countries as well as a huge amount of primary and secondary literature, this work recounts the complexity of transnational minority protection, including the political, economic, and social dimensions as well as the human and group dynamics of the problem. It is both a traditional diplomatic history in the form of a narrative and a topical study centered on specific incidents in specific places. It focuses primarily on the Jewish minority question in Eastern Europe within the larger context of the origins and development of international minority protection.

Throughout this book runs the thread of the three main parties, the minority defenders, the Great Powers, and the minority states, interacting before an often-aroused world public opinion. From this struggle, three related themes emerge: the strengths and weaknesses of minority champions, the pretensions and ambivalence of Great-Power statesmen, and the fierce resistance and vulnerability of all the minority states.

As long as concerned voices urge their governments to protect oppressed groups, as long as governments strive to coordinate their humanitarian actions, and as long as their leaders remain cautious over stirring irredentism and destabilizing states and regions, this history of the attempts and failures between 1878 and 1938 may have some usefulness.

Long in the making, this book owes much to many people. First, I should like to acknowledge with gratitude the research support I have received from the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Philosophical Society, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the German Marshall Fund of the United States as well as the College of Humanities of The Ohio State University (OSU). I should also like to express thanks for the residential fellowships I have been awarded at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis,

19. See, for example, Kristin Henrard, *Devising an Adequate System of Minority Protection* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 2000), pp. 3–8; N. Rouland, S. Pierre-Caps, and J. Poumarède, *Droit des minorités et des peuples autochtones* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), pp. 35–54; P. Thornberry, *International Law and the Rights of Minorities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 25–37.

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Among the joys of historical research is the opportunity to “get one’s hands dirty” in the archives. All the specialists I have worked with have been extremely helpful, but let me mention with special thanks Leo Greenbaum of the YIVO Institute of Jewish Research and Lyn Slome at the American Jewish Historical Society, both now housed in the Center for Jewish History in New York; Kevin Proffit at the American Jewish Archive in Cincinnati; Cyma Horowitz at the American Jewish Committee Archive in New York; Bernhardine Pejovic at the League of Nations Archive of the UN Library in Geneva; and Monique Constant, director of the Archive of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris as well as the unfailingly helpful staff of the Political Archive of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, formerly in Bonn and now in Berlin, the Modern Documents Archive in Warsaw, and the Central Zionist Archive in Jerusalem. In three libraries I received exceptional assistance: OSU, the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW); let me single out David Lincove and Joseph Galron of the OSU Library and Louise Jackson and Sue Ann Cody at UNCW for special thanks.

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Finally, to those to whom this book is dedicated, I offer praise for your commitment and achievements and my thanks for the lessons you have imparted.

Columbus, Ohio, August 2003

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes. Full details of the works cited below and of other works referred to by abbreviated titles in the footnotes are given in the Bibliography.

AA	Auswärtiges Amt [German Foreign Ministry]
AAN	Poland, Archiwum Akt Nowych [Modern Documents Archive], Warsaw
ADAP	<i>Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik</i>
Adler, Diary	Cyrus Adler Diary, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York
Adler papers	Cyrus Adler papers, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York
AGND	Records of the Adjutantura Generalna Naczelnego Dowództwa [Polish Supreme Command], Piłsudski Institute of America, New York
AIU	Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris
AJA	American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH
AJC	American Jewish Committee Archives, New York
ALW	Papers of Leon Wasilewski [Akta Leona Wasilewskiego], Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw
AMZV	Czech Republic [formerly Czechoslovakia], Archiv Ministerstva Zahraničních Věcí [Archive of the Foreign Ministry], Prague

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ARA	American Relief Administration
ARC	American Red Cross
Baker	R. S. Baker papers, Library of Congress
BDBJ	Board of Deputies of British Jews, London
CAHJP	Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Hebrew University, Givat Ram, Jerusalem
Cecil, Diary	Robert Cecil Diary, British Library, London
CDPS/CNS	Conferenza della Pace (1919). Segretario [Peace Conference 1919. Secretariat] Commissione dei nuovi Staati [Committee on New States] Archive. Italian Foreign Ministry, Rome
<i>Council of Four</i>	Arthur S. Link, trans. and ed., <i>The Deliberations of the Council of Four, Mar. 24–June 28, 1919: Notes of the Official Interpreter Paul Mantoux</i>
CZA	Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem
DBFP	<i>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939</i>
DD/CB	France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. <i>Documents Diplomatiques: Affaires d'Orient: Congrès de Berlin 1878</i>
DDF	<i>Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871–1914)</i>
DDI	<i>I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani</i>
DGFP	<i>Documents on German Foreign Policy</i>
Dulles	Allen W. Dulles papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University
DZA	Deutsches Zentralarchiv [(East) Germany, Central Archive], formerly Potsdam, now incorporated in Bundesarchiv, Berlin
FMAE	France. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères [Ministry of Foreign Affairs]
FRUS PPC	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference</i>
GB CAB	Great Britain, Cabinet documents, Public Record Office, Kew
GB FO	Great Britain, Foreign Office records, Public Record Office, Kew
Germ. AA	Captured records of the German Foreign Ministry, T-120 on microfilm, U.S. National Archives, College Park, MD

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Germ. PA AA	Germany. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes [Political Archive of the Foreign Ministry], formerly in Bonn, now in Berlin
Gibson	Hugh Gibson papers, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University, Stanford, CA
HM CC	Sir James Headlam-Morley papers, Churchill College, Cambridge
HM UU Col.	Sir James Headlam-Morley papers, University of Ulster at Coleraine
Headlam-Morley, <i>Memoir</i>	Sir James Headlam-Morley, <i>A Memoir of the Paris Peace Conference 1919</i>
Hoover	Herbert Hoover Presidential papers, West Branch, IA
House, Diary	Edward M. House, Diary, Yale University
Hudson	Manley O. Hudson papers, Law Library, Harvard University
IMAE	Italy. Ministero degli Affari Esteri [Ministry of Foreign Affairs]
JDC	Joint Distribution Committee; also American Joint Distribution Committee; Archive, New York, NY
JFC	Joint Foreign Committee [of British Jews]
KNP	Komitet Narodowy Polski [Polish National Committee]
LC	Library of Congress, Washington, Manuscript Division
LGP	Lloyd George papers, House of Lords, London
LH	Leland Harrison papers, Library of Congress,
LM	Louis Marshall papers (either American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH, or American Jewish Committee Archives, New York)
LNA	League of Nations, Archives, United Nations Library, Geneva
LNOJ	League of Nations, <i>Official Journal</i>
Miller, <i>Covenant</i>	David Hunter Miller, <i>The Drafting of the Covenant</i>
Miller, <i>Diary</i>	David Hunter Miller, <i>My Diary at the Conference of Paris</i>

xxvi	<i>List of Abbreviations</i>
Morgenthau	Henry Morgenthau papers (microfilm), Library of Congress, Washington, DC
MSZ	Poland. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych [Ministry of Foreign Affairs]
NA	National Archives, College Park, MD
PA-AP	Papiers d'Agents, Archives Politiques, FMAE, Paris
Paderewski	Paderewski papers, AAN
PIA	Pilsudski Institute of America, New York, NY
PRM	Poland, Protocol of the Council of Ministers, AAN, Warsaw
PWW	<i>The Papers of Woodrow Wilson</i> , ed. Arthur Link. Other editions specified in notes.
<i>Receuil</i>	France. Ministère des Affaires. Conférence de la Paix, 1919–1920. <i>Receuil des actes de la conférence</i>
Schiff	Jacob Schiff papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH
<i>Stephen S. Wise</i>	<i>Stephen S. Wise: Servant of the People. Selected Letters</i>
Tardieu	André Tardieu papers, FMAE Paris
USDS	U.S. Department of State Records, National Archives, College Park, MD
W/M	Lucien Wolf–David Mowschowitch papers, Microfilm ed., YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, NY
Warburg	Felix Warburg papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH
White	Henry White papers, Library of Congress
Wise	Stephen S. Wise papers, microfilmed copy American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History, NY
Wolf, Diary	Lucien Wolf Diary, Mocatta Library, University College, London
WWP	Woodrow Wilson papers, Library of Congress
YIVO	YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Institute of Jewish History, NY

A Note on Place and Personal Names

Any work covering sixty years of East European history will encounter the difficulty of naming the places concerned. In an attempt to be as consistent as possible I have followed the following practices: (1) Names such as Bucharest, Cracow, Kovno, Prague, Salonika, Vilna, and Warsaw as well as Bessarabia and Galicia are rendered in the standard English spelling; (2) other cities, regions, and rivers are rendered in the name they held at the time; thus Lemberg in 1918, and Pinsk in 1919, but also Poznań for the entire period 1918–39; (3) places still under Turkish sovereignty in the nineteenth century, such as Jassy (Iași) are given two names; (4) in cases in which the orthography has changed (Shantung/Shandong), both spellings are initially given; and (5) where there is any possible confusion, for example, Zbrucz (Zbruch) River, both names appear.

In discussing the struggle in Eastern Galicia, I have used the term Ukrainians, although some of the combatants identified themselves as Ruthenians.

I have used the expression Eastern Europe to designate the entire region between the Baltic and Adriatic and Aegean Seas.

I have also made every attempt to make the English spelling of personal names as consistent and recognizable as possible.

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