



Autocracy

The impossible reform

Ivan III (1462 – 1505): the birth of
autocracy in Russia

Ivan, Grand Duke of Moscow proclaimed
himself “*sovereign of all Russia*”

Title of *Czar* (Caesar): the spiritual heir of the
Byzantine emperor – The representative of
God on earth

The czar is “*autocrat*”: he rules by
decrees/executive orders (*ukase*)

The czar’s subjects: total submission





The rise of parliamentary
systems & political/civil rights in
Europe

Russia unable to reform its
political system

Alexander I: A **solid education**
A Swiss (Republican!) tutor
Frédéric-César de La Harpe

1. Project to abolish serfdom: violent opposition from nobility (wealth based on land ownership and number of serfs)
2. A constitution for Russia



Count Mikhail Speransky (minister of interior)

Project of constitution to include the creation of an assembly (*Duma*) – Limited legislative powers

The nobility opposed to the project: a threat to its privileges

Speransky accused of being too close to Napoleon (growing Franco-Russian tensions)





A Council of State: advisory
body to the czar

The project of transforming
Russia into a **federation**
(1820)

1815: a constitutional charter
granted to Poland

Project of a global constitution
for Russia

The rise of secret societies



1825: the death of Alexander I
No male heir – No successor chosen

Nicolas (Alexander's youngest brother):
reputation of conservatism

Officers of the Imperial Guard: emergency
insurrection (ill-prepared)

“December crisis”: military order & discipline to
prevail – Censorship

Reform of the education system (too “liberal”)





No council of ministers

“Special committees”
(advisory role only)

A private Secretariat

“Third section”: political
police – Tight surveillance
of suspected “Liberals”

Nicolas I's ideological doctrine

Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality



Russian Poland increasingly open to liberal ideas

Calls for Poland's independence

November 1830: uprising

A provisional government

POLISH LANDS 1815-1914



Republic of Krakow (1815-46)
1846 to Austria)

Extent of Polish rebellions of 1830 and 1863-64
in the Russian Empire

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February 1831: massive
Russian military intervention



7 000 to 10 000 Poles
left for exile

Polish national army
disbanded

Higher education
forbidden

Catholic Church wealth
seized



RUSSIAN EMPIRE

Military interventions in Europe whenever conservative order threatened

NO to self-determination

1849: 200 000 men in Hungary





Nicholas I: *“the policeman of Europe”*

PRINCIPAL BATTLE SITES OF THE CRIMEAN WAR, 1853–56



France & Great Britain: to stop Russia's expansionism in the Balkans



Crimean War (1853-1856): a humiliating defeat for Russia





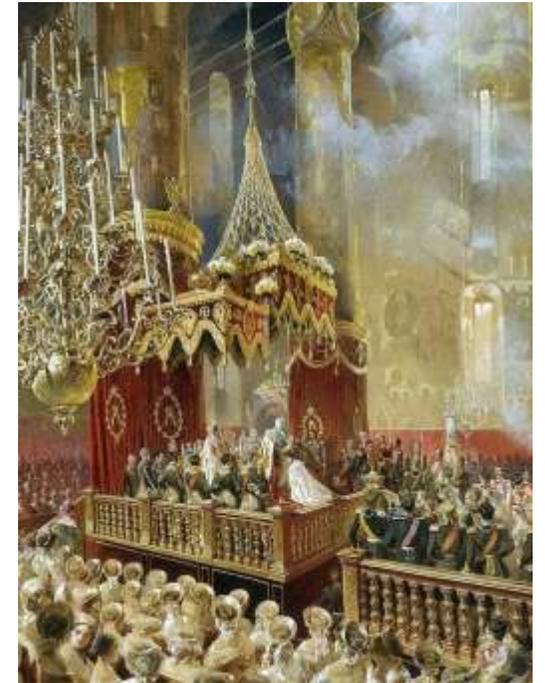
Napoleon III

Alexander II: *“the reformer”*

Military defeat caused by Russia’s economic, technological & military backwardness

Alexander II: to accelerate the pace of reforms

1856: a new era in Russian history

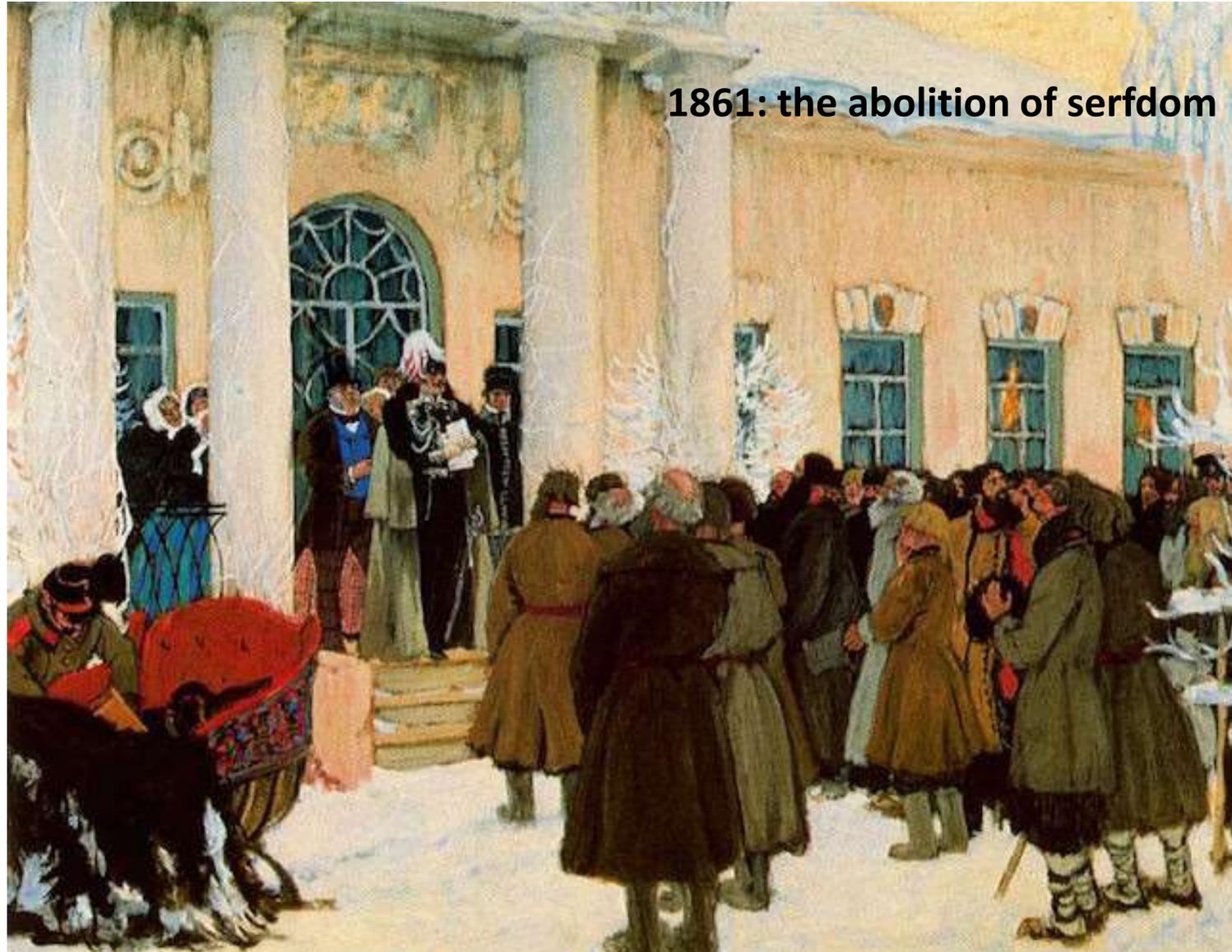




The Polish uprising of
1863-1864 violently
crushed

No special rights to
nationalities within the
Empire

1861: the abolition of serfdom



1864: the creation of local assemblies
(*Zemstvo*)

Lighter censorship

Education for all

1880-1881: a constitution for Russia

The end of autocracy?





Narodnaya Volya (« People's Will »)
Revolutionary political organization

Russian autocracy is a monster unwilling to reform itself

Acts of violence in an attempt to spark mass revolt against the czar



The Czar seen as a protector against the landowners by the Russian peasantry

Revolution not a priority

"History is too slow"



Alexander II's political reforms
deemed insufficient by the
revolutionaries

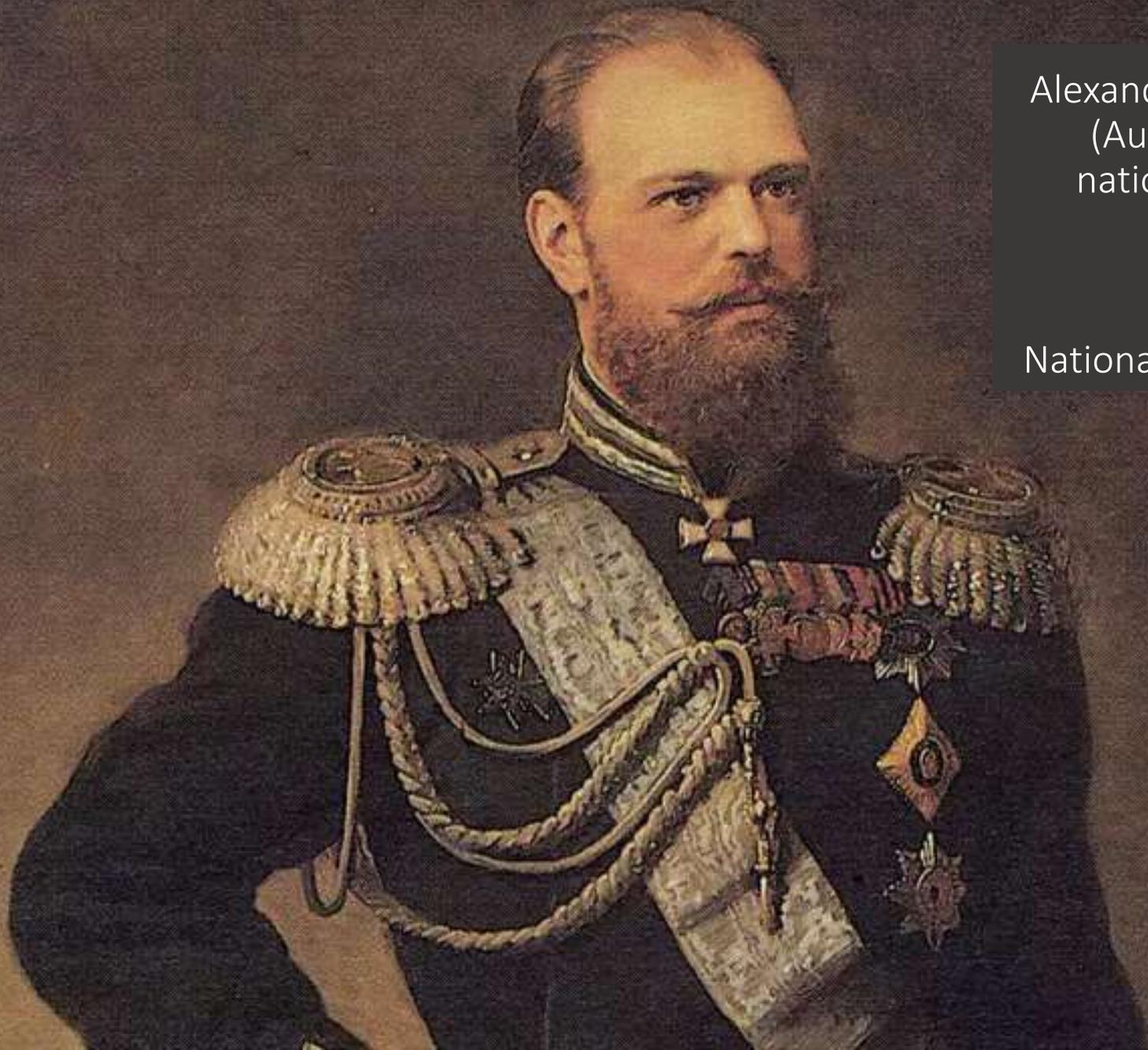
The only choices: to maintain or get
rid of the whole system



Targeting the Winter Palace (1880)

The assassination of Alexander II (1881)





Alexander III: reforms abandoned
(Autocracy – Divine rights,
nationalism & the Orthodox
Church)

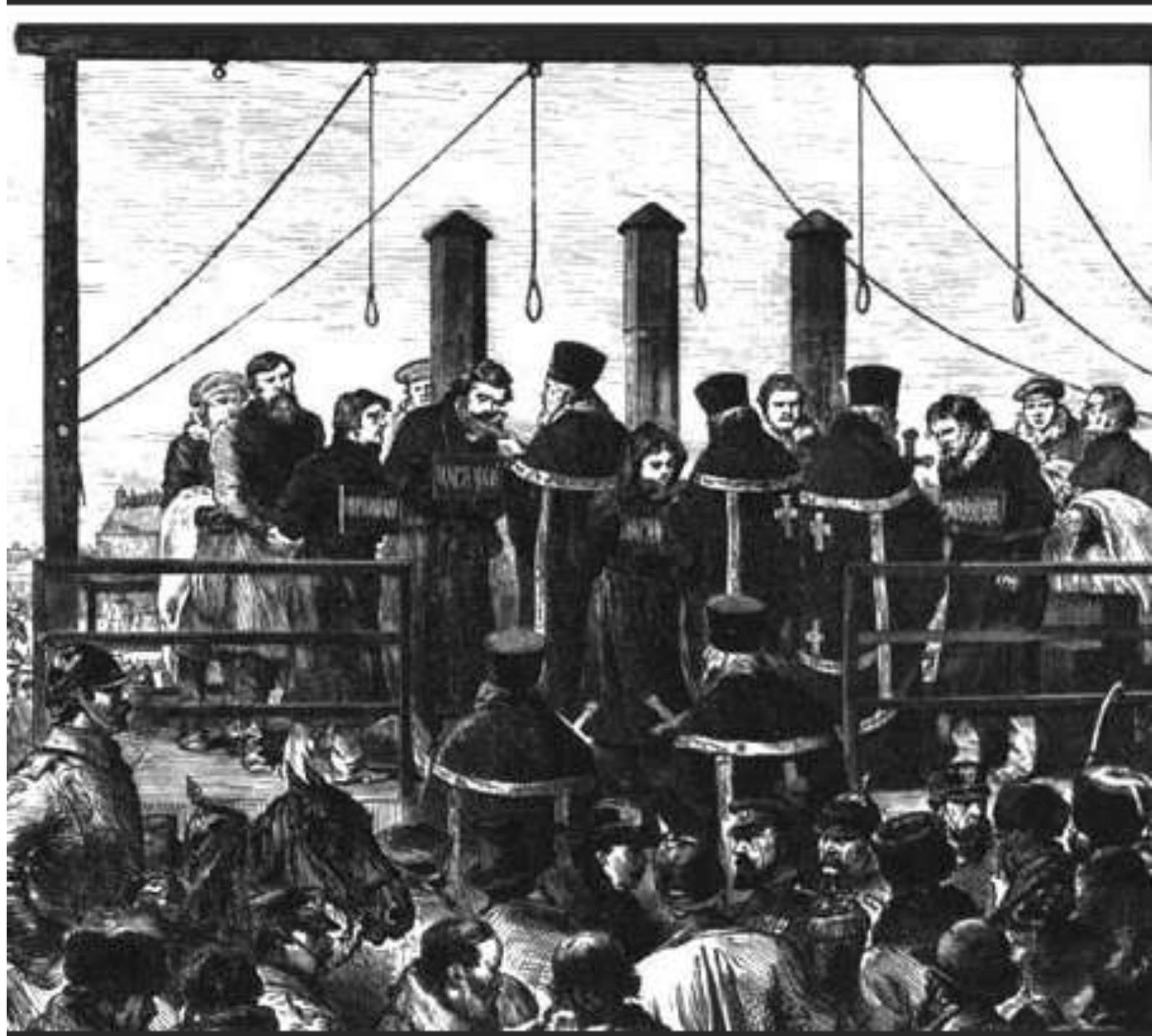
Policy of repression
Nationalist & xenophobic ideology

The execution of the conspirators
(including the first woman)



Responding to terror by terror
(State terrorism)

The destruction of the revolutionary
movement



The Czar's secret police: in the name of efficiency

Police activities centralized

Creation of special units (sections of protection – *Okhrana*)

A network of secret informants (to infiltrate revolutionary movements)

To prevent plots/conspiracies (a system of financial incentive)



A system of *agents provocateurs*
(6 500 agents – 1883-1917)

Agent provocateur: a person who induces
others to break the law so that they can be
caught & convicted



Deportations of political prisoners to Siberia
Extremely harsh conditions





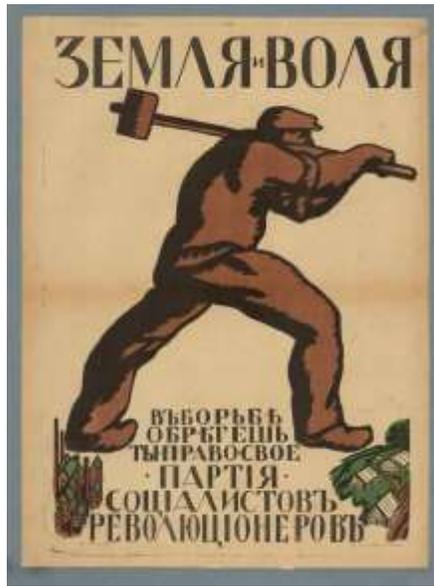
A new Czar: Nicolas II – Autocracy to remain at the core of the Russian political system



Russia: deep social mutations

The Industrial Revolution: calls for constitutional monarchy

The emergence of a working class (miserable living conditions)



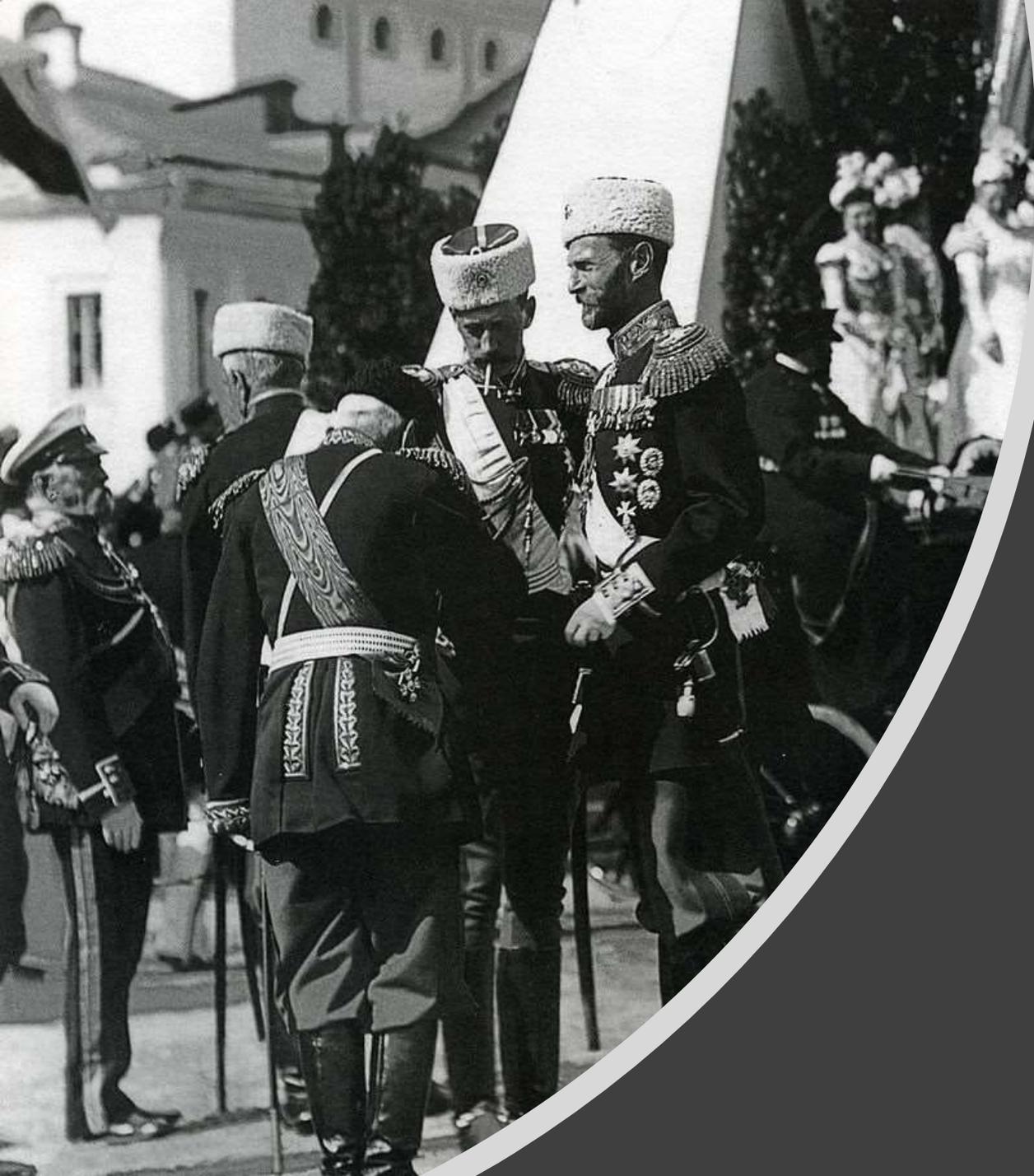
1902: the creation of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party

Party's Manifest: the path to Socialism is blocked by the Russian autocracy

Autocracy needs to be destroyed through the use of terror

1904: the assassination of
Vyacheslav von Plehve
(Minister of the Interior & Director of
the Imperial police)





1905: the assassination of Grand-Duke Sergei (Nicolas II's uncle)





The Russo-Japanese War: an unpopular conflict

Humiliating string of defeats

Political demands - Strikes



Bloody Sunday
(St-Petersburg, 1905)

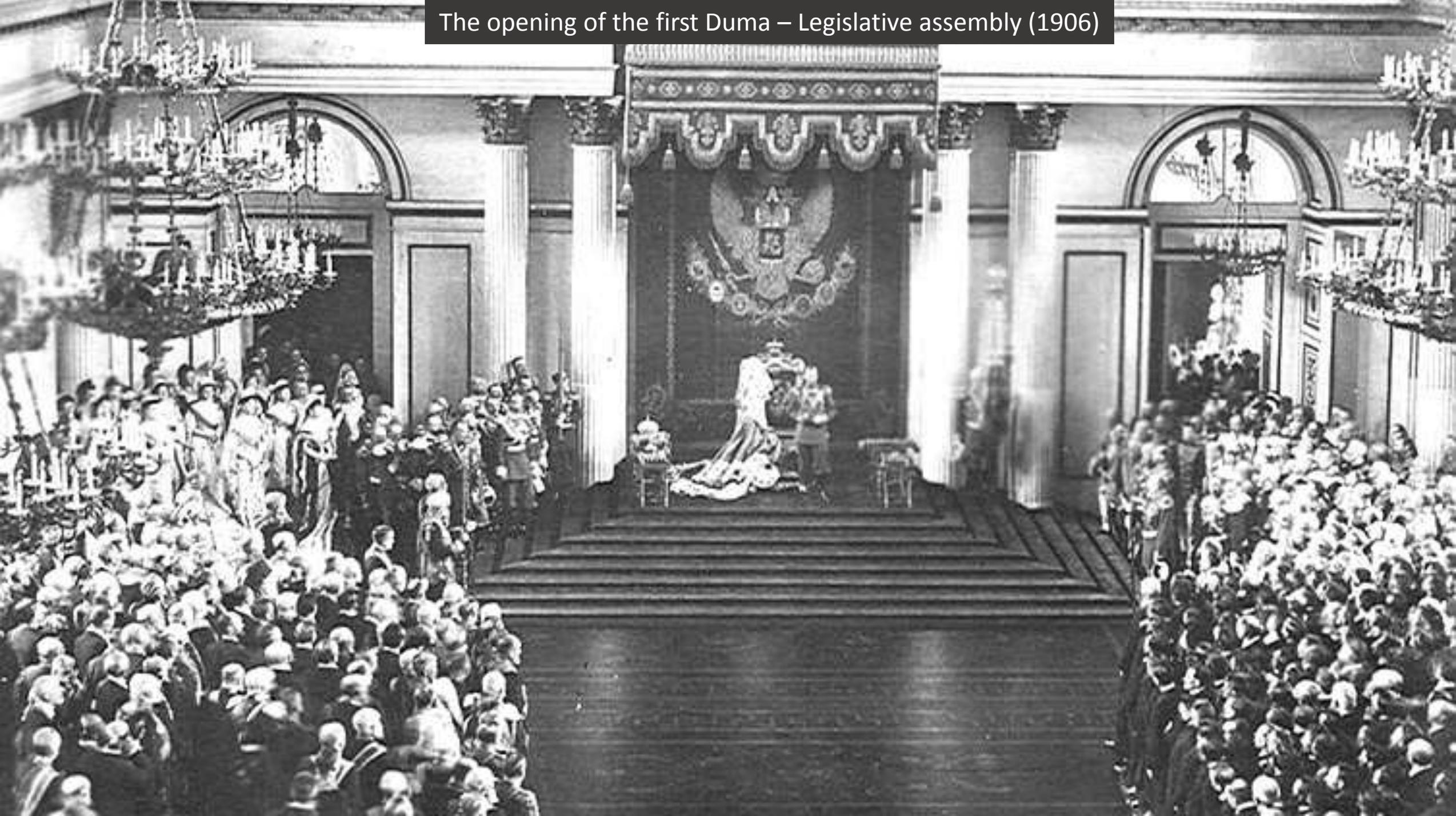
Peaceful demonstration (150 000
workers and peasants)



Father Georgi Gapon: call to all
Socialist parties to act through the use
of *“dynamite and bombs, collective
and individual terror”*



The opening of the first Duma – Legislative assembly (1906)





The end of the absolute
monarchy in Russia

BUT

No budgetary powers
for the Duma

Duma can be dissolved
or adjourned

Assassination attempt against Prime Minister
Piotr Stolypin (1906)





Rasputin and the
Imperial family:
growing discontent

Nicolas II isolated

- Neutral Powers
- Central Powers
- Allied Powers



Deepening tensions in Europe

EUROPE

Central, Entente and Neutral powers

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SCALE OF KILOMETERS

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February 1914: memorandum presented to the Czar by former interior minister Piotr Dournavo

1. Consequences of a potential conflict in Europe
2. Renewed revolutionary agitation likely (wars always create hardship)
3. Government to be blamed for economic difficulties
4. Calls for social reforms - Revolution



28 June 1914: the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and his wife

