

1918: the year the Great War ended and its legacies



1. 1918: why did the Central Powers (Germany & Austria-Hungary) lose the war?



11 November 1918: the **armistice** is signed
an **unconditional capitulation**
A break from tradition



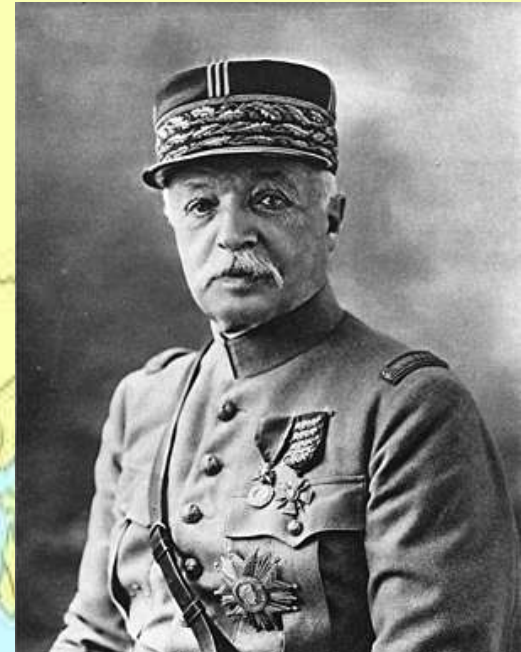
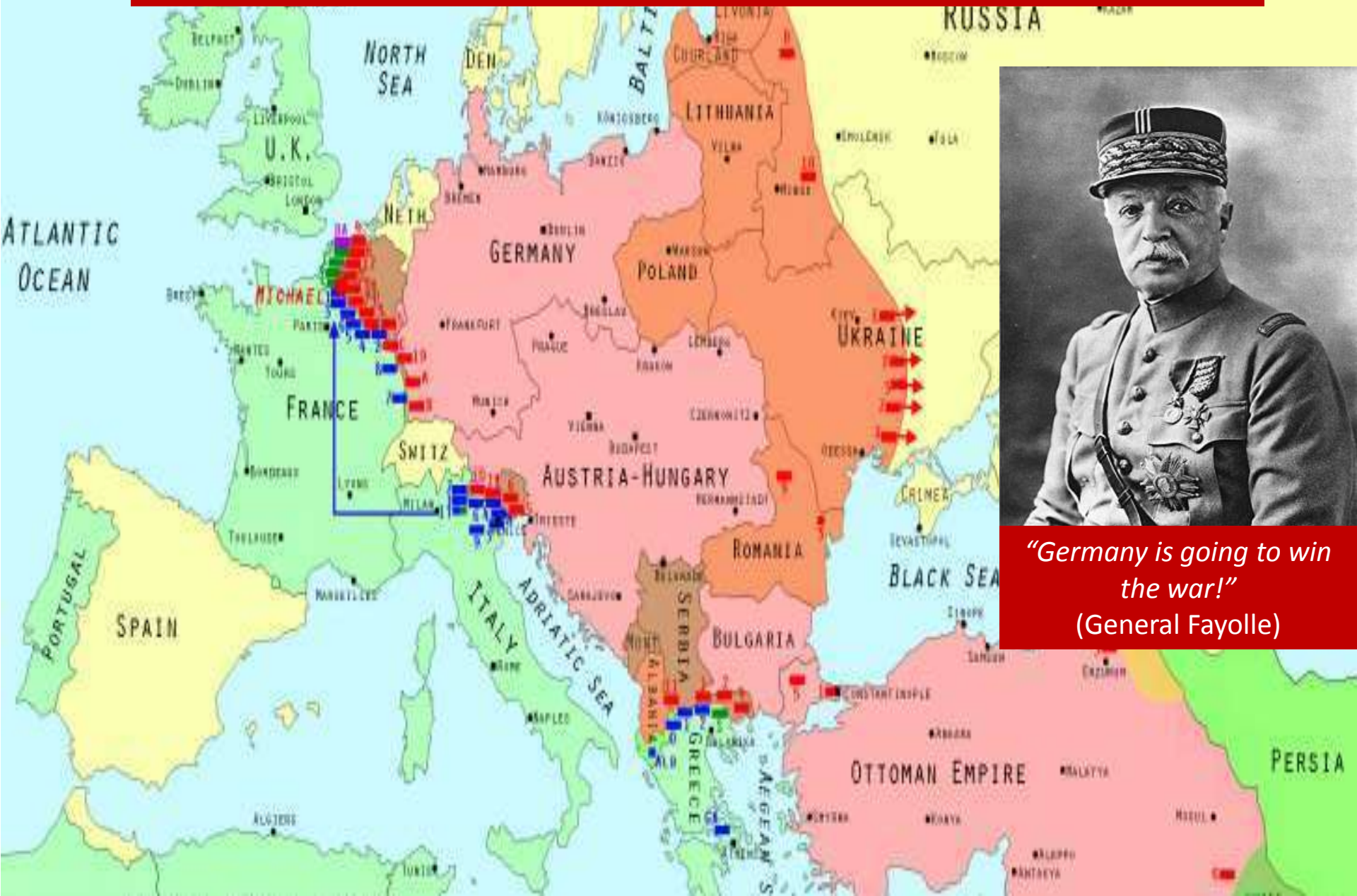
The **German point of view**: how to explain a defeat few
Germans had anticipated

The defeat: something irrational, incomprehensible

The traditional concept of armistice (1648): a **temporary** and **mutually agreed**
interruption of a conflict

A sort of ceasefire paving the way to a **negotiated peace**

November 1918: the German imperial army still occupies a large swathe of Russia
Germany not invaded
Early 1918: Germany still in a position of strength



"Germany is going to win the war!"
(General Fayolle)

Immediate cause (as perceived then): mutinies leading to full-fledged revolution



The “stab-in-the-back” (*Dolchstoß*) myth
Revolution = defeat/military collapse

The image of a Germany invincible preserved
The German army not vanquished



Why did Germany lose? (the real reasons)



The real question: how did the Central Powers manage to hold on for so long?

1914-1917: a European war

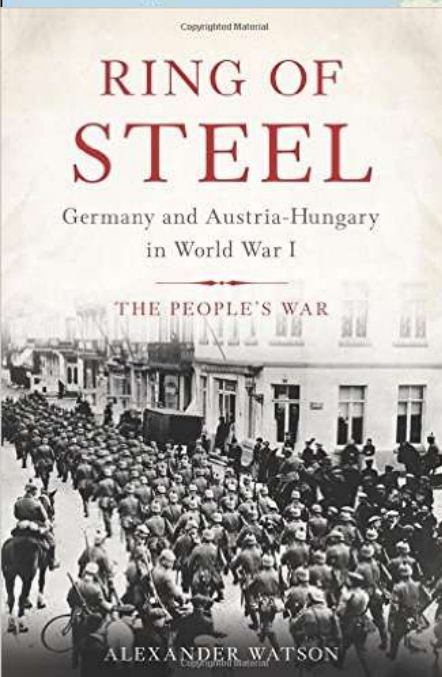
Key

- Neutral Powers
- Central Powers
- Allied Powers

A **strategic nightmare** for Germany & Austria-Hungary:

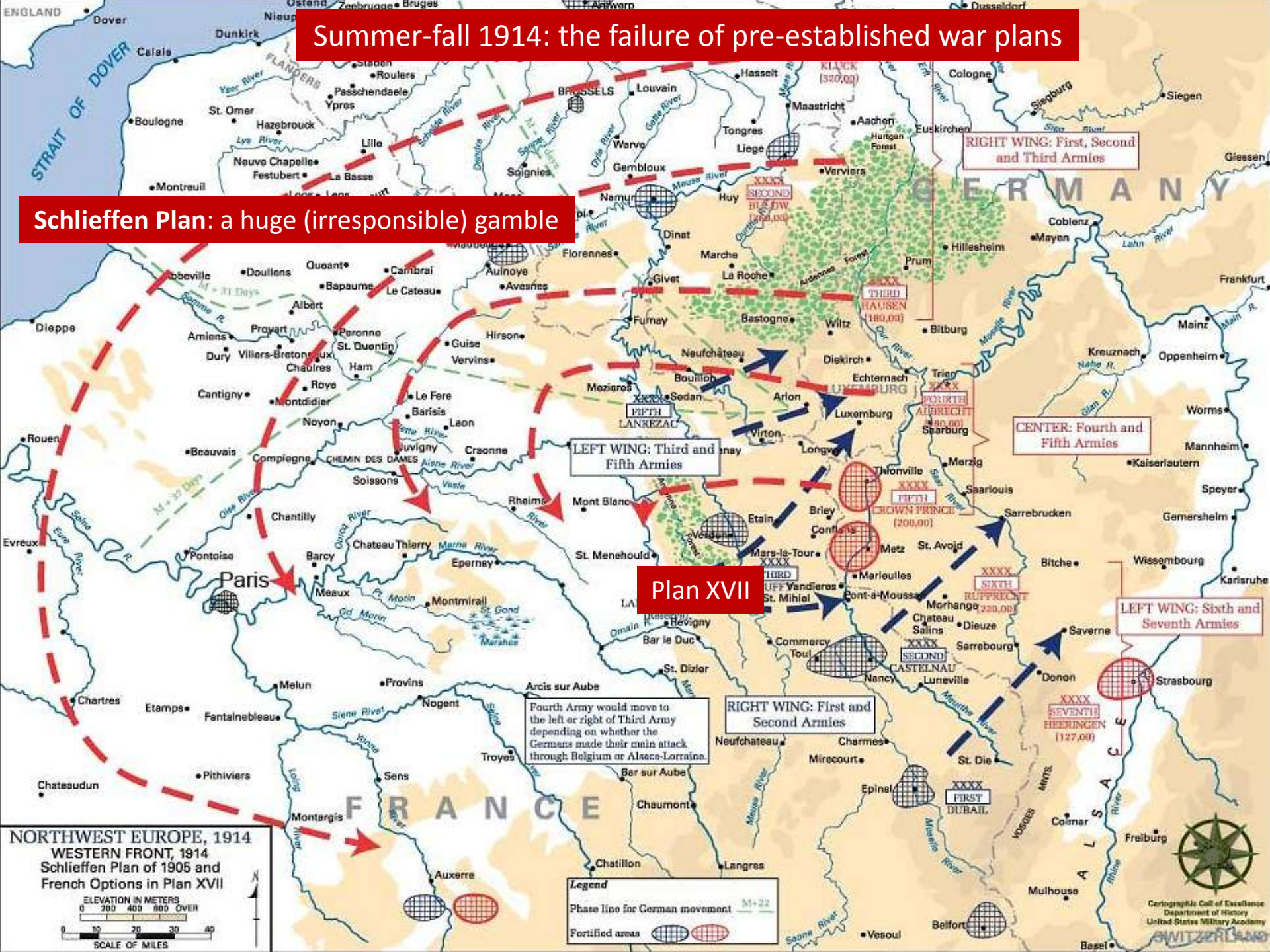
- 1- A war on two fronts
- 2- Numerical inferiority (118 millions vs. 260 millions)
- 3- Superior financial & naval resources (France & Britain)
- 4- Germany well integrated in global trade networks (imports of raw materials)
- 4- Extended hostilities = destabilizing hardship for civilian populations

The need to crush Germany's opponents quickly & decisively
REASON 1: the Central Powers lost the war because time played against them



Summer-fall 1914: the failure of pre-established war plans

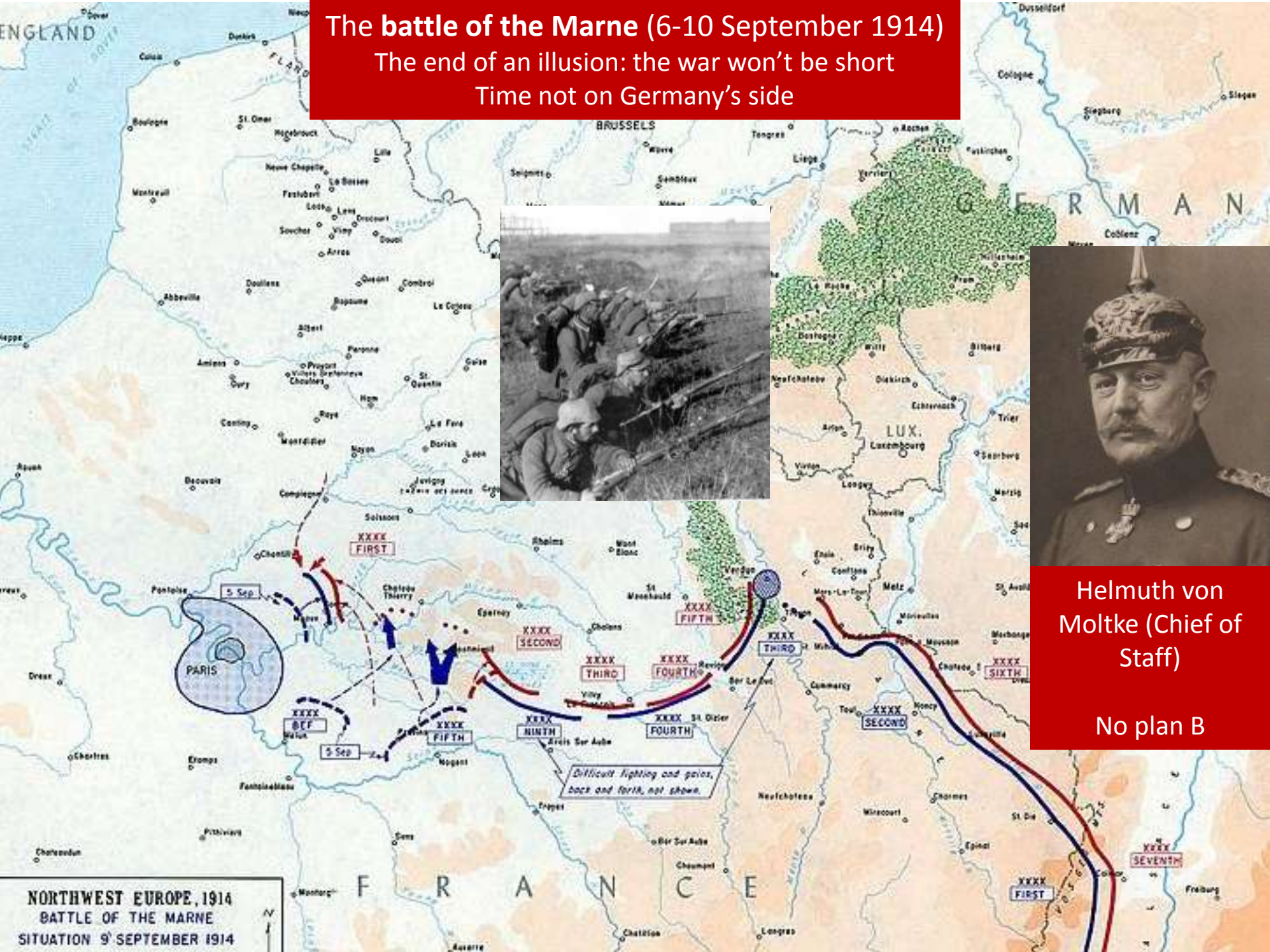
Schlieffen Plan: a huge (irresponsible) gamble



The battle of the Marne (6-10 September 1914)

The end of an illusion: the war won't be short

Time not on Germany's side



Helmuth von
Moltke (Chief of
Staff)

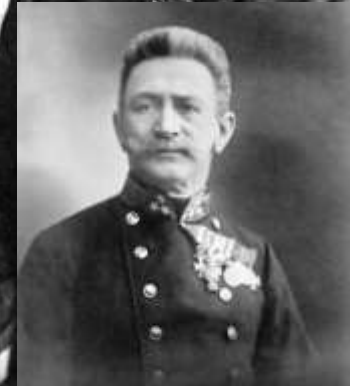
No plan B

NORTHWEST EUROPE, 1914
BATTLE OF THE MARNE
SITUATION 9th SEPTEMBER 1914

Unrestricted submarine campaign: "the last card" (January 1917)

A capital decision & worst decision of the war made by the **German military** (9 January 1917)

Britain on the verge of bankruptcy
French army demoralized
Russia on the edge of revolution



"I do not hesitate to declare that we can [...] force England through unrestricted submarine war to make peace in five months"

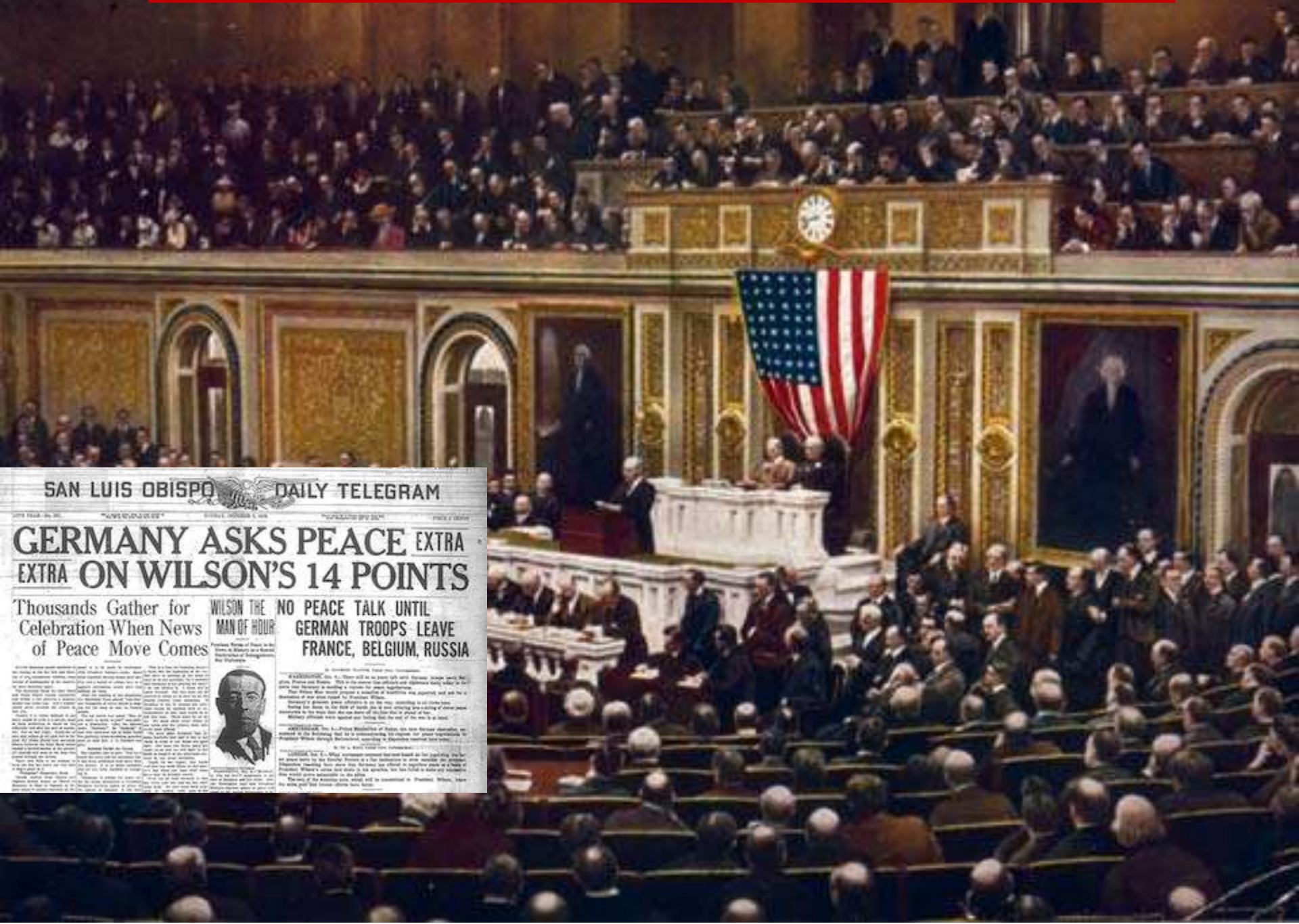
Conrad von Hotzendorff (Chief of Admiralty Staff)

Campaign to begin no later than 1 February 1917

The risk of provoking the U.S.
The U.S. not seen as a threat
Britain to sue for peace before the U.S. could make a difference



2 April: the U.S. (world leading economic power) declares war on Germany



Winter of 1916-1917: growing deprivation & hardship

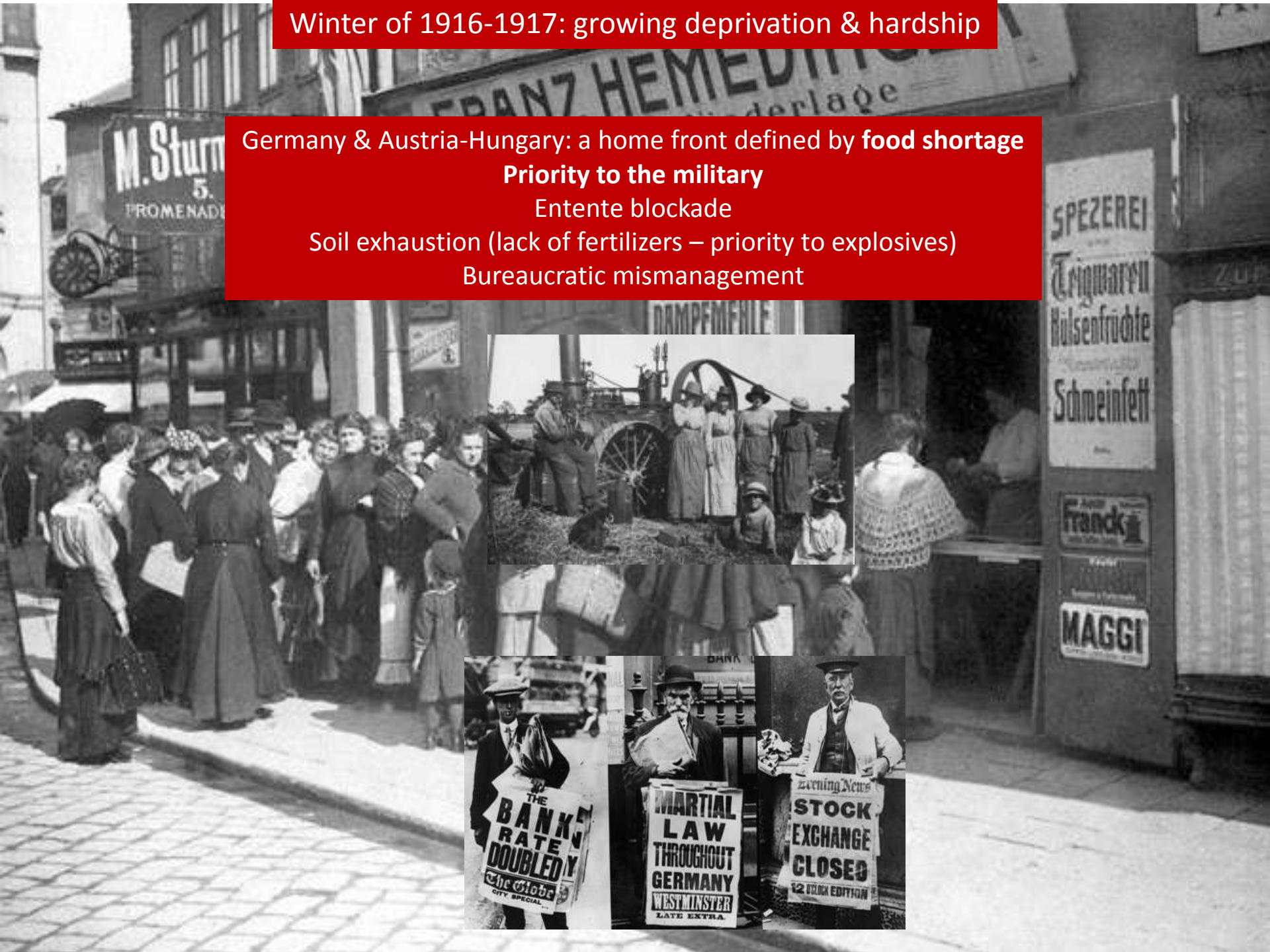
Germany & Austria-Hungary: a home front defined by **food shortage**

Priority to the military

Entente blockade

Soil exhaustion (lack of fertilizers – priority to explosives)

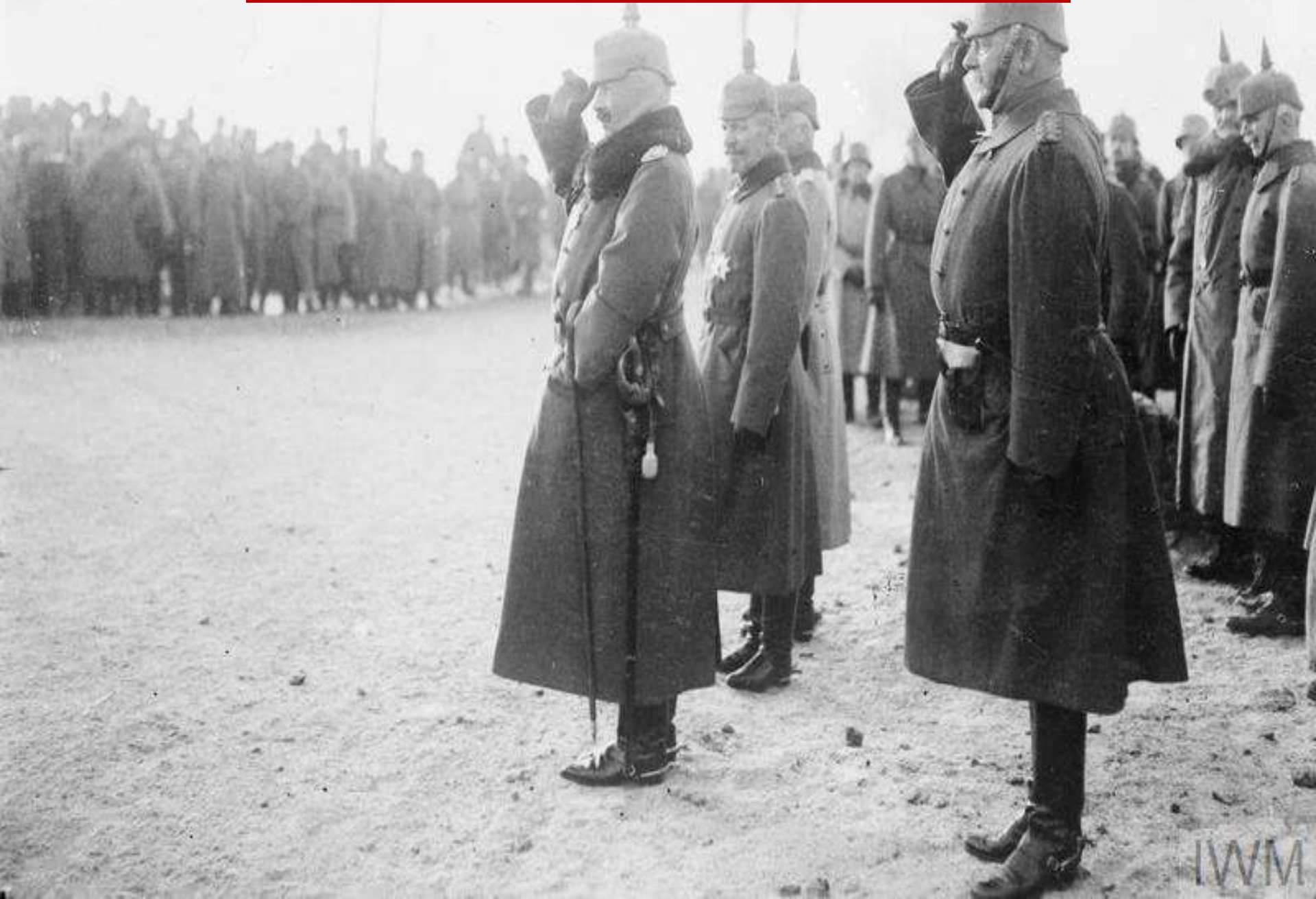
Bureaucratic mismanagement



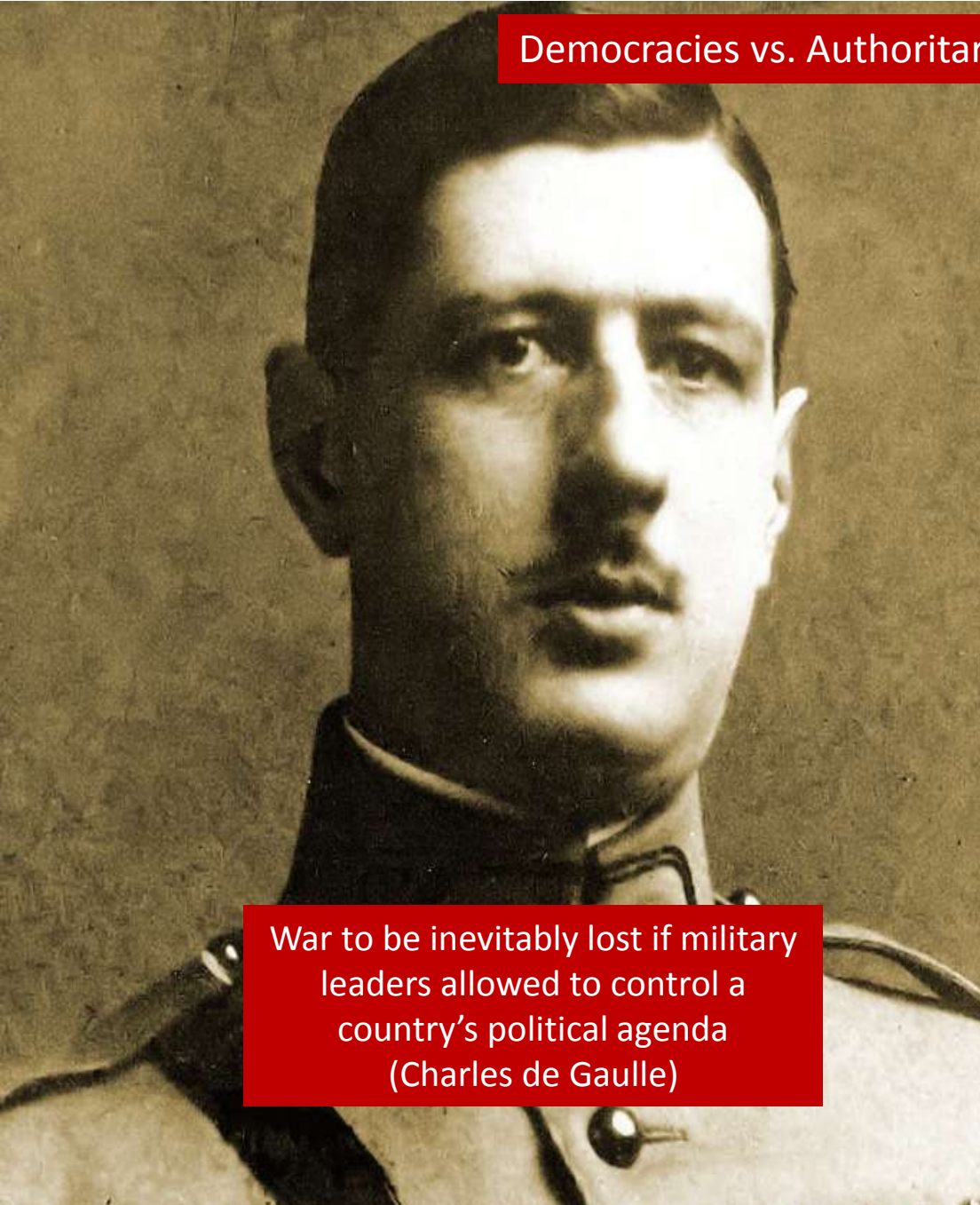
Winter 1917: 1 000 calories per adult
Food riots in German & Austrian cities



Reason 2: a problem of governance
The civilian power lost to the military (able to impose its decisions)



Democracies vs. Authoritarian regimes



War to be inevitably lost if military leaders allowed to control a country's political agenda
(Charles de Gaulle)



1916: the increasing domination of the German military over Germany's political scene

August 1916: the appointments of Hindenburg & Ludendorff = a new phase



Their program: victory, no matter the cost

Military necessity to prevail

The "Hindenburg Programme": to prioritize military above economic and political considerations

Democracies: government control over military operations

German Reichstag powerless

Military power unchecked

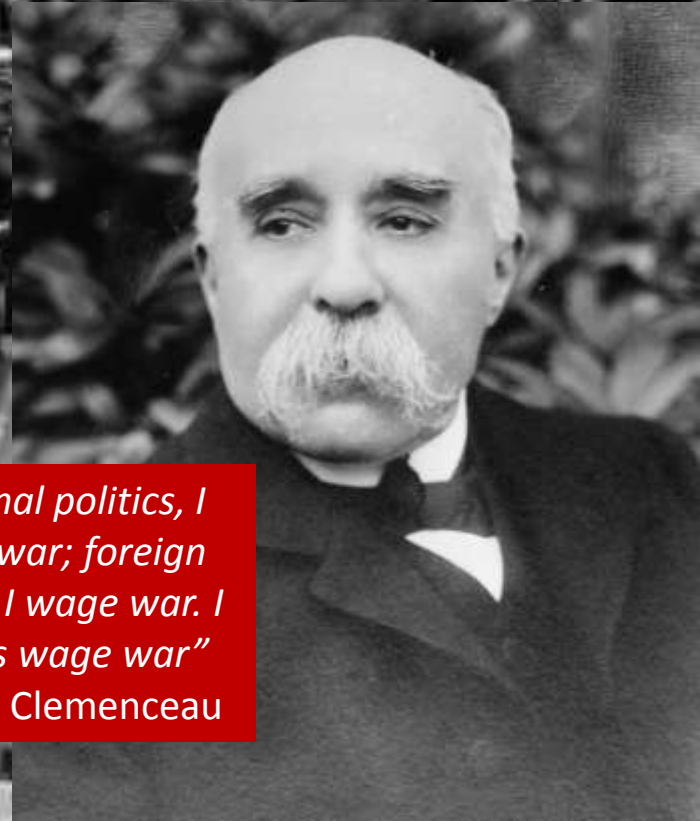
France & Great Britain: control over military decisions



Bethmann-Hollweg forced to resign (July 1917)



"Internal politics, I wage war; foreign affairs, I wage war. I always wage war"
George Clemenceau



Reason 3: the Central Powers lost because they could no longer manager militarily

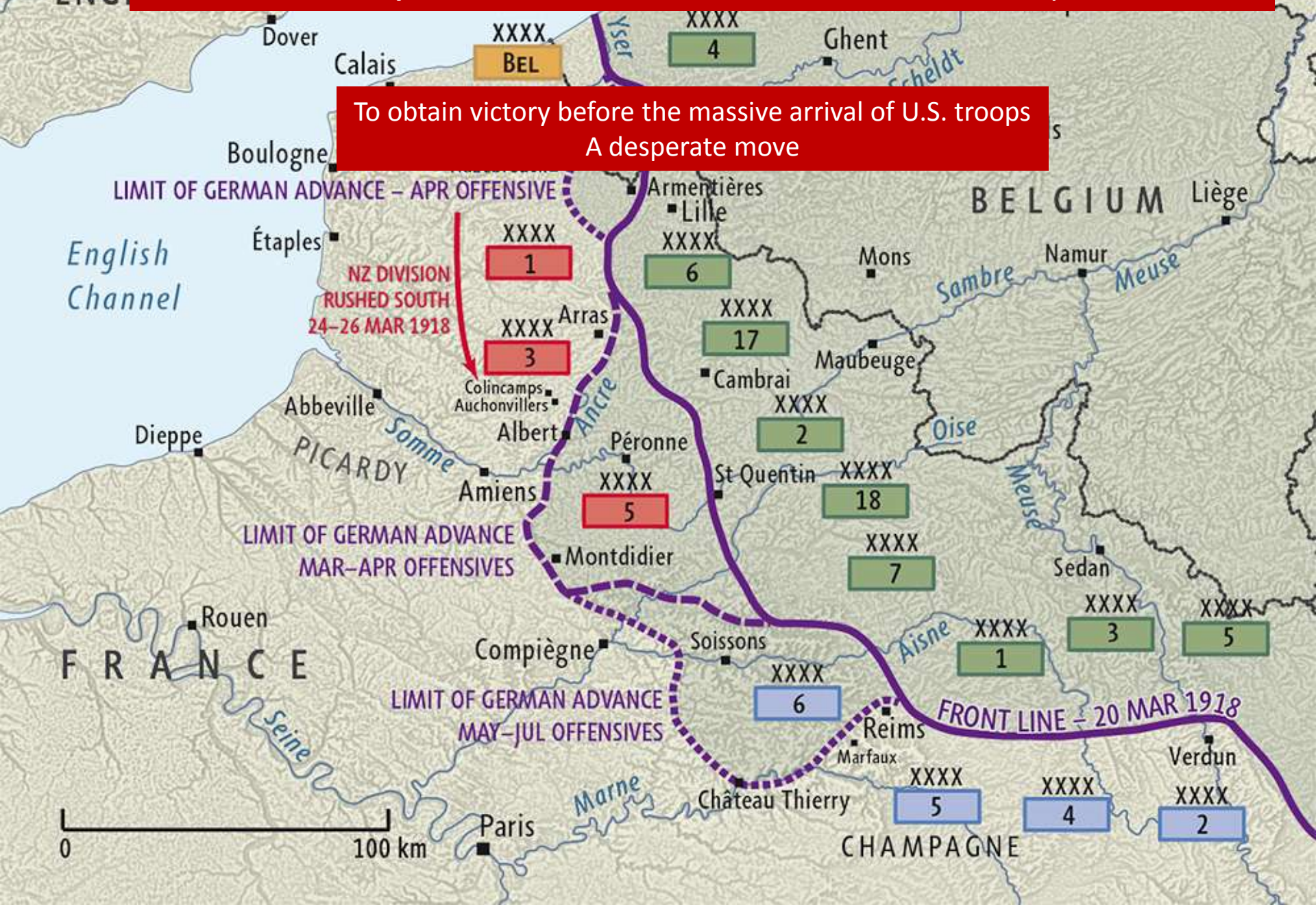
Their defeat was a **military defeat**



The German spring offensives (1918)

The **most important** of the immediate causes behind Germany's defeat

To obtain victory before the massive arrival of U.S. troops
A desperate move



To concentrate enough troops in northern France: the need to remove troops in the Balkans

A disastrous effect on the moral of Bulgarian troops (summer of 1918)





SITUATION, 24TH SEPTEMBER, 1918.

Showing direction of
 the ALLIED OFFENSIVE

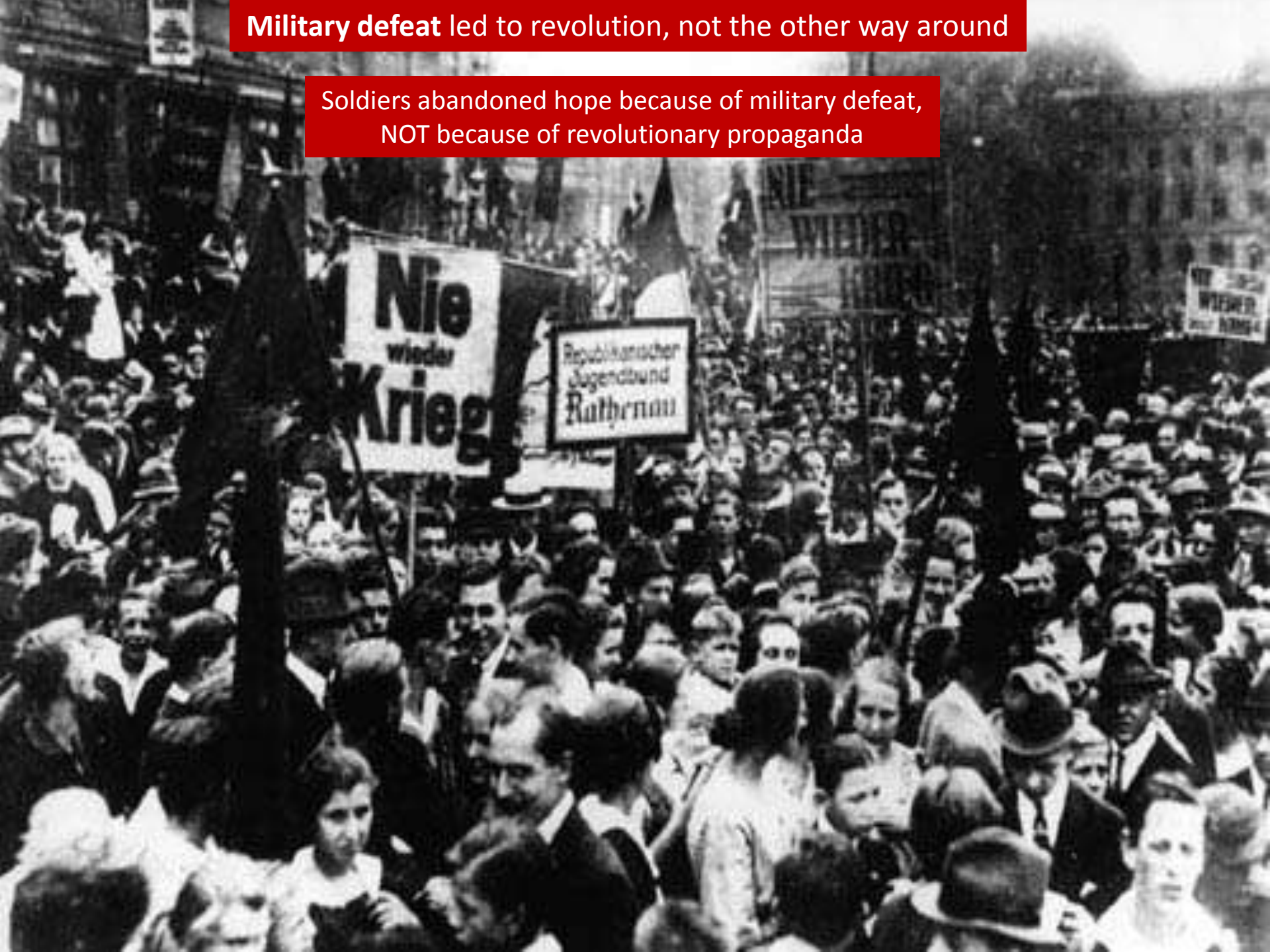
Rapid increase of German POWs: desertion & insubordination (1 million German soldiers)

German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman & Bulgarian armies: RETREAT



Military defeat led to revolution, not the other way around

**Soldiers abandoned hope because of military defeat,
NOT because of revolutionary propaganda**



November 1918: the Germans believe they did not (really) lost the war!



We end the struggle proudly and with our heads held high where we have stood for four years in the face of a world full of enemies."

**Field Marshal von Hindenburg's Order of the Day, 12
November 1918**

2. The Paris peace conference and the peace treaties



Why the need for a peace conference?
To negotiate **collectively** the peace treaties
To develop a system aimed at eliminating the causes of wars

Vanquished nations & Communist Russia **NOT** invited
Powers with general interests vs. Powers with limited interests (a great many nations as extras)



18 January 1919: the opening of the Paris Peace Conference
27 delegations (32 including the British dominions)
An opportunity for countries to gain influence on the world stage

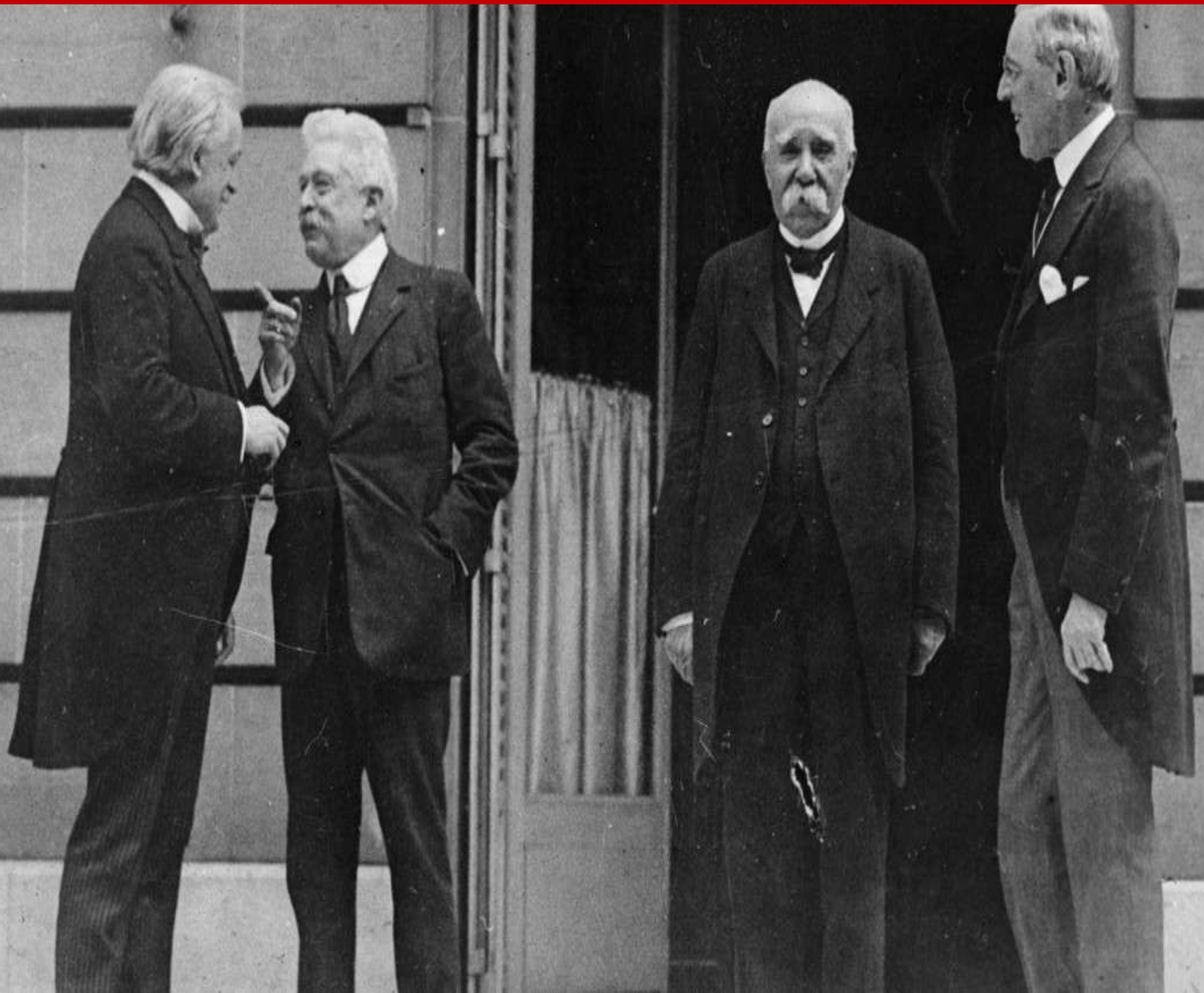


18 January 1871

Paris 1919: the capital of the world



Key decisions made by the four leading victorious nations (Great Britain, France, U.S. & Italy)



The Treaty of Versailles and the question of Germany's guilt



German delegation not allowed to negotiate
Written comments only at the end of the proceedings

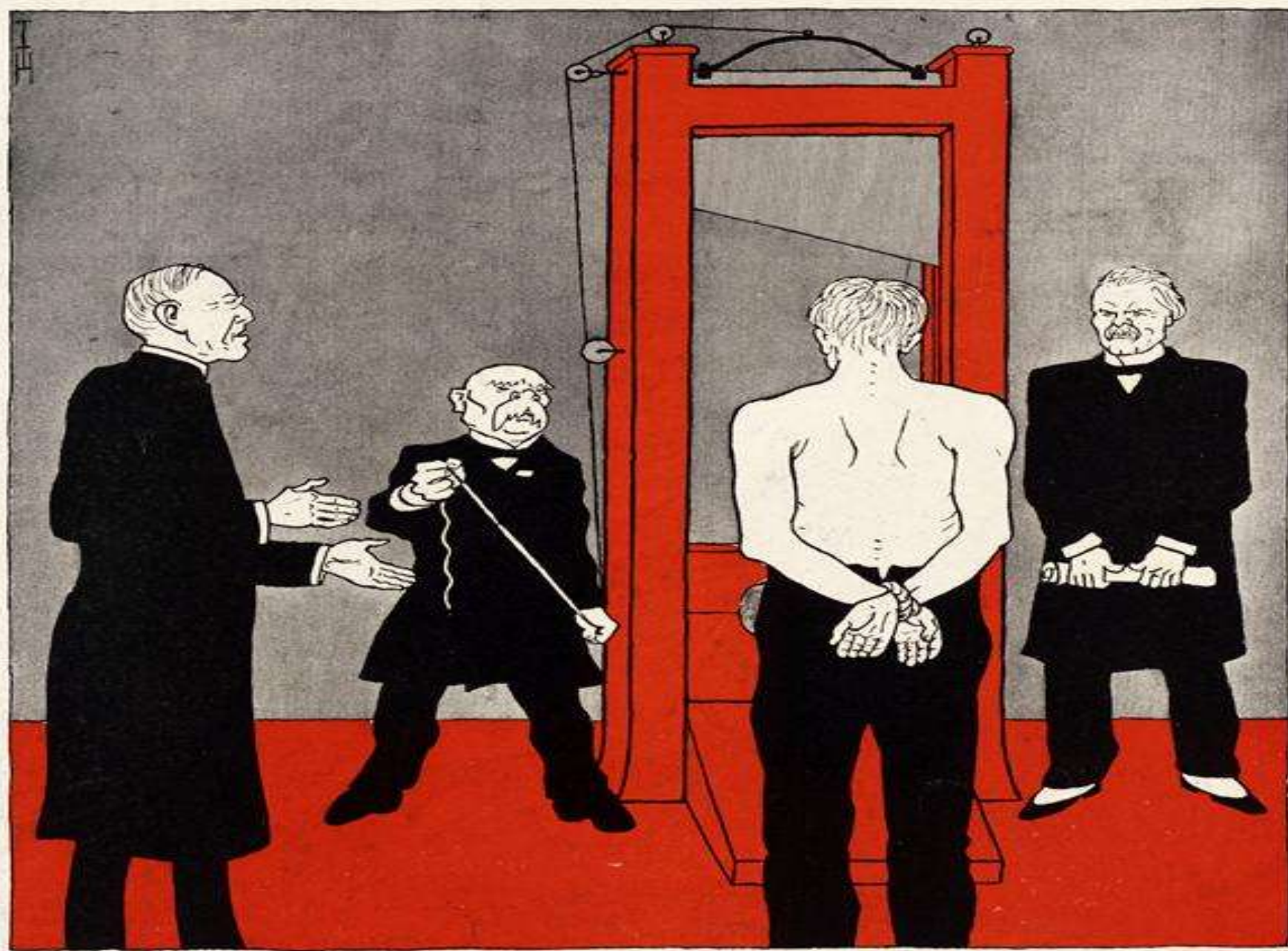


Peace treaty seen as a *diktat* in Germany

Self-determination: Germany & Austria not permitted to unite
A German military limited to 100 000 men + no heavy weapons

Article 231 (Germany's guilt)

Article 227: Wilhelm II to be judged for « *a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of treaties* »



„Auch Sie haben noch ein Selbstbestimmungsrecht: wünschen Sie, daß Ihnen die Taschen vor oder nach dem Tode ausgeleert werden?“

EUROPE

The National Boundary Realignments
Resulting From the First World War



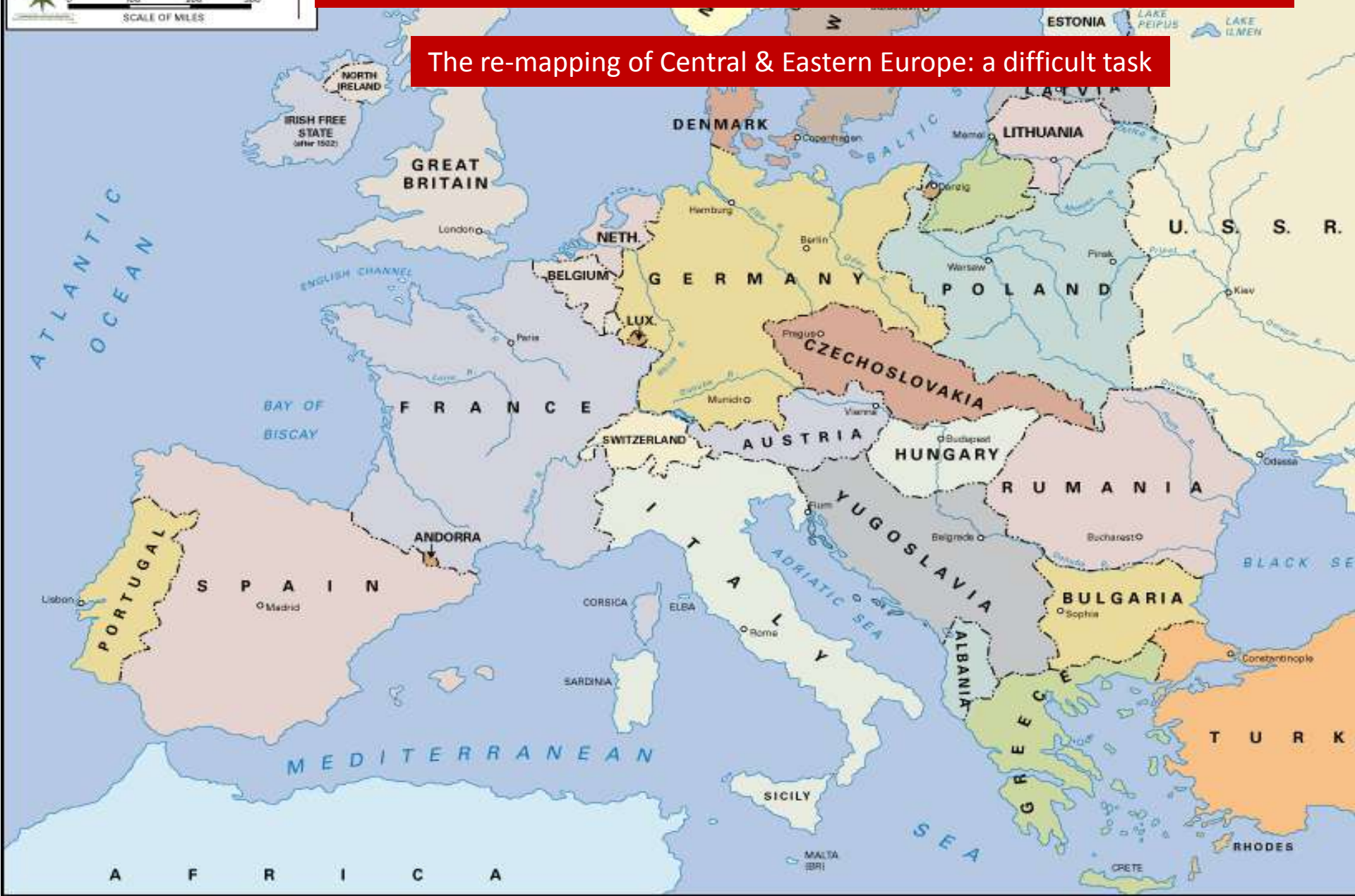
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SCALE OF MILES

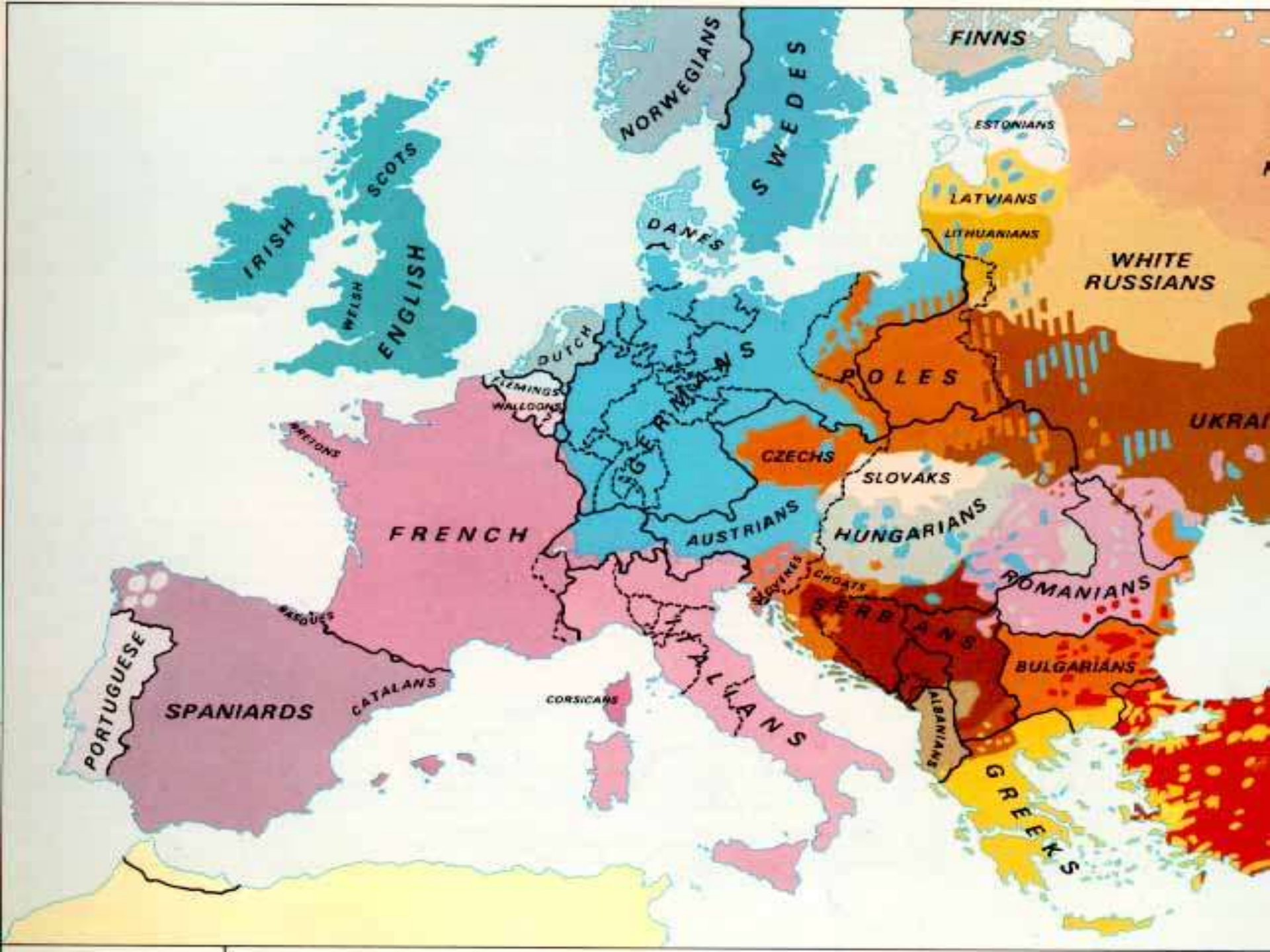
Woodrow Wilson and the principle of **self-determination**

Hope in the colonies

Wilson's open diplomacy: delegations from oppressed or colonized countries

The re-mapping of Central & Eastern Europe: a difficult task





Self-determination outside Europe

Wilson's "*government by consent*" = formidable hope in the colonies
Intellectuals & pro-independence leaders (India, Egypt, Korea & China) largely ignored in Paris

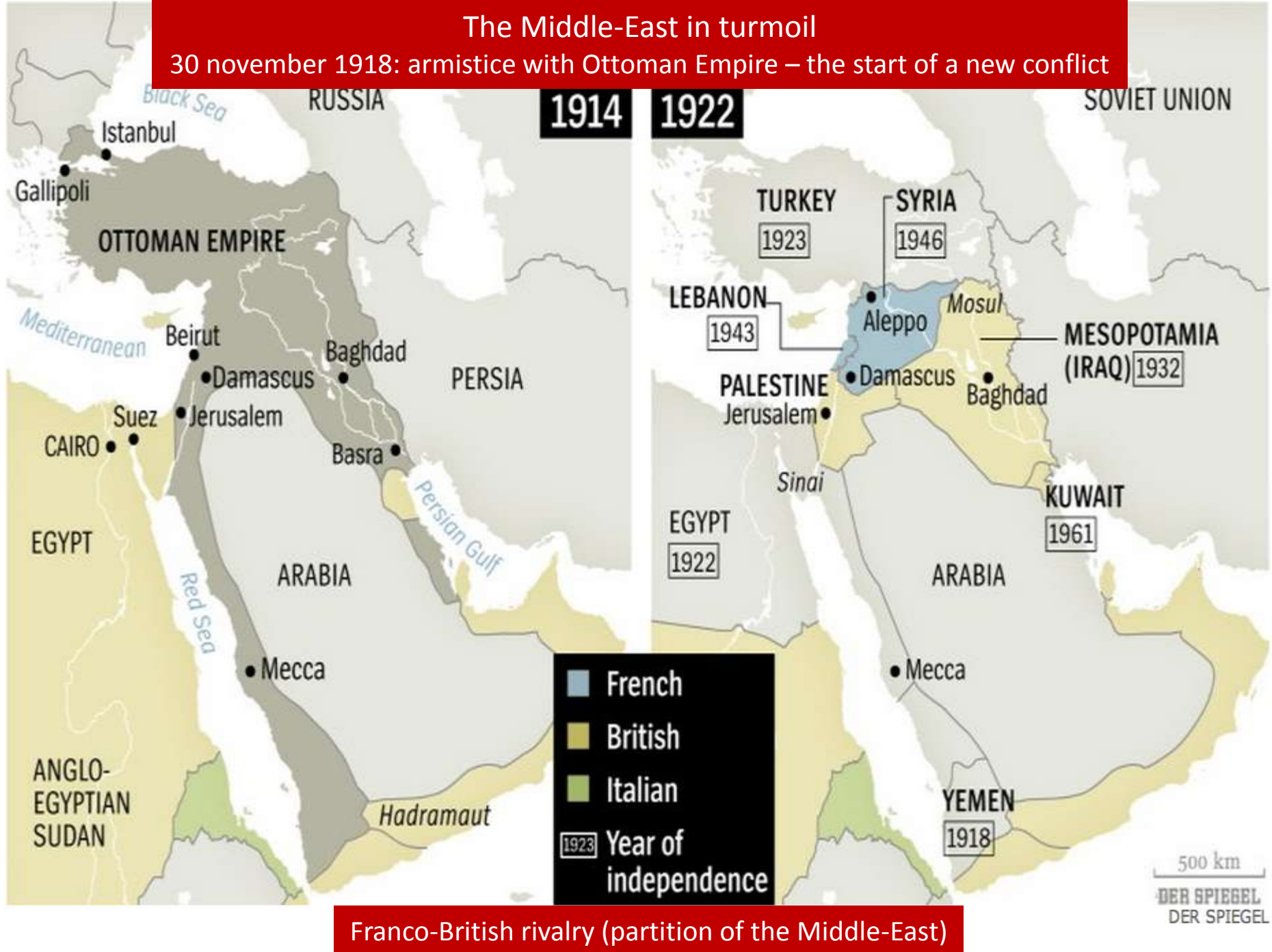


Self-determination in Europe & Ottoman Empire ONLY (Wilson)

The system of mandates for colonies and territories "*inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world*"

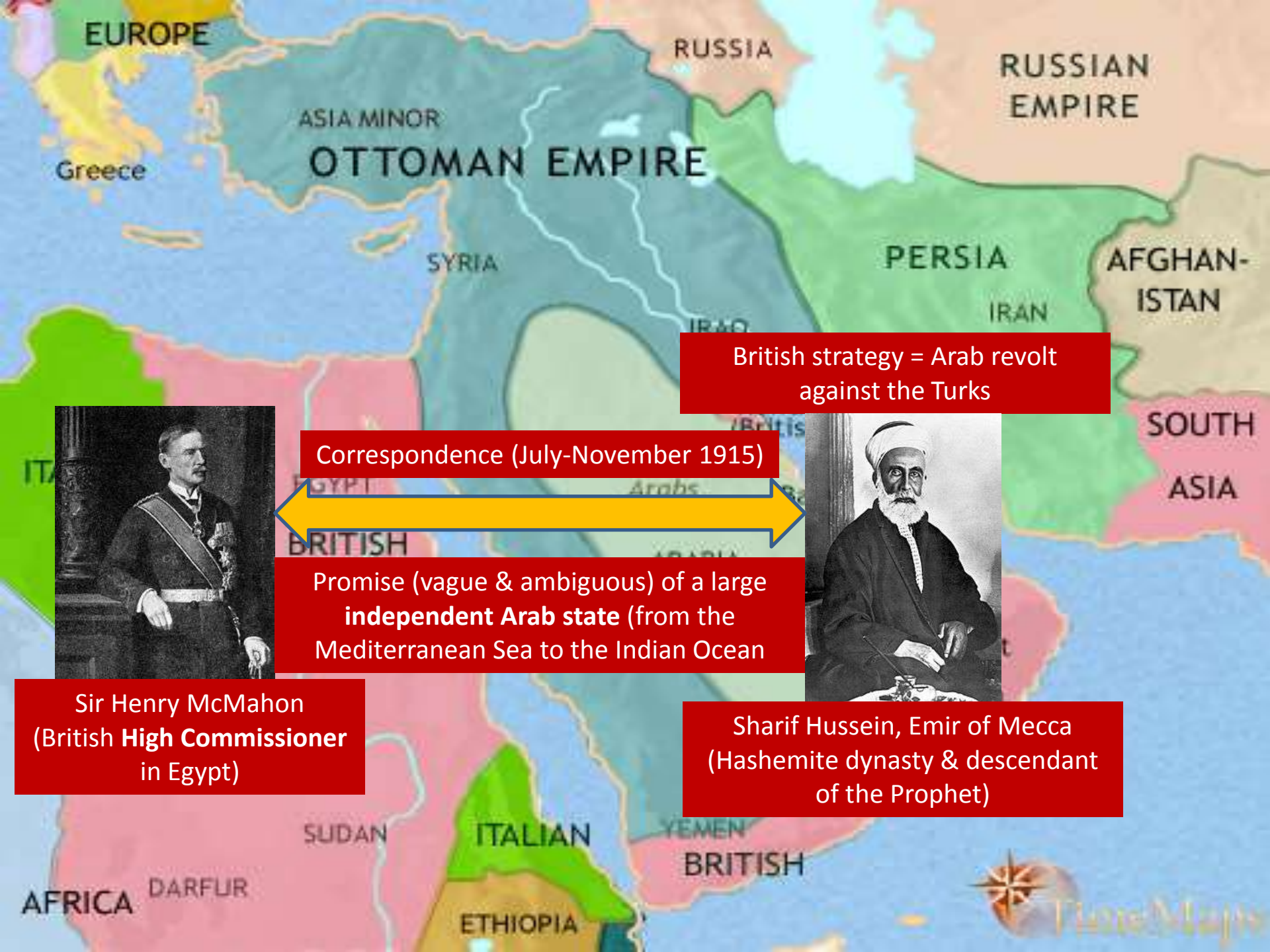
The Middle-East in turmoil

30 november 1918: armistice with Ottoman Empire – the start of a new conflict



Franco-British rivalry (partition of the Middle-East)

Map: The Middle East before and after WWI.



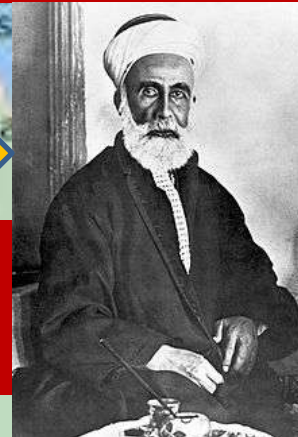
British strategy = Arab revolt
against the Turks

Correspondence (July-November 1915)

Promise (vague & ambiguous) of a large
independent Arab state (from the
Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean)

Sir Henry McMahon
(British **High Commissioner**
in Egypt)

Sharif Hussein, Emir of Mecca
(Hashemite dynasty & descendant
of the Prophet)



16 May 1916: **Sykes-Picot secret agreement**

Comprehensive [secret] agreement on post-war partition of Ottoman Empire



Sir Mark Sykes (British MP)



Francois-George Picot (French diplomat)

The Balfour Declaration

Foreign Office.

November 2nd, 1917.

"Best endeavours" to achieve establishment for a national home for the Jews in Palestine

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country".

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Y. in
Arthur Balfour



Lebanon created by the French in 1920
as a Christian state = civil wars linked to
demographic shifts

Syria never
reconciled with
creation of Lebanon
=
30 year occupation

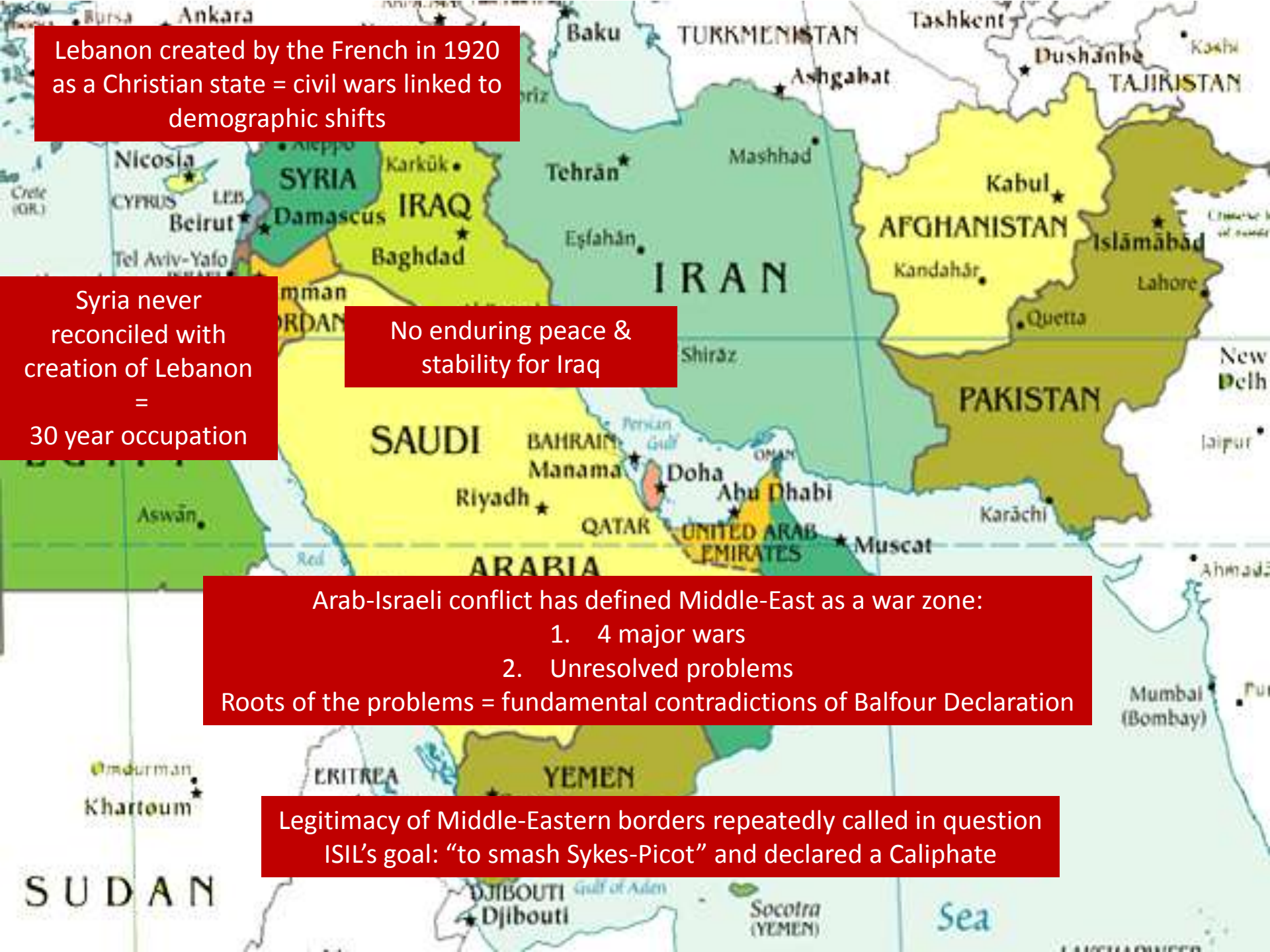
No enduring peace &
stability for Iraq

Arab-Israeli conflict has defined Middle-East as a war zone:

1. 4 major wars
2. Unresolved problems

Roots of the problems = fundamental contradictions of Balfour Declaration

Legitimacy of Middle-Eastern borders repeatedly called in question
ISIL's goal: "to smash Sykes-Picot" and declared a Caliphate



Innovations: the League of Nations
The first **collective security** organization in history

Self-determination: a break from past practices



International Labour Organization (international norms aimed at improving the well-being of workers)

