
Unholy Alliances? Nationalist Exiles, Minorities and Anti-Fascism in Interwar Europe

XOSÉ M. NÚÑEZ SEIXAS

Ethno-nationalist exiles in the interwar period were a unique species. While some of them relied on their own diasporic networks and waited for a chance, others established agitation platforms and regarded themselves as an alternative International of the 'oppressed peoples'. Most of these alliances ended in failure, as it proved extremely difficult to reconcile the demands stemming from divergent national claims, such as those of autonomist factions versus irredentist or pro-independence groups, or those of national minorities seeking reintegration into their motherland as opposed to groups seeking independence. This article explores the relationship between minority nationalist exiles and anti-fascism by focusing on three issues: the emergence and evolution of 'international alliances' of minority activists in interwar Europe; contacts and ideological exchanges between ethno-nationalist exiles and liberal and anti-fascist segments of European public opinion and, finally, the emergence of a transnational anti-fascist nationality theory.

In the aftermath of the First World War state borders in east-central Europe were redrawn at the Paris Peace Conference. The armed conflicts that subsequently broke out between various successor states, along with the progression of the Russian Civil War, forced dozens of ethno-nationalist activists into exile. Those belonging to national and ethnic minorities could easily find refuge in their respective 'motherlands', from Weimar Germany to post-Trianon Hungary. They created networks of political and cultural associations that served as the bases for stirring up irredentism, with official state support and often also with the collaboration of large portions of the homeland's revisionist and nationalist parties. These activists were joined by many other ethno-nationalists with no motherland, who took refuge in former imperial centres such as Vienna and Berlin, as well as Paris, London

Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München, Historisches Seminar, Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1,
D-80539 Munich; x.nunez@lmu.de

Contemporary European History, 25, 4 (2016), pp. 597–617. © Cambridge University Press 2016
doi:[10.1017/S0960777316000370](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777316000370)

and Geneva. The latter acquired new visibility when the League of Nations was established there in 1920. All these cities became centres of agitation for ethno-nationalist émigrés, who tried to influence neutral public opinion in favour of their respective causes.

Many (ethno-)nationalist exiles were not anti-fascists. On the contrary, many came under the influence of integralist visions of the nation, and were subsequently seduced by fascism. In their eyes, fascist Italy and afterwards Nazi Germany seemed to incarnate the best of values such as the cult of the nation, while upholding a strong anti-communist stance. In fact, ethno-nationalist exiles were identified by the earliest fascists as possible allies for challenging the Versailles settlement. The poet and pilot Gabriele D'Annunzio had already planned to set up a league of 'oppressed peoples' on the occasion of the occupation of Fiume in 1919. He saw the inhabitants of the Italian irredenta as potential members of a new coalition of European, Asian and African peoples that included the Irish, Flemish, Egyptians, Macedonians and more.¹ Other exiles found inspiration in the Marxist-Leninist approach to national liberation and were fascinated by the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union. In fact, Moscow became at times a pole of attraction for non-communist nationalist émigrés seeking external support, and communist parties embraced until 1934 the doctrine of Bolshevik self-determination, which was intended to destroy the capitalist states.² All this created after 1945 an image of ethno-nationalist émigrés as troublemakers and fellow travellers into fascism. Their allegiance to the ethnic concept of the nation led them to take strategic risks, or simply seal unholy alliances with fascist powers.³

New ethno-nationalist exiles appeared in the 1920s and 1930s. These included Catalan, Basque, Galician, Sardinian, South Tyrolean and Slovene exiles from Spain and Italy, alongside groups of Irish political exiles in the early 1920s (particularly Sinn Féin activists and later on Irish Republican Army members). These were even accompanied by nationalist activists from the distant peripheries of the British, French and Dutch empires (India, Vietnam, Indonesia), who frequently interacted with European ethno-nationalists.⁴ This latter group generally remained committed to democracy – some even leaned towards communism – and were much less susceptible

¹ See Michael Ledeen, *The First Duce. D'Annunzio at Fiume* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 176–86; Leone Kochnitzky, *La Quinta Stagione o i Centauri di Fiume* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1922), 141–68.

² See for a recent reappraisal Martin Mevius, ed., *The Communist Quest for National Legitimacy in Europe, 1918–1989* (London: Routledge, 2011). The case of the radical Catalan nationalist Francesc Macià, who travelled to Moscow in 1925, provides one example of the strategic seeking out of Soviet Union support. Macià hoped that the Soviets would support Catalan independence, thanks to the mediation of some Catalan communists who worked within the Comintern: see Enric Ucelay-Da Cal and Joan Esculies, *Macià als país dels soviets* (Barcelona: Edicions del 1984, 2015).

³ See for example Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1979), 270–80; John A. Armstrong, 'Collaborationism in World War II: The Integral Nationalist Variant in Eastern Europe', *Journal of Modern History*, 40, 3 (1968), 396–410; Robert Arzalier, *Les perdants. La dérive fasciste des mouvements autonomistes et indépendantistes au XXe siècle* (Paris: Ed. la Découverte, 1990).

⁴ See Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Indian Nationalism and the "world forces": transnational and diasporic dimensions of the Indian freedom movement on the eve of the First

to the 'lure' of fascism than their eastern European counterparts. Finally, the leaders of Jewish minorities in east-central Europe constituted another faction.

Ethno-nationalist exiles in the interwar period were a unique species. While some of them relied on their own diaspora networks, established transatlantic relations with their fellow countrymen in the Americas and simply waited for a chance to be heard, others established agitation platforms during the 1920s and regarded themselves as an alternative International of the 'oppressed peoples' against the old established states and the new 'nationalising states' of east-central Europe. Most of these alliances ended in failure, partly due to the extreme internal heterogeneity of their members. It proved extremely difficult to reconcile the diverse demands stemming from divergent national claims, such as those of autonomist factions versus irredentist or pro-independence groups, or those of national minorities seeking reintegration into their motherland as opposed to groups seeking independent recognition of their nationalities.⁵

This article explores the nature and limitations of the difficult relationship between minority nationalism and anti-fascism among these ethno-nationalist exiles by focussing on: a) the emergence and evolution of 'international alliances' of minority activists in interwar Europe, b) contacts and ideological exchanges between ethno-nationalist activists in Paris and London and liberal and anti-fascist segments of European public opinion and c) the emergence of a transnational anti-fascist nationality theory.

I

(Ethno-)nationalist émigrés had existed throughout the nineteenth century, from the Italian Giuseppe Garibaldi and his fellow leaders of *risorgimento* nationalism to Greek, Romanian and Bulgarian exiles in London and Paris, Irish nationalists in the United States and Polish émigrés in Paris. Until the end of the nineteenth century, these exiles were overwhelmingly liberal or republican oriented. The followers of Mazzini's *Giovine Italia* (1831) attracted Irish, Polish, Serbian and other central European émigrés, who also founded similar organisations.⁶ Although they advocated international cooperation to meet the objectives of liberal revolutions all over the continent, they all believed in the nation as having a supreme value and considered statehood or autonomy for their homelands as a main goal of their

World War', *Journal of Global History*, 2 (2007), 325–44 and Kate O'Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire. Indo-Irish Radical Connections, 1919–64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

⁵ For a general overview, see Heiner Timmermann, ed., *Nationalismus und Nationalbewegung in Europa, 1914–1945* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999); Ugo Corsini and Davide Zaffi, eds., *Die Minderheiten zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1997); Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, *Entre Ginebra y Berlín. La cuestión de las minorías nacionales y la política internacional en Europa, 1914–1939* (Madrid: Akal, 2001); Mathias Beer and Stefan Dyroff, eds., *Politische Strategien nationaler Minderheiten in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014).

⁶ See Ronald Cunsolo, *Italian Nationalism: From its Origins to World War Two* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 18–9 and 58–60. On the transnational circulation of nationalist tenets in the 19th century, see Joop Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

political agitation. This was, in fact, a collateral aspect of the ‘transnational political culture’ of nineteenth-century liberalism.

However, from the beginning of the twentieth century until the eve of the First World War, in great European capitals such as London and Paris new alliances emerged between nationalist émigrés and the British, Swiss and French liberal left. Some republicans and radical liberals, many of them professional opinion makers, journalists and academics, enthusiastically advocated the right to self-determination of European (and occasionally even non-European) nationalities. They criticised the oppression of national minorities and stateless nations within multinational empires, particularly the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian domains, and established close links between the full democratisation of Europe, the preservation of peace and the satisfaction of national and territorial demands all over Europe. Certainly, British ‘champions of nationalities’ were more eager to accept self-determination for, say, Bohemia than for Ireland. Their French counterparts firmly believed that France was nationally and ethnically homogeneous; thus, as a full-fledged democratic nation it was entitled to raise the banner of self-determination. Macedonian, Croatian, Armenian, Lithuanian and other émigrés managed to establish some connections with broader segments of French and English public opinion through liberal associations such as anti-slavery societies. These and other associations had positioned themselves at the origins of organisations such as the Human Rights League (*Ligue des Droits de l’Homme*), the Fabian Society and several peace associations that attempted to establish a transnational network.⁷

Alongside defence of worldwide peace, tolerance, international cooperation and human equality, western European intellectuals and politicians became firm defenders of the rights of ‘oppressed nationalities’, though generally limiting self-determination to ‘civilised’ peoples. Émigrés did not always share this political agenda, as they were far more interested in national freedom and external support for their cause. In this aspect, a fundamental contradiction emerged. The ‘champions of nationalities’ were motivated by altruistic liberalism, rejection of ‘backward’ multinational empires and the search for a new international order based on the peaceful coexistence of races and nations. However, ethno-nationalist activists were generally searching for strategic allies among those who embraced their cause, regardless of their political orientation and strategic aims. This implied a high degree of opportunism: émigrés were positive toward anyone who could carry their claims into the international arena and provide them with access to the ministries of foreign affairs of the great powers. This emerged clearly during the First World War and became the norm among nationalist exiles after 1918. Being heard in the emerging sphere of international public opinion also became a parallel objective for political and intellectual representatives of ‘oppressed’ nationalities. This had been expressed earlier in the emergence of international platforms such as the *Union des Nationalités* (1912), an initiative founded in Paris by

⁷ Jean M. Guieu, *Le rameau et le glaive. Les militants français pour la SDN* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2008); David Cortright, *Peace. A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 58–69; Thomas Davies, *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

some exiled Lithuanians, Jewish Zionists and other nationalist émigrés from eastern Europe, shortly after meeting one year earlier at the Universal Race Congress held in London. At the Congress the founder of the initiative, the Lithuanian exile Jean Gabrys, had also met the French journalist, René Pélissier, who was committed to the cause of oppressed peoples and who would work later for the French information services. Gabrys and Pélissier also attracted some Irish and Catalan nationalists and enjoyed the support of British writers and journalists, along with prominent French intellectuals such as the historian Charles Seignobos.⁸

Political contradictions between the two groups of actors became evident during the First World War. Both sides, but especially the Entente, presented the conflict as a war to liberate the small nations oppressed and invaded by the central powers. This strategy opened certain doors in the foreign ministries in London, Paris and Washington for ethno-nationalist émigrés from the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires (although nationalist exiles from the Caucasus and the Baltic countries first attempted to win German support for their cause). They founded committees to carry out propaganda activities in Paris and London but preferred neutral soil, particularly in Switzerland. The first priority was to locate allies among the public opinion makers of the countries whose support they targeted, as well as lobbyists with the staffs of their ministries of foreign affairs. Academics, journalists, writers and intellectuals were sought to inform the British, French and US governments on matters related to east and central European nationalities.⁹ US President Woodrow Wilson enhanced the legitimacy of nationality claims in 1917. The presentation of his 'Fourteen Points' programme and their international diffusion gave some groups of ethno-nationalist émigrés new opportunities for proto-diplomatic agitation, which was now rhetorically reinforced by their appeal to Wilsonian principles. A good example were the Czech leaders Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, who, moreover, saw their access to the British Foreign Office facilitated by influential mediators who endorsed their cause, such as the historians Robert Seton-Watson and Edward H. Carr, as well as the journalist Wickham Steed. These mediators played the card of the Entente's support for the unsatisfied nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a means of exerting pressure on the Vienna government to sign a separate peace with the Entente.¹⁰

⁸ Charles Seignobos, *Les tendances autonomistes en Europe* (Paris: Alcan, 1913); Jean Gabrys, *Auf Wache für die Nation – Erinnerungen*, E. Demm, ed. (Frankfurt a. M.: PL Acad. Research, 2013); Georges-Henri Soutou, 'Jean Pélissier et l'Office Central des Nationalités, 1911–1918: Un agent du gouvernement français auprès des nationalités', in *idem*, ed., *Recherches sur la France et le problème des nationalités pendant la première guerre mondiale (Pologne, Ukraine, Lithuanie)* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1995), 13–38.

⁹ See the fascinating account by Hugh Seton-Watson and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe: R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Days of Austria-Hungary* (London: Methuen, 1981); as well as Erik Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British diplomatic strategy, peace planning, and the Paris Peace Conference 1916–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Lawrence E. Gelfand, *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917–1919* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963). For a comprehensive account, see Núñez Seixas, *Entre Ginebra y Berlín*, 42–6.

¹⁰ See Derek Heater, *National Self-Determination: Woodrow Wilson and his Legacy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Seton-Watson and Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe*; Frank Hadler, ed., *Weg*

Nevertheless, the final break-up of European multi-ethnic empires can certainly not be solely considered an outcome achieved by the direct influence of nationalist émigrés. They benefited from particularly favourable geopolitical circumstances and, finally, from the refusal of the Austro-Hungarian government to abandon its alliance with Germany and sign a separate peace treaty with the Entente. Ethno-nationalist exiles could rely on a robust propaganda network abroad and on mediators in the state diplomatic corps, who were ultimately responsible for tracing the new borders. The academic advisers of the main delegations, who drew the new map of Europe at the Paris Peace Conference, were influenced to some extent by émigrés. The representatives of the Jewish minorities in Paris, in particular the British journalist Lucien Wolf, also played an important role in agitating for minority protection. The Minority Treaties, first imposed on Poland in 1919, were soon extended to all minorities 'of race, language and religion' in the new nationalising successor states of east-central Europe and the Middle East. This established the framework for an international system of minorities protection under the umbrella of the League of Nations.¹¹

The elites of nationalist movements in Europe saw proto-diplomatic agitation in times of global turmoil as an important element for more effectively attaining their objectives.¹² However, not all émigrés enjoyed similar opportunities. Irish and Indian nationalists sent delegations to Paris but were not allowed to present their claims at the Peace Conference because during the Great War they had opposed the eventual winners. Something similar happened with several political groupings from Catalonia, Brittany, Scotland and the Basque Country, all of whom attempted to send memorandums to the various delegations at the Peace Conference.¹³ Even so,

von Österreich! Das Weltkriegsexil von Masaryk und Benes im Spiegel ihrer Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus den Jahren 1914–1918. Eine Quellensammlung (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995).

¹¹ For a relatively recent reappraisal of the Peace Conference, see Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: the Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End War* (London: Murray, 2003). For the role of Jewish organisations, see Mark Levene, *War, Jews and the New Europe* (London: Oxford University Press / The Littman Library, 1992), as well as Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others. The Great Powers, the Jews, and international minority protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), David Engel, 'Minorities Treaties', in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), vol. 2, 1176–77 and Simon Rabinovitch, *Jewish Rights, National Rites: Nationalism and Autonomy in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 258–71.

¹² See, e. g., the reflection by the Catalanist leader Antoni Rovira i Virgili, 'Necessitat de que tot nacionalisme tingui una política internacional', *Revista Anyal*, 1915, reproduced in D. Martínez Fiol, ed., *El catalanisme i la Gran Guerra. Antologia* (Barcelona: La Magrana/Diputació de Barcelona, 1988), 79–85. On the concept of proto-diplomacy, see Ivo Duchacek, 'Perforated Sovereignities: Towards a Typology of New Actors in International Relations', in Hans J. Michelmann and Panayotis Soldatos, eds., *Federalism and International Relations. The Role of Subnational Units* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 1–32; as well as Francisco Aldecoa and Michael Keating, eds., *Paradiplomacy in Action: The Foreign Relations of Subnational Governments* (London: Frank Cass, 1999).

¹³ Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants. The Little Nations at Versailles* (Port Washington, NY: Kemikat Press, 1969); S. de Gasquet, 'La France et les mouvements nationaux ukrainiens', in Soutou, ed., *Recherches*, 172–83; Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, *Internacionalitzant el nacionalisme. El catalanisme polític i la qüestió de les minories nacionals a Europa (1914–1936)* (Valencia: Afers/Universitat de València, 2010), 75–82.

the example of ethno-nationalists who succeeded in achieving their objectives after 1918 – thanks in part to proto-diplomacy – influenced the strategies of those who sought to follow in their footsteps. They learned the compulsory nature of setting up propaganda bureaus in the greatest European capitals; they presented their claims in multilingual brochures and journals to influence an actor that supposedly became relevant after 1918 – international public opinion –; they sought to gain the support of intellectuals, journalists and influential elites in London, Vienna, Paris, Berlin or Geneva and they established what amounted to a permanent siege of the fledgling League of Nations.

II

From the mid-1920s onwards, two varieties of ethno-nationalist émigrés consciously – but with some nuances – raised the banner of anti-fascism and attempted to combine an agenda of national liberation (or at least of gaining political recognition of collective rights for their territories) with opposition to fascist regimes.

The first was a faction that stemmed from ethnic parties in Italy after the rise of Mussolini to power. It included some leaders of the powerful Sardinian autonomist movement that had emerged in 1918, as well as representatives of the German-speaking South Tyrolean minority and Slovenes from Gorizia, on the Italian-Yugoslav border. One example was Josip Vilfan, a lawyer from Trieste and former deputy in the Italian parliament in Rome. Until his exile to Vienna in 1928 he was a moderate who, along with the other Slovene deputies from Gorizia-Trieste, aimed at a fruitful collaboration with the Italian majority and even demonstrated a willingness to come to terms with the fascist government.¹⁴ Unlike Sardinians, who opted for joining Italian anti-fascist platforms and subordinated home-rule aspirations to the restoration of democracy in Italy, exiled Slovene and South Tyrolean leaders gave priority to defending their respective motherlands within the framework of European alliances. This strategy found resonance in German revisionism, which sponsored committees of fellow countrymen established in Germany and Austria, with the objective of agitating for the incorporation of South Tyrol into German territory.

Catalan, Basque and Galician ethno-nationalist exiles from Spain constituted a second category. They had been forced to leave their country during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–30) and again after the rebel victory in the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), which put an end to the Second Spanish Republic. During the second half of the 1920s Catalan émigrés were especially active in France, Belgium and Latin America. However, they were politically very fragmented and followed divergent strategies. Conservative and moderate Catalanists in exile attempted to present Catalonia as a ‘national minority’ not covered by the Minority Treaties. They

¹⁴ See Claus Gatterer, *Im Kampf gegen Rom. Bürger, Minderheiten und Autonomien in Italien*, Vienna: Europa Verlag, 1968, 390–450; Joze Pirjevec, ‘Die politische Theorie und Tätigkeit Josef Wilfans’, in Corsini and Zaffi (eds.), *Die Minderheiten*, 167–74.

denounced the oppression of the Catalan language and culture by the dictatorship as a violation of the rights granted to ethnic minorities, hoping to force the League of Nations to intervene. They prioritised peaceful strategies – or, as the right-wing Catalanist intellectual and deputy Joan Estelrich put it, the path of the Law – in an attempt to mobilise European public opinion in favour of the Catalan cause and attract the attention of the League of Nations.¹⁵ Catalanist moderate exiles established some links with French liberals and regionalists in the French Regionalist Federation (*Fédération Régionaliste Française*). Their connections were expressed in the journal *Le Courier Catalan*, which was published in Paris from 1924 to 1926. It opposed any form of dictatorship in southern Europe and advocated the peaceful democratisation and decentralisation of Spain. An autonomous Catalonia could then play an active role in European politics, as an avant-garde of democracy and Europeanism.¹⁶

Catalan left-wing and radical nationalists found support among Catalan immigrants in France and among some groups of Italian anti-fascists in exile, particularly the *garibaldini*. They were named after their leader, Garibaldi's grandson Ricciotti Garibaldi (who later turned out to be an informant for Mussolini's secret police) and saw their Catalan counterparts as allies in the effort to topple the Mediterranean dictatorships. Other relevant allies among the nationalist émigrés and representatives in Paris included the Irish Bureau, the Committee of Jewish Delegations (*Comité des Délégations Juives*) and certain German representatives of the later Congress of European Nationalities, founded in 1925 (see below). The *Estat Català* group, led by the former colonel of the Spanish Army Francesc Macià, represented the separatist-revolutionary faction of Catalan émigrés. They were the first to propose the creation of a League of Oppressed Nations that would bring together Irish, Galicians, Basques and anti-colonial nationalists.¹⁷

From 1925 onwards Macià gave priority to a mixture of proto-diplomatic pressure and violent insurrectional tactics that mirrored the Irish group Sinn Féin, which he greatly admired. After a failed attempt at invading Catalonia from southern France in November 1926, dozens of radical Catalan militiamen who had the support of certain Italian anti-fascist groups were arrested before they could cross the border in the Pyrenees. Meanwhile, radical Catalan exiles followed a parallel strategy of mobilising public opinion against the Spanish dictatorship. They established close links to the French liberal and left-wing internationalists grouped around the Human Rights League, such as the flamboyant trial lawyer Henry Torrès, a communist activist who had taken up the defence in the trial of Macià, Ricciotti Garibaldi and their followers in January 1927. In a famous trial nine months later, Torrès also defended

¹⁵ See Joan Estelrich, *La qüestió de les minories nacionals i les vies del Dret* (Barcelona: Catalònia, 1929).

¹⁶ For an extensive analysis, see Núñez Seixas, *Internacionalitzant el nacionalisme*, 115–21.

¹⁷ See Ucelay-Da Cal, 'Estat Català. The Strategies of Separation and Revolution of Catalan Radical Nationalism, 1919–1933', Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University, 1979, 226–32; G. Cattini, *Nel nome di Garibaldi. I rivoluzionari catalani, i nipoti del Generale e la polizia di Mussolini (1923–1926)* (Pisa: BFS Edizioni, 2010).

the Jewish Ukrainian anarchist Sholom Schwartzbard, who had killed the Ukrainian nationalist leader Simon Petliura in Paris.¹⁸

III

The emergence of an international system for protection of minorities under the legal umbrella of the League of Nations added to the newly-acquired legitimacy of the nationality principle among broad sectors of organised public opinion in Britain and France.¹⁹ Liberal and pacifist associations such as the Human Rights League and the League of Nations Union helped shape a transnational space that gave a platform to the claims of representatives of national minorities. At least four partially overlapping international networks articulated that space.

The first was the international League of Nations movement, supported by left-wing and liberal associations in the most important European and American countries. Their social impact was uneven in the various parts of Europe. In several countries, notably Britain, the League of Nations Unions enjoyed widespread social support and truly reflected civil society. In other states, such as Germany, they were mostly supported by the government and amalgamated naïve pacifists, radical democrats and liberals along with representatives of Protestant churches, all of whom sought to establish a new international order.²⁰ Before the consolidation of the minorities protection system at the League of Nations, there were attempts at founding international committees for the defence of the ‘peoples’ rights’. For example, the International Bureau for the Protection of Human Rights (*Bureau International pour la Défense du Droit des Peuples*) was active in Geneva between 1920 and 1922. Though presumably sponsored by the Polish government, it was directed by Swiss journalist René Claparède, who had been engaged in the pacifist movement. In theory, the Bureau sought to uphold the cause of national minorities within the framework of human rights and participated in the first meetings of the international League of Nations movement.²¹

¹⁸ See Saul S. Friedman, *Pogromchik: The Assassination of Simon Petliura* (New York: Hart, 1976). On Macià's and Garibaldi's defence by Torrès, see also E. Ucelay-Da Cal, *Francesc Macià. Una vida en imatges* (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 1984), 113–18, as well as the contemporary account by Louis Santini, *Garibaldi, Mussolini et Cie* (Paris: Librairie Baudinière, 1926).

¹⁹ There is a huge amount of bibliography on the system of protection of minorities implemented by the League of Nations. As a whole, the League of Nations has recently been reappraised from a more positive perspective, seen not only as a failure. See, for instance, Peter Hilpold, ‘The League of Nations and the Protection of Minorities – Rediscovering a Great Experiment’, *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, 17 (2013), 87–12.

²⁰ See Luca dei Sabelli, *Nazione e minoranze etniche*, Bologna: Zanichelli, 1929, vol. II, 179; Núñez Seixas, *Entre Ginebra y Berlín*, 204–45; Marta Petricioli and Donatella Cherubini, eds., *Pour la paix en Europe. Institutions et société civile dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2007).

²¹ ‘L'Assemblée de la Société des Nations à Genève et le droit des peuples’, *Le Droit des Peuples*, 5 (1920); René Claparède, *L'Organisation de la Lutte pour la Liberté des Peuples* (Geneva: Publications du Bureau International pour la Défense des Droits des Peuples, 1921).

National minorities activists soon discovered that founding League of Nations associations to represent their ethnic groups provided a good instrument for participating in the international conferences of the movement (renamed as the International Federation of League of Nations societies, *Union Internationale des Associations pour la Société des Nations*; UIA), which annually hosted representatives from all over the world. The first president of the organisation, French law professor Théodore Ruysen, was himself a defender of minority interests and advocated a liberal concept of the nation based on the will of the people. Some British and continental champions of minorities had a prominent role in the UIA as well. Liberal MP Lord Willoughby Dickinson and the Dutch feminist and pacifist activist Christina Bakker van Bosse paved the way for the active commitment of the UIA to improving and expanding Minorities Treaties. The UIA even issued a bulletin devoted to the minority question in 1928–29.²² This turned the organisation into an interesting platform for representatives of nationalities and national minorities, who saw the Union as an appropriate place for gaining visibility and respectability alike. The UIA set up an advisory body on national minorities alongside similar organs – often with the same protagonists – established by the Interparliamentary Union, the World Alliance for the International Friendship through the Churches and the International Law Association. These attempted to play an avant-garde role in the emerging field of minority law. They also served as informal advisers to certain governments, although they were usually met with indifference by the League of Nations.²³

A second group was composed of the powerful propaganda network of British, French and eastern European Zionists acting through the Committee of Jewish Delegations, which was established in Paris in 1919 as an umbrella office for coordinating *démarches* to favour the interests of Jewish minorities from east-central Europe on the international scene. The Committee also followed up on Jewish minorities' petitions to the Secretariat of the League of Nations and established regular contacts with political and cultural representatives of other ethnic minorities covered by the Treaties, in part thanks to the activity of its representative, the Kiev-born Zionist exile Leo Motzkin.²⁴

A third network involved transnational organisations representing German national minorities from various east-central European states. The most representative, the

²² See Théodore Ruysen, *Les minorités nationales d'Europe et la guerre mondiale* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1924); Willoughby H. Dickinson, 'Les Traités des Minorités', *Les Minorités Nationales*, II, 1–2 (1929); *idem*, *Minorities* (London: League of Nations Union, 1928). See also René Fabre, 'Un exemple de pacifisme juridique. Théodore Ruysen et le mouvement "La Paix par le Droit" (1884–1950)', *Vingtième Siècle*, 39 (1993), 38–54.

²³ See Núñez Seixas, *Entre Ginebra y Berlín*, 208–25; Daniel Gorman, 'Ecumenical Internationalism: Willoughby Dickinson, the League of Nations and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45 (2010), 51–73 and Stefan Dyroff, 'Avant-Garde or Supplement? Advisory Bodies of Transnational Associations as Alternatives to the League's Minority Protection System, 1919–1939', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 24 (2013), 192–208.

²⁴ Fran Neemann, 'Minderheitendiplomatie. Leo Motzkin zwischen Imperien und Nationen', in Dan Diner, ed., *Synchrone Welten. Zeitenräume jüdischer Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 147–74.

Union of German Minorities in Europe (*Verband der Deutschen Minderheiten in Europa*; VDM), was founded in Vienna in October 1922 and directly supported by the government in Berlin. It incorporated delegates from most moderate German minority parties in east-central Europe, and at its forefront were some Baltic German leaders who were in favour of achieving an enduring agreement with ethnic majorities in the states in which they lived, based on the mutual recognition of cultural autonomy for minorities and loyalty to the state.²⁵ With discreet support from the governments of their respective motherlands, representatives of Hungarian and Polish minorities took similar initiatives, usually by means of the establishment of a delegation in Switzerland.

In fact, a dense network of institutes, associations and journals seeking to defend the rights of 'Germans abroad' (*Auslandsdeutsche*) supported a mid-range revision of the borders that had been drawn at Versailles. They set the German appeal in the context of a larger claim for national self-determination for European minorities. Most German minority leaders were increasingly drawn to radical nationalist ideas but also wanted to enlarge the League of Nations Minority Treaties to include all member states, as a step towards the eventual revision of European borders according to the nationality principle. They also pressed the League of Nations to expand the rights granted to ethnic groups by the Treaties. During the 1920s calls to generalise the Minority Treaties and make them more functional became common slogans for most ethno-nationalist and minority émigrés in Europe.²⁶

Thus, short-term strategic interests of some ethno-nationalist émigrés and revisionist states could overlap at times. The German *völkisch* organisations and their mouthpieces, as well as certain revisionist authors who were fiercely committed to defending the rights of Germans abroad, embraced the concept of Wilsonian self-determination. They ignored its most radical democratic side and soon realised that promoting the ethnic deconstruction of Europe went hand in glove with their national interests.²⁷ Unsurprisingly, some *völkisch* journals that championed the cause of German minorities abroad also devoted enthusiastic articles to the home rule demands of the Scots, the Bretons and the Flemish. Some *völkisch* radical activists also attempted to found committees representing oppressed nations, where German minority leaders would supposedly cooperate with the exiles of western European nationalities and even anti-colonialist leaders from Egypt or India. A good example is found in the

²⁵ See Núñez Seixas, *Entre Ginebra y Berlín*, 286–93 and John Hiden, 'Der Verband der Deutschen Minderheiten in Europa 1922–1936: Von der Verteidigung der deutschen Minderheiten zum Werkzeug des Nationalsozialismus', in Baar and Dyroff, eds., *Politische Strategien*, 297–308.

²⁶ See the contemporary account by Paul Lévy, *Le germanisme à l'étranger* (Strasbourg: Comité Alsacien d'Études et Information, 1933), 103–50; as well as Rudolf Jaworski, 'Der Auslandsdeutschegedanke in der Weimarer Republik', *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento*, IV (1978), 223–50 and Gerhard Seewan, 'Mehrheits- und Minderheitsstrategien und die Frage der Loyalität 1919–1939', in Baar and Dyroff, *Politische Strategien*, 15–26.

²⁷ Bastiaan Schot, *Nation oder Staat? Deutschland und der Minderheitenschutz. Zur Völkerbundpolitik in der Stresemann-Ära* (Marburg a. Lahn: Herder Institut, 1988). See also Kurt Trampler, *Staaten und nationale Gemeinschaften. Eine Lösung des europäischen Minderheitenproblems* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1929); *idem* and Karl Haushofer, eds., *Deutschlands Weg an der Zeitenwende* (Munich: Hugendubel Verlag, 1931).

various ‘committees of violated peoples’ supported by the Hungarian government during the early 1920s. Projects were put forward by the Viennese Law Professor Viktor Otte, who in 1925 attempted to hold in Berlin a conference of oppressed peoples ranging from German minorities in Romania to Armenians and Afghans. Around the same date, *völkisch* activists in Berlin sponsored the secretive ‘Committee of Oppressed Peoples’ and invited some exiled Catalan nationalists to attend.²⁸

The best example of joint cooperation between the political representatives of the German, Jewish, Magyar and Slavic minorities covered by the Minority Treaties, along with Catalan nationalists and other groups, was the Congress of European Nationalities (CEN), which remained active from 1925 to 1939. Founded in Geneva as a joint endeavour of Zionist leaders and émigrés, German minority leaders, Slavic and Magyar leaders and exiled Catalanists, the CEN attempted to consolidate itself as the main mediator between the European minorities and state diplomatic corps. It gradually came under the influence of the *völkisch*-oriented leaders of German national minorities, while liberal leaders left the organisation or were simply marginalised. This unstable alliance suffered from several fractures, yet developed a theoretical model for solving the nationality question in interwar Europe. The model was built on the doctrines of non-territorial autonomy inherited from Austrian social democracy, the experiences of the Estonian law of cultural autonomy that was implemented in 1925, the self-governing tradition of Jewish communities in east-central Europe and the corporatist autonomy of German minorities in the same area. However, the CEN leadership could not evade the growing rift between pro-democratic, anti-fascist factions and pro-authoritarian nationalists throughout the 1930s. Some factions of the German minorities’ leadership had developed a democratic-oriented, anti-fascist theory of national belonging that was permeated by a radical belief in European unity and clear rejection of National Socialism and anti-Semitism.²⁹

The fourth group consisted mainly of modest bureaus established by ethno-nationalist movements without motherlands, such as the Irish Bureaus in Paris and other capitals at the beginning of the 1920s. They also established some contacts with substate nationalists from France and Spain, particularly Catalans and Basques.³⁰

²⁸ On Otte’s and Hungarian-sponsored projects, see Núñez Seixas, *Entre Ginebra y Berlín*, 325–7; Daniel Cardona, *La Batalla i altres textos*, E. Ucelay-Da Cal, ed. (Barcelona: La Magrana/Diputació de Barcelona, 1984), 113–5; as well as Viktor Otte, *Die unterdrückten Völker der Welt: Gegen Lüge und Gewalt* (Vienna: Ostmarken-Verlag, 1926).

²⁹ On the origins and evolution of the CEN, see Núñez Seixas, *Entre Ginebra y Berlín*, 16–447; as well as an exhaustive description in Sabine Bamberger-Stemmann, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongreß 1925 bis 1938. Nationale Minderheiten zwischen Lobbyistentum und Großinteressen* (Marburg a. Lahn: Herder Institut, 2000). See also Martyn Housden, ‘Ewald Ammende and the Organization of National Minorities in Interwar Europe’, *German History*, 18 (2000), 439–60.

³⁰ See Dermoth Keogh, ‘The origins of the Irish Foreign Service in Europe (1919–1922)’, *Études Irlandaises*, 8 (1982), 145–64. On the links between the Irish nationalists and Catalan, Basque and Galician nationalists, see Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, ‘El mito del nacionalismo irlandés y su influencia en los nacionalismos gallego, vasco y catalán (1880–1936)’, *Spagna Contemporanea*, 2 (1992), 25–58; as well as Joan C. Ferrer i Pont, *Nosaltres Sols! La revolta irlandesa a Catalunya (1920–1923)* (Barcelona: PAM, 2007).

Other examples include the Macedonian nationalist clubs in Vienna, the Ukrainian exiles in Paris and the Armenian associations in France and other countries.³¹ Many of these relied on the support of their migrant diasporas as they attempted to access the ministries of foreign affairs in their host countries and gain the attention of international public opinion regarding the fate of their respective homelands.

The new émigrés included party leaders, elected deputies and senators and representatives of cultural associations and institutions from national minorities scattered all over Europe. After 1919 they attempted to join some of the pre-existing international networks set up by liberal internationalists, the peace movement and the emerging League of Nations movement. Certainly, not all of them were anti-fascists, and even fewer were fully convinced democrats. In fact, most east-central European émigrés were full-fledged anti-communists. Many shared anti-Semitic attitudes and sentiments with radical *völkisch* nationalists in Germany and found it convenient to look for support from Mussolini's Italy after 1925. One example was the Macedonian para-terrorist organisation, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO). Similarly, several Ukrainian émigrés belonging to the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) found shelter in Weimar Germany, where they developed links to several *völkisch* organisations and the National Socialist Party prior to 1933.³²

Ukrainian nationalists, particularly those who left the country during the 1930s due to the repression policy of the Piłsudski regime, were joined by Hungarians from Transylvania who had been forced into exile by the Romanian government and the fascist Iron Guard. They embraced revisionist principles and received financial assistance from Budapest. Gustave de Köver, the former deputy of the Hungarian Party in Romania, founded in Geneva the Central Bureau for Minorities (*Bureau Central des Minorités*), which set up delegations in Paris and in London (from 1938 on) with the cooperation of some exiled Ukrainians. It sought to mediate in the Magyar and central European minority petitions to the League of Nations while seeking international visibility for the cause of Transylvanian Magyars. With this purpose, the Bureau also published the monthly transnational review *Minorité-La voix des peuples*.³³

The rhetoric of national rebirth, its enhancement of the national interest as the supreme social value and the relevance of nationalist rituals for the Nazi and

³¹ Stefan Troebst, 'Wien als Zentrum der mazedonischen Emigration in den Zwanziger Jahren', *Mitteilungen des bulgarischen Forschungsinstituts in Österreich*, II, 2 (1979), 68–86; A. Ter-Minassian, *Histoires croisées. Diaspora, Arménie, Transcaucasie, 1880–1990* (Paris: Éditions Parenthèses, 1997), 25–66; Jean-Bernard Dupont-Melnyczenko, *Les Ukrainiens en France. Mémoires éparpillées* (Paris: Autrement, 2007), 44–64 and Michael Esch, *Parallele Gesellschaften und soziale Räume. Osteuropäische Einwanderer in Paris, 1880–1940* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2012), 411–27.

³² See Stefan Troebst, *Mussolini, Makedonien und die Mächte, 1922–1930: Die "Innere Makedonische Revolutionäre Organisation" in der Südosteuropapolitik des faschistischen Italien* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1987); as well as Wolodymir Kosyk, *The Third Reich and the Ukraine* (New York: Lang, 1993).

³³ 'Au Directeur de la Section des Minorités de la Société des Nations', *Minorité*, I, 5 Jan. 1934; Gustave de Köver, *Non! Genève ne protège pas les minorités nationales* (Geneva: Éditions du Bureau central des minorités, 1934); *idem*, *Histoire d'une trahison: le calvaire des minorités nationales et la Société des Nations* (Geneva: Éditions du Bureau central des minorités, 1939).

fascist movements exerted some influence on ethno-nationalists from 'little nations' with a democratic and even left-wing history.³⁴ The influence was accentuated among ethno-nationalist leaders that shared common elements with fascist parties: anti-communism, the desire for a mobilisation of militarised youth on behalf of the nation, anti-Semitism or a preference for a corporatist model of society. In fact, most east-central European nationalist émigrés had many points in common with the authoritarian state-led nationalisms. In spite of this they also played the card of cultivating the friendship of liberal humanitarians and sought the attention of British liberal minority champions. Some British Labour and Liberal MPs committed themselves to defending the claims of the Ukrainian minorities from Poland, the Hungarians from Romania or the Macedonians and Croats that had come from Yugoslavia. They sought to raise parliamentary questions that would force the government in London to adopt a pro-minorities stance in the League of Nations. Notably, Sir Noel-Buxton and Sir Willoughby Dickinson promoted solidarity campaigns in favour of specific national minorities.³⁵

IV

Although it could be seen as a contradiction, French liberal and humanitarian internationalists also embraced the claims of European national minorities during the 1920s, so long as they did not involve any threats to the territorial integrity of France. Platforms could be found with links to the political factions of the French liberal left, such as the journal *Le Cri des Peuples*, edited by Bernard Lecache. This Jewish lawyer of Ukrainian origin and left-wing, communist leanings, who was also a free mason and a great admirer of the Soviet Union, was committed to defending the rights of the Jewish minorities in east-central Europe. After the Schwartzbard trial in Paris, he promoted the League against Pogroms (*Ligue contre les Pogroms*) established in 1927, which in 1928 became the International League against Anti-Semitism (*Ligue Internationale contre l'Antisémitisme*), and, later, the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism (*Ligue Internationale contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme*) in 1932, which still exists today.³⁶ A mixture of aesthetic avant-garde, revolutionary rhetoric and petty-bourgeois non-conformism, the mouthpiece *Le Cri*

³⁴ Thus, some Catalanist intellectuals could not escape feeling attracted by Fascist Italy in the mid-1920s. See Enric Ucelay-Da Cal, 'The Shadow of a Doubt: Fascist and Communist Alternatives in Catalan Separatism, 1919–1939', Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, WP 198 (Barcelona: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, 2002).

³⁵ Stefan Dyroff, 'Minority rights and Humanitarianism. The international campaign for the Ukrainians in Poland, 1930–31', *Journal of Modern European History*, 12 (2014), 216–30. See several examples in Lord Noel Noel-Buxton, *National Minorities To-day* (London: The Ukrainian Bureau, 1931); Robert Gower, *The Hungarian Minorities in the Succession States* (London: Grant Richards, 1927) and H. Hessel Tiltman, *Peasant Europe* (London: Kegan Paul, 2005 [1934]).

³⁶ See Emmanuel Debono, 'Les origines de la Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme (LICRA)', *Histoire@Politique* 2/2007, available at: <http://www.cairn.info/revue-histoire-politique-2007-2-page-8.html> (last visited); as well as *idem*, 'Bernard Abraham Lecache, président fondateur de la Ligue internationale contre l'antisémitisme', *Archives Juives*, 40, 1 (2007),

des Peuples was first published as a weekly and later as a monthly journal between May 1928 and April 1929. Among its varied contributors were the British writer and member of the socialist-oriented Fabian Society H. G. Wells, the French communist writer Henri Barbusse and the physicist Albert Einstein, alongside the Catalanist leader Francesc Macià, the Italian socialist Filippo Turati and the former Portuguese President Bernardino Machado. From the very first issue the journal proclaimed its aim of providing a 'platform of solidarity' for the 'national, philosophic and religious minorities' around the globe, to which a 'French minority' of pacifists and anti-militarist activists could also be added.³⁷ Bernard Lecache welcomed in his journal – which clearly leaned towards the liberal left and the moderate socialists – articles from diverse ethno-nationalist activists. Contributors ranged from Jewish leaders to *völkisch*-inclined German minority leaders such as the Baltic German Werner Hasselblatt, or even Hungarian deputies from Transylvania.

Le Cri des Peuples' commitment to national minorities reflected its liberal humanist stance. It held that weak individuals, groups and minorities should be protected from states and gave priority to freedom of conscience and speech over all other matters. This did not necessarily mean that the journal embraced the nationality principle.³⁸ Accordingly, Lecache positioned himself in favour of home-rule for Alsace-Lorraine but kept silent about nationality claims within France. *Le Cri des Peuples* especially welcomed the cause of exiled Catalan nationalists but disapproved of Flemish nationalist aims at independence. Lecache himself was connected to the Committee of Jewish Delegations and especially committed to the cause of some eastern European nationalities. He advocated the revision of the 1919 borders and the independence of Macedonia, Ireland and Montenegro.³⁹ The journal also took great interest in the evolution of the minority question in the League of Nations. Beginning in June 1928 a variety of minority leaders wrote articles in *Le Cri des Peuples*, including the Catalanist lawyer Francesc Maspons i Anglasesell, the Baltic German politicians Werner Hasselblatt and Paul Schiemann, the Hungarians Géza Szüllö (a deputy in the Czechoslovak parliament) and Elémer Jakabffy, publisher of the transnational minority journal *Glásul Minoritatilor-Die Stimme der Minderheiten-La voix des minorités* in Lugoj, Transylvania.⁴⁰

Though *Le Cri des Peuples* was well received by many intellectuals of the French socialist and communist left, it certainly maintained controversial positions on some international issues. It embraced the views of the German minorities organisations, openly advocating the unification of Germany and Austria (*Anschluss*).⁴¹ Although

140–4; *idem*, *Aux origines de l'antiracisme. La LICA, 1927–1940* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 2012) and Esch, *Parallele Gesellschaften*, 433–7.

³⁷ Bernard Lecache, 'À tous! à tous!', *Le Cri des Peuples*, 30 May 1928.

³⁸ G. Renard, 'Pourquoi et dans quelle mesure nous défendrons les minorités', *Le Cri des Peuples*, 30 May 1928.

³⁹ Bernard Lecache, 'Notre programme', *Le Cri des Peuples*, 6 June 1928.

⁴⁰ See, for example, *Le Cri des Peuples*, 11 July 1928; letter from Bernad Lecache to Josip Vilfan, Paris, 17 May 1928, Vilfan archive, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

⁴¹ See, for example, D. K., 'Un mouvement qu'on n'arrêtera pas: c'est l'Anschluss', *Le Cri des Peuples*, 15 Aug. 1928.

the journal publicly identified itself as federalist and not in favour of ethnic separatism, it published articles that leaned towards sympathy with the Breton nationalist movement. That, along with its revisionist attitude towards the peace treaties, stirred up opposing reactions in French public opinion.⁴² During the second half of 1928 *Le Cri des Peuples* increasingly reflected the claims and strategic demands put forward by the European minorities movement.⁴³

Moreover, the journal managed to mobilise support from French politicians in favour of concrete minority issues. In January 1929 Lecache launched an appeal to force the League of Nations to intervene in Macedonia and mediate in the Bulgarian, Yugoslav and Italian interference in the region. As many as twelve left-wing French parliamentary deputies subscribed to the journal, along with two senators, a number of prominent intellectuals and journalists, Italian anti-fascists and the Human Rights League. This was its ideal sphere of action, as a journal that was present among liberal internationalists, French Socialist and Radical-Socialist Party factions, anti-fascist and nationalist exile committees, from Catalanists to Egyptian nationalists, Italian anti-fascists and Hungarians from Transylvania.⁴⁴ They supported what the Chinese Kuomintang were fighting for while also backing the 1929 pro-minorities offensive of German chancellor Gustav Stresemann in the League of Nations and advocating internal federalism as a formula for coexistence between Flemings and Walloons in Belgium. There was room for everyone under the banner of ‘oppressed peoples’.

However, in April 1929 *Le Cri des Peuples* ceased to exist. The official reason given was failure to attain more than 2,500 subscribers. Though no evidence of German financial support has been found, the disappearance of the journal coincided conspicuously with chancellor Stresemann’s diplomatic offensive in Geneva. But the Comintern also seems to have endorsed the publication.

The French radical federalists created a different platform. The Parisian federalist group headed by Eugène Poitevin had ties with Breton, Corsican and Alsatian autonomists. He edited the journal *Le Fédéraliste* between 1921 and 1938, as the voice of the *Foyer d’Études Fédéralistes*, which leaned towards ‘syndicalist’ revolutionary groups. To a certain extent *Le Fédéraliste* waved the banner of the nationality principle as a principle to be embraced by the French liberal left from the early 1930s on. This showed up in its commitment to the federalist claims put forward by substate nationalist groups in France and its support for anti-fascist Italian exiles, particularly the liberal-socialist group Justice and Freedom (*Giustizia e Libertà*). Poitevin’s Proudhonian federalism in conjunction with the corporatism embraced by the group *Ordre Nouveau* prevented *Le Fédéraliste* from succumbing to the fatal attraction of fascist nationalism that affected several factions of the Breton, Flemish or Corsican movements.⁴⁵ Poitevin held the contrary view that a simple pan-European

⁴² *Le Cri des Peuples*, 5 Sept. 1928.

⁴³ Bernard Lecache, ‘En suivant les travaux du IVe. Congrès des Nationalités’, *Le Cri des Peuples*, 5 Sept. 1929.

⁴⁴ *Le Cri des Peuples*, 10 Jan. 1929.

⁴⁵ *Le Fédéraliste*, 4, 27 (1933).

federation of states, nationalities and regions would make it possible for the peoples of Europe to overcome the threat of totalitarianism.⁴⁶ From 1933 on the CEN showed increasing affinity with *völkisch* doctrines and German theories of a new European order that divided nations and peoples into racial and cultural hierarchies; meanwhile Parisian federalists proposed as an alternative path the cooperation between left-wing Catalan and Occitan nationalists during the 1930s.⁴⁷ Poitevin can be considered an ideological forerunner of the concept of 'Europe of the free peoples', a term coined thirty years later as a project to create a European federation of stateless nations.

V

In 1933–34 circumstances on the international scene changed dramatically and affected the space in which ethno-nationalist exiles had to manoeuvre. The rise of National Socialism in Germany and the authoritarian shift of several states in east-central Europe (except Czechoslovakia), led to the systematic inclusion of fascist and right-wing authoritarian tenets in the programmes promoted by the representatives and political parties of national minorities and stateless nations, from Brittany to the Ukraine. Some of them even became useful devices for the foreign policy interests of Nazi Germany, which began to manifest themselves in 1938. The parallel 'levelling', or Nazification (*Gleichschaltung*), of leading posts in German minority organisations all over east-central Europe went hand-in-hand with the authoritarian and pro-fascist inclinations of Breton nationalists, Alsatian autonomists and Flemish and Frisian nationalists. Cooperation with the Germans (or with the Italians in the Corsican case) was regarded by some substate nationalists as an alternative path to national liberation and counterbalance to their scant social support up to that time.⁴⁸ However, three important exceptions to this trend must be noted.

The first were, again, the dominant branches of the Catalan, Basque and Galician nationalist exiles' movements after the defeat of the Spanish Republic in the Civil War (1936–1939).⁴⁹ They fled first to Europe – mainly France and Great Britain – and then to several Latin American countries, giving a distinctive colour to the entire panorama of Spanish Republican anti-fascism. The Basques gained sympathy and support among broad sectors of European liberal Catholicism and the moderate

⁴⁶ See E. Berth, 'Totalitarisme ou Fédéralisme', *Le Fédéraliste*, 2, 41 (1937) and 3, 42 (1937).

⁴⁷ See, for example, *Le Fédéraliste*, 1, 28 (1934).

⁴⁸ See Arzalier, *Les perdants*; Sébastien Carney, *Breiz Atao! Mordrel, Delaporte, Lainé, Fouéré: Une mystique nationale (1901–1948)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015), 189–220; Samuel Goodfellow, 'From Communism to Nazism: The Transformation of Alsatian Communists', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27, 2 (1992), 231–58. See also Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, 'Katalanismus und Faschismus: Zur Interpretation eines katalanistischen Memorandums an das nationalsozialistische Deutschland', *Zeitschrift für Katalanistik*, 6 (1993), 159–201; as well as *idem*, *Movimientos nacionalistas en Europa. Siglo XX* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2004, 2nd. Ed.), 246–9 and 256–62.

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that some Catalan, Basque and Galician conservative ethnonationalists also joined the Francoist side, as they shared with the Spanish traditionalists and Fascists certain values such as religion, social order and fear of social revolution. See Borja de Riquer, *El último Cambó, 1936–1947: La tentación autoritaria* (Barcelona: Grijalbo-Mondadori, 1997).

left. Their cause had been emphasised by the propaganda of the Spanish Republican government in its attempt to show the world that socially moderate and strongly Catholic Basque nationalists also backed the Republic against fascism. The bombing of the Basque town of Guernica in April 1937 echoed across the international press, which presented the Basques as the collective victim of fascist terror. The regional Basque government, constituted in October 1936 under the charismatic leadership of José Antonio de Aguirre, successfully established international lobbies (such as the International League of the Friends of the Basques) to promote their claims and mobilise a relevant part of their migrant diasporas in the Americas.⁵⁰ However, previous links to other ‘oppressed nations’ of Europe, particularly the Irish, proved rather uninteresting.⁵¹ Dozens of Basque nationalist exiles joined the Allied war effort after 1939, both as fighters at the front and as informants for British and US military intelligence, consciously following the model of the Czechoslovak Legion during the First World War. Quantitatively, they were far more relevant than Galician nationalists, who mostly relied on Galician migrant associations based in South America. Their militant anti-fascism was captured in the cartoons and pictures drawn by their main leader, the deputy and artist Alfonso R. Castelao. Catalanist exiles, who had seized the opportunity to leave Catalonia and cross the French border en masse in January 1939, outnumbered Basque and Galician exiles. Unlike the Basques, however, they were politically very fragmented and played only a minor role in anti-fascist activities.

All three groups of exiled nationalists experienced a first phase of political radicalisation, which induced them to strive for short-term independence. Though some – particularly the Basques – were even tempted to collaborate with the Nazis, ethno-nationalist exiles from Republican Spain mostly remained loyal to democracy and firmly opposed fascism. They regarded it as a natural enemy to the sovereignty of a small nation and an outright expression of ‘national-statism’, which meant annihilating small folk cultures in order to favour large ones. Iberian substate nationalists tended to seek sympathy and recruit adherents among the same sectors of international public opinion that supported the cause of the Spanish Republic abroad. After the Allied victory, they pragmatically advocated restoration of the Spanish Republic in the short-term, but ultimately desired a new multinational or confederal Republic.⁵²

⁵⁰ See an exhaustive description of these lobbying activities in Alexander Ugalde, *La Acción Exterior del Nacionalismo Vasco (1890–1939): Historia, Pensamiento y Relaciones Internacionales* (Oñati: Instituto Vasco de Administración Pública, 1996), 533–606.

⁵¹ Irish left-wing parties relied heavily on this past relationship to underscore their sympathy for the Catholic Basques. Solidarity with the Basque Country may also have played a role for some of the 250 Irish volunteers of the International Brigades, including the young Dubliner Sullivan Prendergast, who directly joined a company of Basque volunteers (*Gudariak*). However, mainstream Irish public opinion supported the Francoist rebels, due to their Catholic devotion. Only one Basque radical leader, Eli Gallastegi, found shelter in Ireland after 1937, thanks to his prior contacts with Irish activists. See Daniel Leach, *Fugitive Ireland. European Minority Nationalists and Irish Political Asylum, 1937–2008* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 52–60.

⁵² See Santiago de Pablo, Ludger Mees and José L. Rodríguez Ranz, *El péndulo patriótico. Historia del Partido Nacionalista Vasco, II: 1936–1979* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2001), 75–237; Mercè Morales Montoya,

A second exception, mentioned earlier, involved certain leaders of the Sardinian home rule movement, who continued to oppose fascism – especially the island variant known as ‘Sardo-Fascism’ – and went into exile after dissolving the Sardinian Action Party (*Partito Sardo d’Azione*) in December 1925. The charismatic Sardinian autonomist Emilio Lussu joined the Paris-based group Justice and Freedom and devoted himself to the anti-fascist cause, giving it priority over territorial claims. While other autonomist leaders remained politically inactive in Sardinia until 1945, several of Lussu’s followers took part in anti-fascist agitation in France and Italy. Some of them also joined the International Brigades to fight for the Spanish Republic.⁵³

A third group consisted of German minority leaders who opposed National Socialism and tried to reconcile national claims with democracy. The Baltic German liberal leader Paul Schiemann, for example, had advanced in the mid-1920s a theoretical model for resolving the minority question at the European level. It incorporated many elements of the proposal of Karl Renner and Otto Bauer to denationalise culture by separating the spheres of citizenship and ethnic allegiance. In other words, the state had to be a-national.⁵⁴ Though German minority leaders had widely accepted this theory during the 1920s, the rise of National Socialism reinforced the national-conservative and *völkisch* tendency among them. In a speech given to the VDM in June 1932, some months before the German National Socialists seized power, Schiemann warned of the ‘new nationalist wave’ breaking across east-central Europe due to the rise of exclusive state-nationalism in Germany and its influence on German minority leaders abroad. He argued that Hitler had poisoned the community life of German minorities abroad by imposing a totalitarian concept of the ethnically defined People’s Community (*Völksgemeinschaft*) in Germany that could be imitated by other majority nationalisms.⁵⁵ However, the ninth conference of European Nationalities in Berne (September 1933) revealed the clear dominance of pro-Nazi views among German minority leaders, who saw the ‘New Germany’ as the great, long-awaited defender of their interests in the international scenario.

After opposing the Nazi-oriented leaders of the German minority of Latvia, Schiemann found shelter in Vienna. Alongside Eduard Pant, the German Catholic leader from Poland, and Major Karl Kotska, a Sudeten German, he called a meeting of German anti-Nazi minority leaders, which took place in the Austrian capital in February 1937. They insisted on detaching national identity from state allegiance and denounced the rise of state-led national homogenisation as a threat to individual and collective freedom for all of east-central Europe. Schiemann established the

La Generalitat de Josep Irla i l'exili polític català (Barcelona: Base, 2009); Xosé M. Núñez Seixas and P. Caglio Vila, eds., *O exilio galego de 1936: Política, sociedade, itinerarios* (Sada: Eds. do Castro, 2006).

⁵³ See Salvatore Cubeddu, *Sardisti. Viaggio nel Partito Sardo d’Azione tra cronaca e storia. Vol. 1 (1919–1945)* (Sassari: Edes, 1993), 591–9; as well as Manlio Brigaglia, *Emilio Lussu e “Giustizia e Libertà”* (Cagliari: Edizioni della Torre, 1976).

⁵⁴ On Paul Schiemann, see John Hiden, *Defender of Minorities. Paul Schiemann, 1876–1944* (London: Hurst, 2004); as well as John Hiden and David J. Smith, ‘Looking beyond the Nation State: A Baltic Vision for National Minorities between the Wars’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41, 3 (2006), 387–99.

⁵⁵ Paul Schiemann, ‘Die neue nationalistische Welle’, *Nation und Staat*, 5 (Sept. 1932), 799–811.

new German Association for National Reconciliation in Europe (*Deutscher Verband zur nationalen Befriedung Europas*) but limited its activities to launching a solidarity campaign with the Basque people during the Spanish Civil War. In March 1938 the annexation of Austria to the Third Reich marked an end to this initiative; Schiemann withdrew to his home in Latvia, where he died six years later.⁵⁶ His anti-totalitarian formula for the coexistence of ethnic majorities and minorities within the same state fell into oblivion for several decades. This would also be the fate of some exiled Sudeten German Social Democrats, such as Wenzel Jaksch, who was involved in the Labour and Socialist International. He opposed the Nazis' growing influence on Sudeten German politics and went into exile in Poland and London after the annexation of Bohemia by the Third Reich. Although he maintained close contact with the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, he always demanded a broad autonomy for Sudeten Germans in the new Czechoslovakia in order to solve the internal minority problem, and he continued to claim self-determination for nationalities as a basis for an enduring peace within a federal Europe. This included ethnic Germans from east-central Europe. He went back to Germany in 1949 and remained committed to the cause of Sudeten German refugees and expellees until his death.⁵⁷

VI

Ethno-nationalist movements in exile and anti-fascism were a marriage of convenience in interwar Europe. There were certainly many exceptions to the rule: several groups of nationalist activists prioritised global worldviews over national liberation. Thus, some communist-leaning Ukrainians in Paris denounced Poland's repression of Ukrainian language and culture in eastern Galicia and fiercely rejected fascism. These Ukrainians also rejected the *Promethean* movement sponsored by Poland, which gathered anti-communist nationalist exiles from diverse Soviet republics.⁵⁸ However, most nationalist émigrés searched for support abroad and acted out of strategic pragmatism during their exile: they were only interested in the great powers. Three strategies were usually applied. The first involved cooperation with other émigré groups belonging to 'oppressed nationalities', which also implied seeking support from third states able to support their national claims. In fact, most transnational groups and journals that sought to give voice to minorities and nationalities were suspected of being financed by state diplomacies. A second option

⁵⁶ Paul Schiemann, *Ein europäisches Problem. Unabhängige Betrachtungen zur Minderheitenfrage* (Vienna: Rheinhold Verlag, 1937).

⁵⁷ See Wenzel Jacksh, *Europas Weg nach Potsdam. Schuld und Schicksal im Donaauraum* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1967), 337–52; Karl Kern, ed., *Wenzel Jacksch. Patriot und Europäer* (Munich: Die Brücke, 1967), 95–108 and Martkin K. Bachstein, *Wenzel Jacksch und die sudetendeutsche Sozialdemokratie* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1974), 195–204, and later portions of the book.

⁵⁸ See e.g. Richard Woytak, 'The Promethean Movement in Interwar Poland', *East European Quarterly*, XVIII, 3 (1984), 273–8; Zaur Gasimov, 'Zwischen Freiheitstopoi und Antikommunismus: Ordnungsentwürfe für Europa im Spiegel der polnischen Zeitung *Przymierze*', *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte*, 12 (2011), 207–22.

was to search directly for third-state support, ranging from the Soviet Union to France or Germany. This required the crucial support of political and cultural mediators who could influence public opinion in the third state. The third or 'loyalist' strategy prioritised joint action with other opposition groups from the same state, from liberal democrats to communists, who were usually eager to raise the banner of the freedom of nationalities. Yet, the Popular Front strategy also subordinated this objective to the defence of the national independence of nation states.⁵⁹ The Catalans and the Sardinians chose this path on several occasions. For the most part, this also meant postponing the fulfilment of national claims until the 'oppressor' regime in the homeland was defeated. Each national movement, and even each group within it, chose different and often diverging political agitation strategies in exile, according to the circumstances that shaped the international political scenario.

Fascism was not a common enemy for ethnic minorities and nationalities all over Europe. For many ethno-nationalist leaders and intellectuals, it held a degree of fascination. Although the Italian fascist regime had implemented a policy of brutal assimilation of their borderland minorities, especially German-speaking South Tyrol, its policy regarding cultural diversity in other areas, such as Sardinia, featured a high degree of ambivalence. Similarly, Nazi Germany favoured the recognition of cultural rights for 'racially akin' Danish minorities in Schleswig-Holstein while showing indifference towards its numerically reduced Slavic minorities in Prussia and Silesia. Nazi geopolitics welcomed the flag of national self-determination and the redrawing of national borders in Europe along nationality lines. The great relevance of the nation in fascist ideology and rituals also attracted populist nationalists from all over the continent.

However, certain elements surfaced during the 1930s that decreased the attraction of fascism. First, most minority nationalists from western Europe regarded Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 as clear sign of its imperialist ambitions and of its disregard for little nations. Second, the intervention of Nazi Germany and Italy in the Spanish Civil War also revealed the alignment of fascist powers with state nationalism. Third, the Nazis implemented the first segregationist measures against the Jewish population in Germany in February 1933, though the impact of those measures was certainly not uniform throughout Europe. Integralist nationalists from Ukraine, Brittany and Flanders justified them and felt attracted by the authoritarian tenets of Nazi and fascist doctrine. Basque, Sardinian and Galician nationalist émigrés, by contrast, considered fascism to be the worst expression of state-led, centralist and assimilation-oriented nationalism, which aimed at uprooting their existence as distinctive entities. Even some German minority leaders denounced fascism as the best incarnation of state nationalism and, therefore, a threat to the survival of ethnic and cultural diversity in Europe. In spite of these ambiguities, (ethno-)nationalist liberal and left-wing exiles made a distinctive contribution to European anti-fascism.

⁵⁹ See a general overview in Serge Wolikow and Annie Ruget, eds., *Antifascisme et nation. Les gauches européennes au temps du Front populaire* (Dijon: EUD, 1998).