CHAPTER 1

The Imperial Legacy

LAND AND PEOPLE

The first impression of a traveler moving across Russia at the turn of the twentieth century was the vast size of the country. Stretching nine thousand miles from Central Europe to the Pacific Ocean, Russia was the largest country in the world. Finland and most of Poland, with its historic capital, Warsaw, were within its borders, as were the ancient Christian kingdoms of Armenia and Georgia and the Muslim emirates of Bukhara and Khiva. Traveling from west to east, one moved across an enormous plain without any significant natural barriers. Even the Ural Mountains, which mapmakers established as the border between Europe and Asia, were no obstacle to nomads or invaders. Only in the south were there major mountain chains, like the Caucasus in European Russia and the Pamir, Tien Shan, and Altai at the edge of Central Asia and China. A lesser range, the Carpathians, marked the border between Ukraine and the countries of Central Europe. Moving from north to south was as easy as moving from east to west, facilitated by the great river systems of the Dnieper, Don, Volga, Ob, Enisei, and Lena.

Russia began as a landlocked cluster of small states that grew first to the north and west and later to the east and south, until it bordered on the Baltic Sea and the Arctic Ocean, the Black and Caspian Seas, and, by the seventeenth century, the Pacific Ocean. Russia lay to the north of most of the other major powers in the world. Two-thirds of the empire was above the 50th parallel. One of its southernmost towns, Erevan, later to be the capital of Armenia, was on a parallel with Philadelphia. The harsh continental climate of Russia proper was alleviated only in the empire's peripheries—on the Baltic and Black Sea coasts, in South Caucasia, Central Asia, and the Far Eastern maritime regions. Much of northern Russia and Siberia is permanently frozen tundra, a wasteland of scrubby vegetation. To its south are the massive coniferous forests of the taiga, followed by the mixed-forest zone and the great plains, or steppe. Still farther south, especially in Central Asia, are the arid deserts that make up another 20 percent of the country's territory.

Russia's unfortunate position on the earth's surface determined both the limits of development and the burdens that ordinary Russians bore as their rulers

attempted to compete with more industrialized and technologically more sophisticated countries to the west. Despite its abundant mineral resources, often forbiddingly difficult to recover, Russia was a relatively backward, underdeveloped country as it entered the twentieth century. In the words of one economist, prerevolutionary Russia was "the poorest of the civilized nations." It was the great power least transformed by the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. In 1913 Great Britain was almost five times richer per capita than Russia; the United States was more than eight times richer. Indeed, Russia was poorer per capita than Italy and Spain. And the gap between Russia and the richer nations of Europe widened between 1861 and 1931. Both tsarist and Soviet elites were motivated by the drive to overcome their inferior position and rival the greatest powers on the globe. A sense of backwardness and the need to catch up stimulated, inspired, and sometimes brought Russian leaders to despair.

Just over 43 percent of the people of the Russian Empire in 1900 were ethnic Russians, sometimes called Great Russians, speakers of a Slavic language, usually members of the Orthodox Church, and primarily peasant farmers. They were closely related linguistically, socially, and religiously to the two other major Eastern Slavic groups, the Ukrainians and Belorussians. These three peoples, along with the Poles, made up the Slavic core of the empire, about 72 percent of the population. But since the conquest of the Tatar Khanate of Kazan on the Volga in 1552, Russia had been a multinational empire, and in the early twentieth century it ruled over millions of Jews (4 percent of the population), Kazaks (3 percent), Finns (2 percent), Tatars, Germans, Armenians, Georgians, Muslims of the Volga region, Caucasia, and Central Asia, and the so-called small peoples of the north. The dominant language, used by officials and in higher education, was Russian, but over a hundred other languages, from the Turkic tongues of the Central Asian nomads to the Baltic languages of the Latvians and Lithuanians, coexisted uneasily with Slavic. The empire proclaimed itself religiously Orthodox, the heir to the heritage of Byzantium, but many of its subjects followed other Christian churches, like that of the Armenians, as well as Islam, Judaism, Shamanism, and Buddhism. Russia was a great state, a multinational empire, but not a single nation with a single culture and sense of collective identity.

The first Russian state was founded on the Dnieper, in what is now Ukraine, in the late ninth century (traditional date, 882). The princes of Kievan Rus adopted Christianity as their official religion around 988, establishing a relationship with the Byzantine Empire and what became Orthodoxy, which had enormous influence on the future ideology of tsarism. The imperial two-headed eagle, symbolizing the close relationship of state and church, with the latter headed by the tsar, the separation from the Catholic West and its Renaissance, and a sense of religious mission—all came from Byzantium and influenced the shape of the Russian world. With the decline and fall of Kiev in the twelfth and thirteen centuries, the Russian lands were fractured into smaller, competing principalities which were subjugated by the Mongols in 1237–40. For nearly two hundred years Russia and much of Eurasia were ruled by a great empire with its center far to the east in the steppes

of Mongolia. Paying tribute to the Great Khans like the other Russian states, one of the least prominent of the principalities, Moscow, emerged eventually as the center of resistance to the Mongols and effectively "gathered the Russian lands" into a single state. In the reign of Ivan III, "the Great" (1462–1505), Moscow conquered Novgorod and Tver, and its particular system of absolutist rule replaced the more oligarchic forms in other states. Muscovite Russia was autocratic, with absolute power in the hands of the grand duke (later the tsar), highly centralized (eventually bureaucratic), and militaristic, with its warrior nobles having little independent authority and serving at the pleasure of the prince.

Muscovy expanded steadily in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in the reign of Ivan IV, "the Terrible" (1533–84), it moved beyond the Volga and south to Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea. Ivan IV was the first Russian ruler to call himself "tsar," the Russian word for emperor borrowed from the Latin *caesar*. After his death, the empire suffered a "Time of Troubles," civil strife and foreign invasions by the Poles. But with the founding of the Romanov dynasty in 1613, greater stability led to renewed growth, first to the west, with the incorporation of Ukraine (the union of Pereiaslavl, 1654), and then to the east, with the steady migration into Siberia. Russians crossed the Bering Strait and the Pacific and briefly established colonies in California. In the eighteenth century dynamic emperors pushed Russia's frontiers to the Baltic and Black Seas, bringing Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Baltic Germans, and Tatars into the empire. In the first half of the nineteenth century Russians crossed the Caucasus and annexed the lands of Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis, after which they had to fight for decades to "pacify" the peoples of the mountainous North Caucasus. The final phases of Russia's expansion came in the second half of the century with the drive into Central Asia and the ultimately futile effort to extend Russian power in the Far East. Russia reached its greatest size in the decades before the revolution of 1917. Though Soviet influence and power would at times reach far beyond the borders of the Soviet state, the trend in the twentieth century was no longer expansion of the empire's borders but "downsizing" of the Russian realm, until by the last decade of the century Russia had shrunk back to the contours of Muscovy and Siberia.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeen centuries the Muscovite state steadily limited the movement of Russian peasants, who had enjoyed relative freedom to pursue their own economic lives, gradually turning them into serfs of the landholding nobles. A vast gulf developed between the top and bottom of society. Peasants lived as a separate class, isolated from the larger towns in village communes, holding on to their traditions, superstitions, and religion. The tsars and nobles adopted the ways of the West, particularly after the reign of Peter I, "the Great" (1682–1725), who forced the elites of Russia to study Europe in order to better serve the imperial state. Peter built up his army, levied new taxes, increased service obligations on the nobles, gave greater emphasis to European education, and introduced new industries and technologies borrowed from the West. Peter began a pattern of economic and political reform from above, in response to

foreign challenge and domestic pretensions to greatness, that would be repeated throughout the next three hundred years. In the eighteenth century the educated elite of Russia took on the manners, and even the French language, of the European nobility, and in the reign of Catherine II, "the Great" (1762–96), the empress and her courtiers saw themselves as participants in the cultural and literary Enlightenment. While the upper layers of Russian society were marked by the more secular and cosmopolitan culture of the West, the great mass of the Russian people remained imbedded in the traditional religious culture that was wary of, even hostile to, foreign influences.

The vastness of the Russian Empire was a mixed blessing for its people. The very size of the country meant that the distances to market were extremely great. The riches that lay under the ground and might have contributed to industrialization were far from centers of population. Roads, railroads, and transportation networks in general were poorly developed, though they slowly improved in the century before the revolution. Yet in earlier centuries the frontier was a place to which peasant serfs might flee; later, Siberia attracted migrants from European Russia. Open lands, often quite rich, as in the southeast of central Russia, supported the peasants of the peripheries, though they were faced by unreliable precipitation and fewer sources of water. For the native peoples of the south, the mountains of Caucasia and the great deserts of Central Asia were refuges where the arm of the state could only weakly reach.

The Russian social historian Boris N. Mironov argues convincingly that colonization was what made Russia a great state but that there were also negative effects. Conquering other peoples made the Great Russians a minority in their own empire. A sense of Russian nationhood never fully developed, except arguably among the intellectual and political elite. Russians migrated for much of their history into unpopulated border regions and did not settle in great numbers where other peoples—like the Finns, Poles, or Caucasians—lived in denser settled communities. Russians moved to relatively unpopulated Siberia, the southern steppe, or what later became Ukraine. They did not exterminate native peoples but either integrated them into their ethnicity or left them to their own traditional ways. Migration and colonization created habits and attitudes in favor of developing the economy *extensively*, that is by cultivating new lands and exploiting the abundant natural resources, rather than *intensively* increasing the productivity of already cultivated lands or husbanding resources at hand. Waste and squandering went along with expansion. There was little incentive to use intensive methods, since there was no shortage of land or labor and no abundance of surplus capital to invest. Only in the last half-century of tsarism, when the fund of unclaimed land grew ever smaller and more distant and population continued to grow, did some peasants and landlords turn to more intensive production. But it was difficult to eradicate traditional ideas that "For every soul God will provide" or "For every starving person a piece of bread will be found."

Life for most subjects of the tsar was as harsh as the climate. Life expectancy for the tsar's subjects in 1897 was on average only thirty-two years, slightly higher

for women, slightly lower for men. But ethnic Russians lived less long than other peoples of the empire: on average only twenty-eight years. Latvians lived longest (forty-five years), with Estonians and Lithuanians just behind them, while Ukrainians and Jews managed to make it into their late thirties. Russia's infant mortality rates were the highest in Europe. On the eve of World War I, 245 infants per 1,000 died before completing their first year of life, compared to 76 per 1,000 in Sweden. It was estimated that almost half of all peasant children (43 percent) did not live until their fifth birthday. As Mironov puts it: "Children were born in order to die. The more children were born, the more died; the more children died, the more were born." Russian Orthodox women took a fatalistic attitude toward childhood mortality: "If the child is born to live, it will live; if to die, it will die." Because of various cultural practices, such as techniques of suckling babies, mortality rates among children were much lower among non-Russians—lowest among Estonians but also lower among Jews, Ukrainians, Tatars, Bashkirs, and others. Still, Russia's birthrate, one of the highest in Europe, more than made up for high mortality. The population grew rapidly, even after birthrates began to fall just before 1900. Despite the worsening of nutrition and standards of living for most of the population, death rates also began to decline as medical services, sanitation, and literacy improved.

Russia was a society divided into legally constituted social categories called "estates" (*sosloviia*). Unlike classes, which are usually defined by income, occupation, or, by Marxists, as "the relationship to the means of production," estates are fixed, hereditary stations in life defined in law to have specific rights, privileges, and obligations. Classes were related to the economy, and one could move more easily from one to another, while estates were legally defined social statuses into which one was usually born and from which it was more difficult to rise or fall. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Russian law tended to distinguish between four principal estates: the nobility (*dvorianstvo*), the urban residents (divided into various categories: *pochetnye grazhdane, meshchanstvo, kupechestvo*, etc.), the clergy (*dukhovenstvo*), and the peasantry (*krestianstvo*). At the very time when Russia was consolidating the estate system, much of Western Europe and the newly formed United States of America were eliminating such hereditary categories and opening their societies to greater social mobility between classes. In the Russian Empire there was no principle of the tsar's subjects being equal before the law; they, in fact, were by law unequal! Because not everyone fit neatly into these social categories, a residual category of "people of various ranks" (*raznochintsy*) had to be recognized for those, like artists, teachers, clerks, or petty traders, who fell between noble and peasant. Birth and wealth were key to social status in tsarist Russia, but talent and ability also would be recognized. Because nobility required service to the state until the late eighteenth century, it remained the case that people who served the empire well were often rewarded, first, with personal nobility, and, later, with hereditary nobility that they passed on to their heirs. A curious example of such advancement was Ilia Ulianov, an educational administrator in the Volga town of Simbirsk, who through his diligence and dedication eventually

rose to the rank of hereditary noble, which then passed to his son, Vladimir, who would be known to the world as Vladimir Ilich Lenin.

In 1897, the year of the first all-Russian census, the empire's population numbered 124,649,000. Of these only 18,436,000 people lived in towns and cities, making up less than 14 percent of the population. They included artisans, industrial workers, clergy, nobles, bureaucrats, merchants, and a variety of other townspeople. The most powerful and influential people in the empire, the hereditary and personal nobility, numbered less than 1.5 percent of the population. Over three-quarters of the empire's population (84 percent) were peasants, of whom 90 percent tilled the fields and lived in villages. The Russian word for village—*mir*—also meant "world" and "peace" and was the place where most peasants spent their whole lives. Generalizing about the more than 100 million people living in rural areas scattered across Eurasia and divided into dozens of different nationalities is impossible. Enormous differences divided nomads and seminomads in Central Asia from fur trappers and hunters of northeastern Siberia or the farmers of southern Ukraine. Rather than attempt here to characterize the variety of ways of life and mentalities of villagers throughout the country, we can make a few points about the peasants of European Russia.

Throughout Russia's history, the peasants paid for the rest of society, for the state, for industry, for the civilization of the towns and cities, which they despised and admired simultaneously. Particularly in the last half-century of tsarist rule the government forced the peasants to "underconsume," as it has been euphemistically put, in order to tax their output and export grain abroad so that purchases and payments on the foreign loans that financed Russia's industrialization could be made. Living at the bottom of the social ladder, peasants were considered socially inferior to the rest of society and had little effect on the state's actions. Rather, they were acted upon by the state in the guise of its agents—the tax collector, the police officer, and the military recruiter. To the villagers, the government was foreign and far away and appeared only as an intruder.

Yet this mass of people by its very size and importance in the economy of Russia was quite powerful, if in no other way because of what it could prevent from happening. During the imperial period the government and intellectuals at times saw the peasantry as the major obstacle to progress and development, at other times as the principal dike against the threat of revolution. Indeed, what the peasantry did or did not do would determine whether Russia would grow economically, stagnate, or even slide backward. The general poverty of the peasants limited the growth of markets—they had little money to buy very much—and restricted the formation of capital with which to industrialize the country. Many intellectuals saw the peasantry as the major obstacle to economic and social development. Some argued that the poverty of the peasants prevented the rise of a consumer market and that their lack of skills retarded the formation of an industrial working class. Others saw a transformed, socialist peasantry as the best hope for Russia to avoid the devastations of early capitalist industrialization.

Peasants were basically grain producers. On the eve of World War I over 90 percent of the sown land area was in grain. Not only were wheat and rye what the peasants ate and sold, but grain was the major export of the Russian Empire. The central economic struggle was over how much grain the peasants could keep or control and how much landlords and the state could take from them through rents, collection of debts, and taxation. Most peasants had very little disposable grain. Poverty, disease, death, and ignorance were their constant companions. They were poor in livestock and draft animals, and a cruel image from peasant life was that of a peasant pulling his own plow. The number of horses, cattle, and pigs per capita fell in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the rapid growth of the population in the second half of the nineteenth century (25 million more peasants) meant less land for individual peasant families, higher prices for land, and migration either to Siberia or into cities.

Just after the Emancipation of the peasant serfs in 1861, slightly more than a quarter of Russia's peasants were unable to support themselves through agriculture alone. By 1900 just over half of the peasants could no longer make a living without outside earnings. For generations peasants lived on the edge of starvation, threatened by unpredictable natural forces. A drought or an epidemic could produce widespread famine, as in 1891. Outside the villages wolves roamed, killing upward of a million head of livestock a year. Movement from the village was difficult, even after Emancipation, for laws and economic ties bound people to the peasant commune. Peasant males might leave the village if drafted into the army or sent into Siberian exile or for seasonal work on other farms or in factories. Many peasants were so desperate for improvement in their material conditions that in the last twenty years of the empire 4.5 million Russians migrated to western Siberia and Central Asia.

Nevertheless, peasants managed to cope with the shortage of land and the backwardness of their technology. For all the uncertainty and brutality of peasant life, their conditions may have improved somewhat in the decades before World War I. Overall per-capita grain production actually increased between Emancipation and World War I. In many regions peasant income grew, especially after 1900, and peasants were able to keep more grain in their villages for their own consumption. After the peasant revolts of 1905–7, the government canceled many peasant debts (the payments to redeem the land given peasants after the Emancipation), and their incomes rose even more because of higher prices for grain. Peasant farmers may have felt poor and exploited, overtaxed and abused by the noble landlords in their midst, but in fact they produced on their own fields 86 percent of the total cereal output of the empire and 75 percent of the grain that reached market.

In the ethnically Russian center of the empire, peasant life and work were organized by a unique institution, the commune (in Russian, *obshchina*). The commune's boundaries were those of the village, and it was at one and the same time the local administration, police, and enforcer of custom and tradition. A typical agricultural commune was made up of anywhere from four to eighty peasant

households, with a mean in the late nineteenth century of roughly fifty-four households and 290 people. But in those provinces where water sources were more sparse, toward the south and east of European Russia, villages often included up to one thousand families. The commune ran the lives of the peasants and stood between them and the state. It collected taxes for the government, recruited young men for military service, and kept order in the village. While urban and upper-class Russians lived under written laws, tempered by the will of the autocrat, the peasants lived largely under the customary laws of their region. As a peasant saying declared, "God is invisible and the tsar is far away." But the state, represented by the police or local officials, like the justice of the peace, could make itself felt when it needed to. After 1889 a new official, the land captain, appointed from the local nobility, enjoyed broad administrative and judicial powers over peasants.

Whereas state law was based on individual responsibility, peasant law recognized the collective responsibility of the village commune. The village as a whole was responsible for all taxes and obligations assessed on the villagers. Whereas private property was the norm in towns and cities, family-held or communal forms of property were dominant in the villages. Townspeople might accumulate wealth and rise far above their neighbors socially, but village folk remained generally equal in material terms to one another, and the commune periodically redistributed the village lands to keep households relatively equal. Peasant society was egalitarian and collective, in distinction to the world of the middle and upper classes, which was more individualistic and hierarchical. Instead of individual autonomy being highly praised, conformity to the ways of the village was enforced by the favorable or unfavorable opinion of others. Peasants were hard on those who deviated from social norms. Besides ridiculing them or gossiping about them, peasants controlled their fellow villagers more harshly by beating them, expelling them from the commune, turning them over to the military recruiter, or even, in the case of thieves or arsonists, killing them.

Peasants largely ran their own local affairs through a village assembly and their elected leaders, the elder and the tax collector. While the state tried to impose its authority through these officials, in practice they governed with the consent of the village assembly. The assembly had the greater authority among the peasants, who would obey government directives only after they had been adopted by the assembly. Male heads of household participated and voted in the assembly, which was dominated by older and better-off peasants and excluded women, youths, and men who did not have their own independent household.

Everything in peasant life was geared to the survival of the household and its meager economy. Marriage, for example, was based not so much on fulfilling emotional needs as on maintaining the supply of labor for the fields. Marrying for love alone was considered shameful. Parents arranged marriages and tried to have their children marry young, no later than their early twenties, in order to guarantee that there would be grandchildren and that the family would survive. A boy was not considered a man (*muzhik*) until he married and brought his wife into the household of his parents, where she then fell under the authority of his mother

and father. Girls had little choice but to marry. As peasant proverbs expressed it, "Without a husband, a woman is an orphan." "Life without a husband is a cesspool." "Wings make the bird strong, a husband makes the wife beautiful." Marriage was seen as natural, required, and divinely sanctioned. Its value and meaning came from giving birth to children, particularly sons, and man and wife laboring together.

The family usually worked together and produced for themselves. Little was left over for the market or the tax collector. In this way, peasants may be said to differ from those we usually understand as farmers, those who produce surpluses for the market and are, therefore, intimately involved in the capitalist system. Russian peasant society was far from what Marxists call "bourgeois" society, in which social improvement and position based on accumulated wealth, profit, and saving is both a goal and an incentive to work more than one needs to satisfy basic needs. Traditional in their work habits and ambitions, peasants were not guided by ideas of profit, maximizing their wealth, or efficiency, as capitalist farmers might be. Peasants suspected those with wealth and believed that it was accumulated at someone else's expense. They valued a rough equality, and anyone better off than another was expected to help the less fortunate, at least ideally. Peasants bought and sold in the markets when they could, but in times of great need they could withdraw, lower the amounts that they ate and used, tighten their belts, and wait for better times.

Their ideas of time were also different from those of people in modern industrial societies. Rather than being "spent" or "wasted" as in capitalist economies or regulated by clocks as in the modern world, peasant time responded to the natural rhythms of the sun and the seasons. Peasants might work from dawn till dark or for just a few hours, depending on what tasks or needs faced the family. When sowing or harvesting had to be done, peasants worked long, hard hours, but in winter they might spend most of the day asleep on the stove. Peasants worked as long as they had to to finish a job, not as long as a boss or a time clock told them to work. In this way, peasant work was task-oriented, not time-oriented. In addition, the work year was punctuated by religious holidays and feast days, which when added to Sundays made up over one hundred free days a year. The feasts were marked by huge consumption of food and alcohol, toasts, singing, and mass fistfights between villages that helped alleviate the petty hostilities and tensions of country life.

Though the Russian villagers lived in a world apart from that of the urban classes, many peasants moved back and forth to towns to find work. The circumscribed cultural horizons of most peasants were broadened by such movements, as well as by schooling, which peasants sought as a means to improving their lives. In 1900 almost three-quarters of them were illiterate. More men than women could read, many of them learning their letters while serving in the army. The rate of literacy rose dramatically in the last decades of the tsarist empire, from 21 percent of the population in 1897 to about 40 percent on the eve of World War I. Though it is difficult to generalize about the mentality and beliefs of millions of peasants, historians have argued that they basically accepted the legitimacy of the existing

social and political order. The "Little Father Tsar" was a revered and holy figure who, it was thought, cared for his children, the peasants, and would redress their grievances if only nobles and bureaucratic officials did not prevent their cries from reaching his ears. Loyal primarily to family and village, and perhaps their region, tsar, and the Church, peasants did not have a very clear notion of allegiance to a broader Russian nation.

The existing order was sanctioned by God, and peasants were wary of change. They resisted innovation with the declaration that "our fathers and grandfathers didn't do that and they lived better than we do." They opposed experiments with new tools and were suspicious of the agronomists who tried to teach them new techniques. One provincial administrator in Tambov went so far as to claim that "fear of ridicule is deeply entrenched among the people. They fear evil much less than being laughed at." The world was highly unpredictable and full of dangers. Nature was populated by spirits and demons, water nymphs and devils who might be cruel or kind. Popular religion included belief in sorcerers and witches, spells and curses, the evil eye, and the power of magic. Natural signs were used to tell the peasants when to sow—"when the trees get dressed," for example, or when a certain bird would arrive in the village.

Before the abolition of serfdom in 1861, most peasants lived in large extended families, with several generations under the same roof. Family size shrank somewhat in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the household, like the commune, remained patriarchal in structure, with ultimate authority in the hands of the oldest male (*bol'shak*), who was at one and the same time father or grandfather, judge and mediator of disputes, family accountant and supervisor of chores and farm labor. Women were subordinated to him and other men. As a peasant saying proclaimed, "A crab is not a fish, a woman is not a person." Often the victims of beatings or the violent justice of the village, peasant women were forced to accept male dominance. "The more you beat the old woman," another proverb stated, "the tastier the soup will be." Children were beaten regularly as well, and one who escaped the village to become a famous actor remembered that for his father "loving and fearing your parents was the same thing." Over time, particularly after Emancipation, family relations became less brutal, and women's complete subordination to the will of men was somewhat relieved. The institution of justice of the peace, the spread of liberal ideas, and the migration of both men and women from the villages to towns and factories introduced new ideas and norms that undermined the unquestioned rule of tradition and older men.

Though they were in most things dependent on men and far less socially mobile, peasant women were allowed to retain their dowries and their earnings from certain kinds of work, such as selling eggs or feathers. Women maintained the home and the children, reproducing the relations of power in the household and the commune. They socialized the children and taught them the values of the village world. The children grew up nurtured by mother's love ("There is no other friend like your mother," a proverb proclaimed) and disciplined by the blows of an authoritarian father ("Parental blows give health," claimed another).

Peasants lived in simple, small cottages that outsiders experienced as dark, dank, smelly, and smoky. A frequent visitor to Russian villages, the journalist Maurice Hindus, put together a vivid composite picture of what it was like entering a peasant house:

> There is no door from the street. To enter it you must go into the courtyard, which is always thickly strewn with rags, egg-shells, bones, garbage, and all manner of filth, for the peasant housewife dumps her refuse into the yard. In spring and fall and at other times after a heavy rain, the yard, especially if it is on low ground, turns into a puddle of slush.... The first room you enter is the *seny*—a sort of vestibule with no windows and no light, excepting what dribbles in through the crannies in the walls or the thatch overhead. In this room certain agricultural and house implements are kept and provisions are stored. It is always cold and damp, and smells of rotting wood and musty bread.... In front of the *seny* are the living quarters, usually only one room, fair-sized, dark, damp, fetid, smoky, with bare walls, a floor of earth or rough boards—always, excepting at Easter or Christmas, in sad need of scrubbing. In the place of honor in the corner, directly beneath the ikons, stands a big bare polished table; near or around it, crude backless benches, often also a few chairs, and heavy planks around the walls. Then there is the *polati*, a wide spacious platform, resting against the back wall, which serves as a sleeping place. There is no mattress on it, no pillow, no sheets, no blankets, no semblance of bedding, excepting loose straw or sacks stuffed with straw and covered with a home-woven hemp cloth. When bedtime comes, the peasant pulls off his boots, if he has any on, and drops on the *polati*, usually in his clothes.... If the family happens to be very large every available inch of space on the *polati* is occupied.

No glass on the windows, the wind and rain were kept out by stuffing rags or hay into the openings. What warmth there was came from the large brick oven, where cooking and laundry were done, where peasants bathed, and on top of which in cold weather older folks or visitors slept. Under the stove lived the hens. The whole hut was filled with dense smoke. "Whenever it comes to a choice between smoke and warmth on the one hand and cold on the other," writes Hindus, "the *mouzhik* [peasant] always prefers the first."

Travelers to the villages and self-styled ethnographers as well as novelists and artists tried to fathom the mysteries and varieties of Russia's peasants, but much of their interior life must remain elusive. Among the most prevalent values and beliefs of the villagers was the notion that everyone was obliged to work. "If you want to eat bread," the saying went, "then do not just sit on the oven." The land belonged to God and those who worked it. Peasants did not believe in private property in land or in the "bourgeois" idea that land could be accumulated in one's own hands and make one rich. The land was to provide for all. Labor conveyed the right to participate in the produce of the land, to be respected by one's neighbors, and to share in the occasional repartition of the communal lands. Peasants held tenaciously to an ideal of equality: "All for one and one for all"; "Don't run ahead and leave your own behind." Getting rich was a kind of vanity, but there was no particular virtue in being very poor. "God smiles upon him who is satisfied

with little." "Wealth is a sin before God, but poverty is a sin before other people." Outsiders who saw peasants sleeping on the ovens or taking time off on the many religious holidays thought of the country folk as lazy, when in fact they responded to the seasonal need to work and the need to rest. "The taxes are paid," they said, "we have bread, now it is time to lie down in a warm place." "There are plenty of God's days ahead of us—we will work enough!" Sundays and holidays were sacred: "He who plows on Sunday will be looking for his mare on Monday." And alcohol was the necessary lubricant of leisure. "On a holiday, even the sparrows have beer." Or vodka!

Tradition, following the old ways, was a guide to life: "Like fathers and grandfathers, so should we be," the saying went. "Our fathers and grandfathers may not have known everything, but they were not any worse off." Life, nature, social relations—all were ordered and overseen by God: "What the *mir* ordains is what God has decreed." "You can do whatever you like, except climb to the moon." Order, stability, custom, and knowing what to expect were important to peasants, for life, the weather, sickness, and death were unpredictable, and changes could shatter the delicate balance of village life. "Much that is new, little that is good; where there is novelty, there is crookedness."

Peasants lived in close proximity to one another, unlike American farmers. The gaze of the other villagers determined what behavior was proper and acceptable. They addressed each other with the familiar pronoun, *ty* (thou), rather than the formal *vy* (you), which was used for one's social superiors, the landlord or the occasional visitors from the city. Relations with others were based on emotional or kinship attachments, on respect or disdain, sympathy or enmity, rather than on strictly rational or instrumental using of another person. Being alone was unfortunate. "A person who is alone will drown in his own *kasha* (porridge)." "Live for people, and they will live for you." As the nineteenth century progressed and peasants after Emancipation were freer to affect their own lives, some peasants struck out on their own and adopted more individualistic values. Certain traditions were questioned; the power of the elders was challenged more often; women worked to improve their status. Village life was never as static as some outsiders imagined. Changes were taking place, though fundamental values of egalitarianism among households, besides gender and age hierarchies, remained strong.

AUTOCRACY, NOBILITY, REFORMS, AND REACTION

In 1900 the head of the Russian state was Nicholas II (1894–1917). Though himself a weak and indecisive man, he sat atop an unwieldy, overly bureaucratic political structure that endowed him with enormous power. The Russian political system was an autocracy, that is, a system in which the emperor's (tsar's) will was unlimited. In Muscovite times, the whole of Russia was conceived of as the tsar's own patrimony, though from at least the sixteenth century a distinction was made between the tsar's person and the state. From the time of Peter the Great, the law declared that the monarch was "not obliged to answer for his actions to anyone in

Figure 1.1 Volga peasants, 1905 (RIA Novosti).

the world." The emperor or empress was both legislator and executive, final judge and arbiter of the fate of millions of his or her subjects.

Autocracy was the opposite of constitutionalism or limited government. Unlike in Western monarchies, where the powers of rulers were constrained by parliaments or noble councils, through charters or feudal rights invested in landed elites, in Russia the nobility was not entitled to implement its interests or its will through state institutions. Nobles had no independent claims to authority in the state but were seen as the chosen servants of the tsar. Their land had originally been granted to them by the grand dukes of Moscow and later the tsars and in earlier centuries could have been taken from them at the will of the sovereign. The Russian aristocracy made few attempts to limit the tsar's power, and none

were successful. The bulk of the nobility preferred continuance of the autocracy, rather than any aristocratic oligarchy or European representational institution, at least until the early twentieth century. Tsar and noble supported each other, maintaining a stable political regime that could defend the realm against foreign threats, keep the various nobles from fighting each other, collect taxes and keep order over the immense spread of the Russian lands, and preserve the nobles' hold over their peasant serfs.

While not a ruling class, the landed nobility was in actuality the dominant class in Russian society and remained so until the revolution swept them into oblivion. Their very way of life—their wealth, style, behavior, and distance from ordinary people, all of which stemmed from their birth—gave them a sense of their own right to rule and to be obeyed. The tsar and his state were the ultimate guarantor and protector of the nobility and the landlord's relationship to the peasantry. It was the tsarist government that enserfed the Russian peasantry in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the state that crushed peasant rebellions, and the Tsar-Liberator, Alexander II (1855–81), who handsomely rewarded the landed gentry when he freed the serfs from bondage. On the other hand, landed nobles thought of themselves as the proper governing class of the empire, particularly in the provinces, even though those nobles who stayed in the countryside lost much of their influence to the highest hereditary nobles nearer to court and to a less prestigious personal nobility within the civil bureaucracy and the military.

Russia often turned to reform of its governmental structure or social institutions after defeats in war. Peter the Great looked to the West for models of governance after Swedes and Turks humiliated Russia on the battlefield. Military needs led to fiscal reforms that carried over into other spheres of life. Alexander II came to the throne in the midst of the devastating losses in the Crimean War, when Russia faced a number of European powers and the Ottoman Empire, and he soon empowered his more liberal advisors to begin a vast program of emancipating the enserfed peasantry, modernizing the army, and creating a new system of justice. The emperor's concern was to stimulate economic development of the country and ensure social stability and political order. Against the will of most of the landholding nobles, Alexander granted personal freedom to the serfs and gave them land to farm. Though the state paid the nobles up front, the peasants were obligated to pay back the state's loans and were thus condemned to immobility and indebtedness for decades to come. Neither nobles nor peasants were satisfied. The former landlords had neither the skills nor the capital to become efficient producers for the market, while the peasants felt that the emancipation law had been "written for the masters, not for us." Peasants remained dependent on nobles, who controlled much of the land, but as time passed, more and more nobles had to sell their land and many of the buyers were peasants. The amount of land held by the nobility steadily dropped after 1861, and land held by peasants increased until by 1905 peasants owned about two-thirds of the arable land. The eventual effect of the Emancipation was a landowning class of peasants that aspired to full, unencumbered possession of the land, but ultimately that would come only with the revolution of 1917.

With the reduction of noble control over the countryside, the tsar set up institutions of local government, the *zemstva*, which were to run schools, provide for welfare, and carry out local administration. To compensate for their losses in the Emancipation, the nobles were given the dominant position in the *zemstva*. But there was an inherent contradiction between an autocratic state, which in theory placed unlimited power in the sovereign, and these somewhat-autonomous local bodies running the districts and provinces. Later emperors and conservative bureaucrats worked to restrict the powers of the *zemstva*, but new professionals—referred to as the "third element"—found a home in the local institutions and tried in small ways to improve life in the provinces. The state pulled in one direction, toward central control and discouraging local initiative, while society pulled in another, carving out a space for independent activity fostering social improvement.

One of the most important innovations of the Age of the Great Reforms was the juridical reform of 1864. Earlier, courts were meant to protect and defend the state rather than the rights of the people. As in many countries, wealth, social position, and whom one knew, along with well-placed bribes, determined how well one would do in court. "Justice is strong," the proverb claimed, "money is stronger." "Do not fight with a strong man, do not go to court against a rich man." "Where there is a court," a most cynical saying went, "there is injustice." Law was made by the state, not by courts, but "God is high, and the tsar is far away." There seemed to be a contradiction between unlimited autocracy and the possibility of a judiciary free from the pressure and interference of government officials. Yet Alexander II was determined to create a justice system independent of the government's will with judges and juries that would determine the verdicts. This system was designed for the middle and upper classes, since peasants had their own courts that ran according to the customary law of the region. The tsar set up justices of the peace, who also would judge peasants and others in petty cases. A hierarchy of courts was created for more important criminal and civil cases, with judges appointed by the Ministry of Justice. By law these courts were to operate with complete freedom, free speech in the proceedings (if nowhere else in Russia), and independent juries. Yet from the beginning the tsar could overturn a verdict or keep a case out of court. When Alexander removed a judge and was told that judges were irremovable, he simply said, "But not for me!" Autocracy trumped procedure and the rule of law. When in the 1870s juries acquitted revolutionaries whom the government wanted convicted, the police arrested them anyway. "For the Russian autocracy to accept an independent judiciary," writes historian Richard Wortman, "required that it betray its essence and cease to be the Russian autocracy."

The monarchy made a strong effort to improve the position of the nobility during the reign of Alexander III (1881–94), often viewed as a period of reactionary policies and social repression. The emperor himself was an avowed anti-Semite, who once said, "In the depth of my soul I am happy when the Jews are beaten up." His policies increased the influence and power of the landed nobility, among the

most conservative groups in the empire, and tied the peasants even more securely to the village communes. He rejected the suggestion that courts and other state institutions be open equally to all his subjects regardless of estate. Prepared to quash any resistance or opposition to the smooth functioning of his state, he sought to surround himself with "true Russians" as advisors. His ministers initiated severe censorship of the press and in universities and carried out discriminatory policies toward non-Russians. By the turn of the century the nobles' economic and political decline was reversed, largely because of global economic trends. Like the peasants, those nobles who held onto their land benefited from the rise of cereal prices after 1900 and enjoyed a period of considerable prosperity on the eve of World War I.

Noble attitudes on the autocracy varied from the reverent to the rebellious. The Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, the uncle of Nicholas II, asked Sergei Witte, a key advisor to the tsar, whether he thought the emperor was "merely a human being or is he more?" Witte answered, "Well, the Emperor is my master and I am his faithful servant, but though he is an autocratic ruler, given to us by God and Nature, he is nevertheless a human being with all the peculiarities of one." The grand duke disagreed. "To my mind," he said, "the Emperor is not a mere human being, but rather a being intermediate between man and God." A conservative newspaper editor was more cynical when he confided to his diary in February 1900:

> Autocracy is far superior to parliamentarism because under parliamentarism people rule, while under autocracy—God rules.... The Sovereign listens only to God, and only from God does he take advice, and because God is invisible, he takes advice from everyone he meets: from his wife, from his mother, from his stomach... and he accepts all this as an order from God.

One of Alexander III's ministers, fearful of Western-style innovations that would tamper with the divinely sanctioned autocratic system, warned:

> Every attempt to introduce West European parliamentary forms of government into Russia is doomed to failure. If the tsarist regime is overthrown, its place will be taken by pure undisguised communism, the communism of Mr. Karl Marx, who has just died in London and whose theories I have studied with attention and interest.

The constitution granted by the last tsar, Nicholas II, in 1905 helped to revive noble power by giving them influence in the upper house of parliament, the State Council, and in the lower house, the Duma, thanks to property qualifications for enfranchisement, and within high state institutions. The semiconstitutional, semi-autocratic regime created after 1905 gave unexpected clout to a small number of landed nobles, who in the last decades of the tsarist regime were able to make political and land reform difficult, if not impossible. Their recalcitrance and shortsightedness contributed directly to the final crisis of the imperial state. So closely tied to the tsarist regime was the nobility that its demise quickly followed the fall of tsarism.

In stark contrast to the fate of the nobility, another institution of the tsarist period, the bureaucracy, not only survived the revolution but after some major surgery transformed itself into the central nervous system of the new Soviet system. From its modest origins in the Muscovite state the Russian state bureaucracy grew steadily as an instrument of westernization, expanding from about 15,000 to 16,000 officials in the late eighteenth century to more than 74,000 by the mid-nineteenth century and on to about 385,000 in the early twentieth. During the nineteenth century the number of officials rose seven times as rapidly as did Russia's population. Even so, in Russia there were fewer bureaucrats per person than in any other European country. Though the very highest officials and officers were often men of great property and wealth, family ties became far less important for a state or military career as time went on. Increasingly nonnoble in origin, the bureaucrats were people whose status depended less on birth and more on education and achievement.

As some members of the bureaucracy became more professional in their outlook and work habits, particularly in the nineteenth century, they attempted to promote regular procedures and an adherence to law in order to combat the corruption and disarray within the ministries and the influence of court favorites. They were ultimately thwarted by the autocratic nature of the tsarist system, which allowed the tsar to act in arbitrary and contradictory ways, making a decree on a Tuesday and changing his mind on a Thursday. The autocrat's ability to act on whim precluded the establishment of a general rule of law in Russia. The country was a land of regulations and personal favoritism rather than a land of impersonal rules, predictable laws, and rational bureaucracy. Russian officials were often petty men of little talent who did not have clearly defined functions and procedures within the bureaucracy. Moreover, there were no effective channels of communication through which influential people in society could express their interests to the bureaucratic state.

Closely allied to the state was the Russian Orthodox church. The tsar was head of both church and state, and from the time of Peter the Great, the Holy Synod, a state institution, replaced the Muscovite patriarchs as the highest authority within the church. Steadily from the early eighteenth century, the church lost influence and power within the ruling groups, even as it retained the loyalty of the vast peasant population. Catherine the Great secularized the church's enormous land holdings and deprived it of its serfs and much of its revenues. The church became dependent on state subsidies, while ordinary parish clergy grew ever poorer, living off contributions from their parishioners. As Russian elite culture became more Western and secular, the role of religion in life diminished, and much of the intelligentsia saw the church as a reactionary ideological pillar of the autocracy. The church retained control over marriage and divorce, however, and much of education was in its hands. At times conservative tsars, like Nicholas I (1825–55) and Alexander III, turned to the church to reinstate old Russian values and religion in the minds of the young. On occasion missionaries attempted to convert pagans and Muslims among the non-Russian population to Orthodoxy but with limited success.

The Orthodox clergy was divided between the "black clergy," celibate monks who could rise to the top of the Church's hierarchy, and the "white clergy," the lowly parish priests who could marry. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries local parish priests were elected by their parishioners and then confirmed by the bishops. But over time villagers tended to choose children of their priests to become priests, and eventually the priesthood became hereditary in clerical families. The clergy received certain privileges. Like nobles, they were freed from direct taxation and exempted from corporal punishment and military service. By the early nineteenth century the status of clergy was equal to that of personal nobles (for example, they had the right to ride in carriages). But in the eyes of most nobles they remained social inferiors. Despised for their loose morals by peasants as well, dissipate priests dragged down the prestige of the Church. The higher authorities worked to reform the Church, abolish the hereditary status of the parish priests, improve their education, and turn what had become a social estate into a free profession.

Russia's Orthodox church was highly traditional and seldom innovative theologically and never experienced anything like the Reformation. Indeed, its greatest challenge came from an antireformationist movement, known as Old Belief, that beginning in the seventeenth century resisted any changes in liturgy or ritual. Ironically, the ultratraditionalist schismatics, particularly those who chose to live without priests of any kind, brought a spiritual vigor and even radicalism to their religious practices. They resisted the church hierarchy's injunction to cross oneself with three fingers rather than the traditional two, and thousands of schismatics burned themselves to death rather than succumb to alien authority. For millions of Russians religion was deeply felt, though very often its most passionate practice, whether among sectarians or peasants who mixed Orthodoxy with superstition and remnants of paganism, occurred outside the church.

The ponderous bulk of the tsarist state weighed heavily on the Russian landscape, crushing the weak institutions of civil society that budded outside of the state. The tsar and his ministers remained suspicious of all autonomous organizations and activities of his subjects that in any way might compromise their absolute power. Censors and the police patrolled the society, restricting intellectuals to private discussions, preventing workers from forming unions (up to 1906), and restraining efforts by professionals and even nobles to form organizations to express their own views and interests. What did develop was a public sphere of educated people who were able in a limited way to express their ideas, largely through literature and art, but the regime stifled a broad civil society of autonomous organizations and interest groups. Only in the last decade of the regime, after the constitutional reforms of 1905, was the realm of rights briefly and hesitantly extended to the population. Between society and the state emerged the alienated intelligentsia of liberals, radicals, and revolutionaries, which became a rival society with oppositional ideologies that seriously threatened the defenders of tsarism. In Russia, as the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci put it, "the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous."

THE COMING OF CAPITALISM

Historians of capitalism have emphasized the importance of towns in the early Middle Ages as the original site where long-distance trade created the conditions for the emergence of a market economy, the increased use of money and credit, and a division of labor between agricultural production and manufacture. In his influential writings Karl Marx argued that as a system of production capitalism was indebted to early modern England, the enclosure of peasant lands by the powerful that drove villagers into poverty, the towns, and waged labor. In Russia the centuries of serfdom, with peasants tied to land and landlords, unable to move freely and forced to produce for their masters, inhibited the development of both market relations and urban settlements. In the deep past towns in Russia were first and foremost fortresses, walled settlements often centered around an inner fort, the kremlin, with tradesmen and craftsmen settled around them. They were few and far between. Even on the eve of World War I, Russian towns officially numbered only 729. The average distance between them was 55 miles in European Russia, closer in Poland and the Baltic region, but 307 miles in Siberia. In Western Europe the corresponding distances between towns averaged from just under 5 miles to just over 9 miles. Saint Petersburg, the capital and the empire's largest city, had 1,265,000 inhabitants in 1897; Moscow followed with 1,039,000. The next eight largest cities—Warsaw, Odessa, Łódź, Riga, Kiev, Kharkov, Tiflis, and Vilna—were all in non-Russian ethnic borderlands. Until quite late Russian towns were in large part agrarian, with more than half the population engaged in agriculture, and only in the second half of the nineteenth century did those towns turn into trading, manufacturing, and industrial centers. Still, Russia remained an overwhelmingly rural country. On the eve of the revolution of 1917, only 17 percent of the population lived in towns and cities.

As Russia entered the last quarter of the nineteenth century, its economy was still dominated by peasant agricultural production, much of which never reached the market. Trade and commerce were poorly developed, and for nearly a century influential Russian economists had been advocating that the country follow Western Europe and America in the direction of market capitalism. The European and American economies were based on private ownership of enterprises, hired rather than compulsory labor, and production of goods for sale on the market. Moreover, England, the first capitalist economy, had led the world into industrialization and mass production. Though in many ways the 1880s and early 1890s were the height of tsarist patriarchy or patrimonialism, those decades were also the moment of the first great takeoff of Russian industrialization and began a radical transformation of the economy. As his minister of finance Sergei Witte wrote in his memoirs, "Alexander III recognized that Russia could be made great only when it ceased being an exclusively agricultural country. A country without strongly developed industry could not be great."

Serfdom had inhibited the formation of an industrial workforce by keeping peasants tied to the land, and the great power of the landed nobility, the estate

most opposed to capitalist development, inhibited the shift to a market economy. Once the serfs were freed, however, and noble power suffered a decline, the road to capitalism was somewhat smoother. By requiring redemption payments for their land from the peasants, nobles contributed to the circulation of money. Those nobles able to adjust to the new economic environment consolidated considerable estates and successfully engaged in commercial agriculture. The increased flow of grain to market and the greater (though still restricted) mobility of peasants aided the growth of cities and the emergence of a working class.

Russia was capital-poor and had only a small entrepreneurial class of industrialists and merchants. The least "bourgeois" of any major European state, Russia had few traditions that encouraged enterprise. Almost all social groups were suspicious of middle-class virtues, such as thrift, delayed gratification, and investment for the future, and considered the accumulation of wealth obscene. Intellectuals, from the conservative novelist Feodor Dostoevsky to the Marxists, shared with nobles and peasants a contempt for the "bourgeoisie," the propertied middle class of the West. Standards of honesty were low; arbitrariness, cheating, bribery, and the currying of favor with officials marked economic and social interchanges. In a society where obedience to law was not internalized but required a firm authority to enforce it, personal relationships often took precedence over legal norms.

Yet a small group of entrepreneurs, some of them former serfs, many members of dissident religious sects like the Old Believers, emerged in the nineteenth century to plant the seeds of a market economy. Over time the merchants developed respect for hard work, thrift, temperance, and modest living. Russian business operators tended to be patriotic and devoted to autocracy, probably because they were dependent on the state for support. They did not develop oppositional ideologies, like liberalism, as was common in Western Europe, but were instead nationalistic, anti-Western, and supportive of Russian imperialism in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Merchants were hostile to nobles, whom they considered lazy and undeservedly privileged, and nobles reciprocated by looking upon businesspeople as "dirty-faced" and "fat-bellied."

The weakness of the Russian middle class meant that other sources of capital formation had to be found. Some economic growth resulted from private industries, such as cotton textiles and sugar refining, that found domestic markets. But the weakness of the internal market and the lack of purchasing power among the peasants constricted rapid development. Beginning in the 1880s the tsarist state became a major initiator of industrial development. Taxing the peasants, exporting grain abroad, and borrowing from foreign investors, the government established a program of public works, such as the building of the Trans-Siberian railroad, that stimulated other enterprises, among them the iron and steel industry. In 1891 the Mendeleev Tariff, favored by the merchants, placed high duties on imported European goods that created a protected area in which native industry could develop and contributed to the state's revenues. The government acted in the role of the largely absent Russian bourgeoisie through a system of state capitalism,

which was an early version of deficit financing. In a capital-poor country the government stepped in, borrowed money, and founded new industries that then stimulated a cycle of economic growth. Long before Communists took power, Russia had the largest state-financed industrial sector of any major power.

The results were spectacular. Gross factory output increased more than 5 percent per year from 1883 to 1913, sustaining an annual rate of overall industrial growth of 8 percent per year in the 1890s. The labor force grew about 3 percent per year, and labor productivity in industry increased 1.8 percent annually. The older industrial regions of Russia, like the Urals, were soon eclipsed by the newly industrialized Ukraine. Coal from the Donets region provided fuel for locomotives as well as coke for the iron and steel works that made rails for the new railroads. Iron ore from Krivoi Rog created a new industrial landscape around Kharkov and Ekaterinoslav. At the same time, Moscow and Vladimir took the lead in textile production away from Saint Petersburg, which remained, however, both a textile and a metallurgical center. Industrial production in Russian Poland increased ten times between 1870 and 1890, doubling between 1887 and 1893.

THE RUSSIAN INTELLIGENTSIA

Education in tsarist Russia was a privilege reserved for the few. From the early nineteenth century those distinguished from the rest of society by education and their reformist attitudes were known collectively as the intelligentsia. As a social group, the intelligentsia was marked by its sense of being apart from the people around it and its distance from the tsarist state. One of its earliest representatives, Aleksandr Herzen, defined his fellow Moscow intellectuals as possessed of "a strong feeling of alienation from official Russia and from their surroundings." The historian Marc Raeff saw as "the characteristic trait of the intelligentsia" its conception of "its role as one of service to the people." Less generously, Dostoevsky criticized the intelligentsia for being "historically alienated from the soil" and for "raising itself above the people." While liberals in Russian society saw the intelligentsia as social reformers engaged in enlightened activity, conservatives thought of it as pathological and ultimately harmful.

The intelligentsia was not a social class, that is, a group of people of similar social position or engaged in related work; rather it was a group of men and women of different social origins united by vague feelings of alienation from society and dedicated to changing Russian society and politics. At first most intellectuals were nobles, but increasingly a number of people from no definite social estate, the so-called *raznochintsy*, joined their ranks. Idealist in both the philosophical and political sense, the early intellectuals gathered in discussion circles where they debated questions of art and philosophy. After the December 1825 conspiracy by Western-oriented nobles to overthrow the autocrat was crushed, the new emperor, Nicholas I, became deeply suspicious of intellectuals and reformers. As police surveillance increased, real politics became too dangerous, and discussions about the perfectibility of human beings and society became a kind of surrogate.

The first generation were liberals either enamored of the West (the Westernizers) or who looked backwards to an idealized collectivist Russia (the Slavophiles). Herzen and his friend Nikolai Ogarev became interested in the fledgling socialist movements in France, but their innocent search for political alternatives ended with their arrest in 1834. In the next decade a few intellectuals became more radical, more critical of religion, and more directly involved in politics. Slavophiles and Westernizers no longer frequented each other's circles, and among Westernizers socialists broke with the more moderate liberals. The Slavophiles celebrated the imagined harmony and collectivity of the peasant commune and feared that western capitalism combined with Russian bureaucratic absolutism would eventually destroy the unique values of traditional Russian life. The liberal Westernizers believed that Russia had to abandon its backward ways and become more like Europe—industrial, urban, and constitutional. Reform had to come from above, from the state, and be gradual and moderate. The socialists combined elements from both Slavophilism and Westernism. They called for a leap beyond capitalism into a social order based on the peasant commune. For men like Herzen socialism meant a fusion of what they took to be democratic and egalitarian elements of the commune with the guarantees of individual dignity and rights found in the most advanced Western states. But they fervently wanted to avoid the West's capitalism, private property, a proletariat, and an urban industrial system as Russia moved along its own unique road into the future. If reform did not work, they were prepared to advocate revolutionary change.

With the outbreak of revolutions in western Europe in 1848, the tsar cracked down hard on dissident politics within his empire. The liberal writer Ivan Turgenev was sent into exile for writing a laudatory obituary for his fellow writer Nikolai Gogol. Dostoevsky was arrested and sentenced to death for belonging to a socialist circle. At the last moment, with the novelist standing before a mock firing squad, the sentence was changed to exile in Siberia. This dark period culminated in Russia's hapless drift into war over Crimea (1853–56) and its defeat at the hands of the European powers. With the ascension of Alexander II, a new era of somewhat-freer expression and reform began. New journals and newspapers, discussion circles, and underground political movements blossomed. Poetry, short stories, and novels, which had appeared for the first time in Russia in significant quantity and quality only in the first decades of the century, now became a major medium through which powerful thoughts about society, personality, and morality were expressed. Even when hobbled by the censors, Russia's writers, from Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov to Turgenev, Lev Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and on to Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky, managed to produce a literature that in its profound explorations of human existence exposed the pettiness and brutality of Russian life.

The 1860s was an age of radical, even revolutionary, politics, but the young radicals denigrated the elitism of Russia's westernized culture. They considered literature and art to be products of upper-class sensibilities, and thus cut off from the great majority of the people. Rather than poetry and romantic intuition, the radicals called for a commitment to science, reason, and useful art. The acknowledged leader of the "men of the sixties" was Nikolai Chernyshevskii (1828–89), a philosopher and the editor of a leading intellectual journal, who boldly identified beauty with the morally and socially desirable. Art was to show life as it is and ought to be. Turgenev called Chernyshevskii a "literary Robespierre," and in his famous short novel *Fathers and Sons* he drew a sharp portrait of the rival political generations. From his jail cell Chernyshevskii answered with his own novel, *What Is to Be Done?*, in which he portrayed a model revolutionary that inspired many young men and women to turn to revolutionary activity.

Alexander II's early reign was also a time in which non-Russian peoples of the empire enjoyed relatively benign treatment by the tsarist government. Some ethnic leaders, as well as tsarist officials, advocated assimilation into the dominant Russian culture. Urban Armenians russified the endings of their names, and influential Jewish intellectuals pushed for secular reform of their community. At the same time poets and patriotic writers in Ukraine, the Baltic, and the Caucasus elaborated ideas of national culture and history that laid the foundation for future claims to nationhood. But when Poles rebelled against the empire in 1863, Alexander brutally suppressed the movement and moved away from his earlier reformist efforts. The government was particularly determined to deny separate nationality to the Slavic peoples of the empire. Petr Valuev, Alexander II's minister of the interior, declared that "a special Little Russian language [Ukrainian] has not existed, does not exist, and cannot exist." Later, just as Ukrainian writers were developing their own literary language, the state forbade all printing and performances in Ukrainian.

In 1866 an attempt was made on the life of the tsar, and the era of tolerance came to an abrupt end. Liberals bided their time, hoping that the emperor would renew his program of reform. Radicals went underground, and in the 1870s several thousand dedicated young people organized a movement "to the people," to try both to teach the peasants as well as to learn from them. These propeasant activists made up the political movement known as populism, which sought to create a Russian socialist society based on the peasant commune. When their efforts at propaganda met little positive response from the peasants, one wing of the populist movement turned to terrorism to weaken the government and inspire peasant rebellion.

MARX, LENIN, AND THE CASE OF RUSSIA

The writings of the German philospher and historian Karl Marx (1818–83) were known to a small segment of the Russian reading public from about 1848, when the government censor permitted translations to enter Russia. The state's guardian of proper information was convinced that Marx's work in no way threatened the regime but, rather, was "an abstract speculation" with no relevance to Russia. In 1872 the first volume of Marx's major economic treatise, *Capital*, was translated into Russian, and Marx himself was surprised by its reception. "By some irony of

fate," he wrote, "it is just the Russians whom for twenty years I have incessantly attacked [who] have always been my well-wishers."

Marxism was first taken up in Russia by the young populist revolutionaries, who, impressed by his analysis of capitalism and appalled by the rise of "bourgeois society" in the West, resolved to prevent such a social evolution in Russia. Both Marx and his closest associate, Friedrich Engels, admired the revolutionary zeal of the populists and argued that Russia would be an exception to the general European development of capitalism. If it acted soon enough, Russia would be able to avoid capitalism and build its socialism on the commune, but only "if the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other." But Marx's most fervent followers came, not from the radical, but from the moderate wing of populism. Led by Georgii Plekhanov (1856–1918), a number of young socialists gradually lost faith in the commune, which they saw as already infected by the polarizing effects of the market economy, and declared themselves "Marxists." Rather than concede that Russia might build a peasant-based socialism, Plekhanov concluded that Russia could not avoid a bourgeois-capitalist stage. A "bourgeois revolution," like that in North America in 1776 or France in 1789, was inevitable in Russia and was necessary to create the conditions for the full development of capitalism and democracy. The task of socialists and workers, wrote Plekhanov, was to aid the Russian bourgeoisie to make its revolution and, once that revolution was victorious, to demand the political rights necessary for the working class to create the conditions for the next, the socialist, revolution.

With Plekhanov, Russian Marxism began its own drift away from the complex and often contradictory writings of Marx himself into a more deterministic, rigid, and dogmatic philosophy. For Plekhanov economic forces were decisive in determining social structures and ideological superstructures, that is ideas, laws, and culture. Changes in the material basis of society provided the initial impetus for institutional and ideological change. The coming of capitalism to Russia meant that the peasant commune was a relic of history and should not be preserved. Objective economic trends and experience in the factories would create a proletarian-socialist consciousness among workers. "Let our intellectuals go to the workers," wrote Plekhanov. "Life itself will make them revolutionaries."

Plekhanov and his comrades formed the first Russian Marxist organization, the Liberation of Labor Group, in Geneva in 1883. At first only a few isolated intellectuals and workers read their pamphlets, but by the mid-1890s Marxist ideas became increasingly popular among students, the broader intelligentsia, and the new working class. The extraordinary reception for a body of ideas that to many seemed inappropriate for a largely peasant, primarily agricultural country with an insignificantly small proletariat was the result of the conjuncture of several developments. First, history seemed to be on the side of the Marxists. The Russian industrialization, producing in its wake a class of factory workers and a new urban environment, conformed to the predictions of the Marxists that the future lay with industry and capitalism rather than with the peasant commune. Second, the famine of 1891 demonstrated the helplessness and passivity of many peasants and turned many young intellectuals toward the workers as an alternative revolutionary force. Third, Marxism itself had a number of internal appeals. It was both a sociological tool of analysis of the present and a philosophy of history that anticipated a classless society at the end of a long struggle. Marxism contained both an appreciation of the power of industrial capitalism to create the modern world and a powerful critique of the new economic order that promised transcendence into a more just, egalitarian, and harmonious realm. And finally, Marxism was a doctrine from the West identified with the most progressive social movements of the age, the Social Democratic parties of Germany, Austria, and other European countries. Rather than isolating Russia and making its development peculiar, Marxism linked Russia's future to that of the rest of the continent.

One of the precocious young Marxists of the 1890s was a brilliant and self-assured law student from the Volga city of Simbirsk, Vladimir Ulianov (1870–1924), soon to be known by his revolutionary nom de guerre, Lenin. Born April 10 (22 n.s.), 1870, the son of a dedicated civil servant who was an inspector of schools and a mother who raised five children, Vladimir Ulianov had a happy childhood and excelled at school. His older brother, Aleksandr, joined a revolutionary conspiracy and was executed when Vladimir was seventeen—an event that had a profound effect on the younger boy. Vladimir Ulianov entered Kazan University but was expelled within a few months for participation in a student protest. He completed his law degree as a correspondence student, but by the early 1890s he was already studying Marxism. After moving to St. Petersburg in 1893, he met his future wife and party comrade, Nadezhda Krupskaia. From his earliest days in the Marxist movement, Lenin was respected for his militancy and leadership qualities. For these reasons as well as his premature baldness, his fellow Marxists nicknamed him "Old Man."

Lenin was by nature and training an intellectual, a scholar of politics whose published works would fill fifty-five volumes. He was a rationalist who proposed the application of reason and science to political and social problems, which he believed could be solved through the institution of socialism. As a scientist of insurrection, he worked hard to discipline his emotions, overcome his irritations, and direct all his knowledge and energies to the revolution. Gorky remembered Lenin's musings as they listened to Beethoven's "Apassionata" Sonata in the writer's home on Capri sometime before the revolution:

> I know nothing greater than the "Apassionata." ... I always think with pride: what marvellous things human beings can do! But I can't listen to music too often. It affects your nerves, makes you want to say stupid, nice things, and stroke the heads of people who could create such beauty while living in this vile hell. And you mustn't stroke anyone's head—you might get your hand bitten off. You have to hit them over the head, without any mercy, although our ideal is not to use force against anyone. Hm, hm, our duty is infernally hard.

Supremely self-confident, often aggressive, even ruthless, in his polemics with opponents and comrades, Lenin could be personally charming, had a good sense

of humor, and was modest and unassuming. A man without personal pretensions and ascetic in his personal life, Lenin was coldly practical about the struggle for the international revolution. Power was the means of achieving socialism, and nothing, in his view, could be allowed to stand in the way of its victory. "The scientific concept of a dictatorship," he wrote, "signifies nothing other than a power which, unrestricted by any laws, uninhibited by any absolute rules, resorts freely to the use of violence." While his ultimate vision was to create a society in which the simplest people would rule themselves, he argued that dictatorship and violence, civil war and repression of the enemy, were the only practical means to that end.

Like many of the younger recruits to the Social Democratic movement in the 1890s, Lenin shifted his attention from the economic struggle, agitating for improved wages and working conditions for workers, to a more political strategy aimed at overthrowing the autocracy. After the first attempt to unite Russian Marxists in a Russian Social Democratic Labor Party failed in 1898, Lenin and his associates began publishing a newspaper, *Iskra* (The Spark), around which politically minded revolutionaries could coalesce. The number of small circles of workers and socialist intellectuals loosely affiliated with social democracy mushroomed in the next few years.

In the spring of 1902 Lenin published *What Is to Be Done?* a comprehensive statement of his thoughts on the role of a revolutionary Social Democratic party. Here he called for a "party of the new type," a centralized, disciplined army of Social Democratic professionals, rather than a broad-based party of simple adherents. Lenin broke with those Marxists who believed that class consciousness generated by actually living and working under capitalism was sufficient for workers. "The history of all countries shows," he wrote in one of his most revealing phrases, "that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness." Raising workers' wages and shortening hours was not enough for Lenin. Workers must become aware of the need for the political overthrow of autocracy. That awareness could be acquired by workers only from outside the economic struggle, from the Social Democratic intelligentsia. The party of revolutionary Social Democrats was to act as the tribune of the whole people, expounding the need for democracy, and not as a "trade union secretary" advocating the immediate material interests of workers alone. Under Russian conditions the party was to be made up "first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession.... All distinctions between workers and intellectuals...must be effaced." Such an organization was to be small, as secret as possible, and willing to push the workers beyond their immediate desires.

The issues laid out in *What Is to Be Done?* had been widely discussed in Social Democratic circles, but they had never before been exposed so starkly. Lenin's personal political style, which was to have a decisive influence on the Bolshevik wing of Russian social democracy, was expressively demonstrated in this book. Here he promoted sharp ideological distinctions, principled divisions, and purity of position and threw aside accommodation, compromise, and moderation in favor of an impatient commitment to action. For a militant revolutionary like Lenin

conciliation was a negative quality. Discipline, sobriety, toughness, and subordination to the dictates of the party leaders became the new virtues.

Though Leninism was not yet a fully formed political tendency, Lenin's language and proposed practice had an immediate appeal for certain Social Democratic activists. In the summer of 1903, Lenin's plans for a "party of a new type" seemed about to bear fruit, as Social Democrats from all over Russia made their way to Brussels for the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). But on the crucial question of who should be allowed to join the party, the delegates split into rival factions. Lenin wanted only people who actively participated in one of the party organizations to be members. On this issue he lost to his friend Iulii Martov, who favored including anyone who rendered regular personal assistance to the party under the guidance of one of its organizations. Though to many outsiders the matter of defining membership seemed trivial, in fact two different visions of the political party—one an army of professional revolutionaries, the other a mass party of supporters—divided the Russian Social Democrats irrevocably. After other divisive debates and walkouts by dissidents, Lenin soon gained a majority in the congress, and his faction came to be known as Bolsheviks (the majority) and those who followed Martov and others were labeled Mensheviks (the minority). The split between those Marxists who emphasized leadership and direction over the workers' movement (the Bolsheviks) and those who promoted more democratic participation of the rank and file in the movement (the Mensheviks) would eventually divide the political Left throughout the world. After World War I, those who preferred Lenin's vanguardist model would be known as Communists and those who favored a more moderate, democratic approach would be known as Social Democrats.

EMPIRE AND NATION IN TSARIST RUSSIA

Of the various kinds of states that have existed historically, nation-states and democracies are among the most recent, and empires and monarchies have been among the most ubiquitous and long-lasting. *Empires* are a particular form of political domination. Almost without exception created through conquest and justified initially by the rule that might makes right, empires, like dynastic monarchies, ultimately drew their legitimacy from God. Some people in an empire had the right to rule over other people in a hierarchical, inequitable relationship. Empires were characterized by inequality and distinction between the rulers, who were deemed to be superior, and their subjects, who were said to be inferior. In empires the right to rule comes from above, not from below from the people as in nation-states and democracies.

A *nation-state*, the most widespread political form of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is fundamentally different from the ideal type of empire. While empire is inequitable rule over something different, the citizens of a nation-state are equal to one another under the law. A nation-state, at least in theory if not always in practice, represents the people conceived as a "nation." A *nation* is a

group of people that imagines itself to be a political community that is distinct from the rest of humankind, believes that it shares characteristics, perhaps origins, values, historical experiences, language, territory, or any of many other elements, and on the basis of its defined culture deserves self-determination, which usually entails control of its own territory (the "homeland") and a state of its own. The nation gives legitimacy to the nation-state, and the right to rule comes from below rather than from God, dynastic lineage, or raw force.

Once an empire falls, historians tend to see it as a failure. Yet the tsarist empire can easily be appreciated as one of the most successful empires in history. Over several centuries it maintained effective control over a vast continent peopled by over a hundred different ethnicities with different languages, ways of life, and levels of development. Nomads and illiterate hunters and gatherers were subjects of the same emperor as were the sophisticated Europeanized urban dwellers of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The legitimacy of the tsar's dominion was only infrequently questioned before the nineteenth century and even up to the early twentieth century, primarily by a small number of oppositional intellectuals. At first the ruling elite's distance from the population gave it the aura and mystery that justified its power. The imagery of the monarchy from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth century was of foreignness, separation of the ruler and the elite from the common people. The origin of the rulers was said to be foreign (the Varangians from beyond the Baltic Sea), and they were likened to foreign rulers of the West. Even the models of rulership were foreign—Byzantium and the Mongol khans—and foreignness conveyed superiority. Later, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the myth of the ruler as conqueror was used to express the monarchy's bringing to Russia the benefits of civilization and progress, and the ruler was portrayed as a selfless hero who saved Russia from despotism and ruin.

With the annexation of Ukraine (1654) and Vilnius (1656), the monarch was proclaimed "tsar of all Great, Little, and White Russia." The state seal of Peter the Great's father, Aleksei Mikhailovich (1645–76), adopted in 1667, depicted an eagle with raised wings, topped with three crowns symbolizing Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia, and bordered by three sets of columns, representing Great, Little, and White Russia. The tsar, now also called *sviatoi* (holy), further distanced himself from his subjects because he was more pious than they. With Peter the Great (1682–1725) the Christian Emperor and Christian Empire gave way to a much more secular Western notion of power. Peter carried the image of foreignness to new extremes, imposing on Russia his preference for beardlessness, foreign dress, Baroque architecture, Dutch, German, and English technology, and a new capital as a "window on the West." He created a polite society for Russia, bringing women out of seclusion into public life, culminating in the coronation of his second wife, the commoner Katerina, as empress of Russia. He took on the title *imperator* in 1721 and made Russia an *imperiia*. The emperor was "father of the fatherland" (*Otets otechestva*), and he saw himself as a hereditary ruler who was obligated to serve the state.

By the eighteenth century Russia was truly an empire in the sense of a great state whose ruler exercised full, absolute sovereign power over its diverse territory and subjects. His successors, four of whom were women, were backed by guards regiments that decided struggles for the throne. The scepters of Anna (1730–40), Elizabeth (1741–92), and Catherine the Great (1769–96) extended over a growing realm. As Europe went through the fallout from the French Revolution of 1789, Russia faced new threats from Europe and America's interest in constitutionalism, liberalism, and nationalism. Now nation was seen by many to be the source of legitimate government, and concepts of "the people" and popular sovereignty spread through Europe. The Russian emperors refused to make any concession to the new national populism. Russian resistance to Napoleon, as well as the expansion of the empire into the Caucasus and Finland, only accentuated the imperial image of irresistible power, displayed physically on both battlefield and parade ground by the martinet tsars of the early nineteenth century, Alexander I (1801–25) and Nicholas I (1825–55). Russia emerged from the Napoleonic wars even more imperial than it had been in the eighteenth century. Now the possessor of the Grand Duchy of Finland, the emperor served there as a constitutional monarch observing local laws. In the Kingdom of Poland (1815–32), he served as *Tsar Polskii*, the constitutional king of Poland. According to the Fundamental Laws codified in 1832, "the Emperor of Russia is an autocratic (*samoderzhavnyi*) and unlimited (*neogranichennyi*) monarch," but Russians distinguished their realm, governed by laws from the despotisms of the East. The tsar stood apart and above his people; his people remained diverse not only ethnically but in terms of the institutions through which they were ruled.

The danger posed by nationalism was felt most acutely by the great contiguous empires of Europe—tsarist Russia, Austro-Hungary, and Ottoman Turkey. In the age of the nation empires were caught between maintaining the privileges and distinctions that kept the traditional elites in power and considering reforms along liberal lines that would have undermined the old ruling classes. Victorious over Napoleon, Russia represented the conservative bulwark against the principles of the French Revolution and in many ways the antithesis of nationalism. Russian tsars had traditionally been relatively tolerant of the different customs, languages, and religions of their non-Russian subjects. Nobles from conquered peoples as well as foreigners were welcomed into the imperial elite. Some of the tsar's closest advisors were Baltic Germans, Russified Georgians, or Tatars. But after two Polish insurrections (1830, 1863), the Russian state grew increasingly suspicious of non-Russian aspirations. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the government adopted a policy of administrative and cultural Russification, harsher restrictions on Jews, suppression of the Ukrainian language, and the closing of Armenian schools. As an imperial polity, the Russian state maintained vital distinctions between Russians and non-Russians, in the way it treated various non-Russian and non-Orthodox peoples, and in its legal distinctions between social estates. The Great Reforms of the 1860s did not extend *zemstva* to non-Russian areas. Whole peoples, designated *inorodtsy*, continued to be subject to special laws, among them

Jews, peoples of the North Caucasus, Kalmyks, nomads, Samoyeds and other peoples of Siberia. As the monarchy grew more conservative and suspicious of non-Russians, the state chipped away at the special privileges enjoyed by Finland. Russian nationalists loudly voiced their anti-Semitic claims that foreigners had too much influence in Russian politics. In 1913 a Ukrainian Jew, Menakhem Mendel Beilis was tried for the murder of a Christian boy. Prosecutors and the judges accused him of a ritual killing, the infamous blood libel in which Jews are said to use Christian blood to make matzo. They and the tsar himself knew Beilis was innocent, but still the state tried to convict him. The liberal public and foreign opinion were outraged by the case, and in a stunning upset the jury acquitted Beilis.

Russification only spawned resistance in the Russian Empire. Tsarism not only never created a deeply ingrained sense of belonging to a nation within the whole empire but never tried very hard to instill such a sense among the core Russian population. Tsarist Russia managed only too well in building a state and creating an empire; it failed, however, to construct a multiethnic "Russian nation" within that empire. The imperial tended to thwart if not subvert the national, just as the national worked to erode the stability and legitimacy of the state. Though tsarist Russia's collapse occurred not because of nationalisms from the peripheries but because of the progressive weakening and disunity of the center, much of the legitimacy of the imperial enterprise had withered away by 1917. What the dynasty in the distant past had imagined was empowering, their difference from the people, now became a fatal liability. Elite patriotism, frustrated non-Russian nationalisms, and peasant weariness at intolerable sacrifices for a cause with which they did not identify combined lethally to undermine the monarchy. As Russians suffered defeats and colossal losses in World War I, the fragile aura of legitimacy was stripped from the emperor and his wife, who were widely regarded as distant from, even foreign to, Russia. The principles of empire, of differentiation and hierarchy, were incompatible with modern ideas of democratic representation and egalitarian citizenship that gripped much of the intelligentsia and urban society. When the monarchy failed the test of war, its last sources of popular affection and legitimacy fell away.

THE FINAL CRISIS OF TSARISM

In the first decade of the twentieth century Russians frequently debated with one another the causes of the current social and political crisis. The young monarch Nicholas II seemed particularly ineffectual, unwilling either to make significant concessions to the growing sentiment for reform in educated society or to crack down hard enough on the growing opposition movements among all classes of the population. On ascending the throne at age 26, Nicholas silenced those "voices of persons who have been carried away by senseless dreams" of participation by representatives of various classes in state administration. He declared firmly that "I, while devoting all my energies to the good of the people, shall maintain the principle of autocracy just as firmly and unflinchingly as did my unforgettable father." Educated society was shocked by the tsar's speech on "senseless dreams," and a leading political activist, Petr Struve, who was then a Marxist and would soon become a liberal, spoke for much of society when he replied to the speech with an "Open Letter." Russia, he wrote, was only asking for the removal of "that wall of bureaucracy and court that separates the tsar from Russia." And he concluded, "You have begun the struggle, and the struggle will not be long in coming."

Sensitive to the weakness of civil society and the rule of law in Russia, a small but vocal group of Russian liberals attempted to influence the government either to allow some form of representative institutions to register public opinion or to move toward a more law-regulated state (in German, *Rechtsstaat*). Just as Russian Marxism differed from Western European Marxism, so Russian liberalism was different from that of the West. Instead of being the expression of a confident industrial and commercial middle class, Russian liberalism reflected the views of democratic intellectuals and a few enlightened landed nobles. Liberals believed that they defended, not the interests of specific classes, as claimed by the populists and Marxists, but those of the whole people regardless of class. Their model of a good society was an idealized version of Western capitalist democracy, and their hope was to promote free enterprise and guarantee civil rights and some representation of public opinion in government. Until 1905, however, very few among the liberals moved as far as to call for constitutional limitations on the tsar's powers. Willing to pressure the government for reforms, most liberals stopped far short of advocating revolution, which they feared would degenerate into massive violence. Here was the liberals' dilemma: If the government did not concede reforms, they had no recourse but to accept the status quo.

Russia's first industrial revolution, in the 1880s and 1890s, was a mammoth change for the agricultural empire, but it stopped short of transforming the whole of Russian society. Capitalist industry existed in pockets, around key cities in certain regions, while much of the country lived in the old way, even though they now experienced the effects of the booms and busts of the industrial economy. Around 1900 industrial growth slowed down. As railroad construction tapered off, the demand for goods that it had stimulated dried up. The fall in government orders led to a crisis of overproduction in metals and other industries; ninety thousand workers were unemployed in the Ukrainian metal industry alone. Other markets were insufficient for Russian industry's greater capacity to produce. Three thousand firms closed in Russia in the first few years of the new century.

The industrial crisis of 1901–3 hit at the same time that peasants suffered from low grain prices. Peasant uprisings broke out in Poltava, Kharkov, and western Georgia. The number of strikes and protests by workers rose each year. Red flags were unfurled, revolutionary songs were sung, and workers took on the police and Cossacks. University students protested being drafted into the army and the government's abuse of fellow students. Terrorists killed the minister of education in 1901 and the minister of the interior the following year.

The economic and social crisis was exacerbated by the government's Far Eastern policy, which led it into a disastrous war with Japan in 1904. Defeated at Port Arthur in China, its fleet sunk by Japanese warships in the Straits of Tushima, Russia was the first European state to be humiliated by an Asian power. Unrest and disaffection from the regime grew. One of the pillars upon which tsarism rested was the widely accepted sense that the tsar was the father of his people, that his state had a paternal role to play in the great Russian family, and that even if bureaucrats and nobles oppressed the people, the tsar would hear their pleas and redress their grievances. Yet this "naive monarchism" was severely shaken when the tsar's troops fired upon a crowd of petitioners that marched reverently to the Winter Palace on January 9 (22 n.s.), 1905, to ask for improvement of their material lot and the establishment of legal rights. About 130 demonstrators were killed and several hundred wounded on "Bloody Sunday." The shootings galvanized the country and gave credence to the message brought by Marxist revolutionaries and liberal intellectuals that the cause of Russia's problems was autocracy and the regime of arbitrary power. Growing numbers of ordinary people came to believe that the state was the source of their oppression.

The years 1905–7 are referrred to as the "first Russian Revolution," though in fact the regime merely tottered and did not fall. At times, however, during the first year of the revolution the government lost control of certain towns, cities, and regions as industrial workers struck in massive work stoppages. Mutinies in the army and navy broke out repeatedly, the most famous on the battleship *Potemkin* in the Black Sea. A nationwide general strike in October brought the country to a near standstill. Workers formed their own councils, called soviets, in industrial towns. In St. Petersburg the soviet was led briefly by a young Marxist, Lev Trotsky (1879–1940), whose oratory and pen made him an instant revolutionary celebrity. Attempts to stem the revolutionary tide with piecemeal reforms failed time and again, until the war with Japan was brought to an end in the summer and the tsar answered the popular protests with his October Manifesto, which established a limited constitutional regime. Rights of assembly and speech were guaranteed, though often abrogated in practice, and an elected parliament with two houses, the State Council and the Duma, was established. For the first time in Russian history political parties and trade unions were allowed to exist legally. Though revolutionary violence continued for another year and a half, the tsar's concessions broke the unity of the opposition and gave him the breathing space to use his army to bring a harsh order back to the country. Soldiers crushed an insurrection of workers in Moscow in December 1905, disbanded the Petersburg soviet, and arrested Trotsky. Punitive expeditions stomped out the autonomous peasant "republic" in western Georgia, and military units "pacified" and patrolled regions placed under martial law.

The most perplexing question about the final years of the three-hundred-year-old Romanov monarchy is how the social and political and ideological support for tsarism could erode so quickly in the last two decades of its existence. Historians are divided into two camps on this issue. Optimists argue that tsarism was dealing effectively with the crises in the economy and society and responded

to the revolution with significant reforms that included a constitutional regime complete with a parliament, legal trade unions, and land reform. The last years of tsarism were marked by rapid economic growth, and the final crisis came when imperial Germany forced tsarist Russia to enter World War I, a war for which it was not yet adequately prepared. Pessimists, on the other hand, believe that Russia was in a deep and chronic crisis that would have led to revolution even without the war. Industrialization, for all its rapidity and considerable success, both in the 1890s and between 1910 and 1914, had created a new and volatile working class that increasingly felt itself separate from the rest of society. Moreover, another split was taking place between the monarchy and educated society, which was growing more alienated from the tsar, more disillusioned, even despairing.

While the optimists are correct to emphasize the importance of the war as the straw that cracked the back of tsarism, the pessimists are right that a rising crescendo of social and ethnic conflict intensified in the last ten years before World War I. The semiconstitutional regime created in 1905, which was far from democratic, only increased the appetites of liberals, socialists, peasants, and workers for further reforms. Though there was universal manhood suffrage, representation in the Duma was heavily weighted toward people of property, namely, the nobility and the commercial-industrial class, the last supporters of tsarism. Yet even they became less enthusiastic about Nicholas II and autocracy after 1910. The middle class wanted greater participation in both politics and the economic direction of the country and resented state intervention, although the nobility grew more conservative and rejected any further political or social reforms. Politicians in the Duma wanted a greater role in foreign policy, but here the tsar and the government refused to compromise their powers.

After its defeat at the hands of Japan, Russia was much more tentative in its foreign policy. The government's first task was to restore domestic order, and the able prime minister Petr Stolypin (1906–11) clamped down hard on radicals and revolutionaries, executing over a thousand, closing oppositional newspapers, and harassing trade unions. Stolypin hoped to create a "Great Russia" through a careful program of internal reforms and believed that for this he required "twenty years of peace." His most significant reform was to encourage peasants to leave the commune and become independent farmers on their own privatized land. Altogether, somewhere between a quarter and a third of the peasant households left the communes and formed enclosed farms by 1916, though such separations from the collective were resented by those who remained in the commune. As long as Stolypin was able to manipulate the Duma parties and repress the revolutionaries, Russia was domestically stable. He pursued a pacific foreign policy, signing an entente with England in 1907, making concessions in Persia and Afghanistan, and solidifying Russia's relations with Germany. But more aggressive politicians, like Foreign Minister Aleksandr Izvolskii and his successor Sergei Sazonov, did not hesitate to stir up latent nationalist feeling in society when Austria-Hungary asserted its power over Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908. Educated Russian public opinion was pro-Slav and responded to talk of "Russia's historic mission" as "defender of the Slavonic nation."

In 1911, while attending an opera in Kiev and in the presence of the tsar, Stolypin was assassinated by someone associated with the secret police. With his demise, effective government in Russia ceased. The meddling empress, Aleksandra, told his successor, "We hope that you will never go along with those terrible political parties, which dream only of seizing power or of subjecting the government to their will. . . . Remain yourself: do not seek support in political parties. They are so insignificant in Russia. Rely upon the confidence of the Emperor." The new prime minister found himself isolated, unable to deal with the Duma nor with the influential figures, such as the dissolute "holy man" Grigorii Rasputin, who surrounded the tsar.

For the last three years before World War I Russia's government drifted and became cut off from the very social groups that had supported it earlier. Lenin later referred to the stagnation and impotence in the state and among the ruling elites as a "crisis at the top" of society. At the same time a "crisis at the bottom" of society also developed rapidly. The militant phase of the labor movement had ended abruptly with the defeat of the Moscow insurrection of December 1905, and in the coming years, even as trade unions were legalized and the labor press could operate relatively freely, the government came down hard on strikes (which remained illegal) and worker protests. Thousands of activists were arrested and exiled to Siberia. Employers fired "undesirable elements," and the stagnating economy led to layoffs and growing unemployment. Labor was largely impotent until the eve of the war, trade unions withered, and the radical parties languished as their rank-and-file members deserted.

Not until 1909 did Russia emerge from the deep economic depression that had halted the industrialization of the 1890s. The four years before World War I were a period of renewed growth. But unlike the earlier industrialization this growth was stimulated not so much by state contracts as by a new market provided by the peasantry and the urban population. The rise in world wheat prices between 1906 and 1912 put money into the pockets of peasants, as well as the noble landlords, improving their standard of living and purchasing power. Here was the home market that the populists had said could not develop in Russia, the one the Marxists in the early 1890s had predicted would soon appear. So great was demand that industrial output could not keep up.

The new working class in Russia was becoming increasingly urban and less tied to the countryside. Older workers, who had come into the working class between 1890 and 1900, were now joined by younger workers (about 25 percent of the industrial labor force), who entered factories and plants after 1910. Two different generations of workers coexisted. These workers lived in a new world, distant from and less stable than the villages in which they had been born, and their attitudes differed from the ones of those left at home. Whereas peasants lived in a world close to nature and with a sense that God ordained the lives they lived, workers experienced a much more chaotic world in which rules and timetables were imposed by men, managers and foremen, who were not sanctioned by the divine. The abuses of the shopfloor and the poverty of the tenements were much harder to take than the customary hardships endured back in the village.

In 1910 the great Russian novelist Lev Tolstoy died. The Orthodox Church, which considered Tolstoy to be a heretic, refused to give him a church burial. His funeral became a massive demonstration against the authorities. Students boycotted classes and called for an end to the death penalty (something long desired by Tolstoy). This was the first sign of a new awakening of society. In February 1911 students organized a general strike, and the minister of education answered them with arrests and expulsions. The next year the expression of discontent took on massive dimensions when on April 4, 1912, government troops fired upon a peaceful demonstration of some three thousand workers at the Lena gold fields in Siberia. One hundred seventy people were killed, and another 202 were wounded. Spontaneous strikes in support of the Lena workers broke out throughout the country. The massacre shocked Russian society, and the press reported the angry Duma debates on the government's responsibility for the killings, which only increased workers' fury at the government. The minister of the interior insensitively commented on the Lena events, "That's the way it's always been, and that's the way it will be in the future." With the intelligentsia and politicians debating the future of the country, many workers sensed that the authority of the state could be challenged, that they might act to change the rules of the game of their own society.

By the first half of 1914 the number of striking workers was ten times what it had been for the whole year of 1911, and strikes with political demands outnumbered those in the revolutionary year, 1905. Angry at the intransigence of the industrialists, who consistently refused to concede on wages, hours, and conditions of work, many workers perceived the state as allied with the factory owners. Those who thought little was to be gained within the confines of the existing system, like the metalworkers of St. Petersburg and the oil workers of Baku, became even more militant. The voices of the dissenters in educated society were reaching the factory floor. And among the most resonant voices were those of the most radical socialists, the Bolsheviks, who argued that accommodating attitudes had gotten the workers nowhere and that more radical approaches should now be on the agenda. The more moderate Mensheviks despaired of the new successes of the Bolsheviks, blaming the "romantic rebelliousness" of the workers, their youth, and the peasant outlook of the newer workers. On the eve of World War I thousands of Russia's workers took to the streets to protest their condition and the irresponsibility of those in charge.

The autocracy, which appeared to many foreigners to be a strong and stable government, in fact had feet of clay. Over time tsarism had prevented the development of an autonomous civil society and repressed the emergence of independent institutions and channels of communication from society to the state. Instead, an inefficient, unruly bureaucracy stood between educated society and the monarchy, and even as some energetic ministers tried to reform the system, the inertia of inherited practices and the active resistance of powerful nobles stifled meaningful change. At the same time industrialization had transformed the economy of much of Russia and introduced new social elements, workers and the commercial–industrial groups, that coexisted quite uneasily with the landed nobility and

Figure 1.2 Emperor Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra Feodorovna leaving the Winter Palace during the 300th anniversary of the Romanov Dynasty, 1913 (RIA Novosti).

entrenched bureaucrats. Yet even as the state became less effective domestically, Russian leaders remained convinced that Russia must act internationally like a Great Power.

THE TSAR'S LAST WAR

On Russia's western border lay imperial Germany, a burgeoning industrial and military power, and Austria-Hungary, a disparate multinational state that by contrast was the weakest of the major European powers. In Germany advisors to the kaiser believed that it would be to Germany's advantage to fight a preventive war with Russia before the tsarist empire became any stronger. Aware of Russia's enormous potential strength in the future and its weakness at present, German leaders feared that Russia's "crude physical manpower" and its "expansive and gigantic industrial power" might one day crush Germany. In the summer of 1914 Austria responded to the killing of the Austrian heir apparent, Franz Ferdinand, in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, by issuing an ultimatum to tiny Serbia. Pro-Serbian sentiment was high in Russia, particularly among liberal politicians in the Duma. The emperor and his government decided it was time for Russia to take a "firmer and more energetic attitude." Once Russia determined to back Serbian independence against Austria and Germany gave its "blank check" to Austria, war was inevitable. On July 30, 1914, Nicholas II ordered the general mobilization of the Russian army. The next day Germany demanded that Russia cease her

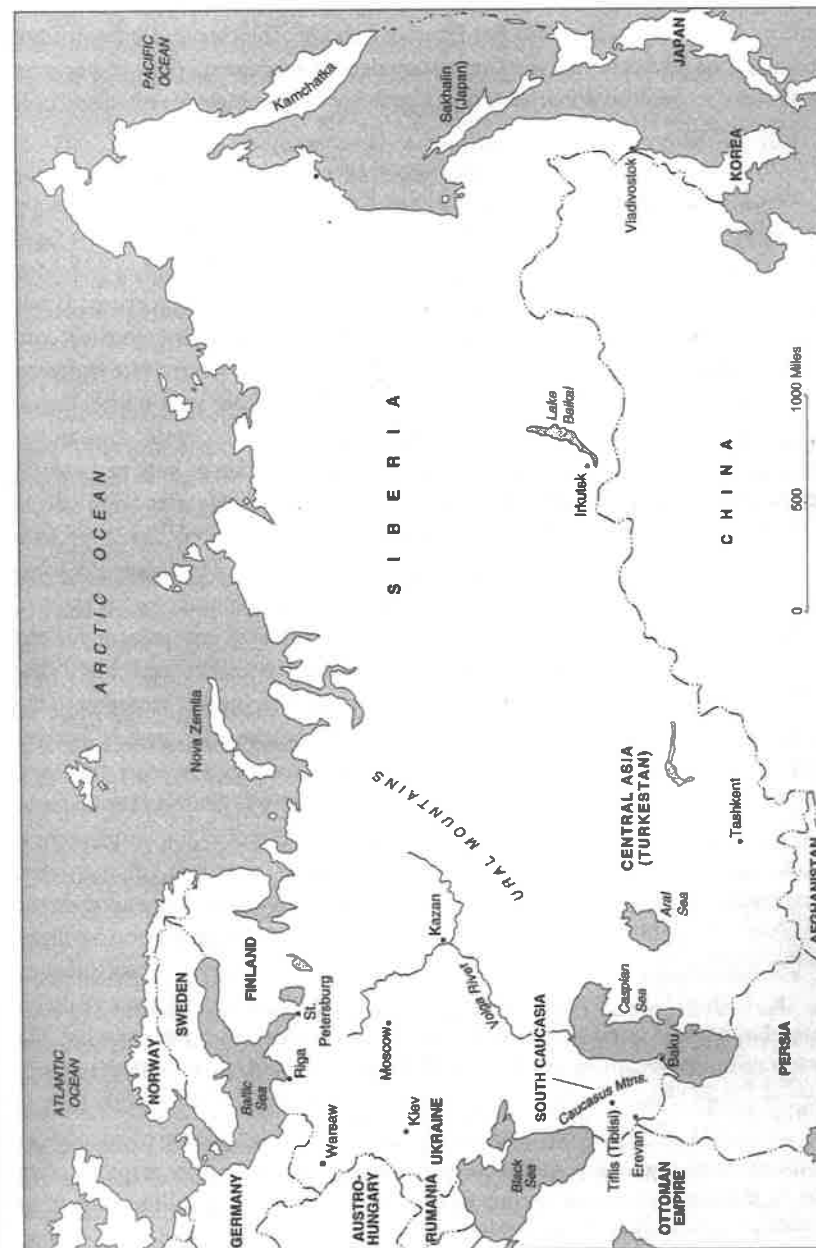

Figure 1.3 The Russian empire, 1914.

preparations along the German frontier. On the afternoon of August 1, France ordered mobilization against Germany, and Germany responded five minutes later with its own mobilization. At seven that evening Germany, having heard no reply to its ultimatum, declared war on the Russian Empire. The tsar and his ministers ignored cautious advisors, like the Caucasian viceroy, who warned that "war must not be allowed . . . general dissatisfaction is growing . . . the question of a war could become 'dynastic.'"

By any measurement the Russian Empire was a great power on the eve of World War I. The largest country on the globe, the most populous state in Europe, one of the top five economic producers in the world, and industrializing at a rapid rate, Russia at the same time had debilitating weaknesses. Its people were poor. Per-capita income was far lower than that of any of the other powers, except Japan. Almost three-quarters of its people were still working the land, though their conditions were improving. More and more peasants owned land as private property, but the pressure of population growth threatened their future well-being. For all the dynamism in the economy, the heavy burden of the semiautocratic state and its incompetence, inertia, and corruption only widened the chasm between society and officialdom. The antique divisions of society into social estates were still in place, even though many people identified more with their social class than with the legal designation into which they had been born. Laws still favored some people more than others and discriminated against whole groups.

At the outbreak of the war there was an explosion of enthusiasm for the struggle against the "Teutonic" race. Anti-German sentiment was high. The capital's name, *Sankt-Peterburg*, even though Dutch in origin, was changed to the more Russian, *Petrograd*. But this jingoistic fervor quickly dissipated. Russian patriotism was shallow, and in order to stir nationalist feelings writers, artists, and singers expressed sympathy with the victims of the fighting, wounded soldiers or orphaned children. Eventually war-weariness turned audiences to escapist entertainment, ignoring the horrors at the front as much as possible. For many the object of patriotism remained Russia, but rather than loyalty to tsar and dynasty, patriots focused on fatherland and the people. In his study of patriotic culture during the war, Hubertus Jahn concludes, "Patriotic imagery reveals that Russians had a pretty clear idea against whom they were fighting [the satanic Kaiser Wilhelm II and the lascivious Young Turk, Enver Pasha], but not for whom or for what. If a nation is a community imagined by its members, as Benedict Anderson convincingly argues, then Russia was not a nation during World War I." Tsar, Holy Russia, and the Orthodox Church had lost their potency as sources of shared identification. Military planners tried to instill a notion of "the nation in arms" among soldiers, but conservative bureaucrats feared the idea of "citizen-soldiers" equal to one another and reinforced the traditional hierarchies of estate and nationality. When the recruiters came to take their sons and husbands, women stood in the way and tried to prevent their men from being drafted. In 1916 Muslims in Central Asia revolted massively against recruitment, and the riots had to be put down, with great bloodshed. In the first year of the war half a million soldiers deserted. And by 1917 soldiers were sick of fighting, angry at their officers and the government, and ready for revolution.

Russia entered World War I with enormous liabilities. Though the economy was growing rapidly, the country lagged far behind Germany in industrial output. Russia's population was still fettered by illiteracy. Just over a third of the population could read and write, a figure that matched the level of literacy in Great Britain in 1750. Yet victory, even survival, in modern warfare depended on the overall industrial might of a country and the skills of its population, and here Russia was at a considerable disadvantage. A huge share of Russia's net national product, more than 10 percent, was spent on the military, which received five times as much money from the state as did education. An amount equivalent to half of the average Russian's income in 1913 went to current defense spending—and this in a country of widespread poverty! The average per-capita income of a Russian in 1913 was $57, just over a quarter of the per-capita income of the average English subject at the time. Russia's backwardness meant not only that a larger part of the nation's output went to arming the country but that each ship and gun cost more to produce because of low labor productivity and high material costs.

At the outbreak of the war the Russian army was the largest in Europe, some 1.4 million men. Russia's Western allies, Britain and France, were counting on the effectiveness of the famous "Russian steamroller," its millions of mobilized men, to exhaust the Germans on the eastern front. In their plans Russia was to draw off a large portion of the German forces to allow an Anglo-French breakthrough in the west. A two-front war was the only hope that the Entente—Russia, France, and Britain—had for victory over the Central Powers—Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. Russia did manage to mobilize more than 15 million men into the armed forces in its two and a half years in the war. In 1914 alone 5.1 million men were drafted, or 15 percent of the male population. But the draft was indiscriminate, calling up skilled industrial workers along with illiterate peasants.

Russians suffered from low military morale in the early twentieth century. Their memories extended back to the defeats of the Crimean War, the humiliating peace treaty imposed on Russia after their victory in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, and the disasters of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5). The ruling elites reflected the pessimism and bitterness of men like General A. A. Kireev, who wrote in 1909 in his diary, that "we have become a second-rate power." This was the same Pan-Slav who nine years earlier had written: "Of course, we, like any powerful nation, strive to expand our territory, our 'legitimate' moral, economic, and political influence. This is the order of things." The fat, old minister of war, General Vladimir Sukhomlinov, held quite definite and antiquated ideas about how war should be fought. He had learned nothing new since the victorious campaigns against the Turks at the end of the 1870s. "Look at me," he said proudly. "I have not read a military manual for the last twenty-five years." For Sukhomlinov all the talk of fire tactics was annoying; the saber, lance, and bayonet charge were the essence of manly fighting, in his opinion. He personally despised the commander in chief

of the army, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, an advocate of military reforms, and kept his post because of his personal closeness to the imperial family and Rasputin and his talent for telling funny stories.

In the first months of the war the Russian armies did well against the Austrians, but in late August the Germans, under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, soundly defeated the Russian army of General Samsonov at the Battle of Tannenberg. The Germans took one hundred thousand prisoners and stopped the Russian advance into East Prussia. In despair Samsonov shot himself. The Germans advanced through Russian Poland in the next few months, and only at the end of the year were the Russians able to hold the line against further German or Austrian penetration. In two great campaigns in the spring and summer of 1915, the Germans took all of Poland, Lithuania, and Courland in the Baltic region, inflicting collossal losses on the Russians. The tsar responded by relieving his uncle and taking command of the army himself.

The prevailing image of the first total war in Europe is of entrenched armies dug in deeply and then repeatedly launching attacks across no-man's-lands, only to fall back to their own half-buried lines. The stagnation that cost millions of deaths at the front was matched by a tragic movement of refugees in the rear, torn from their homes and forced to migrate. In Russia some 6 million people became refugees in World War I, a vast population that found what safe haven they could in cities distant from the battle lines. There they disrupted the old social divisions and added to the material burdens of Russia's urban residents. In 1915, the same year that the Ottoman government of the Young Turks rounded up, deported, and massacred a million Armenians within their empire, anti-Semitic Russian generals, who considered Jews to be traitors and subversives, deported hundreds of thousands of Jews, Germans, and Ukrainians from Austrian Galicia (now western Ukraine), though they refrained from systematic annihilation. When Russian armies retreated from Poland, the Baltic, and eastern Anatolia, floods of Poles, Armenians, Jews, Latvians, Ukrainians, and other borderland peoples fled eastward. Some 200,000–300,000 Ottoman Armenians managed to escape certain death at the hands of the Turks by crossing the frontier into Russian Caucasia, but there they faced hostility from local people as well as starvation and cholera.

In the chaos of the war, ethnicity and nationality became salient points of identification for many of Russia's peoples. As the empire faltered, nationalist intellectuals worked to convince their compatriots that there was an alternative future to the rule of the tsar. That future lay in a Russia freed from autocracy, perhaps in a federated democratic republic with guaranteed national cultural autonomy if not complete independence for the dozens of non-Russian peoples. As the war stimulated ethnic feelings, different visions of the "Russian nation" competed with one another. War, as often happens, empowered the most conservative and bellicose elements of society. The tsar and the reactionary Right resurrected allegiance to traditional ethnic Russia by demonizing foreigners, Baltic Germans, and Jews. Liberal politicians and reformers in the military clung to an ideal of the "nation" that embraced all the peoples of the empire in a fraternal union, eliminated estate

privileges, and established equality among citizens. Nationalist leaders of non-Russian peoples defended their own parochial claims to nationhood, granting Russia a supervisory role of protector and constitutional oversight. But the war fever was contagious. Crowds angry at Germans tore through Moscow in May 1915. Throughout the country thousands of "German" businesses were closed down and turned over to Russians, including the hundreds of Singer Sewing Machine stores, which, in fact, were owned by an American company, albeit with a German-sounding name. Fear fed into deportations, first of enemy aliens and then of Russian subjects related to enemy states by ethnicity. National security concerns allowed for taking over private property of those deemed alien. An empire that had tolerated, even insisted on, difference among its constituent peoples now turned toward a nationalized homogeneity.

The failures in the military reflected widespread failures throughout the state and the economy. The tsarist state failed to organize an effective war economy. In the first month of the war the government prohibited the sale of intoxicating beverages for the duration of the war, thus making Russia the first country ever to attempt prohibition on a national scale. But this led to a sharp drop in state revenues from the loss of alcohol taxes. With soldiers using the railroads, state revenues fell off here as well. For all its vastness Russia had only 42,400 miles of railroad in 1914, and the inadequate transport system broke down under the strain of war. Taxes proved more difficult to collect during the war, and the government was forced both to float loans domestically and abroad and to print more paper money, which led to inflation. Though grain was plentiful in the countryside, and there was enough to satisfy the population's needs, it was not effectively distributed to the towns. The government fixed prices for grain in order to stem inflation, but with industry turning out war material, farmers were denied the manufactured goods from the towns for which they had exchanged grain. Their paper rubles quickly depreciated, and they grew reluctant to part with their grain.

The war brought millions out of the countryside into the army and into new jobs in the cities. Industry and agriculture both suffered the loss of skilled hands, though farming was hurt less because of the chronic excess of labor on the land. But by the fall of 1915 all nonbreadwinners had been recruited, and "first breadwinners," the last males in the villages, were being called up. Military experience had a profound effect on the lives of country folk, as they were thrown together with people of other social classes and different political views. Mobilized peasants were quite receptive to the ideas of their city brothers and the radical intellectuals who interpreted the wider world for them. While peasants at first gave in to the enthusiasm of the educated classes for the war, as the war went badly—4 million casualties in the first year, 1 million of them fatalities—a sullen resentment against the war grew. When supplies of ammunition began to run out at the end of 1914 and casualty rates rose rapidly, morale fell precipitously. By 1915 Russian industry could not fulfill the supply needs of the army. Few peasant soldiers felt a genuine patriotism or identification with Russia; their loyalties remained local, and they

did not think of the war as their war. They had little affection for their officers, whom they identified with the landlord class, and many believed that the war threatened the peasant way of life. Unrest started with the older soldiers, family men who had served before the war. Rumors about pro-German sympathy among the aristocracy spread through the army and led to a number of mutinies at the front. A general fatigue and disgust with the war spread among the soldiers.

Though the autocracy had seldom involved society in tasks thought to be within the competence of the state, the burdens of the war forced the government to deal with various social groups, particularly in towns. Still suspicious of the political parties, the tsar chose to suspend the parliament and rule through his emergency powers. The Duma met only twice in 1915. The government turned to so-called voluntary organizations, local district and provincial bodies and the municipal dumas, to help organize supplies for the army. In May 1915 industrialists met in Petrograd to form the war-industry committees and invited workers to elect representatives to serve in labor groups attached to the committees. These elections, held in September 1915, helped to revive labor activity that had been quiescent since the outbreak of the war.

The military and political situation reached a crisis point in the summer of 1915. Scandals brought down the minister of war, Sukhomlinov, and other ministers. As the Germans advanced relentlessly, the new war minister told the cabinet, "I rely on impassable spaces, on impenetrable mud, and on the mercy of Saint Nicholas, the patron of Holy Russia." Each military setback helped the liberals in the Duma, as defeats were blamed on governmental mismanagement and incompetence. Pavl Miliukov, the leader of the most important liberal party, the Kadets, called for the appointment of a government of liberals that would enjoy the confidence of the educated people of Russia. Miliukov brought together the three leading parties in the Duma—the Kadets, the Octobrists, and the Progressists—to form a political coalition known as the Progressive Bloc to pressure the tsar to bring the liberals to power. The tsar answered on September 3, 1915, by again suspending the Duma and moving to the front to be nearer his troops.

Government was now largely in the hands of the empress and her confidant, Rasputin. Her advice to her husband was "Be more autocratic!" When Nicholas received his ministers at headquarters, Aleksandra suggested that he steel himself by combing his hair with Rasputin's comb. The monarchy's association with this debauched man of the people ate away at the residue of charisma attached to the Romanovs and presented an image to the public of moral emptiness at the heart of the state. Completely shut out of decision-making, the leaders of the Duma met secretly to discuss what seemed to them to be the pro-German sentiments of the empress and her coterie. A few, like Aleksandr Guchkov, the leader of the conservative Octobrists, plotted to overthrow the monarchy. On November 1, 1916, Miliukov rose in the reconvened Duma to denounce the government where, he claimed, there was "treason in high places."

The disaffection with the government spread from the Duma liberals to aristocrats and military officers close to the tsar. On the evening of December 16, Prince Feliks Iusupov lured Rasputin to his palace in Petrograd where he and several co-conspirators poisoned, shot, and finally drowned him in a canal. When the news reached the empress the following morning, she wrote to the tsar, "Our friend has disappeared. Such utter anguish. Am calm and cannot believe it." With thousands dying at the front and pathetic incompetents dithering away their power, the three-hundred-year history of the Romanov dynasty was rapidly coming to a close.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The best overall reference history of Russia is the three-volume *Cambridge History of Russia* (Cambridge, 2006), edited by Maureen Perrie, Dominic Lieven, and Ronald Grigor Suny. For a synthetic overview of prerevolutionary Russian history, the revision of a classic work by Nicholas V. Riasanovsky and Mark Steinberg, *A History of Russia* (New York, 2004) is very useful, as is Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1557–1917* (Cambridge, MA, 1997). A truly unique work is Boris Mironov, with Ben Eklof, *A Social History of Imperial Russia, 1700–1917*, 2 vols. (Boulder, CO, 2000). An excellent reader is James Cracraft (ed.), *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia* (Lexington, MA, 1994).

On the years of industrial formation and revolutionary upheaval, see Theodore von Laue's *Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia* (New York, 1963); Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, 2 vols. (Stanford, CA, 1988, 1993), and Abraham Ascher, *P. A. Stolypin: The Search for Stability in Imperial Russia* (Stanford, CA, 2001); Andrew Verner, *The Crisis of Russian Autocracy: Nicholas II and the 1905 Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 1990); Geoffrey Hosking, *The Russian Constitutional Experiment: Government and Duma, 1907–1914* (Cambridge, 1973); Roberta T. Manning, *The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia: Government and Gentry* (Princeton, NJ, 1982); Tim Mc Daniel, *Autocracy, Capitalism, and Revolution in Russia* (Berkeley, CA, 1988); and Leopold H. Haimson (ed.), *The Politics of Rural Russia, 1905–1914* (Bloomington, IN, 1979).

The literature on the workers and the socialist movement is varied and rich, and among the most interesting works are: Reginald E. Zelnik (ed.), *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: The Autobiography of Semen Ivanovich Kanatchikov* (Stanford, CA, 1986); Charters Wynn, *Workers, Strikes, and Pogroms: The Donbass-Dnepr Bend in Late Imperial Russia, 1870–1905* (Princeton, NJ, 1992); Victoria E. Bonnel, *Roots of Rebellion: Workers' Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900–1914* (Berkeley, CA, 1984); Heather Hogan, *Forging Revolution: Metalworkers, Managers, and the State in St. Petersburg, 1890–1914* ((Bloomington, IN, 1993); Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford, CA, 1963); Allan K. Wildman, *The Making of a Workers' Revolution: Russian Social Democracy, 1891–1903* (Chicago, 1967); Leopold H. Haimson, *The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism* (Cambridge, MA, 1955); J. L. H. Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (Oxford, 1963); and Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution* (Boston, 1948).

The literature on women, nationalities, and social classes has burgeoned in the last decades: Alfred Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1982); William C. Fuller, Jr., *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881–1914* (Princeton, NJ, 1985); Esther Kingston-Mann and Timothy Mixter (eds.), *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); Ben Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861–1914* (Berkeley, CA, 1986);

Christine D. Worobec, *Peasant Russia: Family and Community in the Post-Emancipation Period* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (eds.), *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ, 1994); Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900–1914* (Berkeley, CA, 1993); Nancy Mandelker Frieden, *Russian Physicians in an Era of Reform and Revolution, 1856–1905* (Princeton, NJ, 1981); Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (Princeton, NJ, 1990); Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700–2000* (Cambridge, 2004); and Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991* (New Haven, CT, 2007).

Cultural studies have also blossomed recently. An excellent introduction can be found in Nicholas Rzhevsky (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture* (Cambridge, 1998). On the discourses around gender and sexuality, see Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca, NY, 1992); on literacy, Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Princeton, NJ, 1985); on music, Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music from Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); and James von Geldern and Louise McReynolds (eds.), *Entertaining Tsarist Russia: Tales, Songs, Plays, Movies, Jokes, Ads, and Images from Russian Urban Life, 1779–1917* (Bloomington, IN, 1998).

Among works that have investigated the question of empire and nation in tsarist Russia are: Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (Harlow, Oklahoma City, OK, 2001); Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen, and Anatolyi Remnev (eds.), *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700–1930* (Bloomington, IN, 2007); Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (London, 2000); Serhii Plokhy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (Toronto, 2005); Hubertus Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia During World War I* (Ithaca, NY, 1995); Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (DeKalb, IL, 2003); and Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

On foreign policy the single best work is David M. McDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia, 1900–1914* (Cambridge, 1992). On Russia in World War I, see Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia During World War I* (Bloomington, IN, 1999); and Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign Against Enemy Aliens During World War I* (Cambridge, MA, 2003).

CHAPTER 2

The Double Revolution

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION AND THE END OF ROMANOV RULE

On January 22, 1917, just a month before the outbreak of the revolution in Russia, Vladimir Lenin, in exile in Zurich, addressed a meeting of young Swiss workers in German. His topic was the Russian revolution of 1905, and his aim was to counteract the despair that many revolutionaries felt in the third year of World War I. "We should not be deceived by the present graveyard silence in Europe," he stated soberly.

> Europe is pregnant with revolution. The monstrous horror of the imperialist war and the suffering caused by the rise in the cost of living engender a revolutionary spirit, and the ruling classes, the bourgeoisie and their lackeys, the governments, are moving deeper and deeper into a blind alley from which they will never be able to extricate themselves without tremendous upheavals....

He confidently told his audience that the coming revolution would be a "proletarian, socialist revolution," but he was more pessimistic about its timing. "We of the older generation may not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution."

Lenin proved to be a better revolutionary than a prophet of revolution. The brief wave of patriotism at the beginning of the war had only temporarily ameliorated the political crisis of tsarism. By the spring of 1915, the chasm between the government and educated society had opened up again, as the majority of Duma members, the Progressive Bloc, called for a cabinet that had the support of the Duma. But the tsar had steadily refused to grant such a government and instead threatened to dissolve the Duma. Disenchantment with the emperor and empress reached into the royal family itself. High officials, even the tsar's uncle, Grand Duke Nicholas, knew of plots to overthrow the tsar and did not report them. Defeats and economic disarray turned more and more people against the regime. The Romanov dynasty existed almost without support, held in place by the inertia of three centuries and fear of the alternatives.