

# Republic or monarchy?

The French dilemma (1870-1914)



# A HISTORY OF THE THIRD FRENCH REPUBLIC



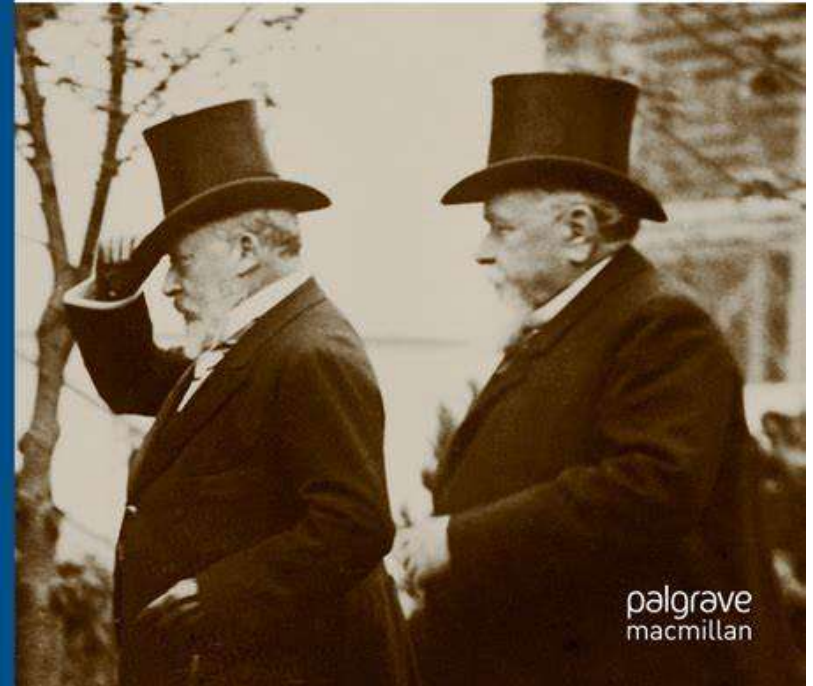
Charles Wright



CAMBRIDGE IMPERIAL  
AND POST-COLONIAL STUDIES

## British and French Colonialism in Africa, Asia and the Middle East Connected Empires across the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries

*Edited by* James R. Fichter



palgrave  
macmillan

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# A few definitions

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**Republic** (Latin *res publica*: “public affair”):  
a form of government without a monarch

**Monarchy**: a form of government with a  
monarch at its head

**Parliamentary system**: a system of  
democratic governance – Responsible to a  
parliament



# The failure of hereditary monarchy

1789-1870





## 4 September 1870: the proclamation of the Third French Republic

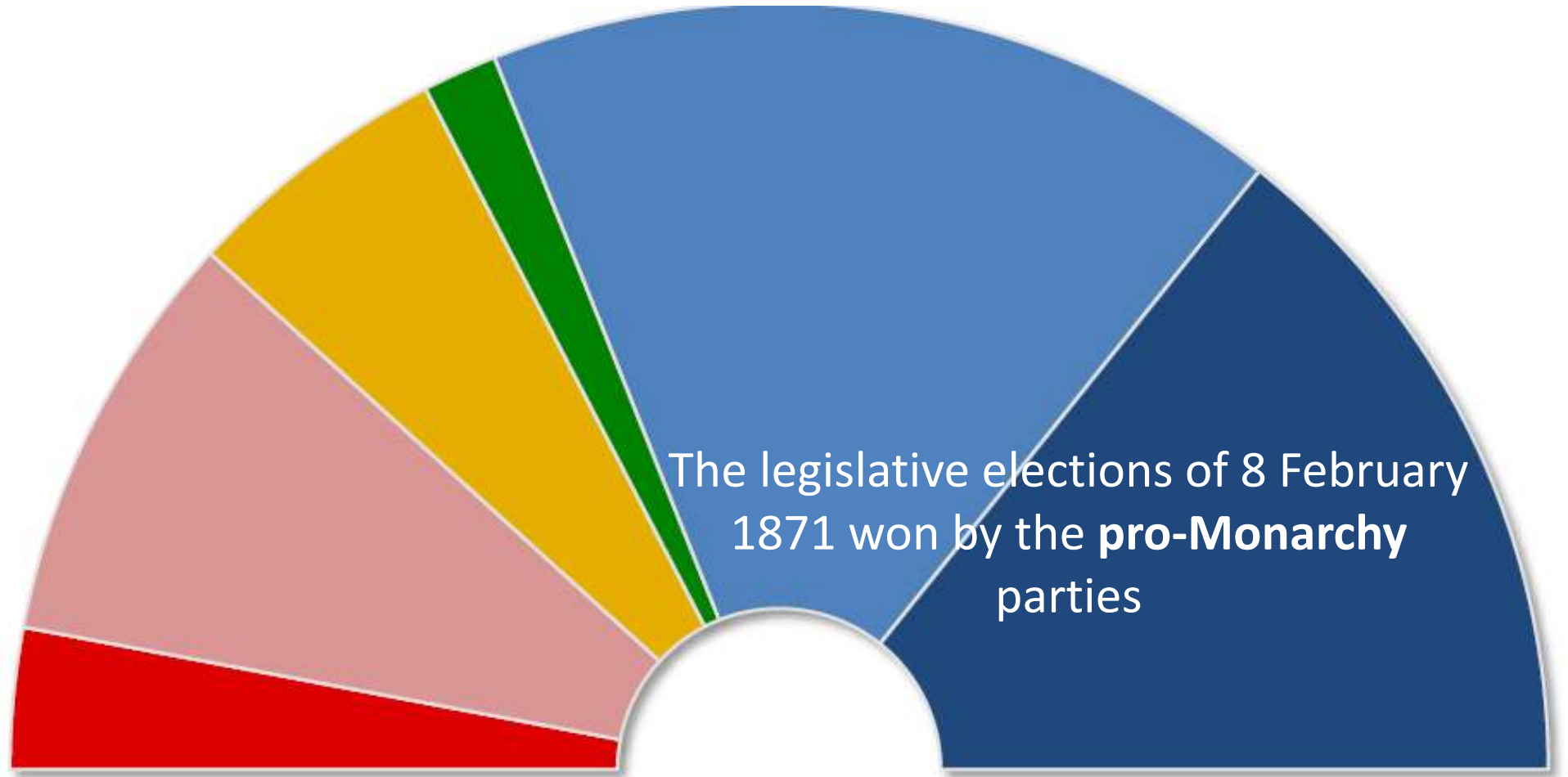
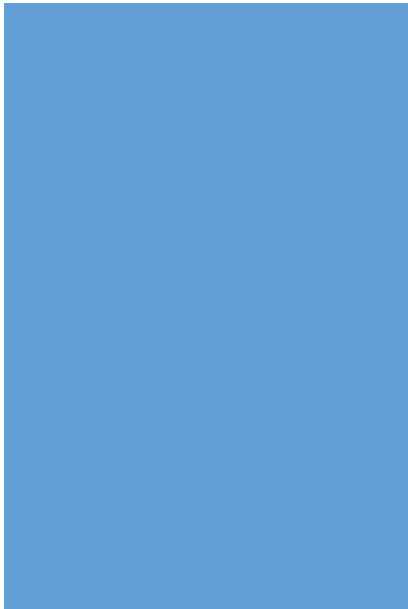
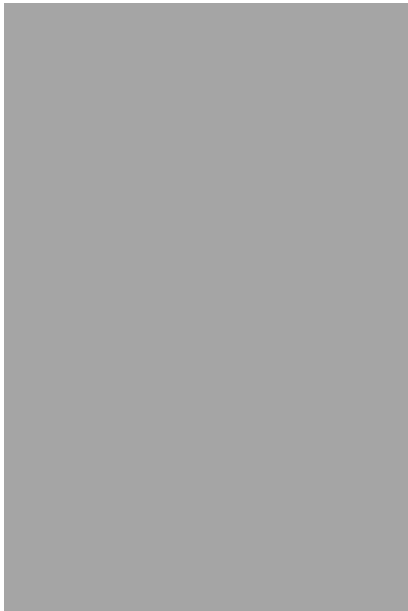
For the first time a republican regime did last  
The Third Republic resisted to **many crises**  
France **recovered** quickly **economically &**  
**diplomatically**  
The second largest **colonial empire**



**28 January 1871:** armistice signed with  
the Germans

The monarchists favored peace and refused  
the spectre of an all-out war with Prussia





# Assemblée nationale

*IIIe République - Élections du 8 février 1871*

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



**Henri, Comte de Chambord (1839)**

1871: the Bourbons allowed to return to  
France

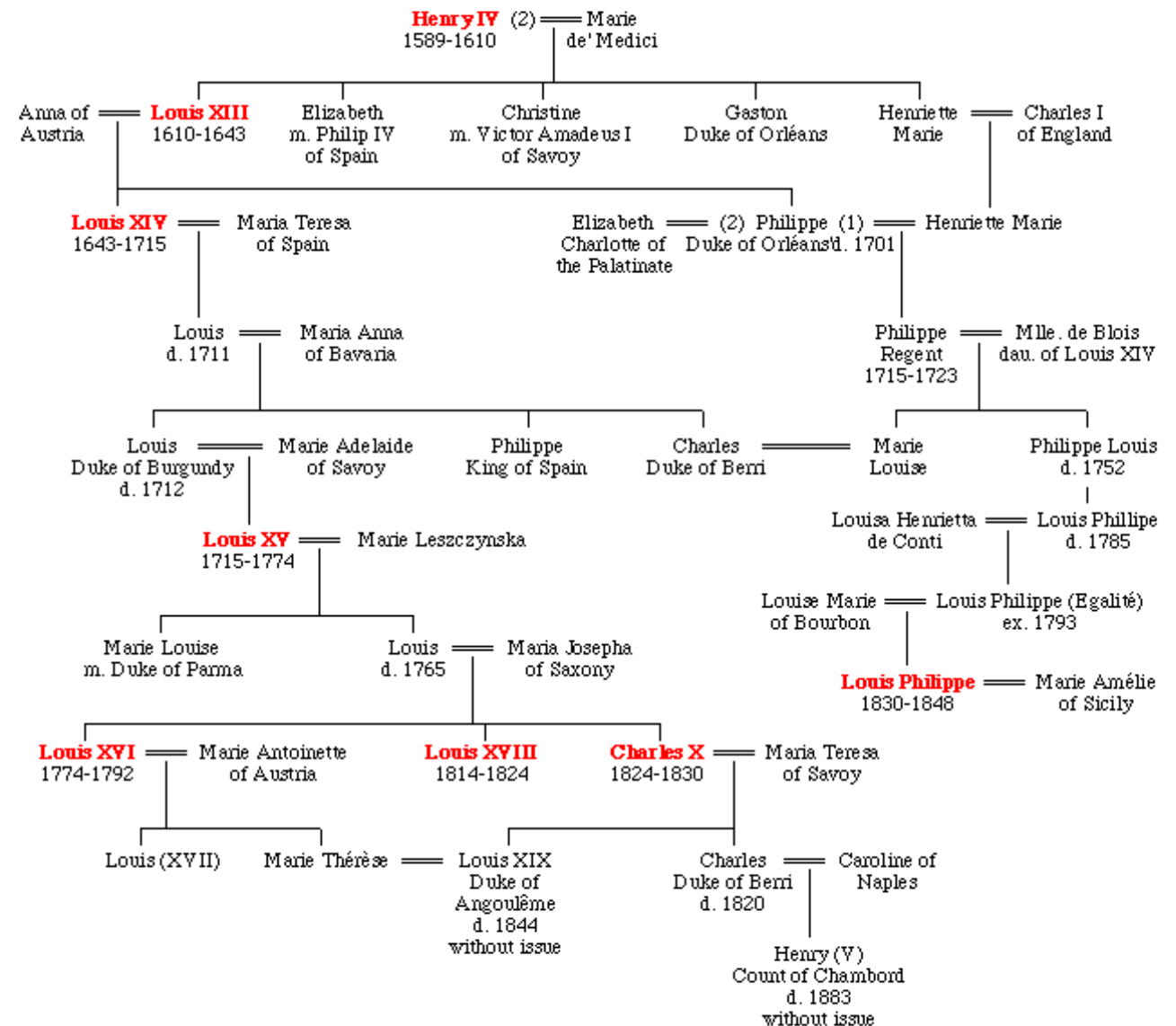
France to become a monarchy again?





# The French Monarchy: the Bourbons

by Ed Stephan



The proposed merger of the two branches of the Bourbon dynasty

## **Adolphe Thiers**

Elected **chief executive** of the new French government in 1870

Named **President of the Republic** in August 1871

**Negotiated** the departure of German soldiers 2 years ahead of schedule

**Resigned** in May 1873 (monarchists and left wing of Republicans' opposition)





## **Patrice de MacMahon**

Head of the Versailles army which defeated the Paris Commune (May 1871)

A devout conservative Catholic & a **monarchist**

**1873:** MacMahon elected **President of the French Republic** (royalist majority at the National Assembly)



## **Victor de Broglie**

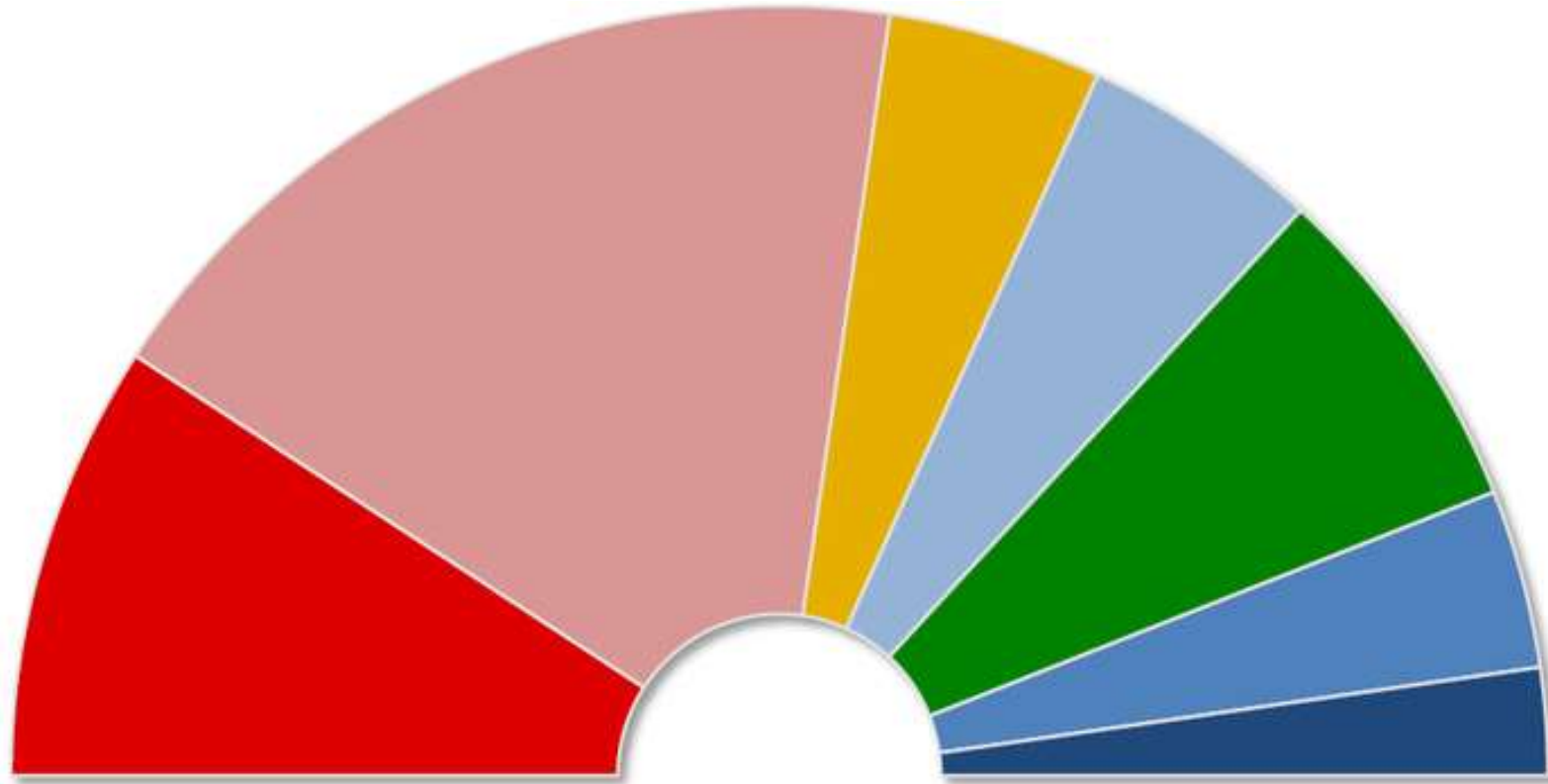
Prime Minister & Foreign Affairs  
Minister (1873-1874)

### **Conservative policies**

“Moral order” – Key role for the  
Catholic church  
Fight against radicals & socialists







## Chambre des députés

*III<sup>e</sup> République - Elections des 8 février  
et 5 mars 1876*

- Union républicaine [98]
- Gauche républicaine [193]
- Centre-gauche [48]
- Centre-droit [54]
- Bonapartistes [76]
- Orléanistes [40]
- Légitimistes [24]

The legislative  
elections of **1876**

A clear **Republican**  
**majority**

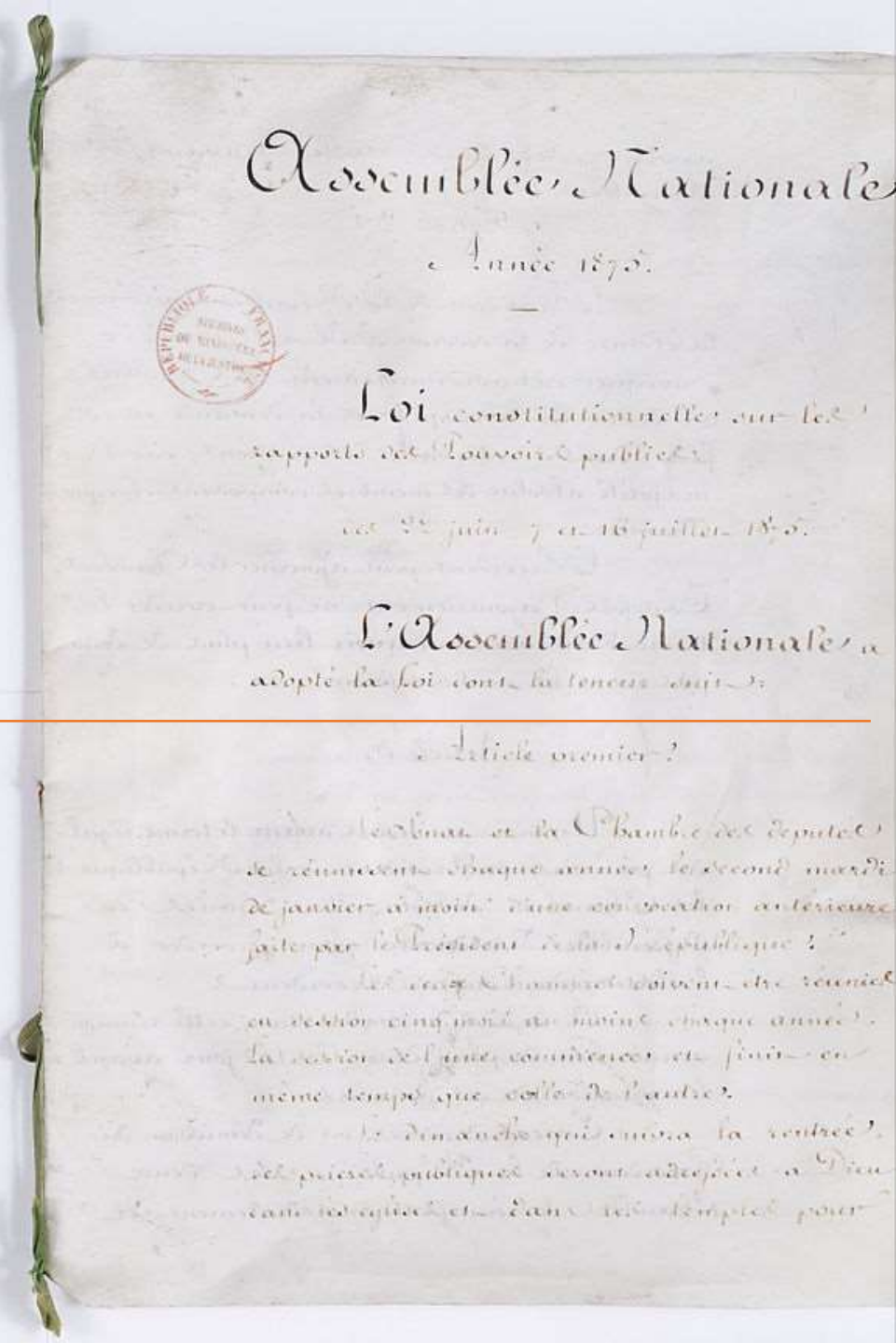
# French Constitutional Laws of 1875

The establishment of a  
**parliamentary system**

**A two-house legislature: Senate and  
Chamber of Deputies**

**A Council of Ministers responsible to  
the Chamber**

**A president as head of state with  
limited powers**





## Political deadlock

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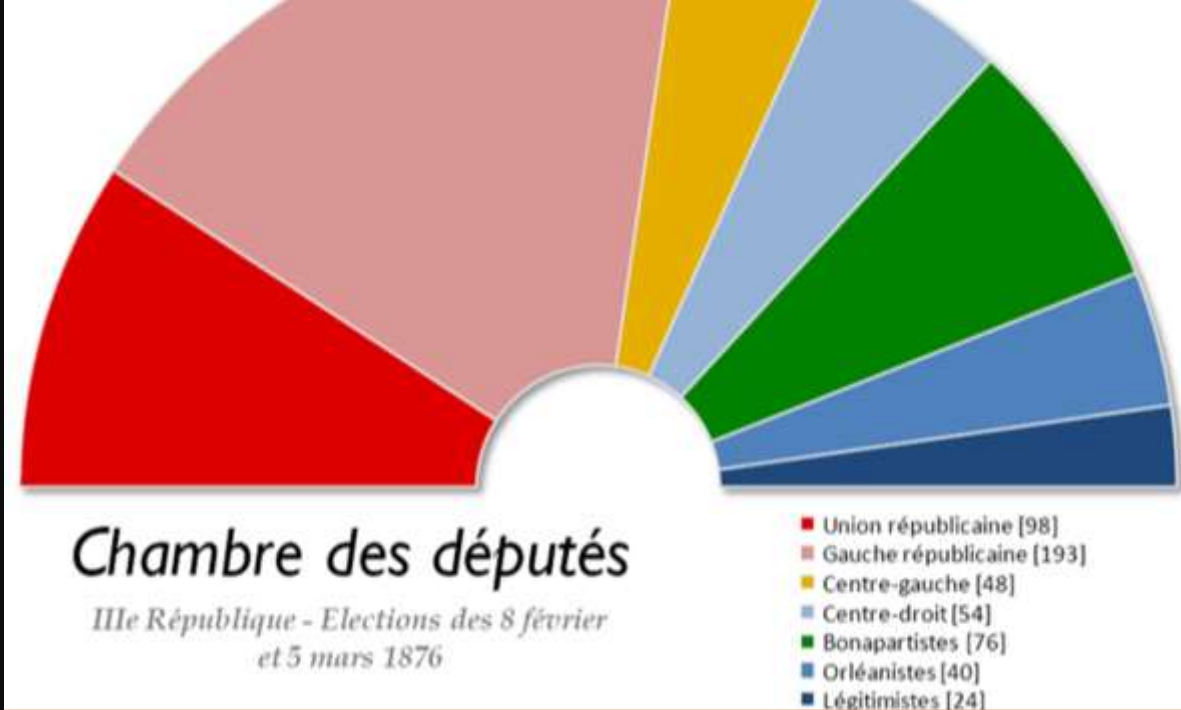
**A monarchist as president**

A Chamber of Deputies dominated  
by Republicans

Political divisions

Looming institutional crisis

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Spring 1877: growing criticism towards the Church and its role

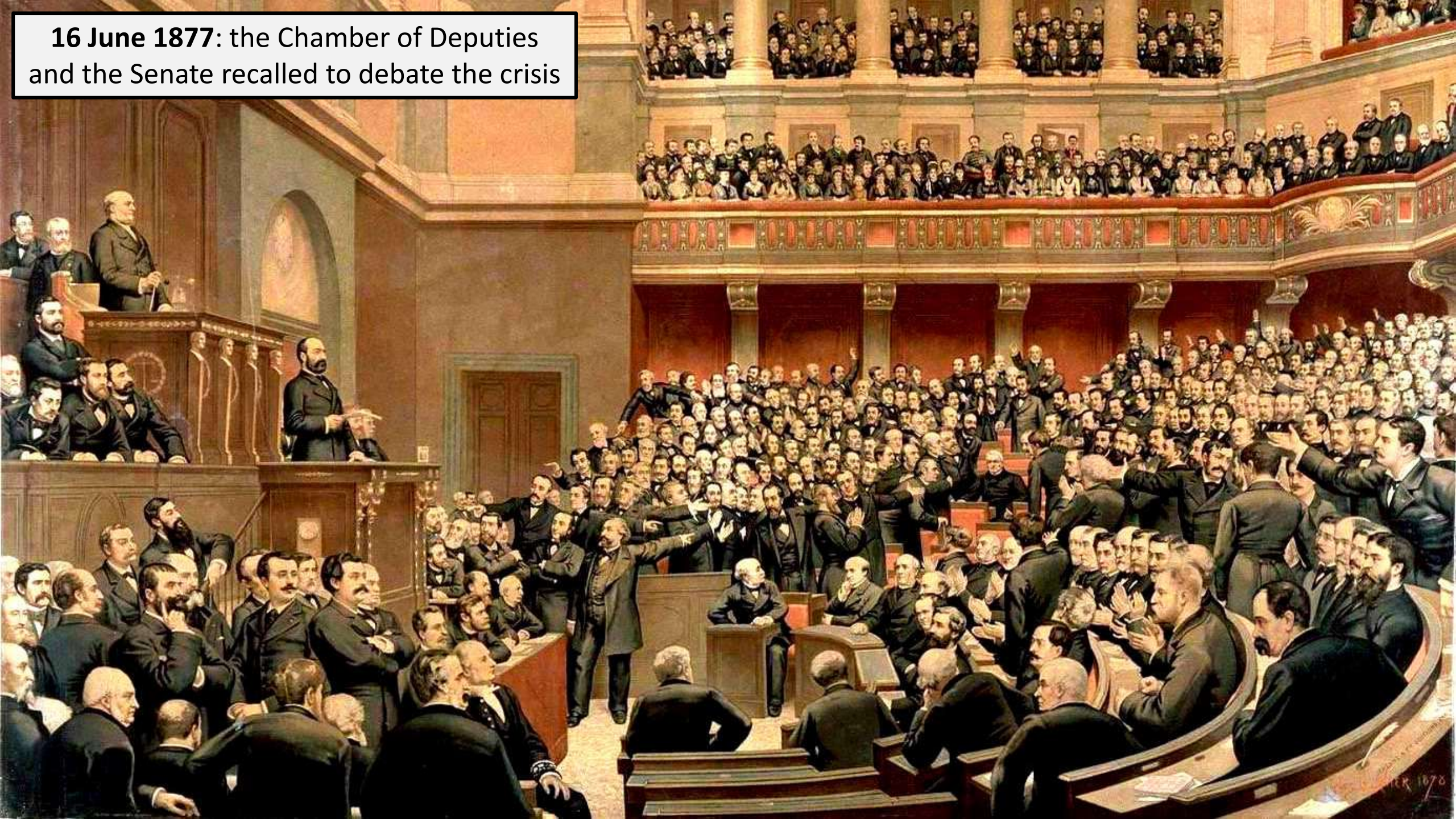
MacMahon dismissed the Republican head of the government (Jules Simon)

Victor de Broglie back as head of the government  
Decision made **without the approval** of the Chamber of Deputies  
A quasi coup

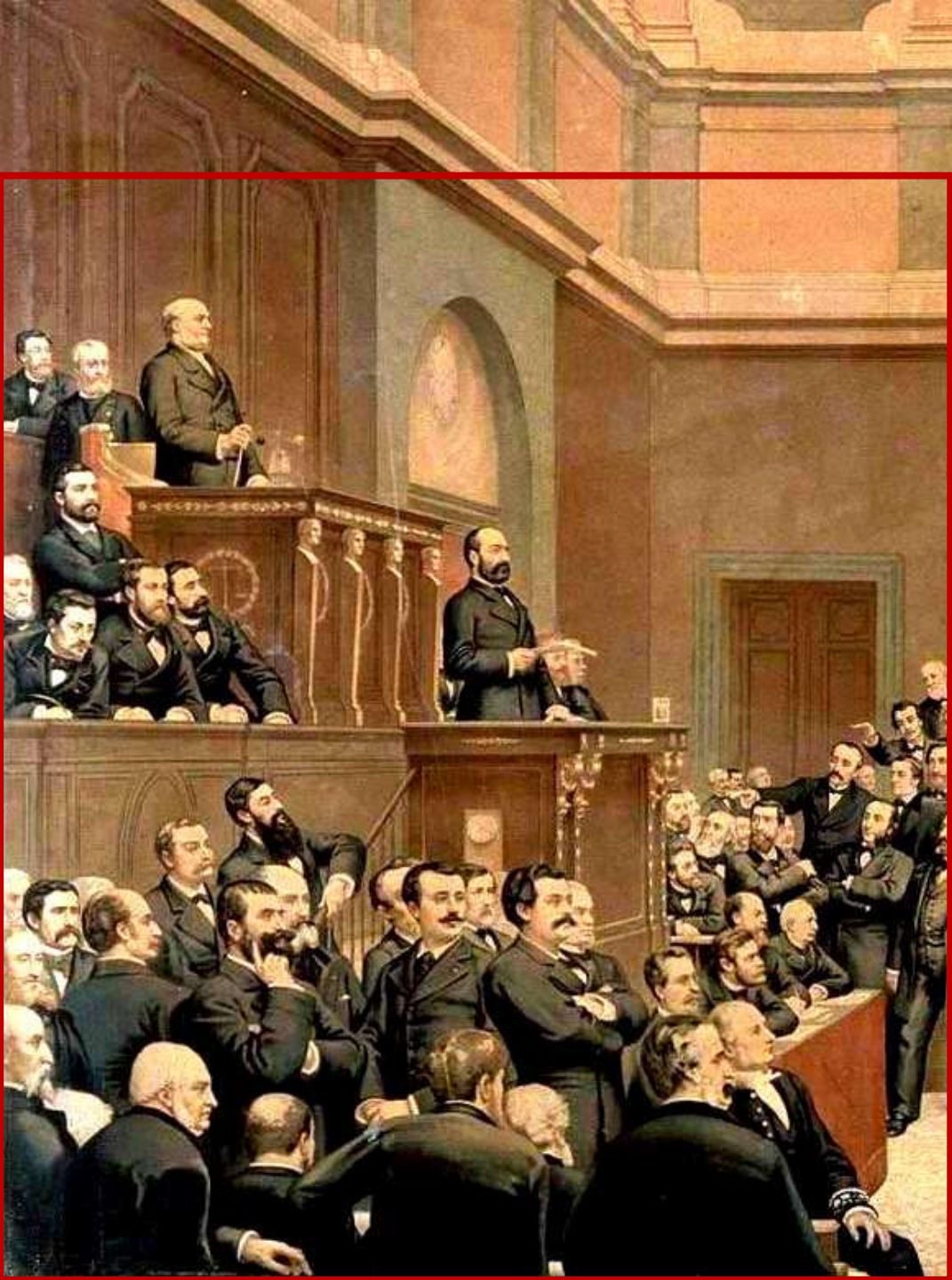




16 June 1877: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate recalled to debate the crisis









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Imposing room  
Uniformity of the clothes worn by  
the deputies (dark suits)

Nothing spectacular about the  
scene

**Jules Grévy** (straight as a statue)  
presides over the session

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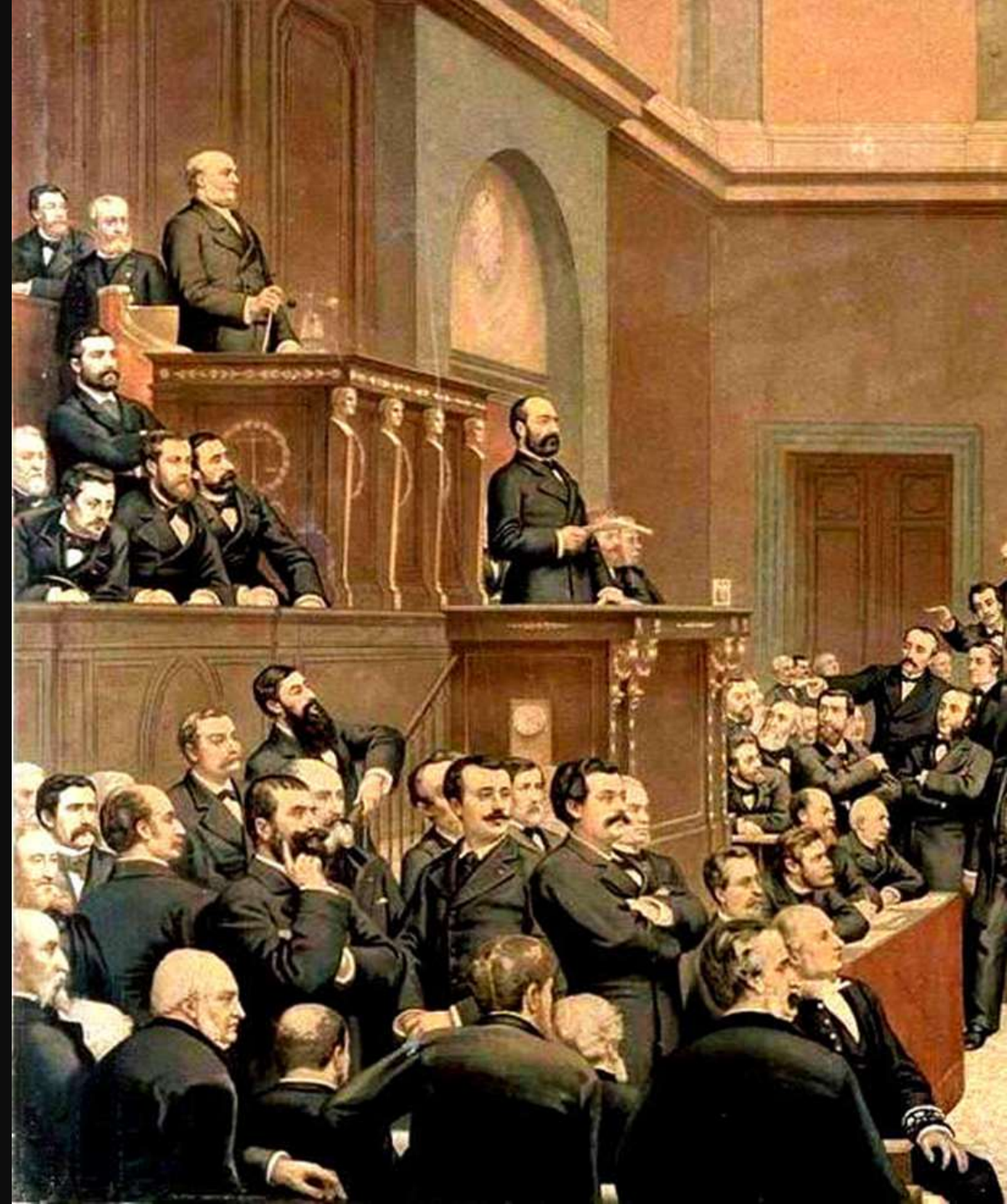


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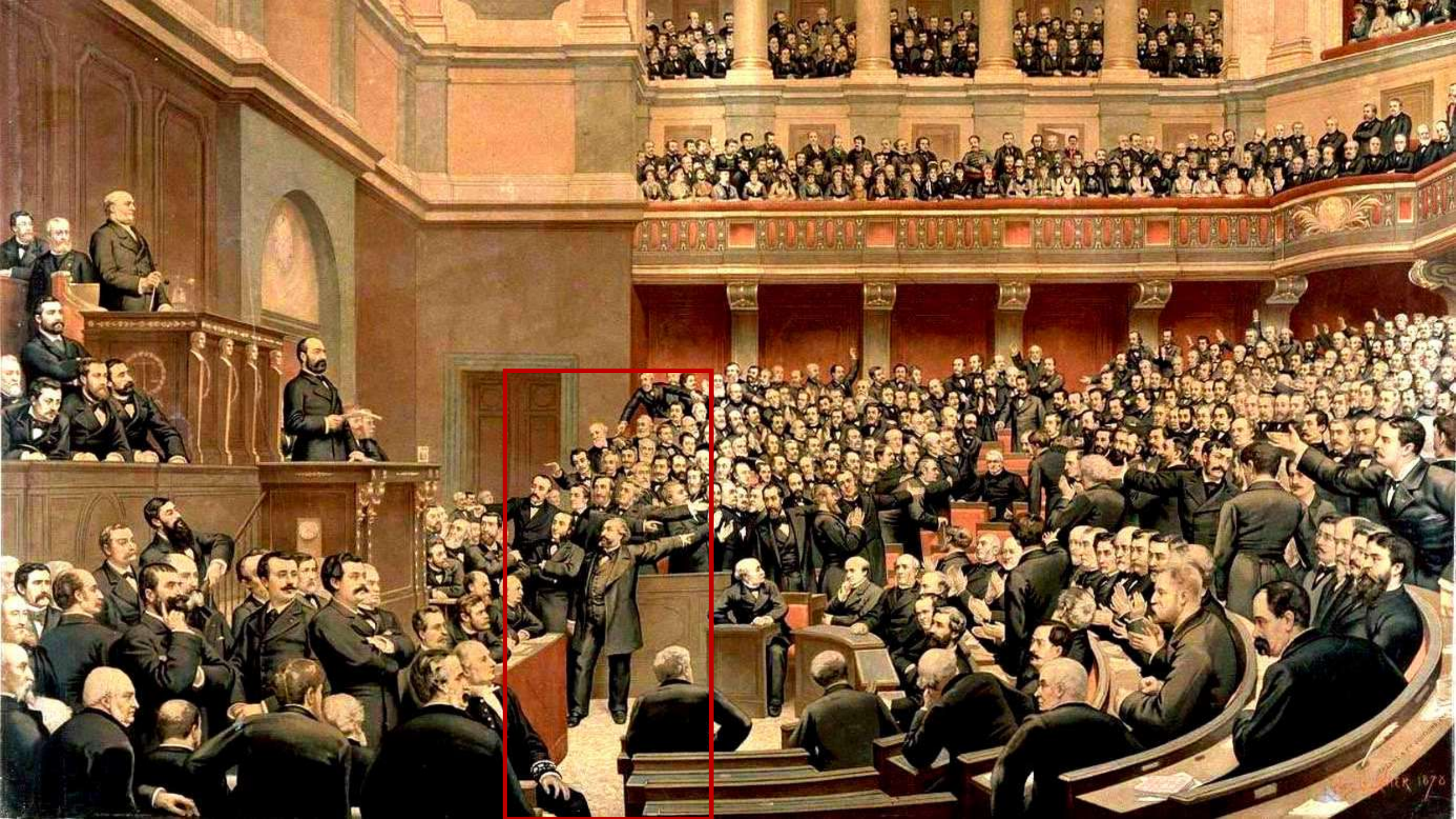
**Minister of the Interior** delivers a speech defending the government & attacking the Republicans (Gambetta)

*“The men who belong to the government today were among the deputies of this National Assembly which helped pacify the country and liberate our territory...”*

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Gambetta: a moderate Republican

Opponent to the Napoleon III and the  
Second Empire

**1869:** the “**Belleville program**”

Separation of Church & State

Secular and free primary education



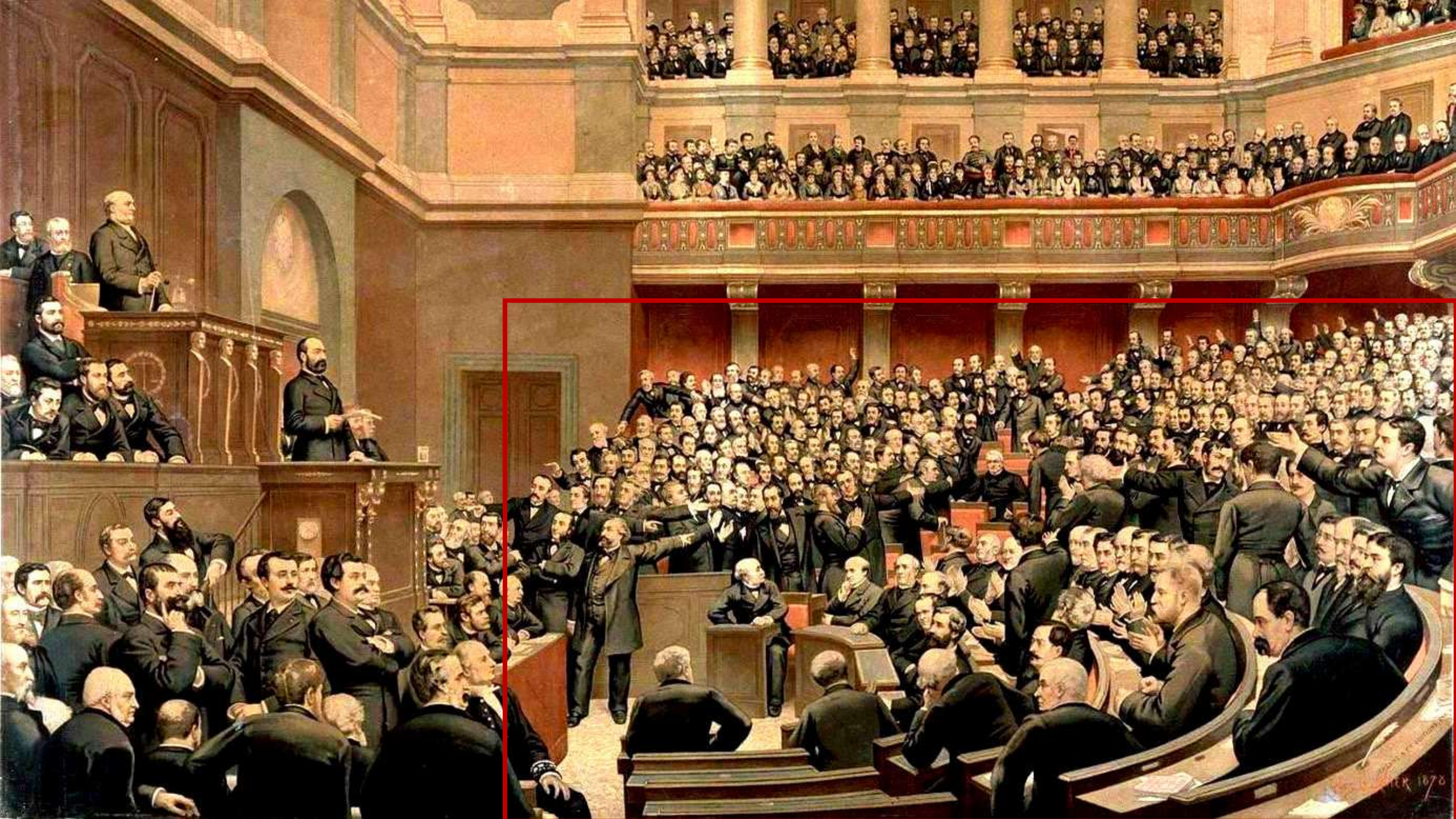
Léon Gambetta

7 October 1870: Gambetta left  
besieged Paris to assemble a new  
army in Tours (Loire Valley)

New defeats but Gambetta opposed  
to the signing of an armistice

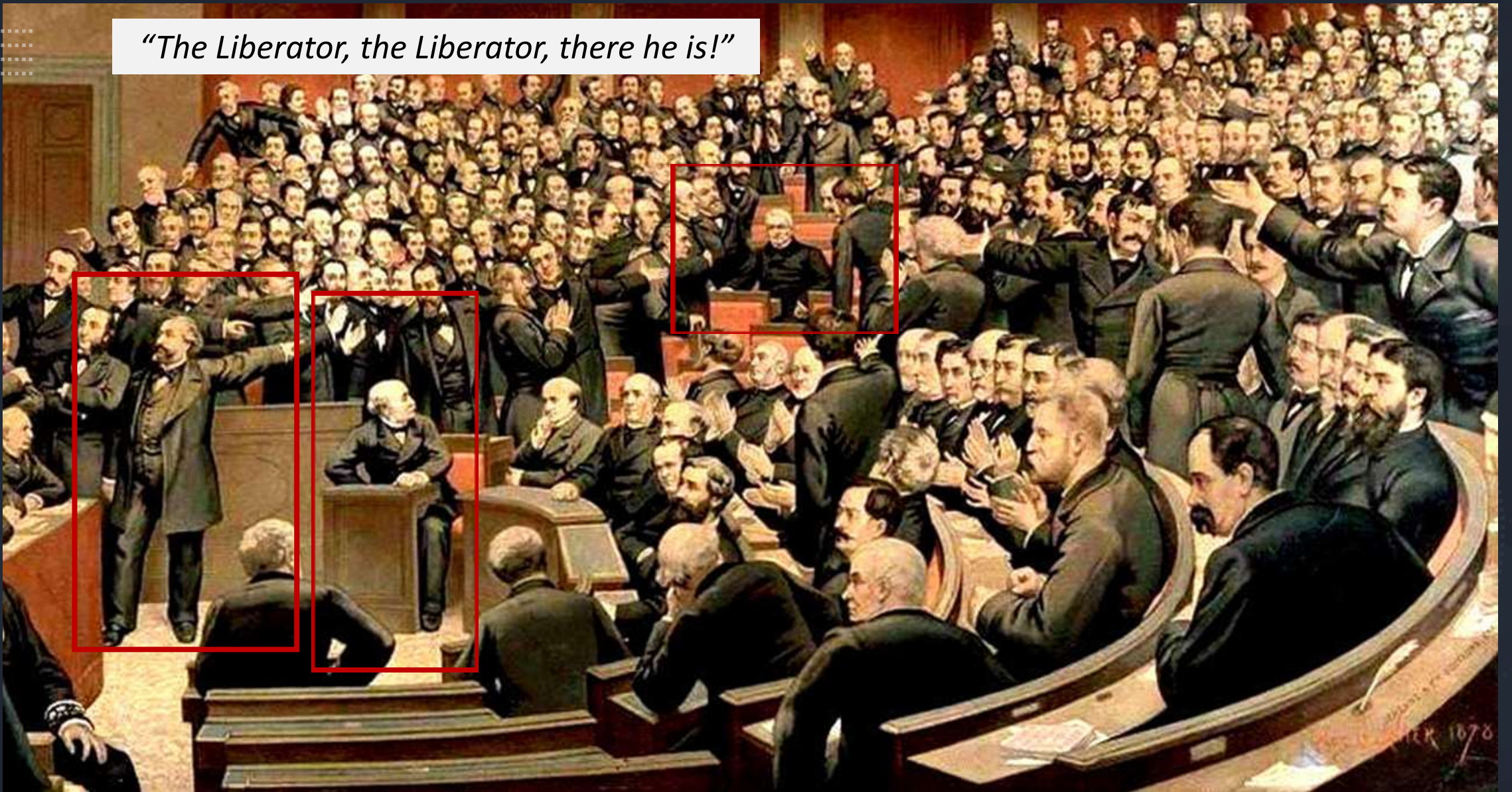








*“The Liberator, the Liberator, there he is!”*





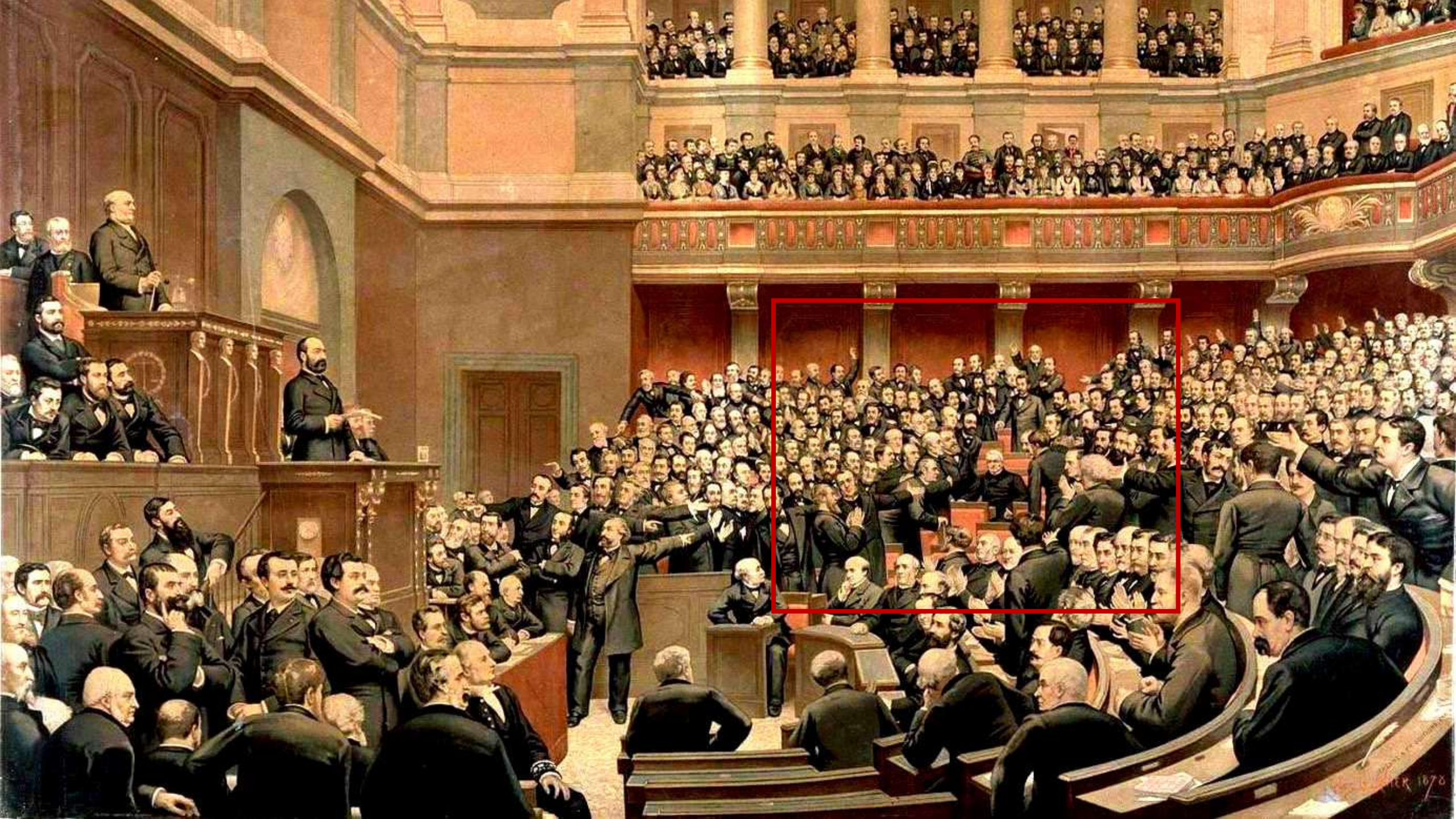
Victor de Broglie also looks at  
Thiers

Thiers: the “true hero”

The conservative government: no  
credibility







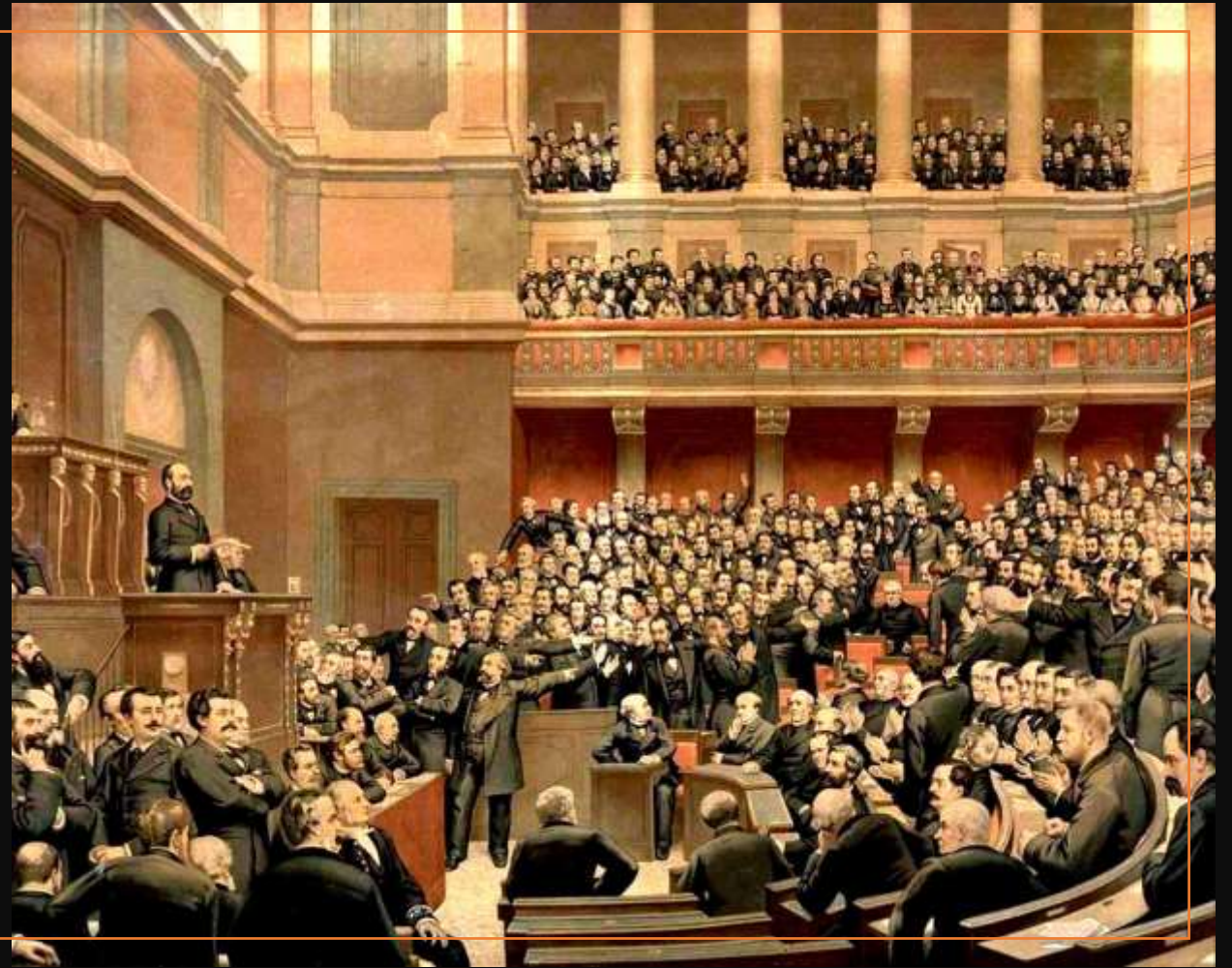


**Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877):** from  
monarchy to republic

The man who helped Louis-Philippe  
become king in 1830

Opponent to the Second Empire

One of the founding fathers of the  
Third Republic

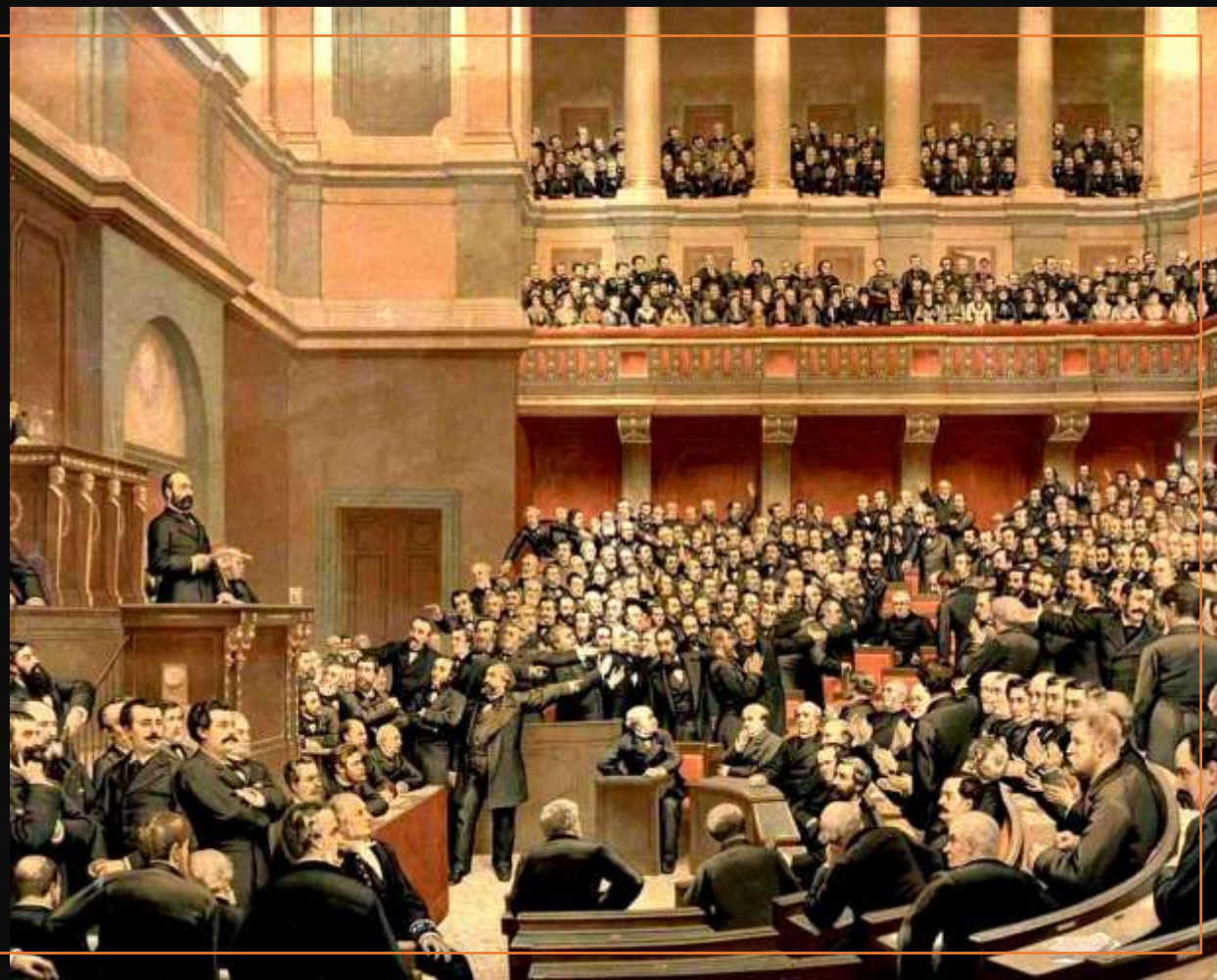




**The May 16 Crisis: the monarchists  
defeated**

Ministers **responsible** to the Chamber  
of Deputies confirmed

MacMahon resigned as president in  
1879





**Adolphe Thiers:** *“the Republic is the form of government which divides (the French) the least”*







**Jules Ferry**

## **Opportunist Republicans vs. radical left**

**Moderate republicanism (not  
associated with socialism)**

**Protection of property**

**Anti-Labour policies**



**Jules Grévy**



## Jules Ferry (Minister of Public Instruction)

1880s: the Republic further strengthened through **education**

A series of laws: free, compulsory and secular education – State run primary and secondary schools

Standardized & centralized curriculum  
Schools: teaching **patriotism**  
The rise of **national identity**









*“The nation which has the best schools is the best nation: if it is not true today, it will be tomorrow”*





The French army  
reorganized

**Compulsory military service**  
(Military Law of 1872): *“the best  
social school”*

The French army widely admired





**14 July 1900:** showcasing the strength of the French army







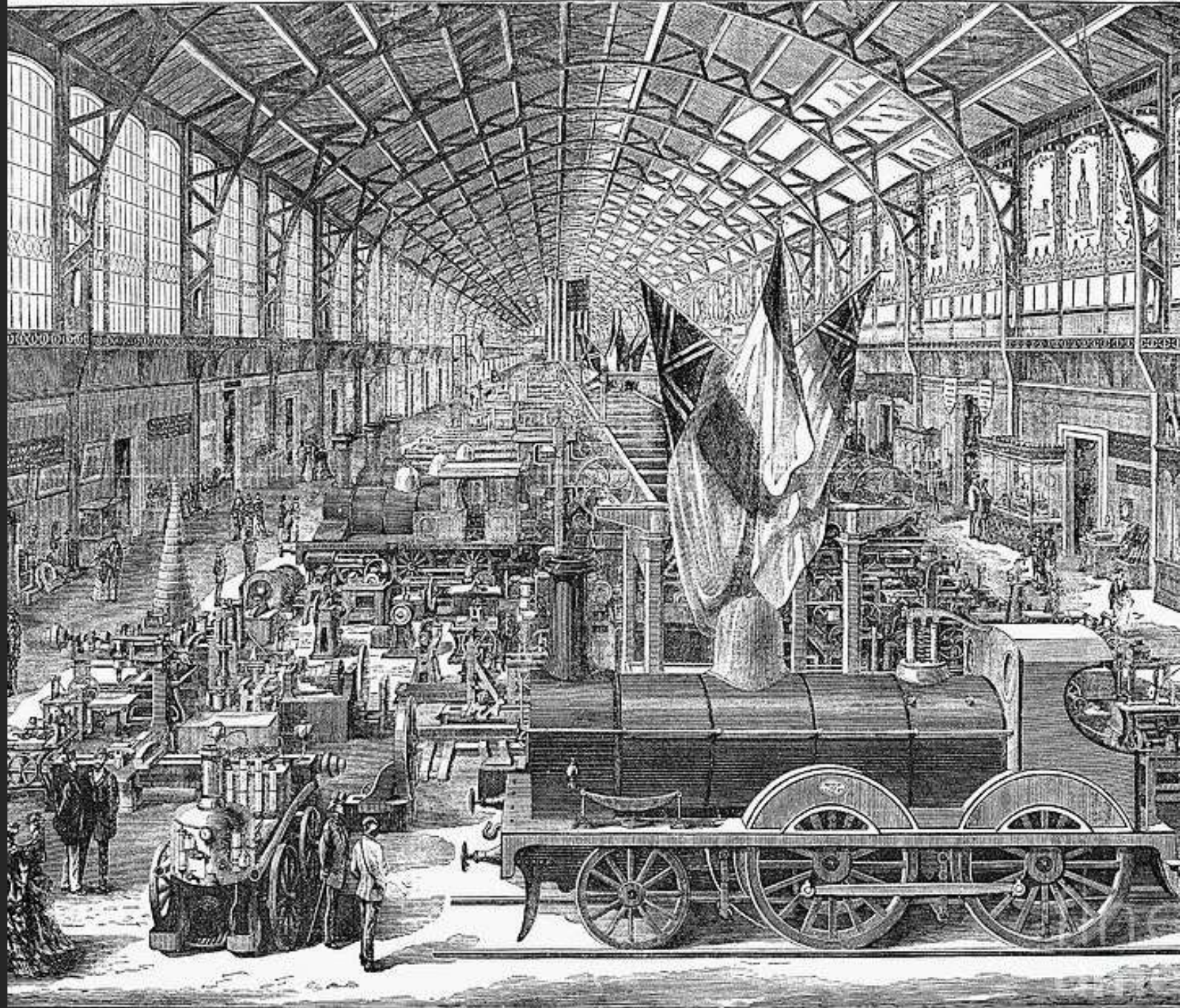
The Paris World's Fair of 1878: a celebration of France's recovery





21 May 1880: a law to make 14 July a national holiday

14 July 1789 or 14 July 1790?  
Political divisions



PARIS EXHIBITION: MACHINERY HALL IN THE EXHIBITION PALACE, CHAMP DE MARS—THE BRITISH SECTION.



**The storming of the Bastille  
(14 July 1789)**













A historical scene from the Fête de la Fédération in 1790. The image shows a large crowd of people gathered around several cannons. In the background, several flags are flying, including the French tricolor (blue, white, and red) and other regional or national flags. The scene is set outdoors, with a cloudy sky and some structures visible in the distance. The overall atmosphere is one of a significant public event.

**CHAMP DE MARS**  
**Fête de la Fédération - 14 Juillet 1790**





*“Do not forget that after the day of  
14 July 1789, there was the day of  
14 July 1790 (...) This [latter] day cannot  
be blamed for having shed a drop of  
blood, for having divided the country. It  
was the consecration of the unity of  
France”*

(Senator **Henri Martin**)



**14 July 1880:** 300 000 people to watch the **military parade** (a tradition to this day)

**14 July 1882:** a new statue for the Place de la République







**1889:** the centennial of the  
Revolution

A world fair and the **Eiffel  
Tower** “to celebrate the  
centennial of the French  
Revolution and the progresses  
of sciences...”



*Entrée de l'exposition universelle de  
1889 (Jean Béraud)*

The **Eiffel Tower**: the symbol of  
modern & conquering French  
Republic

France once again a major player  
amongst the great powers





**31 March 1889: the  
inauguration of the Eiffel  
Tower**

The tallest building in the world  
The result of 5 years of work and  
research





## The political challenges:

To propose to the visitors a  
**brehtaking experience**

AND

Showing off to the world  
Republican France's  
**technological influence**





The **Eiffel Tower** opened to the public (15 May 1889)

Huge success from the start: 2 million visitors (May-October 1889)

The symbol of France, its capital (Paris) & its modernity

7 million visitors annually today





*Entrée de l'exposition universelle de  
1889 (Jean Béraud)*

A diverse crowd (all social classes) to  
emphasize the notions of **equality**  
and **fraternity**

1889: the centennial of the  
**Declaration of men & citizens**





*Embracement de la tour Eiffel pendant  
l'Exposition universelle de 1889 (Georges  
Garen)*

The symbol of France's technological superiority  
Faith in the industrial age & progress

The Eiffel Tower: the world tallest building for  
the next 40 years







The message: a united  
France looking forward

The reconstitution of a  
(smaller) Bastille outside the  
premises of the World Fair





An exhibition dedicated to the storming of the Bastille (set up by the municipality of Paris)

July 14 to remain a source of disagreement until 1914

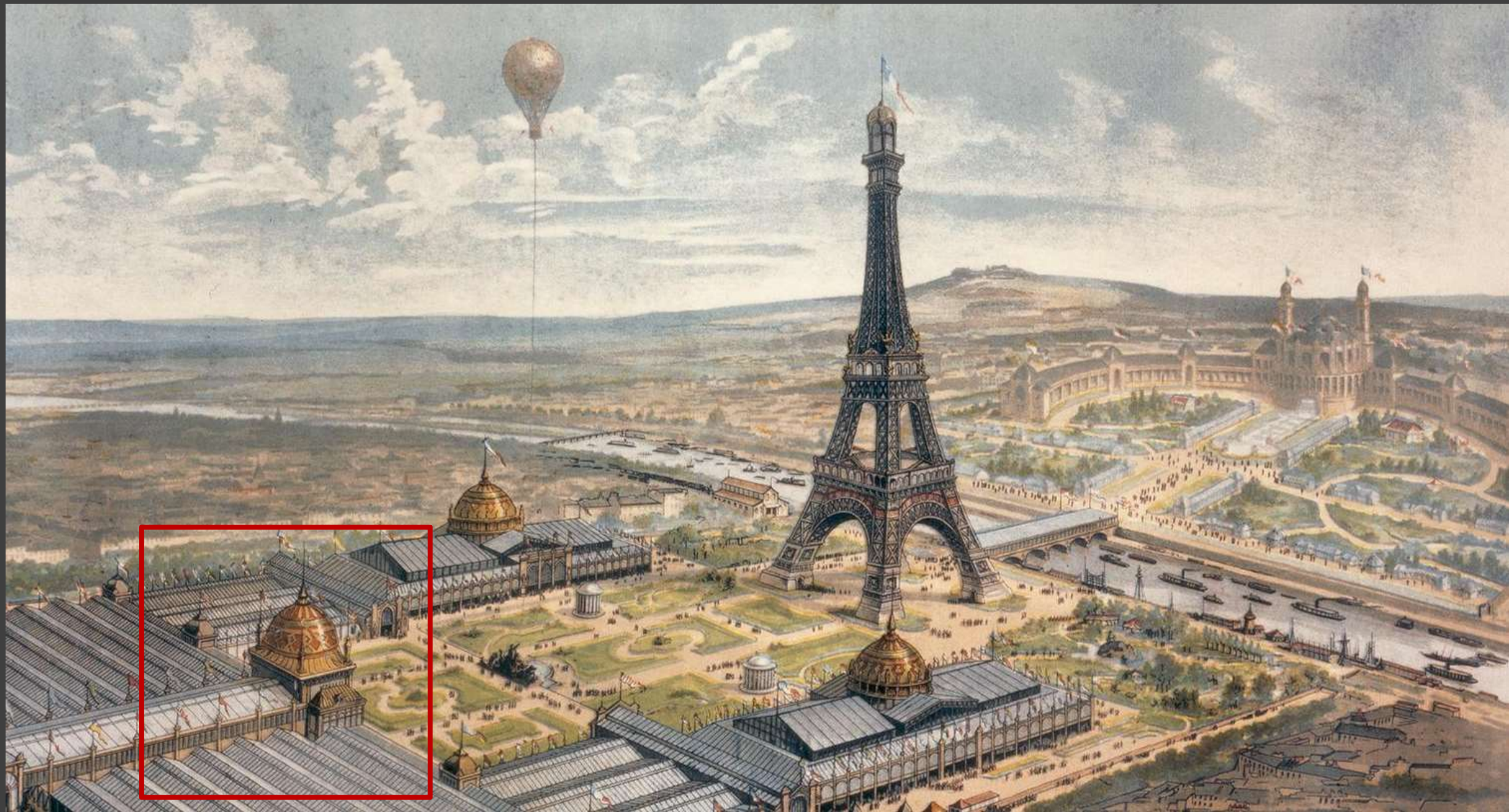




*Le Dôme central de l'exposition  
universelle de 1889*  
(Louis Beroud, 1890)



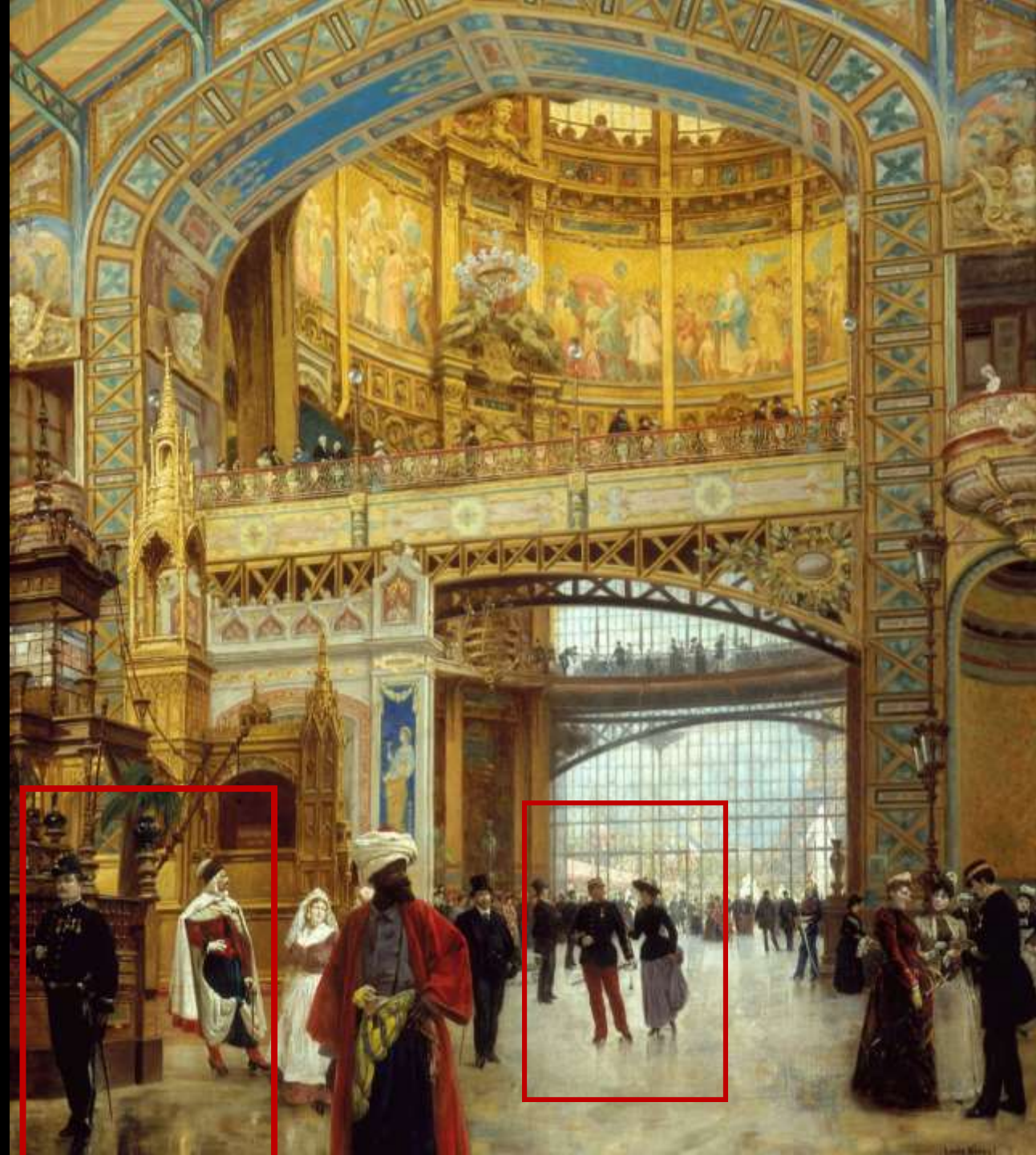






Visitors from all nationalities

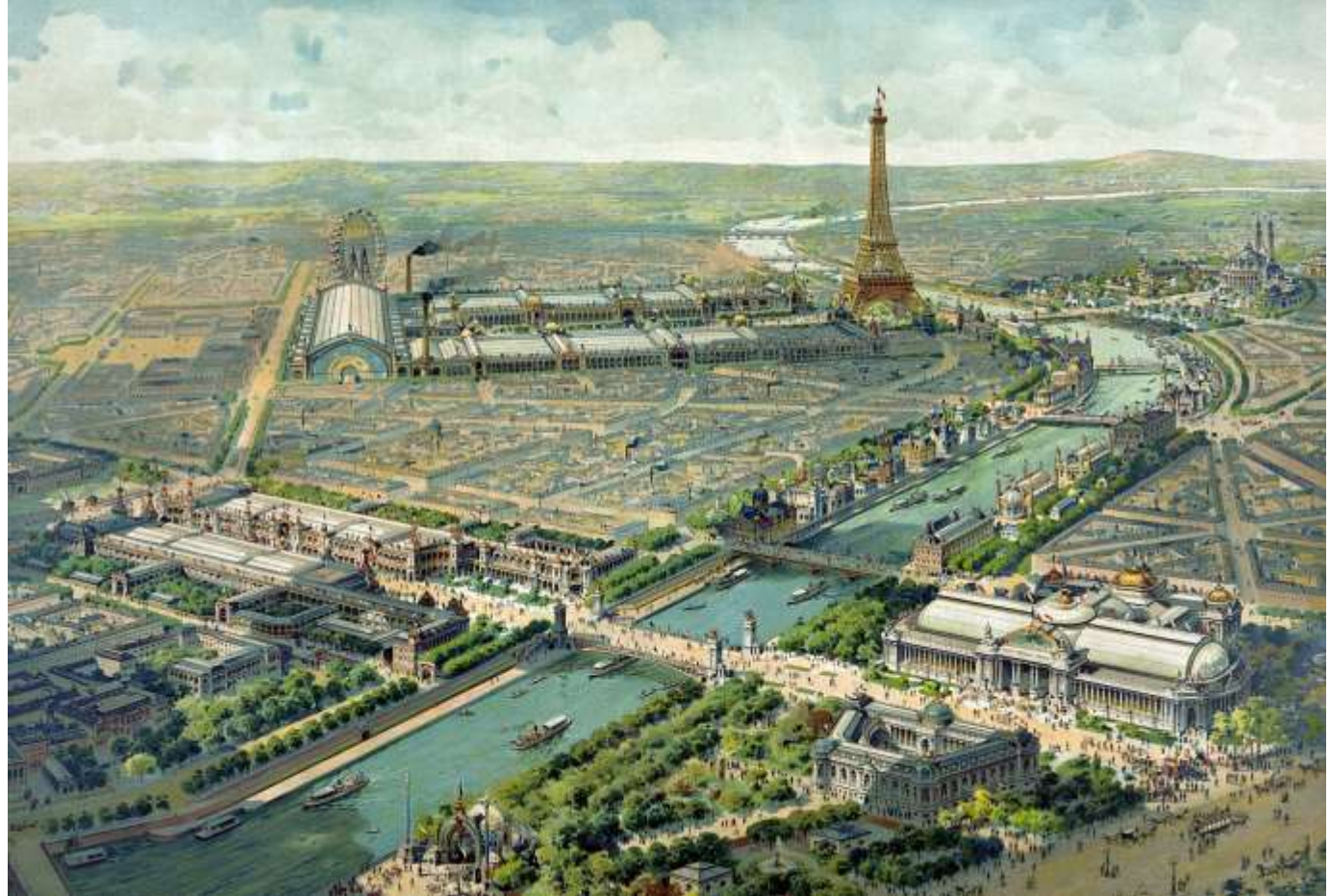
Army officers





## The 1900 Paris World Fair

48.5 million visitors – Showcasing France as a major colonial power







M. Salah, architecte.

## LA TUNISIE

L'Exposition de la Tunisie occupe près de 5000 mètres dans les jardins du Trocadéro. C'est une véritable petite ville arabe transportée au Trocadéro. A droite du pont d'Iéna se trouve l'exposition algérienne et tunisienne, près de Tiencen, avec une décoration en faïence colorée.



LE PALAIS OFFICIEL DE L'ALGÉRIE

présentent.





The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine: a mistake

France irreconcilable

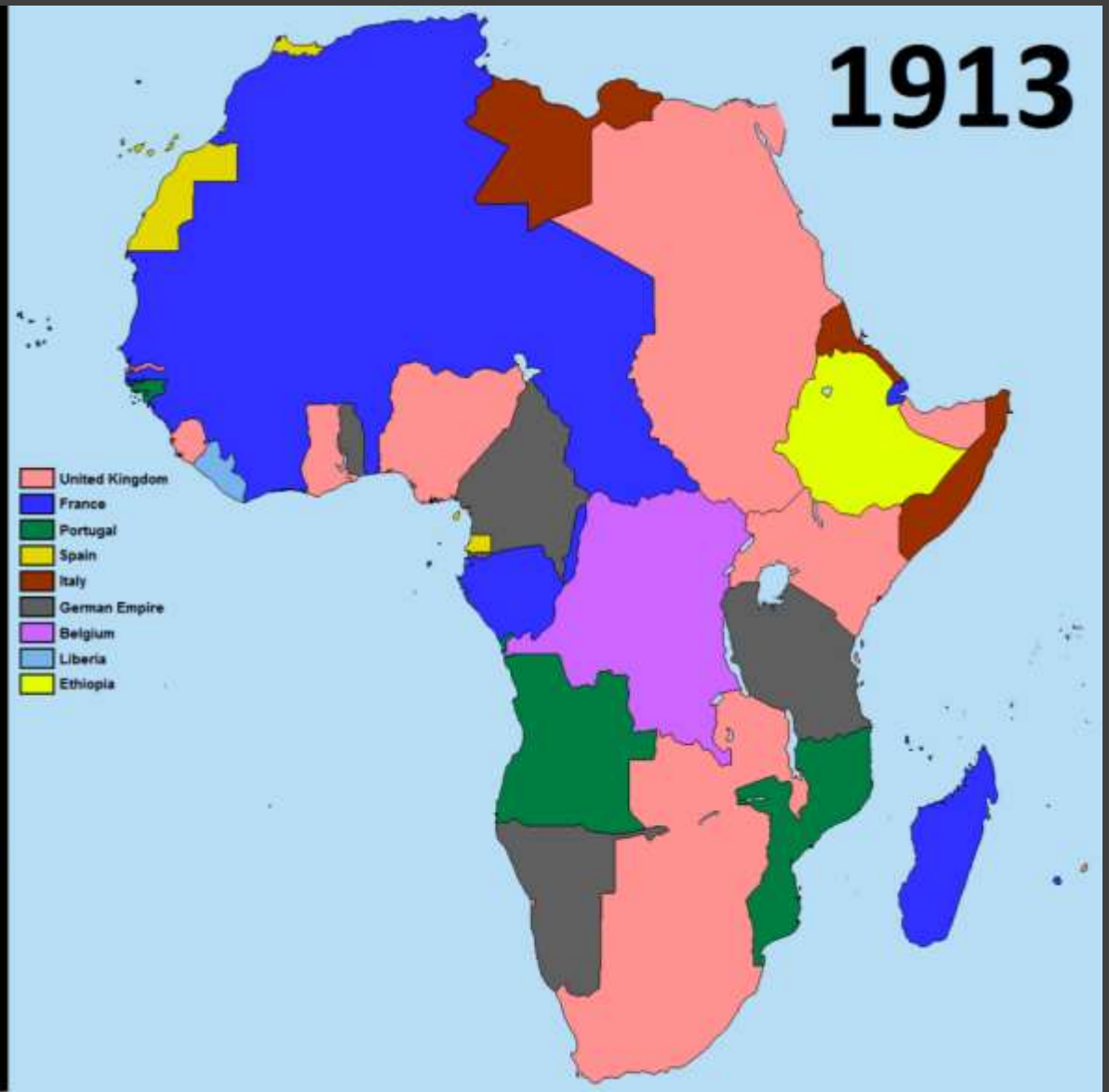




After our humiliating loss of  
Alsace-Lorraine, France needs a  
victory to restore pride in the  
nation.

~ Jules Ferry







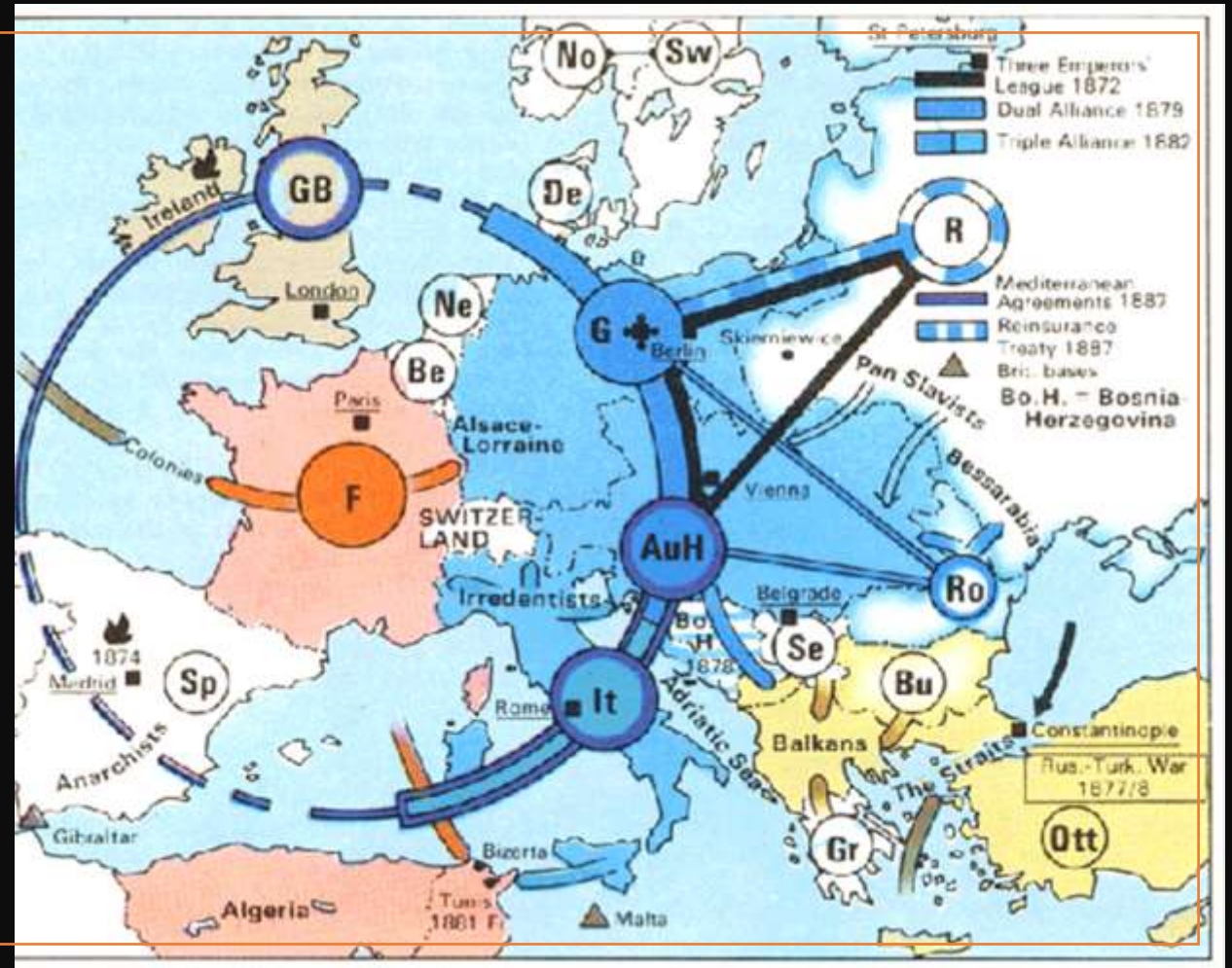
France: a Republican & democratic regime based on the rights of men

The building of a colonial empire: a paradox





# Bismarck's diplomacy: to isolate France





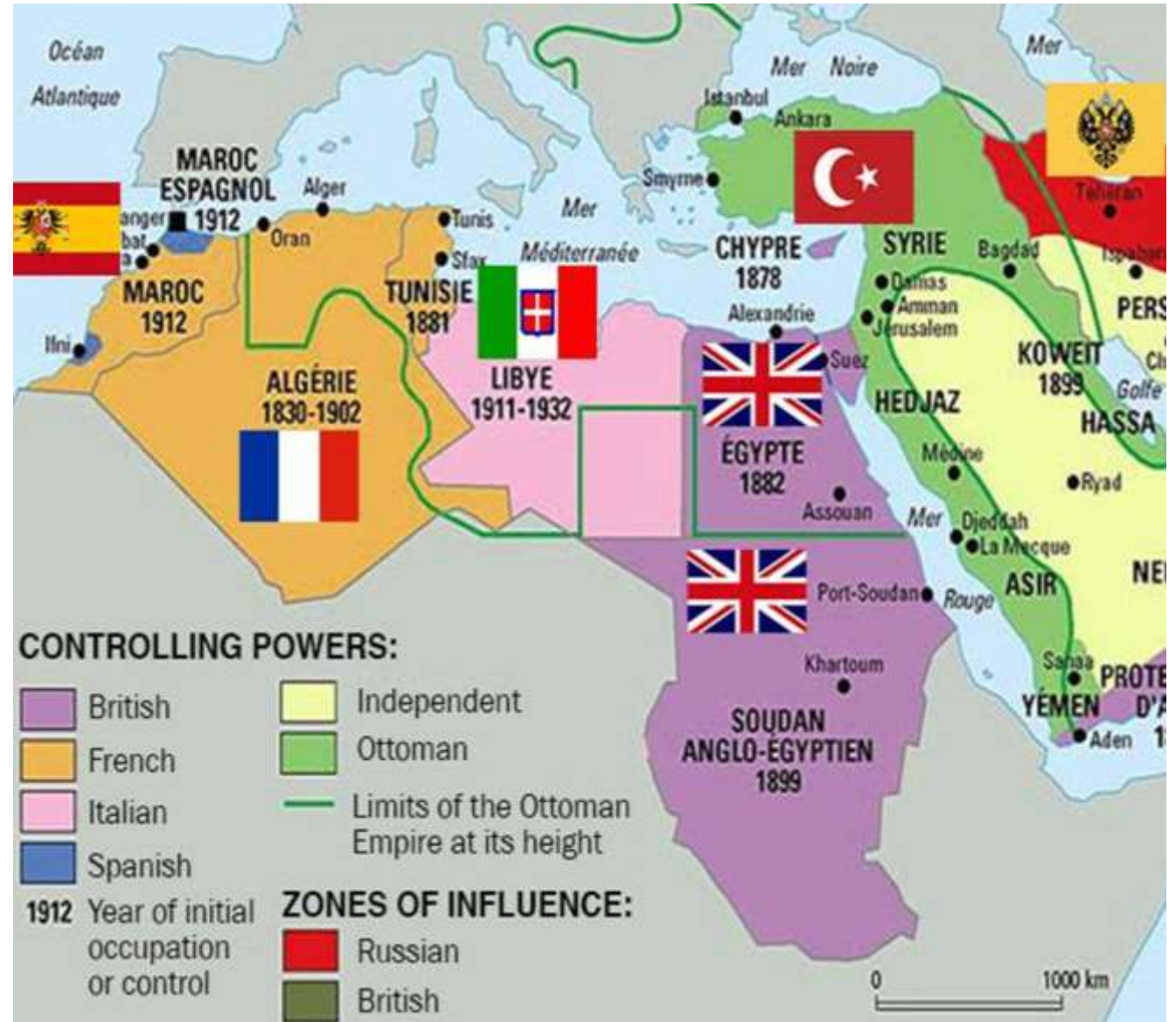
# The Congress of Berlin (1878)





Tunisia handed over to France A French protectorate in 1882

Growing Anglo-French tensions over Egypt





## Africa: the target of growing European rivalry (1880-1885)

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**The initial drive: nationalism** – A sense of national prestige

**Empire-building** = “great power” status

Europeans saw themselves as bearers of a superior culture

### **Economic competition**

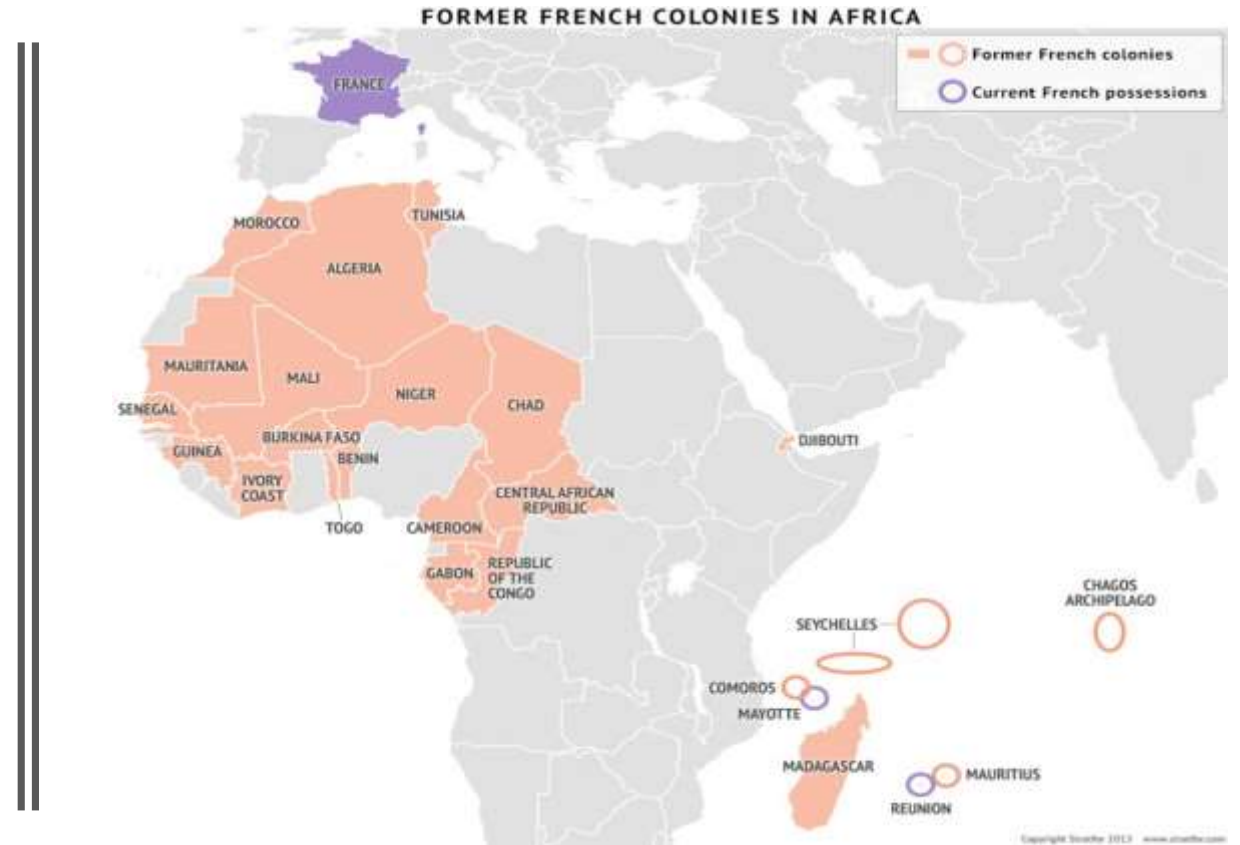
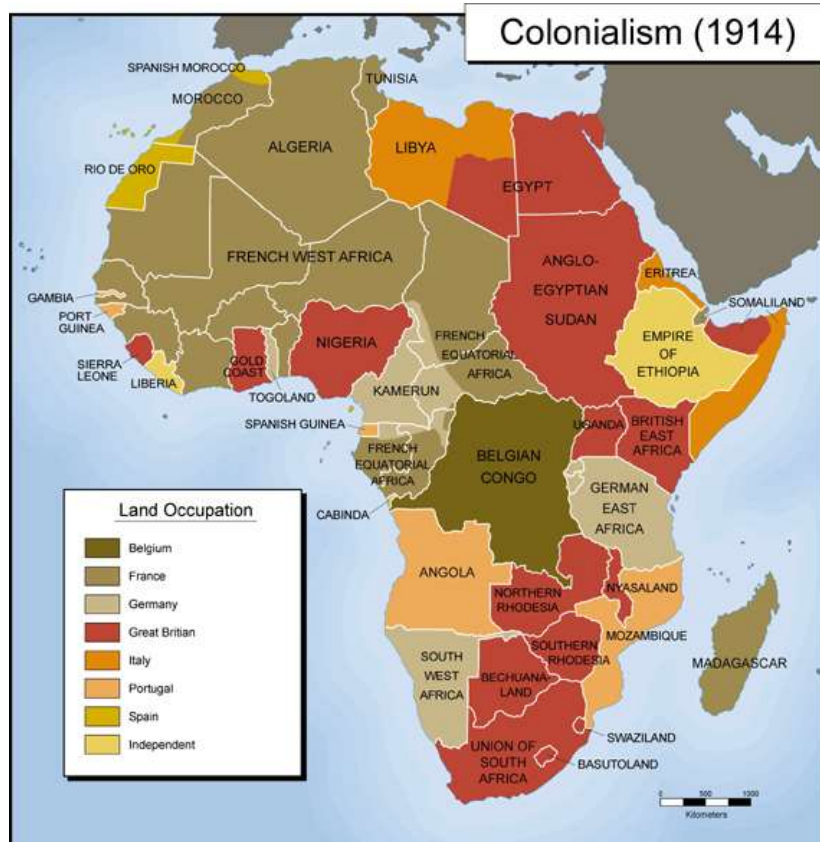
**A great power must be an industrial power** (new markets and access to natural resources)

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# The French eager to extend their influence in West Africa





**The Berlin international conference (1884-1885): the partition of Africa**

A “gentleman’s agreement” – 14 powers represented

African peoples and their leaders **not consulted**





**Georges Clemenceau:** the colonial  
adventure not in the interest of  
France

Focus and energies should be in Europe

Colonial conquest: *“a pure and simple  
abuse of force”*



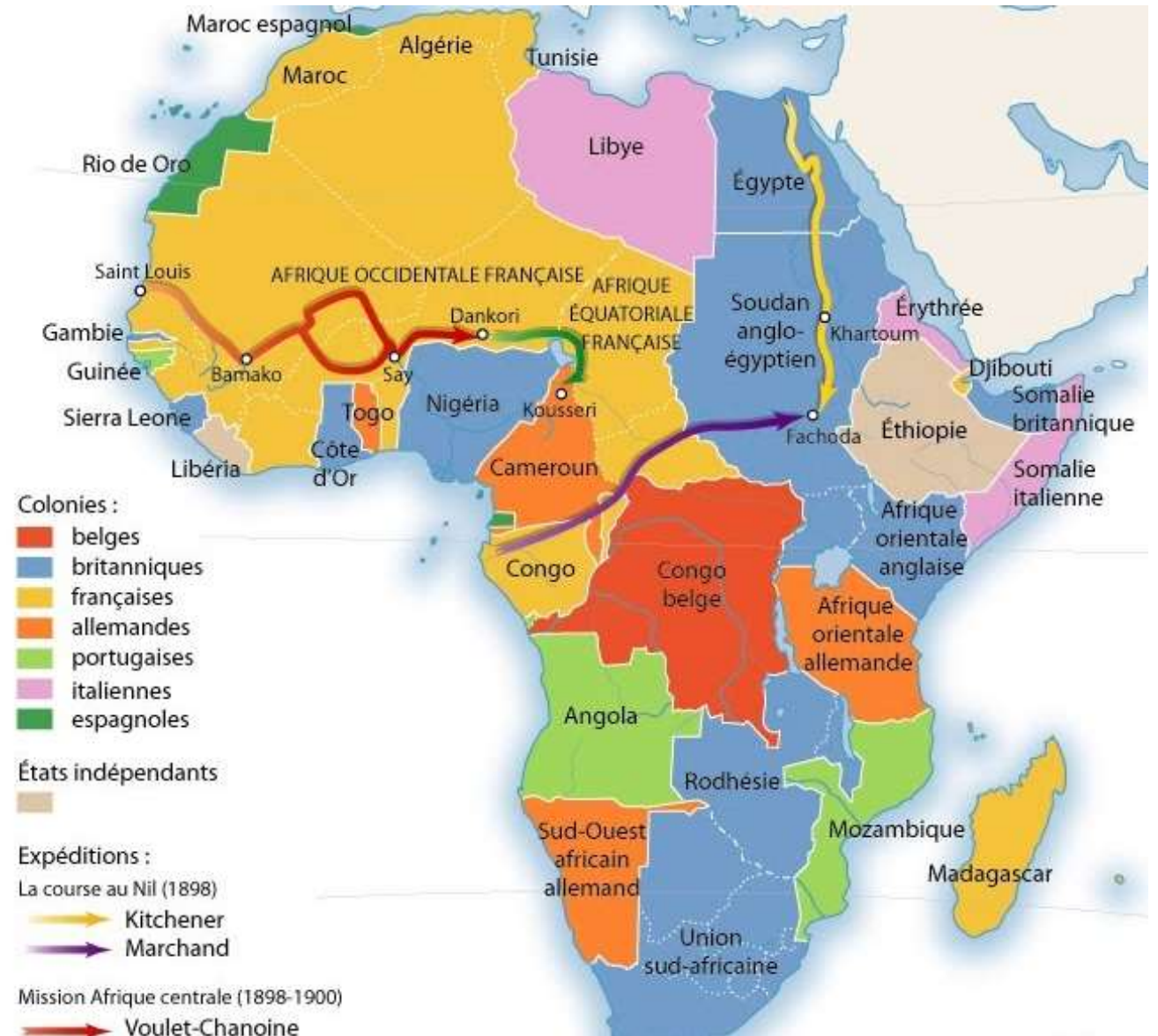


France's ambition: to develop an **axis Congo-Djibouti**

Britain's ambition: an "imperial **axis**" **Cairo-The Cape**

Control over the Suez Canal & the Cape

**The Fachoda crisis (1898)**





Wilhelm II and *Weltpolitik*: to transform Germany into a **global power**

*"We wish to throw no one into the shade, but we also want our own place in the sun"* (Foreign Secretary von Bulow)





Germany perceived as a growing threat

**Franco-Russian alliance: a marriage of convenience (1894)**



Alexander III



**Nicolas II's official visit to  
France (1896)**







## 1897: French President in Russia

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**National subscriptions** in France to  
help Russia finance its economic  
growth

Military reforms & railroads

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**June 1914:** the assassination of Franz Ferdinand

