

1870: the terrible year

The **Franco-Prussian War** and
the birth of the **3rd Republic**



The Franco-Prussian War of 1870:
the war that should never have
happened



10 January 1870: Victor Noir shot by
Pierre-Napoléon Bonaparte



*"I was weak-minded enough to
believe that a Bonaparte could
be something other than a
murderer"*

Henri Rochefort (*La Marseillaise*)



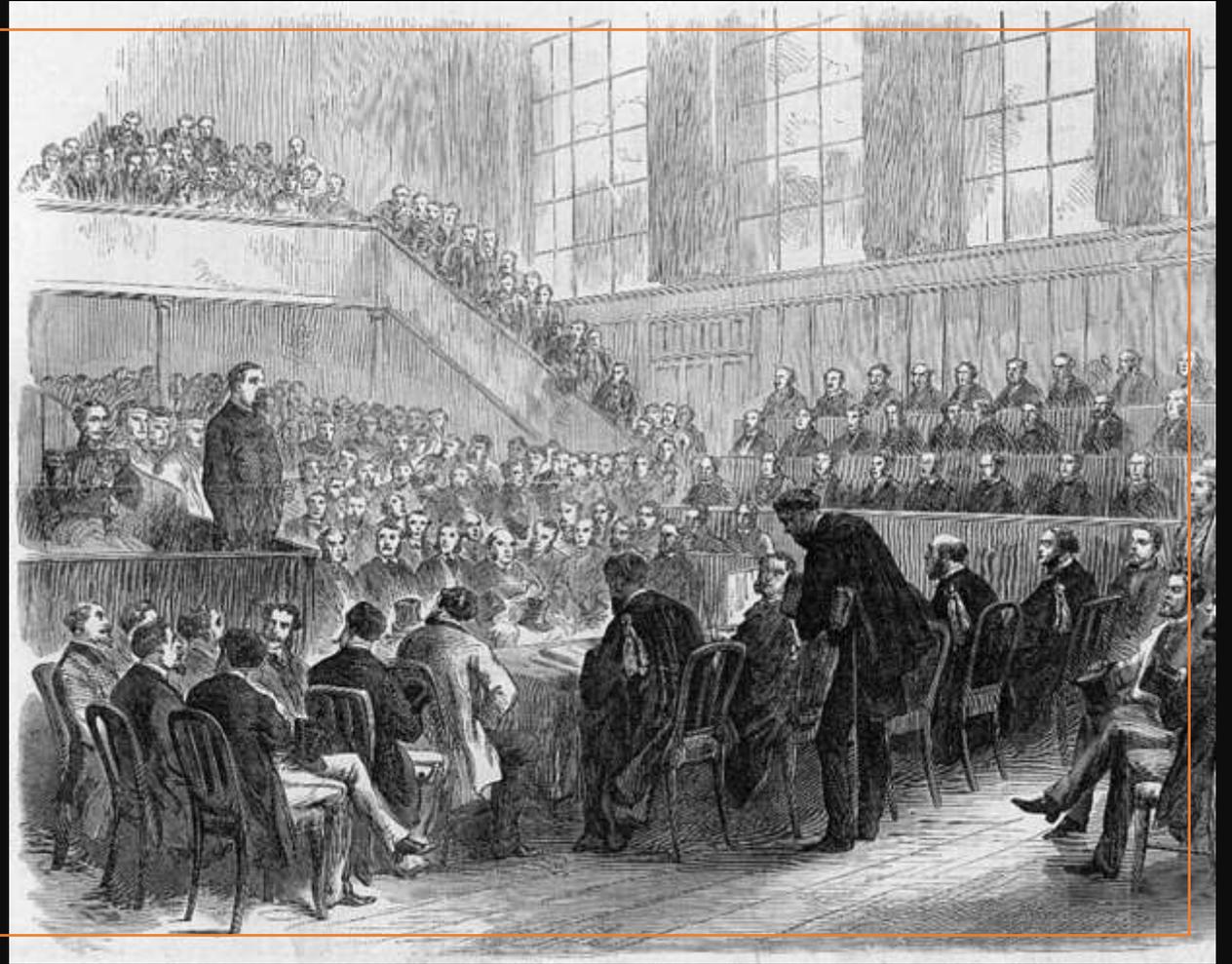
12 January 1870: 100 000
people attended the funeral of
Victor Noir

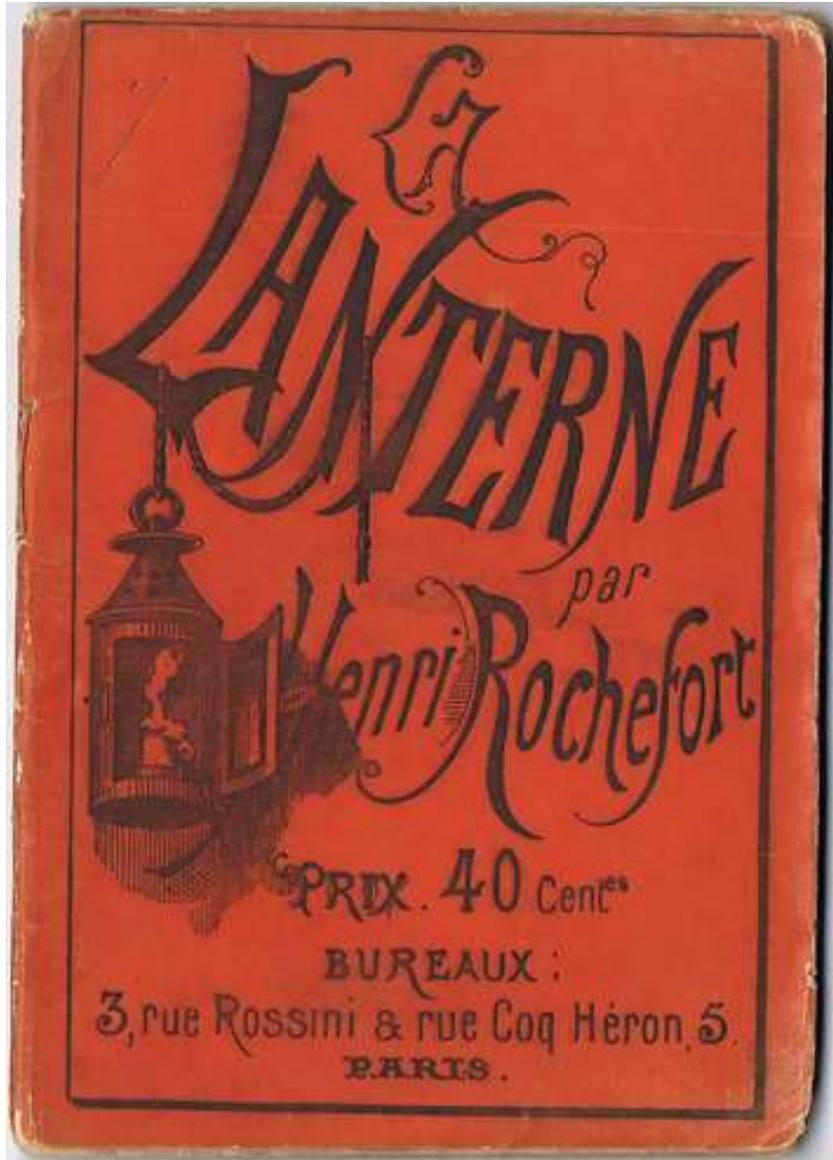
The specter of revolution



Funérailles de Victor Noir. — La foule coupe les traits des chevaux et traîne le corbillard.

27 March 1870: Pierre Bonaparte
acquitted





“France includes 36 million subjects, not to mention the subjects of dissatisfaction”

LA MÉNAGERIE IMPÉRIALE.

NAPOLÉON III

N°1



dit Brevet des Artistes L. que Tardieu

Jay Goussier Paris

LE VAUTOUR (Lâcheté - Férocity)

LA MÉNAGERIE IMPÉRIALE.

EUGÉNIE

N°2



2

de G. COIFFÉ 1868

LA GRUE (Pose Bêtise)

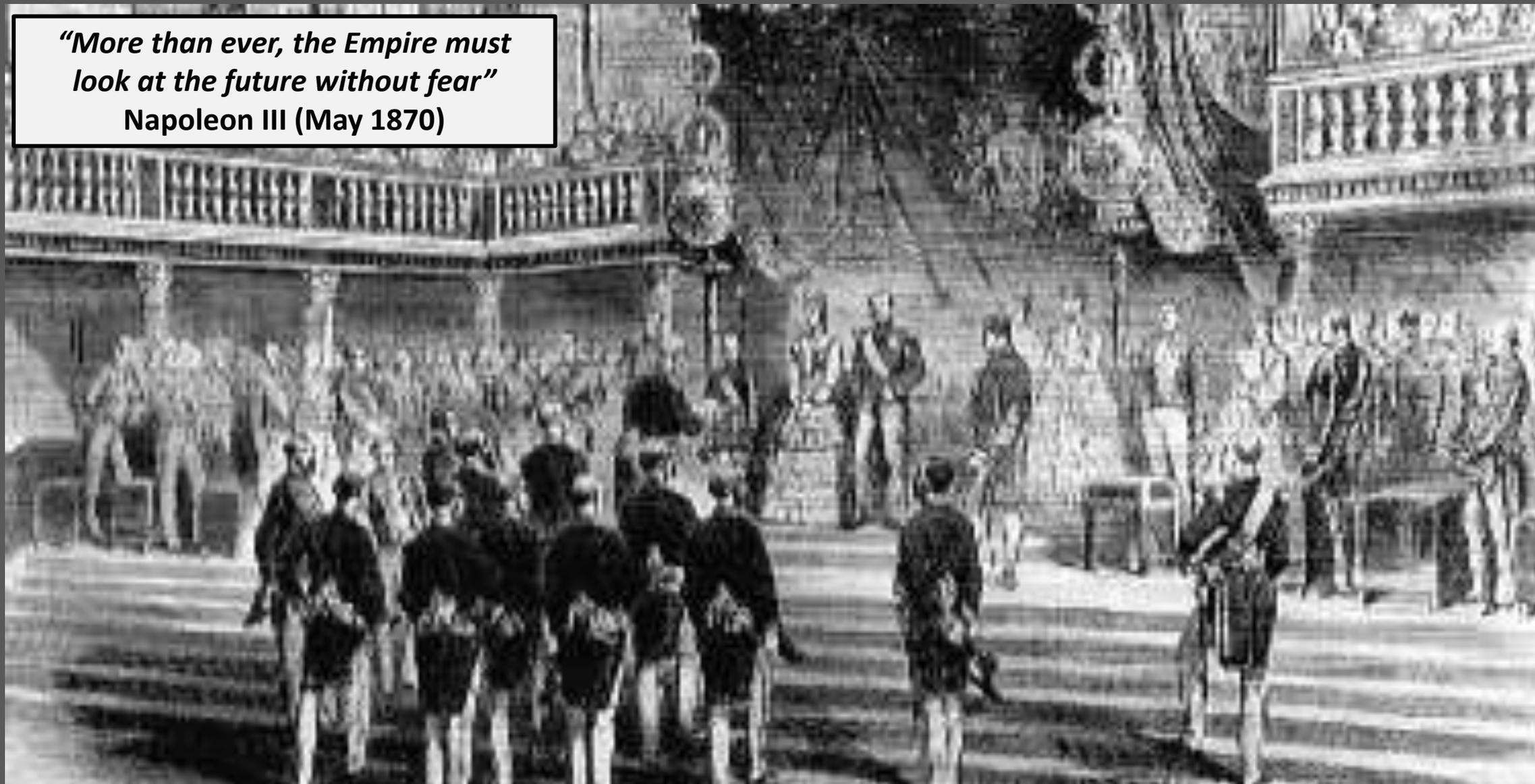


The strategy: to secure popular endorsement of the reforms introduced by the government

Napoleon III's reaction to growing discontent & republican opposition:
another **national referendum**
(1870)

7.3 million "Yes"
1.5 million "No"

***“More than ever, the Empire must
look at the future without fear”
Napoleon III (May 1870)***



***“The government has no
uneasiness whatever; at no epoch
was the peace of Europe more
assured”***

Émile Ollivier (Prime Minister)

30 June 1870



Saint-Cloud: the promise of a quiet summer

Napoleon III “*terribly changed and very ill*” (diagnosis of gallstone treated with opium)

Surgery recommended



Bismarck and the **unification of Germany**: the growing influence of Prussia in Europe

Step 1: to eliminate Austria as a serious competitor in the German world



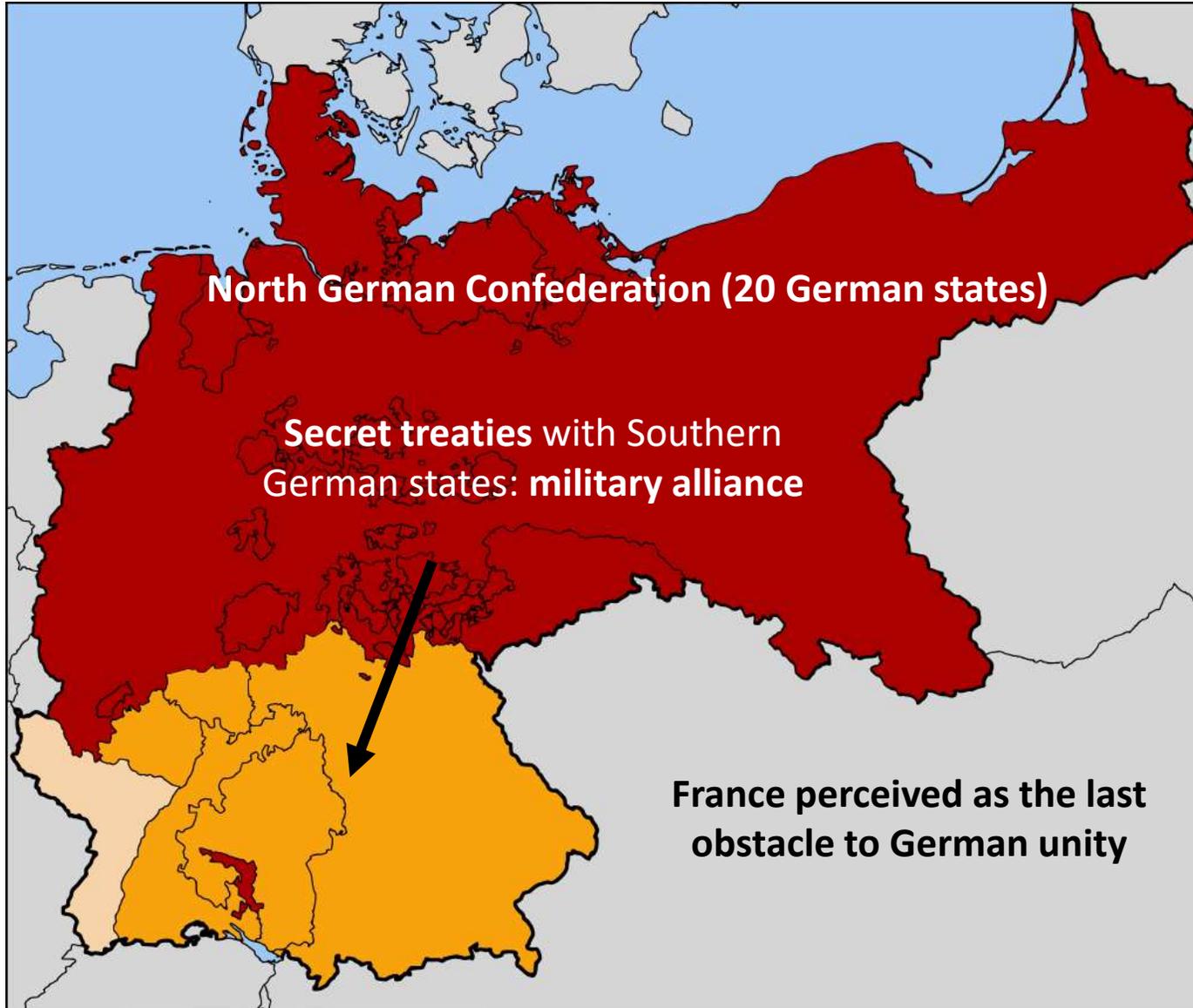


Bismarck's grand plan

Step 1: to eliminate Austria's influence within the German-speaking world



July 1866: the **Battle of Sadowa** – The end of Austria's influence among German states
A **modernized** Prussian army



North German Confederation (20 German states)

**Secret treaties with Southern
German states: military alliance**

**France perceived as the last
obstacle to German unity**





1868: the abdication of Queen Isabella II of Spain

Step 2: the candidacy of Leopold of Hohenzollern (cousin of King of Prussia) to the throne of Spain

2 July 1870

France: NO German prince king of Spain
Fear of **encirclement**





Napoleon III and William I
eager to avoid war

12 July: Leopold's candidacy
withdrawn

A French **diplomatic** victory

King William I of Prussia





Agenor de Gramont

French government to ambassador in Prussia: King William **never in the future** to allow another German prince to accept the crown of Spain

William I refused to
promise anything: he *“has
nothing more to say”*



Empress Eugénie: war with Prussia
inevitable sooner or later

France's honor and influence in Europe
at stake

To reaffirm France's preeminence & to
save the Bonaparte dynasty

13 July: decision to mobilize French
armed forces



The widespread belief the
French army was ready and
would be victorious

*“So ready we are, that if the war
lasts two year, not a gaiter button
would be found wanting”*
(Marshal Le Boeuf)







19 July 1870: France
declares war on
Prussia

The Emperor as **Commander-in-Chief**

“I am quite old for such a military campaign and I am not in a good health at all”



The French army **perceived** as the best in Europe (victories in the Crimea, Italy and Algeria)

Napoleon III less than optimistic

280 000 French vs. 500 000 Germans

Deficient armament

Widespread disorganization

Poor communications

Lack of flexibility

Rivalries among high-ranking officers

Faulty intelligence



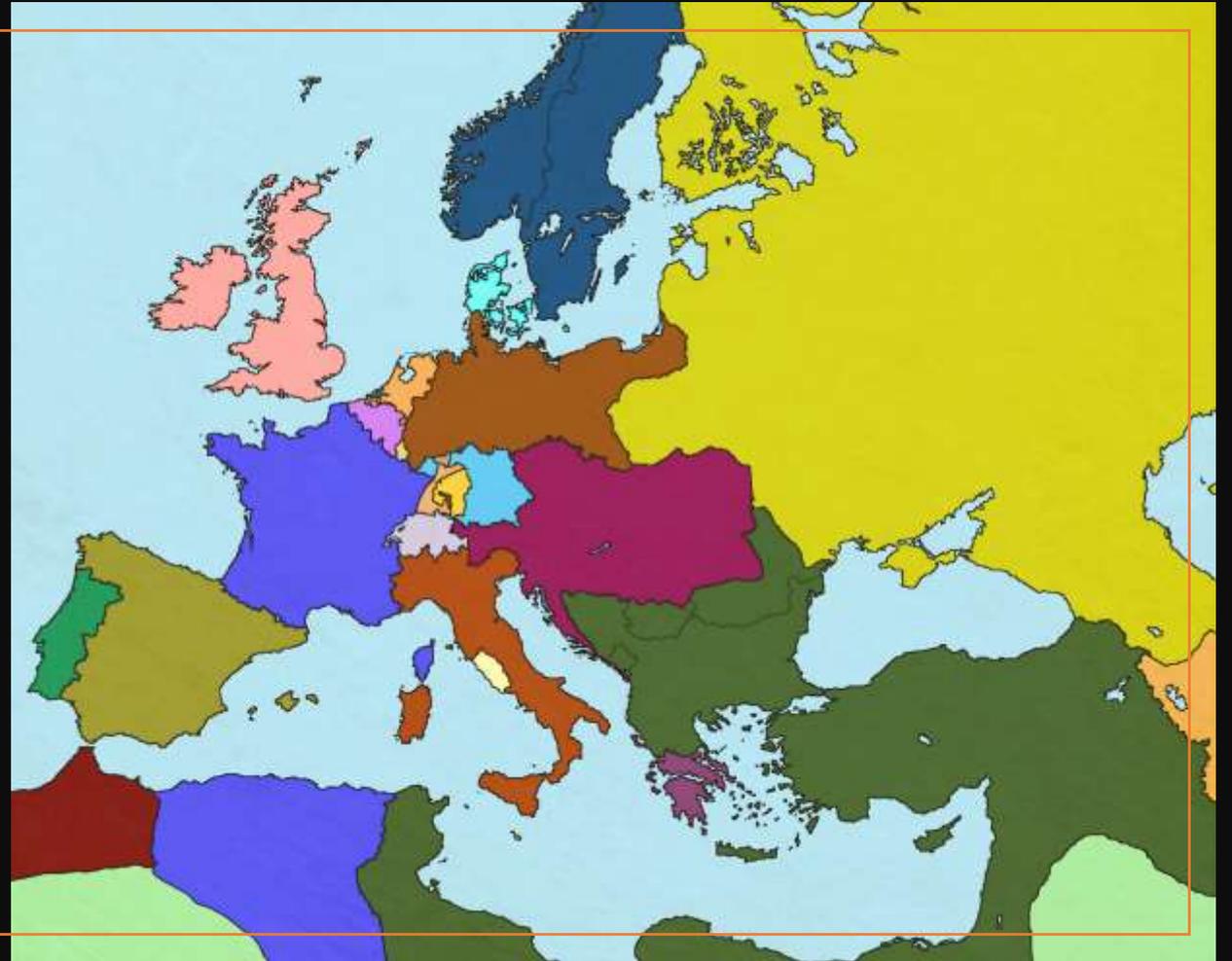
France diplomatically **isolated**

Austria: wait & see

Italy: no help (the status of Papal states)

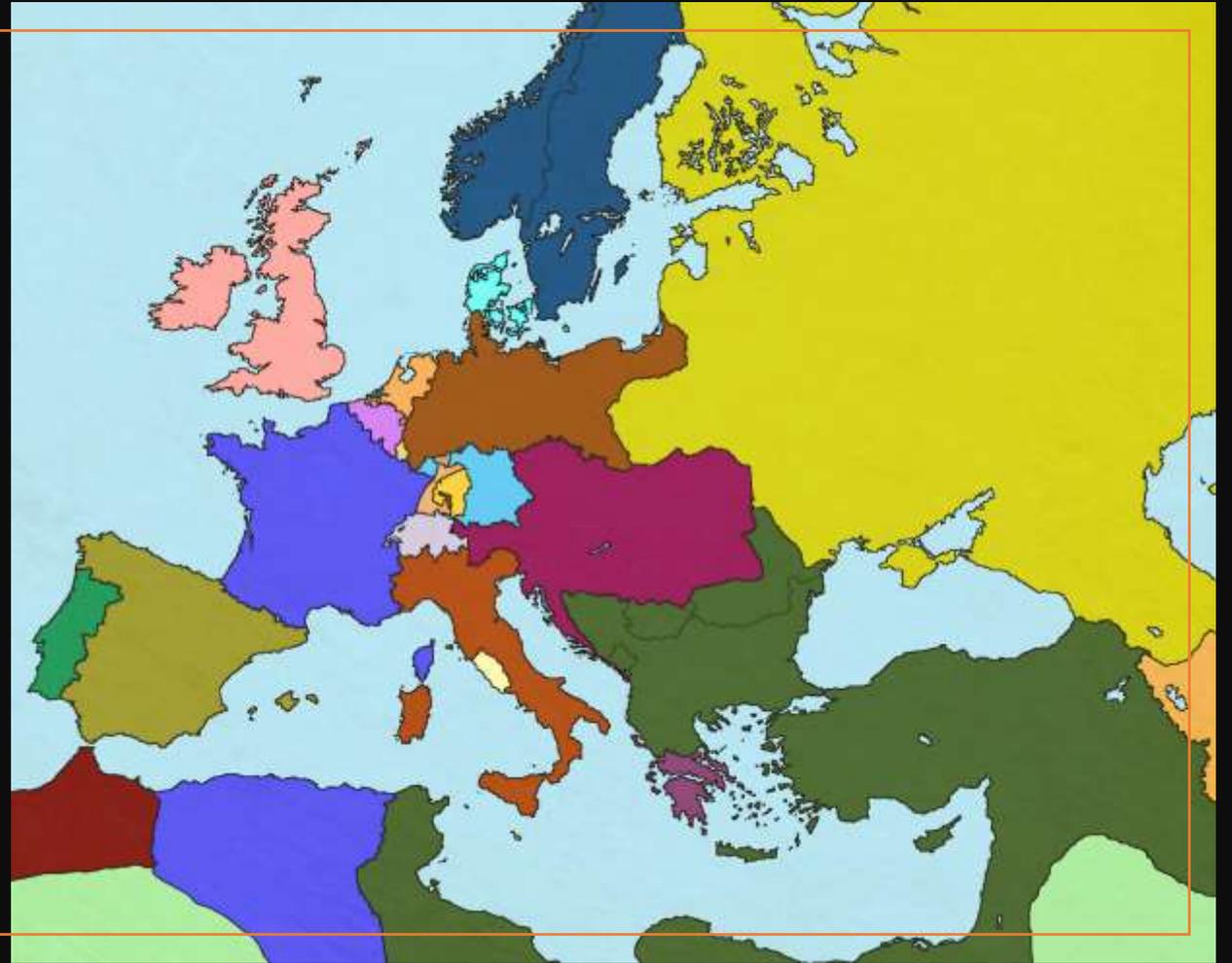
Great Britain: Belgium neutrality

France portrayed as the aggressor
French government playing with fire



Neutrality

Status formalized at the Hague Convention (1907): a direct consequence of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71

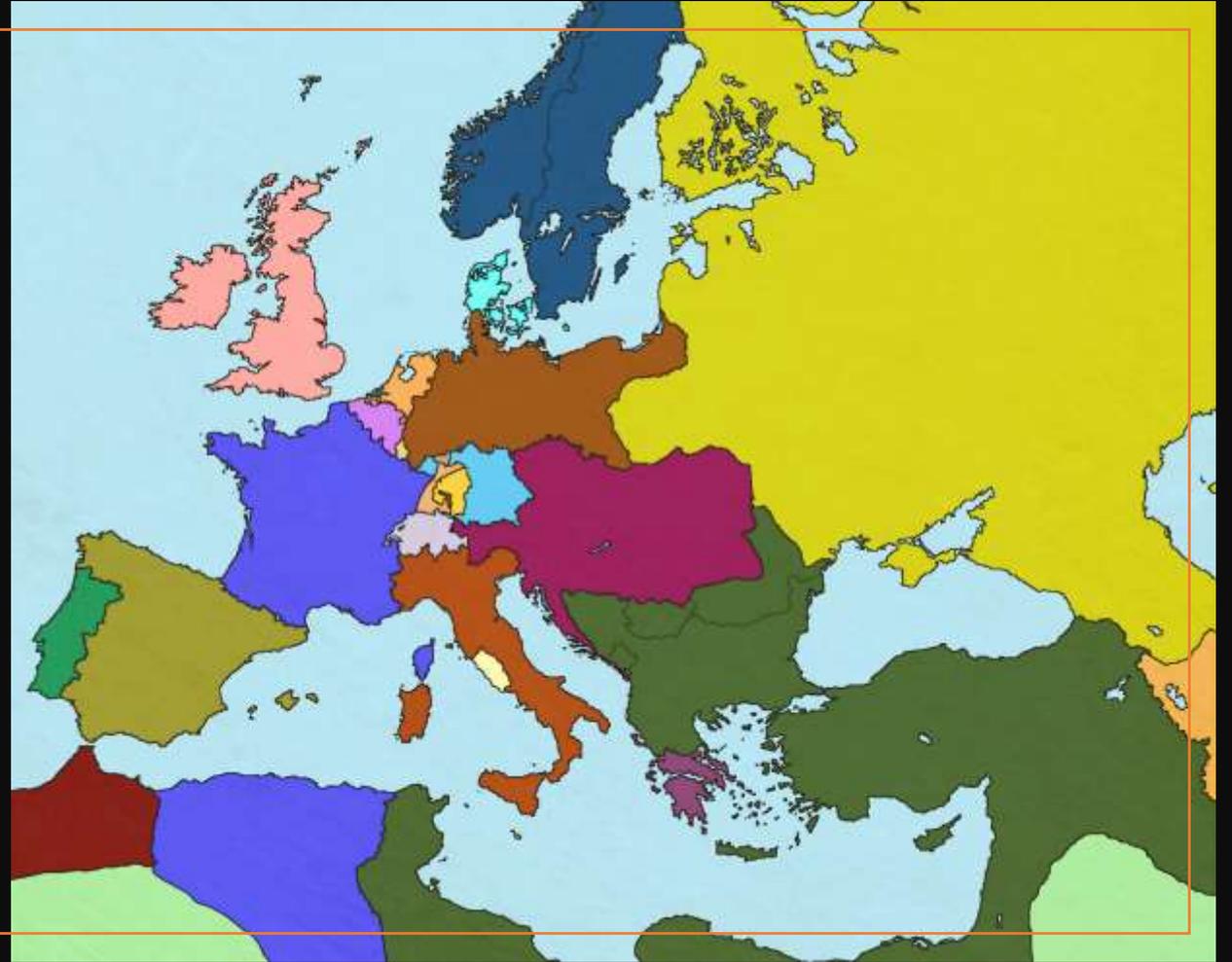


The rights and duties of neutral nations

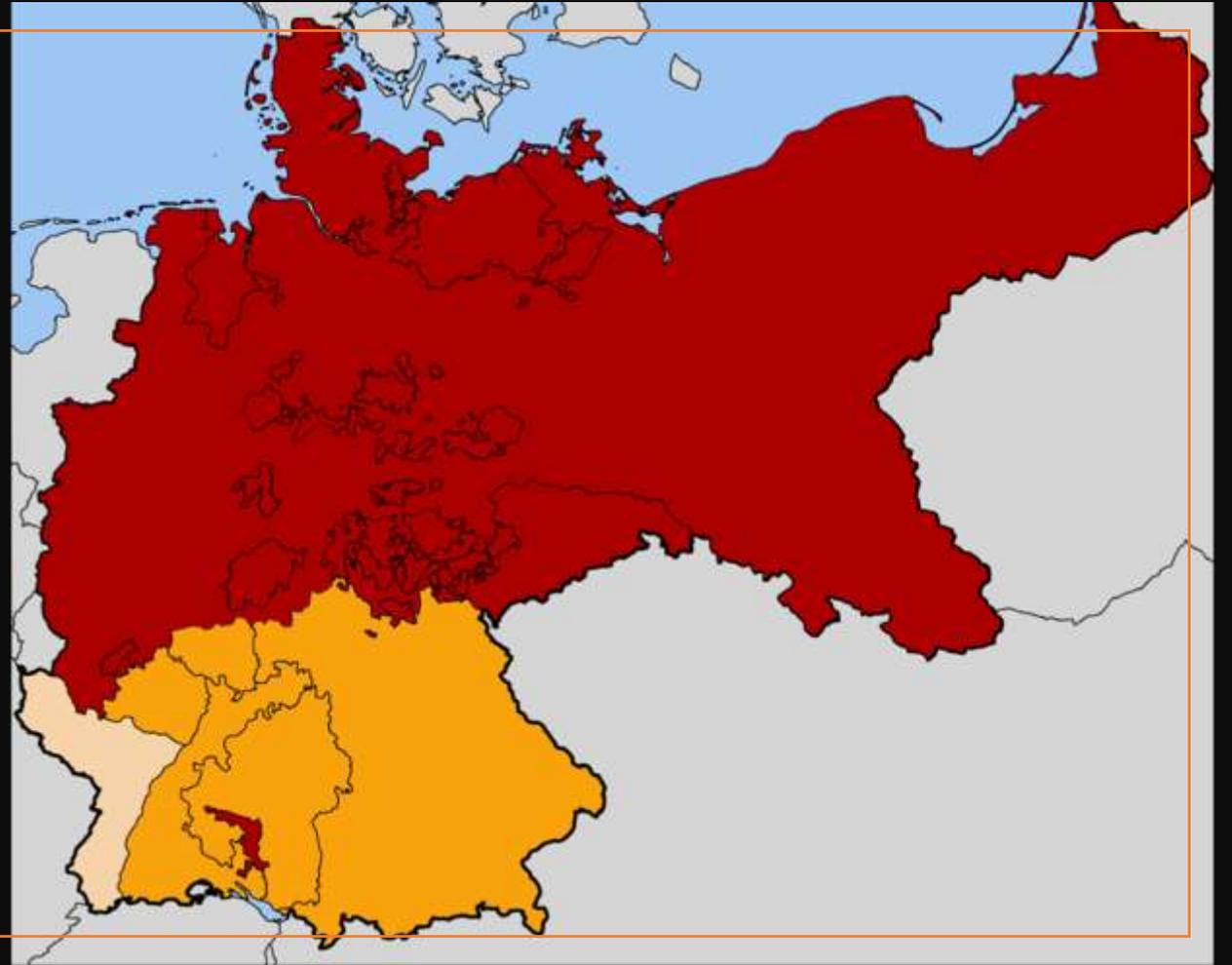
Neutral countries forbidden to fight,
provide financial or material aid to
belligerents

Protection of their borders

Humanitarian aid

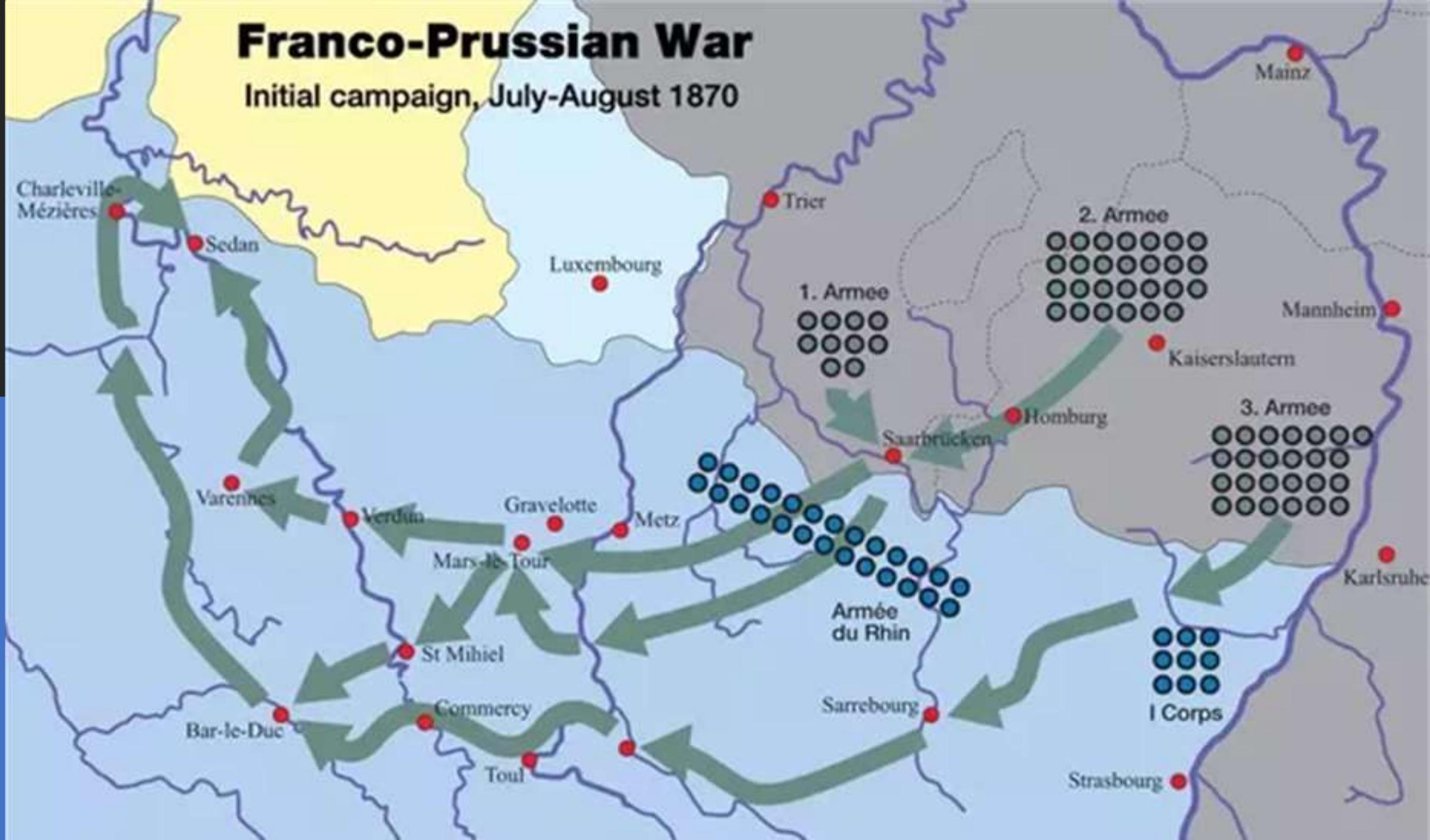


Southern German states joined Prussia
and the German Confederation against
France
(military cooperation since 1866)



Franco-Prussian War

Initial campaign, July-August 1870



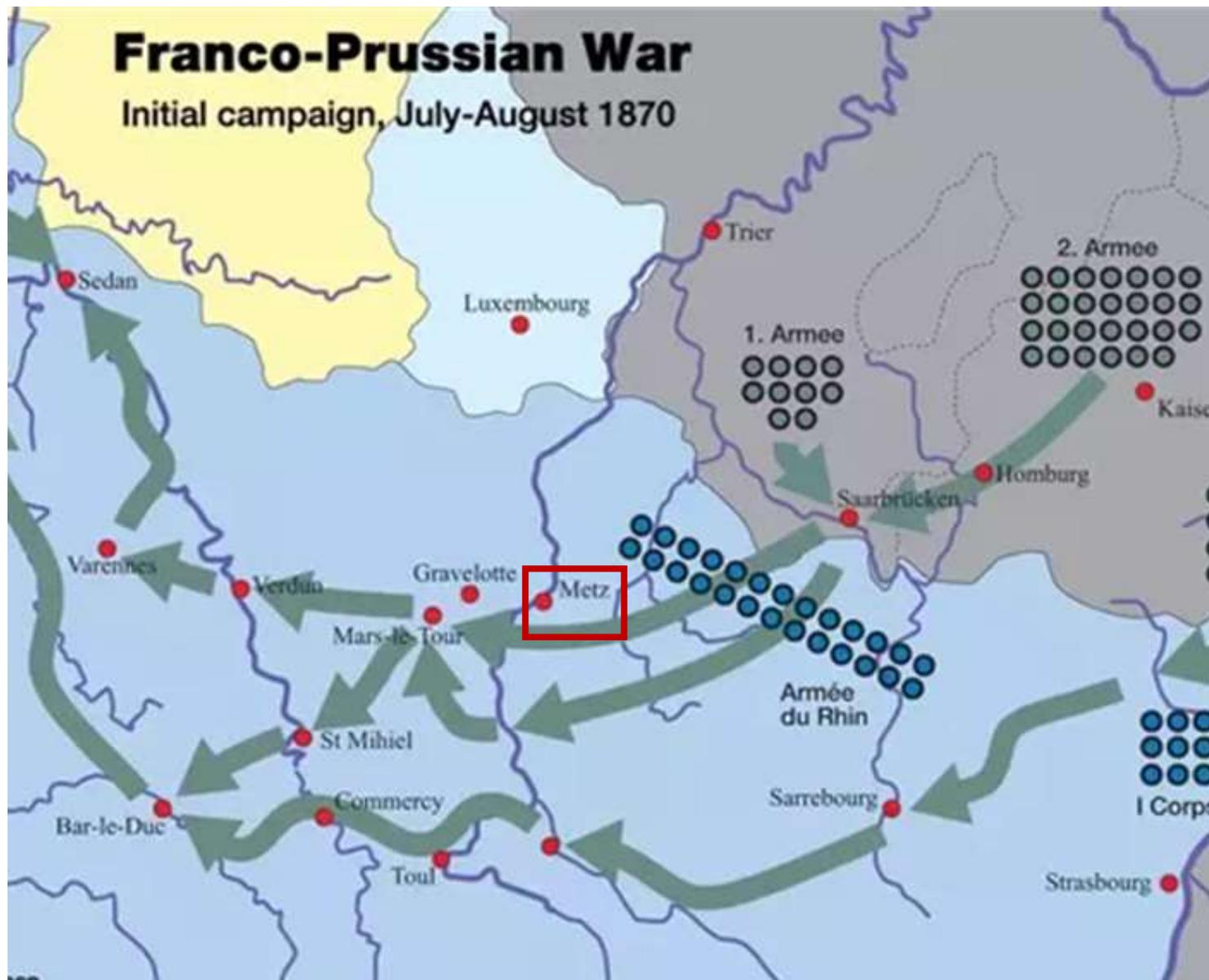
French troops defeated
everywhere

Metz besieged (18 August)
Half of the French army encircled





Marshal Bazaine



August 21: Napoleon III's decision to lead a newly constituted army to help Bazaine

French troops forced to retreat towards Sedan

Sedan: a trap – French army encircled and unable to retreat north (Belgium neutrality)





2 September: Napoleon III
capitulated

85 000 French prisoners
Napoleon III captive





3 September: Eugénie received a telegram from Napoleon III

“The army has been defeated and I in captivity. I myself am a prisoner”

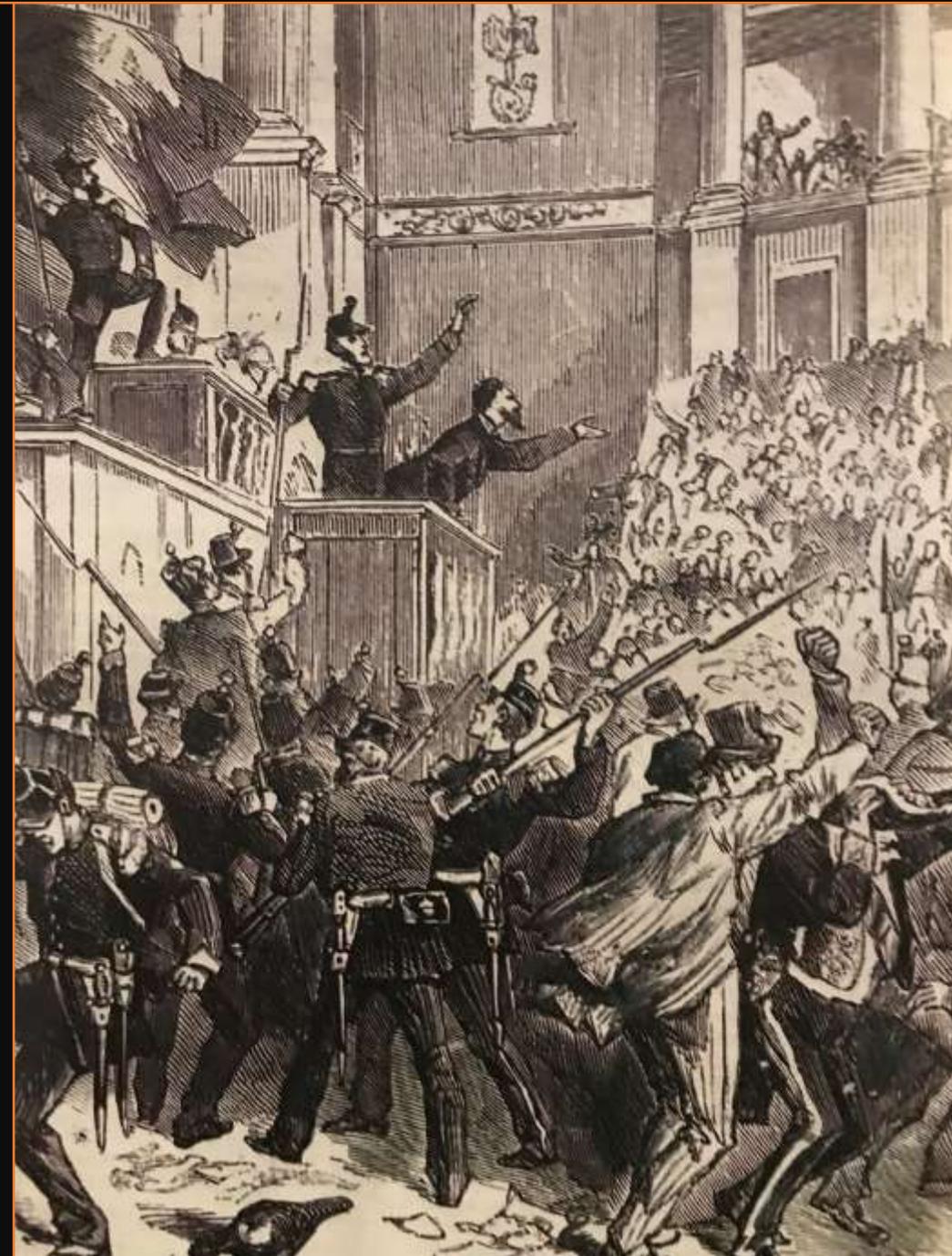


Republican opposition to the Second Empire: **liberals** (moderates) vs. **far-left** (socialists)

Fear of violence (the “Reds”)

The far-left: repeated calls for a republic
(military defeats)

Only a republican regime can save France



“The Republic saves France”

Defeated imperial France (the broken sword) makes way to the Republic



Announcement of the abolition of the imperial regime by Jules Didier & Jacques Guiaud



“Never revolution was made with such ease” (Jules Ferry)

A soft transition?





A temple for the new Republic

Palais-Bourbon: majestic and huge
Former princely palace (18th century)
Façade added by Napoleon (like ancient
Greek temple)

Soft lighting





Statues representing the spirit of **reform & conciliation**

Sully (minister of Henri IV): The new Republic associated with good government

Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom

The weather accompanies the soft transition
Clouds are disappearing above the Palais-Bourbon
(blue sky)





Republican deputies
addressing the peaceful crowd
Announcement the Bonaparte
dynasty has ceased to rule
over France

The crowd to follow the
deputies to the Hôtel de Ville
(proclamation of the Republic)

A quiet & reassuring revolution

A huge crowd in front of the Palais-Bourbon

Mix of joy and astonishment

Multiple scenes of fraternity (no barricades
or flags)



A notable **lack of enthusiasm** among moderate Republicans

The fear of revolution and its excesses
Continuing the war? A final defeat likely to discredit the new Republic

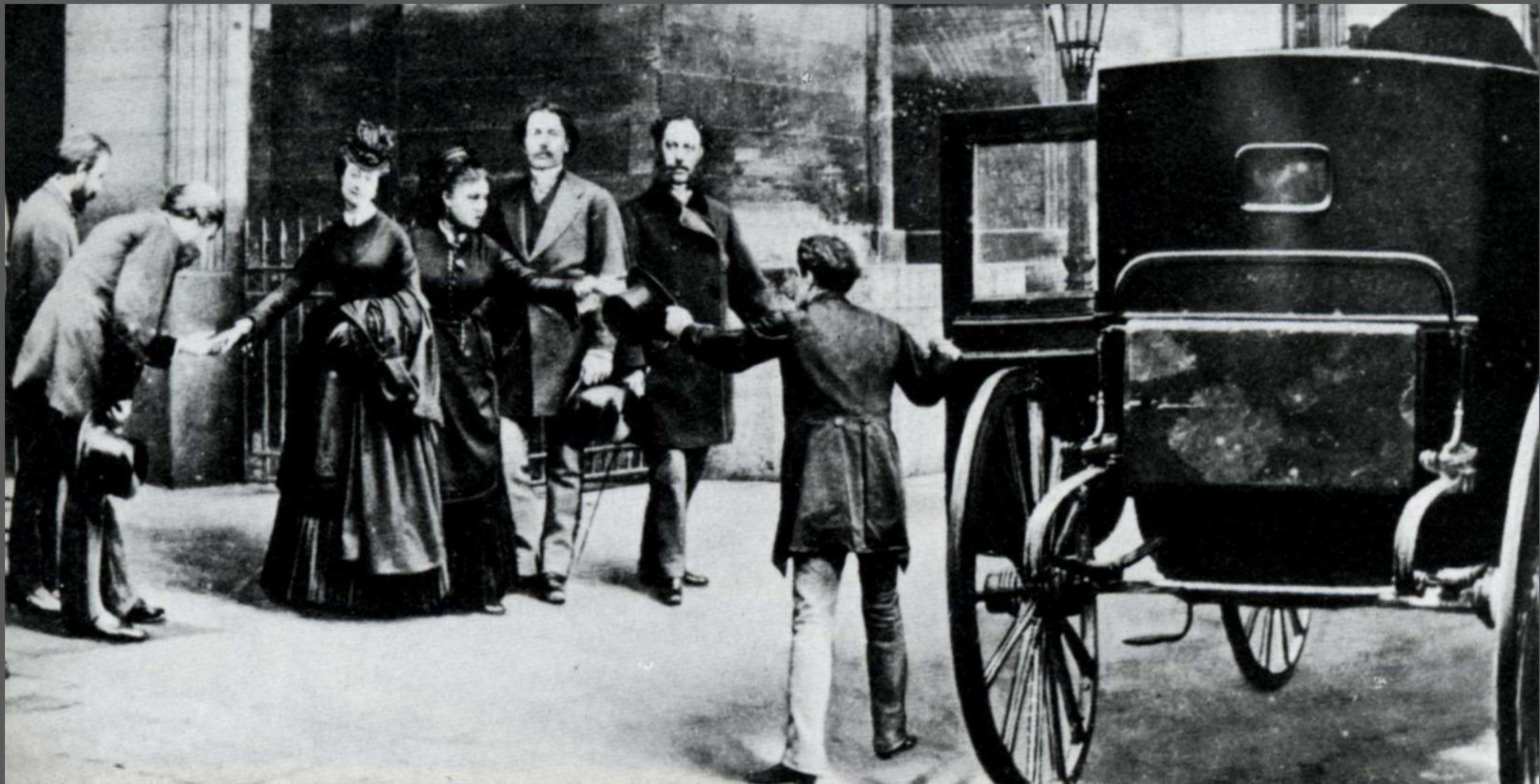


Léon Gambetta

4 September 1870: a curious
“revolution”

Pressure from the street
Hesitant moderate deputies (fear
the far-left would proclaim the
Republic)







A Provisional government led by the governor of Paris (General Trochu)

“On September 4th, the red flag was not raised in all of Paris, while there was no where means to resist”

The **dilemma** of the Republican deputies

To let the far-left take over or seize power and continue a war that could discredit them?

To reassure the Army: *“we are the government of national defense”*



Jules Favre

Free elections at the first opportunity

The prerequisite: an armistice

19 September: what would be the conditions for an armistice

Bismarck: the annexation of **Alsace**



Jules Favre

Moderate Republicans forced to
proclaim the Republic and to
continue waging war on the
Germans

*“The revolution was made despite
the men of September 4th, not by
the men of September 4th”*



And what about rural France?

Is it willing to continue the fight?

Will it accept a Republic?

“The people of Paris does not have the right to choose a government, any more than the people of Perpignan or Dunkirk”



Léon Gambetta

19 September 1870: Paris
besieged and bombarded

4-month resistance
Paris deprived of food supplies
Cold winter + starvation



The siege of Paris (1870-1871) by
Ernest Meissonier (1884)





Paris as a lioness

The heroic resistance of Paris saved France's honor

The central character is a woman whose head is covered with a lion skin

Pride, sadness and anger

The Prussian eagle on the
arm of famine

The specter of famine over Paris
The eagle in a position of attack
The sacrifice of the Parisians





Fallen heroes



Prussians not directly represented but the effects of their siege are presents

Fire in the background – Priests transporting a soldier
The suffering of civilians

7 October: Gambetta left besieged
Paris to assemble a new army in
Tours (Loire Valley)

New defeats but Gambetta opposed
to the signing of an armistice





German military parade in
Paris



The proclamation of the German Empire (18 January 1871)



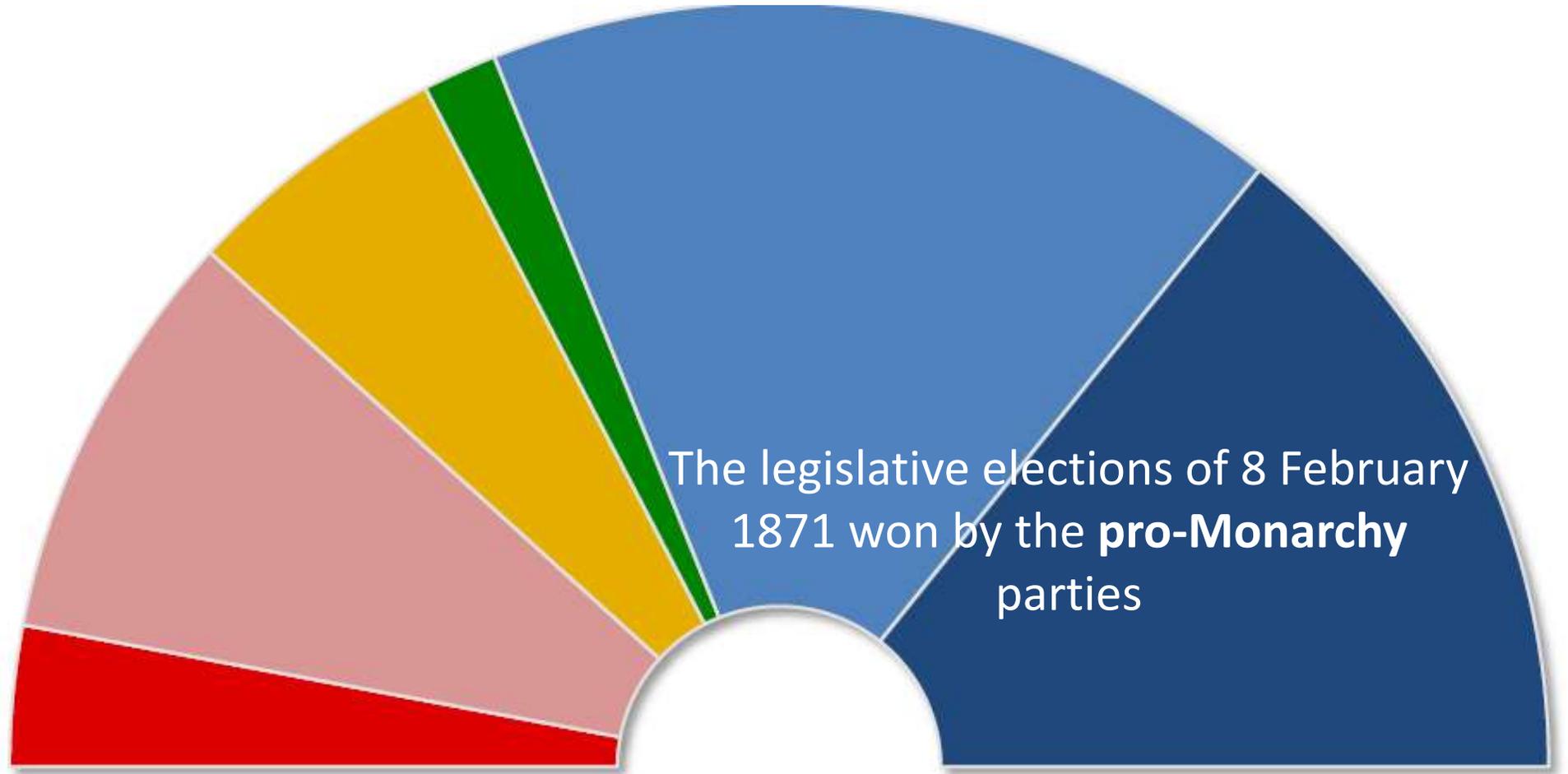
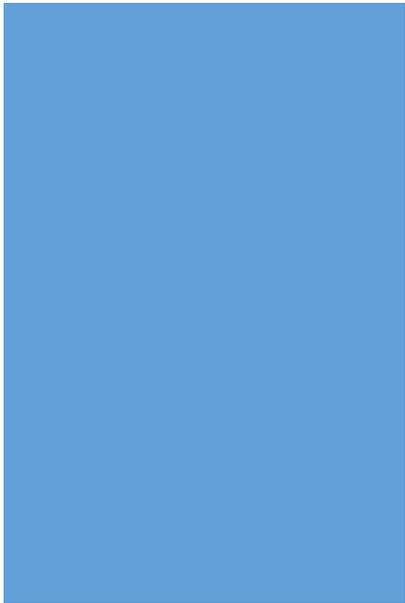


28 January 1871: armistice signed
with the Germans

Paris could not be held forever
Gambetta's rescue armies unable to
prevail

Public opinion in Paris strongly opposed
to the armistice





Assemblée nationale

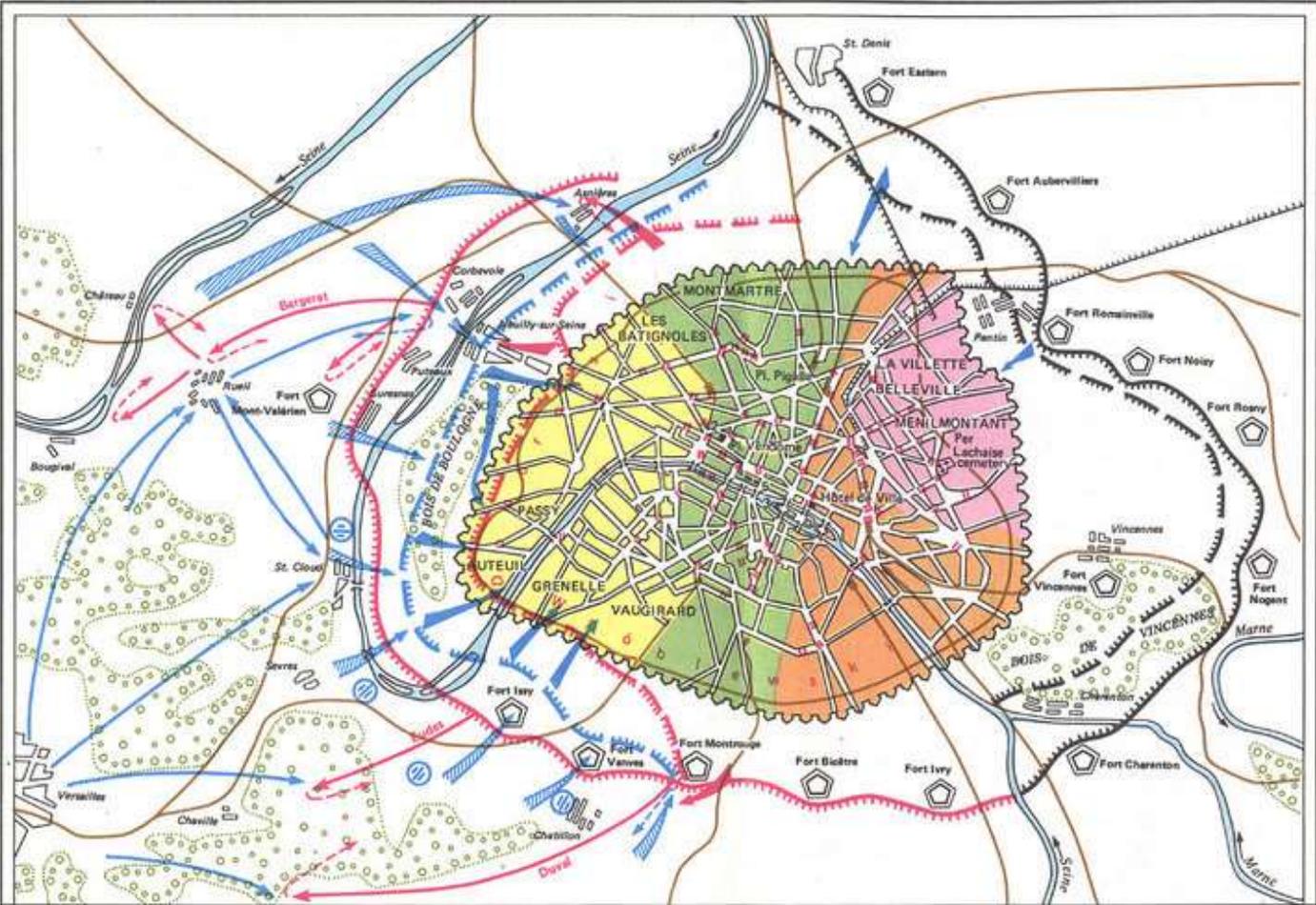
III^e République - Élections du 8 février 1871

- Républicains radicaux [38]
- Républicains modérés [112]
- Libéraux [72]
- Bonapartistes [20]
- Orléanistes [214]
- Légitimistes [182]

18 March – 29 May 1871: The Paris Commune

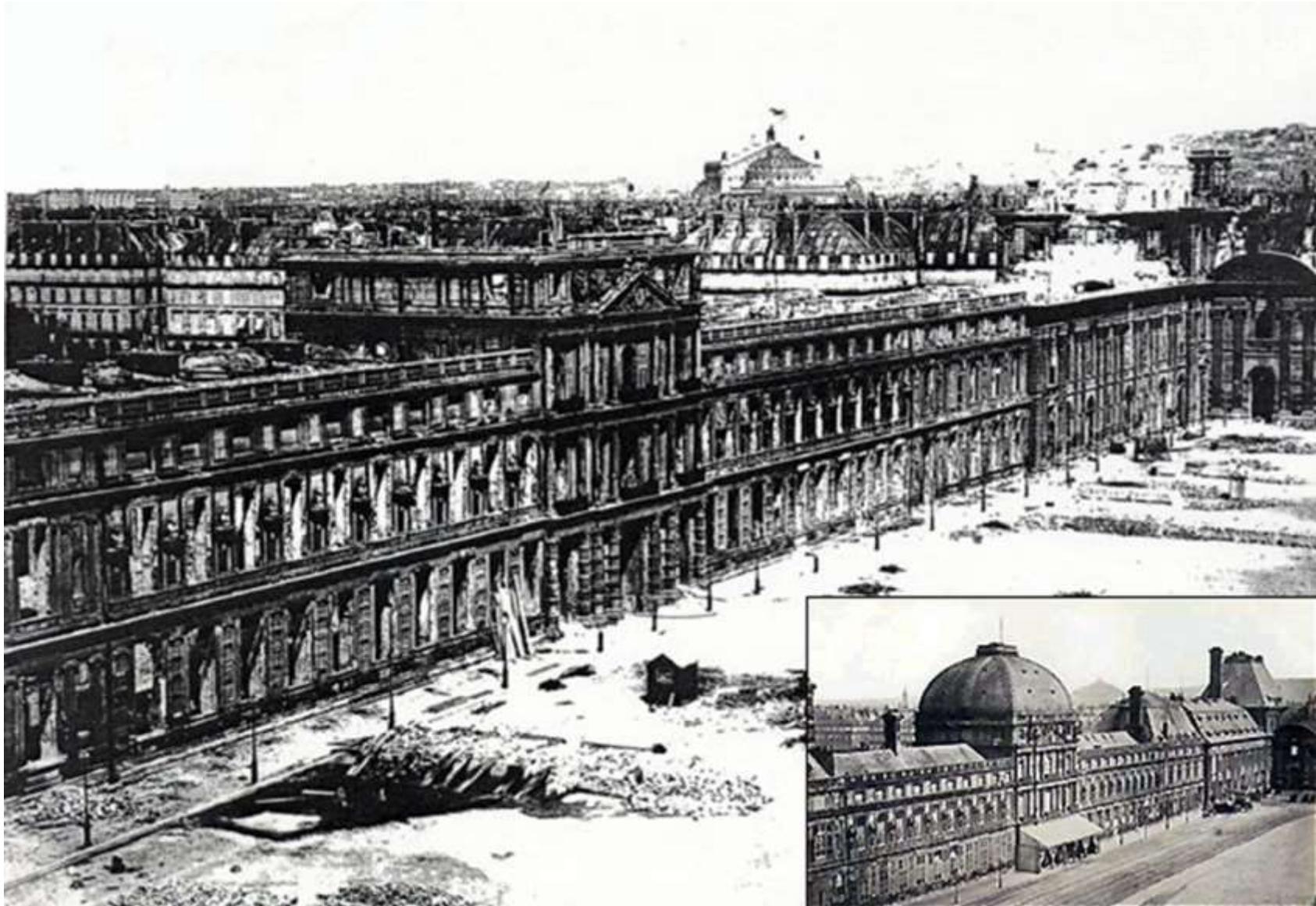
The establishment of a **socialist**, revolutionary government in Paris





The "Bloody week" (21-28 May)







10 May 1871: Treaty of Frankfurt

Humiliating peace for France

Hefty war indemnity

Military occupation



JULES FAVRE SCELLANT LE TRAITÉ DE
FRANCFORT (1871), AVEC LA BAGUE QUE
LUI AVAIT DONNÉE NAUNDORF.



CI-CONTRE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE
PRISE SPÉCIALEMENT AU M
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈ



The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine: a mistake

France irreconcilable



The Franco-Prussian War: a forgotten war?





Local war monuments & remembrance ceremonies

1911: Franco-Prussian war veterans granted a medal



“Sedantag” (“Sedan Day”):
celebrating the unification of
Germany each September 2

Symbolic importance: all the German
states fought together for the first
time

A collective enterprise against the
“hereditary enemy”





Belgium: the Franco-Prussian War as a vital threat

Mixed population (Flemish & Walloons)

The ability to protect its borders

4 000 French soldiers disarmed and retained in Belgium



Switzerland: asylum granted to 85 000 French soldiers

Swiss neutrality acknowledged in 1815

Image of a **humanitarian nation** consolidated in 1870-1871

The disarming of French troops
(Switzerland)



The Franco-Prussian War: a total war?

Efficient weaponry
The use of railroads
Violence against civilians

Limited war aims
POWs well treated
Localized battles





WORLD COLONIAL EMPIRES, 1900

 Belgium	 German Empire	 Italy	 Portugal	 United States
 France	 Great Britain	 The Netherlands	 Spain	 Other independent states

WORLD COLONIAL EMPIRES, 1900