



HITLER-STALIN: THE UNTHINKABLE ALLIANCE

WHY DID THE LEADER OF THE
COMMUNIST WORLD CHOSE TO
MAKE A PACT WITH HITLER?



Berlin: **12 January 1939**

The diplomatic corps
at the new Reich
Chancellery

Hitler's objective: to impress his guests





A bizarre scene

Hitler engaged in
conversation with the Soviet
ambassador

A warm handshake

WHAT WAS GOING ON?



Tense Soviet-German relations

Treaty of Rapallo (1922): friendly diplomatic relations

German republic & Soviet Union isolated

German army allowed to train in Russia

Spirit of cooperation LONG GONE in 1939



1933: Hitler Chancellor

The end of the treaty of
Rapallo

Bolshevik Russia perceived as
an existential threat to
Germany

No interest in a political
agreement



The Reichstag fire (March 1933)

German communists accused
of setting the Reichstag
(parliament) on fire

A ploy to eliminate them as a
political force

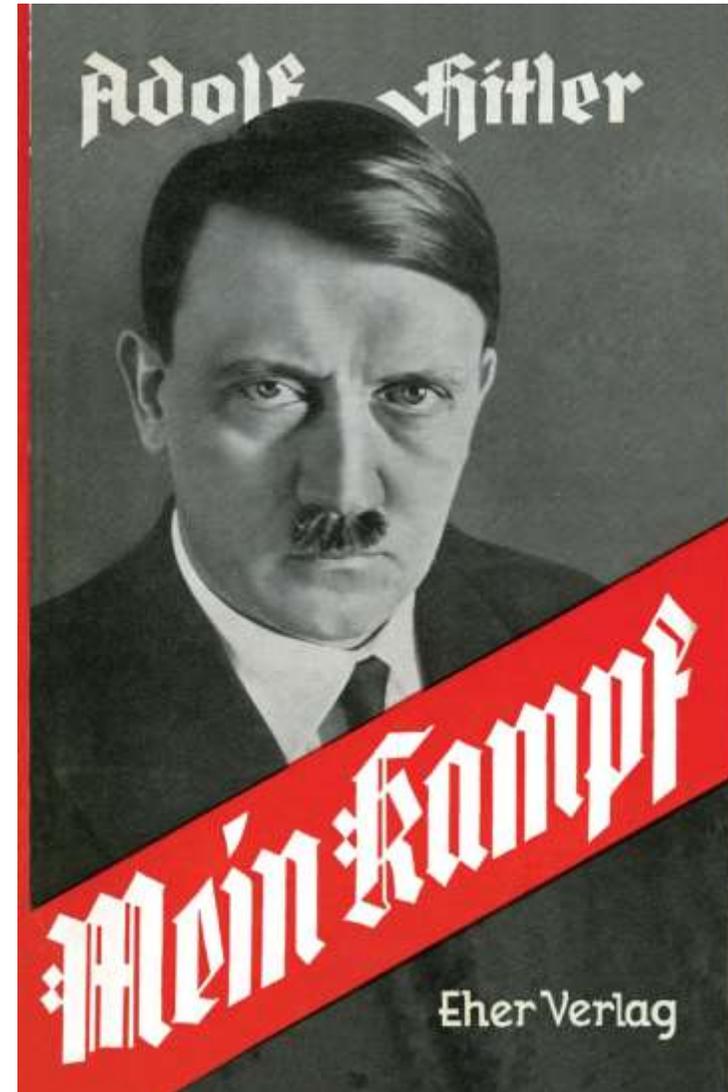


Hitler's vision

Slavic peoples described as
sub humans
(*Untermenschen*) unable to
govern themselves

The concept of vital space
(*lebensraum*) in Eastern
Europe

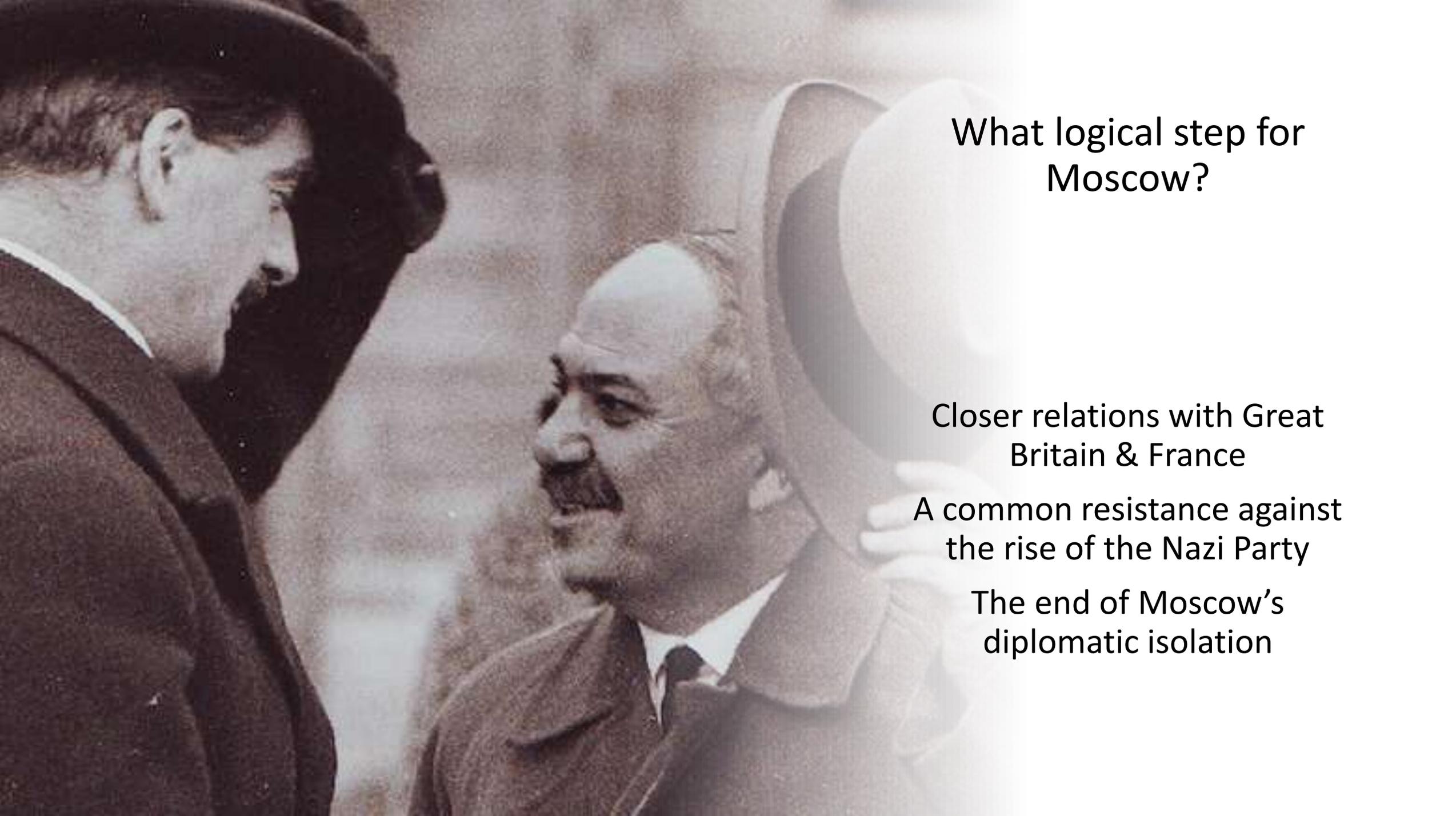
The Soviet leaders:
"Bolshevik pigs"



Nazi propaganda

Germany as the best
protection against Soviet
communism





What logical step for
Moscow?

Closer relations with Great
Britain & France

A common resistance against
the rise of the Nazi Party

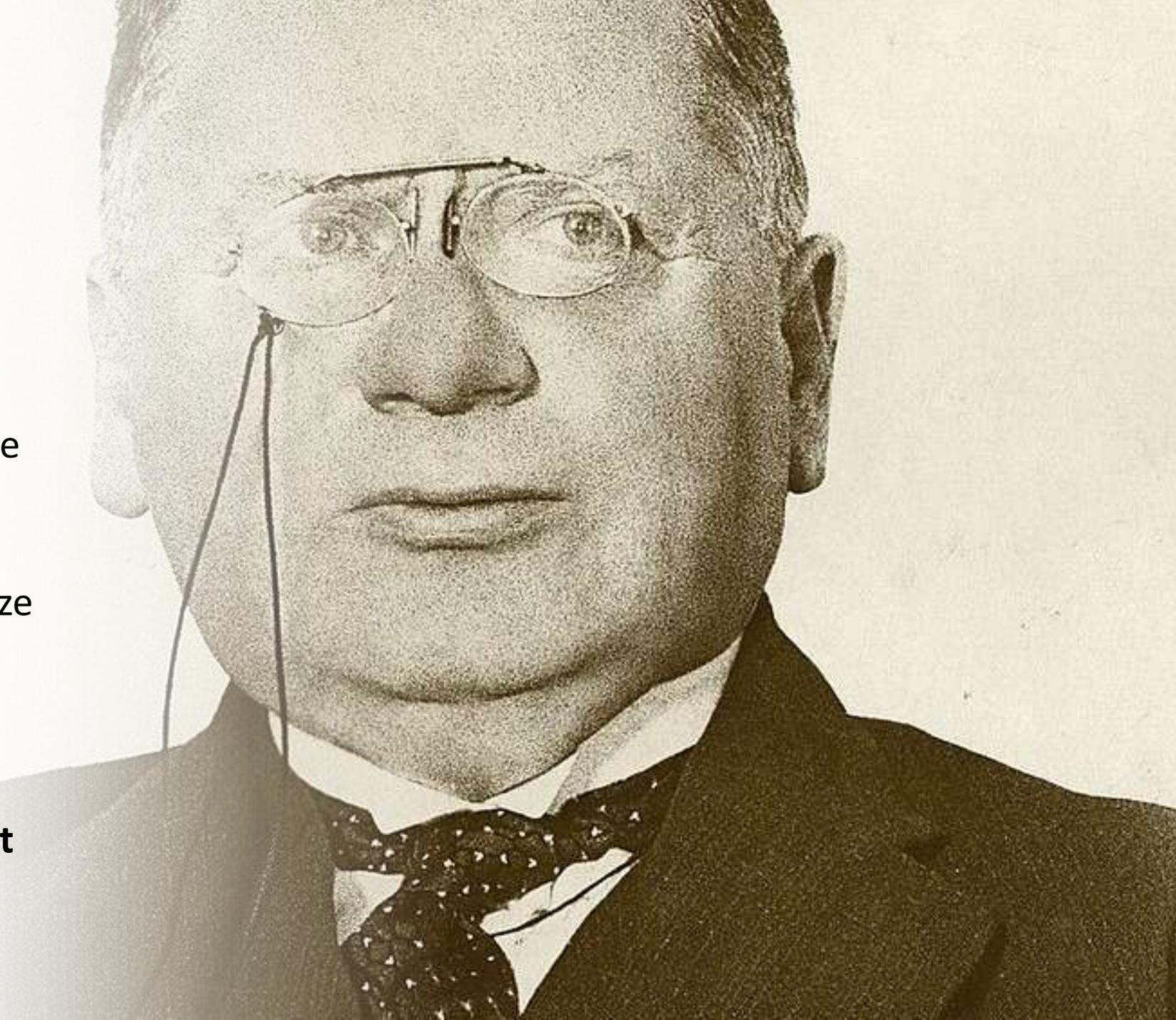
The end of Moscow's
diplomatic isolation

Maxim Litvinov
(Soviet Commissar of
Foreign Affairs)

The first Soviet representative
in London (1919)

Convinced the U.S. to recognize
the Soviet Union

A leading voice for a Soviet
policy of **collective security**
with Western powers **against**
Germany





France

Unstable politically

BUT

The French Army believed to be the
best army in the world

Litvinov's vision: to resuscitate the old
Franco-Russian alliance



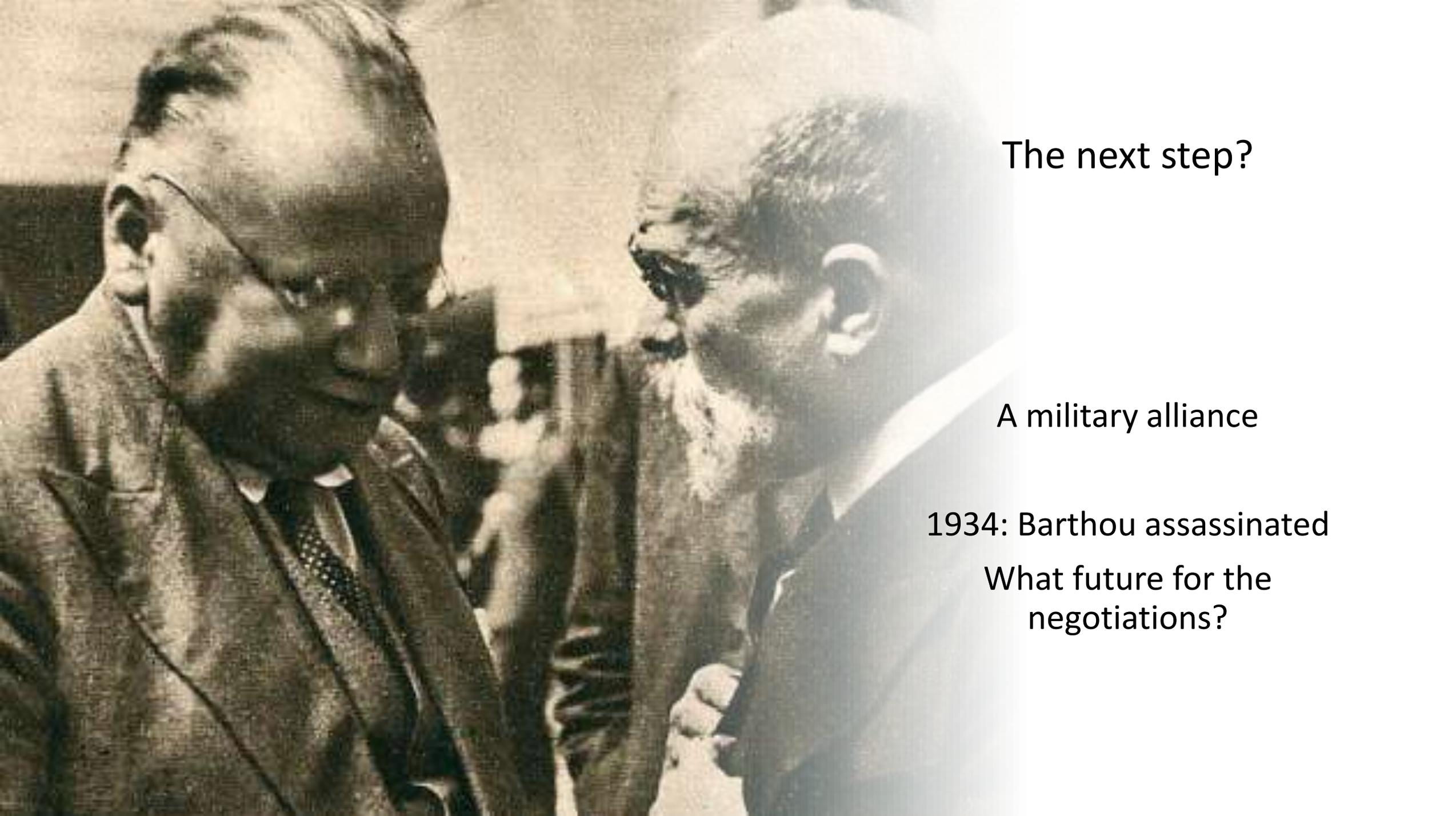
A powerful
ally in France

Louis Barthou (Foreign Affairs
Minister)

Anti-Communist but focus on French
security

Hitler: a danger

Soviet Union welcomed to the **League
of Nations** in Geneva



The next step?

A military alliance

1934: Barthou assassinated

What future for the
negotiations?

A similar approach with London

Ivan Maisky: an excellent diplomat

Friendship with **Anthony Eden**
(British Minister at the League of Nations)

Eden: the first Western diplomat to meet Stalin in Moscow

British government: cooperation with the Soviets not an option



London to Paris: bury your project
of military alliance with Moscow

The French in need of allies to
contain Hitler

Great Britain: the only possible ally
in Western Europe



General Gamelin



Anglo-German naval Agreement (June 1935)

Germany authorized **to rebuild**
its navy

Total tonnage of *Kriegsmarine* to
be 35% of total tonnage of the
Royal Navy

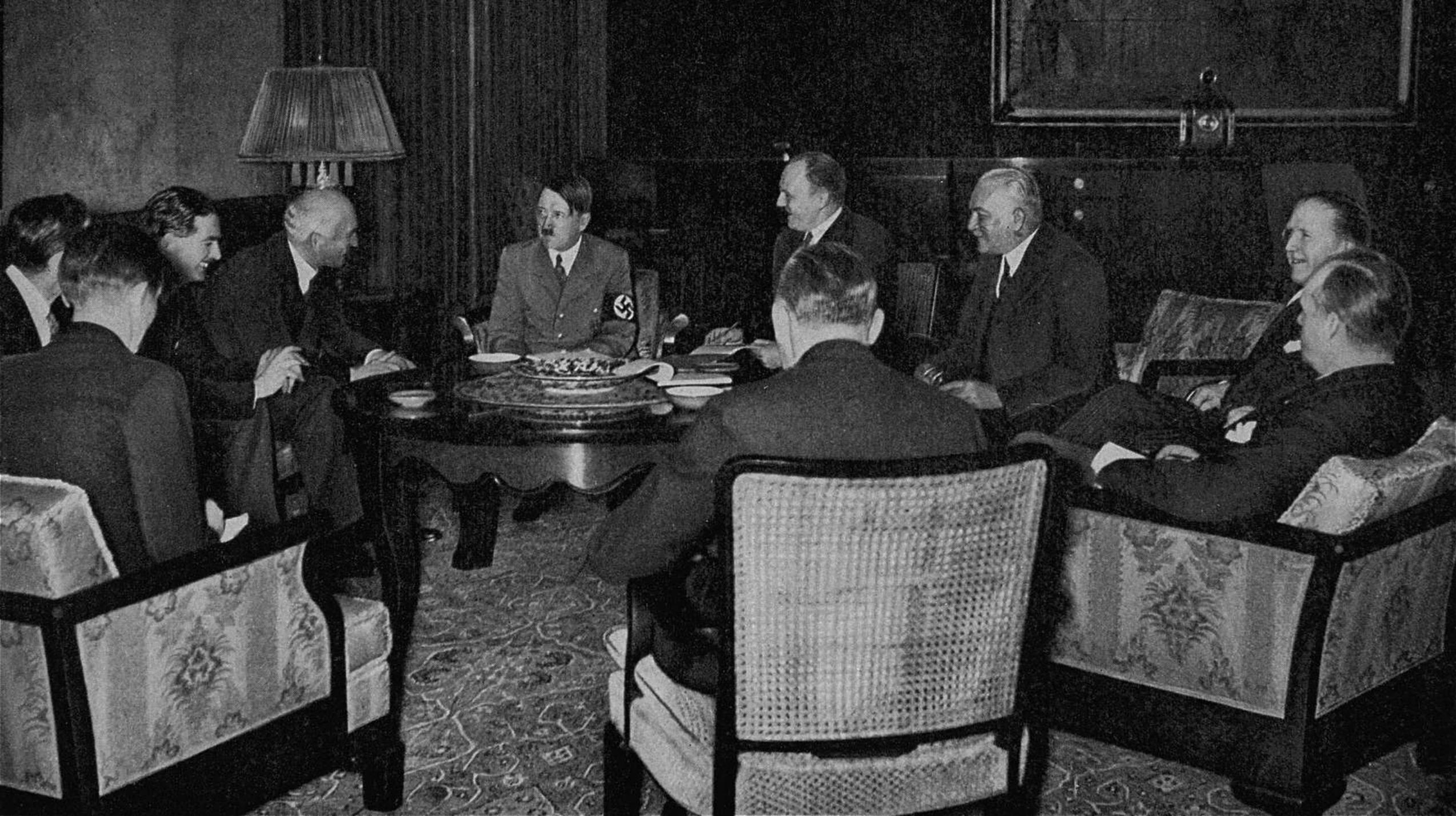
Stalin: a conspiracy against the
Soviet Union



1935: the first violations of the
Treaty of Versailles

The creation of a modern air force
(Luftwaffe)

The return of military conscription



The Nuremberg Laws

rial stock, because rare. Several firms ally no business and o furnish their em- work, although they o keep up at least a as long as they retain on the floor.

on is all the more dis- local securities houses e fact that several pro- ets were recently sup- rder of the authorities concentrate activity in

ng paralysis that has e stock and bond mar- generally attributed to an State's centralized

BERLIN WORKS OUT ANTI-JEWISH RULES

No Date Has Yet Been Set for Promulgating Regulations to Enforce Recent Laws.

No official condemnation amongst British Conservatives

NEW WARNING ON FLAMES

Citizens Are Admonished

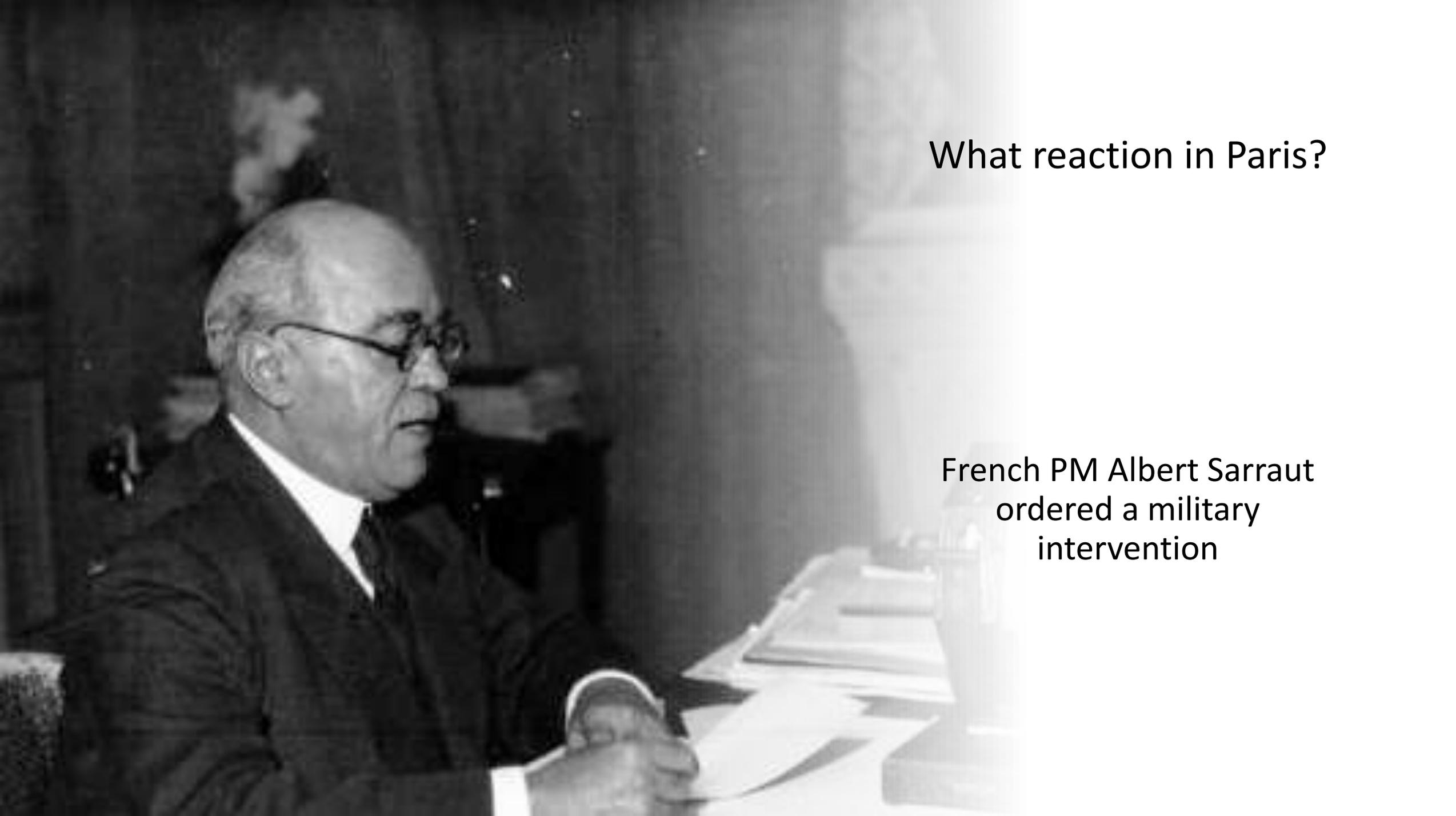
The exception: Winston Churchill (a lone voice)

March 1936

Another German violation: the
remilitarization of the Rhineland

Will France intervene? Hitler
nervous





What reaction in Paris?

French PM Albert Sarraut
ordered a military
intervention

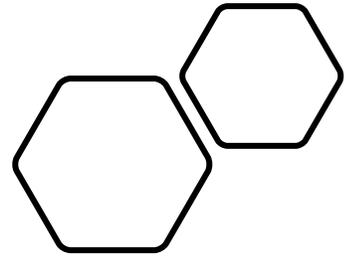


Gamelin to PM: NO!

Unless British support
assured

The British: no to a military
intervention

No French reaction – Hitler
unopposed



A crusade against "Jewish Bolshevism"

Alliance with Mussolini



1936 Anti-Comintern Pact

Anti-Communist agreement
between Germany, Italy and
Japan against the Soviet
Union

Germany as the **spearhead**
of the fight against
Communism





Joachim von Ribbentrop

An alliance with Great
Britain?

Ribbentrop: ambassador in
London

A Nazi fanatic
Multiple blunders
“Brickendrop”

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)

Nationalists (supported by
Berlin) vs. **Republicans**
(armed by Moscow)



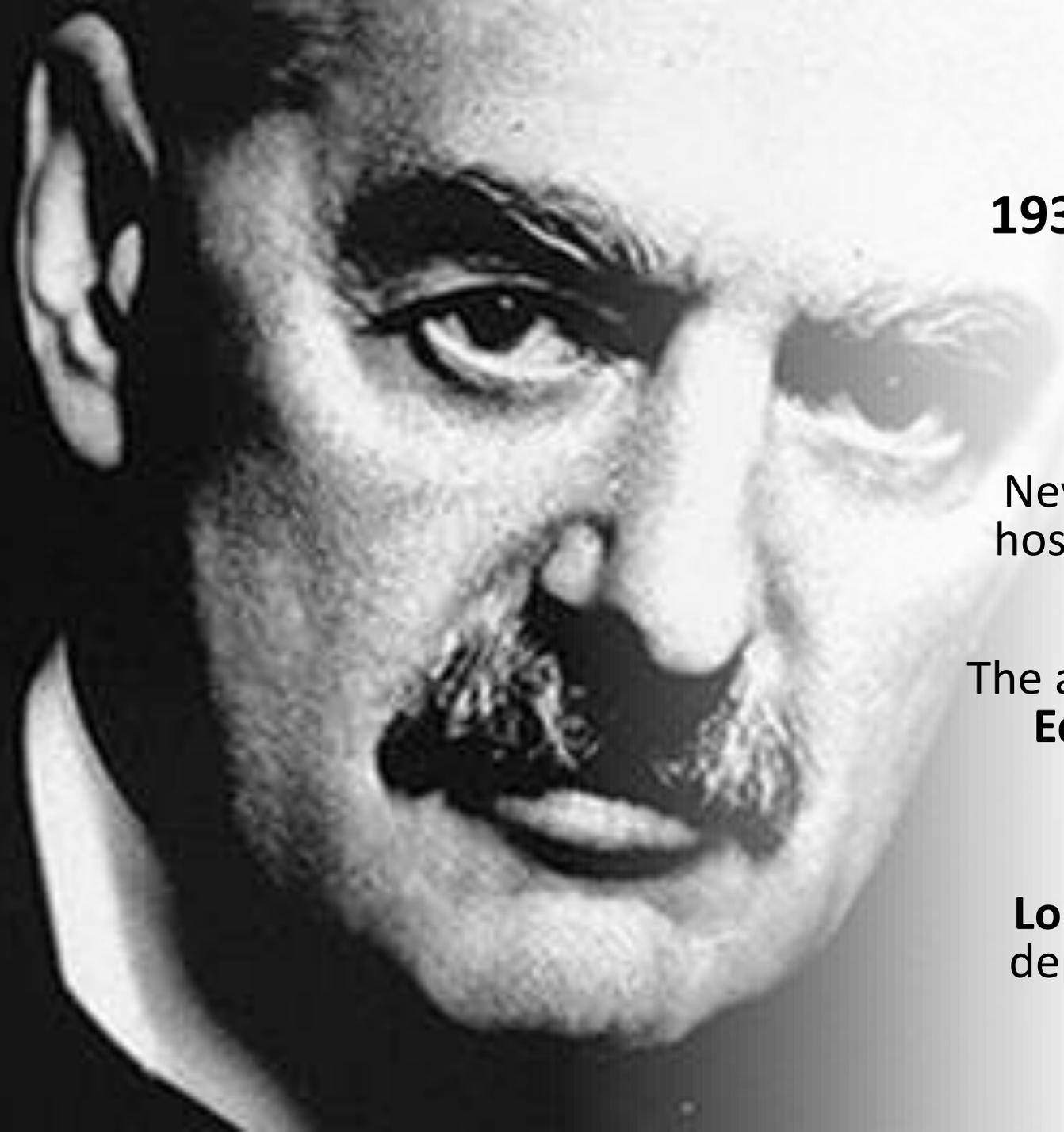


Stalin's other problem: Japanese expansion

1931: the brutal invasion of
Manchuria

A threat to the Soviet Union:
where will the Japanese stop?





1937: a new British PM

Neville Chamberlain: very hostile to the Soviet Union

The appointment of **Anthony Eden** as Foreign Affairs Minister

Lord Halifax as unofficial deputy Foreign Secretary

“Appeasement”

Lord Halifax: a staunch
proponent of Appeasement

Appeasement: policy of
making concessions to avoid
a conflict





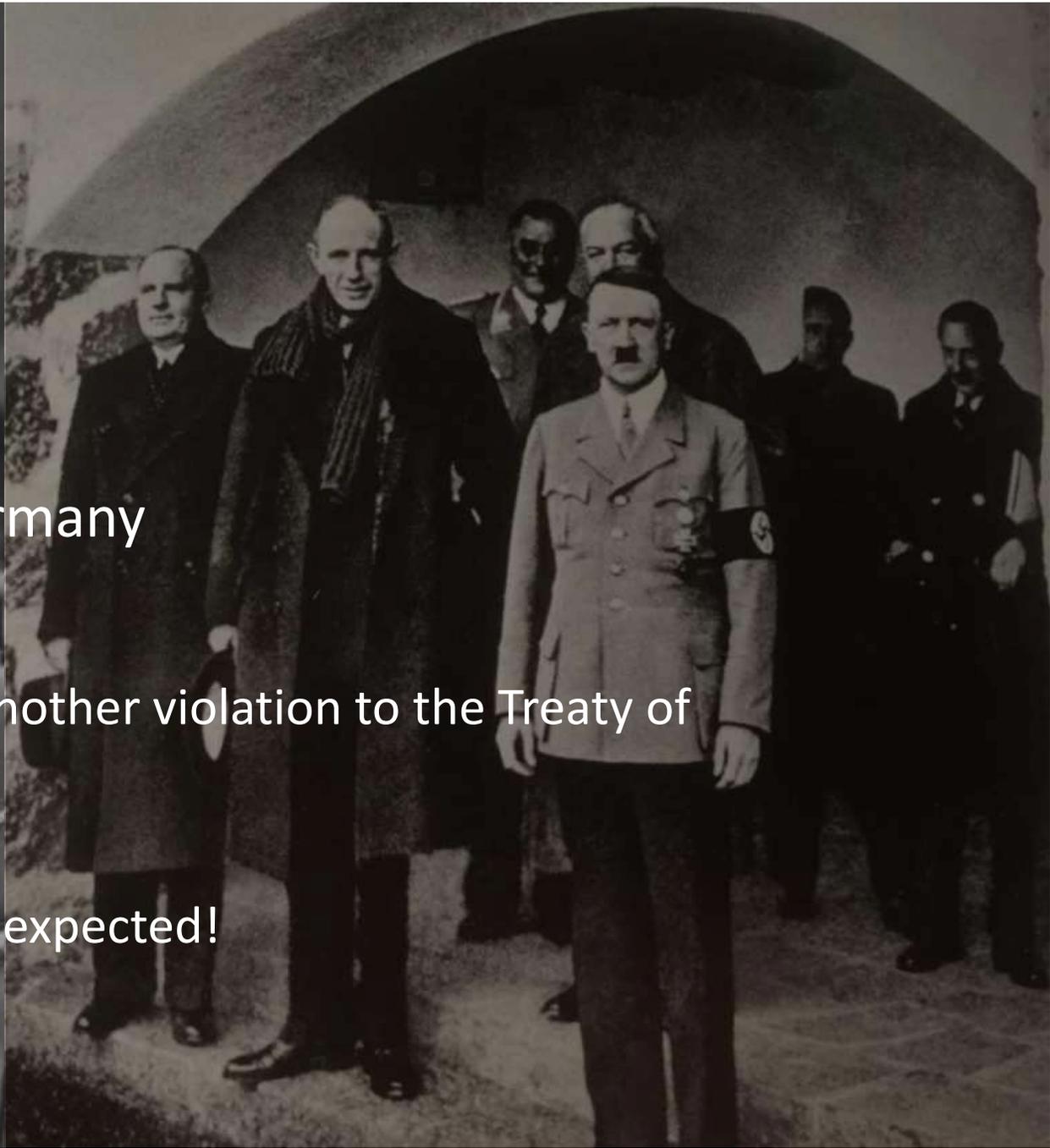
November 1937: Lord Halifax in Germany

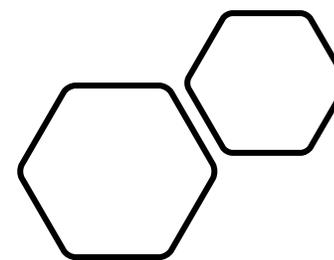
Meeting with Hitler

Germany to annex neighboring Austria (another violation to the Treaty of Versailles)

Halifax: no opposition from London to be expected!

Anthony Eden resigned







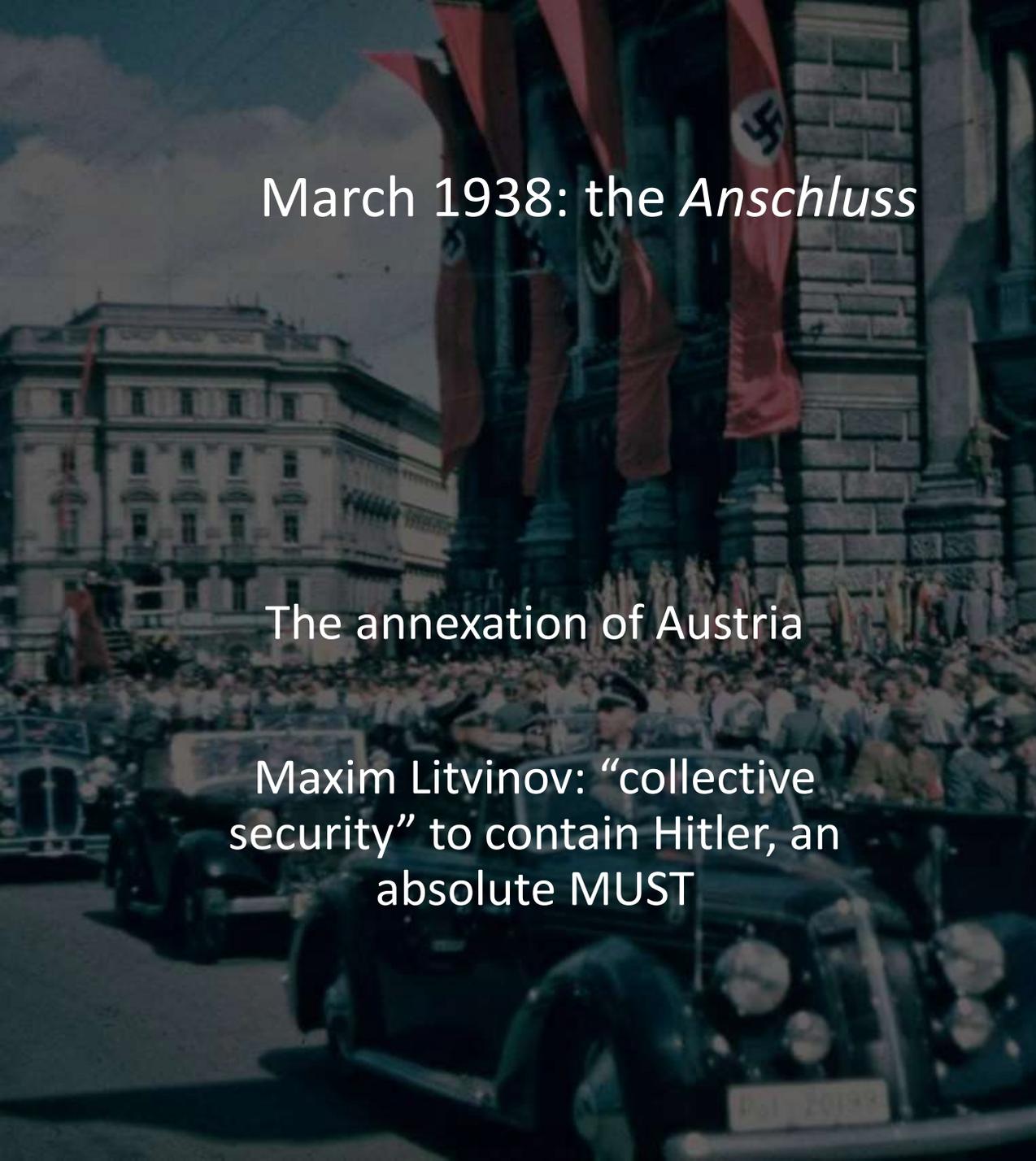
Lord Halifax appointed
Foreign Secretary

A major blow for Moscow

March 1938: the *Anschluss*

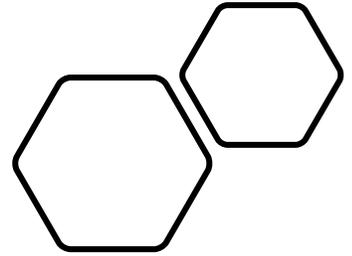
The annexation of Austria

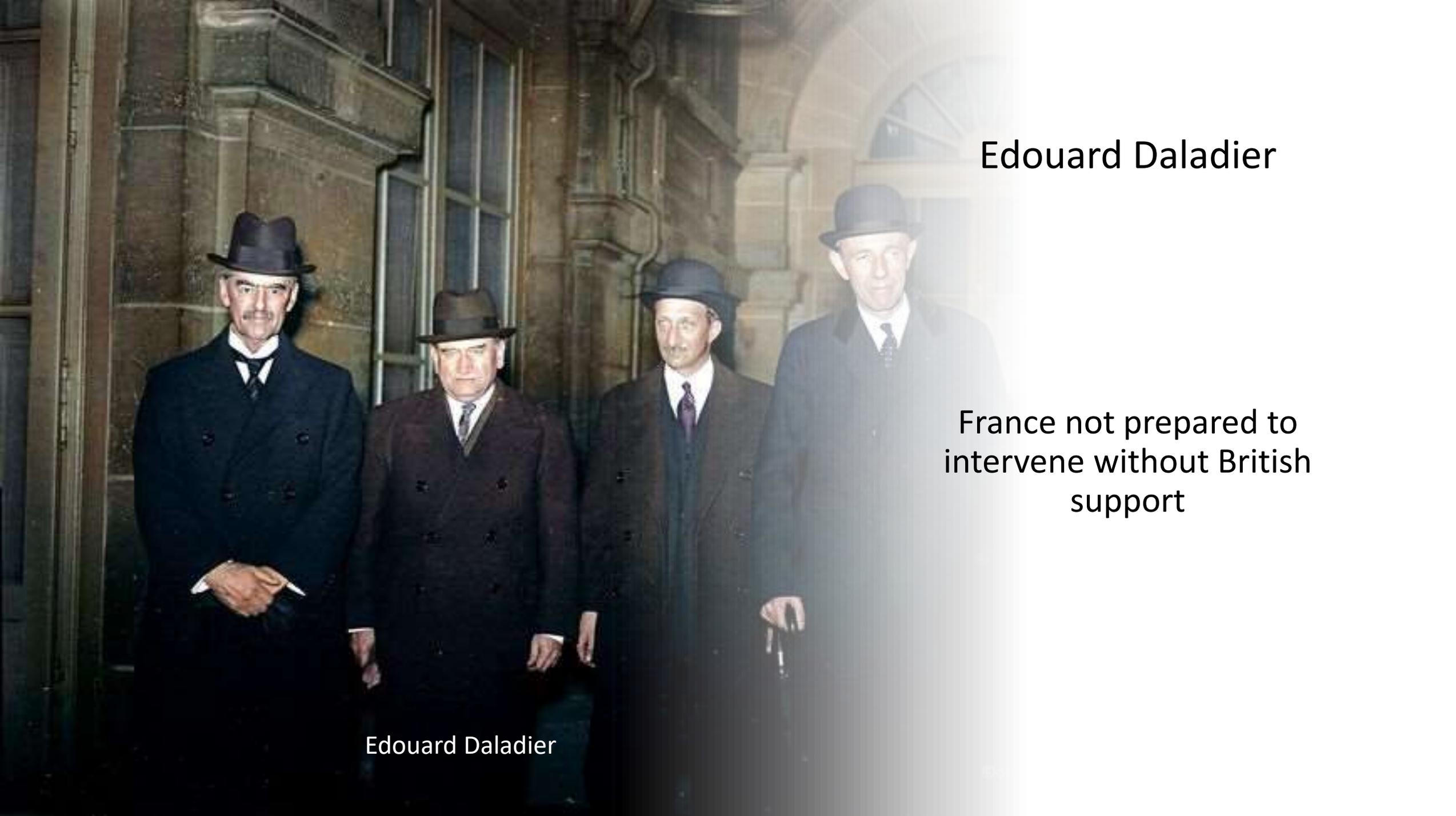
Maxim Litvinov: “collective security” to contain Hitler, an absolute MUST





HITLER IN VIENNA (1938)





Edouard Daladier

France not prepared to
intervene without British
support

Edouard Daladier

Litvinov & Maisky in trouble

Stalin growing suspicious of their support for “collective security”

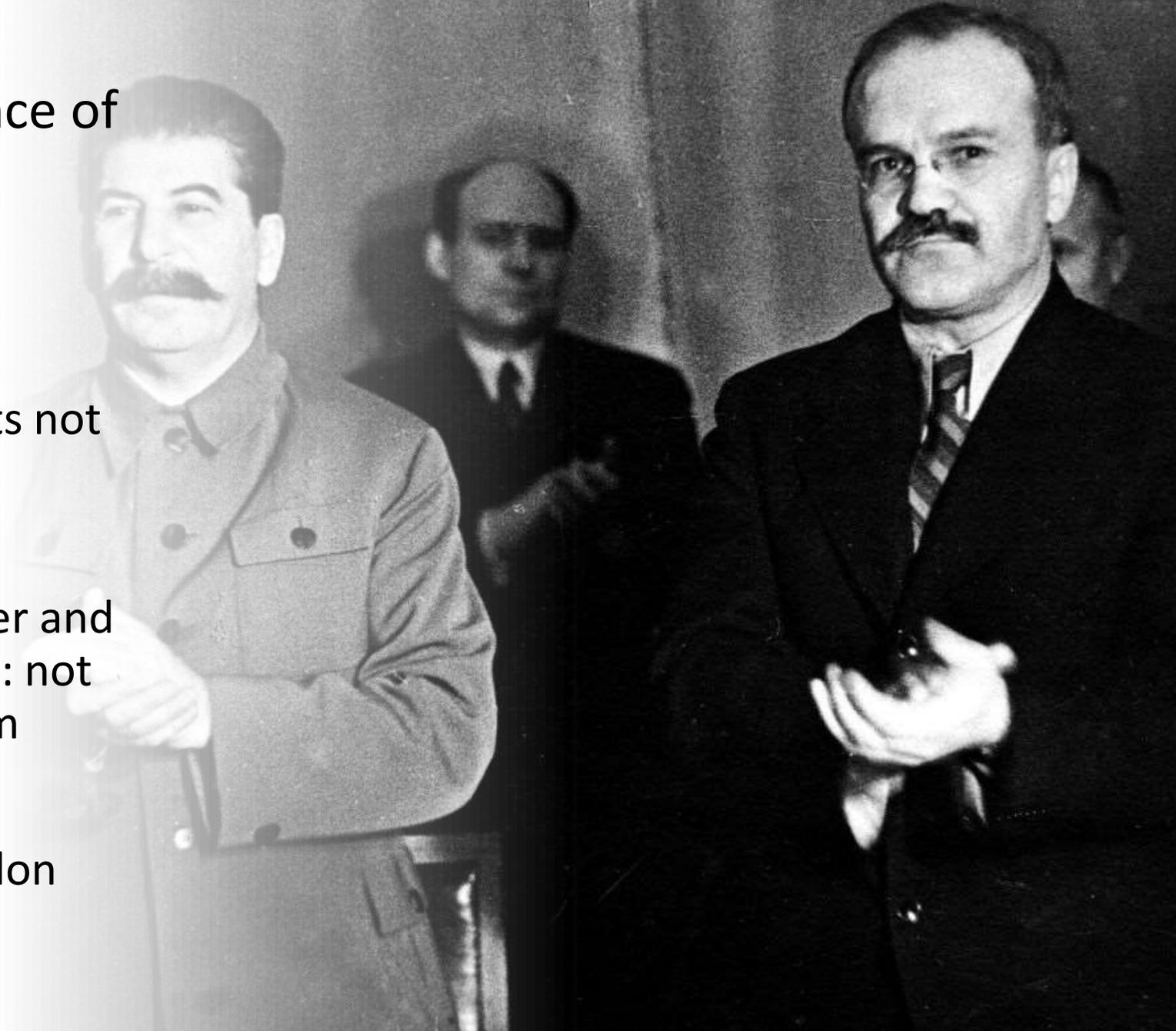


The growing influence of
Molotov

The Western capitalists not
to be trusted

Tensions between Hitler and
Western democracies: not
Moscow's problem

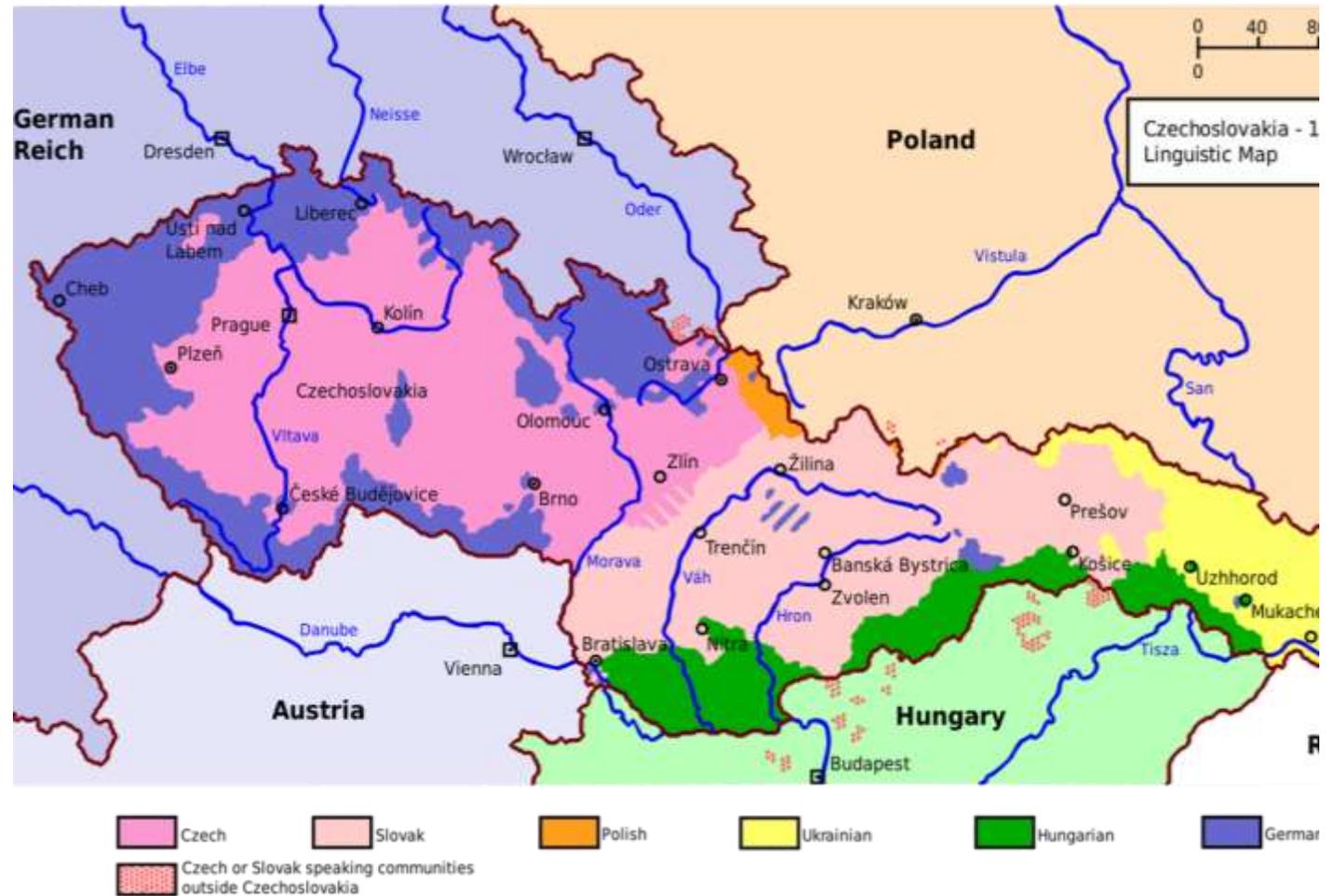
Maisky back in London



Hitler's next move: the annexation of the Sudetenland

Czechoslovakia not alone: a **dual military alliance** with France and the Soviet Union

Will France intervene?
What about Great Britain?

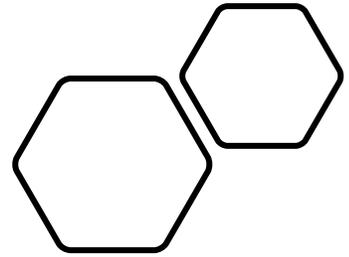






The 1938 Munich Agreement

The Soviet Union not invited



The Munich Agreement

Neville Chamberlain: *“A peace for our time...”*

Stalin: evidence of a Franco-British **conspiracy** (promoting a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union)



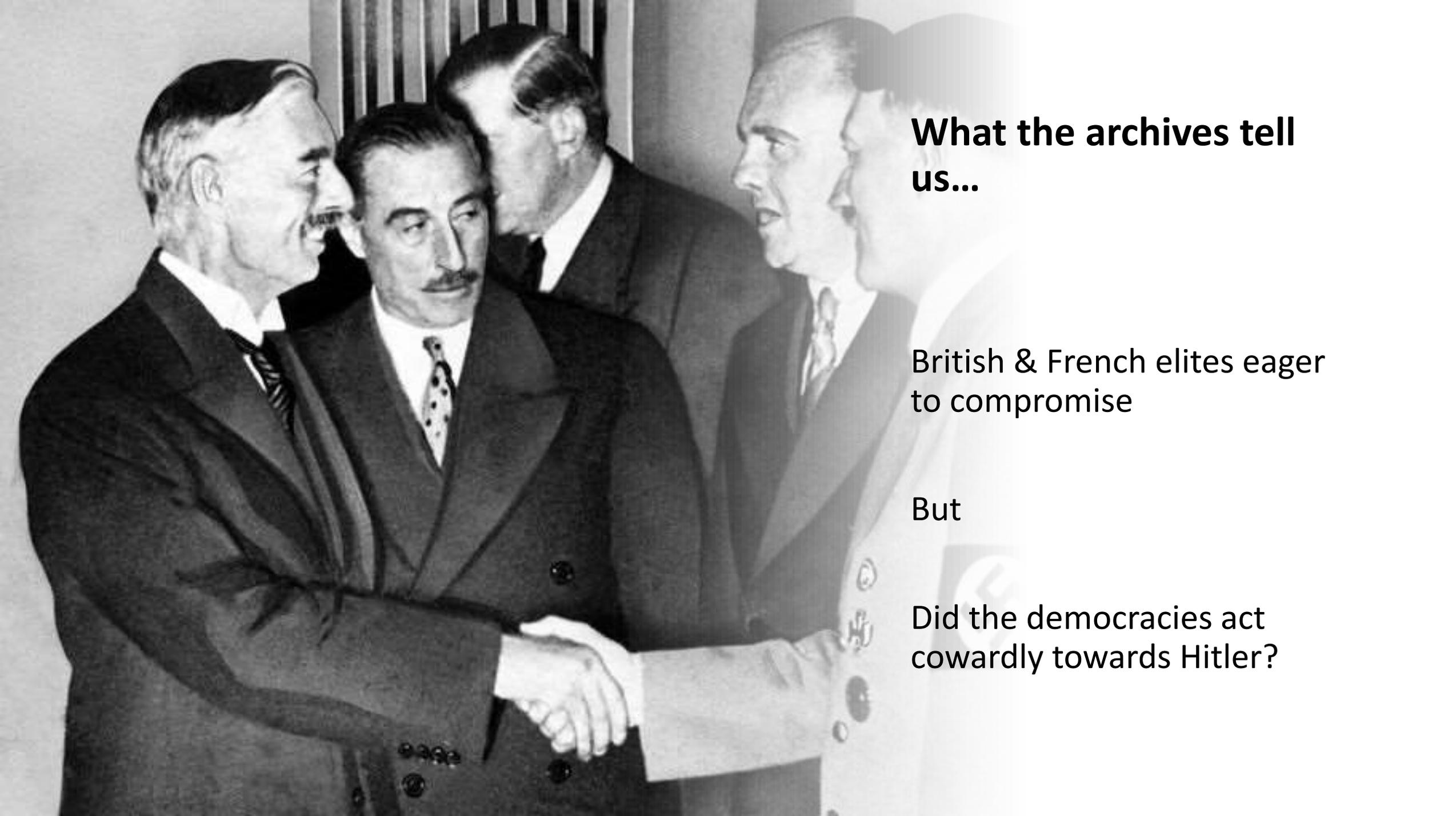
***Appeasement* (negotiation & compromise): was is so wrong?**

A **rational policy** for a declining Great Britain?

Everything had to be attempted to avoid another conflict

Churchill: the man of the hour who saved Britain?





What the archives tell us...

British & French elites eager to compromise

But

Did the democracies act cowardly towards Hitler?

Could a war in 1938 have prevented the horrors of WW2?

Hindsight: History with “ifs”



Fact: a great many number of German generals feared the consequences of a war in 1938

The German army
(*Wehrmacht*) not ready

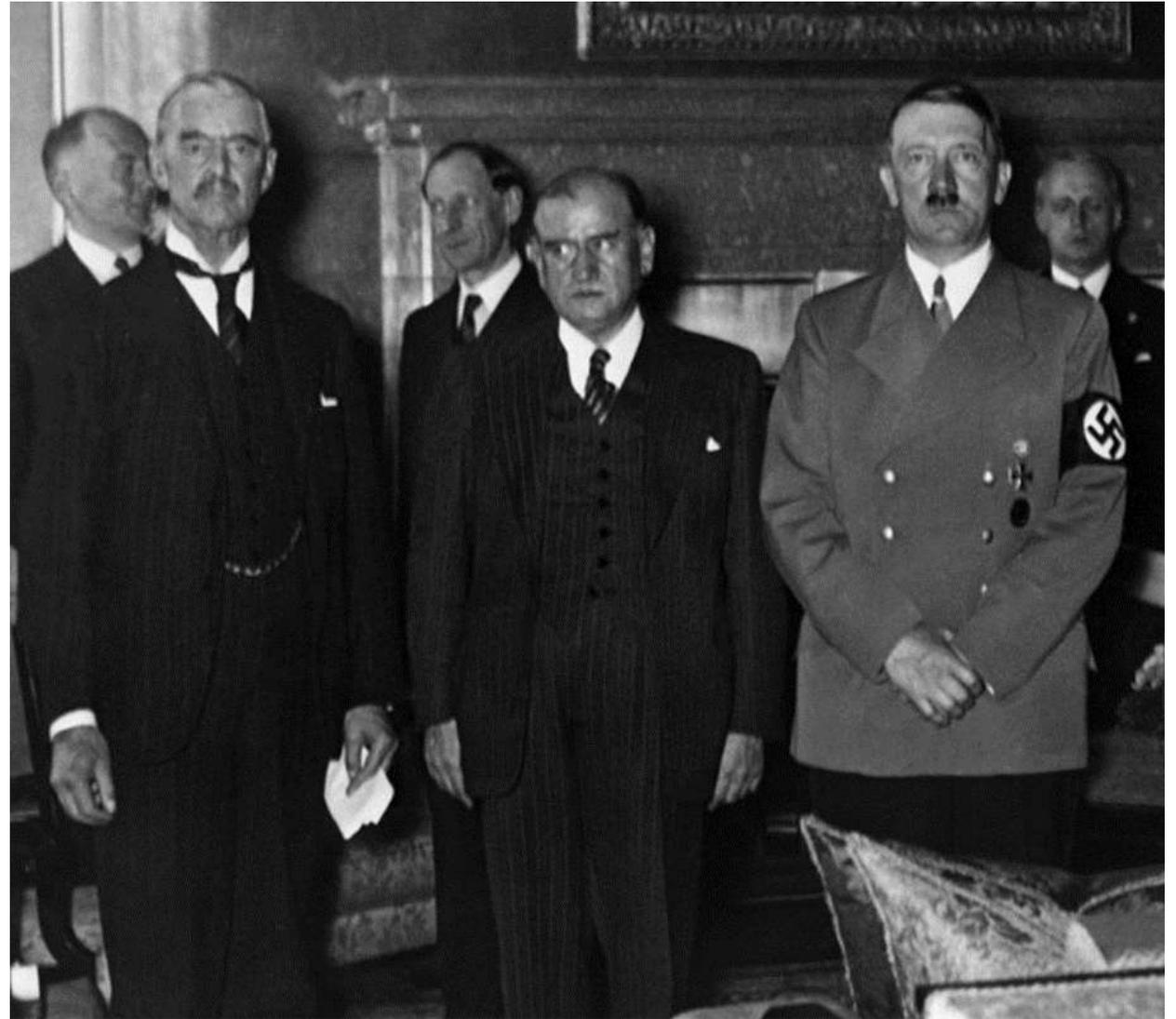
Defensive strategy



Why were France & Great Britain unwilling to consider war in 1938?

German air force (*Luftwaffe*) capabilities & industrial potential overestimated

Anti-appeasers: the minority and poorly organized





Rearmament (France & Great Britain)

A real effort at rearming

British military budget tripled
between 1937 & 1939

1940 British production of
aircraft far superior to
Germany's

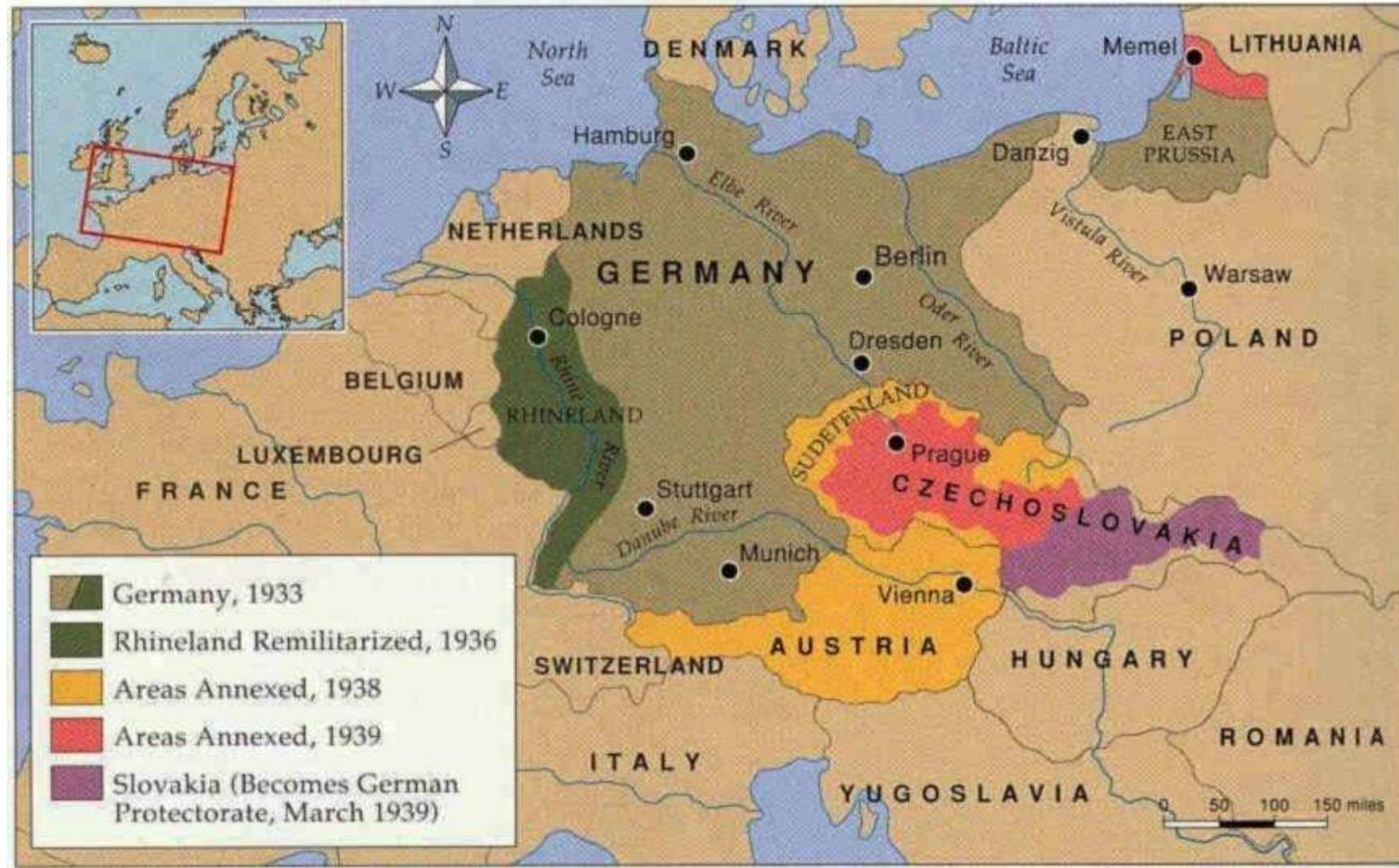
France & Great Britain
produced 3 times more tanks
than Germany

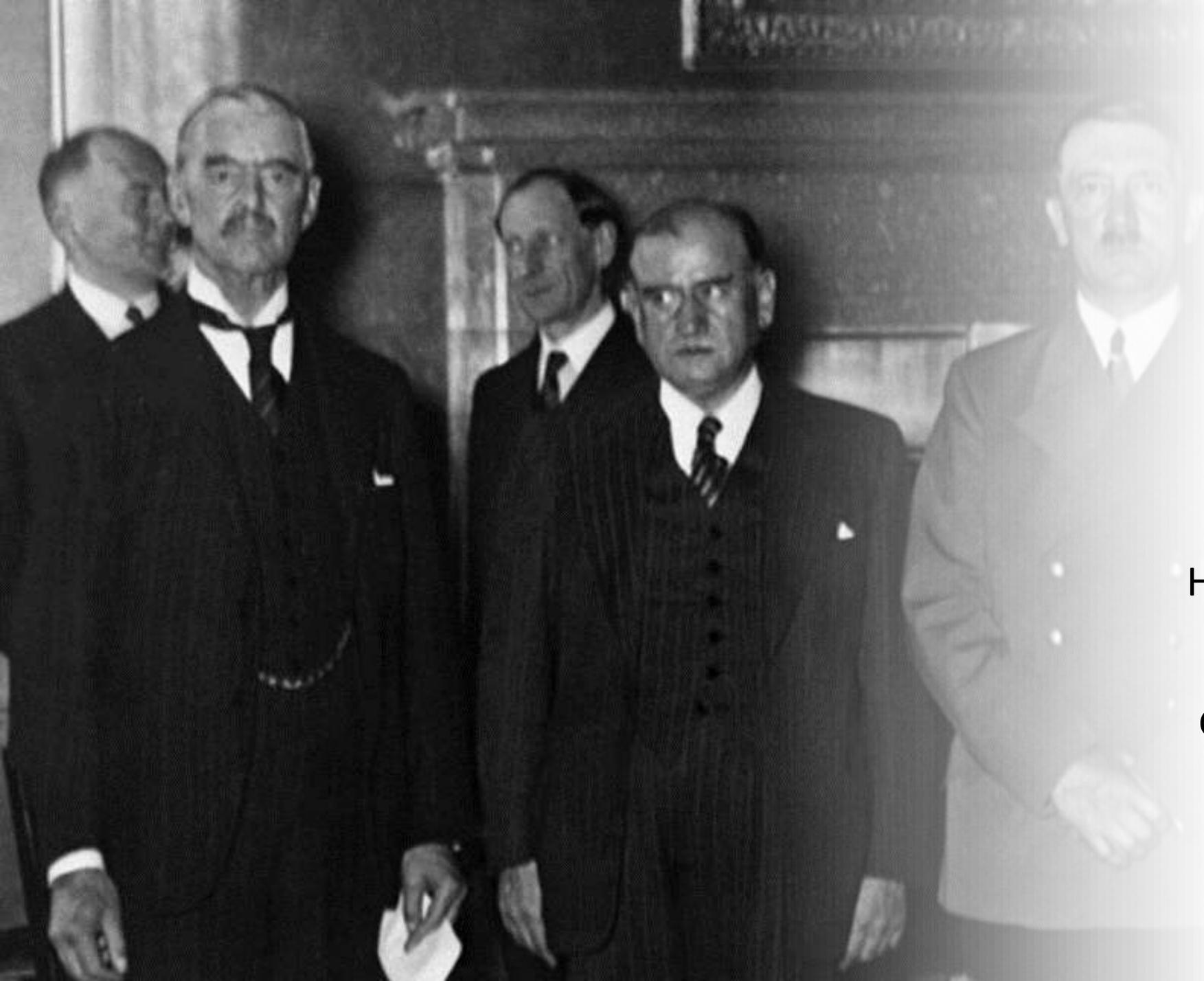
With hindsight, France & Great Britain **should have** waged war on Germany in 1938

BUT

War is more than statistics on paper

Nazi Germany on the March, 1936-1939





Widespread belief in 1938
that Hitler could be talked
into compromising

Hitler's ability **to dissimulate**
his real intentions

German elites & people did
not want war

Czechoslovakia - 1930
Linguistic Map



Could France & Great Britain have justified a war with sole objective to prevent German populations of Czechoslovakia to be reunited with Germany?



How to justify war in 1938?

No one could have anticipated the horrors of WW2

Racial war did not start until the invasion of Poland (September 1939)





Nazi concentration
camps paled in
comparison to Soviet
camps

Millions had died of hunger
in the Soviet Union (Ukraine)

1 million executed in Soviet
Union prior to 1938

Kristallnacht (9-10 November 1938)

Violence against the Jews:
Kristallnacht took place after
Munich



Violence against the Jews in
France (Alsace-Lorraine & Paris):
“greedy” Jews accused of
promoting a “Jewish war”





A rigid system of alliances led to war in 1914

Why renew with similar alliances in the 1930s

Hitler denounced Germany's "encirclement"





Soviet Union: anti-colonial stance
A mortal threat to the British Empire

The Pact of Steel (22 May 1939)

A Germano-Italian bilateral
alliance





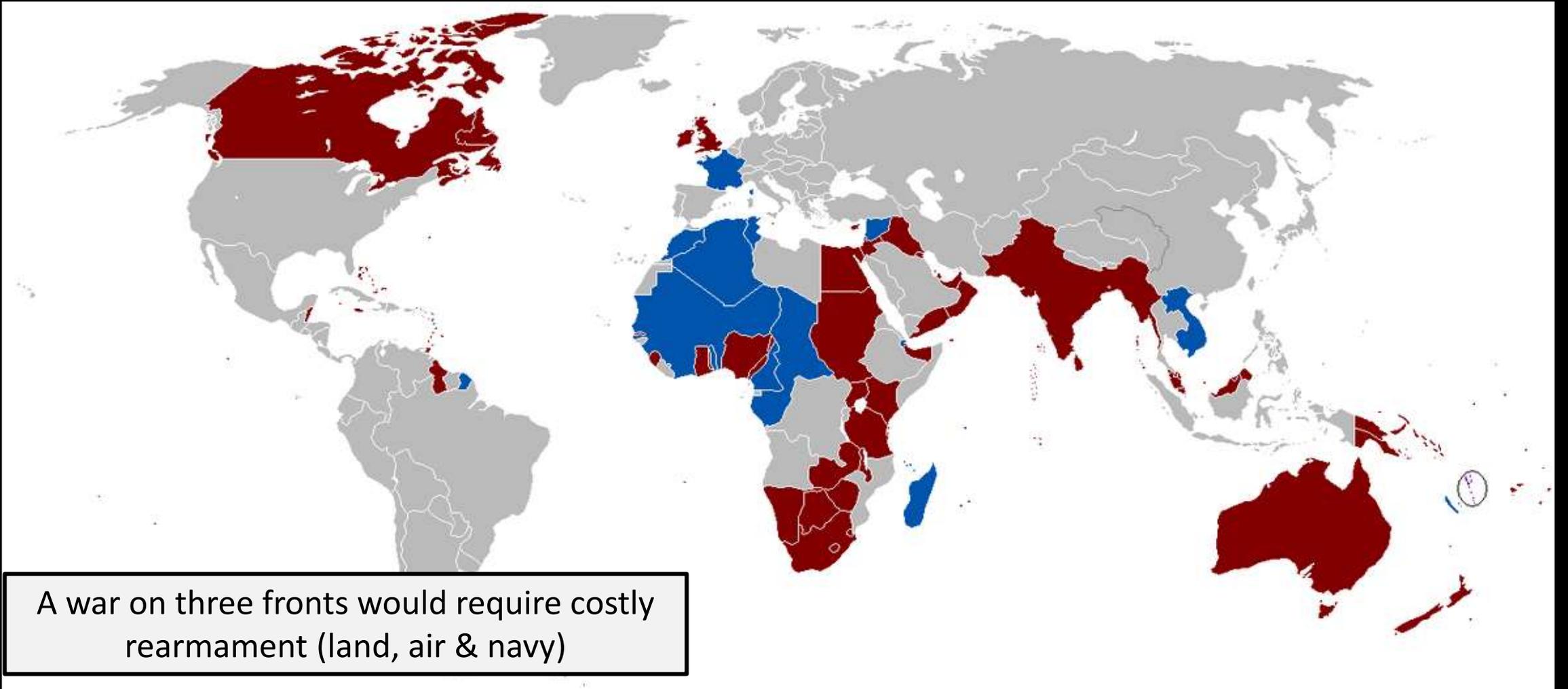


Italian fleet: a threat to vital British communication lines in the Mediterranean

Mediterranean key to British defense system in the Far-East

40% of British oil imports via Mediterranean

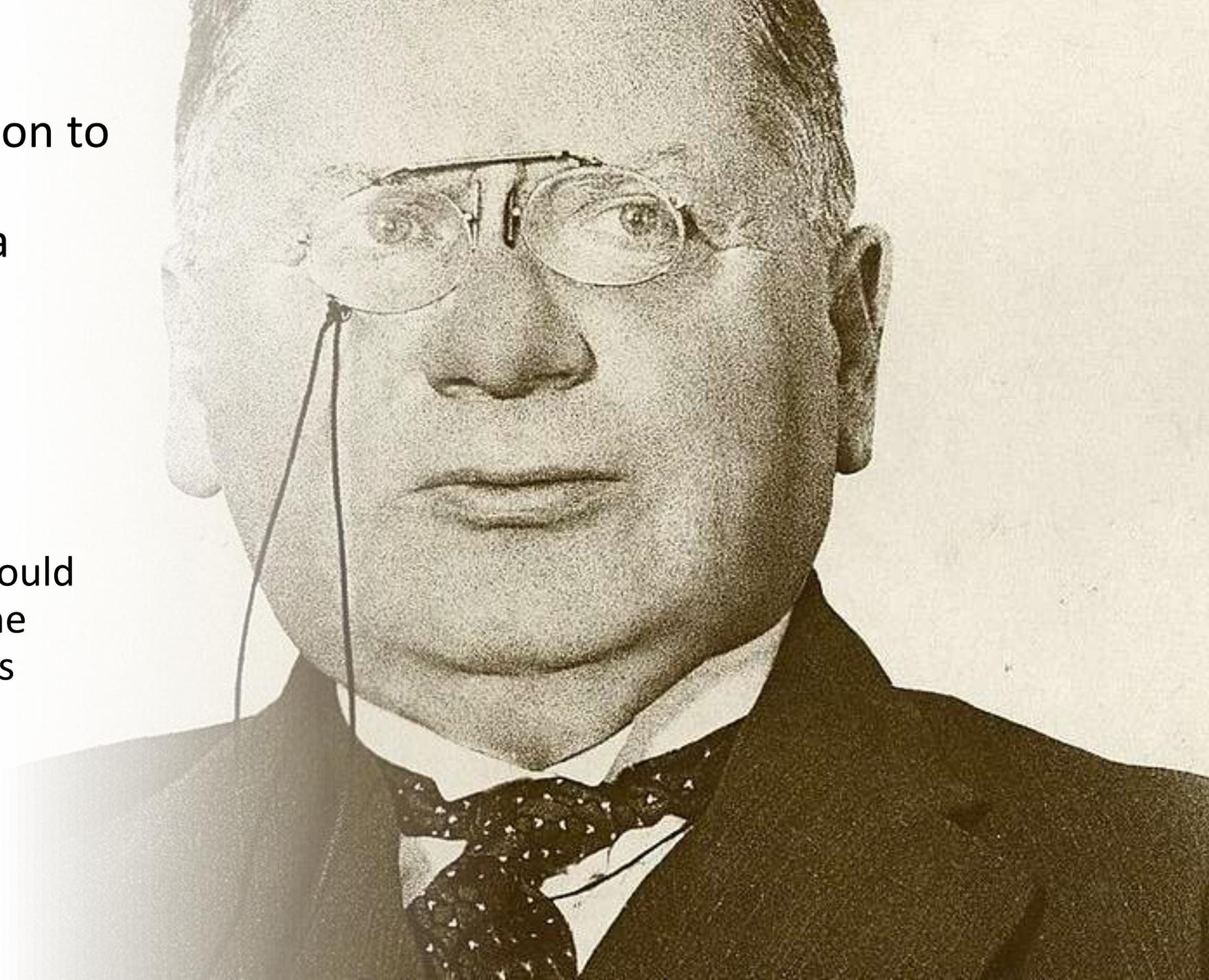
Active Italian anti-British & anti-French propaganda in the Middle-East & Tunisia



The British nightmare: a war against Germany in Europe, Italy in the Mediterranean Sea & Japan in Asia

Litvinov: Soviet Union to
help defend
Czechoslovakia

Collective security would
have prevented the
Sudetenland crisis



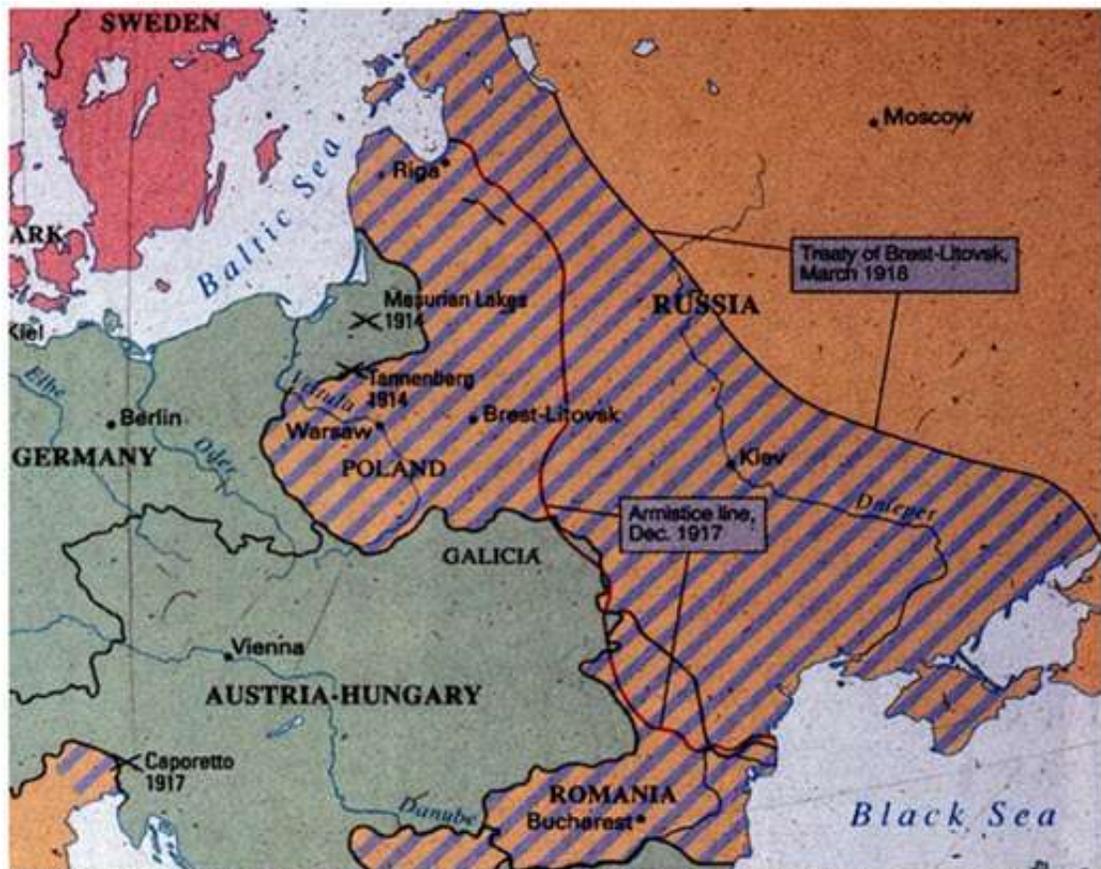


EUROPE Sept. 1938

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Scale of Miles
Scale of Kilometers

Country of Countries	•	Teens over 1,000,000	•
International Boundaries	—	Teens of 500,000-1,000,000	•
Coasts	—	Teens of 100,000-500,000	•



1918 – Map illustrating the land given up by Russian delegation in signing the Brest-Litovsk treaty.



Poland reborn

Poland fiercely attached to its independence

An authoritarian state squeezed between Germany & the Soviet Union

Poland not prepared to allow Soviet troops through its territory





Consternation in Moscow

Litvinov: no more illusions

Stalin humiliated: a Western
conspiracy against the Soviet
Union

Growing frustration

How to explain Hitler's cordial attitude towards the Soviet ambassador?

Hitler also friendly with the Polish and Hungarian ambassadors

WHY?





Nazi Germany on the March, 1936-1939



March 1939

The final takeover of Czechoslovakia

British and French ambassadors recalled – A guarantee to Poland

France & Great Britain to Moscow: a common **guarantee** of Poland's borders

No answer from Stalin

Hitler furious

Paris & London likely to seek
a military alliance with the
Soviet Union

Why not a German-Soviet
Pact instead?





Secrets negotiations with Germany

A special envoy to Moscow
to negotiate an economic
agreement

Germany in dire need of
natural resources (oil...)

Towards a political
agreement?



Hitler: a fascination for
Stalin

Stalin's great purges
(1937-1938)

Hitler to Stalin: Germany
more reliable than Western
democracies



Nazi Germany on the March, 1936-1939



March 1939

Another conflict deemed inevitable in London & Paris

A war between Germany and the Soviet Union preferable

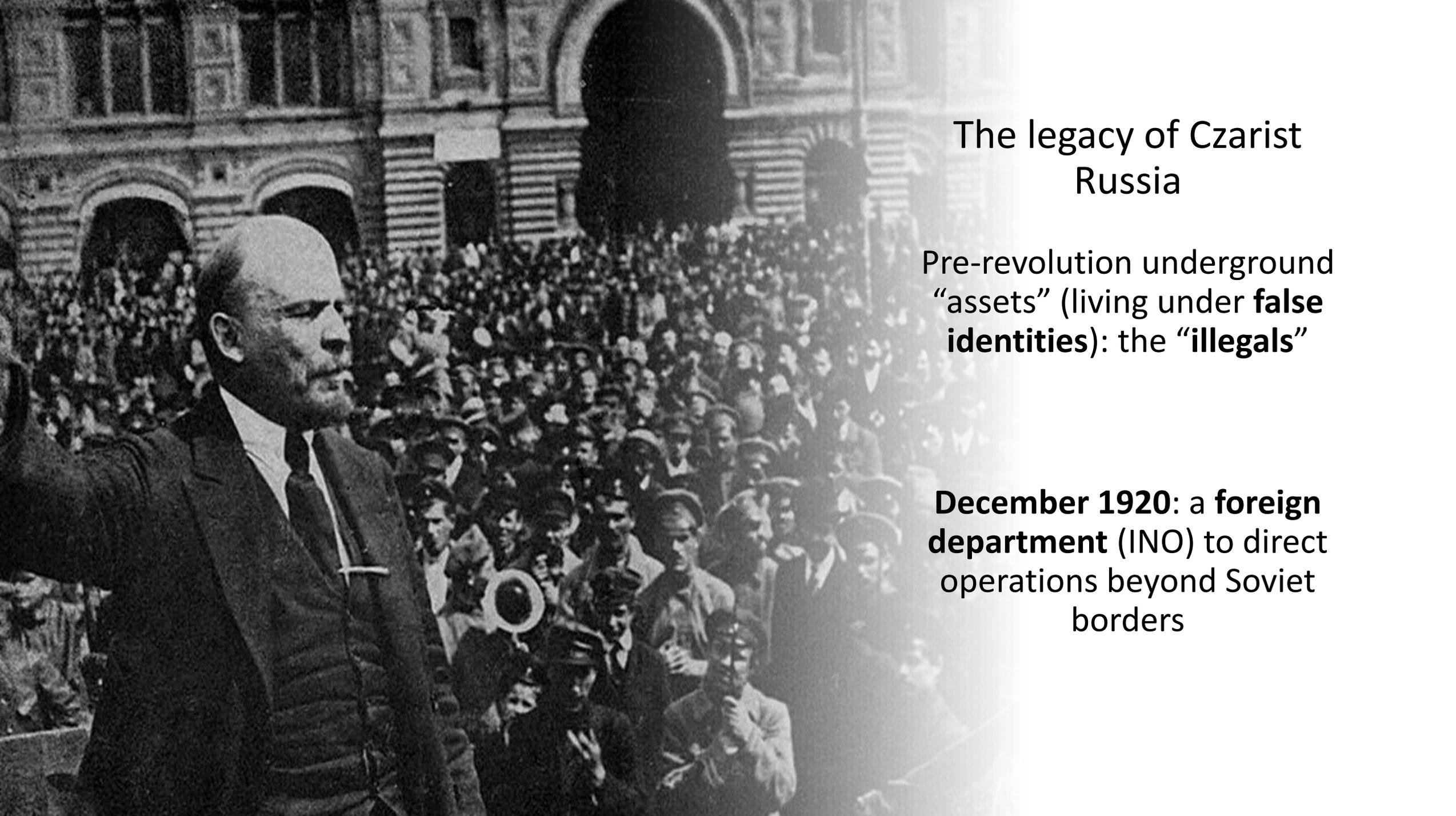
Stalin well informed (Soviet spy ring)

December 1917: the foundation of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Profiteering and Corruption (Cheka)

The first Soviet security & intelligence agency

A **repression tool** against political opponents





The legacy of Czarist Russia

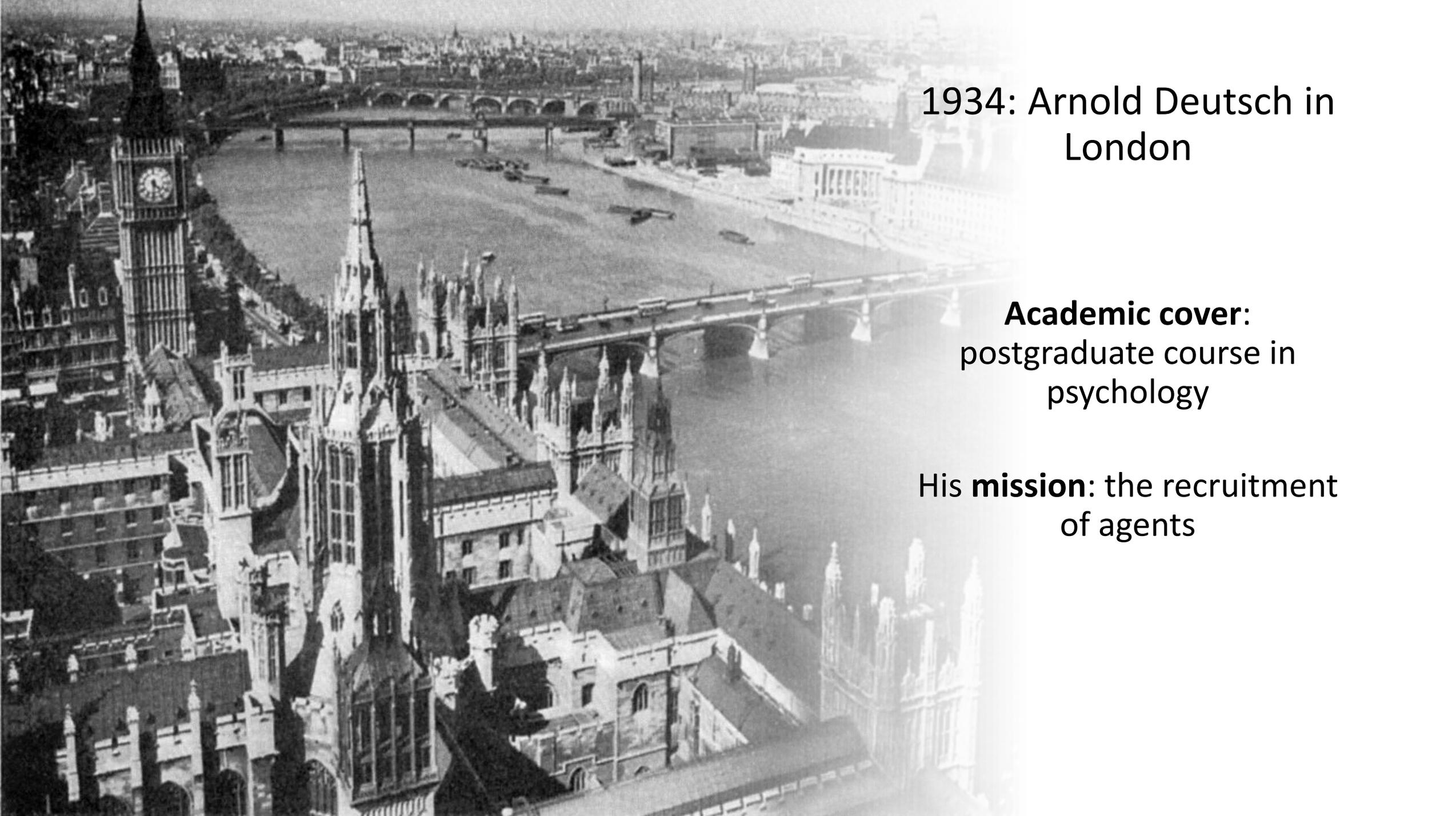
Pre-revolution underground
“assets” (living under **false
identities**): the “**illegals**”

December 1920: a **foreign
department** (INO) to direct
operations beyond Soviet
borders

Arnold Deutsch: chief recruiter
of students & graduates
(**Cambridge University**)

The strategy: to cultivate
communist sympathizers at
leading universities before
they enter the corridors of
power (Foreign Office, MI5...)





1934: Arnold Deutsch in
London

Academic cover:
postgraduate course in
psychology

His **mission:** the recruitment
of agents



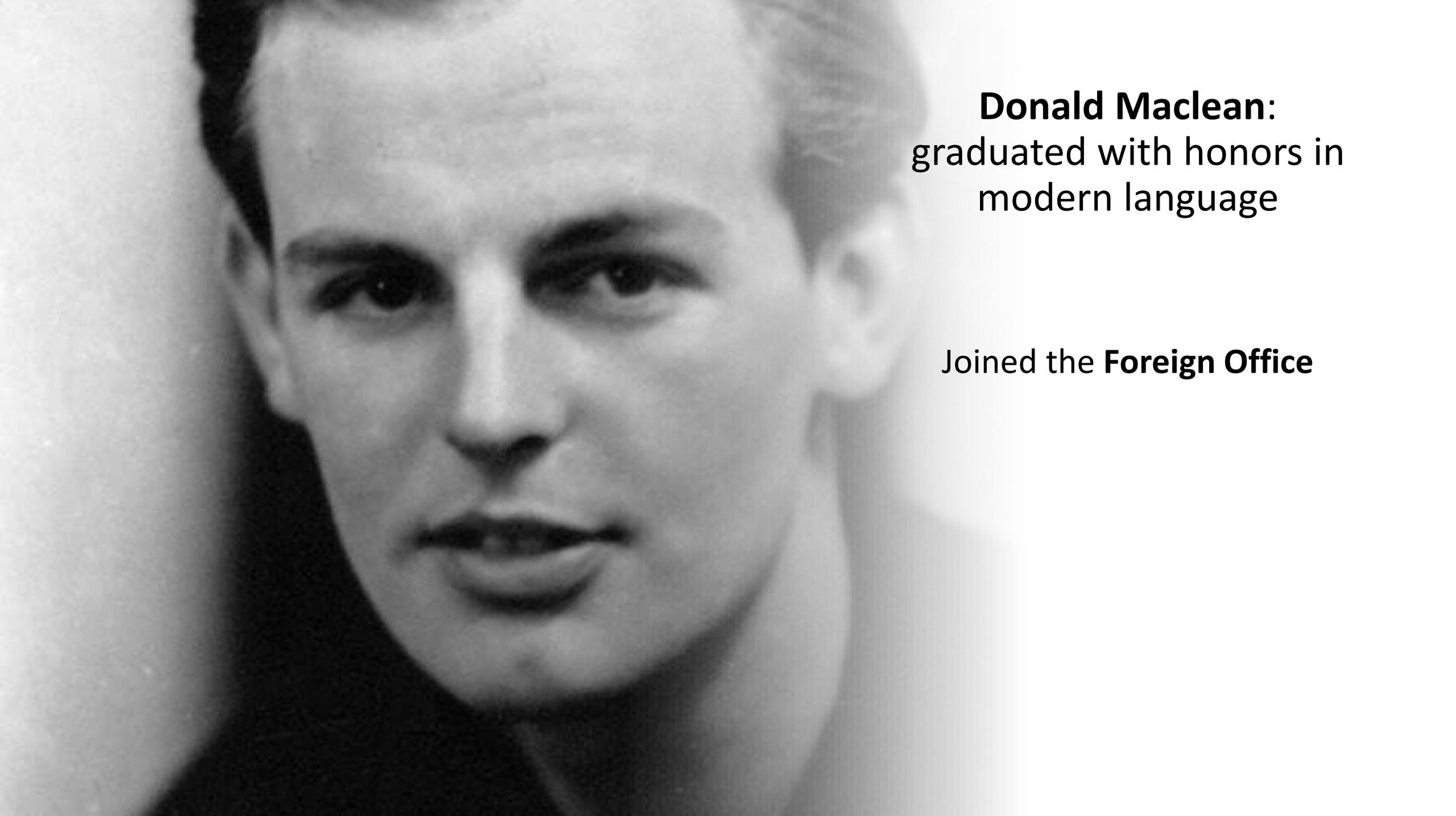
The "Cambridge Five"

Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess, John
Cairncross, Donald Maclean & Kim Philby

*“My life must be devoted to
Communism”* (Kim Philby, 1933)

Philby's first mission: to identify other
potential Cambridge recruits





Donald Maclean:
graduated with honors in
modern language

Joined the **Foreign Office**

1937-1938: Stalin's "Great Purge"

Most of the "Illegals" eliminated

Deutsch recalled to Moscow (a severe blow to the Soviet spy ring in the West)



1939: a new Soviet “Rezident”
(Anatoly Gorsky)



His **mission**: to renew
contact with Donald
Maclean

The smuggling of
classified documents
out of the Foreign
Office



Maclean appointed **Third Secretary**
at the British embassy in Paris



Secret reports to Moscow: French
& British **reluctant to negotiate** an
alliance with Soviet Union