



Indolence into depravity: the tragic final years of Tsarist Orthodoxy

Its parish clergy are despised, its bloated bureaucracy is blind to social evil, its most loyal servants are in anguish, and a mad monk runs the court, the state, and the church

Count Vladimir Nikolayevich Kokovtsov was not known as a particularly emotional man, nor as an ardently religious one. Square of jaw and trim of beard, clear-eyed and dapperly attired, he was every inch the bureaucrat who had risen from the lowest ranks to the highest as Tsar Nicholas II's prime minister for three tense and fateful years. But that was before the First World War, in which he had opposed any Russian participation and had therefore been supplanted. Now, in March 1916, with Russia nearly eighteen months into the war and losing it disastrously, the count presented himself at the French Embassy in an uncharacteristic state of distress.

"He gave me the idea," the French ambassador Maurice Paléologue would recall, "that he was forcibly controlling himself to prevent me from seeing the real depth of his despair. In his general diagnosis of the internal condition of Russia, I observed the importance he attached to the demoralization of the Russian clergy. He spoke in a grief-stricken tone, which occasionally made his voice tremble," as he unfolded the tale of woe that had befallen the Orthodox faith and its clergy.

"You must know," he told Paléologue, "how wretched is the condition of our priests, both materially and morally. The priest of our rural parishes almost always lives in a blank misery which too often loses all dignity...and respect for his cloth and office. The peasants despise him for his idle, drunken ways... Sometimes they don't even stop at insulting and even beat him. You've no idea

The early twentieth-century Russian artist Boris Mikhaylovich Kustodiev painted this portrait of Tsar Nicholas II in 1915. At the time, Nicholas had set his already failing empire on a disastrous course by entering the Great War against Germany and Austria-Hungary. Two years later, the Russian army was in retreat and disarray, and this last Romanov would, along with his country, fall victim to the Bolshevik Revolution.

1. St. Petersburg was renamed Petrograd in an outburst of patriotism and Germanophobia that marked the beginning of the First World War, which condemned the term “burg” as German.

what an accumulation of grief and bitterness there is at the hearts of some of our priests.” The count went on to deplore the conversion of many junior clergy to the ranks of socialism. The most powerful weapon of persuasion in the revolutionary arsenal, he said, was the notorious subjugation of the church leadership—the bishops, archbishops, and Holy Synod—to the “Rasputin Clique.”

By this “clique,” he meant the growing coterie of devotees around the supposed holy man whose very name meant “the dissolute.” The monk Rasputin had bountifully lived up to his name by attracting a harem of female sexual partners of all classes, both those who cynically traded sex for political influence, and others—including noblewomen—who had become genuinely infatuated with this base, unkempt, smelly vulgarian and his compelling gaze.

Although Petrograd did not otherwise lack for debauchees—in fact, it teemed with them—what distinguished Rasputin and horrified all who cared for Russia was the baneful grip he held on the minds and spirits of the royal family, and, through them, on the civil government and the Orthodox Church.¹ Some rumors held that Rasputin had seduced the Tsarina Alexandra and her older daughters. But the real reason for his power was a secret known to just a few, notably the tsarina’s ineradicable conviction that only the spiritual powers of the so-called mad monk held any hope of curing the often fatal disease, hemophilia, that afflicted her only son, the young Tsarevitch Alexei. What was all too well known, however, was that Rasputin was using his royal connection to manipulate the appointment of bishops, bureaucrats, and even cabinet ministers with his roistering, drinking, and often depraved companions.

However the origins of the squalor into which Russia’s church had fallen lay much farther back than either Rasputin or Tsar Nicholas II, back some two hundred years to the era of Nicholas’s most famous ancestor Peter the Great, viewed as the most accomplished of the tsars, but one with an utterly cynical view of the church. At first Peter had been content to merely mock the Orthodox Church, though he did so in a manner no Western monarch would dare. He gathered his Russian and foreign friends together in a parody of a bishops’ council, calling it

In this famous 1860 painting, A Meal in the Monastery, the realist artist Vasily Perov portrays the decadence of the clergy in nineteenth-century Russia. The decline of the Orthodox Church dated back to the early eighteenth century, when Peter the Great put its hierarchy into the hands of the state and imposed upon it a stultifying bureaucracy.



“The Vastly Extravagant, Supremely Absurd, Omni-Intoxicated Synod.” He named a “Prince-Pope” to head it, surrounding him (says one account) with “a conclave of twelve cardinals, all inveterate drunkards and gluttons.” This group staged comic public displays throughout Peter’s life and privately engaged in drunken and orgiastic revels. Small wonder rumors started that Peter was the anti-Christ.

But after returning from an extended tour of Western Europe, Peter decided to take the church seriously. Fearing its opposition to his plans to modernize Russia, he turned it into an arm of the state. He enlisted Feofan Prokopovich, an Orthodox cleric, to forge the chains of the church’s subjugation. Prokopovich had converted to Roman Catholicism while studying in the West, then reconverted to Orthodoxy on his return, and was regarded as the most educated man in Russia. Waiting until the incumbent patriarch of Moscow died, Prokopovich drafted the 1721 law that replaced the patriarch with a council of bishops and laymen, called the Holy Synod, into whose hands the governance of the entire Russian church was placed.

Peter established the tradition of regularly switching the Holy Synod’s clerical members while retaining a lay bureaucracy, headed by an over-procurator. This kept the church weak and the government in full charge. Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries more bureaucratic layers were created, distancing the bishops ever further from the decision makers, while the over-procurator was given a seat on the Council of Ministers or cabinet. The same structure was repeated at the diocesan level, with a short-term bishop and a permanent bureaucracy of laymen headed by a lay appointee of the Holy Synod. The church structure became known officially as the Administration for Religious Affairs of the Orthodox Faith. But unofficially it was called “the Captivity of the Russian Church.”

Not all of Peter’s Romanov successors shared his scorn for Orthodoxy. Indeed, Tsar Alexander I (1801–1825), returned from victory over Napoleon in 1812 a changed man—half-mystic and, some of his nobles believed, half-insane. He wanted to unite Europe in peace under a Holy Alliance of monarchs, inspired by Christ’s teachings. Foreign leaders mocked him. His mistress of several decades left him, believing he was religiously deranged.²

Four Romanov tsars would follow Alexander I before the dynasty came to a violent end ninety-two years later. They were Alexander’s brother Nicholas I, then Nicholas’s son Alexander II, who would be assassinated, then Nicholas’s grandson Alexander III, and finally Nicholas’s great grandson and namesake Nicholas II,



Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I are pictured in this contemporary French engraving forging their short-lived alliance on a barge in the Neman River in 1807. The alliance would turn tragically sour in 1812 when Napoleon invaded Russia and was thoroughly defeated. The hitherto skeptical Alexander returned from his victory a changed man, wishing to unite Russia with the European powers in a Holy Alliance inspired by Christ’s teachings.

2. Tsar Alexander played a pivotal role in the Napoleonic Wars, initially as an ally of Napoleon, and eventually as his chief continental opponent. He led the allied armies into Paris when the allied victory at Leipzig had forced Napoleon to abdicate. After escaping assassination, however, Alexander turned reclusive. When he died from typhus in 1825 at the obscure southern Russian city of Taganrog, rumors spread that he was still alive and had retired to a monastery. A saintly and aged monk named Feodor Kuzmich died there many years later, and some held that he was in fact the former tsar.

3. The Decembrist insurgents ostensibly acted in the name of a third brother, Constantine, who was Alexander's rightful heir, but who had secretly renounced the succession years earlier. For twenty-five days after Alexander's death, Nicholas waited for Constantine to say something before finally announcing his assumption of the throne.

4. In practice, the doctrine linked patriotism, nationalism, and racism. Nicholas ordered all Jewish boys conscripted into the army cadet corps at the age of twelve, where they were physically abused, but promised better treatment if they converted to Christianity. At eighteen they began twenty-five years' service in the army proper. The goal was assimilation. Worse would follow under his grandson. The program was eerily similar to that of the Ottoman Turks who, centuries before, had conscripted Christian boys from the Balkans into their Corps of Janissaries, converting them to Islam in the process.



Nicholas I, inset, officially succeeded his brother on the same day that the Decembrist Revolt, led by liberal junior army officers, erupted in St. Petersburg's Senate Square (depicted above in a tempera painting by Dmitri Nikolayevich Kardovsky). Nicholas blew the rebels apart with artillery and imprisoned the survivors in the dread Fortress of Peter and Paul.

who would be murdered along with his whole family. Unlike the first Alexander, these four sought to lead not Europe but Russia, and in so doing they greatly strengthened the bureaucracy's hold over both church and state.

Nicholas I (1825–1855) was confirmed in this Russia-first persuasion, when what is known as the Decembrist Revolt of junior army officers broke out against him on the very day he officially succeeded his brother. The officers wanted a liberal revolution.³ When several thousand of them assembled in St. Petersburg's Senate Square, Nicholas agonized—but only briefly. He then efficiently blew them to pieces with artillery, and imprisoned the survivors in the dreadful Fortress of Peter and Paul.

Raised to be a soldier, Nicholas was convinced that the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars could have been prevented had Louis XVI jailed all his critics. Accordingly, Nicholas reduced the power of the Russian nobles, and, after crushing a Polish insurrection, removed many of that country's knights from the nobility entirely. To counterbalance the nobility, Nicholas inflated the bureaucracy to eighty-two thousand by 1855, a fivefold increase from 1796. Its competence did not grow with its numbers. It became an unwieldy, ineffective monstrosity that blocked progress altogether and delayed the most minor decisions. But this

bureaucracy, and the state educational system he created along with it, promulgated a unified ideology: Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality.⁴

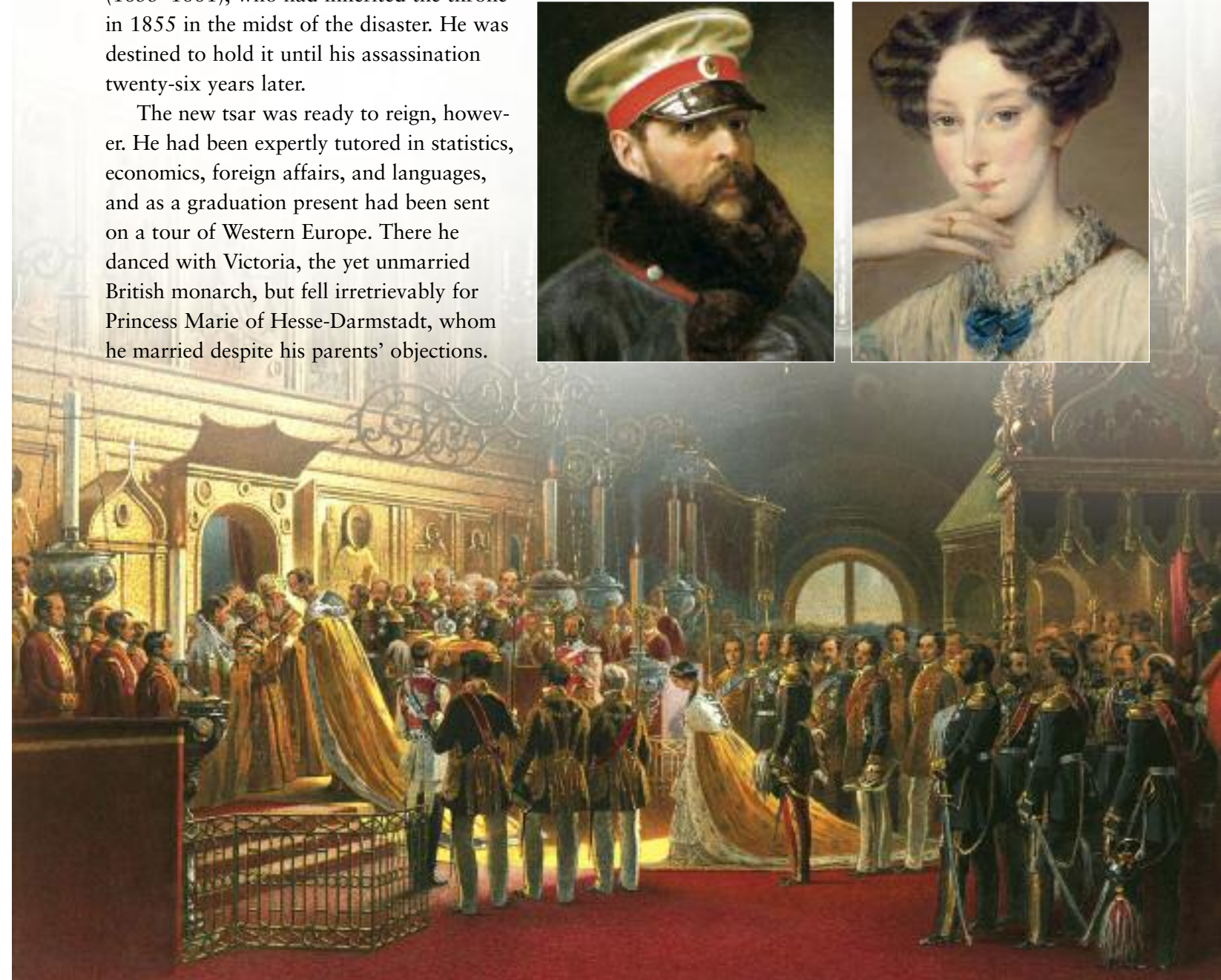
During nearly all the thirty years of Nicholas's reign, Russia remained confident and complacent. True, its industrial sector was tiny, with one-twentieth the cotton production of Britain, and one-thirtieth the farm machinery output of the United States. Yet it boasted the largest standing army in Europe, one and a half million men, the army that had been victorious over Napoleon and was methodically, piece by piece, pushing the Ottoman Empire out of Europe. But suddenly, as Nicholas neared death, there came a calamity which roused Russians to the undeniable fact that their ostensible ascendancy was over.

In the Crimean War (1854–1856), Russia found herself fighting the British, French, and Turks all at once. Since there were but 570 miles of railroad in Russia, and none to the Crimea, Russian soldiers marched to the war carrying the same smooth-bore muskets their grandfathers had carried at Leipzig. They were cruelly outranged by the Europeans' rapid-firing rifles and cannon. At sea, the British and French navies so outmatched Russia's Black Sea fleet that it became an irrelevancy. Though the Western allies' land forces were far from distinguished for their competence, they ultimately captured Russia's Black Sea naval base at Sevastopol and forced a humiliating treaty on Nicholas's son Alexander II (1855–1881), who had inherited the throne in 1855 in the midst of the disaster. He was destined to hold it until his assassination twenty-six years later.

The new tsar was ready to reign, however. He had been expertly tutored in statistics, economics, foreign affairs, and languages, and as a graduation present had been sent on a tour of Western Europe. There he danced with Victoria, the yet unmarried British monarch, but fell irretrievably for Princess Marie of Hesse-Darmstadt, whom he married despite his parents' objections.



The coronation and anointing of Tsar Alexander II and the Tsarina Marie of Hesse-Darmstadt took place in the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow's Kremlin in September of 1856 (depicted below by the Romanticist painter Georg Willhelm Timm). The new tsar took the throne just as his father Nicholas's adventure in the Crimea was nearing its calamitous end.





The ill-fated charge of the Light Brigade, memorialized in English verse, letters, and in this illustration by late nineteenth-century artist Richard Woodville, was a setback in the otherwise successful campaign by Anglo-French-Turkish forces against the Russians in the Crimean War. Although Russia at the time boasted Europe's largest standing army, her weaponry and navy were greatly inferior to those of the allies.

Alexander realized that the Crimean defeat meant Russia must reform itself technologically along modern Western European lines. However, the biggest transformation would be to the status of the serfs, some fifty million ill-educated, intransigent, and devout Russian peasants. The tsar named a commission to study serfdom and created regional commissions of nobles to decentralize the task and to encourage self-government. But the nobles resisted, forcing the government to mandate change unilaterally. The Emancipation Laws of 1861 were a disappointment to peasants and liberals alike. They freed the peasants but gave each one only a small personal plot of land; the remainder went to village communes, and the government paid for only part of it: the peasants and communes would have to pay the rest over time.

There were more reforms: regions, cities, and villages were given self-government of sorts; the justice system was improved with the institution of public trials. The legal framework was created for limited liability companies. Universal military service replaced a peasant military with one filled from all classes. Further, the rights of women were improved.

The church, too, needed reform and everyone knew it, but no one knew how to go about it. One man who believed he had the answers was a rural priest named Ivan Stepanovich Beliustin. He wrote a frank, sarcastic essay for circulation among the intelligentsia. He wrote it anonymously to escape persecution. But his friend Mikhail Pogodin, who had undertaken to pay for handwritten copies to be made, liked it so much he had it published in Germany in 1860 under the title *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia*. Back in Russia it created a sensation, brilliantly capturing the faults of a system that imprisoned the country clergy in intellectual and economic poverty. The rural clergy, stated Beliustin, were poor because they depended on voluntary donations, which many supplemented by farming church lands. Moreover, while they were free to find a different parish, they must stay clergymen all their lives, and their sons must follow them. Before they were ordained, many prospective priests married the daughters of sonless priests, in order to inherit their livings and thereby acquire richer parishes.

Sons were forced to become priests by first being required to attend seminaries, which were themselves monuments of inefficiency and corruption. Underfunded, these schools taught a curriculum crammed with subjects such as Latin, leaving little room for Orthodox theology. Worse, unless the student's father was willing to bribe the seminary staff, the son would be beaten mercilessly for minor offenses. Diocesan officials required similar bribes to advance priests to wealthier parishes

or respond in any way to parish needs. What is more, parishes were encumbered by caretakers, often seminary dropouts, who constituted a permanent subcaste of their own. Beliustin blamed the church hierarchy, which was, he said, dominated by peasant-born "black clergy"—monks from Russia's extensive system of monasteries. Bishops were chosen from the monks because the monks were not married, and bishops had to be celibate. They naturally denied the best positions to the "white" (or married) priests from the dioceses.

Part of the solution was simple, said Beliustin. The Russian state should pay the clergy salaries based on the number of children, keep the Holy Synod but end the black clergy's domination, and reform the seminaries. Others, encouraged by the debate and the spirit of reform caused by emancipation of the serfs, called for the clergy to be freed to leave their profession, and outsiders to be free to enter it.

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Typically, the Holy Synod tracked down and identified Beliustin, and banished him to a far northern monastery. Then it created the customary commission to study the problems he had revealed. Neither measure proved effective. The tsar immediately rescinded the banishment, making Beliustin hopeful of getting a good job at last, perhaps as chaplain to a member of the royal family. This proved a vain hope, however. After several years of shameless intriguing for preferment he was banned from St. Petersburg. The commission, meanwhile became bogged down in disagreements among bishops and civilian bureaucrats. Their failings caused Beliustin to report to a friend: "The Synod discussed it all at length, but not the slightest good came of it... Fools, fools. Beliustin is before their very eyes but they do not want to ask him what to do. The devil with them!"

Finally the over-procurator, Count D. A. Tolstoy, was assigned to the task. Tolstoy improved the administration of the church, freed the rural clergy and the children of the clergy to become anything they chose, and ended the practice of the children inheriting parishes. He also allowed people from other classes to become priests. But he did nothing to address the underfunding of the clergy, turning over that problem to the new parish councils he created and the parallel village councils instituted by the secular reform, who did nothing. As a result, many clergy happily left the profession, while few entered it from the rest of society, reversing the previous situation of a surplus of priests with a dire shortage.

Both religious and secular reform left many disappointed, and ironically triggered a violent revolutionary

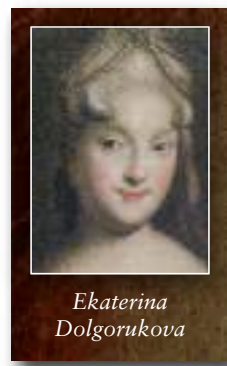
A crowd in Moscow celebrates the abolition of serfdom by Alexander II in this 1861 photograph. The Emancipation Laws turned out to be a disappointment in that the bulk of the feudal land went to the village communes, and the peasants were awarded only tiny plots.





One of the several assassination attempts against Alexander II, this one occurring in Paris in 1867, is depicted here by an unknown French artist. The tsar was eventually killed by an assassin with hand grenades. His son and successor Alexander III rounded up and hanged the conspirators, and formed the dreaded secret police, the Okhrana, to ensure such mischief would not recur.

5. Two of the Okhrana's most famous double agents were Anna Serebriakova and Evno Azef. The former spied for them for twenty-five years. A Red Cross worker, she operated a salon in Moscow that became a favorite of many leading Marxists, including future Soviet ministers and Lenin's own sister. Azef, the son of a Jewish tailor, helped found the Russian Revolutionary Party and was second in command of its assassination squad. In that capacity he betrayed the entire party membership of Kharkov, but allowed some assassinations of cabinet ministers to proceed, especially if they were anti-Jewish.



Ekaterina Dolgorukova

movement that focused on killing the tsar, something Alexander's iron-handed father did not have to face. The first assassination attempt came in 1866, when Alexander still considered himself both popular and safe. Strolling in a public garden, he was shot at (but not hit) by a failed university student who cried, "Fools, I've done this for you," when police arrested him in front of onlookers.

That same year, Alexander, now nearly fifty and devastated by the death of his son and heir, fell in love with an eighteen-year-old girl, Ekaterina Dolgorukova, and to the dismay of the faithful installed her in his palace like an oriental concubine, fathering her children and promising her marriage as soon as the Empress Marie passed away. He kept that promise, leaving the empress to die alone and ignored by her husband. He married Ekaterina forty days later, although he kept this a secret from the court, his family, and the country. One contemporary suggested he cut short the grieving period because he believed that "every day might be his last." Indeed, he was a marked man. That same year a group called the Party of the People's Will had painstakingly secreted enough dynamite into St. Petersburg's Winter Palace to blow a hole in two stories of the building, killing eleven people. But the tsar, on the third floor, was unharmed.

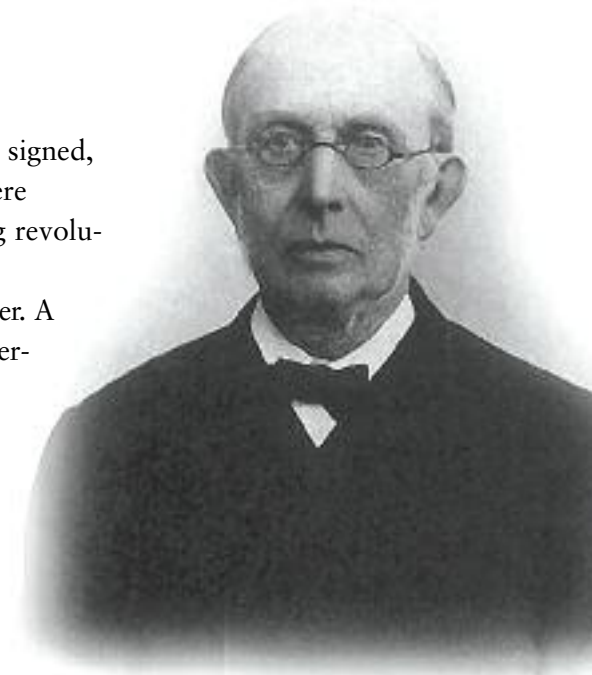
That was the group's fifth attempt. Its sixth called for another explosion of dynamite, this time in a tunnel dug under one of the tsar's usual carriage routes, with a backup plan to bombard the vehicle with hand grenades. On the designated day the tsar changed his route, but the hand grenades proved devastatingly effective, killing both Alexander and the assassin.

That his successor was made of sterner stuff was soon evident. Alexander III galloped away from his father's deathbed and through St. Petersburg at the head of a regiment of Don Cossacks, their gleaming lances poised.

He immediately countermanded a democratizing edict his father had just signed, and initiated a "White Terror" against his father's assassins. Soon five were hanged and a new secret police force, the dread Okhrana, was infiltrating revolutionary organizations in Russia and abroad.⁵

Alexander III appointed jurist Constantine Pobedonostsev as a key adviser. A reformer turned arch-conservative, he believed that only the tsar's stern leadership could manage the orderly modernization of Russia. Alexander III imposed managers on village governments and mandated the schools of ethnic minorities to teach only in Russian. But foreign investors insisted the tsar retain the rule of law introduced by Pobedonostsev's own earlier reforms. They would increase their stake in Russia only if their property was secure from confiscation by the state. The tsar doubtless met the condition, since an era of unprecedented industrial growth ensued. But grain exports to buy foreign machinery led to the famine of 1891. Colonel Alfred Von Wendrich, however, averted a total disaster by reversing the flow of grain back to the farms on Russia's new rail system.

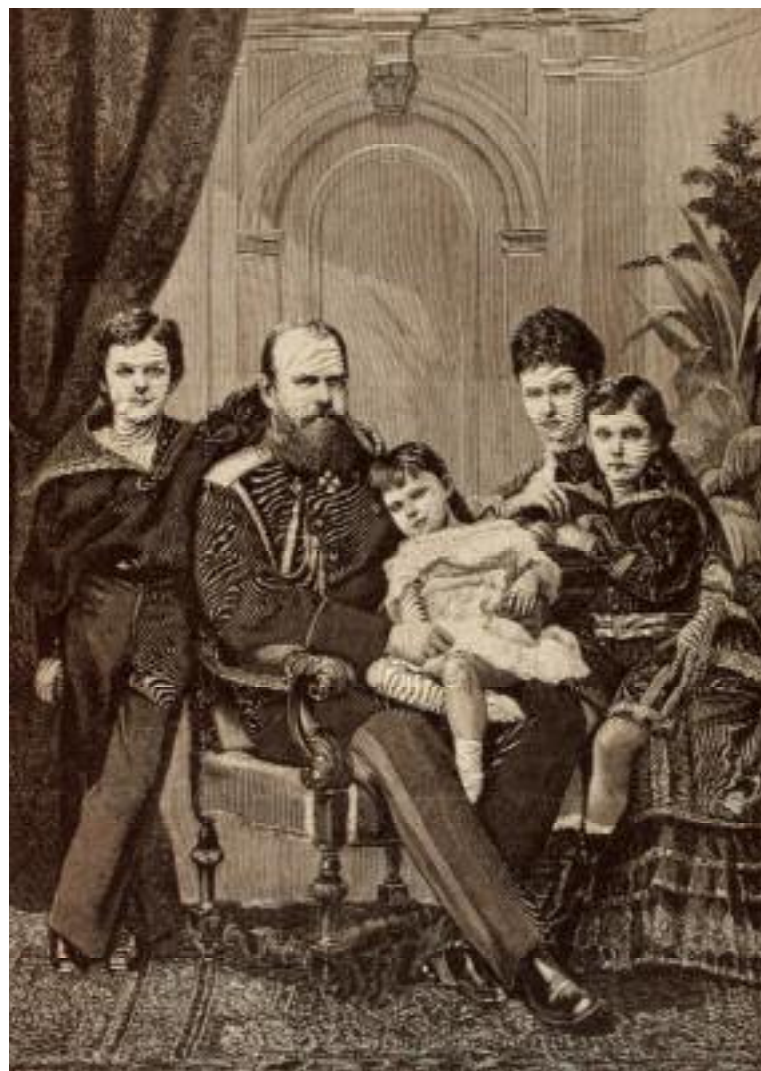
In all this time of turmoil, the Orthodox Church was expected to play an important stabilizing role, so important that Alexander III made Pobedonostsev over-procurator of the Holy Synod. Pobedonostsev persuaded the tsar to finance the revival of church-run elementary schools and suppress dissident groups such as the Old Believers, (see previous volume, *We the People*, ch. 5), Doukhobors, and, above all, the Jews.⁶ However, the tsar's modernization plans were derailed by his premature death at the age of forty-nine in 1894, leaving for his son



Constantine Pobedonostsev, above, Alexander III's key adviser, recommended a program of stern monarchical leadership and modernizations that included the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, depicted below, which eventually connected St. Petersburg to Vladivostok, a distance of 5,772 miles, and took in Russia's rich resource producing regions.



6. Under Alexander III, fifteen to twenty thousand Jews were expelled from Moscow in 1891, some to prisons and some to exile in Siberia. Many were allowed to emigrate to the U.S. Spontaneous outbursts of anti-Semitism in Russia had long been chronic. Soon after Alexander III began his reign, pogroms broke out in cities and towns. Gangs looted and destroyed Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues, raping women and assaulting men. Christian town-dwellers and peasants would often join in the attacks. Russian police and soldiers offered only feeble opposition at best, and at worst loaned the attackers their weapons. The tsar supported the pogroms on theological grounds, seeing Jews as "Christ-killers," but he grew to disapprove, as did others in the social upper strata, because the mobs were disorderly, and might turn next on the nobility or the merchants.



This family portrait by an unknown Spanish artist shows Tsar Alexander III, Tsarina Maria Feodorovna (formerly Dagmar of Denmark), and their children, including the Tsarevitch (crown prince) Nicholas (far left). Following his father's unexpected death from nephritis, twenty-six-year-old Nicholas was unready for power, lamenting, "What is going to happen to me...to all of Russia?"

Nicholas a task for which he was woefully unprepared. For this seeming negligence, his father had pleaded futility. "He is an absolute child," Alexander had lamented. "His judgments are still truly childish." Still, at twenty-six, Nicholas II was a confirmed autocrat, if doubting his own ability. Upon his succession, he asked pathetically: "What is going to happen to me...to all Russia?"

Things went wrong from the start: His father's funeral turned into a disorganized shambles. His coronation was worse, with thousands trampled to death by a runaway mob at the free banquet he had arranged for the common people. The bright spot in his early days as tsar was his marriage. First enraptured by a rising young ballerina named Kshessinska, he fell more realistically in love with a Hessian princess and granddaughter of Britain's Queen Victoria named Alix of Hesse-Darmstadt. He married her shortly after his father's death.

The beautiful red-headed new tsarina adopted the name Alexandra and converted to Orthodoxy. She was as strong-willed as her husband was weak, but lacked judgment, surrounding herself with dubious advisers whom many regarded as "quacks," and striving always to draw Nicholas away from government affairs to their own little family circle. After four daughters,

the couple at last produced a male heir in 1904, but their joy vanished as the Tsarevitch Alexei proved to have inherited hemophilia through his mother. This was an incurable disease that threatened his life by preventing the clotting of his blood after even minor injuries.

That same year brought a major setback to the Russian state: a war with Japan that thoroughly demolished Russia's pretensions to Great Power status. It was a war the Russians did not want but nearly everyone, including the tsar, expected to win easily against opponents whom Nicholas II himself dismissed as "short-tailed monkeys." One minister even proposed that "a short, victorious war" would distract dissenters from the country's social ills. Russia's diplomats refused to budge on Japan's current claims over Korea, expecting the Japanese to submit to the superior race.

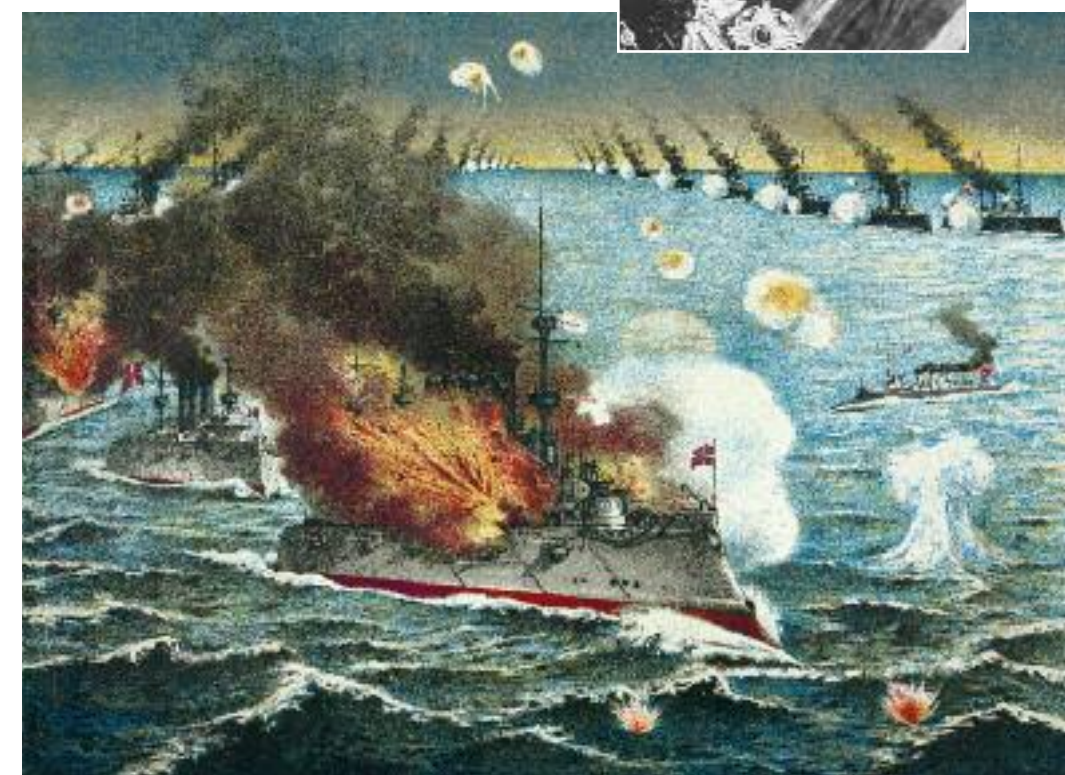
In fact, control of the sea was crucial, and Japan had the more modern fleet. Her crews were British-trained, her army German-trained. When diplomacy failed late in 1903, the Japanese sent a squadron to attack the Russian fleet at Port Arthur early in 1904, without declaring war. The Russians were utterly unprepared: the shore batteries were incapacitated, the anti-torpedo nets were undeployed, the ships' guns were unmanned, and every one of the fleet's seven battleships was lit up gaily, making them easy targets. The Japanese sank two battleships and several smaller vessels, and then withdrew offshore to blockade the port for the remainder of the two-year conflict.

The Japanese Army occupied Korea, laid siege to Port Arthur, and advanced toward the Trans-Siberian Railway at Mukden. The tsar's government hastened to bolster its eastern forces via the Trans Siberian Railway and dispatched to the Pacific its Baltic fleet, a hapless assembly of mismatched and obsolete vessels. Off the coast of Great Britain, it mistook some English trawlers for Japanese torpedo boats and opened fire. Another component of the fleet, separated by fog, fired back, killing three Britons and two Russians (but no Japanese). Later, the same squadron accidentally cut the telegraph cable linking Africa and Europe.

By the time the Russian ships arrived off the coast of Japan in May 1905, the Japanese had taken Port Arthur and pushed back a Russian army at Mukden. Russia's last hope for glory was dashed on May 14 with the most one-sided naval engagement of modern times. The Russians lost eight battleships, three cruisers, and nine lesser ships, while the Japanese lost only three torpedo boats. Knowing that the larger nation could eventually overwhelm them, however, the Japanese agreed to a peace treaty mediated by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, which put Korea firmly within Japan's sway. Russian public opinion had at first supported the war with campaigns to send clothing and medicine to the war theater, but the regime discouraged this out of fear that any popular expressions of feeling might turn into resentment over the war's outcome among the educated and peasants alike. The short but inglorious conflict had the reverse effect of what the government had hoped: it focused public dissatisfaction rather than distracted it.

There was much to be dissatisfied about. By 1905 Russia had experienced the most rapid industrialization of any European country after starting from the most primitive condition of all. The human fuel for growth—the new industrial working class—endured immense suffering against which, by 1905, it was more than ready to rebel. Early on, industrialization had been delayed by serfdom. When emancipation freed the serfs, they flooded into the cities to man the factories. Russia's population doubled between 1850 and 1900, and while many remained on the land, the cities grew exponentially. Where there had been only 3.25 million industrial workers in 1861—less than five percent of the population—their numbers doubled by 1890 and redoubled by 1900. Much of this was concentrated in St. Petersburg where factories sprang up to make railway cars, engines, and rails; the new iron dreadnoughts for the imperial navy; and cotton to clothe the Russian people. Proliferating smokestacks cast a pall over the sky that was a noxious mix of orange, black, green, and yellow smoke.

The Emperor Mutsuhito, inset, embarked on a program of westernization and modernization in Japan, which saw its military strength increase to the point where its navy handily defeated Nicholas's fleet in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904. The contemporary print below shows a line of Japanese battleships, on the right, firing on a line of Russian battleships on the left, in the surprise naval assault at Port Arthur (today part of the Chinese port city of Dalian).



GROWTH OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA FROM 1850 TO RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 1917



Inside those factories men, women, and children labored for subsistence wages, less than half those of their counterparts in Britain or America—fifteen to forty-five cents a day for men, eight cents for children. The wages were paid sporadically and at the whim of the owner. In fact, a worker could not support a family on his own earnings. Only if his wife and children worked as well could the family sustain itself. Children labored for a “shortened” work day of twelve hours and some factory owners petitioned that their hours be extended. When child labor was banned, the ban was widely flouted. Children were useful for their nimble hands and fingers and small size, which enabled them to crawl under and reach into machines to clear them of obstructions, a dangerous task. Owners posted signs advising: “In the event of an accident, the owner and directory of the factory assume no responsibility.” Worker negligence, not working conditions, was to blame.

Workers were expected to clean their machines on their own time, and were fined for absence for any reason, as well as for drunkenness or “for assembling several people together in a single group.” Women routinely delivered babies beside their machines to avoid a fine. One factory owner bragged of the nursery for his female workers, which turned out to be a row of planks on which babies were laid in rows of five. Three of every ten babies did not survive. A law requiring employers of more than one hundred workers to provide them an infirmary was ignored. Observed one contemporary: “Those unfortunate enough to be sick do little else but lie on their rank cots in the barracks and wait for fate to decide if they would live or die.” One four-year-old in Moscow fell into the latrine during a shift change. No one came to his aid until his father was notified. By the time he arrived, a half hour later, and plunged immediately into the muck, his son was dead.

Living conditions were, for many, worse than working conditions. Many lived in barracks provided by the owners. These offered little more than wooden planks to keep sleepers off the dirt or concrete. But this was preferable to crushing into existing housing in St. Petersburg and Moscow where rooms routinely housed a dozen people, on occasion far more. An observer in the 1880s said, “These rooms are filthy and the walls and ceilings are thick with soot. Two rows of cots line each room and two men are obliged to sleep in each one.”

Yet these were the lucky ones; they had jobs. Others existed by begging, theft, and prostitution, while dwelling in the tens of thousands in the St. Petersburg’s cellars. In Alexander Kuprin’s novel *Yama: The Pit* (1909–1915) he puts these words into one prostitute’s mouth: “Look at me. What am I anyway? Some sort of universal spittoon, a cesspit... Think of the thousands and thousands of men who’ve taken me, pawed me, panted and grunted like pigs... Ach, how I detest them all.” The denizens of this netherworld lived in the cellars: always damp but sometimes flooded to a depth of four feet. Everywhere was human excrement. There was no plumbing for these makeshift dwellings, and landlords took no responsibility for removal of waste. In 1869 one public official estimated there was more than thirty thousand tons of raw sewage lying unattended in the capital. With both industrial and human waste being poured into the same rivers that provided drinking and cooking water, it was small wonder that St. Petersburg had the highest mortality rate of any major city in Europe. Its rate of typhus infection was eight times that of Moscow and thirteen times that of Warsaw. Cholera, syphilis, and tuberculosis all took their toll.

The cumulative impact of working and living conditions was that half the workers were dead by age forty-five. Among children raised in these conditions, the anecdotal evidence suggests one in five was lucky to survive. Fully seven thousand

Peasants gather coal at an abandoned mine in this 1894 painting by Nikolai Alekseyevich Kasatkin. Living and working conditions in Russia by the turn of the century were such that half the labor force was dead by age forty-five.





These Russian laborers, pictured in a late nineteenth-century photograph, are being fed kassha, a gruel made of buckwheat, cabbage, and fish. The church was so paralyzed by its bureaucratic leadership that it could do little to alleviate the material suffering of the people, a situation that helped provide an opening for the Marxists.

young children were abandoned by their parents in St. Petersburg during the 1870s. By the 1890s public and church schools and efforts by the educated classes had expanded literacy to six in ten factory workers, and from these had emerged a working-class elite who, while not ready for confrontation, were certainly able to imagine a better life. Though government censorship suppressed political ideas, even adventure books lifted the mind out of the hand-to-mouth existence most workers endured. “Books taught me to think,” one worker said. Moreover, the pressure was on. Just as scholars of the French Revolution can link individual explosions of popular violence to upward shifts in the retail price of flour, for the Russian worker, the cost of such consumer essentials as bread, meat, fish, and kerosene doubled between 1890 and 1900 while wages rose by barely twenty percent.

Contemplating such conditions, any Christian could be forgiven for wondering, “Where was the church when all this was going on?” The answer would be that the church was so paralyzed by its bureaucratic leadership that it could do little for the material suffering of the people. The Russian Orthodox Church at the turn of the

twentieth century comprised nearly eighty-four million members out of the one hundred and twenty-five million subjects of the Russian Empire, ministered to by forty-six thousand priests, sixty thousand lesser deacons and “psalmists,” sixteen thousand monks, and forty-one thousand nuns.

This vast network had been deliberately tailored to mirror the civil authority: It was bureaucratic, stymied by requirements for paperwork and by a top-down leadership style enforced by the promise of advancement and the fear of punishment. As with the secular authority, the tsar was at the very top and the whole organization was devoted to keeping him there. Just as every soldier swore “by Almighty God” to “bravely” defend “his Imperial Majesty and Emperor and autocrat,” so the priest of every church in Russia uttered the curse (at least until 1869), “Anathema, anathema, anathema” against anyone who disputed that the tsar ruled by divine right. In 1902 came the latest mandate from the Holy Synod to preach against “peasant uprisings” and “the evil minded who urge them to disobey the authorities established by the tsar.” And to cement the identification of church with autocracy, every imperial proclamation reached the peasantry from the priest’s mouth in the village church. Parish priests since the time of Peter the Great were required to violate the confidentiality of confession when they learned thereby of treasonous plots.



Before the Confession by Aleksei Ivanovich Korzhukin depicts an upper middle-class Russian family in an Orthodox church. Priests were bound to curse anyone who spoke against the tsar, and were required to violate the confidentiality of confession if they suspected treasonous plots.

The tsar had final pick over senior church appointments. While he never interfered in doctrinal issues directly, he could revoke the punishment of those convicted of heresy. When the Holy Synod excommunicated the great novelist Leo Tolstoy in 1901, Nicholas stiffly informed the Holy Synod he expected to be consulted the next time. However, it was through the synod and its over-procurator that the tsar exercised his authority over the whole church. Synod members who voiced positions contrary to the over-procurator were removed from the synod and even transferred from their bishoprics. For the last decades of the nineteenth century, the over-procurator was the tyrannical Pobedonostsev, who readily resorted to censorship, exile, and imprisonment to protect Orthodoxy and Autocracy. The tsar and Holy Synod both followed his views, but those outside the church hated him and the church alike.

As with the national church, so with each diocese. Actual power rested with a professional bureaucracy appointed by the Holy Synod. In a Russian bureaucrat’s five-hour working day, each consistory might vote on seventy-five matters laid before it; in a year it might decide—or decide to postpone—twenty thousand matters. Under such circumstances, just as with the Holy Synod, the senior civil servant became the de facto master. To reinforce this, bishops were moved from diocese to diocese every few years by the Holy Synod, ensuring they would never attain familiarity with their responsibility equal to that of their secretaries, who were laymen. Decision making in this system, as in the civil bureaucracy, tended to be passed upward, making for prolonged delays for the most mundane matters.

Even so, as the Orthodox Church groaned under its own form of serfdom during the nineteenth century, there nonetheless was considerable spiritual and theological activity, signs



Russia’s most eminent author, Leo Tolstoy, is shown here in 1907 with his wife, Sophia, in a painting by Ilya Efimovich Repin. During the missionary movement in the late eighteenth century a number of prominent atheists and revolutionaries were brought back to the faith. By one account they included Tolstoy, who was once Orthodoxy’s greatest critic.

The firing squad that failed to fire

One man knew the drums signaled reprieve from death, so he laughed aloud, and after years of servitude lived to become what many regard as Christendom's greatest novelist

The scene: central St. Petersburg. The time: early morning, December 20, 1849. In the biting cold, a procession of small carriages clip-clops single file through the deserted streets, then stops. Out of each step two figures, a guard and his prisoner. Sparsely clothed and shivering, the score or so of prisoners stare about them. They are in Semenovskiy Square, they realize, but there is something strange about it. A frame scaffolding has been erected, some twenty feet high, draped in black. Worse still, as their guards push them roughly onto it, they are aghast to see in the square below a line of soldiers with muskets at the ready.

So this is their sentence—death by firing squad! Each prisoner suddenly realizes that he has only minutes to live. As the first three are pushed down the steps, tied to stakes, and blindfolded, the rest tremble with cold and fear. The soldiers raise their weapons. The drums roll—and one doomed man breaks into laughter. A soldier himself, he recognizes that drum roll as the signal for retreat.

Abruptly, the muskets are lowered. “You have been reprieved,” an officer announces. “You are sentenced to hard labor. This was to be a lesson to you!”

The “lesson” caused one prisoner to collapse, babbling and berserk, destined to remain so for life, but another reacted very differently. “I cannot tell when I was ever as happy as on that day,” he would recount to his wife years later. “I walked up and down my cell, sang at the top of my voice, so happy was I being given back my life. I still have my heart and the same flesh and blood, desire and remember, and that, after all, is also life. One *sees* the sun.”

This man was Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, whom many regard as one of the world's greatest Christian novelists. For the next four years he would endure the miseries of a Siberian labor camp: “in winter, indescribable cold...filth on the floors an inch thick...packed in like herrings in a barrel...impossible not to behave like pigs...fleas, lice, black beetles by the bushel.” But there were other memories too, such as the titled women who followed their convict husbands into Siberia to spend years, often a lifetime, ministering to the prisoners, many of whom (such as Dostoyevsky and their husbands) had been sentenced for too volubly criticizing the government.

The Siberian experience wrought a convulsive change in the soul of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, formerly a brash, arrogant young man, boastful and self-absorbed, a nominal Christian, yes, but not quite ready to ground his life in his faith. The second of seven children of a Ukraine-born medical doctor—a severe father and devout Christian who worked at a Moscow hospital for the poor and the criminally insane—Fyodor was sent to a boarding school, then on to study mathematics at a St. Petersburg engineering institute, but much preferred reading Shakespeare, Pascal, and Victor Hugo. Upon graduation he was commissioned in the army and spent much of his service time translating French plays into Russian. In 1846 he left the army and published his first short novel, to instant acclaim, which so thoroughly inflated his ego that his second novel failed dismally. Dostoyevsky subsequently became involved with the Petrashevskiy Circle, a group of socialists regarded as subversive by the secret police. After they infiltrated it, the scene in Semenovskiy Square soon followed, with the dispatch of its leaders to Siberia.

There he encountered two further horrors surpassing even the ordinarily dreadful conditions of a Siberian prisoner. One was the satanic Major Krivtsov, who in drunken rages delighted in liberal use of the lash, which Dostoyevsky feared he would be unable to withstand. Equally fear-inspiring were the serf pris-

oners, who vented upon him their virulent hatred of the “gentle” classes. “Monsters in their misery,” he called them. Biographer Joseph Frank (*Dostoyevsky: A Writer in His Time*, 2010) describes the consequence:

“Dostoyevsky’s previous sympathetic attitude towards the peasants in the role of benefactor had now been replaced by a loathing of everything around him, but most of all of his fellow prisoners.” One becomes himself “as unjust, malignant, vile” as they, Dostoyevsky would later write.

Yet in the midst of this agony and anger, he suddenly experienced a transformation as undeniable as it is incredible. It seems connected to a childhood memory of a peasant on his father’s small estate, who had saved him from a wolf. It was likely an imaginary wolf, he thought, though real ones were plentiful in that place and time, but it was the tender care and protection of the rough peasant for a little boy that rose from his memory. Might these frightful human creatures now around him retain such instincts even yet?

And might God perhaps enable him, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, to become someone who could inspire good in people, rather than evil? It appears from all accounts that almost overnight Dostoyevsky did indeed become a different person. Not just a better person, but *another* person, for the man who emerged from that cesspool of evil would produce over the next twenty-five years literary works capable of inspiring much the same change in hundreds of thousands of others.

Released from prison in 1854, he had to serve five more years in the army. After this, his novels and novellas appeared steadily: in 1862, the *House of the Dead* about his prison experiences; in 1866, the psychological masterpiece *Crime and Punishment*; in 1869, *The Idiot*; and in 1880 what most regard as his greatest achievement, *The Brothers Karamazov*. In all, he published fifteen novels and novellas, seventeen short stories, and four non-fiction collections.

His influence would run deep into the twentieth-century English-speaking world. James Joyce and Virginia Wolfe praised his prose. Ernest Hemingway acknowledged him as a significant influence. Sigmund Freud called *The Brothers Karamazov* one of the world’s three greatest literary works. The German-American poet and philosopher Walter Kaufmann called *Notes from Underground* (1864) “the best overture to existentialism ever written.”

Not that Dostoyevsky’s latter years, despite all the acclaim, were joyous. In 1857 he married Mariya Dmitrievna Isayeva, the widow of a friend, a union so happy that he never fully recovered after her death seven years later. In 1867 he married his stenographer, Anna Grigorievna Snitkina, who survived him, but his later life was shadowed by serious financial trouble, partly due to business losses, partly to the debts of a dead brother for whose children he assumed responsibility, and partly to the epilepsy that had plagued him most of his life. Compulsive gambling made things much worse. He died in February 1881, at the age of fifty-nine.¹

While the works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky are highly esteemed throughout the literary world, he has a special

place in the minds and hearts of the Slavic peoples. After Siberia, he sharply rejected the philosophical positivism of the modern West in favor of the Orthodox Christian understanding of the spiritual life. He became in fact a central inspiration for the brief renaissance of Russian Orthodoxy that in the generation that followed him would rise on the eve of the Bolshevik convulsion.

This renaissance began prior to the 1905 revolution with a symposium of the intelligentsia and senior clergy held in St. Petersburg. It produced an assortment of spiritually-centered political ideas, which sought to apply the principles of Christ to the horrendous social problems created by industrialization. These were published under the title *Problems of Idealism*. Much the same group reappeared after the 1905 revolution with the publication of a collection of essays entitled *Vekhi* (*Signposts*). Prominent among these participants were converts to Christianity, most of them Orthodox and some Baptists, who had emerged from the Marxist movement and denounced it.

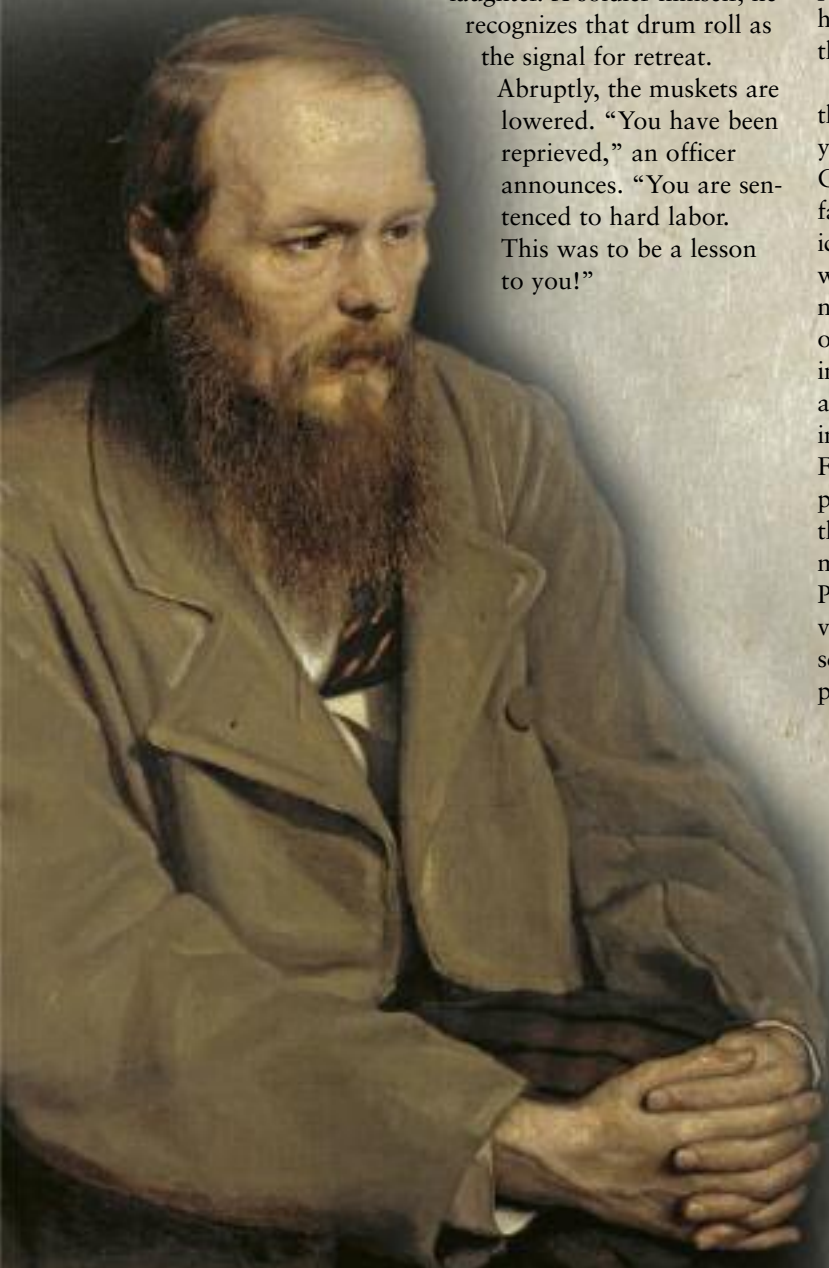
One of them put it very plainly: “The weakness of socialism is that it is a blasphemous perversion of the kingdom of God, stolen in the name of the kingdom of man.” Social conditions, however appalling, could be resolved only by changes in the hearts of men, and Christ alone could do this. To attempt Revolutionary change without God would assuredly result in disaster.

The name of this prophet was Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov, who, with one hundred sixty other members of the intelligentsia, was expelled from Russia as soon as the Bolsheviks took over. In Paris, they established a school that continued to develop their ideas and would survive Russia’s Marxist slave state, reemerging to influence Orthodoxy in the late twentieth century. As declared in the prologue to St. John’s Gospel, the light was to shine in the darkness and the darkness could not put it out. ■

1. Russia’s other great nineteenth-century novelist, Leo Tolstoy, outlived Dostoyevsky by twenty-nine years. Although their admiration for one another reportedly was profound, they never did meet, but Tolstoy wept when he heard that Dostoyevsky was dead. A copy of *The Brothers Karamazov* was found on the nightstand beside Tolstoy’s deathbed.

The Orthodox philosopher Sergei Bulgakov, shown here in a 1917 painting by Sergei Nesterov, was among the 160 members of the intelligentsia and clergy expelled from Russia when the Bolsheviks took over. A former Marxist, Bulgakov and his exiled colleagues established a school that continued to develop their ideas and would survive Russia’s Marxist slave state, reemerging to influence Orthodoxy in the late twentieth century.

*Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, portrayed here in an 1872 painting by Vasily Perov, might not have become the great novelist he was had he not spent four horrendous years as a political prisoner in a Siberian labor camp. The experience transformed him from a brash and arrogant young man into the empathetic Christian capable of such triumphs as *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.*





The charitable works of St. John of Kronstadt, photographed here with his family in 1898, targeted the industrial poor and apostates. Also a mystic, who experienced ecstatic visions whilst celebrating the Divine Liturgy, John encouraged thousands in the use of the “Jesus Prayer.”

Russia. Among the diocesan clergy, the charitable works of St. John of Kronstadt (1829–1908) for the industrial poor and for people who had abandoned Christianity, attracted great attention, as did his spiritual writings. He was also a mystic who had ecstatic visions while celebrating the Divine Liturgy and he encouraged thousands in the use of the “Jesus Prayer.”⁷

Notable too were the diligent nineteenth-century missionary endeavors of the Orthodox Church across Siberia and the Bering Strait to Alaska and the northwest coast of North America, borne by a Christian fervor much at odds with the bureaucratic paralysis of the Holy Synod (see subchapter, p. 119). Timothy Ware, in his history *The Orthodox Church*, tells how some prominent atheists and revolutionaries, such as Sergei Bulgakov and Nicholas Berdyaev, were led back to the faith. Even Tolstoy, Orthodoxy’s greatest critic, showed an inclination at the end of his life to return to Christianity. An interesting book in which the American historian Vera Shevzov seeks to account for the extraordinary resurgence of the Russian church after the fall of the Soviet system in the late twentieth century (*Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*, 2004) details an intense lay activity in the church just before the Bolshevik blow fell. Such signs have led historians such as Anton Kartashev to describe the Synodic period as the church’s “subjugation”—yet one in which “she grew, she spread and she flourished.”



Georgii Plekhanov



Alexis Komiaikov

But such flickers of light assume prominence only in contrast to the great, dark storm forming on the horizon. The revolutionary cataclysm would be led by the intelligentsia—the professional class of lawyers, doctors, and academics and the disaffected nobility. This was a group that had not only abandoned Orthodoxy; it was openly and firmly hostile to it because of Orthodoxy’s alliance with the autocracy. Its participants had become radicalized in their university days in the 1870s when,

of a surge in lay interest and of a new spirit of independence, expressing itself in a call to shake off the synod’s control. Led by the Slavophile Alexis Khomiakov (1804–1860), Orthodox thinkers developed a native theology that was free of Western and Catholic influences, which were deemed too “rationalist.” A school of spiritual leaders and counselors grew up at the remote monastery of Optino that included the monks Marcarius, Leonid, and Ambrose. Such men drew spiritual searchers, including prominent literary figures, from all over

in their disappointment with Alexander II’s reforms, they turned to the socialistic ideas of Western Europe. In the mid-1870s, they took their ideas to the peasants, visiting hundreds of villages across European Russia in hope of igniting the masses with revolutionary fervor. Guided by the “scientific socialism” of Georgii Plekhanov, they believed Russia’s peasants already lived in a kind of primitive socialism. They were completely rebuffed. “Scientific socialism,” grieved one, “bounces off the Russian masses like a pea off the wall.” Betrayed by the peasantry, the radicals resorted to assassination. But this incited not revolution but revulsion and patriotic support for the White Terror—the counterterrorist police state.

There were reform-minded men among the junior parish clergy, including one priest who accused the tsar of “drinking the blood” of the peasants. Liberal church publications gradually gained courage. They condemned the death penalty and state brutality against protesters and Jews, and they denounced authoritarian behavior by bishops. Antonii, archbishop of St. Petersburg, was himself suspected of liberal views, and certainly “harbored” pro-worker priests such as Father Georgii Gapon, who established labor organizations while also informing the secret police. Antonii flatly refused to endorse the arch-conservative Union of the Russian People, declaring them terrorists no better than the bomb-throwing leftists.

Such positions won the gratitude of many liberals but drew only the scorn of the entrenched extremists in busy exile in Paris and in Switzerland. Men like Plekhanov were newly inspired by the writings of Karl Marx, who argued convincingly that true socialism could only arise from a revolution of industrial workers, not peasants. St. Petersburg’s workers had already begun to organize. Now the exiles reached out to them with Marxist certainties and direction. Vladimir Ilych Ulianov (who later renamed himself Lenin) and Julius Martov were among the first to respond. In 1893 they formed the Union of Struggle for the Liberation of



Vladimir Lenin (otherwise Vladimir Ilych Ulianov), pictured above left in 1918, and his comrade Julius Martov (otherwise Yuly Tserdobaum), were among the first to heed the call of the Marxists who urged a revolution of industrial workers in St. Petersburg in 1905. This began with strikes for better wages and working conditions, and actions like the overturning of a locomotive at the main railway depot at Tiflis (depicted below).



the Working Class and led the St. Petersburg workers to strike for better wages and working conditions. According to their theory it did not matter whether the workers got what they wanted. The point of the strikes was to radicalize and unite the proletariat against the government and the capitalists.

The government countered by creating, sometimes secretly, its own worker organizations in a strategy called “police socialism.” At the same time it suborned individual radical leaders or planted its own agents within the unions while periodically jailing key agitators. Thus Lenin and Martov were both imprisoned and then exiled. However, when the working class began to rise in revolt, it was Father Gapon who briefly stood at the center of the action. A popular Ukrainian cleric who found he had a gift of eloquence, he was paid by the secret police to organize “tame” labor organizations. However in January 1905, he persuaded the striking workers at St. Petersburg’s Putilov factory to escalate their activity into a general march on the Winter Palace that was anything but tame. Before the march took place, an outdoor religious service involving the tsar caused panic when soldiers who were saluting him accidentally fired live rounds over the heads of the crowd.

Only a few days later, the soldiers would aim lower. Gapon assembled a huge crowd of thirty thousand workers, wives, and children for the march, and instructed them to bring no weapons. They would carry icons only, sing hymns, and present the tsar with a petition calling for universal suffrage, an eight-hour work day, and an end to the war with Japan. But Father Gapon also planted a revolutionary notion with the marchers. “Suppose the tsar will not receive us and will not read our petition?” he asked everywhere he went in the days before the march. “Then we have no tsar,” came the repeated response.

The army, twelve thousand strong, moved into St. Petersburg and was provided with live ammunition. The tsar fled the city with his family. Under orders, the soldiers fired on the marchers several times, killing more than one hundred and fifty men, women, and children, and wounding more than four hundred and fifty. The shocked marchers retreated. But a few days later Father Gapon was answering his own question with the declaration, “There is no tsar.” Soon he fled to Switzerland and joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party. A year later, his comrades discovered his ongoing correspondence with the secret police and executed him.

St. Petersburg, meanwhile, remained a city under occupation. The death squad of the Socialist Revolutionary Party assassinated two successive military governors of Moscow, one a grand duke, and would kill hundreds more in the next years. Other parties provoking the

workers were the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, who pushed for a worker-led socialist revolution, and Martov’s Mensheviks, who wanted the middle class aligned with the workers to create a more liberal democracy. Leon Trotsky was another leader who shifted between the factions, attempting reconciliation. In the first nine months of 1905, they led more than one million workers in sixteen hundred strikes, unleashing a movement they could not control.

Lenin and Trotsky were out of Russia when the 1905 revolution began. The war with Japan was over, the tsar had permitted a parliament, or Duma, to be created, and the anger seemed to be abating. Then a walkout on the Trans-Siberian Railway in October turned spontaneously into a general strike involving millions of workers, even the entire corps de ballet of the Imperial Mariinskii Theater, essentially shutting down Russia’s cities. While most of the tsar’s cabinet were paralyzed by these events, one man saw the road that must be taken. Count Sergei Witte, who alone had opposed war with Japan and who had then negotiated the peace treaty, now gave the tsar two options: suppress the strikers with much bloodshed, followed in a few months by yet more suppression, or create, at long last, a real parliament with the power to ratify laws, elected on a wide mandate. The tsar took the second. The resulting October Manifesto, written by Witte and issued by the tsar,



Count Sergei Witte, above left, one of Tsar Nicholas’s chief ministers, urged him to create a real Duma (parliament) with a wide mandate. The first Duma was elected in 1906 with Peter Stolypin (right) as prime minister. But his plan, to emancipate the peasants and thus give them a stake in the regime, was defeated by the revolutionaries who dominated the Duma.

Gapon gathered a crowd of thirty thousand workers, wives and children for the march, and told them to bring no weapons. They would carry icons and sing hymns.

drew support from the middle class and moderate workers, splitting the forces of revolution as Witte had intended. Those still committed to complete overthrow of the tsar armed themselves and took to the streets. So did gangs of counterrevolutionaries called the Black Hundreds. Each attacked their opponents with beatings and assassinations.

Russian military units then arrested several hundred members of the workers’ council in St. Petersburg, and when they met with resistance from a similar body in Moscow, they bombarded it for several days and then picked off the survivors. The tsar unleashed the same draconian tactics in the countryside to put down gangs of lawless peasants. Special army units attacked anyone they found—men, women, and children. The revolution was over, but so was the fond notion of the tsar as “the little father.”

To fulfill the October Manifesto, a general election was held in 1906, which produced Russia’s first Duma in June. Its short life was characterized by an utter unfamiliarity with the art of compromise. Both the tsar’s cabinet and the elected representatives staked out extreme positions and refused to budge. Nicholas, reluctant to admit that the October Manifesto meant he was no longer an absolute ruler, dissolved the Duma after a month.

Father Georgii Apollonievich Gapon (inset) was a popular Ukrainian cleric who, while simultaneously employed by the Okhrana, persuaded striking workers to lead a march on the tsar’s Winter Palace in January of 1905. Tsar Nicholas II had fled with his family to an outlying residence, when an unarmed crowd of thirty thousand gathered before the palace where they were fired upon by imperial troops—an event that killed one hundred fifty and is portrayed below in Vladimir Egorovic’s contemporary painting, Death in the Snow.



But that same day, he made the uncharacteristically wise selection of Peter Stolypin as prime minister. It was Stolypin's astute plan to complete the emancipation of the peasants, by allowing the ambitious to buy up not only the common property but government land freed for that purpose. His object was to create a peasant middle class, the kulaks, who would have a strong stake in the regime. But the second Duma, convened in February 1907, would not approve such a reasonable and moderate scheme. The revolutionaries who had boycotted the first election participated in the second, and dominated the new Duma. After a few months, the tsar dissolved it too, and Stolypin set about revising the franchise to give more voting power to the middle class. The third Duma was more agreeable, and with a coalition of the right and center, Stolypin was able to create the kulak class and abundantly enhance the productive power of Russian agriculture—so abundantly, writes American historian Bruce Lincoln in *The Romanovs: Autocrats of All the Russias* (1991), that the much more populous Soviet Union would not surpass until 1960.

Among the third Duma's reforms was an expansion of civil liberties, including

religious freedom for Protestants and other dissenters such as Old Believers and Doukhobors. The leading bishops of the Orthodox Church thereupon pressed the tsar for freedom from the Holy Synod, which itself had been calling for a *sobor*, or council, of the whole church to discuss reform. The tsar agreed in principle but put off the event until the very eve of the 1917 revolution. In the meantime, several young and radical priests were elected to the Duma, whose attacks on the tsar and his regime unnerved the Holy Synod.

As for the royal family, they were so alarmed by the abortive 1905 revolution

that they retreated from St. Petersburg to a life of sedate wealth, migrating among various country palaces and royal yachts in fear of assassination. On a rare appearance at the ballet in St. Petersburg, the tsar and several of his children were only a floor above Stolypin when the prime minister was fatally shot by a revolutionary (who was also a police spy). The wounded minister fell back, and, seeing the tsar in the royal box above him, made the sign of the cross before collapsing.

While the royal family absented itself, the capital sank into a fatalistic expectancy, as the upper classes diverted the dread of revolution with assorted debaucheries, including sadomasochism and homosexuality, in a period they termed collectively "the Silver Age." Their isolation at their country palace at Tsarskoe Selo did not shield the royal family from this decadence. They embraced it in the person of the profligate "mad monk" Grigorii Rasputin. Born in the Siberian village of Pokrovskoe, this bizarre figure fell under the influence of a sect of *Khlysty*, or flagellants, and preached as they did that people should commit plenty of sins, especially sexual ones, to occasion Christ's forgiveness.

Rasputin won over clergymen too, but his special targets were women, who found his hypnotic gaze irresistible. Bishops, persuaded of his healing powers, brought him to the capital in 1903. By 1905 he had wholly ingratiated himself with the tsar and tsarina. There is no convincing evidence Alexandra acted unchastely with him. His hold over her was through her son Alexei, whose hemophilic bleeding only Rasputin seemed able to stop. She quickly concluded that he was sent by God to bless her family. Despite his lecheries that scandalized the capital, he would retain his hold on the royal family for eleven years.

Tsar Nicholas, shown here in a 1916 photo with Tsarevitch Alexei, a hemophiliac, was so unnerved by the 1905 revolution that he withdrew with his family from St. Petersburg to a life of sedate wealth in various residences including the 1,066-foot-long Catherine Palace, pictured below, in Tsarskoe Selo, fifteen miles south of the capital.



Tsarina Alexandra of Russia is pictured below with her four beautiful daughters, (from left) Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia. In the 1917 revolution, along with the tsar and tsarevitch, they were shot and killed by the Bolsheviks.





The "mad monk" Grigori Rasputin is pictured above at his St. Petersburg apartment in 1914 with an entourage of mostly female admirers, and below in a 1915 cartoon where he is depicted as a sinister puppeteer controlling Nicholas and Alexandra.

Many tried to remove Rasputin, but were thwarted by the court. Antonii, the bishop of Rasputin's home diocese of Tobolsk, was stopped from bringing criminal charges against him by the threat of banishment combined with the promise of promotion. He chose the latter. Others were more persistent, including Prime Minister Stolypin, but even he was rebuffed by the tsar. When Stolypin was murdered, the tsarina declared it an act of divine justice. Gossipers were able to credibly claim Rasputin's hold over the royal family to be sexual, because the tsarevich's hemophilia was kept secret.

Much of the concern centered on the royal princesses, because Rasputin had access to their bedrooms until their governess protested. He was barred, but the governess was dismissed. The girls' letters certainly suggest an unhealthy intimacy.

Princess Olga at fourteen wrote to him as her "dear, darling, beloved friend," while her eight-year-old sister Anastasia told Rasputin she dreamed of him in her sleep. Archbishop Antonii warned the tsar his daughters were in danger, but he too was rebuffed. The criticism was nonetheless growing so intense by 1911 that Rasputin left the country for several months.

When he returned he faced a new adversary. Bishop Hermogen of Saratov publicly censured the over-procurator V. K. Sabler for appointing an illiterate peasant and Rasputin sycophant named Varnava as bishop of Tobolsk. Hermogen also took time to meet with Rasputin and pronounce anathema on him with the words: "You pose as a holy man while leading an unclean and shameful life.

I adjure you in the name of the Living God to cease troubling the Russian people." Rasputin tried to physically attack Hermogen but was restrained by onlookers. However, Rasputin again prevailed. The Holy Synod ordered Hermogen to return to his diocese. He refused to go. Instead, he leaked the affair to the press. He was thereupon confined to a monastery on the Polish border for four years.

Nevertheless, this and a host of other incidents finally persuaded Nicholas to allow the removal of Rasputin to his home province for two years. On a visit to his village in 1914, the monk was accommodated by a former lover, and he soon regained the royal acquiescence for his return to the capital. However, since Crown Prince Alexei was not then suffering any bouts of hemophilia, Rasputin was not recalled to the court. The war meanwhile had begun, and in the opening month, at Tannenberg, Russia had lost a crucial battle. In 1915, the over-procurator and Rasputin protector V. K. Sabler was replaced by Alexander Samarin, who immediately announced that Rasputin must go.

The capital sank into a fatalistic expectancy. The upper classes diverted the dread of revolution with assorted debaucheries in the period known as 'the Silver Age.'

He went, but not for long. Tsarina Alexandra was soon conspiring to replace and punish Samarin. By now, she had grown profoundly obsessed, seeing a world divided in two camps. In one were those few who favored her, her family, and Rasputin. In the other, a far larger camp, was everyone else. Samarin's dismissal became assured when he took the further step of attempting to retire Bishop Varnava. It seemed the man's crude sermons had distressed the laity. Then, when Varnava attempted to unilaterally confer sainthood on a bishop who had preceded him in office, Samarin objected again. That proved fatal. Nicholas, presumably at his wife's behest, approved the beatification and sacked Samarin, replacing him with another Rasputin nominee named Volzhin. Nicholas also ordered the demotion of the archbishop of St. Petersburg, now Petrograd, and replaced him with a friend of Rasputin's.

When the tsar decided to take over direct command of the armed forces, his wife became his deputy, and Rasputin's nominees began to fill the positions in the cabinet too, even that of the crucial minister of Internal Affairs. Alexandra also passed on to her husband Rasputin's advice on the management of the war. "Our Friend begs you not to too much worry over this question of the food supply—says things will arrange themselves." (In fact, the army was starved not only for food, but ammunition and the weapons with which to shoot it.) Meanwhile, numerous and well-publicized attempts by a variety of centrist and rightist leaders and aristocrats to persuade both the tsar and tsarina to banish Rasputin failed utterly. The result was that the upper and middle classes in the capital, along with the antidemocracy reactionaries in the Duma, all came to see Rasputin and the royal family as the enemies of Russia.

Thus it was, scant months after Count Kokoftsov had laid bare his grievances before the French ambassador, that Rasputin would finally be brought down by

Prince Felix Yusupov, left with dog, was a cross-dressing relative of Nicholas who, along with Dimitri Pavlovich, top right, and Vladimir Purishkevich, bottom right, lured Rasputin to Yusupov's home with the promise of sex with the prince's wife where they planned to assassinate him.



an unlikely pair of right-wingers: Vladimir Purishkevich, leader of the archconservative Union of the Russian People, an anti-Semite and patriot, and Prince Felix Yusupov, a cross-dressing but dashing young soldier married to Nicholas's own niece. Meeting on November 21, 1916, they agreed to kill Rasputin together. On December 16, the prince used the promise of an assignation with his beautiful wife to lure Rasputin to his home, where Purishkevich and several other plotters waited. Stalling

Rasputin with the promise that the princess would soon come downstairs to meet him, Yusupov plied the mad monk with poisoned cakes. When these failed to affect him in the least, Yusupov fetched his pistol and felled his target with a single shot. But the hardy onetime peasant rose and made his escape. He was nearly at the street when Purishkevich brought him down for good with three more shots to his head and body. The conspirators dumped him in the river. When police recovered the body, they found water in the lungs, meaning that Rasputin had still been alive when thrown in the water. The assassins' identity soon became well known but they were too popular for the tsar to take action against them.

The conspirators first fed Rasputin poisoned cakes, and when these failed to kill him, Prince Yusupov felled the monk with a single shot from his pistol. But still Rasputin stumbled away, and it wasn't until Purishkevich fired several more shots into him that Rasputin finally lay still. They dumped his body into the Neva River, whence it was recovered and photographed (below) by police.

With Rasputin gone, Russian Orthodoxy would take brave steps to reform itself by calling its first council in centuries of the whole church, clerics and laity, and selecting a patriarch to lead it. But by the time that was decided, the Red Army was already in the streets of Petrograd and the future of Russian Christianity was decided. It was about to face various degrees of persecution and suffering at the hands of an implacably atheistic state for the next seventy-five years. That it would survive, which it did, evidenced the fact that something a great deal more powerful than flawed humanity must have stood strong beneath it. ■



The man who got there too late

As bureaucracy strangles Russian Orthodoxy, a spiritual fire ignites the missions, spreading eastward toward the capital, but the Bolsheviks are now in and quench it

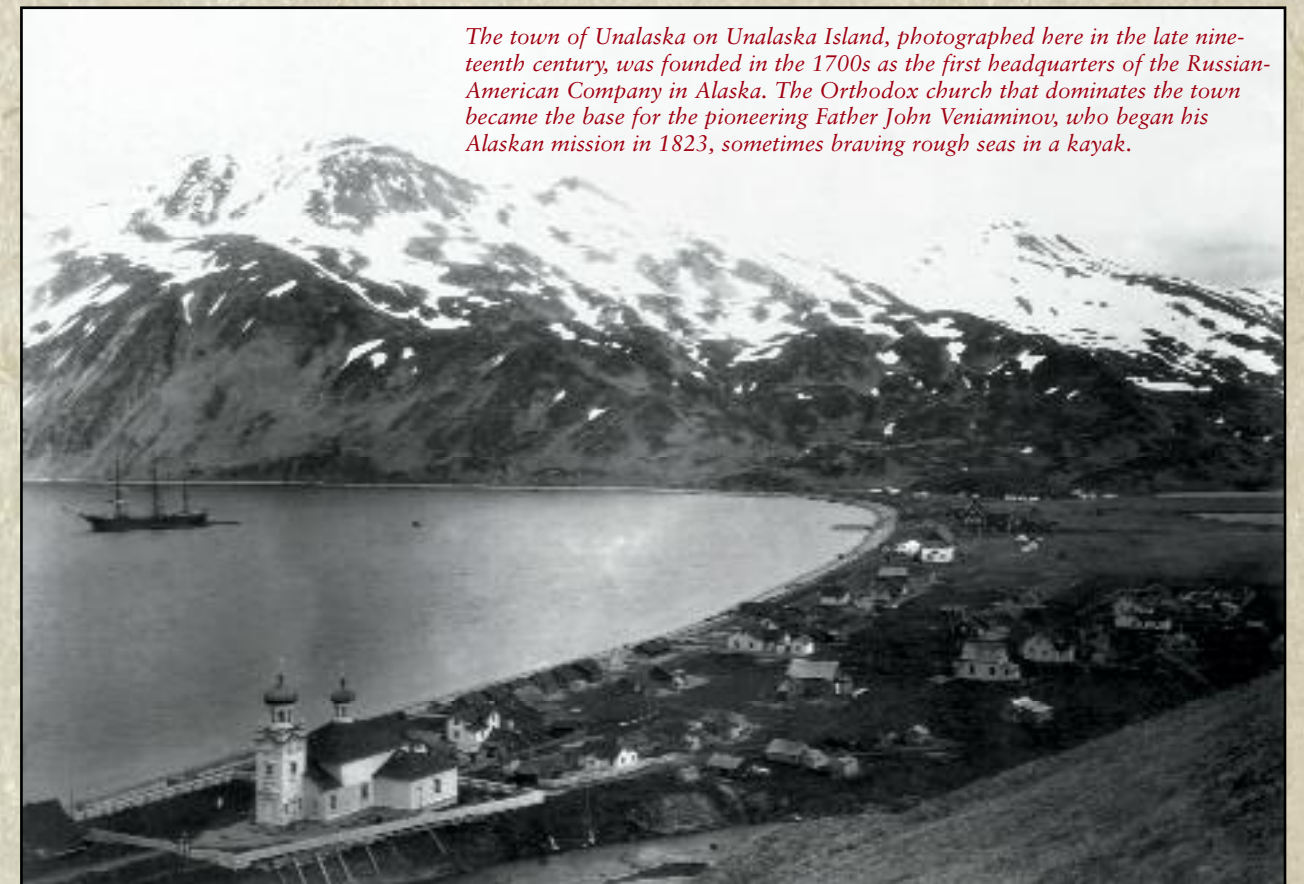
In the two hundred and seventeen years between Peter the Great's abolition of the patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church and the attempted liquidation of the church by the Soviet state, the ancient institution went through an era of unremitting spiritual disintegration as a department of the tsarist government. Yet there were some notable exceptions. Nearly half way around the world from its bureaucratic center in St. Petersburg, the distant missions of the church that reached down the Pacific coast of northwest North America experienced more than a century of astonishing evangelical fervor and growth. Thousands of the native peoples of Siberia and Alaska became Orthodox Christians and they have largely remained so to this day. At the same time, a lasting Orthodox presence was established in Japan.

Paradoxically, the movement of this Orthodox outreach did not begin in Moscow and St. Petersburg and move eastward. It began in Alaska and gradually moved westward across Siberia into Japan and across the Urals. But it reached the capital at St. Petersburg too late. As one of the foremost missionaries was being chosen to restore the patriarchate of Moscow, the Bolsheviks were already taking over. They would soon identify him as a dangerous enemy, depose him, and

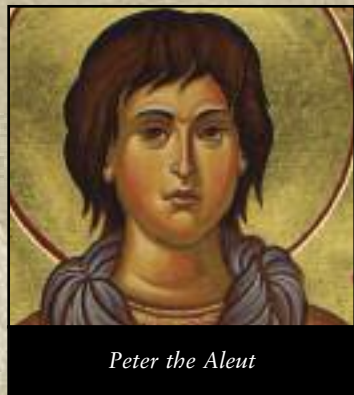
imprison him. This was St. Tikhon of Moscow, one of five men chiefly canonized for their role in the nineteenth-century Orthodox missions to the East.

The Orthodox move eastward actually predates them, however. Peter the Great in the seventeenth century and Catherine the Great in the eighteenth had sent missionaries into Siberia. But they were there to minister to Russian traders and government officials. The native peoples held little interest to them, so the missions soon became inactive, some disappearing altogether.

The change began in September 1794, when the ship *The Three Saints* landed ten Orthodox priests and monks on Kodiak Island, just off the Alaskan coast. The missionaries immediately began ministering to the natives and soon discovered that their chief problem lay in the exploitation and abuse these natives suffered at the hands of the Russian fur traders. The bearded clerics took the part of the local Aleuts whom they zealously evangelized. The traders' response was to oppose, persecute, and sometimes imprison the missionaries. Nevertheless several thousand Aleuts were baptized, and schools were opened for the native children. Misfortune, however, soon overtook the mission. Several monks died, and in 1799 a locally built schooner sank in a northern Pacific storm, drowning their new bishop and most of the rest.



The town of Unalaska on Unalaska Island, photographed here in the late nineteenth century, was founded in the 1700s as the first headquarters of the Russian-American Company in Alaska. The Orthodox church that dominates the town became the base for the pioneering Father John Veniaminov, who began his Alaskan mission in 1823, sometimes braving rough seas in a kayak.



Peter the Aleut

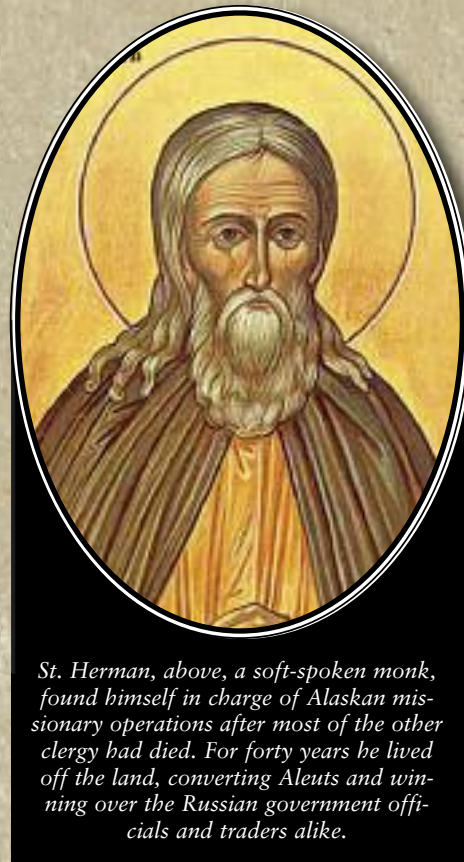
Their soft-spoken monk named Herman, one of the lay brothers, neither aspiring to leadership nor even imagining himself in such a role, as the lone missionary. He then began teaching the natives (and Russian colonists as well) by the only method he knew—his own “prayer and fasting.” As a dwelling, he dug himself a cave in the ground on tiny, wooded Spruce Island, just off the Kodiak shore, and reopened the school and an orphanage. Then, with winter coming, the local Aleuts built him a little cell near his cave—

allowing him to convert the cave into his someday grave.

For forty years, fertilizing the rocky soil with seaweed, Herman survived the summers by growing potatoes and cabbage, and gathering and drying mushrooms which he salted with seawater. Summer and winter, he wore the same deerskin smock—“for several years at a time,” says one anonymous hagiographer. He slept on a wooden bench, covered only with a wooden plank—the “blanket” with which he later asked to be buried. Yet he always had enough to feed the community’s orphans, and a little produce to sell to the traders to purchase books for his students.

Before long, he began winning over as well the Russian government officials and fur traders, so impressed had they become with his self-imposed austerities. Passersby heard him praying and singing by himself in his cave. Was he not lonely? they asked. In reply he would scold them: God is everywhere, he would say, and anyway, it was better to speak with angels than with men. When invited to dine out, he ate almost nothing and refused to sleep away from his cell. Whatever his company, Russian sailor or native trapper, he spoke only of God’s primacy.

Herman’s flock included a young Aleut, baptized Peter, who later joined a Russian trapping expedition to northern California. In mid-1815, however, the Spanish governor of California, to counter the Russian encroachment, ordered them all out of the area, and then arrested a hundred of them. In the Russian accounts, Catholic inquisitors demanded that the prisoners become Catholics on pain of death. Peter refused, replying, “I am a Christian,” and was thereupon tortured to death.¹ Later, when one of the Aleut witnesses told him the story, monk Herman is said have cried out: “Holy newly-martyred



St. Herman, above, a soft-spoken monk, found himself in charge of Alaskan missionary operations after most of the other clergy had died. For forty years he lived off the land, converting Aleuts and winning over the Russian government officials and traders alike.



Innocent of Alaska

Peter, pray to God for us.” Peter the Aleut was made an Orthodox saint as was Herman himself.

St. Herman’s little cell was the seedbed of the Orthodox Church in America. He raised a generation of lay evangelists, worshipping in Aleut, Alutiiq, Tlingit, and Yup’ik. But Herman was not a priest, and Moscow did not send one out until 1823, when the tsar demanded it, prior to renewing the Russian-American Company charter. Herman died on Kodiak Island in 1837 somewhere between seventy-

seven and eighty-four years old.

Other monks had by now arrived from Russia, prominent among them Father Ivan Veniaminov, raised in a small town in the East Siberian province of Irkutsk where his father was a church sacristan. His father died when Ivan was six, he was enrolled in a seminary at age ten, married at twenty, and was ordained a priest at twenty-four. Volunteering for the Alaska missions in 1823, he sailed with his wife, their infant son, a brother, and his aged mother. They took a year to get there, almost perishing in a storm en route, a not uncommon hazard in the Alaska missions.

When they arrived at Unalaska Island, Father Ivan learned that everyone had been instructed and baptized by laymen, no one had had their marriages blessed or confessions heard, nor had anyone received Communion. Yet his flock included an illiterate lay evangelist named Smirennikov, flawless in his teaching and, so he felt assured, well instructed by angels. To minister to his far-flung flock, Father Ivan began paddling his kayak through waters said to be some of the roughest in the world. Once he found himself thirty miles from shore in a rolling sea, bailing his kayak to stay afloat.

Up to now, the missions had been confined to the islands. He then began evangelizing Alaska’s untouched west coast, paddling the Bering Sea. Returning from one such journey, he was presented with his newborn fifth child. Then in 1834, Ivan moved his family to the town of Sitka, at that time called New Archangel. On Baranof Island on the Alaskan panhandle, he mastered six native dialects and translated the Gospels and the Liturgy into Aleut.

In 1837, Ivan was called home to report his activities

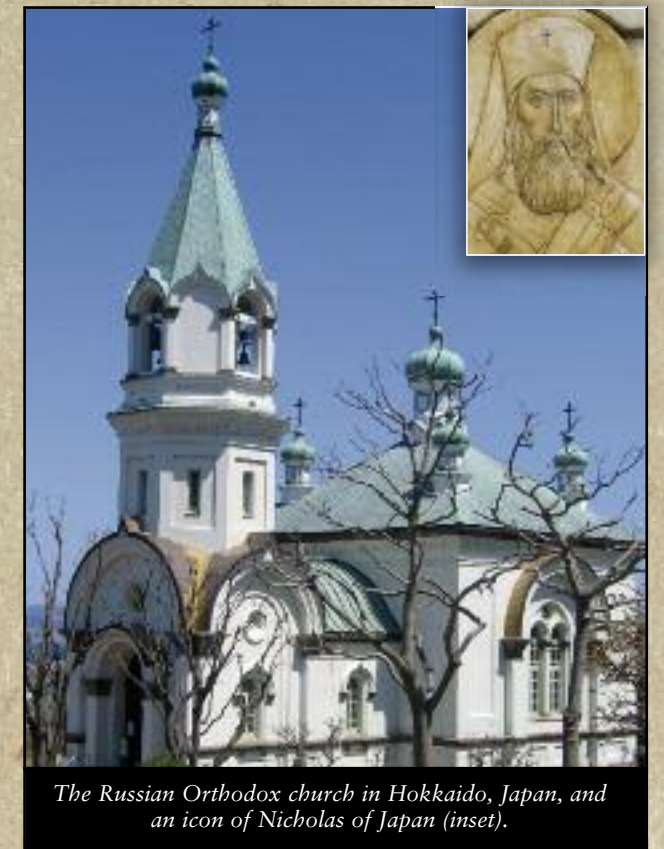
to the Holy Synod in St. Petersburg, traveling by foreign merchant vessels via Hawaii, Tahiti, Cape Horn, and Rio de Janeiro. Once home, he learned that his wife had died back on Sitka. So, after arranging for the education of his children, in 1840, he was tonsured as a celibate monk and then consecrated Bishop Innocent of Kamchatka, the Kuriles, and the Aleutians. Now a celebrity missionary, he drew huge crowds on his return trip east through Siberia, particularly in his home town of Irkutsk. The next year, a 12,500-mile round-trip tour of his diocese, by schooner, barge, cart, and mule stretched from Easter 1842 to the autumn of 1843.

At St. Petersburg, the Holy Synod made Innocent an archbishop, expanding his already vast diocese eastward to include the pagan Yakuts of Siberia. In 1853, he moved from North America into Asia to the Lena River trading settlement of Yakutsk, twelve hundred miles west of Kamchatka, and eight hundred north of the Manchurian border, half way to the Arctic Ocean. There he learned the Yakut language, translated the Gospels and Liturgy, and began the conversion of three hundred thousand Siberians. In 1857, after a treaty settled the Russian-Chinese border issue, he moved south to the Amur River and, over the next decade, baptized thousands of pagan Mongols. The distances were already staggering; yet upon learning of Alaska’s sale to the United States in 1867 Innocent could only cheer. Here was a chance to evangelize America.

Such irrepressible zeal had to attract attention, even in cynical St. Petersburg, and in 1865 Innocent was appointed to the ruling Holy Synod. This became a trend: the comfortable church hierarchy at home, as some saw it, borrowing the sanctity of its distant missionaries. Two years later, Innocent was elected metropolitan of Moscow. There, he would reform the Orthodox Mission Society, but he could do little to shake the church’s dependence on the tsar. “In general, the state church remained somnolent,” writes historian Kenneth Scott Latourette in his *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, “with strong assistance from the secular authorities.” Blind for the last decade of his life, Metropolitan Innocent died in 1879, aged eighty-two. He was later canonized as the “Enlightener of America.”

Orthodoxy, meanwhile, had looked elsewhere in Asia and launched what amounted to a one-man mission in Japan. Father Nicholas Kasatkin had come there as the chaplain to the Russian Embassy, but was personally intent on evangelization. He was stymied by the militant Japanese xenophobia, however. The Japanese, he was assured, have nothing to learn from foreigners.

But when Archbishop Innocent passed through in 1864, he offered some advice: learn to think Japanese, he said. So rather than trying to plant a Russian Orthodox Church in Japan, Nicholas devoted himself to developing a Japanese Orthodox Church, with lay Japanese teaching the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. When a patriotic samurai threatened to kill him for enfeebling Japan with his teaching, Nicholas challenged him first to learn what he taught,



The Russian Orthodox church in Hokkaido, Japan, and an icon of Nicholas of Japan (inset).

then outlined the history of salvation from the Old and New Testaments. The thoughtful samurai Sawabe became one of Nicholas’s lay evangelists. He took the name Paul after the apostle who had also begun as a persecutor of Christians.

Soon after the dawn of the twentieth century, however, Father Nicholas found himself confronted with a seemingly insurmountable and very dangerous problem. Russia and Japan went to war. The Russians now branded him a traitor, and the Japanese, a spy, but somehow, both he and his work survived. By the time of his death in 1912, St. Nicholas, the Apostle of Japan had left behind a Japanese Bible, the Liturgy in Japanese, an Orthodox seminary, several schools, almost fifty clergy serving 266 communities, and over thirty-three thousand Orthodox Japanese. Historian Richard Drummond, himself not Orthodox, calls him “the greatest missionary of the modern era,” and his fruits endure to this day.

As the Orthodox mission spirit flowed west from the Bering Sea back toward Mother Russia, the Muslim Tatars seemed to beckon. Their ancestors had spread terror through Russia for more than two centuries. Ivan the Terrible had suppressed them, and in the eighteenth century, the government had vainly tried to coerce them into becoming Christians on pain of death. Many refused. In the nineteenth century, Kazan, the ancient Tatar capital, a city of some fifty thousand, became the focus of a new Orthodox effort. The Kazan Theological Academy was reestablished in 1842, and this time, persuasion and evangelical appeal supplanted persecution.

Orthodoxy now met with abundant success. The Kazan Academy drew the foremost historians,

ethnographers, and philosophers, who translated the Gospels and Liturgy into Tatar, Mari, Udmurt, and Mordva, and published periodicals such as *The Missionary Review* and *The Missionary Anti-Muslim Collection*. It educated eighty future bishops, and spun off at least four mission organizations, a half-dozen Russian mission schools, the Central School for Christian Tatars, and the Seminary for Non-Russian Natives. By 1909, Kazan Diocese had over a million and a half practicing Orthodox, served by over a thousand clergy in almost eight hundred churches. At the turn of the twenty-first century, with a population of one million, Kazan was Russia's sixth largest city, roughly half Christian and half Muslim.

Had this mission spirit reached Moscow and St. Petersburg several decades prior to the First World War, history might have been different. As it was, one of Orthodoxy's greatest missionaries, who would become St. Tikhon of Moscow, did reach the capital, but it was just as the Bolshevik storm broke. This was Vasily Ivanovich Belavin, son of a priest in the Orthodox diocese of Pskov. From childhood onward, it was said, he displayed a particularly religious disposition. He was only thirteen years old when he began studies at the Pskov Theological Seminary in 1878. After graduating from the St. Petersburg Theological Academy and the Kholm seminary, he returned to his native diocese as an instructor at Pskov seminary. By now he was a tonsured monk, and had adopted the name Tikhon. At age thirty-two he became bishop of Lublin, then archbishop of North America with his cathedral in San Francisco.

Once in America, Tikhon found Russian immigrants crossing the Atlantic and flooding its east coast, so he built St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn and a seminary in Pennsylvania. He became an American citizen and as

archbishop traveled tirelessly—sometimes by dogsled—to parishes in Alaska, the Yukon and western Canada, Montana, and Minnesota, building his diocese from fifteen to seventy parishes, while meeting the immediate needs of Russian immigrants. Like Innocent before him, he emphasized that the task was not to create a Russian Orthodox Church in America, but a North American Orthodox Church, and he strongly urged the translation of the Orthodox Liturgy into English.

But in 1907, Tikhon was called back to the Russian Empire, to serve in Lithuania. In August 1917, he was elected the metropolitan of Moscow, just as the Russian bishops were reestablishing the Moscow Patriarchate, in effect reasserting the authority Peter the Great had usurped from the church. One of their first acts was to name Tikhon to that position.

But they were too late. Russia was already erupting in the Communist Revolution. Tikhon condemned the 1918 murder of the tsar and his family, and he protested the government's seizure of church property. So, inevitably, he was denounced as an enemy of the Marxist regime. In 1922, he was arrested, imprisoned, and deposed as patriarch by the Soviet government. The church did not acknowledge the deposition. He died three years later and was subsequently named a saint. Many consider him a martyr. In this he was not alone. He was one of twenty-eight bishops and twelve hundred priests killed by the Soviet government, a story to be recounted in the next volume. ■

1. The Russian records identify Peter's executioners as "Jesuits," a distinct improbability since the papal suppression of the Jesuits was not lifted until 1815, the year before the incident, and it's unlikely Jesuits had reached the frontier of California within that time. However, there were Catholic missions in the area



This preparatory watercolor painting by the twentieth-century Russian artist Pavel Demitrievich Korin is based on his witnessing of the intercession of Patriarch Tikhon in Moscow's Cathedral of the Dormition shortly before Tikhon's death in 1925. Senior clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church, then being vigorously suppressed by the Bolsheviks, were present. After the event Pavel decided that his magnum opus would be named *Requiem*, or *Requiem for Russia*, and would depict in oils Tikhon's intercession and show the Russia that was lost after the October 1917 revolution. Korin spent forty-two years on the preparatory work for the huge oil painting, but when he died in 1967 he had not applied a single brush stroke to the canvas. So it remained for posterity in watercolors.

The fall of the Ottoman colossus

As the sultanate sinks into insanity and squalor, the Balkan Christians rise in rebellions marked by villainy, treachery, mass murder, and success

At the close of the eighteenth century, the European Christians in the quarter-million square miles loosely known as the Balkan Peninsula had been living under the iron rule of the Muslim Ottoman Turks for more than three hundred years. Like the Arabs, their predecessors as Islam's dominant power, the Ottomans spread the faith by the sword. But where the Arabs over the centuries had eventually made Islam the religion of the majority of the population in the lands they conquered—Arabia, Persia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, North Africa and even Spain until the resident Christians, after a seven-century struggle, drove them out—the Ottoman Turks largely failed to convert the peoples they conquered. This failure became conclusive in the nineteenth century, in a series of independence movements whose history would be a narrative of butchery, villainy, assassination, betrayal, recurrent wars, mass murder, and eventual success.

One purpose alone spurred on these independence movements, namely to oust the Turks. The record of Ottoman rule in Greece, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Herzegovina, Albania, and Bulgaria, writes British historian R.W. Seton-Watson in *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans* (1917) "is one long catalogue of bloodshed and rapine... Like a vampire, the Ottoman state could only flourish by draining the life blood of its victims."

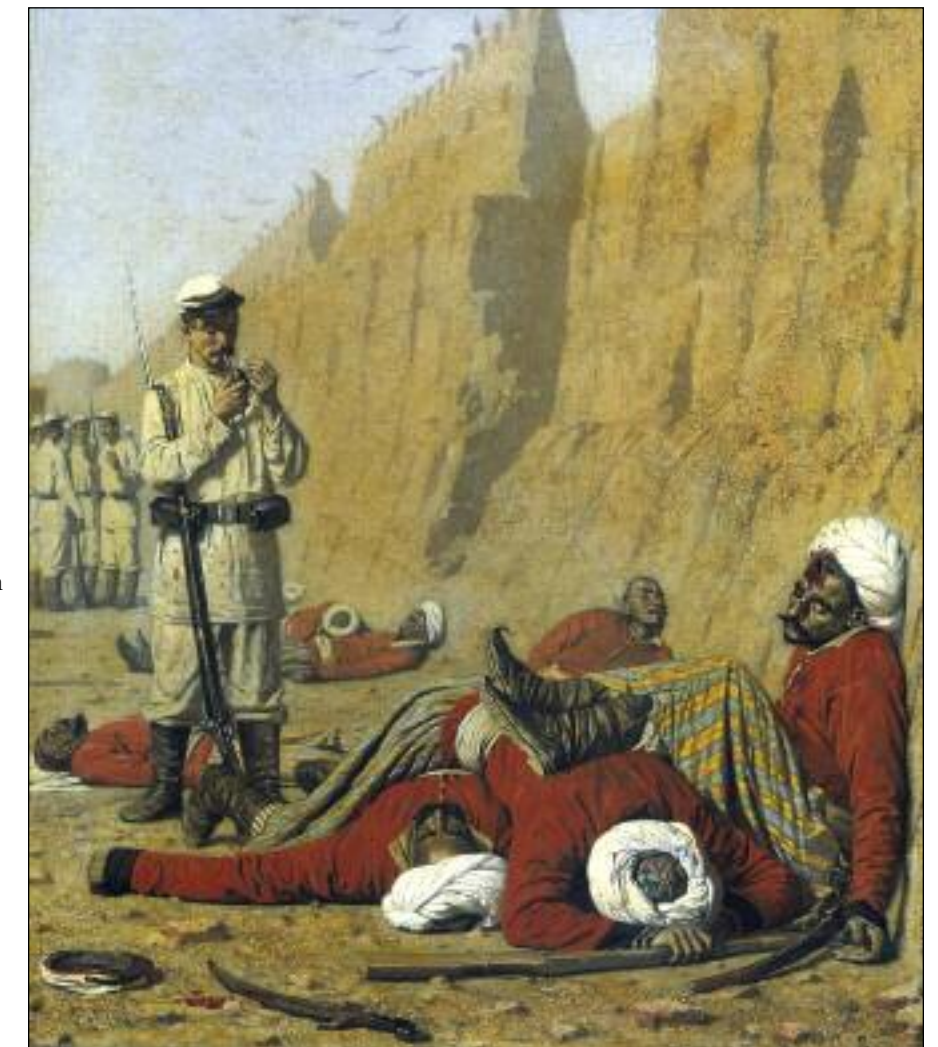
The Turks had closed most of the monasteries in the Balkans, leaving the clergy ignorant and demoralized. They had imposed degrading laws, stipulating, for instance, that a Christian who met a Muslim on the road must dismount and let the Muslim pass, or be put to death on the spot. They conscripted the strongest, healthiest boys from Christian communities, forced them to convert to Islam, put them through rigorous military training, and then sent them back to Christian lands as members of the elite Janissaries to conquer, plunder, and enforce the dread rule of the sultan.

Yet in their ultimate endeavor of making the Balkan peoples part of the *Dar al-Islam*, the universal realm of Islam, the Turks failed almost totally. The vast majority of the peoples who inhabited the Balkans remained stubbornly Christian.

Their Muslim masters distrusted them, with good reason, and thus were ready to impose drastic penalties for any hint of revolt—including the wholesale slaughter of entire communities. An end would be put to their regime early in the twentieth century, but at bitter cost to both the Turks and their Christian subjects. By no means was all the savagery on the Muslim side.

The Turkish decline had begun in the decisive summer months of 1683 when the Turks had spectacularly failed to capture Vienna (see previous volume, *We the People*, ch. 6). Despite this defeat, Turkish technology and military capability remained the best in Europe, but over the succeeding years it suffered a steady disintegration. By the dawn of the nineteenth century, the Turkish army

This painting by the famous nineteenth-century battle artist Vasily Vereshchagin shows a Russian soldier lighting his pipe after a victory against the Turks in the Russo-Turkish War. Much of the turmoil in the Balkans during the nineteenth century was a result of Ottoman decline in the region and the competition between Russia and the other nations to carve out strategic pieces of formerly Turkish territories.





The future Sultan Abdul Hamid I is shown at the center in a photograph taken at Balmoral Castle in 1867. Surrounding him, clockwise from bottom left, are the nineteenth-century Ottoman sultans Selim III, Mustafa IV, Mahmud II, Abdul Mejid I, and Abdul Aziz. Turkish setbacks began in 1790 when the Russians seized the Danube fortress of Ismail and killed thirty-four thousand of Selim III's troops. Various revolutions and wars continued throughout the nineteenth century resulting in incremental losses of Turkish land, and ultimately the deposition of the last sultan in 1909.

was woefully inferior to the forces of Western Europe, and the Turkish sultanate had become a standing international joke. The man who ruled the Ottoman Empire in 1800 was Selim III. He had become sultan in 1789 and reigned for nearly twenty years, amply demonstrating his incapability of dealing with external enemies or managing internal opponents. Less than a year into his tenure, a Russian army dealt the empire a devastating and humiliating blow by seizing the vital Danube River fortress of Ismail, located some forty miles from the Black Sea, and slaughtering thirty-four thousand Turkish soldiers. It being mid-winter and the ground frozen, the Russians tidily stuffed the bodies beneath the ice of the Danube.

The Russians were within forty miles of the Ottoman capital, causing panic. The sultan had to capitulate.

1. By the early nineteenth century, the Janissaries had long since lost their reputation as crack frontline troops. No longer were their ranks filled by boys conscripted from Christian families. No longer were they forbidden to marry and hold property. They were now a privileged class, becoming independently wealthy by drawing huge salaries, marrying and filling their ranks with their own sons, and fully able to install or assassinate sultans. They remained as brutal as ever, however, as their persecution of the Serbians evidences. In 1826, Sultan Mahmud II suppressed them, having to use loyal troops to overcome their consequent rebellion. Some four thousand Janissaries were killed in the fighting, more thousands executed, and the rest exiled.

Trouble surfaced next in the Balkans. The Serbs, backed by Austria, had rebelled in 1788, but when the Austrians withdrew their support three years later, the uprising failed and the Turks regained control. A period of relatively benign Turkish rule followed until the appearance of their dreaded Janissary troops in 1799.¹ The Janissaries imposed martial law, levied draconian taxes, ignored orders from Constantinople, and in 1804 slaughtered dozens of prominent Serbs, triggering another revolt. Encouraged by Russia, the Serbian rebellion became a war of independence, and for eight years the Serbs enjoyed a respite from Turkish rule. Meantime, Selim III was forced by a revolt of the Janissaries to abdicate. He was strangled on orders from his successor, Mustafa IV, who was in turn deposed and executed by troops loyal to Selim III. The next sultan, Mahmud II, proved more

enduring. He reigned from 1808 to 1839. Though his mother was French and he had received a French education, he imposed all the brutalities which had characterized Ottoman rule. When Napoleon invaded Russia, Sultan Mahmud reasserted Turkish control of Serbia in 1812. The Janissaries slaughtered thousands of Serbs while tens of thousands fled to safety in Hungary. But the Turkish return was short-lived. Inspired by Russia's defeat of the French, the Serbs rose again in the spring of 1815. Fearing Russia, Mahmud agreed to make Serbia a semi-autonomous region, and over the next fifteen years, Turkish influence steadily declined. Serbians took increasing control of their own affairs and the 1829 Treaty of Adrianople formally recognized Serbia's independence. One state had been liberated.

While the Serbs were slowly advancing toward full independence in the 1820s, their southern neighbors, the Greeks, had begun their own bloody and prolonged war of independence.² Their revolt started in February, 1821, several hundred miles north of mainland Greece in the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which, with adjoining Transylvania, then under Habsburg rule, would become modern Romania. A former Russian cavalry officer of Greek descent, Alexander Ypsilanti, led a liberating army into the principalities, and aligned himself with a peasant uprising against the Ottomans. He implied he had Russian support, but he did not. The tsar refused to help him, while the patriarch of Constantinople

excommunicated him. When an Ottoman army of thirty thousand arrived to suppress the revolt, Ypsilanti suffered a major defeat and sought refuge in Austria. But he had supplied the Greeks with the opportunity they had been anticipating since the fifteenth century.

Ypsilanti's adventure was "the spark that fired the powder," writes Seton-Watson. Revolts broke out in Macedonia, in central Greece, in the Peloponnese Peninsula, and on Crete, the largest of the Greek islands. At the same time, prosperous residents of three Aegean islands, Hydra, Spetses, and Psara, outfitted a rudimentary navy to harass the mighty Ottoman fleet and to prevent the Turks from resupplying their garrisons and landing reinforcements.

By the end of 1821, the Greeks had been remarkably successful. They had captured one town after another, but each time a fury that had been building for centuries burst



forth in an orgy of slaughter. Resident Turks and the families of Christians who had converted to Islam were slain by the thousands. The worst massacre occurred in the Peloponnese administrative center of Tripolitsa. "Upwards of ten thousand Turks were put to death," a British eyewitness later reported. "Their arms and legs were cut off and they were slowly roasted over fires. Pregnant women were cut open, their heads cut off, and dogs' heads stuck between their legs. From Friday to Sunday the air was filled with screaming..."

The Turks responded in kind. Prominent Greeks in Constantinople were murdered. The patriarch of Constantinople was hanged from the gate of his palace on Pascha (Easter Sunday) 1821. One year later, all Europe was shocked by news of the massacre at Chios, a prosperous Greek island located only two miles from the Turkish mainland. An estimated forty thousand Ottoman troops looted and burned towns and villages. They slaughtered every child under the age of three, every male over the age of twelve, all women aged forty and up. Some twenty-three thousand people were either driven into exile or taken into slavery.

Amid this savagery, the Greeks managed to establish a provisional national government and draft a constitution for an independent Greece. But their leaders quarreled, one region was set against another, and dissension and civil war threatened the entire revolution. Nevertheless, in four years of such turmoil, the Turks were unable to retake the country. Then in early 1825 the

sultan effected a diplomatic coup. He reached an agreement with Muhammad Ali, the illiterate military genius who ruled Egypt on his behalf, the most powerful and prosperous province in the Ottoman Empire. Mahmud would give the Egyptian leader control of Syria and Crete in exchange for subduing the rebellious Greeks. Ali accepted, and sent an expeditionary force under the command of his son. Egypt's army was European-trained, disciplined, and formidably armed. Soon it recovered most of Greece for the sultan.

Initially, the European powers ignored the Greco-Turkish War. Austria's Prince Klemens Wenzel von Metternich, principal architect of the Congress of Vienna, which only six years before had established continental peace in post-Napoleonic Europe, that would endure for a century, typified their disdain for the Balkans: "It matters not," he remarked in 1821, "if over there beyond our frontiers three or four thousand people get hanged, strangled or impaled." Such attitudes were changing, however. Increasing reports of Turkish atrocities aroused indignation in Europe. The British public took note after the famous Romantic poet Lord Byron threw himself into the fight for Greek liberty in July 1823 and died there nine months later, not on the battlefield, but of an infection. The Egyptian intervention and the near complete defeat of the Greeks finally altered political opinion in London, Paris, and Moscow.

In July, 1827, the three great powers offered to broker a peace. When the sultan

Above left, French Romanticist painter Eugene Delacroix's depiction of the massacre of Chios by the Turks, one of a series of horrific reprisals that characterized the Greek revolt, set off by Alexander Ypsilanti (inset) in 1821. In the painting on the right the bishop of Old Patraos Germanos blesses the flag of the Greek War of Independence.

2. Over the years, the boundaries observed by Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian and other Balkan peoples varied greatly. The Greeks, somewhat like the Jews, lived under different national regimes, and were often beset by conflicting loyalties. The Greek Orthodox Church was also divided by the conflict, the patriarch of Constantinople being under "obligation" to support the sultan and his administration, while a good number of bishops in Greece were involved in the rebellion.



English poet Lord Byron, shown arriving in Greece in this contemporary painting by an unknown artist (above), was among the liberals who popularized the Greek revolution in the West. When the Bulgarians rose up against their Ottoman masters in 1875, the Turks responded with brutal reprisals, including the sack of the town of Batak, depicted in the English illustration below.

unequivocally dismissed this overture, England, France, and Russia assembled a combined fleet under Admiral Edward Codrington, commander of the British naval forces in the Mediterranean. The allies confronted the combined Turkish-Egyptian fleet in Navarino Bay, the operational base of the Ottomans, located on the southwest coast of the Peloponnese.

The bay is a mere three miles long by about two miles wide, and the Battle of Navarino began around 2 p.m. on October 20, 1827 when the three European fleets sailed into this narrow body of water.

Codrington commanded twenty-two ships bearing 1,258 guns, and effectively faced three lines of enemy vessels—seventy-eight all told, carrying 2,180 guns. Yet in the space of four hours, the allies had destroyed the Ottoman navy, sinking all but twenty-nine ships and killing or wounding nearly six thousand men.

News of this stunning victory flashed across the Peloponnese and to mainland Greece, which at that time consisted of about half of present-day Greece. Church bells rang all night. Bonfires were lit on hilltops and mountaintops. Greeks everywhere rejoiced despite the fact that some forty thousand Ottoman troops remained in their country. Several years would elapse before the Greeks could drive them out with help from a French expeditionary force, achieving full independence in 1832.

The Turks, meanwhile, stumbled into another disastrous military conflict—this one with Russia. Sultan Mahmud, enraged by the intervention of the three European nations, declared a jihad against all Europeans, ordered Mehemet Ali to keep his troops in Greece, and peremptorily closed the Bosphorus to international shipping. Since this kept Russian commercial vessels trapped on the Black Sea, Russia had no choice but to declare war. In the spring of 1828, Tsar Nicholas I led an army of one hundred thousand men into the Danubian Principalities. The tsar's army easily swept aside Turkish defenders in Romania, crossed the Danube, and laid siege to three Ottoman fortresses in Bulgaria. The Russians took one of the fortresses, but the Turks held the other two,

and the 1828 campaign ended inconclusively when disease and a shortage of supplies compelled the invaders to retreat for the winter.

In the spring of 1829, the Russians returned. They quickly captured the Turkish fortress at Silistra, then began a march straight for Constantinople. By early September, they were within forty miles of the Ottoman capital. This caused panic in the streets and the sultan had no choice but to capitulate, buying peace at a very high price. Among other things, the Treaty of Adrianople, signed in 1829, opened the Dardanelles to all commercial ships, ceded the mouth of the Danube to Russia, allowed Russia to occupy the Danubian Principalities, and guaranteed the sovereignty of Serbia and Greece.

For the next quarter century, the Turks and Russians remained at peace. Sultan Mahmud died in 1839 and was succeeded by his sixteen-year-old son Abdul Mejid who, according to one historian, “was enfeebled early in his reign by excessive indulgence in the harem.” He had scarcely any interest in governing and devoted much of his time to building a gargantuan new palace—Dolmabeche—on the Bosphorus. In short, Abdul Mejid further accelerated the decline of the “sick man of Europe,” as the Ottoman Empire was becoming known.

By the early 1850s, an emboldened Tsar Nicholas I sensed an opportunity to expand Russia's influence, bring about the downfall of the Ottomans, and perhaps capture Constantinople itself. He exploited a quarrel with the Turks over Russia's right to protect sacred Christian sites in the Holy Land. France and England were alarmed at the prospect of Russian aggression. In fact, writes historian Norman Rich in *Why the Crimean War: A Precautionary Tale* (1985), the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston was wholly persuaded that Russia, not Turkey, was Britain's principal enemy. In the resulting Crimean War, Britain and France therefore allied with the Turks.

The war began in the Danubian Principalities and spread to the Black Sea, the Crimean Peninsula, and the Caucasus. Thousands died needlessly in an essentially unnecessary and avoidable sixteen-month conflict that proved immensely costly for Russia.³ The fighting ended in February 1856, and the resulting Treaty of Paris, among other things, guaranteed the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and prohibited warships on the Black Sea, a blow to Russian prestige and power.

In June of 1861, Sultan Abdul Mejid died and was succeeded by his brother Abdul Aziz—the notorious “Madman of Dolmabeche.” He was said to be simple-minded, and wildly extravagant. Abdul Aziz



maintained a harem of nine hundred concubines guarded by three thousand black eunuchs, borrowed money from European bankers to build palaces and import wild beasts from Africa and India, and proved completely incapable of dealing with the crises and catastrophes that soon engulfed his empire.

The Greeks of Crete rebelled against the Turks in 1866, and their uprising lasted three years before being put down with great severity. In 1873 a drought in Anatolia caused famine and starvation and eroded government revenues. The Ottomans responded by imposing exorbitant taxes on their Balkan subjects, which led in the summer of 1875 to uprisings in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Serbs declared war in 1876, and in April that year an uprising began in Bulgaria that would lead the Ottoman empire into another catastrophic war with Russia.

The Turks employed regular troops to put down the Bulgarian revolt that centered on the town of Batak. They then decided to make an example of the Bulgarians. With their notorious irregulars known as *bashi-bazouks*—a mix of Circassian refugees and Crimean Tatars—the Turks burned and destroyed sixty villages, and slaughtered

Source: *The Lords of the Golden Horn* by Noel Barber, Macmillan Ltd., 1973.

3. The famous charge of the Light Brigade came to symbolize the senselessness of the Crimean War. Vague orders and a mix-up in battlefield communication caused the British cavalry unit to race headlong up a valley and into enemy fire from three directions. Of the 673 in the charge, 118 were killed, 127 wounded, and sixty taken prisoner. War correspondent William Russell later wrote: “Our light Brigade was annihilated by our own rashness and by the brutality of a ferocious enemy.”





At the Battle of Shipka Pass in the Balkan Mountains in January of 1878, a decisive engagement of the Russo-Turkish War, where five thousand Bulgarian and twenty-five hundred Russian troopers repulsed for three days an attack by the Ottoman central army of forty thousand, is depicted in this contemporary painting. Three weeks later the Russians reached Adrianople and the terrified sultan sued for peace.

thousands of men, women, and children, including twelve hundred who had taken refuge in a church in Batak and were burned alive. In one village they took some four hundred young women hostage, raped them over a period of four days, and then beheaded them one by one.

As it happened, a roving American journalist named J. A. MacGahan visited Bulgaria shortly afterward and filed reports to the *London Daily News*, the first ever eyewitness accounts of Turkish atrocities. “I counted from the saddle a hundred skulls picked and licked clean: all women and children,” MacGahan wrote of entering Batak. “On every side were skulls and skeletons charred among the ruins or lying entire where they fell in their clothing...We approached the church. There these remains were more frequent until the ground was literally covered with skeletons, skulls and putrefying bodies.”

The English populace was horrified by the ghastly reports, which also set off a major clash in the Commons. In his *Disraeli and the Eastern Question* (2011), historian Milos Kovic describes the way in which Liberal leader William Ewart Gladstone used the explosion of public anger over the massacre of Bulgarian Christians to coerce Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli into withdrawing British support for Turkey. In Russia, meanwhile, this news unleashed a wave of nation-

alist fervor. The tsar, eager to avenge the humiliations of the Crimean War, to enhance Russia’s status as protector of the Orthodox faithful, and perhaps even to seize Constantinople, declared war in April 1877.

The Russian army marched on the Ottoman Empire from two directions. One hundred fifty thousand men advanced from the Caucasus, east of the Black Sea, into the eastern provinces. Two hundred thousand marched west into the Danubian Principalities, accompanied by the tsar himself. The Western troops encountered little or no resistance and expected to find the road to Constantinople open once they had crossed the Danube. Instead, they met a heroic Turkish resistance at Plevna, twenty miles from the river. A brilliant general, Osman Pasha, commanding fifty thousand men, had created nearly impregnable defenses on the ridges and highlands overlooking the town of seventeen thousand nestled in a deep valley.

The opposing armies fought twice, on July 29 and September 11.⁴ The Turks lost four thousand men, the Russians fifteen thousand. After the second battle the tsar decided to surround the town and starve the Turks into submission. The defenders held out till mid-January 1878. An attempt to break through the Russian ring failed—thanks to a Polish spy who tipped off the unsuspecting Russians—and Plevna fell.

In the last days of January 1878, the Russians reached Adrianople (present-day Edirne), just 130 miles from Constantinople, and the terrified Turkish sultan sued for peace. The price seemed catastrophic. In the resulting Treaty of San Stefano, the Ottomans ceded all claims to the Danubian Principalities, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria. Once again, however, the major powers moved to save “the sick man of Europe.” The Treaty of Berlin, negotiated some four months after San Stefano, required all of these newly independent states to pay portions of the sultan’s debts, outraging national feeling in every one of them. In addition, Romania lost all of Bessarabia (peopled largely by Romanians) to Russia and received in return a part of Dobruja (peopled chiefly by Turks and Bulgarians).

The man who presided over this tottering Ottoman ruin was Sultan Abdul Hamid II, younger son of Abdul Aziz, who had been deposed in May 1876 and then committed suicide. Abdul Hamid was thirty-four when he ascended the throne, a thin, ugly, haggard-looking man with a bewildering personality. A Hungarian scholar who knew him well wrote that he was capable of benevolence and wickedness, generosity and meanness, and cowardice as well as bravery. Above all, however, he was terrified of assassination. He hired a dozen architects to design and build a new residential complex called Yildiz, none of whom ever met or knew what the others were doing. Yildiz emerged as a maze-like complex of hundreds of buildings with mirrored rooms, all linked by secret passageways and surrounded by gardens and parks, and home to some five thousand people.

Abdul Hamid’s reign was no improvement on his predecessors. He distrusted his ministers and seldom consulted them, relying instead on an assortment of advisors, which included a slave purchased at a market, a clown, the son of a cook, and an astrologer. He employed thousands of spies to report on the activities of his subjects. He forfeited his tenuous hold on Egypt after a British fleet bombarded Alexandria and a British army occupied the country. Finally, he turned on the ancient Christian Armenians who lived near Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey, putting to death one hundred thousand in an outrage that further turned world opinion against him. However, this would prove only a minor forerunner of the genocide the Turks would loose upon the Armenians

eighteen years later, to be described in the next volume.

An army revolt in 1908 precipitated Abdul Hamid’s downfall. The rebel leaders issued an ultimatum from their base in Macedonia in July, giving him twenty-four hours to accept a new constitution, complete with democratic elections, or they would march on Constantinople. He accepted and the people hailed him as a liberator, which meant the rebels couldn’t depose him. However, they did strip him of most of his power, dismissed hundreds from the payroll at Yildiz, and fired his spies. Elections were held, and in early December 1908 a parliament was convened. But two further wars in the Balkans in 1912 and 1913 led to additional territorial losses as Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Bulgaria proclaimed its independence. The Great Powers had forced Turkey to evacuate Crete in 1898, and its union with Greece was proclaimed in 1908.

These moves led to turmoil and popular unrest in Turkey, and some historians believe that Abdul Hamid took advantage of the discontent to stir up additional trouble. In any event, army units loyal to the sultan rebelled in April 1909. The revolt was quickly suppressed, and Abdul Hamid was deposed and sent into exile in Macedonia along with three wives, two sons, four concubines, four eunuchs, and fourteen servants. But the end of the Ottoman dynasty was not yet. It would not finally perish until 1924, but by then imperial Germany, imperial Russia, and imperial Austria would have predeceased it, as the next volume will show. ■



4. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, the Red Crescent was first used as a neutral symbol of medical or humanitarian aid on the battlefield. The Red Cross had been adopted by the Geneva Convention in 1864, but the Turkish government believed its soldiers would be offended by this Christian symbol. They proposed the crescent instead, and the Russians agreed to respect it.

This Greek allegorical painting from 1908 celebrates the success of the Young Turk revolt in Constantinople, marking the beginning of the end of more than four centuries of Ottoman tyranny. Sultan Abdul Hamid tried to stage a counterrevolt in 1909, but it was quickly put down and Abdul Hamid was sent, along with his three wives, two sons, four concubines, four eunuchs, and fourteen servants to exile in Macedonia.