

FROM KAISERREICH TO THIRD REICH

Elements of Continuity in German History
1871–1945

Fritz Fischer

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Volume 13

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Elements of Continuity in German History
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FRITZ FISCHER
TRANSLATED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY ROGER FLETCHER

First published in English in 1986 by George Allen & Unwin Ltd

This edition first published in 2020

by Routledge

52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-367-02813-8 (Set)

ISBN: 978-0-429-27806-8 (Set) (ebk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-23592-5 (Volume 13) (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-28077-1 (Volume 13) (ebk)

Publisher's Note

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Translated and with an Introduction by

Roger Fletcher



London and New York

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Originally published in German under the title Fritz Fischer,
Bündnis der Eliten
© 1979 by Droste Verlag GmbH, Düsseldorf.

This translation first published in 1986
Third impression 1990

Reprinted in 1991 by
Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE
29 West 35th Street, New York NY 10001

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Fischer, Fritz
From Kaiserreich to Third Reich: elements
of continuity in German history, 1871–1945.
1. Germany—History—1871–1918
2. Germany—History—20th century
I. Title II. Bündnis der Eliten. *English*
943.08 DD220
ISBN 0-415-07878-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fischer, Fritz
From Kaiserreich to Third Reich.
Translation of: Bündnis der Eliten.
Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
1. Germany—Politics and government—1871–1933—
Addresses, essays, lectures. 2. Germany—Politics,
and government—1933–1945—Addresses, essays, lectures.
3. Elite (Social sciences)—Germany—History. I. Title.
JN3388.F5713 . 1986 943.08 85–32065
ISBN 0-415-07878-4

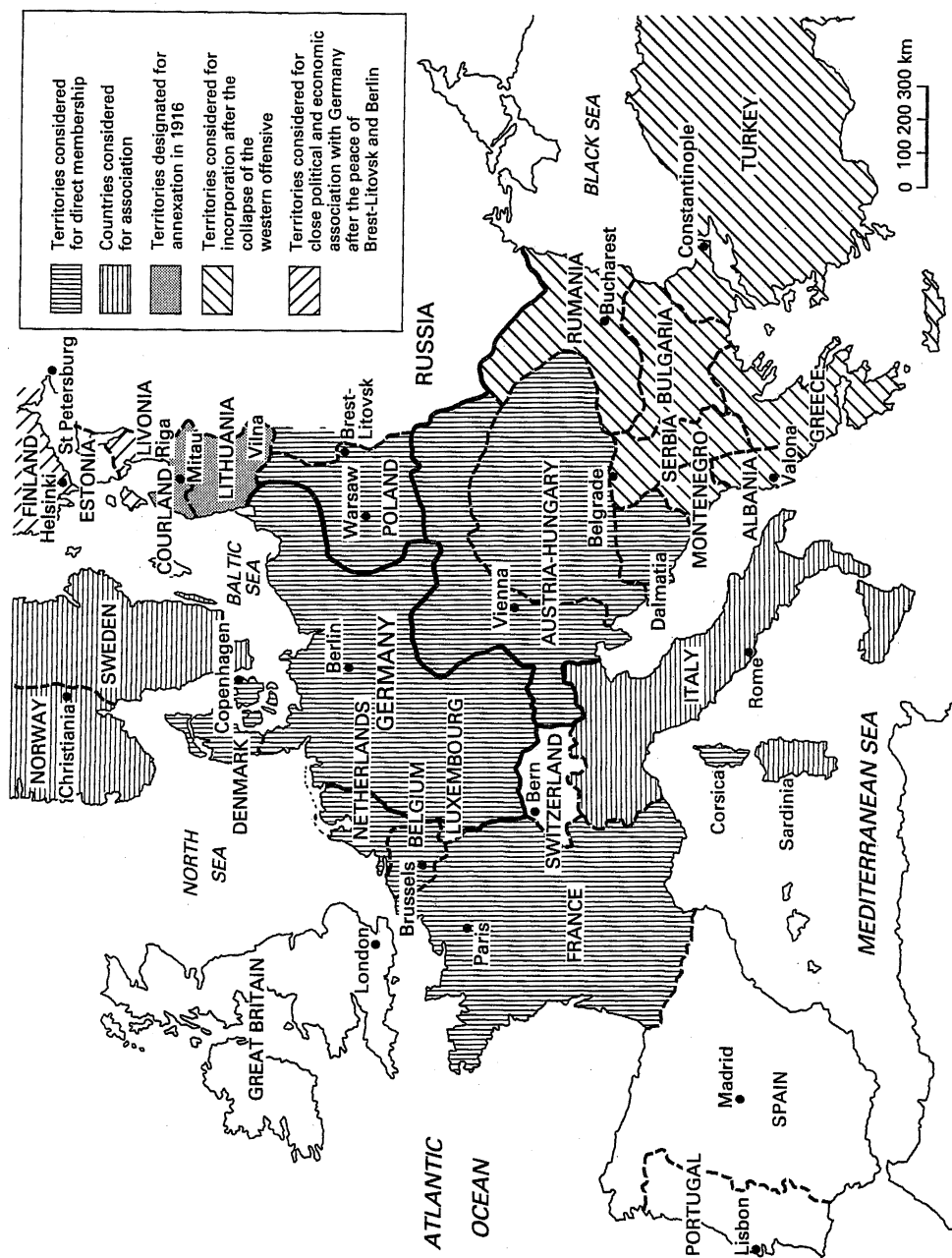
Set in 11 on 12½ point Garamond by Paston Press, Norwich
and printed in Great Britain by Billing and Sons Ltd,
London and Worcester

Contents

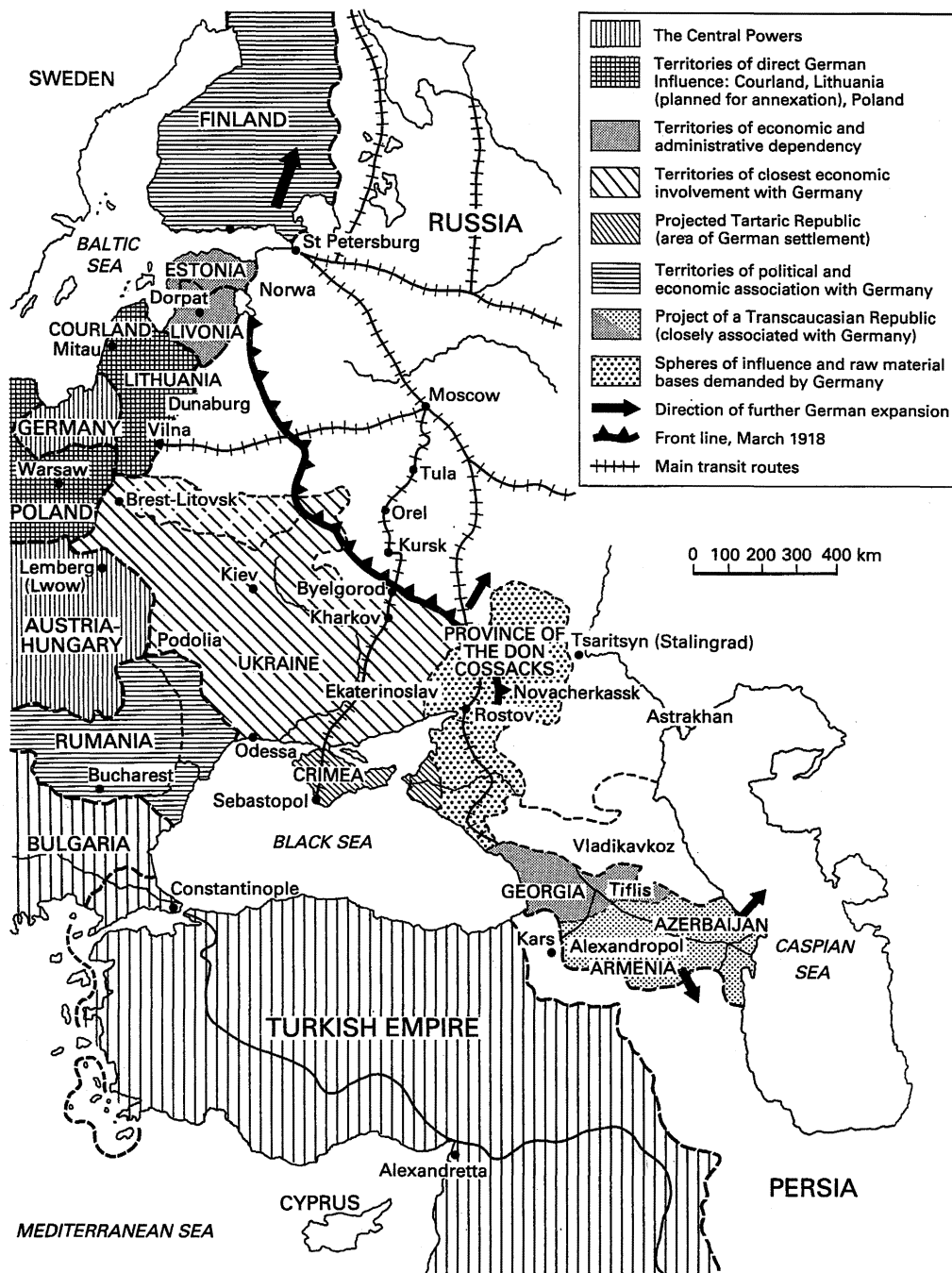
Acknowledgements	<i>page</i> vi
Maps	vii
Introduction	1
Foreword to the Anglo-American Edition	33
Foreword to the German Edition	37
1 Ruling Cartel and Imperialism	39
'Steel and Rye'	39
From 'World Policy' to Continental Hegemony	42
'Polycratic Chaos' or Military State?	50
2 Between Preservation of the System and External Expansion	56
The Image and the Reality of War	56
The Illusions Remain	62
'War Socialism' without Reform	67
3 Tradition versus Democracy	74
'Authoritarian Capitalism'	74
Economic Interests and Foreign Policy	83
The Army and the Power-State Tradition	89
Conclusion	97
Notes	100
Index	113

Acknowledgements

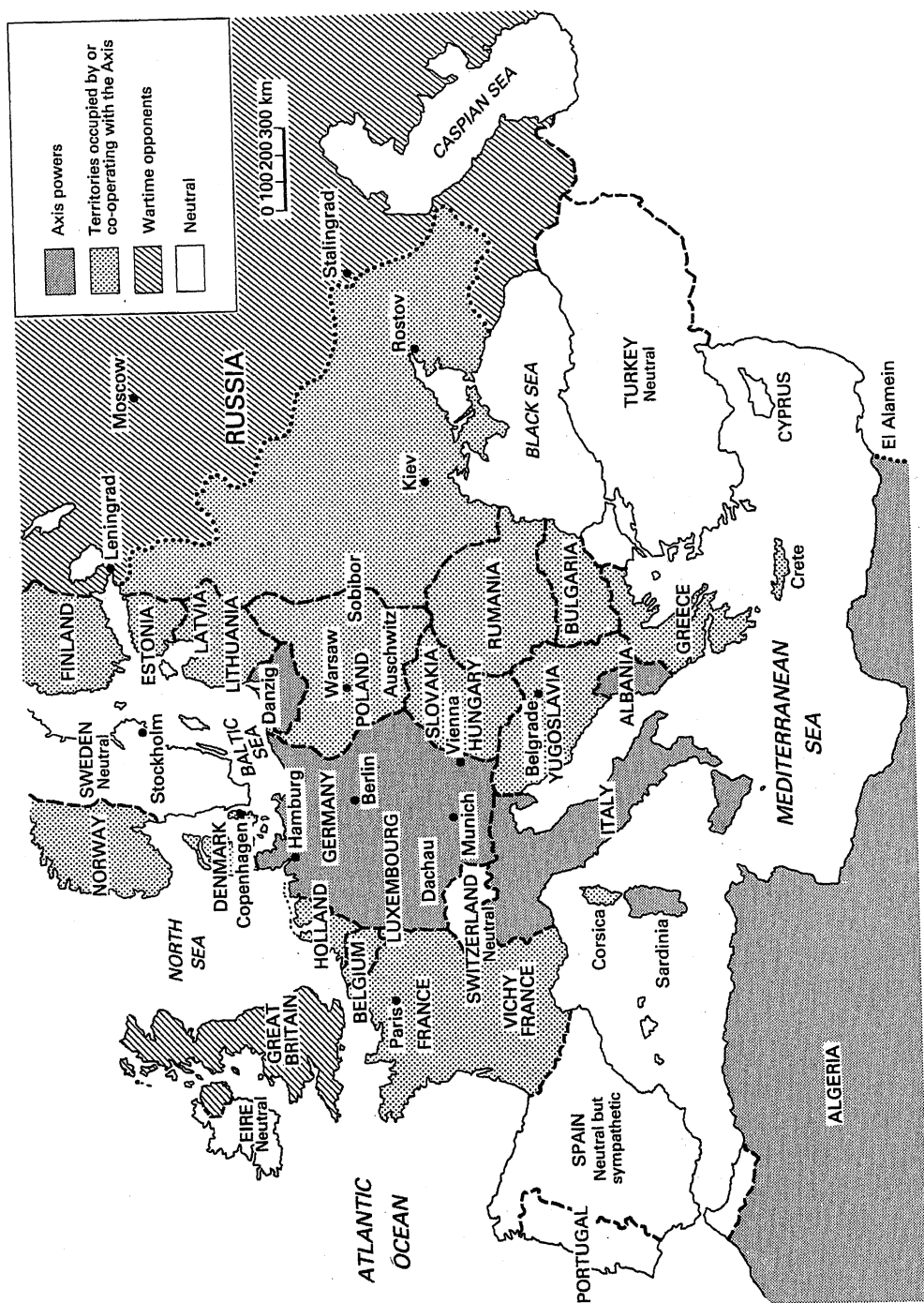
Thanks are due to several persons and institutions for their assistance in the preparation of this book: to Ray Duplain of Deakin University, Australia, for drawing the maps; to Carolyn and Lisa, who did most of the typing; to John Moses, for useful suggestions regarding the translation; to Hazel Blumberg-McKee, for the indexing; to Tim McMullin and the editors of *Teaching History*, for permission to use, in the introduction, some of the material and ideas which first appeared in 'Germany and the 1914 Question: An Epilogue to the Fischer Thesis' (in volume 18, number 4 of this journal). The publishers, Chatto and Windus, of London, UK and W. W. Norton, of New York, USA, have kindly agreed to the use, again in the introduction, of a rather long extract from Professor Fischer's *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, and for this, too, we are most grateful.



Map 1 'Central Europe' as a new economic unit. Conception of the middle European tariff union in Bethmann Hollweg's programme of September 1914



Map 2 The 'New Order' in the East, 1914-1918



Map 3 The Third Reich at its greatest extent, 1942



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Introduction

Reviewing Barrington Moore, Jr's, *Injustice: The Social Basis of Obedience and Revolt*, Guenther Roth expressed the truism that 'it is always risky for a scholar to write a sum of his knowledge and insights toward the end of his career.'¹ This, in effect, is what Fritz Fischer has done in the present book. Never noted as one for shirking risks, Professor Fischer here offers the Anglo-American reader a concise articulation of his empirical findings and a clear application of the Fischer methodology, all within the framework of an explicitly stated pedagogic purpose.

Fischer's most obvious contribution to modern German historiography lies in his attempt to provide a number of challenging insights into, and controversial reinterpretations of, the recent German past. In particular, it is now widely recognized that 'Fritz Fischer's work . . . [has] had a major impact on interpretation' of the origins and nature of the First World War,² but in 1961 he burst like a bomb-shell on the staid West German historical scene with a book entitled *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (*Grasp at World Power*), arguing that the Kaiser's Germany, no less than Hitler's Reich, had aimed at empire in the grand manner:

A survey of Germany's aims at the beginning and in the middle of 1918, when German self-confidence was at its peak in the expectation of early victory, discloses a picture of an *imperium* of grandiose dimensions. In the west: Belgium, Luxemburg, Longwy-Briey linked with Germany on such terms as to make possible the adherence of France and Holland and to isolate Britain and force her to recognise Germany's position; in the east: Courland, Livonia, Estonia and Lithuania, from Reval to Riga and Vilno, the Polish Frontier Strip and Rump Poland all closely fettered to Germany; in the south-east: Austria-Hungary clamped into