

The Great War: A Timeline of Conflict (1914–1919)

From the assassination in Sarajevo to the Treaty of Versailles—
tracing the events that reshaped the modern world.



1914

1915

1916

1917

1918

1919

The Powder Keg of Europe

By 1914, Europe was a complex web of alliances, imperialism, and nationalism. A “balance of power” was intended to keep the peace, but instead created two armed camps ready to drag the entire continent into conflict if a single member was attacked.

Note: Britain's involvement included its vast empire (India, Australia, Canada), turning a European dispute into a world war.



Pre-War / 1914



June 28, 1914

The Spark in Sarajevo

Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife are assassinated by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This event triggered the alliance systems. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, setting off a chain reaction.



June 1914



The July Crisis: A Chain Reaction



The July Crisis

July-Aug 1914

1970

1975

1980

1985

1912

1913

1910

2020

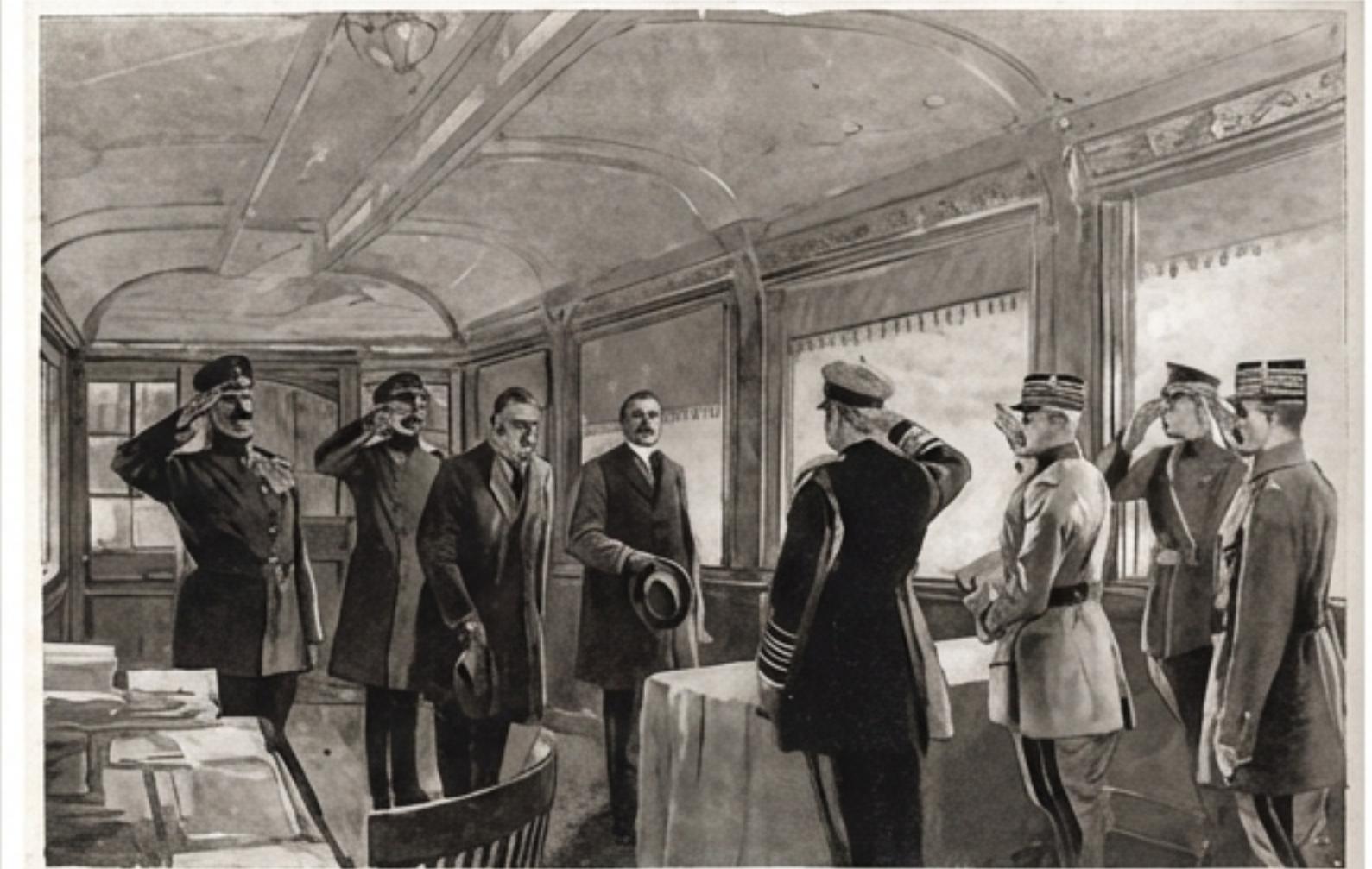
The Failure of Movement

August – September 1914.

Germany executed the **Schlieffen Plan**, aiming to knock out France quickly by marching through Belgium before turning to Russia. French and British armies halted the German advance at the **Battle of the Marne** (Sept 5-10, 1914).



The Result: Both sides dug in to protect their positions. A line of trenches soon stretched from the **Swiss border** to the North Sea. **The war of movement was over; the stalemate had begun.**



1909

1900

1914

Late 1914

1915

1916

2017

The Reality of Trench Warfare

The Western Front became a 'senseless series of attacks and counter-attacks.'
Soldiers faced mud, lice, disease, and the constant threat of artillery.



No Man's Land

The deadly narrow strip of territory between opposing trenches that belonged to neither army. Attacks required soldiers to cross this open ground against machine-gun fire.

1914-1918

1915: Global Escalation and New Fronts.

Gallipoli (April 25)

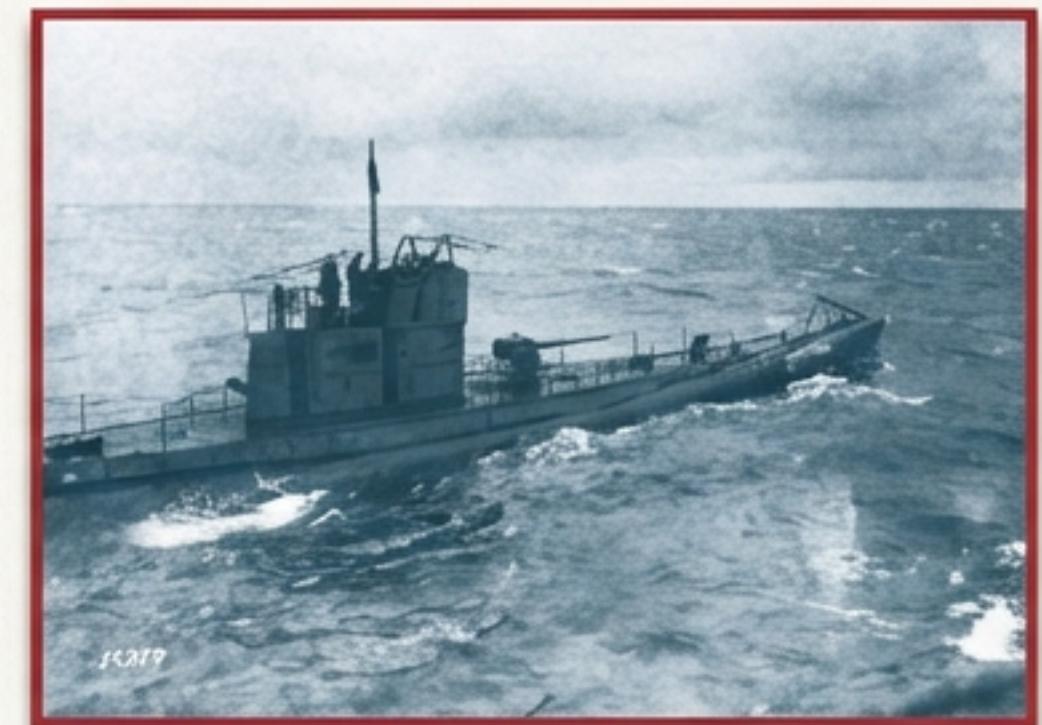
Allied forces (including Anzacs) land in Turkey to open supply lines to Russia. It ends in withdrawal by Dec 1915.

Italy Enters (May)

Italy leaves the Triple Alliance and joins the Entente.

The Lusitania (May 7)

A German U-boat sinks the passenger ship, killing 1,198 people (including 128 Americans). This event shifts US sentiment against Germany.



1914

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1916: The Year of Attrition.

The war became a contest of industrial slaughter. Two major battles defined this year on the Western Front.

- **Verdun:** One of the longest battles of the war.
- **The Somme (July – Nov):** Intended to relieve pressure on Verdun. The opening day (July 1) was the bloodiest in British history.

57,000 Casualties

Sustained by the British Army on Day 1 of the Somme.

1916

Industrializing Death

1914-1918 represented history's largest revolution in military tactics. The "Modern Style of Warfare" emerged—a complex system coordinating infantry, artillery, and new machines.

Innovations

The Tank



Unleashed by Britain at the Somme (Sept 1916) to crush barbed wire and cross trenches.

Chemical Warfare



The use of poison gas (chlorine/mustard) necessitated gas masks for men and animals.

Air Power



Moved from reconnaissance to combat (fighters and bombers).

1914

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1916

Technology

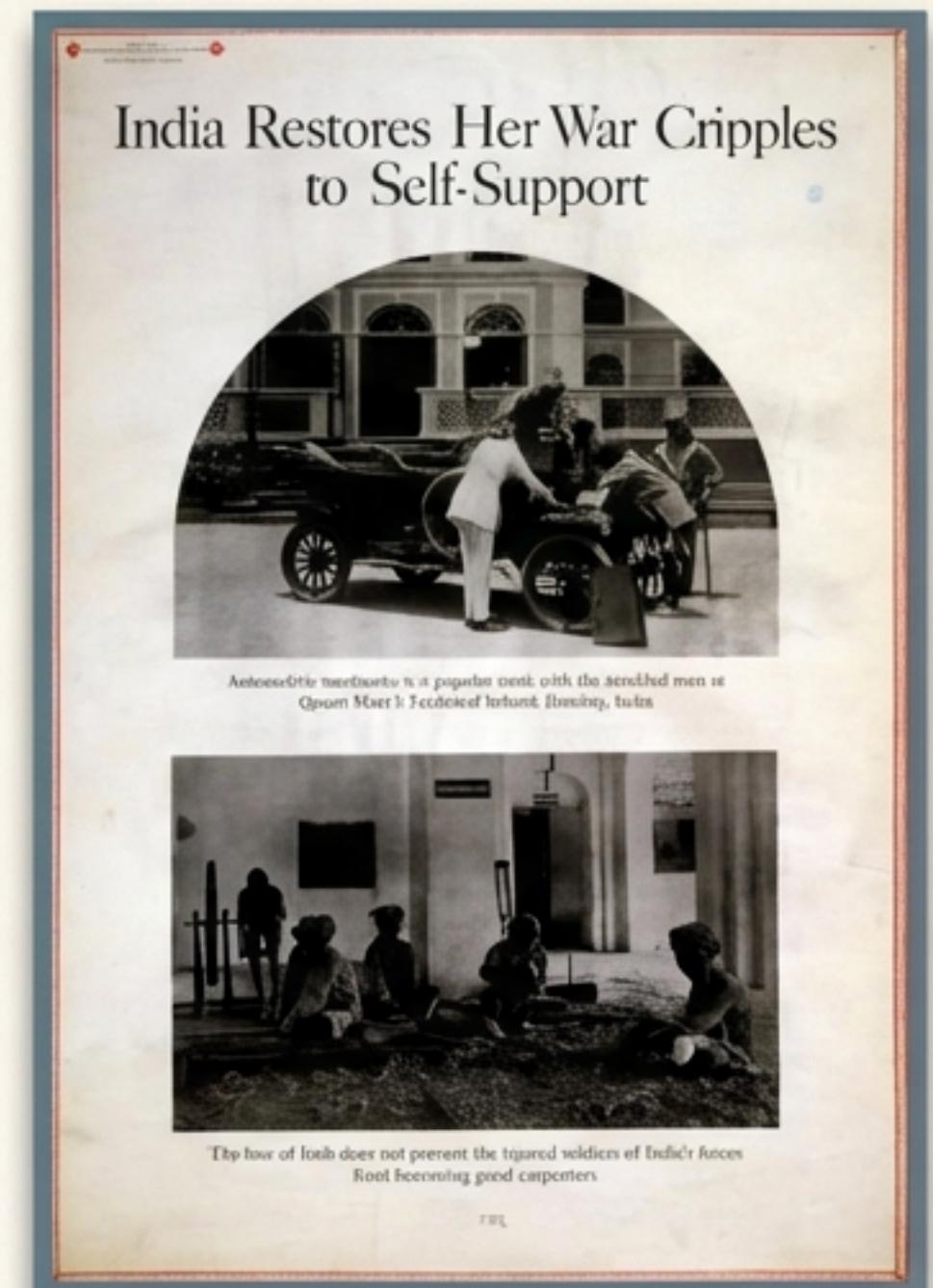
1917

1918

The Global Soldier

The war was not fought solely by Europeans. Colonial subjects were drafted or volunteered from across empires.

- **Africa:** Troops from French West Africa and German colonies served in both combat and labor roles.
- **India:** The British Indian Army contributed massive numbers of troops to the Western Front and the Middle East.
- **Dominions:** Australia, Canada, and New Zealand provided shock troops often used in spearhead attacks.



1970

1970

2030

2040

Introduction

Untown Phases

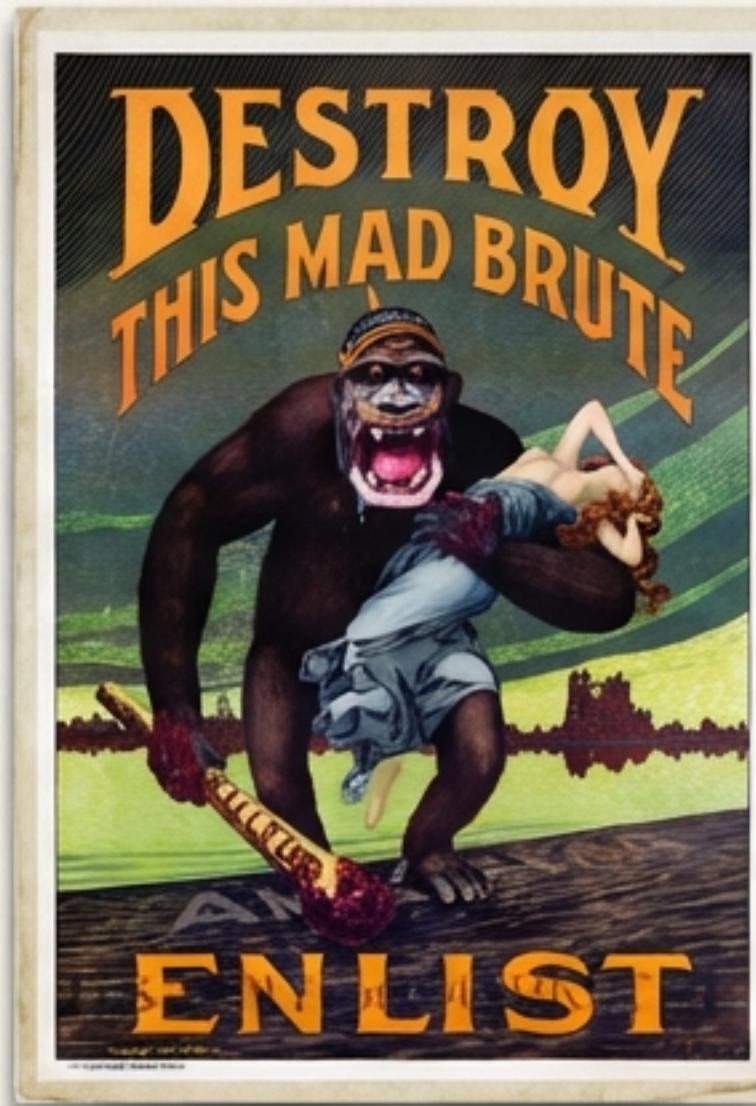
Global Scale

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Mobilizing the Mind: Propaganda.

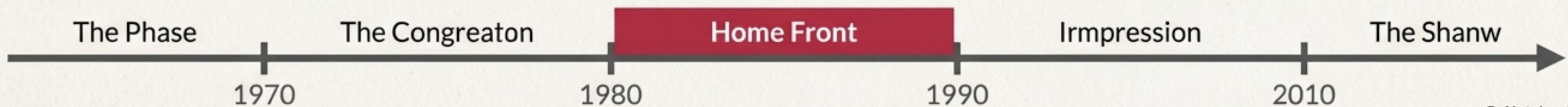
Governments used mass media to justify total war, demonize the enemy, and finance the conflict.



Demonization: Depicting the enemy as a monster to urge enlistment.



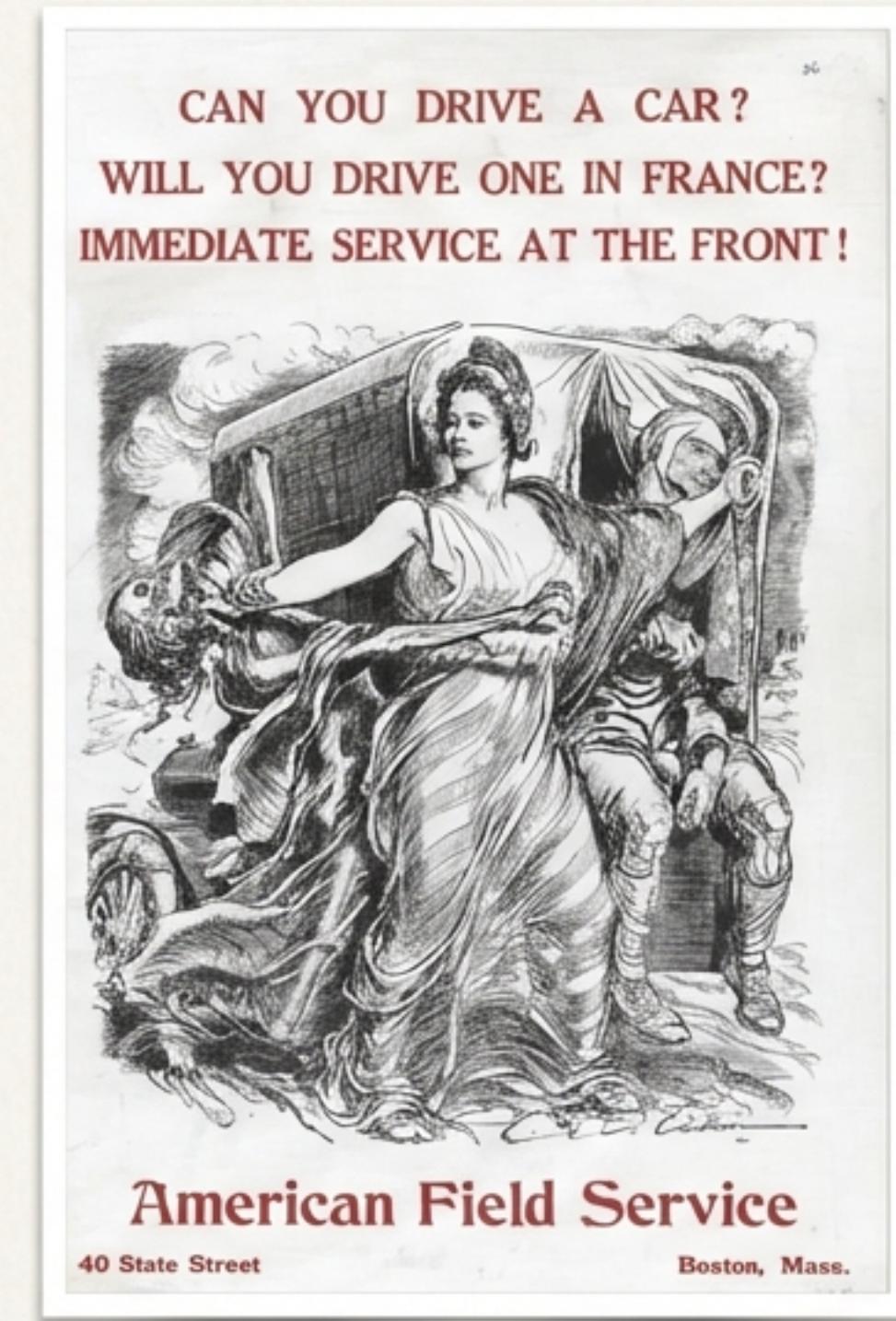
Financing: Connecting civilians directly to the violence of the front.



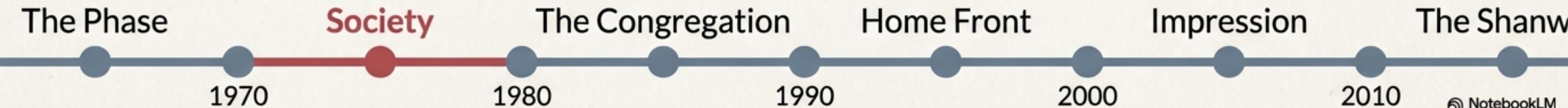
Shifting Roles: Women in War

With millions of men at the front, women stepped into roles previously denied to them, driving the industrial war effort.

- Munitions factory workers, nurses, ambulance drivers, and auxiliary military corps.

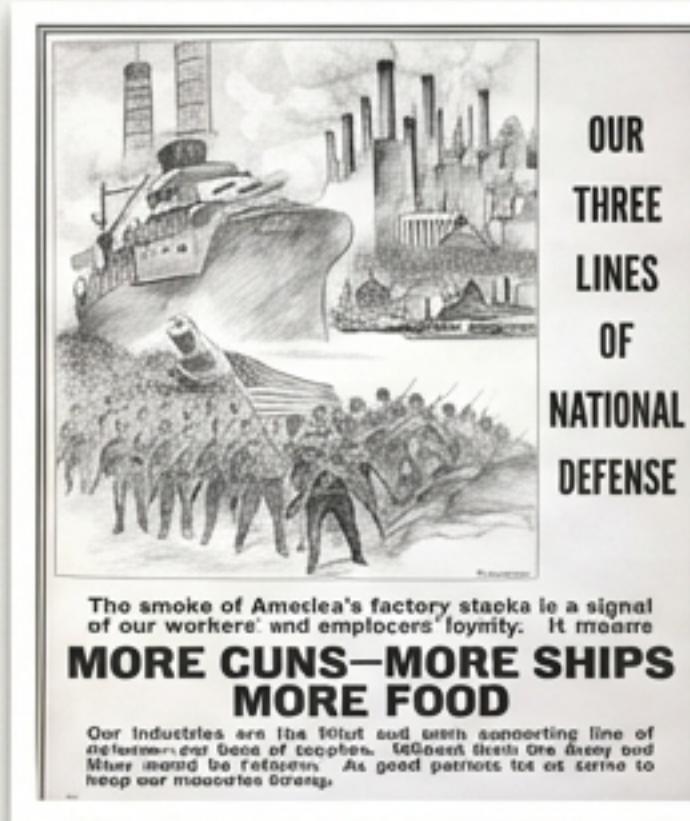


A direct appeal for women's technical skills in the war zone.



1917: The Tipping Point.

The Entry (April): USA



The US declares war on Germany due to unrestricted submarine warfare and the Zimmerman Telegram.
Result: Fresh manpower and industrial resources for the Allies.

The Exit (October): Russia



The Bolshevik government seeks peace (Treaty of Brest-Litovsk).
Result: Germany moves Eastern armies to the Western Front for one final push.

1916

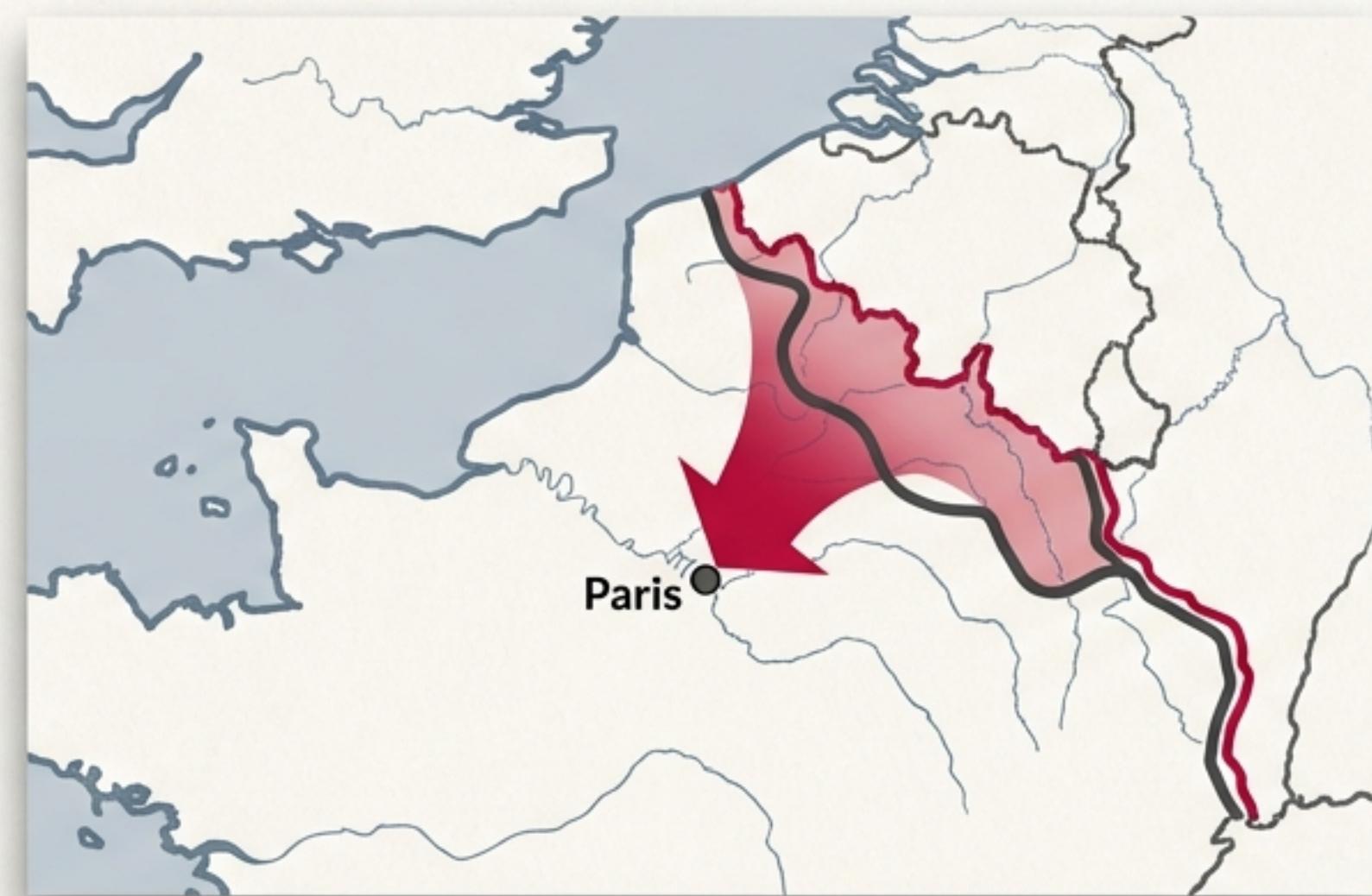
1917

1918

Spring 1918: The German Spring Offensive

Reinforced by troops from the Russian front, Germany launched the “Ludendorff Offensive” in March 1918.

- **The Goal:** Break the Allied lines and win the war before the US military presence reached full strength.
- **The Result:** Significant initial gains and a return to mobile warfare, but the German army exhausted itself and outran its supply lines.



Aug–Nov 1918: The Hundred Days Offensive

The Black Day of the German Army

The Allied counter-strike at the Battle of Amiens (August 8, 1918) broke the German lines, leading General Ludendorff to call it “The Black Day of the German Army.”

Modern Style of Warfare

- Coordinated attacks using tanks, aircraft, artillery, and infantry (notably Australian and Canadian corps) rolled back German gains irreversibly.



1917

Late 1918

1919

The Hundred Days Offensive

The Armistice: November 11, 1918.

With their domestic population starving due to blockades and the army collapsing, Germany signed an armistice. The guns fell silent at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

Human Cost

Soldiers Dead: 10 Million

Soldiers Wounded: 20 Million

Civilian Deaths: 6.6 Million

1917



Nov 11 1918

1919

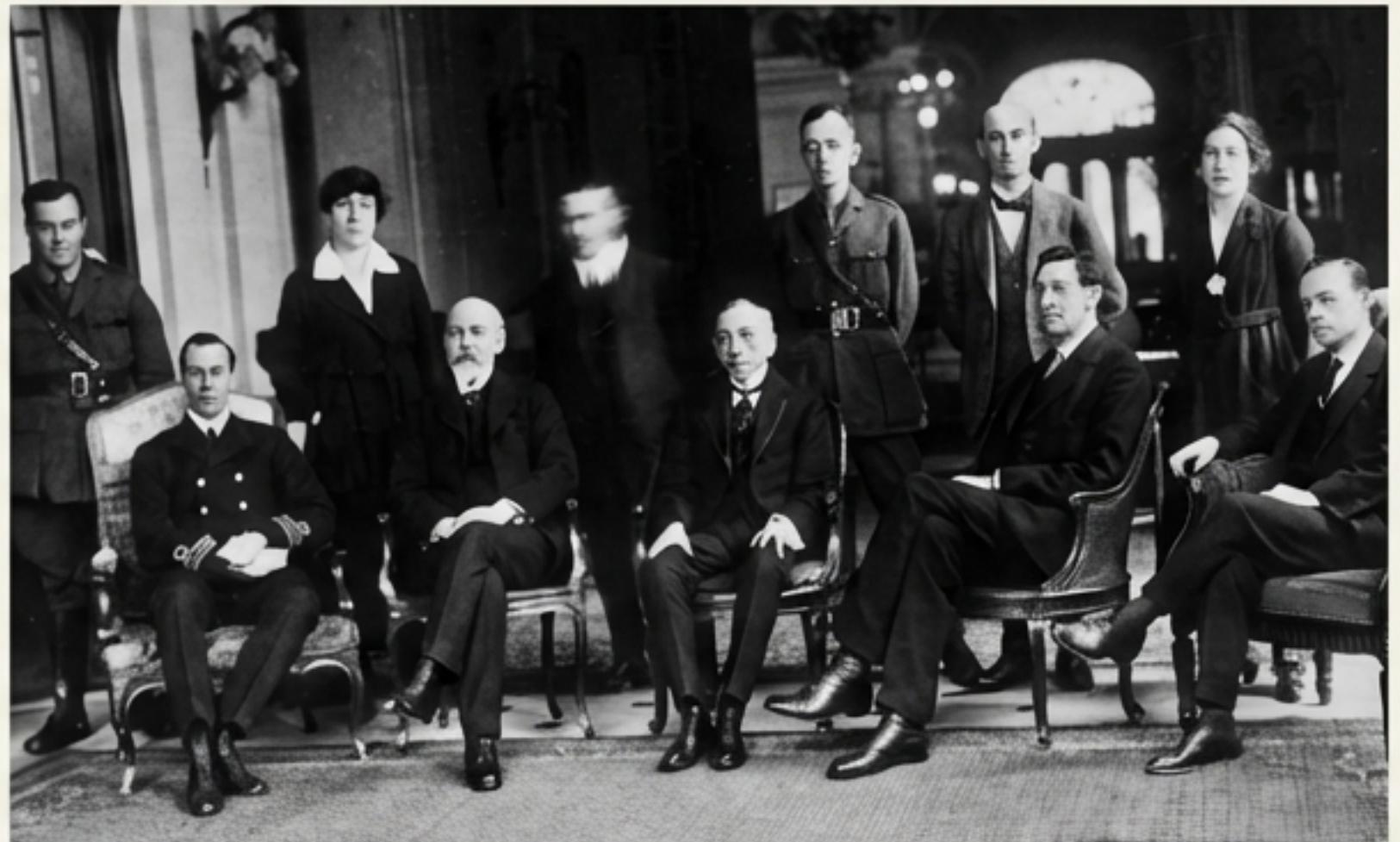
The Armistice

1919: The Treaty of Versailles.

The Paris Peace Conference redrew the map of the world.

Key Terms

- **Reparations:** Germany forced to pay massive financial penalties.
- **Territory:** The German and Ottoman empires were dismantled.
- **Legacy:** Described as a “Carthaginian Peace”—it punished Germany severely, creating economic ruin and resentment that paved the way for World War II.



1917

1918

1919

1920

The Treaty of Versailles

The Legacy of the Great War.

World War I ended the era of “gentlemanly” warfare and birthed the modern age.

Playfair Display

Military Legacy: Established the “System of Systems” model—warfare as a complex coordination of variables that remains the standard today.

Geopolitical Legacy: The collapse of empires and the redrawing of borders created scars and conflicts that persist in the Middle East and Europe to this day.



Australian War Memorial, Canberra

1917

1918

1919

Legacy