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THE FIRST RUSSIAN REVOLUTION – THE DECEMBRIST MOVEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON RUSSIAN POLITICAL HISTORY

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Summary

Almost two centuries have passed since the Decembrist uprising, but it still continues to be a very important topic for historians, scholars, and researchers as it had dramatic repercussions in Russian political history and culture that, according to some historians, are still visible today. The determination, dedication to the cause, and sacrifices of the Decembrists have fascinated leading Russian writers and their image has been mythologized with numerous works of literature and art. Inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, freemasonry, and their experiences in Western Europe during the campaigns against Napoleon, the Decembrists desired political and social reform. Specifically, they wanted to eradicate the autocratic system, reform the judicial system, and emancipate the serfs. This paper attempts to explore the dynamics of the Decembrist movement and its impact in Russian political history. In doing so, it briefly examines the economic, cultural, social, and political circumstances that prepared the ground for the emergence of the movement. The paper then focuses on the short-, medium-, and long-term repercussions of the Decembrist movement in Russian history. Finally, the paper tries to underline the revolutionary character of the Decembrist movement, which became an inspiration for the revolutionary movements to follow and not only opened a new era in Russian history but in global politics as well.

Key Words: Decembrists, serfdom, Napoleonic Wars, liberal idea, Speransky's project, Official Nationalism, Westernizers, Slavophiles, European revolutions of 1848, revolutionary movement.

Introduction

On 19 November 1825, Alexander I died at Taganrog in Southern Russia. Since the deceased Emperor had no children, he should have been succeeded by his oldest brother, Constantine, at that time governor-general in Warsaw.^[1] However, Constantine had already renounced his right to the throne with a special Manifesto that was signed on 16 August 1823 by Alexander I. The reason for Constantine's renunciation of his right to throne was his morganatic marriage to a Polish Catholic aristocrat who was not of royal blood. The copies of the said Manifesto were sealed and deposited in the Uspensky Cathedral in Moscow to be opened after the death of Alexander I. The Manifesto named Nicolas as the successor to the Russian throne. This secret document was known by only a few members of the imperial family. There are different opinions as to whether Nicholas knew that he had been chosen as the successor to the throne.

On 27 November 1825, the news of Alexander's death reached St Petersburg. Being unaware of the Manifesto, the army and the officials of the state institutions took an oath of allegiance to Constantine. Similar action was taken three days later in Moscow. Nevertheless, Constantine reiterated his renunciation of the right to the throne. The lack of an heir and the existence of two self-denying Emperors led to chaos, which continued for three weeks. During this period, the Russian Empire remained without a sovereign. Despite the efforts of the royal family to persuade Constantine to ascend to the throne, he refused to return to the capital. Finally, on 12 December 1825, Nicholas resolved to become Emperor.

According to Anatole G. Mazour, the Decembrists opposed the candidacy of Nicholas without question as Nicholas had displayed a despotic character. Having been absorbed with military affairs, Nicholas lacked diplomatic and political training, and he possessed none of the qualities, such as tolerance, tact, and vision, that are the attributes of a statesman.^[2] Constantine's obstinate behavior prepared the ground for secret society members—later known as the Decembrists—to take action to overthrow the autocracy. When the general confusion concerning the succession began, and the army, having taken the oath to Constantine, was requested to take it again to Nicholas, the Decembrists decided to take up arms without delay.^[3]

In fact, the conspirators had long been planning a coup. Their earlier strategy was to assassinate Alexander I, but they were too unorganized to realize the assassination. When they heard the news of Alexander's death, they thought it was the best time for action. The Decembrists had secret meetings frequently at the home of Prince Eugene Obolenskii and the apartment of the poet Kondraty Ryleev^[4] to plan the coup. They chose 14 December as the day for the revolt. Their plan was to march the troops onto Senate Square, where they would refuse to take the oath of allegiance to Nicholas and demand that Constantine assume the throne. They also planned to demand a constitution that would establish a constitutional monarchy or a republic.

Despite the fact that the organization was still too weak to stage a revolt and that there was not enough time to gain the required coordination and agreement between the Northern and Southern Societies, the Decembrists hoped to gain the support of the masses. The Decembrists preferred not to proclaim their true goals—the abolition of serfdom and the foundation of a government assuring the freedom, rights, and equality of all men—with the fear that the rebellion would turn to widespread bloodshed and popular revolt.

On the morning of 14 December 1825, a battalion of the Moscow Regiment and some Grenadier and Marine Guards assembled in Senate Square in St Petersburg, where Etienne

Falconet's famous statue to Peter the Great stands.^[5] The rebels and the guard regiments waited for the appearance of Prince Sergei Trubetskoi, whom the conspirators had nominated as a revolutionary "dictator". Trubetskoi, who was supposed to take command of the troops assembled on the Square, failed to appear.^[6] Ryleev, who went to find Trubetskoi, also did not return. Although the government was caught unprepared, the mutineers were soon faced by troops several times their number and strength. The two forces stood opposite each other for several hours. The Decembrists failed to act because of their general confusion and lack of leadership while the new emperor hesitated to start his reign with a massacre of his subjects, hoping that they could be talked into submission.^[7]

Nicholas sent General Mikhail Miloradovich, the Governor of St Petersburg, to try to persuade them to take the oath, but Miloradovich was shot by Decembrist member Pyotr Kakhovsky^[8] beside the statue of Peter the Great. Following the murder of Miloradovich, Nicholas ordered his troops to open fire at the insurgents. According to the official figures, more than 1,200 conspirators were killed along with civilians.

The news of the events in St Petersburg reached the south in a short time. The Chernigov troops, led by Sergei Ivanovich Muraviev-Apostol, started a second uprising on 29 December. On 3 January 1826, the insurgents, after roaming the countryside from Vasilkov to Motovilovka and then to Belaia Tserkov and Zhitomir, were surrounded by the imperial troops at the village of Trilesy. The conspirators were either killed or taken prisoner.

The judiciary process for the conspirators continued until 30 May 1826, when the leaders, Pavel Pestel, Kondraty Ryleev, Pyotr Kakhovsky, Sergei Muraviev-Apostol, and Mikhail Bestuzhev-Riumin, were sentenced to death by quartering. The death sentences were then changed from quartering to hanging and were carried out on 13 July 1826, when the five Decembrist leaders were hanged on the ramparts of Peter and Paul Fortress.

More than 500 Decembrists had been arrested, the majority of which were released in the next few weeks. Of the conspirators, 121 were found guilty of treason, stripped of their noble titles, and sent to Siberia for various terms of forced labor and exile, in 31 cases life-long. Several wives wanted to follow their husbands to Siberia. Perhaps the most famous of these was Sergei Volkonsky's wife Maria, who chose to share her husband's fate. These women, renowned in Russian literature and history as *dekabristki*, became famous for their heroic sacrifices. The Decembrists in exile were physically isolated from society until 1856, when Tsar Alexander II granted them amnesty and allowed the few survivors to return to Western Russia. The term "Decembrist" (*dekabrist* in Russian) started to be widely used in the 1860s.

For a better understanding of the dynamics of the Decembrist movement and its impact on Russian political history, it would be appropriate to briefly examine the economic, cultural, social, and political circumstances that prepared the ground for the emergence of the movement. That will enable us to better understand the revolutionary character of the Decembrist movement, which had short-, medium-, and long-term repercussions in Russian history that are still being discussed by historians and scholars.

The Circumstances That Prepared the Ground for the Decembrist Movement

A) The Economic Problem

When Alexander I came to the Russian throne on 12 March 1801, he inherited extraordinarily difficult problems of all kinds. Financial affairs were in a precarious state. There was a considerable national deficit, an accumulated debt amounting to more than two hundred million

rubles, and a complicated bureaucratic machinery to further handicap the administration.^[9]

Industry in Russia during the eighteenth century developed along lines different from those of industry in Western Europe. The reason is to be found in the deep-rooted attachment of the Russian peasant to the soil. In Western Europe industry drew its labor supply chiefly from the free landless peasants. In Russia, industry had to depend, for the most part, on the serf labor of peasants who were attached to the soil, or on proscribed industrial labor drawn from among social outcasts. These sources produced unfavorable conditions for the development of the skilled industrial proletariat that is a requisite for any industrial society. The difference in this respect between Western Europe and Russia was striking.^[10]

Industry in Russia, instead of following along capitalistic paths and discarding the medieval order, endeavored to adjust itself to the old institutions. Thus, it attempted to transfer from agriculture the institution of serfdom and to adapt it to its own purposes. The Russian industry developed distorted types of factories of a semi-feudal character, which proved totally inadequate for the needs of the modern state. This resulted in the formation of a class composed of laborers who might be called industrial serfs as distinguished from agricultural serfs, a class unknown in Western Europe.^[11]

A modern industrial society demanded a new social relationship, larger contingents of free workers, a free and more prosperous peasantry with the purchasing power to absorb industrial produce, and, last but not least, political readjustment. Among the Decembrists Pestel realized this fact more than any other member except perhaps Nicholas Turgenev. However, political developments in the first quarter of the nineteenth century failed to keep pace with economic demands.^[12]

B) Serfdom

The word serf, in the sense of an unfree peasant of the Russian Empire, is the usual translation of *krepostnoi krestyanin* (крепостной крестьянин). The origins of serfdom in Russia can be traced to Kievan Rus' in the eleventh century. Serfdom became the dominant form of relations between peasants and nobility in the seventeenth century. Alexander I was twenty-three years old when he ascended the Russian throne. Brought up with the ideas of the Enlightenment, he was hailed as a liberal and his ascent to the throne increased the expectations for reform among the liberals. The new Emperor decided to transform Russia with the help of four young, cultivated, intelligent, and liberal friends, the so-called Unofficial Committee. The members of the committee, Nicholas Novosiltsev, Count Paul Stroganov, Count Victor Kochubey, and a Polish patriot, Prince Adam Czartoryski, reflected the enlightened opinions of the period, ranging from Anglophilism to Jacobin connections.^[13]

Alexander I was preoccupied with the question of serfdom from the very beginning of his reign. Stroganov's notes taken during the meetings of the Unofficial Committee suggest that Alexander's intention was to abolish autocracy and serfdom. The young Emperor was aware that the Empire needed to be remodeled. However, the modern ideas of the Emperor created reaction both in the State Council and among the landlords. The nobility feared that a reform in serfdom would lead to social unrest and even a large-scale peasant revolt. It became apparent quickly that the reform of the administration and the mass of people would be very difficult. Disillusioned with these harsh realities, Alexander's consultations with the Unofficial Committee became less and less frequent.

Facing strong opposition in the conservative State Council, the idea of emancipation of the serfs soon faded away, but a new ray of hope came, this time inspired by a nobleman who was himself a product of Western liberal culture. In November 1802, Count Nikolai Rumyantsev^[14] in a memorandum to Alexander suggested the gradual abolition of serfdom, following it soon after with a

carefully detailed project. Rumyantsev's plan became the basis of the law of 20 February 1803, which provided for the creation of a new class of peasants, the so-called free farmers.^[15]

The Decembrist society strongly opposed serfdom. Their interest in the problem of serfdom was something not only academic or emotional. The majority of the Decembrists were of the landed nobility and their attachment to the land enabled them to have direct contact with the peasants and observe the hardships of the agrarian crisis. Agriculture was the dominant factor in the economic life of Russia, which made land and serfdom indivisible parts of a whole. Decembrist Nicholas Turgenev was convinced that serfdom in Russia was outdated and had to be abolished to give way to an emancipated society.

It was evident that the original idea of the Decembrists was to achieve the emancipation of the peasants through peaceful measures and the persuasion of serf owners, in the hope that emancipation might come as a grace from the throne rather than by force from below. As time went on, however, hopes for peasant emancipation by legal means had to be abandoned. "Constitutional ideas", as Pestel stated, or in other words, revolutionary plans, began to appear.^[16] Realizing the retarding effects of serfdom upon the transformation of a rural country into an industrialized power, the Decembrists became advocates of the middle class, which in a modern capitalistic society constitutes the founding pillar.

According to Decembrist Nikolai Chernyshevsky^[17], the solution of the problem of serfdom required the liberation of all classes, "top to bottom", since the emancipation of the serfs by "sovereign slaves" was not likely to happen. In other words, it required the abolition of the autocracy. The efforts of the Decembrists were not enough for the emancipation of serfs. However, the Decembrist vision paved the way for the destruction of the social structure of Petrine Russia. The ideals of the Decembrists finally came to life in February 1861 when the serfs were finally emancipated.

C) The Liberal Idea

When Alexander I ascended the Russian throne the country was of an older generation. The younger generation, becoming ever more discontented with the situation, had its own conception of the Fatherland. Patriotic in the truest sense of the world, enthusiastic as youth generally is, idealistic, and unselfish, the young people gradually voiced their protest and commenced to plan the fulfillment of their country, Young Russia. The last quarter of the eighteenth century marks a growing popular and intellectual movement that contributed to the formation of social ideals and of a better organized opposition.^[18]

One form of the liberal tradition inherited from the eighteenth century was reminiscent of the once popular Masonic lodges. Masonic lodges had been the earliest groups to provide an opportunity for men interested in reform to come into closer contact. They also contributed gradually to the development of more unified social organizations. The liberal tendency of the Masons during the earlier period, 1810-1820, had attracted many Decembrists. In general, Masonry sought the eradication of religious prejudices and class, racial, and national discrimination, as well as the establishment of international cooperation. Like the Illuminati^[19], the liberal Masons did not believe in immediate radical reforms, but rather in gradual reform through long and persistent education of the individual in society.^[20]

Many of the Decembrists, like Pestel and Alexander Muraviev, were members of a Masonic lodge. The experience that the Decembrists acquired in the Masonic lodges helped them to organize their own secret societies, similar to the secret structure of Masonic lodges. In other words, the Masonic lodges constituted a pattern for secret political societies to be copied by the Decembrists who later led the revolt against Russian autocracy.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, European ideas started to penetrate into the medieval structure of Russian society and the liberal thought of the age of enlightenment was embraced by Russian intellectuals. The nobility and the intellectuals started to travel to European capitals and had direct contact with liberal ideas and writings. The young men who were sent to the West by Peter I for training and education returned to Russia not only with technical skills and knowledge of shipbuilding and military science but also with new political and social ideas.

Most of the Decembrists were pupils of the Encyclopedists.^[21] They were deeply influenced by the revolutionary movement in France and other countries. Nearly all of the Decembrists acquired their ideas of liberal political institutions through their acquaintance with foreign literature and with the revolutionary movement in Western Europe. In the early nineteenth century increasing intercourse with Western Europe deprived Russia of her political isolation. Travel and study abroad became fairly common. Developments between 1812 and 1814 hastened the disintegration of Old Russia, brought the Russian Empire into the family of Western nations, and revealed more clearly the striking political, social, and economic contrasts between Western Europe and backward Russia.^[22]

D) Unstable Character of Alexander I

Following the assassination of his father, Emperor Paul, Alexander I ascended the Russian throne when he was only twenty-three years old. The cream of St Petersburg looked forward to his reign with the expectation of the creation of the modern society that Peter the Great had visualized. Alexander had promising beginnings. Tall, blond, and strikingly handsome, he was a dashing figure both on the parade ground and in the ballroom. He was well educated, sophisticated, and charming, and he spoke French better than Russian. He seemed the ideal monarch to advance Russia into the modern world, liberalize the government, and eliminate serfdom. However, his reign turned into an excruciating drama for which St Petersburg was center stage.^[23]

Alexander I had a paradoxical character and the enthusiasm that appeared following his ascent to the throne soon waned. Various elements in the emperor's background have been cited to help account for his baffling character. There was, to begin with, Alexander's difficult childhood and boyhood and in particular his ambiguous relations with his father, Paul, and his grandmother, Catherine the Great, who hated each other. Alexander spent more time with Catherine than with his parents, and he learned early the arts of flattery, dissimulation, and hypocrisy, or so his boyhood letters indicate. Catherine the Great took a personal interest in Alexander's upbringing, which was guided by the ideas of enlightenment. The contrast between theory and practice characteristic of Alexander I's reign was derived, according to some scholars, from this one-sided education. The circumstances of Alexander I's accession to the throne have also been analyzed for their effect on the sovereign's character and rule. Alexander almost certainly knew about the conspiracy against his father, but the murder of Emperor Paul apparently came to him as a surprise and shock. Certain critics attribute to the tragedy of his accession Alexander I's strong feelings of guilt and his later mysticism and lack of balance.^[24]

Alexander I was indecisive, unstable, and impressionable in behavior. The problems of his personality grew with the passage of time. He became more and more irritable, tired, and suspicious of people; more dissatisfied with life; and more frantically in search of a religious or mystical answer. The autocrat died in 1825, only forty-eight years old. However, as if to continue the mystery of Alexander I, some specialists insist that he did not die, but rather escaped from the throne to live in Siberia as the saintly hermit Theodore, or Fedor Kuzmich. Based on such circumstantial evidence as the emperor's constant longing to shed the burdens of his office and a court physician's refusal to sign the death certificate, this supposition needs further proof, although it cannot be entirely

dismissed. Suicide might offer another explanation for a certain strangeness and confusion associated with the sovereign's death.^[25]

E) The Redefinition of the European Architecture and Its Impact on Russia

After succeeding Paul, Alexander proclaimed a policy of neutrality, but Russia could not stay out of the conflicts raging in Europe for long. Not surprisingly, Alexander I joined the opponents of France. Economic ties with Great Britain and the traditional Russian friendship with Austria and Great Britain contributed to the decision. Furthermore, Alexander I apparently came early to consider Napoleon as a menace to Europe.^[26]

The War of the Third Coalition broke out in 1805. Russia joined Great Britain together with Austria and Sweden against France and its ally, Spain. On 2 December 1805, Austrian and Russian armies suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of Napoleon at Austerlitz. Napoleon obtained a decisive victory against the Russian army on 14 June 1807 in the Battle of Friedland. Following the defeat at Friedland, the Treaties of Tilsit^[27] were signed between France and Russia on 7 July and France and Prussia on 9 July. With the Treaties of Tilsit, Alexander I not only had to accept Napoleon's redrawing of the map of Europe but also gave a commitment not to trade with Great Britain.

The defeat in the war with Napoleon and the signing of the Treaty of Tilsit caused great reaction in St Petersburg. Particularly the landowners and merchants, who depended on trade with England, were furious. To make matters worse, wartime finances and the printing of money had led to high inflation. Alexander's popularity had plummeted, and he felt insecure on the throne. He had to redeem himself.^[28] Thus, Alexander turned his attention to internal reforms, which, because of the general postwar dissatisfaction, had become imperative. This time he placed his faith in Mikhail Speransky^[29] and in 1808 appointed him as Assistant Minister of Justice.

Alexander looked to Speransky mainly for legal reform and ideas for restructuring the government. Speransky believed strongly in the separation of executive, legislative, and judiciary powers. He argued that "it is impossible to base a government on law if one sovereign power both composes and executes the law" and he claimed that his proposal consisted "not in hiding autocracy in external forms only, but in limiting it by the international and substantial force of institutions".^[30] Alexander instructed Speransky to work on the codification of the Russian civil laws and to present a general plan for political reforms.

In 1809 Speransky presented his plan entitled "An Introduction to the Code of State Laws". The document was divided into two parts: the first was a treatise on the general condition of national affairs and the second comprised specific constitutional reforms recommended by the author. Speransky foresaw the development of capitalism and that it would be in conflict with the existing form of government. He recommended an administrative reorganization whereby political rights were to be given to a larger proportion of the population, though still only to the "better classes". Though he believed that serfdom was destined to come to an end, he still feared to tamper with it, referring to the issue as premature and therefore dissociating it from political reforms.^[31]

F) Failure of Speransky's Project and Its Aftermath

Speransky's new code was heavily inspired by the Code Napoleon. When the new draft of the Civil Code was submitted to the Council of State for review in 1812, the French inspiration on it became apparent. Enemies of Speransky, who considered him a Russian Jacobin, claimed that the new code was nothing more than a translation of "Code Napoleon. Speransky became the target of harsh criticism and was accused of imposing upon autocratic and Orthodox Russia a set of foreign laws developed under different social, economic, and political conditions.

The campaign against Speransky began in Moscow, to whose nobility Speransky represented an alien force that epitomized what they feared about St Petersburg and its culture. If Speransky got

his way, they believed, Russia would take another fundamental step away from the national traditions of autocracy, orthodoxy, and national identity. The nobility's prerogatives and way of life would be threatened, and so eventually might be the institution of serfdom. This opposition found intellectual expression in Karamzin's famous *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, which accused Speransky of disregarding Russia's past, repudiating its spiritual tradition, and threatening its landed nobility. He argued for preserving autocracy unlimited by any laws, restoring the nobility to its traditional role of the Tsar's personal servants, and reducing the bureaucracy that had displaced much of that nobility.^[32]

Having been branded as a Francophile and accused of spying for France, Speransky's fall from power became inevitable. His project was finally rejected and the second liberal period of Alexander I's reign (1807-1812), like the first (1801-1807), produced no basic changes in Russia.

G) The Napoleonic Wars

The days of the Russian alliance with Napoleon were numbered. The agreement of Tilsit, which was renewed in Erfurt in 1808, failed in the long run to satisfy either side. The Russians, who were forced to accept it because of their military defeat, resented Napoleon's domination of the continent, his disregard of Russian interests, and in particular the obligation to participate in the so-called continental blockade. This blockade hurt Russian exporters and the powerful landlord class. Russian military reverses at the hands of the French cried for revenge, especially because they came after a century of almost uninterrupted victories. Also, Napoleon, who had emerged from the fearful French Revolution, appeared to be a peculiar and undesirable ally. Napoleon and his lieutenants, for their part, came to regard Russia as an utterly unreliable partner and indeed as the last major obstacle to their complete domination of the continent.^[33]

France and Russia stood as two great powers on each end of the continent. It was inevitable that the titans would clash. In St Petersburg, the salons bristled with talk that the Emperor would be incapable of coping with the coming storm, and some ventured that perhaps he should be replaced. Alexander knew that this time he must emerge from the conflict with his own and the nation's honor intact, which could mean a fight to the end.^[34]

Having made the necessary diplomatic and military preparations in June 1812, Napoleon started the invasion on Russia. On 24 June, the Grand Armée crossed the Niemen.^[35] The French army started marching into the heart of Russia along the Vilna-Vitebsk-Smolensk line. In the battle of Smolensk^[36], the Russian army inflicted considerable losses on the enemy and they escaped encirclement with a withdrawal from the city at night. The retreat of the Russian armies increased the fears about Alexander's leadership and his unpopularity grew rapidly. Under the pressure of the French advance and the increased reaction in St Petersburg, Alexander had no choice but to appoint Mikhail Kutuzov, the popular commander of St Petersburg's militia, as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian forces.

Sixty-seven-year-old Kutuzov pursued a strategy of tactical retreat, refraining from giving Napoleon the major battle that he was looking forward to in order to declare an early victory. Finally, that battle took place on 7 September 1812 near the village of Borodino, which was only 75 miles away from Moscow. The battle of Borodino caused considerable losses for both sides. Despite the retreat, Kutuzov reported the battle of Borodino as a victory. Nevertheless, when Napoleon entered Moscow, the feelings of pride and joy changed to gloom and distrust in the Emperor. A fire, which is believed to have been started by Count Theodore Rostopchin, governor and military commander of Moscow, nearly completely destroyed the city and left Napoleon no choice but to retreat before the onset of winter. The retreat of the Grand Armée started on 19 October 1812. The Russian winter descended upon the soldiers of Napoleon as they were marching westward, following

the route by which they had come.

In St Petersburg, the news that Napoleon abandoned Moscow was announced to the accompaniment of cannon fire from the Fortress, but the city would not see the return of its heroes for over two years. Seeing the opportunity to become Europe's liberator, Alexander now vowed to pursue Napoleon to the end. On 31 March 1814, scarcely a century after Peter the Great had founded St Petersburg and set his reforms in motion, Alexander marched down the Champs-Élysées on his white horse at the head of the Russian army. Marching alongside him as officers were the sons of St Petersburg's aristocracy. A century before, unreformed Russia could not even gain the Baltic and scarcely knew Europe. Now it was Europe's savior and most powerful member. Such an achievement would have been impossible without the century-long drive to modernization under new ideas begun by Peter the Great and symbolized by St Petersburg. Russia's success disguised its many unremedied ills and seduced many into the complacent belief that Russia's system was fundamentally sound, but soon the system would again be under attack.^[37]

H) The Aftermath of the Congress of Vienna: A Crusade Against Liberalism

Following the defeat and surrender of Napoleon in May 1814, the victors convened the Congress of Vienna on 8 September 1814. The negotiations in the Congress continued despite the outbreak of fighting triggered by Napoleon's return from exile and resumption of power in France during the Hundred Days of March–July 1815. The “Final Act” of the Congress of Vienna was signed nine days before the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo on 18 June 1815.

The Congress of Vienna aimed at the establishment of a long-term peace in Europe, which would be based on the balance among the leading powers of the continent. It was a conservative reaction to the dangerous revolutionary ideas that threatened to upset the status quo in Europe. The immediate outcome of the Congress of Vienna was the Holy Alliance, a coalition created by the monarchist great powers of Russia, Austria, and Prussia. The document known as the Holy Alliance was signed in Paris on 26 September 1815. The leading figure of the Holy Alliance, Austrian state chancellor Prince Klemens von Metternich, considered the Alliance as a fortress against democracy, revolution, republicanism, and secularism. The monarchs of the three countries involved devoted themselves to impeding the spill-over of revolutionary ideas to their nations. The Holy Alliance was intended to restrain republicanism and secularism in Europe.

The ideas of Metternich soon encompassed the Russian Empire. Alexander held the rationalist liberal ideas responsible for the Napoleonic Wars and all that Russia had suffered. The reactionary spirit culminated in Russian political and economic life. Alarmed by the liberal ideas among the younger generation, the older generation started a war against the dangerous ideas coming from the West. Upholding the three pillars of Old Russia, orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationalism, the conservatives raised their banner against the “Jacobin spirit”. Becoming suspicious of every political, social, and religious activity, Alexander forbade all societies entirely, except those sponsored by himself.

During the second half of his reign, Alexander adopted a conservative political stance. His regime became one of oppression. General Alexis Arackheev, who has become a symbol of darkest reaction and cruelest oppression, filled the position of Speransky and became Alexander's minister of war and eventually prime minister. In the literary field, Admiral Alexander Shishkov and Count Rostopchin advocated purging Russian literature of every sign of foreign influence. During this period, defenders of autocracy and nationalism dominated public debates.

Another indication of the state of affairs during the second half of the reign of Alexander was the religious-mystical fervor that accompanied the political reaction. In this respect the Holy Synod headed by Prince A. Golitsyn demonstrated the darkest aspects of the period. As head of the Holy

Synod and later the Ministry of Education, Golitsyn caused great damage to national education. Two names notorious for their association with the darkest days of the Russian universities are those of Mikhail Magnitsky and Dmitry Runich.^[38] During the second half of Alexander's reign, censorship increased and became arbitrary. Both political writing and artistic productions suffered from heavy censorship. Journalists were asked to write in accordance with government policies. Publication of material about the actions of the government was subject to prior authorization. During this dark period of oppression, many philosophical and literary works were banned, and journals were closed down.

I) The Children of 1812

St Petersburg's youth had joined Alexander on his glorious campaign in Europe simply as military officers on a military mission, but they returned home charged with liberal political ideas. This generation of young men was well educated in European history, thought, and languages and had absorbed a Western mentality from a young age. During the military campaign they had a chance to meet their fellow officers from other allied countries. They became acquainted with the latest Western political debates, theories, writings, and political parties, and they witnessed the formation of constitutional monarchies. They saw the dignified and independent bearing of Westerners, even among those of low social rank. They explained this by the rule of law that had taken hold there, which was the result of a high degree of general enlightenment.^[39]

During the campaign against Napoleon, noblemen also saw the patriotic spirit of the ordinary people and the heroism of the peasant partisans who forced the Grand Armée to retreat from Russian soil. These noblemen, who were brought up to consider and treat serfs as human beasts, suddenly found themselves in the world of the peasants. Living in the harshest conditions together with the peasant soldiers, their respect for the common people grew. This enabled them to form a bond with them. The victory, they thought, did not belong solely to the noble class, but it was a national one shared by all classes. Therefore, they believed that the peasantry deserved the rights of citizens as loyal children of the fatherland.

After the war, these democratic officers returned to their estates with a new sense of commitment to their serfs. For some officers it was not enough to identify themselves with the common people's cause: they wanted to take on the identity of common men themselves. They Russified their dress and behavior. The young officers who came back from Europe were virtually unrecognizable to their parents. The Russia they returned to in 1815 was much the same as the Russia they had left, but they had greatly changed. Society was shocked by their "rude peasant manners", but they differed from their elders in far more than their manners and dress.^[40] These young officers compared Europe to the Russia to which they now returned. They returned to their homeland with opened eyes and awakened minds and were sickened by what they saw.^[41]

The formerly frivolous young officers had been transformed into serious, thinking citizens. Soon they needed more structured ways to spend their time. Sharing common values, experiences, and dissatisfaction with the regime, they needed outlets through which to discuss their concerns and what might be done. They began to gather regularly in social circles at their homes, often with the company of likeminded intellectuals and writers, and naturally politics was at the forefront of conversation. Eventually their views crystallized. They formed secret societies based on Masonic models.^[42] They gathered to formulate an opposition with the expectations of social and political change in Russia, which constituted the core of the Decembrists.

The Rise of the Decembrist Society

A) The First Signal: The Semenovskiy Incident

The Semenovskiy regiment was the most favored of Alexander I. Its officers were all of higher nobility and many of the educated liberals among them were participants in the Decembrist movement. Relations between privates and officers were cordial and corporal punishment had been abolished. During the entire period of the Napoleonic Wars, the regiment endured all the hardships of the campaign without a sign of insubordination. In 1815 it returned to St Petersburg from abroad, with a record of which any military unit might be proud.^[43]

Soon the liberal atmosphere inside the regiment was recognized by conservatives, and in 1820 Arakcheev dismissed the commander of the regiment, General Yakov Potyomkin, who was a respected officer. The new commander, Colonel Schwartz, restored corporal punishment and introduced brutal penalties immediately after taking over his duties. On 16 October 1820 a number of soldiers declared that they could no longer endure the harsh regime and they wanted to make a complaint against Colonel Schwartz. The next day the company was arrested and sent to the jail of the Peter and Paul Fortress. The whole regiment went out demanding the release of their comrades and the dismissal of Colonel Schwartz. The response of the authorities was to send the whole regiment to the jail and later disperse it among distant garrisons. They could get their old rights back only in 1823.

Certain consequences derived from the Semenovskiy incident. Some of the officers of the dispersed regiment never abandoned relations with their old veteran friends; among these was Muraviev-Apostol, one of the leading Southern Decembrists. These faithful veterans would support the uprising, and a great number of them did participate in the Southern revolution of 1825. Instead of preventing or at least localizing the spirit of rebellion, the measures taken by the government only spread it over a wider area. The Semenovskiy incident was the prologue of the Decembrist drama of 1825. Discontent in the army was not confined to the uprising in the Semenovskiy regiment. From 1820 on, various political groups began to organize secret societies with revolutionary aims, similar to those of Western Europe. These developments opened the way directly to the catastrophe of 14 December 1825.^[44]

B) The Union of Salvation

On 9 February 1816, Alexander Muraviev, Nikita Muraviev, Prince Sergei Trubetskoi, Ivan Yakushkin, and Matvei and Sergei Muraviev-Apostol established the first secret political society under the name "Union of Salvation" or "Society of the True and Faithful Sons of the Fatherland". The founders were officers of the Guard and members of the high nobility. The members started gathering at the house of Muraviev. Four of these six officers were officers of the Semenovskiy regiment. The society grew bigger with the enrollment of new young officers. Pavel Pestel, who was to play the leading role in the Decembrist revolt, was one of the new members. Soon Pestel won the leadership of the group. The original stated goals of the society are not clear as its constitution was not preserved.

When the members of the Union met, they agreed on the moral and educational aims of the society but quickly split into two camps over its political program. Most members preferred a liberal but moderate program aimed at achieving in due course limited constitutional monarchy by legal rather than revolutionary methods.^[45] A minority, led by Pestel, called for a revolutionary action. The Union of Salvation was too small and weak to endure such a split within its members. Therefore,

the Union came to the brink of a break-up in 1817. In an effort to reorganize the society under a constitution, a special committee was elected and authorized to draft a constitution. In February 1817, the committee completed the drafting of the constitution. A group led by Yakushkin opposed the constitution and advocated a moderate policy and the gradual influencing of public opinion rather than revolutionary action. Later, the Union obtained the text of the *Tugendbund* by the help of a colleague in Germany. The Committee, after studying the document, modified it and drafted *A Code of the Union of Welfare*, which became known as the *Green Book* (*Zelenaia Kniga*) because of the color of its binder. The *Green Book* became the constitution of the society known as the Union of Welfare.

C) The Union of Welfare

Following the completion of the new constitution, the Union of Salvation was superseded by a larger Union of Welfare in 1818 (*Soiuz blagodenstviia*), which lasted until 1821. The constitution had modest goals in the beginning. Excluding the problems related to political life, the *Green Book* laid out four different fields of activity for the members of the Union of Welfare: philanthropy, education, justice, and national economy. The approach of the constitution concerning the emancipation of serfs was not more than advice to treat serfs humanely, leaving the whole issue to individual will. Contemporary readers interpreted the *Green Book* as a modest and conservative social document. Its scope was also very narrow. There still exists an argument that the *Green Book* presented only a small part of the goals and that the members of the Union of Welfare planned to write a second part in which the political aims would have been laid out. Nevertheless, the second part could never be found and there are doubts that it was ever written, except as a rough draft.

Despite the fact that the *Green Book* did not include provisions of a political nature, the main purpose of its drafters was obvious: to curb monarchical power, to emancipate the serfs, and to introduce reforms in political, economic, judicial, and social life. The Union of Welfare had branches in St Petersburg, Moscow, Tulchin, Kishinev (today's capital city of Moldova), Tambov, Nizhny Novgorod, and other provincial cities of the Russian Empire. Thanks to the liberal and humanitarian aims laid out in the *Green Book*, the Union was able to attract a relatively large number of men. It had approximately 200 members, the majority of which were coming from the nobility or gentry (*dvorianstvo*).

D) The Rise of the Northern and Southern Societies

The modest goals of the constitution soon triggered an ideological struggle within the organization. In the Northern provinces, the majority of the members were satisfied with the principles and goals laid out in the *Green Book*. However, the situation in the south was entirely different. In 1818, Pestel was assigned to the Second Army, which was based in Tulchin (located in today's Ukraine, in the south of the province of Vinnitsia). Pestel immediately started to organize the Southern branch. Despite his revolutionary ideas, Pestel perceived the *Green Book* as a means to demonstrate the innocence of the organization in the case of an attempt by the monarchy to detain its members.

Meanwhile, in the north, the organization lost a number of important and influential members. Alexander Muraviev abandoned the Union and Prince Sergei Trubetskoi went abroad. This loss of blood shook the organization fundamentally. As the remaining members lacked the necessary skills to organize the Union, progress became impossible. The attempts to establish branches of the Union of Welfare in Nizhny Novgorod, Tambov, Smolensk, and Poltava faced the same challenges.

Pestel considered St Petersburg as the city in which the revolt was going to be staged. Therefore, a crack in the Northern Society had the potential to nullify all the efforts towards

revolutionary action. In cognizance of this danger, Pestel went to St Petersburg in November 1819; however, he was unable to persuade the local leaders to accept a more radical program and political action. Internal conflicts and increased government surveillance compelled the Union of Welfare to organize a general conference. The Moscow group took the initiative to convene the conference, and in January 1821 delegates from the Northern and Southern Societies came together at Fonvizin's home.

The government became aware of the conference thanks to the traitor Mikhail Gribovsky. Friends of the delegates from St Petersburg sent a warning to the conference and informed the members of the Union that their actions were being followed by the government. The following day, the delegates took the decision to "fictitiously" dissolve the Union in an attempt to mislead the government and to get rid of the members who had become a burden on the Union.

Pestel resolved to continue the organization in the south under his own agenda. Eventually his group became known as the Southern Society. He drafted a proposed constitution for Russia entitled *Russian Justice*. It called for a republican form of government open to most citizens and the abolition of serfdom with land, but it also featured the retention of the government supervision of economic life and forced Russification of nationalities. Establishing this republic would require assassinating the royal family, after which a dictatorial provisional government headed by Pestel would rule for eight or more years before a republic could be formed. Although Pestel always insisted that he would never become a despot, his behavior did not dispel such fears.^[46]

In 1822 the St Petersburg leaders of the disbanded Union of Welfare established what was known as the Northern Society headed by Nikita Muraviev, this time with overt political goals.^[47] Its nucleus included Nicholas Turgenev, Prince Sergei Trubetskoi, and Prince Eugene Obolenskii. Muraviev drafted the constitution of the Northern Society. The republican ideas of Muraviev were too advanced for the majority of the members of the Northern Society. Therefore, he had to produce a constitution with more modest goals compared to that of the *Russian Justice* of Pestel. The political program proposed by Muraviev was completely different from Pestel's ideas. Muraviev's constitution was an ideological document. Class limitations were expressed much more strongly in Muraviev's draft than in *Russian Justice*. According to Muraviev's constitution, the Russia of the future was to be a constitutional monarchy and at the same time a federal state, whereas Pestel's vision was a republic. Even Muraviev's low-profile constitution was opposed by some members of the Northern Society and was labeled as "utopic".

The Southern and Northern Societies decided to be in constant contact in an attempt to discuss and gradually eliminate their differences. For this purpose, a congress was set for 1826, which would bring the two societies together to work on constitutional principles. Nevertheless, Alexander's sudden death took both societies by surprise and forced them to act prior to the planned time, which was in mid-1826 at the earliest.

The Failure of the Decembrist Revolt and its Immediate and Longer Term Impacts

Despite its failure, the Decembrist movement established a constitutionalist position that was to hover on the margins of public discourse for the next 80 years. Even more importantly, the state's reaction to the Decembrist uprising redefined the parameters of the debate and clearly indicated the constraints on political action.^[48]

Some Russians perceived the Decembrist revolt as an example of how European ideas could become a threat for Russia. Others considered it as proof of the gap that was gradually opening between Europe and Russia. Another reaction was the formulation of a new variant of "Russian

Messianism”, as put forward by the Wisdom-lovers (*Lybomudrie*). Some Russians argued that Europe was superior to Russia in political and economic fields and expected, as Ivan Kireevsky did, Russia to take steps to overcome these differences.

The most significant reaction to the Decembrist uprising came from Peter Chaadaev. In *First Philosophical Letter*, he argued that the unity of Christendom (*Civitas Dei*) was the main factor that made Europe blossom. In contrast to medieval Europe, Chaadaev argued, Russia had made the mistake of following despicable Byzantium, which was not part of the “universal brotherhood of man”. As a result, it had become easy prey for the Tartars. When the Tartars left, Russia could have joined the European mainstream, but did not. For these reasons, he wrote, Russia was now like a child born out of wedlock, with no real heritage. From this, Chaadaev concluded that Russia had no past, no present, and no future.^[49]

A) The New Emperor and the Rise of Autocracy and Despotism

As a man and a ruler, Nicholas I had little in common with his brother Alexander I. In contrast with his predecessor’s psychological paradoxes, ambivalence, and vacillation, the new sovereign displayed determination, singleness of purpose, and an iron will. He also possessed an overwhelming sense of duty and a great capacity for work. In character, Nicholas I seemed to be a perfect despot. He always remained an army man and insisted on arranging and ordering everything around him minutely and precisely.^[50]

The Decembrist rebellion at the beginning of Nicholas I’s reign only hardened the new emperor’s basic views as well as his determination to fight revolution to the end. It also contributed to the emperor’s mistrust of the gentry. Becoming increasingly suspicious of the nobility, Nicholas I tried to keep the gentry away from the power circles and the army became the only field of advance for individual nobles. The new regime became preeminently one of militarism and bureaucracy. The Emperor surrounded himself with military men to the extent that in the later part of his reign there were almost no civilians among his immediate assistants.^[51]

In July 1826, Nicholas published a manifesto in which he portrayed the Decembrists as “monsters”, inspired by foreign ideas and destined to be rejected by the Russian people, who were naturally inclined to embrace monarchy.^[52] In his manifesto, Nicholas I described the Russian people as authority-loving and thereby justified the maintenance of the authoritarian status quo. Throughout his reign, Nicholas I emotionally remained under the effect of the Decembrist events. This played an important role in Nicholas I’s rejection of any notion of political liberalization. He preferred to deal harshly with all groups and individuals that he considered a threat to his indisputable power.

Nicholas I introduced a wave of repressive measures to prevent the spread of liberalism and to pursue the status quo. He imposed strict censorship upon the press and firm control was established over the bureaucracy and the army. The worst effects of Nicholas I’s hostility to liberalism became visible in the field of culture and education. He was opposed to the education of the poor with the belief that the lower classes had become accustomed to a set way of thinking and had to be protected from dangerous liberal ideas. Nicholas I had also learned lessons from the Decembrist revolt. He was aware of the deplorable situation of the peasants and the need for reform to improve their living conditions in order to prevent uprisings. However, this reform had to be carried out from above. Thus, Nicholas I, from 1833 onwards, issued orders aimed at the relative improvement of the treatment of state peasants. Nevertheless, these concessions never created a class of free peasants. On the contrary, Nicholas I strengthened the conservative tradition of reforms from above and equipped autocratic repression with modern efficiency.

In an attempt to fortify his ruthless suppression of all liberal views, Nicholas I enacted a special department in the police, namely the Third Section of the Chancellery. Divided into districts

in order to cover the whole of Russia, the Third Section of the Chancellery was a higher police authority designed to prevent any resurgence of Decembrist activities. The new department swept away all secret societies. In addition, Nicholas I created a huge network of secret agents who closely followed political and religious opponents, foreigners living in Russia, and other suspects. Nicholas I's famous Minister of Education, Count Sergei Uvarov (1786-1855), took all measures to prevent the flow of new ideas into Russia and introduced a stricter regime in the universities. Under Uvarov, the appointment of professors, the control of students, and the scope of the curriculum came under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. The government needed only a limited number of educated servants. Therefore, only a limited number of students were permitted to attend the universities.

B) The Doctrine of Official Nationalism

In normal conditions an Emperor such as Nicholas I who claimed supreme political authority would not be attracted by nationalist ideas. He was the sovereign of a multinational empire and nationalism could have destructive consequences in Russia. However, nationalism was gaining currency in Europe and it was impossible for Nicholas I to completely ignore it. His post-Decembrist manifesto was not "nationalist" in intent. Nevertheless, it gave a role to the Russian people: loyalty to the tsar. Nicholas I had to reformulate the ideal of nationalism in a Russian way in which the tsar assumed a central role. In other words, the tsar would represent everything about the Russian national identity. In Europe, nationalism developed as a centrifugal force that threatened multinational empires, whereas in Russia it had to be tied to the autocrat. Russian nationalism under Nicholas assumed a statist character.

Thus, Nicholas I considered nationalism as a tool to maintain his absolute rule. In 1833, the Russian government, for the first and only time until the Bolsheviks seized power, formulated an official ideology. This ideology, later labeled Official Nationalism, had its origins in a statement made in March 1832 by Count Sergei Uvarov to Nicholas I. His ideology was based on three concepts: orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality. Orthodoxy meant devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church and a return to the spiritual roots of pre-Petrine Russia. The affirmation of the principle of autocracy meant a return to the old Muscovite notion of autocracy as the basic and permanent feature of Russian statehood. Finally, nationality was interpreted by Uvarov as devotion to the Russian national heritage and spiritual make-up of the people, with a refusal to trust Western Europe as a model for Russia or Western European theories as at all relevant for Russia.^[53]

The ideology of Official Nationalism prevailed as the official political doctrine until February 1917. The successor of Nicholas I, Alexander II, was the only Tsar who did not strictly follow this ideology. However, it was faithfully adhered to by the last two Emperors, Alexander III and Nicholas II.

C) The Rivalry between Westernizers and Slavophiles

Following the Decembrist revolt, the revolutionary spirit passed on from the nobility and officers to a new generation of intellectuals. By the 1830s Russia presented an enigma to intellectuals who sought to define the nature of its culture and to anticipate its historical role. It was poised geographically between Europe and Asia; it had been historically separated from the former, but was thrust into contact with it by the technical and cultural Westernization of the eighteenth century. It possessed two "capitals" – the native, Byzantine Moscow and the Europeanized St Petersburg. It was divided socially by the gulf that separated the Westernized educated classes from the ordinary masses, still steeped in the traditions of the past.^[54] This latent cultural ambivalence lay the roots for the emergence of two schools of thought: the Westernizers and the Slavophiles.

The Westernizers were a group of Russian intellectuals who opposed feudalism. Alexander

Herzen, Timofei Granovsky, Nikolai Ogaryov, Vasily Botkin, Nikolai Ketcher, Yevgeny Korsh, Konstantin Kavelin, and some others formed the Moscow Westernizers group. Vissarion Belinsky, who lived in St Petersburg, maintained close ties with this group. Westernizers rejected serfdom and advocated Western-style socioeconomic reforms. Their objective was to demonstrate how Russia was, in fact, already developing along European lines and how it could accelerate this process. The Westernizers called for overcoming Russia's socioeconomic backwardness on the basis of progressive European experience, rather than promoting unique elements of national culture.

The main preoccupation of Westernism (*Zapadnichestvo*) was to reconcile universalism and nationalism. The political and economic models of Europe were superior to those of Russia and thus history itself demanded that they be emulated. Before the Decembrist uprising, the proposed model had been to formulate a constitution for Russia. Following the uprising, the Westernizers believed that the course of history would enforce the inevitable process of Europeanization.

In the mid-1840s, the movement split into liberal and revolutionary democratic wings. The liberal wing comprised Annenkov, Granovsky, Kavelin, and some others, whereas the revolutionary democratic wing consisted of Herzen, Ogaryov, and Belinsky. The two groups had different opinions on the methods of reform and Russia's post-reform development. The democrats advocated revolutionary struggle and the construction of socialism.

The term "Slavophilism" was used to define a group of ideologists who formed a romantic and nationalist group of opposition to the trend of "Westernism". Poet Konstantin Batyushkov was the first to use the word "Slavophile". The ideology strongly appeared as a response to Peter Chaadaev's famous work *First Philosophical Letter*, published in 1836. The classical Slavophiles were a remarkably homogeneous group who were members of a small number of noble families. The most outstanding thinkers of Slavophilism were Ivan Kireevsky, Aleksei Khomyakov, Konstantin Aksakov, and Yury Samarin. Their intellectual home was Moscow, where they had received their education. They considered St Petersburg a symbol of the corruption of Russian life by the hostile West.

The Slavophiles believed that the true Eastern Orthodox faith borrowed by Rus' predetermined the Russian nation's special historical mission. Eastern Orthodoxy was marked by *Sobornost*, the term for organic unity and integration and the salient feature of Russian society's life. The innermost foundations of the Russian soul were formed by Orthodoxy and traditional peasant communes. The Slavophiles idealized the Russian nation's patriarchal nature and the principles of traditionalism and perceived it in the spirit of conservative romanticism. At the same time, they called on intellectuals to merge with the people and to study their way of life, culture, and language.

The central issue of the Slavophile ideology was Russia's relationship with Western Europe. According to the Slavophiles, Russia's exclusion from the Roman heritage was the essential feature distinguishing it from Europe. Russia had been spared this fatal heritage and was therefore established on purely Christian principles that were in complete harmony with the spirit of the Slavic peasant commune. The West was poisoned by shallow rationalism and racked by class antagonism, from which Russia was saved by her Byzantine heritage and Slavic spirit.

The Slavophile ideology occupied an important place in the process of the development of national identity and nationalism in Russia. Its contribution to the awakening of self-awareness among the Russian nation with its distinctions and individualities is indisputable. Slavophile concepts were reflected in the philosophical doctrines advanced by Vladimir Soloviev, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Lev Karsavin, and Pavel Florensky in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The repercussions of the Slavophile doctrine, in fact, can still be seen in contemporary Russia, where the long-lasting debate about whether Russia is European or Eastern is increasingly lively.

The Decembrist revolt served as an inspiration and a model for the future intelligentsia. It survived as a myth to inspire all future rebels against the regime: the intelligentsia of the 1840s, the Nihilists of the 1860s, the Populists and Anarchists of the 1870s, and the Marxists of the 1880s.

D) The European Revolutions of 1848 and the Response of Nicholas I

In 1848, Europe exploded into revolution. Liberal protesters rose up against the conservative establishment in many European capitals. The fire of revolution started in France. Following the severe famine of 1846, the prices of food and other goods rose drastically while wages remained stagnant. The reduced consumer demand forced thousands of industrial workers out of their jobs. High unemployment combined with high prices sparked the liberal revolt. The National Guard and the army garrison stationed in Paris joined the revolutionary protesters as well. King Louis-Philippe attempted to introduce some reforms but it was already late to stop the revolutionary force. Louis-Philippe had to leave his throne and run away while the revolutionaries proclaimed the Second Republic on 24 February 1848.

The revolution of February 1848 in France opened a new chapter in the struggle between the old order and the rising forces of the modern world in nineteenth century Europe. Nicholas could not tolerate a revolution, so he broke off diplomatic relations with France and assembled troops in western Russia in preparation for a march to the Rhine. However, rebellion spread faster than the countermeasures of Nicholas I. In less than a month, Prussia and Austria were engulfed in the conflagration, and the entire established order on the continent began to rapidly crumble into dust. Nicholas I rose to his full stature as the defender of legitimism in Europe.^[55]

The revolution of 1848 produced a wave of repression inside Russia. Even Sergei Uvarov, the mastermind of the doctrine of “official nationalism”, lost his office because he was unable to respond to Nicholas I’s will for the harsher treatment of the universities. In March 1848, the Czar withdrew permission for teachers to travel abroad. He also banned the study of the constitutionality of European states in Russian universities. By suppressing all revolutionary ideas and crushing all revolutionary movements, Nicholas was able to prevent domestic uprisings.

According to Bruce Lincoln, the worst thing about Nicholas’ response to the crises of 1848 was the capricious manner in which he and his senior officials exercised their authority. Obviously, he overreacted to the revolutionary events of 1848.^[56] Similar to the reaction of Emperor Paul to the French Revolution of 1789, Nicholas’ fear of a revolution in Central and Eastern Europe and within Russia turned into paranoia.

The impressive and in certain ways dominant position that Russia gained with the collapse of the revolutions of 1848-1849 on the continent failed to last. In fact, the international standing of the “gendarme of Europe” and the country that he ruled was much stronger in appearance than in reality: liberalism and nationalism, although defeated, were by no means dead. On the other hand, Nicholas I reacted to his success by becoming more blunt, uncompromising, doctrinaire, and domineering than ever before. The stage was set for a debacle.^[57]

E) The Impact of the Crimean War: The Birth of Pan-Slavism, Liberalism, Russian Socialism, and Marxism

Nicholas I was the last of the Romanovs to hold undivided power. He was, in a very real sense, Russia’s last absolute monarch. The collapse of his system, which became dramatically and painfully obvious in the year after his death, forced Russia upon a new course. A multitude of problems had arisen in the first half of the nineteenth century, and they demanded solutions that he and his system could not provide. Russia’s continuing financial crisis, her economic backwardness and underdeveloped industry, her insufficient bureaucracy, and the antiquated institution of serfdom all required attention. It became the task of Alexander II to take them up after his father’s death on

18 February 1855. He would usher in the period of Russia's history known as the Era of the Great Reforms. Paradoxically, this reform era would also see an upsurge of revolutionary terror, and Alexander II, the Romanov who freed Russia's enserved millions, would become the first Romanov to be murdered.^[58]

Alexander II had a stable character compared to Alexander I but he was less reactionary than Nicholas I. Russia's humiliating defeat in the Crimean War against the alliance of France, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire came shortly after the coronation of Alexander II. Tsar Alexander II considered the military defeat of the Russian serf-army by free troops from Britain and France as proof of the need for emancipation. The Crimean War also led to the eventual recognition by the Russian government of its technological inferiority in military practices as well as weapons. Alexander II saw the pressing needs of Russia and initiated a new reform program. His most important reforms were no doubt the emancipation of the serfs in 1861; the introduction of the rural councils, the *Zemstvos*, in 1864; and the judicial reforms that earned him the title of "Tsar Liberator" of Russia.

Before the Crimean War, the position of the Russian state was aligned with Romantic nationalism. Following its defeat, the Russian government made a number of approaches in the direction of Westernism. The new thinking of the state sparked some interesting new repositionings among the Romantic nationalists as well as the Westernizers. Where the former were concerned, the military defeat and the state's loss of interest in Romantic nationalism initially made for a period of inaction. Eventually, however, Slavophilism gave way to pan-Slavism.^[59]

The first significant group of adherents to the ideology of pan-Slavism was one of the Decembrists' organizations, the Society of United Slavs. After the failure of the Decembrists, the pan-Slavic idea was picked up by the conservative Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin. He became the chairman of the main pan-Slavic organization, the Moscow Slavic Benevolent Society.^[60] The group assumed a pivotal role in championing the cause of Balkan Slavs during the Balkan wars of 1875-1878. During those years, the influence of the pan-Slavic group reached its climax and gained considerable public support. Finally, the liberation of the southern Slavs from Turkish rule was accepted by the government as an official policy by Alexander II.

The new reforms and the steps towards Westernization created higher expectations of reform among the Westernizers. However, Alexander was an autocrat and his reforms proved half-hearted in both conception and implementation. Many of the reforms created new problems that increased the disappointment among the Westernizers. These disappointments increased the revolutionary activities. In turn, Alexander II became convinced of the futility of a reform policy and, after 1866, he changed from a reformer to a reactionary. This caused the radicalization of the Westernizers to split into three positions: liberals, Russian Socialists, and Marxists.

Traditional Westernizers who believed in constitutionalism gathered around the liberal position. Socialists believed that Russia had to pick and choose from Europe's experiences in order to arrive at a specifically Russian socialism. This group was no longer referred to as Westernizers. Instead, they formed a new position of Russian socialism that, in the course of the 1860s, was further radicalized into a populist position. The leader of the socialists, Alexander Herzen, maintained that the transition to socialism could be made without going through a capitalist stage. Finally, other socialists argued that Russia had to pass through the same developmental stages that Europe had passed through, which would end with a socialist revolution.^[61]

A number of intellectuals idealized the Russian village commune and no longer referred to themselves as "Russian socialists" but rather as populists. The populists introduced the life of the Russian peasant as a model for Russian development and criticized the individualism of Europe.

According to Walicki, classical populism was not only a reaction to the development of capitalism in Russia but also (and especially at the beginning) a response of the democratic Russian intelligentsia to the capitalism and socialism of the West.^[62]

F) Assassination of Tsar Alexander II and Its Aftermath

In the beginning of the 1880s, populists took the lead, marginalizing the Romantic nationalists and the Marxists. They considered the elimination of Tsar Alexander II as a crucial step in facilitating the introduction of capitalism in Russia. After escaping unharmed from numerous attempts of assassination, the Tsar was finally killed on 13 March 1881 in St Petersburg by a group of populist commandos.

The assassination of Tsar Alexander placed Alexander III on the throne. The first reaction of Alexander III was to tighten censorship. His reign was marked by extreme measures of oppression introduced by the state. Civil liberties were suppressed and police brutality became a daily exercise. In particular, the Okhrana, which was widely used by Alexander III, employed brutal methods in order to identify and eliminate suspected rebels and protestors.

The industrialization process in Russia had adverse effects. The worker class that suffered from harsh working conditions became more open to the socialist influence. With his policies and actions Alexander III paved the way for revolution. In 1894, Alexander III died and Nicholas II became the new Tsar. During the 1890s, the Marxist position became stronger. In 1903, a split took place in the Marxist position. The Mensheviks saw the Russian bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class. In order to topple tsarist autocracy, the proletariat should therefore make a tactical class alliance with it. In organizational as well as political work, European social democracy was an indispensable source of inspiration and support.^[63]

Lenin's "party of a new type" was a new concept in the sense that it was different from the European-style party that the Mensheviks wanted. The rivalry between the "Asiatic Bolsheviks" and the "European Mensheviks" would be a dominant theme in the Marxist debate in the years to come.

G) The Revolutions of 1905 and 1917: From Tsarist Autocracy to Communist Dictatorship

Despite the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 by Alexander II, the position of the peasantry was not greatly improved because peasants were not given land. Trying to purchase lands, the peasants were soon in debt as result of the heavy payments. In addition, the high taxes and frequent famines worsened their situation. Economic factors increased this unrest. The industrialization process in Russia began rather late when compared with European countries. Industrialization created a poorly paid and badly housed and fed proletariat labor force, which was added to the ranks of the discontented. Among the liberals, there was also a wide range of discontent. The Zemstvos, which were created in 1864 by Alexander II, heightened the expectations for a national elected assembly. However, the Tsars were determined to maintain their autocratic rule and this indispensably led to a clash between liberal circles and the government.

Concerned by the growing discontent among peasants, workers, and liberals, both Alexander III and Nicholas II strictly enforced repressive policies. Both Tsars hoped that repression would quiet the discontent of the people. Nevertheless, the repressive measures did not prevent dissent. On the contrary, they created a more radical and more sophisticated reactionary force. As a result, three parties were created: the Social Democratic Party, mainly concerned with workers; the Social Revolutionary Party, concerned with peasants; and the Constitutional Democratic Party, concerned with the educated and members of the Zemstvos. These parties were to provide leadership in the coming revolutions.

The year of 1905 was marked by dramatic sociopolitical changes in Russia. The Russo-

Japanese war was continuing and there was considerable unrest in the capital. The Bloody Sunday^[64] of January 1905 triggered a strike movement that spread throughout the country. Perhaps the most significant effect of Bloody Sunday was the drastic change in the attitude of the Russian peasants and workers. Previously, the Tsar had been considered as the father of the people. However, after Bloody Sunday, the Tsar was held personally responsible for the tragedy that occurred. The social contract between the Tsar and the people was broken, which delegitimized the position of the Tsar and his divine right to rule.

Tsar Nicholas II, in an attempt to appease the people, signed the October Manifesto, declaring Russia to be a constitutional monarchy, and allowed the setting up of a Duma with limited powers. With this step, the Tsarist state came closer to the liberal position. This was the first time in Russia that a united cabinet was formed. The 1905 revolution succeeded in achieving a constitution, but it was to be short-lived since it was almost impossible for an authoritarian system of government to transform itself into a full-fledged democracy. Thus, the autocracy eventually resorted to force near the end of 1905 in order to curtail the strike movement that continued to spread. The new rapport between the state and the liberals after 1905 marginalized the Romantic nationalists, much as had happened after the Crimean War. Similar to what happened in 1856-1863, in the years from 1905 to 1909 the Romantic nationalist position underwent a transformation. The whole position shifted away from pan-Slavism, towards the spiritual outlook of Soloviev.

Though the 1905 Revolution failed, it did have great significance that was felt in 1917. The revolutionaries learned lessons from their failure to get better prepared for the coming revolution. Only a slight spark would be enough to start a revolution. The outbreak of the First World War gave the long awaited opportunity. This time, reactionary classes were determined not to be deceived by the appeasement policy and delay tactics that Nicholas had employed in 1905. When the opportunity arose in 1917, they made use of it to achieve what they failed to realize in 1905. Tsar Nicholas^[65] abdicated the throne on 15 March.

On 16 March a Provisional Government under Prince Gregory Lvov was established in the form of an alliance between liberals and socialists who wanted political reform. With the arrival of Lenin in Petrograd in April 1917, the popularity of the Bolsheviks increased steadily. The Bolshevik Central Committee drafted a resolution calling for the dissolution of the Provisional Government in favor of the Petrograd Soviet and the October Revolution began. On 7 November 1917, the Bolshevik revolt ended the phase of the revolution instigated in February, replacing Russia's short-lived provisional parliamentary government with the government of the Bolsheviks.

Lenin attempted to transform Russia socially, economically, and politically. The Bolsheviks took steps towards the introduction of a centralized state structure imposing ever-growing restrictions and curtailing the freedom of Russian citizens. According to Grigori Petrovich Maximov, the despotic character of state communism converted the country into an immense prison and set Russia back to the times of feudalism and serfdom. He further argues that all that was gained through long centuries of bitter struggle and great sacrifices with church, feudalism, serfdom, absolutism, and state democracy was destroyed by Marxist state communism.^[66]

The Bolsheviks, who strongly criticized the restrictions on political freedom during the Tsarist era, introduced a state control mechanism that went far beyond that of the Tsars. There were many similarities between the Tsarist and the Communist states in terms of state control and suppression of political freedoms. Politically, Russia remained an autocracy, with the dictatorship of the Communist Party replacing an imperialist Tsar.

Conclusion

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Russian monarchy strengthened its centralized apparatus and enslaved the peasant masses. The possible disastrous consequences that such a policy would cause were ignored by the Tsarist rule. The first warning to the Tsarist oppression came with the Pugachev rebellion. The rebellion was crushed but the necessary lessons were not learned from the uprising. Serfdom remained as the major peasantry problem. Despite the pressing need for reform, Tsar Alexander I tried to maintain the status quo and refrained from taking action. The general dissatisfaction grew into a revolutionary force that took the stage in 1825 with the Decembrist revolt.

Nearly two centuries have passed but the Decembrist uprising has remained as a vibrant event in Russian historical consciousness. Being the first open armed action aimed at the overthrow of the autocracy, the Decembrist uprising holds a significant place in the history of the revolutionary movement and the political history of Russia. It is not a surprise, therefore, that Lenin began the periodization of the Russian revolutionary movement with the Decembrists. The contemporaries of the Decembrist movement, such as Pushkin, played an important role in the creation of the Decembrist myth in Russian culture, which had its repercussions in the centuries to come. The successors of the Decembrists learned their lessons from the Decembrist uprising and, with an attempt not to make the same mistakes, they became more organized and well prepared. Thus, “Decembrism” became a philosophy of political rebellion for the revolutionaries.

Perhaps the most profound consequence of the Decembrist uprising was the direct and indirect impact that it had on the character of the Tsarist rule. The trauma of the Decembrist rebellion at the beginning of Nicholas I’s reign hardened the determination of the new Tsar to fight revolution to the end. The regime of Nicholas I became one of militarism and bureaucracy and this was a direct result of the Decembrist uprising. Nicholas remained under the emotional effect of the Decembrist events throughout his reign. The Third Section of the Chancellery, which was created by Nicholas I to suppress all liberal views, became the root of the tradition of a police state, which was later strengthened by the Cheka and the KGB.

Another direct impact of the Decembrist movement was the creation of the doctrine of Official Nationalism, which was a reformulation of the ideal of nationalism in a Russian way in which the Tsar assumed a central role. Official Nationalism has been the first and only official ideology developed by the Russian government. It prevailed as the official political doctrine until February 1917. Except for Alexander II, the succeeding Tsars faithfully adhered to the doctrine until the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

The Decembrist uprising also had a direct impact on the generation of the 200-year-old debate on the place of Russia between West and East among Russian intellectuals. Westernizers saw the “East” as linked with autocracy, despotism, and empire. Their opponents admired precisely these features, which for them signified a strong state, unity, and order.^[67] The Decembrists struggled to reform the Russian Empire based on the model of the European national states.^[68] Other young idealists such as Vladimir Fyodorovich Odoyevsky saw the Decembrist uprising as an example of how European ideas could slowly corrupt Russia. Peter Chaadaev, in his famous work *First*

Philosophical Letter, published in 1836, raised the question of Russia's place in world history. Chaadaev's letter triggered the Romantic nationalists to develop a comprehensive position known as Slavophilism, which claimed that the Russian way of life was superior to that of Europe. The discussion launched by Chaadaev created a controversy between the Slavophiles and Westerners that dominated Russian political thought until modern times.

The Decembrist uprising caused such a fear in the Tsarist state against revolutionary ideas that it was unable to gain the necessary lessons from the European revolutions of 1848. Instead of answering the urgent need for political and economic reform, the Russian state severely restricted public political space and refrained from taking steps to reform the agrarian-based economy. In that way, the Decembrist uprising opened the way for the humiliating defeat in the Crimean War in 1856.

The defeat demonstrated the technological inferiority of Russia before its European rivals. The Russian state decided this time to move in the direction of the Westernizers. The most important reform of Alexander II was no doubt the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. However, the steps taken by the state were far from answering the expectations of the Westernizers for radical reforms. Thus, the stance of the Westernizers radicalized, splitting them into three major positions: liberal, socialist, and Marxist. As a result of the state's choice of the Westernization path, the Romantic nationalist movement also shifted from a Slavophile, isolationist line towards a pan-Slavist, aggressive line that advocated confrontation with Europe. Thus, the revolutionary spirit that took the stage for the first time during the Decembrist uprising had a huge impact on the nature of the state and on the revolutionary movements to follow.

The assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 caused a great setback for the reform movement. The first reaction of the new Tsar, Alexander III, was to increase oppression. In 1894, Alexander III died and Nicholas II ascended the throne. Nicholas II continued the repressive measures, which created a more sophisticated reactionary force. During the 1890s, the Marxist position became stronger. The Marxist position split into a Menshevik position and a Bolshevik position in 1903.^[69]

Following Bloody Sunday, Tsar Nicholas II signed the October Manifesto in an attempt to appease the growing unrest. The 1905 revolution succeeded in achieving a constitution, but it could not transform the authoritarian rule into a democratic one. Despite its failure, the revolution of 1905 prepared the ground for the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. The revolution created nothing but a shift of autocracy from an imperial Tsar to the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

In an attempt to assert their government's legitimacy as a ruling entity, the Bolsheviks tried to justify the Decembrist uprising. In doing so, they used the Decembrists' sense of honor, sacrifice, and obligation to the people as a role model to appeal to the masses. In order to keep the ideals of the Decembrist movement fresh, the Bolsheviks organized ceremonies to commemorate the Decembrist anniversaries. Perhaps the most famous ceremony was the one for the 1925 Centennial, which marked an important moment in the history of the newly formed Soviet Union.

Despite its failure to achieve its immediate goals, the Decembrist uprising, as explained above, gave momentum to a chain of internal political developments that shaped the political history of Russia in the period between 1825 and 1917. The revolt also had an enormous impact on Russian culture. Especially in the post-Soviet era, literature constituted the main forum to maintain and further develop the Decembrist myth in Russian culture. In the post-Soviet era, during the twentieth century, filmmakers and composers used the Decembrists as an inspiration for cinematic and musical explorations of the topic.

Today some scholars and historians argue that there are certain similarities between the nationalist reactions given by Nicholas I to the Decembrist uprising and by President Vladimir Putin

to the demands for pluralism and democratic representation. In both cases, they argue, the head of state restricted the growth of civil society and tried to protect his role as the center of the state and the state's role as the center of society. By equating Russianness with love, respect, and the need for authority, both leaders have been able to distract the Russian people from the undemocratic nature of Russian society. The principles of patriotism, power, and statism cherished by President Putin have clear similarities to Russian nationalism as defined by Nicolas I. In the example of Nicholas I, the postponement of addressing Russia's needs for reform with the policy of state nationalism did not generate the expected results and led to the defeat in the Crimean War, which opened the door for liberal reforms under Alexander II. The decades to follow will demonstrate whether history will be repeating itself.

^[1]Anatole G. Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, Stanford University Press, California, 1937, p.155.

^[2]See Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.158.

^[3]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.157.

^[4]Ryleyev was the de facto leader of the Northern Society. He believed that the revolt was likely to fail and that the participants would be executed. Still, he argued that their sacrifice would not be in vain, as the uprising might "awaken Russia".

^[5]Derek Offord, *The Response of the Russian Decembrists to Spanish Politics in the Age of Ferdinand VII*, *Historia Constitucional*, No: 13, <http://www.historiaconstitucional.com>, 2012, p.163.

^[6]It was later discovered that Prince Sergei Trubetskoi sought protection at the Austrian Embassy.

^[7]Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p.321.

^[8]Kakhovsky was arrested at his own apartment on December 15 (the day after the revolt). He was one of the five sentenced to death. He was executed along with four other ringleaders, Pavel Pestel, Sergey Muraviev-Apostol, Mikhail Bestuzhev-Ryumin, and Kondraty Ryleyev, on the crownwork of the Peter and Paul Fortress on 25 July 1826 and presumably interred with the rest of the five in a secret grave on Goloday Island in Saint Petersburg.

^[9]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.1.

^[10]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.11.

[11]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, pp.11-12.

[12]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.12.

[13]Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, pp.302-303.

[14]Count Nikolai Petrovich Rumyantsev (3 April 1754-3 January 1826) was Russia's Foreign Minister and Chancellor of the Russian Empire in the run-up to Napoleon's invasion of Russia (1808-1812). During the first years of the nineteenth century, Rumyantsev was very influential with Alexander I and his mother Maria Fyodorovna, serving as Minister of Commerce (1802-1811) and President of the State Council (1810-1812). As Foreign Minister (appointed in 1808), he advocated a closer alliance with France. When Napoleon entered Moscow, he advised the Emperor to dismiss Kutuzov and to seek peace at any cost. Eventually Alexander lost all confidence in Nikolai Petrovich, who retired in 1814 just before the Congress of Vienna. Rumyantsev died on 3 January 1826 in St Petersburg. His statue stands in front of the Gomel Palace in Belarus.

[15]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.4.

[16]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, pp.8-11.

[17]Chernyshevsky was a founder of *Narodism*, Russian populism, and agitated for the revolutionary overthrow of the autocracy and the creation of a socialist society based on the old peasant commune. He saw class struggle as the means of society's forward movement and advocated for the interests of the working people. In his view, the masses were the chief makers of history. He is reputed to have used the phrase "the worse the better" to indicate that the worse the social conditions became for the poor, the more inclined they would be to launch a revolution.

[18]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.48.

[19]The Illuminati (plural of Latin *illuminatus*, "enlightened") is a name given to several groups, both real and fictitious. Historically, the name usually refers to the Bavarian Illuminati, an Enlightenment-era secret society founded on 1 May 1776. The society's goals were to oppose superstition, obscurantism, religious influence over public life, and abuses of state power. The Illuminati, along with Freemasonry and other secret societies, were outlawed through edict by the Bavarian ruler, Charles Theodore, with the encouragement of the Roman Catholic Church, in 1784, 1785, 1787, and 1790. In subsequent use, "Illuminati" refers to various organizations that claim to have links to the original Bavarian Illuminati or similar secret societies. They are often alleged to conspire to control world affairs by masterminding events and planting agents in governments and corporations in order to gain political power and influence and to establish a New World Order.

[20]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.48.

[21]The Encyclopedists were members of the “Société des gens de lettres”, a French writers’ society, who contributed to the development of the *Encyclopédie* from June 1751 to December 1765 under editors Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert. The composition of the 17 volumes of text and 11 volumes of plates of the *Encyclopédie* was the work of over 150 authors belonging, in large part, to the intellectual group known as the philosophes. They promoted the advancement of science and secular thought and supported the tolerance, rationality, and open-mindedness of the Enlightenment. More than a hundred Encyclopedists have been identified. The Encyclopedists were not a unified group, neither in ideology nor social class.

[22]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.48.

[23]Arthur L. George and Elena George, *St. Petersburg: Russia’s Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, New York, 2003, p.229.

[24]Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, p.301.

[25]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.46.

[26]Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, p.307.

[27]In Tilsit, the Prussian King ceded about half of his pre-war territories. From those territories, Napoleon had created French sister republics, which were formalized and recognized at Tilsit: the Kingdom of Westphalia, the Duchy of Warsaw, and the Free City of Danzig; the other ceded territories were awarded to existing French client states and to Russia. Napoleon not only cemented his control of Central Europe but also had Russia and the truncated Prussia ally with him against his two remaining enemies, Great Britain and Sweden, triggering the Anglo-Russian and Finnish War. Tilsit also freed French forces for the Peninsular War. Central Europe became a battlefield again in 1809, when Austria and Great Britain engaged France in the War of the Fifth Coalition. Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the Congress of Vienna would restore many Prussian territories.

[28]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia’s Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.236.

[29]Mikhail Speransky (1772-1839) was a unique personality. In contrast to the members of the Unofficial Committee as well as to most of the other associates of the Emperor, he came not from the aristocracy but from poor village clergy. It was his outstanding administrative capacity that led him to serve as the right hand of the Emperor.

[30]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia’s Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.238.

[31]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, p.25.

[32]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.239.

[33]Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, p.310.

[34]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.241.

[35]The Niemen River arises in Belarus and flows through Lithuania before draining into the Curonian Lagoon, and then into the Baltic Sea at Klaipėda. It begins at about 55 km southwest of Minsk.

[36]The Battle of Smolensk was the first major battle of the French invasion of Russia that took place on 16-18 August 1812, between the Grande Armée under Napoleon Bonaparte and the Russians under Barclay de Tolly.

[37]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.245.

[38]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, pp.31-32.

[39]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.259.

[40]Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance, A Cultural History of Russia*, New York, 2002, pp.74-77.

[41]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.259.

[42]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.260-261.

[43]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, pp.58-59.

[44]Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution, 1825: The Decembrist Movement, Its Origins, Development, and Significance*, pp.60-63.

[45]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.262.

[46]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.268.

[47]George and George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, The First Three Centuries*, p.268.

[48]Aleksander Gerschenkron, *Economic Development in Russian Intellectual History of the*

Nineteenth Century, in Gerschenkron (ed.), *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1962, p.164.

[49]Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, Routledge, New York, 2003, p.xiii.

[50]Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, p.323.

[51]Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, pp.334-335.

[52]Sean Cannady and Paul Kubicek, Nationalism and legitimation for authoritarianism: A comparison of Nicholas I and Vladimir Putin, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Volume 5, Issue 1, January 2014, p.3.

[53]Sergei Vasilievich Utechin, *Russian Political Thought*, London, 1963, p.72.

[54]Norman Stone and Dimitri Obolensky, *The Russian Chronicles – A Thousand Years That Changed the World*, Surrey, 1998, p.271.

[55]Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, p.334.

[56]W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Romanovs – Autocrats of All the Russias*, New York, 1981, p.421.

[57]Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, pp.335-336.

[58]Lincoln, *The Romanovs – Autocrats of All the Russias*, p.427.

[59]Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, Routledge, New York, 2003, pp.40-41.

[60]Sergei Vasilievich Utechin, *Russian Political Thought*, London, 1963, p.85.

[61]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, pp.41-47.

[62]Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1969, p.13.

[63]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, pp.92-93.

[64]The Association of Russian Factory and Plant Workers, which was headed by Father Georgii Apollonovich Gapon, a Russian priest who was concerned about the conditions experienced by the working and lower classes, drafted a petition on 19 January 1905 that called for improved working conditions, fairer wages, and a reduction of the working day to eight hours. Other demands included an end to the Russo-Japanese War and the introduction of universal suffrage. On the morning of Sunday, 22 January 1905, striking workers began to gather in the industrial outskirts of St Petersburg and proceeded towards the Winter Palace, the Tsar's official residence. The crowd, whose mood

was quiet, did not know that the Tsar was not there. The imperial guards opened fire into the crowd, killing more than 100 people and wounding more than 300. Although the Tsar was not at the Winter Palace and did not give the order for the troops to fire, he was widely blamed for the inefficiency and callousness with which the crisis was handled. The killing of people, many of whom had seen the Tsar as their 'Father', resulted in a surge of bitterness towards Nicholas and his autocratic rule. A widely quoted reaction was that "we no longer have a Tsar".

[65]In March 1917, the Provisional Government placed Nicholas and his family under house arrest in the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoe Selo, 24 km south of Petrograd. In August 1917 the family was evacuated to Tobolsk in the Urals. After the Bolsheviks came to power in October 1917, ideas of putting Nicholas on trial increased. As the counter-revolutionary White movement gathered force, leading to full-scale civil war by the summer, the Romanovs were moved during April and May 1918 to Yekaterinburg, a militant Bolshevik stronghold. During the early morning of 16 July, at approximately 01:30, Nicholas, Alexandra, their children, their physician, and several servants were taken to the basement and killed. According to Edvard Radzinsky and Dmitrii Volkogonov, the order came directly from Vladimir Lenin and Yakov Sverdlov in Moscow. That the order came from the top has long been believed, although there is a lack of hard evidence. Radzinsky noted that Lenin's bodyguard personally delivered the telegram ordering the execution and that he was ordered to destroy the evidence.

[66]Grigori Petrovitch Maximov, *Bolshevism: Promises and Reality*, Chicago, 2011, p.10.

[67]Peter J. S. Duncan, *Contemporary Russian Identity Between East and West*, *The Historical Journal*, Volume 48, Number 1, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2005, p.277.

[68]Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, p.86.

[69]Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, p.xiii.

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