

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEW EUROPE

small and, therefore, weak states would be a cause of instability. Therefore it pushed for the creation of larger states, which would of necessity encompass smaller ethnic groups, whose rights were in turn to be protected by a series of minority treaties. None of the concerns of the Allied Powers on eastern Europe conflicted, though they came to similar conclusions for different reasons.

France wanted to see stronger states emerge in this region to counter-balance Germany, Wilson also saw the utility of this and encouraged the cooperation of different national groups, and Britain was likewise supportive since it was concerned that the new states be large enough to be stable and secure. The result was encouragement for the establishment of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, each made up of related, but different, nationalities. Also receiving support were those states and nationalities that had sided with the Allies. Roumania and Greece received support for expansion to their biggest feasible extent. These border changes were made to the detriment of the defeated Central Power. Separate peace treaties were concluded with each of the defeated states, the Treaty of Saint-Germain with Austria, the Treaty of Trianon with Hungary, and the Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria.

THE DEFEATED CENTRAL POWERS

On 12 November a new régime in Vienna proclaimed itself the German Austrian republic, as part of the new German republic. There was general support for the union, or *Anschluss*, of this rump, German-speaking portion of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire with Germany. This would be entirely in accord with the idea of national self-determination and the move to states with a common ethnic identity. Such a union, however, would strengthen Germany just at the time the Allies were attempting to find ways to constrain its power in the future. As a result articles in both the treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain specifically forbid any union of Germany and Austria. The new republic was even compelled to change its name from German Austria to Austria. The new Austrian government, led by Dr Karl Renner, tried unsuccessfully to argue that the new republic was as much a new state as any of the other new states in eastern Europe and that, as such, it should not be liable to pay reparations. Nonetheless, Austria and Hungary were both treated by the Allies as the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and were therefore liable for the empire's part in the war. The peace treaty with Austria, the Treaty of Saint-Germain, was signed on 10 September 1919. By its terms the new Republic of Austria retained only 27 per cent of imperial Austria, was limited to an army of 30,000, and was required to pay reparations. The clause forbidding an Austro-German union remained controversial until it was achieved by Hitler in 1938; but an independent Austria was restored in 1945.

In 1918 the old order in eastern and southeastern Europe shattered, one of the manifold consequences of the First World War. The situation in this region was entirely different from that in western Europe. Here there was no status quo but, rather, a fluid and increasingly volatile region with many new, nationally orientated, states with undefined frontiers. The toll of the war was colossal in terms of loss of life, damage to infrastructure and the destruction of long-established institutions. Some, though, saw the opportunity to build a better future on the ruins of the old, the opportunity of building a New Europe. The Czech leader, Thomas Masaryk, observed that Europe was now, 'a laboratory sitting atop a vast graveyard.'¹ The collapse of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires allowed the resurgence of nationalities previously subsumed in these larger entities. In the wake of the war new states emerged and others expanded their frontiers. The new states were Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, while Roumania and Greece greatly expanded their territory. Austria and Hungary, now no longer the nuclei of the multi-ethnic Habsburg empire, separated and proclaimed themselves republics, though neither was reconciled to the loss to neighbouring states of territory that included their ethnic kinsmen.

The various Allied Powers each had their own objectives in this region. France, as a Continental power, was looking to lay the foundations of a new alliance among the emergent states as the basis for future security. This would replace its old alliance with Russia which had lapsed with the communist seizure of power in that country. The aim of such an alliance would be twofold; first, to act as a restraint on Germany and second, to provide a buffer against Soviet Russia. The United States had less direct interest in the region, though Wilson saw it as a proving ground for the efficacy of his ideas on national self-determination. Britain's chief concern was to avoid an unstable eastern Europe whose problems would have a dangerous ripple effect upon the stability of western Europe, where Britain's primary security interests were to be found. It was concerned that too many

There were a number of problems in demarcating the frontiers of this new Austria. The future Austro-Italian border had been one of the subjects of the wartime, secret Treaty of London in which Italy had been promised a frontier as far north as the Brenner Pass, far beyond any ethnic Italian area. Wilson's Fourteen Points, however, demanded that borders be defined as far as possible along the lines of nationality. Wilson, though, accepted the Italian argument that the Brenner Pass was a natural strategic frontier, and acquiesced in the incorporation into Italy of approximately 220,000–250,000 German-speaking people in the area south of the pass. Italy's acquisition of the Trentino, South Tyrol, and Istria completed the Italian *Risorgimento* begun in the Italian Wars of Unification.

The Peace Conference also detached a small strip of territory from western Hungary, which became the Austrian province of Burgenland. This action led to renewed tension between Austria and Hungary and some viewed this decision as intended to provide a cause of friction between the two former partners, thus preventing their becoming allies. Italy was looking to establish good relations with Hungary, largely out of concern that its own gains at the expense of Austria would lead to tense relations. Italy, therefore, pushed to have the Allies reconsider the Burgenland decision and a compromise was reached whereby a small area around the town of Sopron (Ödenburg) was returned to Hungary. On the new Austro-Yugoslav border fighting broke out over control of the Klagenfurt district, forcing the Allies to intervene to determine the issue by plebiscite. For voting purposes the area was divided into two zones: A in the southern and predominantly Slovene districts, and B in the northern and predominantly German-speaking districts. Zone A was to vote first, and if it opted for Austria then no vote need be taken in Zone B. To the surprise of many, the inhabitants of Zone A voted in favour of Austria. This illustrates the complexity of such issues, as people do not always decide their preferences purely on the basis of ethnic identity.

Five days after Austria had proclaimed itself a republic on 11 November, the Hungarian government, led by Count Károlyi, proclaimed Hungary a republic on 16 November. Although an armistice had been signed on 13 November 1918, with the French army in the Balkans commanded by General Franchet d'Espèrey, Hungary's neighbours took this opportunity to secure their territorial aspirations. Transylvania was occupied and unilaterally annexed by Roumania on 11 January 1919. Serbia took control of the Bácska, Baranya and the western Banat on 24 November 1918. Czech and Slovak forces took control of Slovakia and part of Ruthenia. In the wake of its defeat in war and the partial dismemberment of the old Kingdom of Hungary, the political situation began to polarize. In March 1919 a communist government took power, led by Béla Kun. The Allies were unhappy at this potential spread of Soviet Russian influence into

central Europe and were concerned that this could lead to communist seizures of power in other countries. A special mission was sent under General Smuts to try to negotiate with Kun, but no agreement could be reached. Roumania now saw the opportunity to gain further territory and its army again began to advance. Czechoslovakia soon after did the same. The Roumanian government hoped it would now enjoy the support of the Allied powers under the guise of combating the spread of communism. By July 1919 the Roumanian army was only 100 km from Budapest and there was the possibility that all Hungary might be occupied. This led to the collapse of the Hungarian communist regime on 1 August, followed by the unopposed occupation of Budapest by the Roumanian army. A series of weak transitional governments proved wholly unable to grapple with the situation. A counter-revolutionary militia led by Miklós Horthy, the last commander of the Habsburg navy, now began to assume control in unoccupied Hungary, unleashing a 'White Terror' in place of the previous communist 'Red Terror'.

The Allies tried to intervene to stabilize the situation in Hungary, sending as their emissary the British diplomat, Sir George Clerk. In return for promises from Horthy to introduce democratic reforms the Allies orchestrated the withdrawal of the Roumanian army from the Hungarian capital, issuing an ultimatum to Roumania on 15 November which brought about their evacuation of Budapest, though they did not finally leave Hungary until March 1920. Horthy and his forces thereupon entered Budapest and Horthy would remain the dominant figure in Hungarian political life until 1944. There was a strong movement for a restoration of the monarchy, though the monarchists were divided between a return of the Habsburgs and the selection of a new monarch. As a result, it was decided to appoint a regent until the matter could be resolved, with Admiral Horthy being elected regent of the re-established Kingdom of Hungary in March 1920. Hungary thus became a land-locked kingdom without a king, ruled by an admiral.

Having, at last, a clearly established regime with which to deal, the Allies rapidly moved to conclude a peace treaty with Hungary, the Treaty of Trianon, on 4 June 1920. By its terms Hungary lost 71 per cent of its territory and 60 per cent of its population, was limited to an army of 35,000, and had to pay reparations. As a result of the new borders Hungary, like Austria, lost its outlet to the sea. Resentment was caused by the fact that the new frontiers left 1.8 million Hungarians just outside the country, particularly in Transylvania which was assigned to Roumania. Over 350,000 ethnic Hungarians fled to Hungary from the lost lands, further straining the domestic political situation. The chief aim of Hungary's alliance with Hitler in the 1930s was to regain these lands and peoples, which was temporarily achieved by the Vienna Awards (1938 and 1940).

The peace treaty with Bulgaria, the Treaty of Neuilly, was signed on 27 November 1919. By its terms Bulgaria lost the Southern Dobrudja to Roumania, four small but strategic salients on its frontier with Yugoslavia, its Aegean coastline, won only in 1913 in the Balkan Wars, was ceded to Greece. Bulgaria was limited to an army of 33,000 and was to pay reparations. In 1923 the financially stricken country's payments were cut from £90,000,000 to £22,500,000.

THE VICTOR STATES

Framing peace treaties with the defeated states proved difficult enough, but the problems were exacerbated by the ambitions of some of the victors and the newly emergent states, which were themselves often contradictory. Italy had entered both the war and the peace negotiations with exorbitant expectations of the rewards it would receive. It hoped to make the Adriatic into an Italian sea, but the creation of a large unified Yugoslavia was to prove an obstacle to this objective. Italy had entered the war after having received the commitment of Britain and France, in the secret 1915 Treaty of London, that it would receive the Trentino, Trieste, the south Tyrol to the Brenner pass, the Istrian peninsula, and northern Dalmatia. This would give Italy a strongly defensible northern border and extend its control over significant areas of the land lying opposite Italy across the northern Adriatic Sea. This brought Italy into confrontation not only with Yugoslav ambitions, but also with the views of Wilson. The American president had always made clear that he would not be bound by any of the commitments the Allies had made secretly between themselves before the United States became a partner to the war.

Italian forces had already occupied the Trentino and the important port of Trieste. The first possible crisis came over pushing Italy's border as far as the Brenner Pass, as this would include primarily German-speaking districts of the south Tyrol. Here Wilson made an early concession to Italy which conflicted with Point Nine of his Fourteen Points [Doc. 3]. Although he had called for Italy's borders to be readjusted along ethnic lines which, conceivably would have met most of its aspirations, he agreed early on that this could be adjusted to include the areas up to the Brenner Pass. This would create, he accepted, a secure border which, it was hoped, would assist in ensuring future security. The cost of this, however, was to leave 250,000 German speakers under Italian sovereignty. Wilson would later regret this action.

As the conference proceeded Wilson, while accepting most of Italy's other claims, did not accept its claim to Dalmatia, which was almost entirely Slavic. The Italian leaders then exacerbated the situation by adding a new claim to the port city of Fiume (Rijeka), until recently one of the chief

ports of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This city, with its mixed population, was claimed both by Italy and Yugoslavia: the old city having an Italian population and the outer districts and the hinterland a Slovene majority. As a port for all the countries in the region it was of great importance. Indeed, until this period, it had served as the chief port for the Hungarian portion of the Habsburg empire. Fiume lay well beyond the generous frontiers promised to Italy in the Secret Treaties and Wilson, having agreed to Italy's claims for the Brenner Pass frontier, was unwilling to agree to further bending of his basic principles. Britain and France felt some obligation to support Italian claims arising from the London treaty, although Fiume had not been explicitly mentioned. In an interesting contradiction, Italy was now claiming the Brenner pass frontier, on the basis of commitments made through secret treaties, and Fiume on the basis of Wilson's new open diplomacy and the principles of ethnicity. In fact, the Italian government was divided between those who saw Fiume as an unnecessary diversion when the object should be the acquisition of the important Dalmatian bases that would give Italy control of the Adriatic, and those who focused on bringing all Italians under one state. The foreign minister, Sidney Sonnino, saw the Adriatic as *Il Golfo*, and control of it as in the days of Venetian empire as essential to Italian security. These linked issues provide an example of some of the difficult contradictions often confronted by states seeking to achieve wide objectives.

The Allies occupied Fiume pending a final decision on its fate. Wilson reacted forcibly to what he saw as grasping demands by Italy's delegates and, using what he saw as a tool of open diplomacy, published his arguments in a leading newspaper. The Italian delegation reacted by walking out of the conference and returning home, where it was met by a popular reception. Wilson, briefly revered in Italy, was now reviled. The action of the Italian delegation, while wonderfully theatrical, did nothing to promote its real objectives. Despite Italy's absence, the rest of the conference proceeded and, as a result, Italy was not able to make its voice heard in many aspects of the wider settlement and, therefore, failed to influence many final conclusions. One example is that Italy, in the end, received none of the mandates to control former German or Ottoman territories which had been among its goals.

In part due to this crisis, the government of Orlando fell and he was replaced in June 1919 by Nitti, who had little more success. The Fiume issue continued unresolved. The situation changed dramatically, however, when on 12 September 1919 a group of Italians occupied Fiume, led by the eccentric poet d'Annunzio. The issue was left to smoulder for a period as other events captured the attention of the key powers. Ultimately, it was agreed that Fiume should become a Free City under the League of Nations. D'Annunzio, however, rejected this solution and, in a typically flamboyant

gesture, he even declared war upon Italy. The dispute was ultimately resolved in a 1920 bilateral treaty by which Italy gained the port of Zara on the east coast of the Adriatic, a few islands, and most of the Istrian peninsula, although most of its population was Slavic. Fiume, following the model of the solution to the Danzig crisis, was to become a Free City. D'Annunzio refused to accept this solution and had to be removed by force by the Italians in January 1921. Fiume now entered a brief existence as a Free City, until 1922 when it was occupied by Italian forces. In 1924 Italy and Yugoslavia agreed by treaty that Fiume would become part of Italy, with the predominantly Slovene suburbs going to Yugoslavia. After the Second World War the areas gained by Italy in this dispute were all taken by Yugoslavia. Domestically, for Italy, the Fiume incident was also important because it showed the ability of dissident forces to defy the government. It helped convince many that Italy was being robbed of its rightful share of the spoils of war and thus contributed to the collapse of Italy's liberal democracy and the rise of a fascist regime under Mussolini in 1922.

Italian intransigence spawned a number of imitators, in particular Roumania which hoped to achieve the creation of a Greater Roumania. The difficulty was that the irredenta of the nascent Yugoslavia and the prospective Roumania overlapped. This resulted in the Italians backing the Roumanians on the principle of troubling the Yugoslavs, while the French backed the Yugoslavs, probably in order to irritate the Italians. Although Roumania's record during the war had been mixed, its forces acted effectively once the main hostilities had ended. Despite the existence of an armistice, Roumanian forces seized most of its desired territory from Hungary. The collapse of Russian power had also allowed Roumania to regain Bessarabia, a much-disputed district lying between the Pruth and Dniester rivers (which has changed sovereignty six times during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). Not surprisingly, the regime in Moscow refused to recognize this and, given Roumania's diplomatic troublesomeness, the Allied powers were equally reluctant. Roumania began to follow a more constructive approach in early 1920, but an agreement recognizing Roumanian sovereignty over Bessarabia was accepted only by Britain. Diplomatically isolated and therefore possibly militarily exposed, Roumania now began to seek a stronger security arrangement, starting first of all with potential regional allies. This was one of the factors which led to the formation of the Little Entente, which would come to involve France as well.

The cause of South Slav unification had been one of the origins of the First World War and the motivation behind the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which had sparked the conflict. With the ending of the war the union of the South Slavs in the new Yugoslav

kingdom (officially called at first the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes) was now a reality, but a reality without definite frontiers. While most of its borders were agreed by 1920, the final frontiers were not defined until 1924 when Yugoslavia abandoned its claim to the port city of Fiume. The new state incorporated the former Kingdom of Serbia, with its king assuming the new crown; the former Kingdom of Montenegro, whose own dynasty was deposed; the former Hungarian province of Croatia and the former Austrian province of Dalmatia, whose majority population were Croats; the former Austrian province of Carniola, and some other small parcels of territory which were primarily populated by Slovenes; the former Hungarian territories of Bácska, Baranya and the western Banat which had a mixed ethnic population; and Bosnia-Hercegovina, which had been under joint Austro-Hungarian rule and was comprised of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims.

POLAND

With the collapse of the empires at the end of the First World War, Poland re-emerged as an independent state, but without clear frontiers [Doc. 11]. The first president of Poland, Pilsudski, had himself been born in neighbouring Lithuania and dreamt of recreating the vast Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, that had also covered much of the Ukraine during its fifteenth-century apogee. The attempt to define its borders would lead to six concurrent wars during 1918-21. The first was the Ukrainian war against the West Ukrainian republic that had taken power in what the Poles considered to be eastern Galicia, in territory that had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This republic hoped, ultimately, to join with the eastern Ukrainian state that had been part of the Russian empire. By July 1919 Poland had overrun this area and simply presented a fait accompli to the Allied powers. It had skirmishes with Germany over Posnan at the end of 1918, and there were three periods of conflict over Silesia from the summer of 1919 to 1921. Poland also fought a war with Lithuania over control of the city of Vilnius (Wilno) which Lithuania hoped to make its capital. Poland's success in this war embittered Polish-Lithuanian relations throughout the interwar period.

A further conflict with far-reaching implications was the struggle with Czechoslovakia for control of the former Duchy of Teschen. This was a mineral-rich district that was also an important transportation centre. At the end of the war Poland and Czechoslovakia had agreed to delineate the border by amicable negotiation and, in the meantime, control was divided. In late 1918, however, Poland mobilized its army in the area and moved to incorporate the portions it controlled. In response, Czechoslovakia deployed its forces and skirmishing followed. The Allied great powers intervened and

forced an armistice. Tensions in the district were so high that it was impossible to hold a plebiscite to determine the inhabitants' wishes and instead the Allied powers imposed a solution that left Czechoslovakia with the bigger portion but gave the city of Teschen itself to Poland. This conflict condemned the two countries to poor relations in the years ahead and when Hitler moved against Czechoslovakia in 1938, at the time of the Munich Crisis, Poland took the opportunity to seize the whole of Teschen, rather than make common cause against the threat being posed by Germany. At the time, Poland probably would have pursued its claims to Teschen but it was forced to accept the Allies' settlement as at the same time a large Soviet army was heading for Warsaw.

The biggest conflict came with Soviet Russia. The Paris Peace Conference proposed for Poland's eastern frontier a line, known as the Curzon Line, which included within Poland all those districts of a definitely Polish character. The Polish government, however, claimed a frontier much further east on historical grounds. The German evacuation of the contested district that lay between the Curzon Line and Poland's preferred eastern border, combined with Russia's distraction in a civil war, provided an opportunity for Poland to implement its claims. The Russians also attempted to occupy the evacuated districts and hostilities followed. The war began well for the Poles who, under Pilsudski, occupied the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, before a Russian counter-attack drove them back to the outskirts of Warsaw. In the Battle of Warsaw the westward advance of the Russian army was checked and the Soviet army driven back. By the Treaty of Riga in 1921 Poland received a frontier substantially to the east of the Curzon Line (see Chapter 5).

THE LITTLE ENTENTE

A web of alliances began to emerge among the eastern European states which came to be known as the Little Entente. It was a term first used derisively by a Hungarian journalist, recalling the prewar great power Triple Entente. Whereas that combination had been aimed against Germany, this new grouping was aimed against Hungary. Many of these new states were concerned that Hungary would make a bid to regain at least some of the vast territory it had lost. In December 1919 the Czechoslovak foreign minister, Beneš, proposed a mutual defence agreement with Yugoslavia against a Hungarian attack. The following month he extended the same invitation to Roumania. The Czechoslovak-Yugoslav pact was concluded in August 1920 [Doc. 12]. Roumania hesitated about joining but an abortive attempt by the deposed Habsburg emperor, Karl, to regain the throne of Hungary in early 1921, hastened the growth of the Little Entente. Within weeks Roumania had agreed its own alliance with both Czechoslovakia and

Yugoslavia, in this case extended to cover the eventuality of an attack by Bulgaria. Over the next months and years this trilateral arrangement would be strengthened by military conventions and greater cooperation in foreign policy and trade matters. After 1926 the Little Entente states normally occupied (by rotation) one of the non-permanent seats on the League of Nations Council. These agreements were consolidated by the Treaty of Belgrade in 1929 which converted these alliances into an international organization with a permanent council and a secretariat.

The Little Entente came into being without direct French assistance, but it sat well with French thinking. France, until the First World War, had based its security against Germany on an alliance with Russia. With the Russian revolution France lost this partnership and sought to replace it with a network of arrangements with the newly emergent eastern European states. France promoted its own security structure in eastern Europe as a parallel and separate arrangement outside whatever security would be provided by the new and untried League of Nations. It therefore put its hopes in the mechanisms of the new diplomacy and insured itself with the traditional mechanisms of the old diplomacy. France began to build its own bilateral ties with the Little Entente states, starting in 1924 with a treaty of alliance with Czechoslovakia [Doc. 16]. The pivot of French plans at this time, however, was Poland which it supported during its war with Soviet Russia and with which it concluded a treaty of alliance in 1920. It was estimated that Poland would be able to raise an army of four million soldiers, making it a valuable military ally against any renewed German aggression. It proved impossible to bring Poland into the Little Entente, however, because of the poor state of Czechoslovak-Polish relations that had arisen over the struggle for the control of Teschen. This weakness in the security structure in eastern Europe would later help prevent cooperation against Hitler's Germany.

THE MINORITY PROTECTION TREATIES

Given the ethnic complexity of eastern Europe, it was impossible to draw frontiers which did not leave minority populations. Therefore fourteen states were required to sign special minority rights treaties or make similar declarations to the League of Nations (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Roumania, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, Turkey, and Iraq). All these states complained that the great powers were not required to agree to similar provisions. Wilson, though, argued that the Peace Conference was attempting to eliminate as far as possible sources of potential disturbance. While the Great Powers were attempting to arrange an equitable distribution of territory, the reality of minority populations left a possible source of later upheaval. Therefore it was

necessary to do everything possible to ensure that minorities would not feel unjustly treated.

Europe was familiar with the problem of the transfer of populations from one state's sovereignty to that of another. Earlier major peace settlements had contained provisions to safeguard the rights of populations so transferred, notably that reached at Vienna (1814), Paris (1856) and Berlin (1878). The Berlin settlement had extended the principle even further, with the various Balkan states having to agree to protect their Muslim populations, while the Ottoman Empire pledged to protect its Christian subjects. None of these agreements, however, contained any mechanism for enforcement. The Paris Peace Conference not only extended the principle of protection to cover all minorities in the states adhering to such arrangements, but also provided a mechanism of appeal to an international body.

The problem of how to protect minority rights was one of the many conundrums facing the peacemakers. A Committee on New States was established which ultimately produced, as the best solution for this problem, a basic template for a minorities protection treaty. By internationalizing the issue through specific treaty obligations, rather than relying on mere principles to be declared through the League of Nations, a major, if at the time not so noticed, leap was made in international governance. The first agreement was signed with Poland, on the same day that the German peace treaty was signed at Versailles. All the minority protection treaties followed a similar formula. The treaties contained a general statement of underlying principles and specifics on the granting of citizenship, aimed at preventing discrimination against the minorities. Most importantly it contained the mechanics of enforcement. It was usually the practice that members of minority groups could appeal to the League of Nations, which established a special Minorities Commission. Differences of opinion would be adjudicated by the new Permanent Court of International Justice, whose decision was to be binding. One of the leading historians on this issue, Carole Fink, has observed that, 'The weary victors hesitated to confer on minorities too prominent a status, weaken the new governments, or provide minority defenders with the means to dispute the new order.'² Although the effectiveness of these minority protection agreements varied from state to state, it was a significant step forward in the recognition of human rights.

CONCLUSION

The treaties of Saint-Germain, Trianon, and Neuilly with the defeated Central Powers have often been criticized for creating so many minority problems. In retrospect the number of geographical decisions that had to be made in creating a new political landscape may seem bewildering, but they

were just as much so to the peacemakers at the time. In a world exhausted by war, with small conflicts still raging in the region and the need to establish governments with clear authority over clearly demarcated states, with time of the essence for fear that order would break down altogether and concerned about the possible spread of Soviet Russian power, the peacemakers laboured to establish an effective settlement. The reality of the patchwork of national population distribution made it impossible to draw neat frontiers which left no minorities. It did, nonetheless, leave three times as many people free from alien rule as were left subjected to it. The minority protection treaty system was not without its flaws, but for the first time the international system had not only evolved a concept of minority civil rights, but had attempted to find a way to enforce it. Nonetheless, the settlement that evolved for the new Europe was untested and, as Masaryk had observed, it was still a laboratory.

Notes

- 1 M. Baumont, *La Faillite de la paix, 1918–1939* (Paris, 1946), p. 8.
- 2 Carole Fink, 'The Minorities Question at the Paris Peace Conference: The Polish Minority Treaty, June 28, 1919', in M. Boemke *et al.*, eds, *The treaty of Versailles: a reassessment after 75 years* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 274.