

A Short History of Russia (to about 1970)

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Foreword.

This short history has been compiled from the study of a number of other works, in particular H.A.L. Fisher's "History of Europe", Paul Crowson's "A History of the Russian People", and William L. Langer's "Encyclopaedia of World History".

In it the histories of the other Slav peoples is touched upon sufficiently, it is hoped, to make comprehensible their effect on Russian history.

Chapter 1. Early History of the Slavs, 2,000 BC - AD 800.

During the first and second millennia B.C. Indo-European tribes spread from their land of origin - probably western Asia - into Europe, where they mixed with the Europeans of the Bronze Age. They founded the Greek and Latin civilisations, and some of them - the Germanic tribes - overran most of northern Europe. The Slavs were a branch of these Indo-Europeans who followed the Germans westwards and settled in the region of the Vistula, the upper Dnieper, the Don and the Volga. By perhaps the first century A.D. the Western Slavs, who became the Poles, Czechs and Slovaks, had become separated from the Eastern Slavs, who became the Russians. And several centuries later the Southern Slavs - Serbs, Croats, Slovenes - broke away from the Eastern Slavs towards the Danube and the Adriatic Sea.

The Eastern Slavs remained virtually unaffected by the civilisations to the south, though about 400 B.C. the Greeks founded some colonies on the north coast of the Black Sea, and for a time the Slavs were in contact with the Hellenic civilisation.

This contact was broken by successive waves of barbarians from the east, who swept across the steppes (treeless plains) of southern Russia in periodic invasions of Europe. The most far-reaching of these invasions were those of the Mongol Huns in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. under their greatest leader, Attila, in the middle of the 5th century they were masters of a vast area from the Rhine to the Urals, which they plundered and devastated at their will. On Attila's death, however, this huge destructive empire fell to pieces, and the Huns were absorbed by the peoples of the lands they had conquered.

In the forests and marshes north of the steppes the Eastern Slavs remained largely isolated, possibly because the land, frozen in winter and scorched in summer, was unattractive to others. For many centuries they lived their own hard lives, slowly clearing the forests, tilling the soil, building little wooden towns, and trading on the rivers. By the 8th century they were settled along the great rivers connecting the Baltic and the Black Sea, an unorganised people engaged in the marketing of furs and forest produce.

Much of the southern steppes at this time was dominated by Turkish nomads, the Pechenegs; and further east, in the lower Volga region, some of the Slavs were subject to another Turkish tribe, the Khazars, who had there established a powerful kingdom.

To the west of the Eastern Slavs were the Poles, and further west, in Bohemia, the Czechs were settled. To the north, on the Baltic coast, were the Slavic Lithuanians. The Southern Slavs were in the north-western part of the Balkan peninsula, and to the east of them had appeared the Bulgars, an Asiatic non-Slavic people who in the course of time became completely Slavicised.

One event in this 8th century not directly connected with the Slavs deserves mention; the successful defence in 717 of Constantinople by the Byzantine emperor against the Mohammedan onslaught. Though the Eastern Slavs were probably unaware of this struggle, the result was momentous for them and for the future of

eastern Europe. Had the Mohammedans taken the Byzantine capital they, and their religion, might well have swept northwards and found in the non-religious Slavs willing converts to Islam.

Chapter 2. The Vikings in Russia.

In the 9th century the Norsemen from Scandinavia made a violent eruption into the outside world. These sea-faring pirates (the Vikings) raided the coasts of western Europe, and later conquered Normandy, England and Sicily. We are concerned with those Vikings, mainly Swedish, who - at about the same time that the Danes were conquering England - explored to the south-east, up the rivers from the Baltic and then down the Dnieper and Volga to the Black Sea and the Caspian. In about 860 they raided Constantinople.

It is thought that the Vikings were welcomed by the Slavs, who may have looked to them for protection against marauders from the east. The Vikings used the Slav leaders as subordinate rulers, and inter-married with them. They taught the Slavs the elements of national organisation, and so laid the foundation of a Russian state. By the Greeks these Vikings were called Varangians; by their Finnish neighbours they were called "Ruotsi" or "Russ" hence the name Russians, which came to be applied to the Eastern Slavs. (The Finns were of Mongol origin, not Scandinavian or Slav.)

The first of the Viking rulers in Russia was the semi-legendary Ruric, of Swedish or Danish origin. About 862 he founded a principality at Novgorod, and this was soon followed by others at Kiev and elsewhere. These settlements became centres of authority for the surrounding Slavs.

Ruric's successor Olag (about 880-912) united Novgorod and Kiev under his control, and established a confederation under the leadership of Kiev. Kiev became the chief stronghold of Viking power, and for the next 300 years was, in effect, the capital of Russia.

Several times in the 10th century the Viking rulers of Kiev launched attacks on Constantinople. They failed to capture it, but they extracted commercial concessions from the Byzantine emperors. Their interest in Constantinople may have helped to fire Russian ambition for the possession of the city - which survived as a main feature of Russian policy until the 20th century - and it taught the Russians to look to Byzantium for their culture. About 957 the Russian princess Olga visited Constantinople and was converted to Christianity.

Olga's son Svyatoslav (964-972) was the greatest conqueror amongst these early Viking princes. He broke the Turkish Khazar empire on the lower Volga, and in the south he successfully campaigned against the Bulgars, who were menacing Byzantium. He maintained a second capital among the Bulgars until he was driven out by the Byzantine emperor. He was killed in 972 by the nomad Pechenegs (whom he had earlier repulsed when they attacked Kiev).

After a dynastic struggle Svyatoslav was succeeded as Prince of Kiev by Vladimir (978-1015), who before his accession had waged successful campaigns against the Poles to the west, the Lithuanians to the north, and the Turks of the Volga. Vladimir adopted Greek Christianity as the state religion (see next chapter). This may be said to mark the end of the Viking period of Russian history, and the beginning of the era of Slavic civilization centred on Kiev.

Chapter 3. The Adoption of Greek Christianity: The Era of Kievan Civilisation.

The story goes that Vladimir, notorious for his lust and cruelty, decided to examine the leading religions of the day, and to adopt the least distasteful. His choice fell on Greek Christianity. His envoys had been greatly impressed by the beauty of the Church of St Sophia in Constantinople, the great monument of the Greek Church. Vladimir accepted baptism in return for marriage to the Byzantine Emperor's sister and proceeded to carry out the forcible conversion of the Russian people (for which he was later canonised).

The adoption of Greek Christianity had far-reaching importance for Russia, politically and culturally. Politically, the Greek Church became subservient to the state, whereas the Roman Church did not. Thus in Russia, though bringing with it many of the benefits of Christian thought and ways, the Church did not resist the complete despotism of the temporal rulers; and the acceptance of the Greek faith set Russian civilisation on a different path from that of western Europe, and alienated the Western Slavs of Poland and Bohemia, who joined the Roman Catholic Church.

Christianity soon became a pervading influence in the lives of the Russian people, and on Russian art. Kiev is said to have quickly acquired some 200 churches (mainly wooden structures which have not survived), dominated by the Church of the Holy Wisdom which rivalled St Sophia in magnificence.

The Church of the Holy Wisdom, designed by Greek architects, was built at the behest of Vladimir's son and successor, Jaroslav the Wise (1019-1054). Jaroslav was the most enlightened ruler during the Kievan era, and under him the predominance of Kiev over the other principalities reached its zenith. He inflicted a crushing defeat on the Pechenegs; and he also established a code of Russian law, and was a patron of ecclesiastical learning and literature.

Jaroslav's death was followed by a long period of dynastic struggles for the grand principedom of Kiev, and a consequent decline in Kiev's importance. Its last phase of glory was under Vladimir Monomakh (1113-1125), who asserted his authority over the other principalities and recovered some of the eastern borderlands from the nomad Polovtsy (or Kumans) who had replaced the defeated Pechenegs.

Kiev's predominance ended with the death of Vladimir Monomakh, and leadership gradually passed to other principalities in the north-east, notably those of Suzdal and Vladimir. Meanwhile in the north-west the citizens of Novgorod had banished their princes and established a republic, which was governed by officials elected by an assembly of the townspeople. Its territories embraced much of northern Russia.

During this period many peasants, to escape from the marauding Polovtsy, or from the oppression of their own rulers, left their villages in the Dnieper valley and migrated into the forests. Some moved westwards to the lands already occupied by the Poles. These newcomers, known as "Little Russians", were despised as heretics by the Roman Catholic Poles. Others went east, to the plains of the upper Volga and Oka region. These came to be known as "Great Russians". Vladimir was their main settlement.

In 1169 Andrei Bogolubski of Suzdal stormed and sacked Kiev. He transferred the seat of authority to Vladimir, preferring it to Suzdal because in Vladimir there was less popular resistance to despotism. For the next century and a half Vladimir was the capital of Russia; but early in the 13th century political developments in Russia were overwhelmed by the Tatar (Mongol) conquest.

Chapter 4. The Tatars: The Golden Horde: The Rise of Moscow: Ivan the Great.

The first Tatar invasion of Russia came in 1223, shortly before the death of Jenghis Khan, the founder of the Mongol empire. Near the Sea of Azov the Tatars crushed a combined army of the Polovtsy and the southern Russian princes. This was only a raid, but in 1237 they returned, led by Batu and Subatai. The Russians, divided amongst themselves, were no match for the well organised and brilliantly led Tatars, with their incomparable cavalry. Nearly all Russia was overrun. All the cities in the Suzdal region were destroyed, and Kiev was utterly razed in 1240. Novgorod was the only important city to escape destruction.

The Tatars went on to ravage Poland and annihilate an army of Poles and Germans in Silesia. But on the death of Ogodai Khan, Jenghis's son, there was trouble about the succession, and the undefeated Mongol armies poured back to Asia. Thereafter they concentrated on their Asiatic conquests. They left behind, however, on the south-eastern steppes of Russia the "Golden Horde", founded by Batu.

The most powerful Russian prince at this time was Alexander Nevsky. He had led the armies of Novgorod to victories over the Swedes, the Teutonic Knights, and the Finns. He was unable to repel the Tatars, but he succeeded in coming to terms with them. He persuaded them not to molest Russia any further, and accepted from them the office of Grand Prince of Vladimir, whose function was to collect from all the principalities and cities a tribute to the Golden Horde.

For the next 200 years the Tatars of the Golden Horde dominated Russia. As well as paying tribute, Russians were conscripted for the Tatar armies, and skilled Russian workers were sent to the Tatar capital, Saray on the Volga. Apart from these impositions, the Russians were allowed to continue their normal lives and their Christian customs (the Tatars had become not very devout Mohammedans). But this long period of subservience left its mark on the Russian people. It retarded their culture and further estranged them from western Europe.

In the internal politics of Russia these centuries of Tatar mastery saw the rise in influence of a hitherto insignificant state - the Grand Duchy of Moscow to the west of Vladimir in the central plain. The Grand Dukes of Moscow reached a position of ascendancy over their fellow tributaries, not by being champions of Russian liberty against the Tatars, but by the success with which they courted their favour. In 1328 Ivan Kalita of Moscow (Ivan the Money Bag) secured the much sought after post of Grand Prince, agent for the Golden Horde. As well as becoming their tax gatherer he became their police agent, assisting his Tatar overlords in their punitive expeditious against other Russian princes. He also secured the office for his descendants, and so laid the foundations of a powerful new Russia of the central plains, after the old Russia of the Dnieper had fallen into decay.

The basis of this new Russia was agriculture, and it proved more enduring than the commercial communities of the Dnieper. It was, however, no happy State. The ignorant peasants were oppressed both by their despotic rulers and by the priests who, exempt from the capitation tax, grew in wealth and power.

While the Tatars held sway over south-eastern and central Russia a new power arose in the west. Towards the end of the 13th century the pagan tribes in the Niemen district, whose independence was threatened by the Teutonic Knights, achieved some degree of unity; and they were welded into the Lithuanian nation by Gudimin, who ruled from 1315 to 1340. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Russians, Gudimin conquered Kiev and the land of the middle Dnieper, and made western Russia subject to Lithuania.

This small state could not for long have maintained its power, but in 1386 the Grand Duke of Lithuania formed a rather loose union with the kingdom of Poland, and at the same time adopted the Roman Church. So by the end of the 14th century the Greek Catholic Russia of the Muscovites, as well as being subject to the Tatars, was confronted on the west by the Roman Catholic Poland-Lithuania. (Lithuania and Poland were formally united in 1569, and remained so until the "partitions of Poland" late in the 18th century.)

In 1380 the first blow for Russian freedom was struck. Dimitri Donskoi, Grand Duke of Moscow, defeated a great Tatar army at Koulikovo. The Tatars soon retaliated; but the victory had united the Russians of the central plain and given them a new patriotism. So when, ten years later, the Mongol conqueror Timur invaded and disorganised the Golden Horde (apparently not being content with conquering non-Mongol peoples), the Russians were ready to take the opportunity to free themselves from their tutelage to the Tatars. Their final emancipation, however, did not take place until 1480 when Ivan the Great, Grand Duke of Moscow 1462-1505, refused to pay tribute any more.

As well as throwing off the Tatar yoke, Ivan the Great made two further contributions to the future greatness of Russia. First, he expanded his territories westward, and to the north and north-east, by annexing most of the rival principalities and by subjecting, after a series of wars, the city of Novgorod, which was allied to Lithuania. This victory, in 1478, which ended a long struggle with Novgorod for supremacy, gave Muscovy access to the Baltic and also jurisdiction over a vast area stretching to the Urals.

Secondly, Ivan married, in 1472, the niece and heiress of the last Byzantine emperor. In 1453 this Empire, which for centuries had been dwindling in extent and importance, had finally passed away with the loss of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks. Moscow had then become the natural capital of the Greek Church, and Ivan's marriage consolidated Russia's position as the successor to the traditions of the Byzantine Empire. Ivan took the Byzantine double headed eagle for his arms and assumed the imperial title of Caesar, or Tsar.

Ivan thus laid the foundations of a united and powerful Russia; but it was largely to the detriment of the peasants, whose bonds of serfdom were tightened condemning them to lives of unremitting toil to produce grain to feed the armies and the expanding population. Many of them fled to the frontiers to lead a lawless life of comparative freedom with the Cossacks.

Chapter 5. *The Cossacks: The Ukraine: Siberia.*

The Cossacks were originally refugees from the Turkic states of central Asia, who preferred a nomadic life on the steppes to serfdom. Their numbers grew rapidly in the 16th century with the influx from Russia - adventurous spirits, including some criminal elements, and others who were tired of the endless work on the farms.

The Cossacks adopted the Tatar way of life, and formed great hosts of horsemen on the southern steppes, becoming a sort of frontier screen between Russia and the Tatars. Sometimes they raided the Tatars, beating them at their own game. Sometimes they raided Muscovy. They had the wild characteristics of most border tribes.

There were three main Cossack hosts - of the Ukraine, the Don, and the Urals. The Ukrainian Cossacks came from the Little Russians who had abandoned the Dnieper and settled in southern Poland. There they were oppressed by their Polish overlords, and when the Tatar menace began to recede the more adventurous among them formed a Cossack host which returned to the lower Dnieper, about the end of the 14th century. They were followed by other Little Russians who settled in the lands of the upper Dnieper. These, with the Cossacks, formed the majority of the inhabitants of the Dnieper basin, and their Little Russian or Ukrainian dialect became the established language. (A further migration of Little Russians from southern Poland moved north-east to the forests and marshes of the Pripet. These were outnumbered by the older inhabitants, the "White Russians", and adopted the White Russian dialect.)

These migrations took place at about the same time as the expansion of Lithuania-Poland; so the settlers in the Ukraine, and those in White Russia, soon found themselves once more subject to Polish sovereignty. The Poles also claimed authority over the Ukrainian Cossacks, and at times succeeded in asserting it, the Polish kings forming Cossacks into military forces as protection from the Tatars.

The second great Cossack host, and perhaps the largest, were the Don Cossacks. With them the Tsars followed the Polish example, and as time went on they were gradually incorporated into the Imperial service. By about 1650 they had come to a permanent alliance with the Tsar. He supplied them with grain and munitions in return for their military services. A class distinction then grew up between the old Cossack families and the newcomers, and eventually - in the 18th century - the Cossacks settled down as a great land-owning community, the new recruits being little more than serfs. In later years the descendants of the Cossacks formed Cossack regiments in the Russian Imperial army.

The third Cossack host were an offshoot of the Don Cossacks. They were originally a group of mutineers who migrated from the Don to the Urals in 1575-80, and so became the Ural Cossacks. The right to develop a huge area of land west of the Urals had been given by the Tsar to Stroganovs, an old-established and enterprising trading family. At the time that the Ural Cossacks arrived the Stroganovs were being greatly troubled by a powerful Tatar chief, Kuchum, whose tribe lived just east of the Urals. So the Cossacks, equipped by the Stroganovs and under a brilliant leader, Yermak, crossed the Urals in 1581, and after an adventurous campaign lasting three

years drove Kuchum from his stronghold and launched Russia on her expansion across Siberia.

This went on throughout the following century, steadily overcoming the fading power of the Mongols. The Cossacks led the way, no longer on horseback but sailing up the rivers, exploring and living on the country. (In 1648 a group of Cossacks sailed along the northeast coast of Siberia and through the Bering Straits into the Pacific.)

After exploring, the Cossacks manned forts. Then came adventurous individuals who settled as peasants or trappers. Then governors were sent out as authorities in the new districts. Okhotsk on the Pacific became a centre of authority in 1649, Kamchatka in 1697. Then came gentry, with their families and their serfs, and companies to exploit the great mineral resources. But there was always a demand for more manpower, which the Government sought to meet by sending to Siberian exile all those it wished to be rid of - criminals and all others who were troublesome to the despotic rulers of Russia.

Chapter 6. The 16th and 17th Centuries: Ivan the Terrible: The Romanoffs: Wars with Poland.

In 1533 Ivan the Terrible, so called because of his insane cruelties, became Tsar, the first ruler of Russia to be formally crowned as such. He carried on the policies of his grandfather, Ivan the Great. He successfully continued to push back the Tatars, capturing Kazan and Astrakhan, their strongholds on the Volga, thus bringing Russia's boundary to the Caspian Sea. But he was unsuccessful in attempted further westward expansion at the expense of the Poles.

Within Russia Ivan greatly increased the autocratic power of the Tsar. He undermined the power of the old-established aristocracy (the Boyars) by creating a "Council of the whole nation" - the Zemsky Sobor - which included new boyars, government officials, army officers, clergy and merchants, as well as the old boyars. And later he set up, by the side of the official government, a private government run by himself - the first complete Russian autocracy, equipped with its security police. Ivan's system might have produced better conditions for the Russian people, but instead he used his powers to earn his nickname by torture, massacre and murder, including that of his eldest son.

So, when Ivan died, he was succeeded by his young and feeble minded second son Feodor, and there followed a struggle amongst the boyars for the regency, which was secured by one Boris Godunov. In 1598 Feodor died, the last of the descendants of the House of Ruric, which had ruled Russia for seven centuries.

Boris became Tsar, but to the conservative Russians it was unbelievable that the real Tsar was dead, and for a time there was chaos while rival claimants fought for supremacy, aided by Cossacks, Poles and Swedes. The period 1604-1613 is known as the "Time of Troubles". The Poles occupied Moscow, and it seemed that a Roman Catholic Polish Tsar would prevail. This was too much for the deeply religious Russian people, with their strong adherence to the Greek Church. A national uprising evicted the Poles, and in 1613 the boyars elevated to the Tsardom one of their number, Michael Romanoff, son of the Patriarch of the Church. The Romanoffs ruled Russia until the revolution in 1917.

Having elected Michael Romanoff the boyars left the government more and more to the Tsar and his favourites and officials, and the Zemsky Sobor disappeared in 1653. For its last forty years it was used mainly to pass laws which reduced still more the freedom of the peasants, until in 1649 they were completely reduced to the status of serfs, with their lives controlled by the gentry. As a result many ran away and joined the Don Cossacks, where they were organised into a rebel band by the Cossack Stephen Razin. In a serf rebellion in 1667-71 they terrorised the gentry in the Volga district, but they were finally crushed by government troops.

Meanwhile war with the Poles and Lithuanians continued intermittently from 1613 until 1667. In its later stages this developed into a struggle for the Ukraine. In 1648 there was a revolt of the Ukrainian Cossacks, led by Khmelnitsky, against their Polish overlords. Khmelnitsky's aim was independence for the Ukraine. This he failed to achieve, largely owing to dissension amongst the Ukrainians, many of whom, to make life easier under the Poles, had become "Uniat Christians" - Roman Catholics

who retained the Orthodox religion's service. Failing in his main object, Khmel'nitsky gave allegiance to Moscow, thinking that a lesser evil than subjection to Poland. Eventually, in 1667, the war ended. Russia acquired the eastern Ukraine, recovering Kiev after three centuries under Polish-Lithuanian rule. The western Ukraine, and "White Russia", continued to be ruled by the Poles.

Russia's advance to the Pacific in the course of the 17th century has already been described. So by the end of the century Russia was a very considerable power. She was almost totally Asiatic in outlook and had not yet taken part in the affairs of western Europe. Indeed, by western European standards, Russia, though becoming a great power, was a barbarous one. Several centuries after the beginning of the Renaissance in the west the vast majority of the Russian people were still in a primitive state of existence. The Church, instead of using its wealth to encourage the advancement of knowledge and intelligent thought, suppressed it. Illiteracy was general. Science was virtually unknown.*

There was little industry and commerce. There was no parliament. Justice was bought and sold. Flogging and drunkenness, cruelty and all forms of vice were common in all classes, men and women alike. The Tsar was an autocratic ruler, assisted by the boyars in a corrupt administration. The boyars owned the land, under grant from the Tsar, and owned, in varying degrees of freedom or lack of it, the peasants. Such was the state of Russia when Peter the Great became Tsar in 1689.

* This backwardness did not apply to the western and southern Slavs, who had for long been in touch with western Europe and with the Byzantine Empire. In the middle of the 16th century Poland contributed to world knowledge in the work of Copernicus (1473-1543). He proved that the sun is the centre of our system, and so became the founder of modern astronomy.

Chapter 7. Westernisation: Peter the Great: Elizabeth.

Peter the Great became Tsar at the age of 17. He had great physical strength and ferocity, inexhaustible energy, and the intelligent curiosity and technical efficiency of a good brain. His temperament varied between one of exuberance and fits of sullen gloom. For the first six years of his reign he spent most of his time with his friends in the foreign quarters of Moscow, drinking, singing in the streets and playing practical jokes, and he performed at various times the roles of dentist, engraver, surgeon, shipwright and executioner. He was unhampered by morals, religious feeling or social customs. He immured his sister, discarded his first wife, and tortured and executed his son.

Unlike most of his countrymen Peter liked the sea and ships and was ambitious for naval power. His first warlike exploit was the seizure from the Turks, by a Russian fleet, of the port of Azov at the mouth of the Don. Peter realised, however, that Russia, unaided by a western ally, could not achieve mastery of the Black Sea, and he turned his attention to the Baltic area the west. (Azov was lost again to the Turks in 1711.)

In 1697 Peter went on a western tour, visiting England and many of the European capitals. He saw the advantages and amenities of western civilisation, and returned home determined to "westernise" Russia and raise the level of her efficiency as a State. In this, by the force of his overpowering personality, he succeeded.

He abolished the Council of Boyars and formed a centralised government with a civil service to administer it and a senate, appointed by himself, at the top. He established a navy and a regular army, at the head of which was the Guards regiment consisting entirely of gentry, who were given the obligation to serve the State. He attacked the ancient Russian traditions the beards and gowns of the men, the seclusion of women, the wealth of the priests. He reformed the currency and the calendar, and deducted eight letters from the alphabet. He created schools, though through lack of funds, teachers, and the desire to learn, these made little progress. He gave the Russians their first hospital, their first newspaper and their first museum.

As a symbol of contact with the west Peter built a new capital on the Baltic - St Petersburg, complete with the Peterhof, its "Versailles" on the French model, 18 miles away. St Petersburg stood for the acceptance of western culture, as opposed to Moscow, the heart of the oriental traditions of Russia. (The return to Moscow after the revolution 200 years later was symbolic of the closing of the doors to the west.)

Peter's measures gave to Russia some of the efficiency and material advantages of western life. They did not give to the Russians any social justice or alleviation of the poverty of the masses. Indeed they widened the gap between the westernised gentry and the peasants. To raise money for Peter's projects the peasants were extortionately taxed- 300,000 of them were conscripted for his army. Thousands were conscripted to man the new industries and to build St Petersburg, where they worked until they died. To escape from the hated government many fled to join the

Don Cossacks, where they rose in the second great serf rebellion in Russian history, in 1707. As in the first rebellion of 1667, the rising, after inflicting much damage, was suppressed by government troops.

The big obstacle to Peter's ambition for territorial expansion to the Baltic was Sweden, which, after centuries of quiescence, had become in the 17th century the leading military power in Europe. A series of predatory wars on her neighbours had succeeded in surrounding Sweden with a ring of enemies - Poland, Denmark, Saxony and in 1700 a coalition was formed against her, which Peter took the opportunity to join.

The coalition, however, had failed to take into account the young Swedish King Charles XII,, who proved himself to be an indomitable leader and a master of the art of war. Peter's first venture, then, was a failure. At Narva, near St Petersburg, 40,000 Russians were routed by 10,000 Swedes. But Charles XII spent the next six years punishing the Poles and the Saxons before turning once more on Russia, and so gave Peter a breathing space during which he reorganised his army and seized the Baltic provinces.

In 1709 Charles marched into the heart of Russia to dethrone the Tsar. As others were to discover after him, an army advancing into Russia has not only the Russian army to face, but the formidable adversaries of vast roadless wastes and a pitiless winter. Eventually, shrunk to half their strength by privation and disease, the Swedes were annihilated by the Russians at Poltava, east of Kiev, though Peter himself, during a critical period of the campaign, was drunk.

The Battle of Poltava was decisive, The Swedish Empire south of the Baltic disintegrated, and Peter the Great consolidated his position in the Baltic provinces.

After Peter's death in 1725 there were several short reigns until 1741, when Peter's youngest daughter Elizabeth became Empress. An able politician, but dissolute in character, Elizabeth continued her father's westernisation policy. She kept a brilliant royal court, but under her the privileges of the aristocracy increased and their service to the State lessened. It was also, however, a period of development in learning and science. Russians first university was founded at Moscow in 1755.

Chapter 8. Catherine the Great.

Elizabeth was succeeded in 1762 by her nephew, the weak and incompetent Peter III. His wife was Princess Sophia-Augusta of the small German state of Anhalt-Zerbst, a brilliantly clever woman whose ambitions were to become Empress and then to win a European reputation as an enlightened ruler.

She started by becoming Russian, in name (Catherine), speech, religion and habits. When her husband became Tsar, he offended the gentry by his ostentatious admiration of Frederick the Great of Prussia, with whom Russia was then at war (see Chapter 9). So Catherine's friends in the Guard deposed Peter, and later murdered him, and raised Catherine to rule in his place. Thus she achieved her first ambition. She was Empress of Russia from 1762 to 1796.

Catherine now set about her second ambition. Her aim was to be an enlightened despot according to the theories of Voltaire, with whom she corresponded. She convoked the "Great Commission" (1766-8) to consider far-reaching legislative changes, and she herself wrote the "instructions" to guide them. These instructions denounced serfdom; but the majority of the gentry, on whom her position depended, were against her on this issue. So she let things drift in accordance with their wishes.

Then came the third great peasant revolt, this time in the Ural and Volga regions, led by the Cossack Pugachev. For eighteen months (1773-5) they terrorised the countryside, murdered gentry and priests, and even threatened Moscow before they were suppressed by the army. Frightened by this, and later by the French Revolution, Catherine abandoned her progressive views.

Apart from her ideas on politics, Catherine the Great was intensely interested in literature, art, music and science. Fired by her example Russians began, in the early 19th century, to take a prominent part in the world of literature, led by their national poet Pushkin (1799-1837).

Catherine also completed the westernisation of the gentry, started by Peter the Great. They became "Europeans", spoke French, and were entirely estranged from the serfs, whom they despised. Some of the gentry, however, inspired by Catherine's earlier ideas, and seeing on their Western tours how much better off the peasants were in other lands, became the forerunners of the reformers and revolutionaries of the 19th century. One of the first of these - Radischev - was sent to Siberian exile by Catherine in her later reactionary days.

Chapter 9. Foreign Affairs in the 18th Century: The Partition of Poland.

From the time of Peter the Great onwards Russia took part in the diplomatic affairs of Europe. The main theme of her foreign policy was expansion to the south, at the expense of Turkey, with the ultimate goal Constantinople and access to the Mediterranean. At the same time, as opportunity offered, she continued her attempts to extend her frontiers westward into Europe. Both these aims drew Russia into friendship with Austria in the early 18th century. Austria was the main European bastion against the Turks, and Austria desired to curb the growing power of Prussia, whose outlying territory of East Prussia on the Baltic was to Russian eyes an attractive land to acquire.

In partnership with Austria, Russia established a puppet of her own on the Polish throne in 1735, and with the same help in a war against the Turks Russia once more took Azov, in 1739. Then, in 1756, came the "Seven Years War", launched by Frederick the Great of Prussia against his encircling enemies France, Austria and Russia, who had formed an alliance to prevent further Prussian aggrandisement. (The policy of each of these three countries was at that time controlled by a woman - the Empress Elizabeth of Russia, Maria Theresa of Austria, and Madame de Pompadour, mistress of the French King Louis XV - all of whom had been targets of the scurrilous wit of the misogynist Frederick.)

France's military efforts were neutralised by Frederick's alliance with England; but in Austria and Russia he faced enemies with vastly superior manpower. He won many victories, defeating the Russians at Zorndorf in 1758, but in 1759 he suffered a crushing defeat by a combined Russian and Austrian army at Kunersdorf; and in 1760 the Russians burned Berlin. But Frederick and Prussia survived, and were saved when the Empress Elizabeth died in 1762 and Peter III, the great admirer of Frederick, withdrew Russia from the war.

Catherine the Great, on becoming Empress, continued Peter's policy towards Prussia, perhaps because she felt that Prussia was too strong to oppose. This alliance, which implied the resignation of Russian designs on East Prussia, lasted - except during the chaotic period of the Napoleonic Wars - until Russia was deserted by the German Chancellor Bismarck nearly 120 years later.

Towards the end of the 18th century the position in eastern Europe was radically changed by the obliteration of Poland. To summarise Polish history in the 17th and 18th centuries: the Cossack revolt of 1648, which shook Poland to the core, has already been mentioned (Chapter 6), and also the loss of Kiev and the eastern Ukraine to Russia in 1667. Poland then became involved in a losing battle with the Turks in the western Ukraine. But at this critical point in her history a great leader came to the fore - the nobleman John Sobieski, whom the Poles raised to be king. Under Sobieski, large and energetic both in body and mind, the Poles pushed back the Turks and regained possession of the bulk of the western Ukraine (1675). So Poland was still a large country stretching from the Baltic almost to the Black Sea, and was still overlord of the Cossacks of the Ukraine.

For the next 100 years Poland continued to be a force to be reckoned with, but internally she was unstable. Poland was a poor country and consisted of two very distinct classes - the nobles or landowners, who were poor aristocrats, and a down-trodden and ignorant peasantry. Her great weakness, though, was the system of government. There was a king, not hereditary, but elected for life. The election was naturally a fruitful cause of intrigue and jealousy among the nobles. Moreover the king, when elected, had no power to rule. He could not make war or peace, levy a tax, or alter the law, without the approval of the Diet of nobles, and any single member of the Diet could veto any proposal put before it - a custom known as the "liberum veto". Under these circumstances a coherent policy in Poland was impossible.

To Frederick the Great the existence of Poland was irritating, as it separated East Prussia from the main body of his territory. (Hitler was to be subject to the same irritation 170 years later.) While Catherine the Great was engaged in yet another war with Turkey, in which she gained the Crimea, Frederick proposed a division of some of Poland between Prussia, Austria and Russia, and the first of three "partitions of Poland" followed (1772). Russia obtained White Russia and all the land to the east of the Dvina and Dnieper.

This stung Poland to action. Many reforms were introduced, the king was made hereditary, and the liberum veto was abolished. A revived Poland, however, was not to the taste of Catherine the Great. In 1792 she invaded the country, defeated a brave resistance, and invited Prussia and Austria to share in a second partition. This time most of the Ukraine and Lithuania went to Russia.

Finally, in 1795, by a third partition Poland disappeared from the map. All her remaining territory was divided between her three ruthless neighbours. Russia acquired what was left of Lithuania and the Ukraine. As a separate nation Poland ceased to exist until she came to life again in 1918.

Chapter 10. The Napoleonic Wars.

Catherine the Great saw the menace of the French Revolution to the autocracies of Europe, and she encouraged Prussia, and Austria to invade France and restore the monarchy. By her own invasion of Poland in 1792, however, she diverted their efforts to seeing that they got their share of the Polish spoils. Thus she unwittingly contributed to France's recovery; and Napoleon was able to consolidate the new French army without serious interference from the European powers.

Catherine's son and successor, the tyrannical and mentally unbalanced Paul I (1796-1801), took offence at Napoleon's capture of Malta, whose Knights of St John had elected Paul their grand master. Moreover Russian statesmen were alarmed by Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, which infringed Russia's claims to any territories lopped off the Turkish Empire. So Paul became the chief architect of the "second coalition" against France, consisting mainly of Russia, Austria and Britain (1799). At first the allies prospered. The British drove Napoleon from Egypt; and the Russians, under the aged but fiery and brilliant Tatar peasant General Suvorov, scored a series of victories over the French in Italy. Then Suvorov was let down by his Austrian allies; and Paul blamed Britain for the failure of an Anglo-Russian expedition to free Holland from the French. He also now conceived a great admiration for Napoleon, and Russia withdrew from the coalition.

Paul then came forth as the champion of the "Freedom of the seas" gathering under his wing the countries of northern Europe, he set out to destroy Britain's main weapon against Napoleon, the blockade. This scheme was nullified by the British naval victory of Copenhagen, and by the murder of the Tsar in a palace revolution (1801).

The new Tsar, the young and ambitious Alexander I (1801-1825), was provoked by Napoleon's designs on Turkey into joining the "third coalition" (1805). Nelson's victory at Trafalgar confirmed Britain's supremacy at sea, but on land Napoleon inflicted a series of scattering defeats on his adversaries routing the Austrians at Austerlitz, the Prussians at Jena, and the Russians at Friedland (1807).

After Friedland Napoleon met the Tsar at Tilsit (in Lithuania). Alexander agreed to the creation of a Polish state out of Prussian Poland - the Grand Duchy of Warsaw under the King of Saxony - and also to join in Napoleon's counter blockade of Britain, under which British ships were to be barred from all continental ports. In return Napoleon agreed that Alexander should conquer Finland from Sweden, which he duly did. (The Finns, who were neither Slavs nor Catholics, had enjoyed equal rights with the Swedes under the Swedish crown.) Napoleon indeed flattered the Tsar with vague ideas of their dividing the world between them.

For the next few years, while Napoleon was being made to work hard to maintain his supremacy in Austria and was being harassed by the British campaign in Spain and Portugal, the two emperors remained ostensibly friendly. But neither trusted the other. Napoleon did not like Russia's advance towards the Mediterranean in a war with Turkey (1806-1812). And the counter blockade, with its consequent loss of trade with Britain was unpopular in Russia; by 1811 trade between the two countries had been resumed. Taking this as an excuse, Napoleon decided to invade Russia and

settle matters with the Tsar, who, to meet the threat, quickly made peace with Turkey. (He acquired Bessarabia from the Turks, but not, as he had hoped, Moldavia and Wallachia as well.)

In 1812 Napoleon advanced into Russia with a great army of 600,000 men. The Russian army, which could muster only some 200,000, refused any decisive engagement and restricted itself in the main to raiding the French communications. Napoleon reached and took Moscow. But his deep penetration into Russia had altered the nature of the war. Hitherto the Russian people had disliked Alexander's wars, which for them meant being conscripted for his armies and paying more taxes to finance them. But now that war had come to them in their own homes their patriotism was aroused, and they joined in on their own account and in their own way, harassing the French armies by guerilla tactics and depriving them of food by scorching the earth. So when Napoleon took Moscow, to his surprise Alexander did not capitulate. Instead, the Russians burned the city. Then Napoleon, short of supplies, was faced with the return across the wastes of Russia, with winter approaching. Frost, hunger, disease and the Russian guerillas decimated the remains of his army, and he returned to France with less than 100,000 men, there to raise new forces with which to oppose the other reviving European powers. But the retreat from Moscow had destroyed the might of the French army and paved the way for Napoleon's decisive defeat in the "Battle of the Nations" at Leipzig in 1813. In the following year Alexander and his allies triumphantly entered Paris.

The powers then met at the Congress of Vienna to redraw the map of Europe (the process being interrupted by Napoleon's return from Elba, until his final defeat at Waterloo). The guiding idea in their deliberations was to bolster up the empires of Austria and Prussia, in order to prevent any further French aggression. They totally disregarded the aspirations of the smaller peoples of Europe. Russia's annexation of Finland was confirmed, and Poland became a constitutional kingdom under the Tsar.

After the Congress of Vienna Alexander produced a rather mystical idea for a "Holy Alliance" of European rulers, who were to be guided by Christian principles in their relations with their subjects and with each other. In effect it became an alliance of the Emperors of Russia, Austria and Prussia with the object of stifling any liberal movements and upholding autocracy everywhere.

At the same time a more definite Organisation developed: the Quadruple Alliance, or Concert of Europe, to which Russia, Austria, Prussia and Britain belonged. The four powers pledged themselves to maintain the provisions of the peace treaty, and agreed to meet at intervals to discuss matters affecting the security of Europe. The Quadruple Alliance was an embryo League of Nations, and it did succeed in maintaining an uneasy peace between the great powers for nearly forty years.

Chapter 11. The First Part of the 19th Century: Serfdom and Autocracy: Turkey and Britain: The Crimean War: The Polish Rebellion.

At the beginning of his reign Alexander I had ideas for reform similar to those of his grandmother Catherine at the start of hers. But he found, as Catherine had, the opposition of most of the gentry to his plans for freeing the serfs too great for him; and in his later years, again like Catherine, he abandoned these plans and indeed made the lot of the serfs still worse by conscripting them in increasing numbers for his armies.

Similarly Alexander at first encouraged the plans put forward by his liberal adviser Speransky for broadening the government by the establishment of councils at all levels - local, provincial and imperial - under the direction of a Council of State appointed by the Tsar. But in the event only the Council of State was set up.

Views that the autocratic powers of the government should be curbed, and that serfdom should be abolished, were strongly held by a minority of the gentry, and by many army officers who had seen more enlightened ways in the lands they had traversed on their campaigns. On Alexander's death in 1825 they induced some of the Guards to mutiny and demanded a parliamentary form of government. But the plot failed and the "Decembrists", as they were called, were executed or exiled to Siberia.

Alexander was succeeded by his brother Nicholas I, who did not share Alexander's liberal views. He was a firm believer in autocracy. To prevent the possibility of any further plots he formed the "Third Section" of his chancery - a corps of secret security police to watch for and send to Siberia anyone who murmured against the government. The study of philosophy was banned because it might lead to revolutionary views. A strict censorship was imposed, even on music in case the notes concealed a cipher. Serfdom was preserved, though Nicholas did publish a new code of law edited by Speransky, which defined and limited the rights of the landlords.

In spite of Nicholas's repressive regime criticism of autocracy continued, and the seeds of future agitation were sown. The poet Pushkin was several times exiled for his liberal sentiments, and Gogol in his novels ridiculed Russian bureaucracy. Amongst the critics two schools of thought began to form: the Westernisers, who wished to adopt the political and social systems of western Europe; and the Slavophiles, who thought that Russia should evolve her own political methods. Both groups criticised bureaucratic rule, serfdom and repression of thought.

Nicholas's fear of revolution made him a staunch supporter of the Holy Alliance. When the restored King of France was driven from his throne by the July revolution in 1830 Nicholas prepared to intervene, but his intentions were thwarted by an insurrection nearer home, in Poland. The Poles fought valiantly for a year, but they were finally crushed, their constitution was abrogated, and their liberties were lost. Many of the Polish leaders escaped to the west and settled in Paris, which became

the intellectual capital of Poland. An enduring bond was formed between Poland and France.

In 1848, the "year of revolutions" in central and western Europe, Nicholas, true to his principles, saved the Austrian Emperor by sending a Russian army to assist in quelling a formidable Hungarian revolt.

The only time that Nicholas was on the side of the rebels was when he joined with Britain and France in helping the Greeks in their fight for independence from the Turks (1821-1830). In this case his hatred of revolutionaries was outweighed by the traditional hostility to Turkey and his desire to extend Russia's frontiers to the south. The Greeks gained their independence. The Russians gained from Turkey northern Georgia on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, the mouth of the Danube on the west, and a strong influence in the adjacent Turkish provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia.

In his plans for southern expansion Nicholas was usually careful not to alienate Britain, which was always suspicious of Russia's designs on Constantinople. Twice he acted in concert with Britain in rescuing the Sultan from defeat by his nominal vassal Mohammed Ali of Egypt. But he believed that the Turkish Empire, the "sick man of Europe", was dying; and he tried to reach agreement with Britain on the distribution of Turkish territory between the European powers. No agreement was reached. Eventually Nicholas tried to obtain the Sultan's consent to the safeguarding of the rights of Orthodox Christians in the Holy Places in Palestine, and - of more importance - to a Russian protectorate over all the Orthodox Christians in the Turkish Empire. The Turks agreed to the first demand, but not the second, whereupon the Russians occupied Moldavia and Wallachia. Assured of British and French support, Turkey declared war on Russia (1854).

So started the Crimean War, one of the most ill-managed wars in history. The Russians sank the Turkish fleet in the Black Sea, whereupon Britain and France sent a force to the aid of the Turks. This force landed in the Balkans but found that the Russians, threatened by Austria, had retreated from Moldavia and Wallachia. So they looked around for an objective of sufficient importance to the Russians to bring them to battle. They selected Sebastopol, the Russian naval port in the Crimea, for which a British-French-Turkish force embarked with total disregard of the climate and of the equipment required.

A year later Sebastopol fell, and with all the belligerents exhausted the war ended. Both sides had suffered terrible losses from cholera and frostbite. But the Russians had suffered the most. Their high command and army contractors were incompetent and corrupt; and Russian military power was crippled by the long winter marches to the Crimea, when hundreds of thousands of peasant soldiers died in snowdrifts on the way.

The peace treaty left the position of Turkey much the same as before, and Russian expansionist plans were thwarted. She lost the mouth of the Danube; Moldavia and Wallachia remained in the Turkish Empire as partially independent principalities (and were united into one - Roumania - a few years later); Russia's claim to a protectorate over all Orthodox Christians was abandoned; and Russian warships were forbidden in the Black Sea. No one was in a position to enforce this last provision, which Russia soon repudiated.

In Russia itself the disasters and sufferings of the war increased the unrest of the serfs and provided an impetus for reforms brought in by the new Tsar Alexander II. Nicholas I was himself a victim of the severe winter of 1854-5.

The Crimean War had no decisive effect on the situation in the Balkans. But it had a side-effect on European politics in that Austria's hostility to Russia during the war broke up the long-standing friendship between the two countries. Relations between them were further worsened when Austria, with Britain and France, protested to Russia at the ruthless suppression of a second great Polish rebellion in 1863. Alexander II had started by trying a liberal policy in Poland. He won the support of the Polish moderates, but the Nationalists wanted complete independence and caused disorder which the Russian government attempted to quell by drafting them into the army. This touched off the rebellion, which rapidly spread and was finally suppressed, with great severity, after nearly eighteen months of guerilla fighting. Total Russian authority was restored. Poland became a Russian province, and a policy of "Russification" in education was instituted.

In this crisis Russia had been able to ignore the representations of Britain, France and Austria (who advocates Polish Home Rule) because Bismarck, now controlling Prussian policy and caring nothing for the Poles, had befriended Russia in her isolation. (By this action he ensured Russian acquiescence in his subsequent wars with Austria (1866) and France (1870) which resulted in the foundation of the new German Empire.)

Chapter 12. The Reforms of Alexander II: Political Movements: Marxism.

Alexander II (1855-1881) was by nature opposed to change. But serf risings - of which there were about sixty a year - and the inefficiency and corruption of the government, so glaringly shown up by the Crimean War, made him realise that drastic changes were necessary. And so his reign was remarkable for the freeing of the serfs and the introduction of many other fundamental reforms.

The serfs were liberated by the Emancipation Edict of 1861. About half the cultivated land of Russia was distributed amongst them, but not individually. It was given to the village commune. The other half of the land remained in the possession of the land-owners, who now hired paid labourers. For the land and the serfs they lost the owners were compensated by the government, which was to recover the money over a period of 49 years by annual payments from the villagers.

The consequences of this edict were not entirely happy. The villagers resented having to buy their freedom, and they considered that they should own all the land rather than half of it. Moreover they were still bound to the village commune, and many of them taking into account the annual payments - were worse off than before. In the communes control of the peasants by landowners was replaced by the control of government officials.

Meanwhile the population of Russia was rapidly increasing, from about 60 million in 1860, of whom 50 million were peasants, to 90 million in 1900; but communal farming provided little incentive for greater output, with the result that near-famine conditions were frequent. And so discontent grew, and the free peasants became as great a threat to the government as the serfs had been.

A further result of emancipation was the growth of a new class of factory workers. The industrialisation of Russia was at this time just beginning, and many peasants made use of their new freedom by moving to the towns - where, in common with the industrial workers of many other countries, they lived in squalor and misery.

In Alexander's other reforms the first steps towards democracy were taken. The judiciary system was modernised and trial by jury introduced. Liability for military service was made universal instead of being confined to the lower classes. The censorship was no longer enforced. And local government by County Councils (Zemstva) was established. The members of the Zemstva were elected, and they could raise funds by local taxation in order to improve roads, schools, hospitals etc. But representative government was confined to the Zemstva in the central government autocracy still prevailed.

There was, however, no lack of criticism of autocratic rule. Following Pushkin (1799-1837) and Gogol (1809-1852) in the literary world came a notable trio of novelists, who all achieved international fame:- Turgenev (1818-83) who suffered imprisonment for his fearless denunciation of tyranny; Dostoevsky (1821-81) who was sent to Siberia for his revolutionary views; and Tolstoy (1828-1910), an aristocrat who felt deeply the tribulations of his people - before the Edict of Emancipation he had freed the serfs on his own estate. (This literary flowering in the

19th century was accompanied by a revival in the musical world. The leading composers were the "St Petersburg school" of Balakirev, Cui, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and Mussorgsky, and in Moscow, Tchaikovsky.)

The relaxation of the censorship in 1856 let loose a flood of free discussion and criticism in the universities. The two schools of thought (Slavophiles and Westernisers) broke up into several groups, though the groups were not distinct and those in a particular group were not necessarily all Slavophiles or all Westernisers. One group was the Tsarists. These were pure Slavophiles. The Tsar was to be the father of his people. Paternal and Holy Russia was to develop in her own way, and that way was to be as different as possible from that of the western world.

The Liberals were westernisers and worked for parliamentary democracy. They were strong supporters of the Zemstva, on which they served with enthusiasm, and they made repeated attempts to persuade the Tsar to establish a freely elected central parliament.

The Tsarists wanted a strong government under the paternal guidance of the Tsar, and no parliament. The Liberals wanted a weak government, controlled by parliament. The next group, the Anarchists, wanted no government at all; the people were to have complete control of their own lives. The Anarchists were mainly Slavophiles. The extreme Anarchists wanted to destroy the whole existing order - government, church, family life - and having nothing to offer in their place were named (by Turgenev) Nihilists. Some Anarchists were content to persuade by argument; but many preferred more drastic measures, and every member of the government from the Tsar downwards was a mark for their daggers and bombs. The main result of these activities was to discredit progressive ideas in the eyes of many, and so to hamper the work of the Liberals.

A further group, and eventually the most important, -were the Radicals. They supported the Liberal desire for a parliament, but this was only to be the stepping stone to a far greater goal: the possession of all the land by the peasants and more wealth for the factory workers, this to be obtained by the organisation of trades unions. Originally the Radicals were mostly Slavophiles. They wished to prevent the rise of a commercial middle class on the western model, and hoped that Russia would remain predominately a peasant country. Their first efforts were directed to riots in protest against the peasants' injustices and to attempts to get the peasants to rebel. They made little headway here, however, as the uneducated peasants looked with suspicion on the student agitators. So many Radicals turned their attention to the factory workers and to the teaching of Karl Marx whose book "Das Kapital" was translated into Russian in 1872.

Marx was of a middle class German Jewish family. He became an atheist, he loathed nationalism and despised liberty. He held that the fundamental cleavage of society was not between nations or religions, but between classes. The existing order - belief in God, private property, the upper and middle classes - must go, and the way made clear for the dictatorship of the proletariat, leading to an eventual classless society. To achieve this, world revolution was inevitable, and that revolution would be carried through by the factory workers.

The founder of Marxism in Russia was Plekhanov, born into the minor gentry. He joined the "Land and Liberty Party", formed by the Radicals in 1876 to work for revolution. For several years they tried Anarchist methods, which resulted in

wholesale arrests and no benefit to the workers or peasants. Then the party split into two. The terrorists formed the "People's Will Party". The opponents of terrorism, led by Plekhanov, became organised as the "Black Redivision".

Meanwhile the riots, plots and assassinations had changed Alexander's views on reform, and in the latter part of his reign governmental repression was once more the order of the day. In 1880, however, when his dining room had been blown up and violence was at its height, the Tsar made a final effort to satisfy the wishes of his people with proposals which embodied an embryo central parliament. Before these were put into effect a People's Will Party assassin's bomb killed Alexander, and also killed for a time Liberal hopes of a parliament. Under the new Tsar, Alexander III, the government became wholly reactionary.

Police action after the assassination of Alexander II suppressed the People's Will Party, but many of its former members formed (in 1895) the Social Revolutionary Party, whose general aim was a peasants' revolution and their ownership of all the land. Of more importance was the Social Democratic Party, founded in 1889 from the Black Redivision. The Social Democrats worked for a planned factory workers' revolution.

Chapter 13. *Asia and the Far East (the 19th Century)*

Russia's advance across Siberia in the 17th century has already been described (Chapter 5). After a long interval she then attempted further expansion across the Bering Straits into Alaska, and southwards at the expense of China.

After Cossack adventurers had led the way a group of traders persuaded the Russian government in 1799 to annex Alaska, and a company was formed to develop the fur trade. Baranov, the manager of the company and Governor of Alaska, was a man of vision and established Russian colonies in California (then under Spanish rule) to provide food for the Alaskan settlers. Russian claims on the North American coast, however, brought protests from the United States and Britain, and the boundary of Alaska was fixed at its present position by agreement between the three countries in 1825. The Tsars of Russia, indeed, were too busy with affairs at home to give the requisite backing to this Pacific enterprise.

The Californian settlements were evacuated in 1844; and in 1867 Alexander II, considering the Alaskan adventure not worth the effort, sold the whole territory to the United States for seven million dollars.

The first attempts of the Cossacks to invade China and conquer the fertile Amur valley, in the 17th century, were unsuccessful, and the boundary between Siberia and China was fixed in 1689 at the Stanavoi mountains, where it remained for nearly 200 years. The project of annexing the Amur valley was re-opened in the 19th Century by Murayev, an enterprising Governor-General of Eastern Siberia. The scheme was delayed by the Crimean War, but in 1858 the Emperor of China, who was then embarrassed by the Tai Ping rebellion and by war with Britain, ceded to Russia the northern, bank of the Amur and a coastal strip as far south as Korea. At the southern extremity of this territory Murayev founded the port of Vladivostok.

As well as in the far east Russian Asiatic expansion proceeded in two other directions during the 19th century in Transcaucasia and in Central Asia.

The Mohammedan people of the Caucasus mountains were subdued after many years of intermittent fighting. Beyond the Caucasus Russia regarded herself as the champion of the Christian peoples of Georgia and Armenia. We have seen that she gained northern Georgia from Turkey after the Greek War of Independence; and in the early decades of the 19th Century Russia acquired territory in Armenia and Azerbaijan after several wars with Persia.

The main reason for the Russian advance into Central Asia – the semi-desert region bounded by the Caspian Sea, Afghanistan and Sinkiang – was the interference with her trade with India caused by the nomadic inhabitants. Between 1860 and 1890 the Russians conquered this whole area, and held it together by building the Trans-Caspian railway from Krasnovodsk on the Caspian Sea to Merv, Bokhara and Samarkand.

Both these advances alarmed Britain, who feared that India was threatened – from the Caucasus through Persia and from Central Asia through Afghanistan. There wee

several crises when Britain thought that a Russian invasion of Persia or Afghanistan was imminent, and indeed Britain undertook two Afghan wars to maintain her ascendancy there. However, Russia was more interested in the Balkans than the Far East, and acknowledged that Afghanistan was beyond her sphere of influence.

Meanwhile Russian emigration to Siberia was gaining in volume, though this vast area remained sparsely populated. Free immigration increased considerably after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861; and during the fifty years in the middle of the 19th century about $\frac{3}{4}$ million were sent to Siberian exile. The greatest aid to emigration came in 1891, when the trans-Siberian railway was started. A single track was nearly complete in 1904.

Chapter 24. *Pan-Slavism.*

In the 1870s Russia's western foreign policy took a new line. So far she had taken little interest in the misfortunes of the Western and Southern Slavs who were subject to the Austrian and Turkish Empires. But now the Slavophiles wanted Russia to champion the cause of all Slavs and liberate them from their non-Slav rulers; so Russia assumed the leadership of the Pan-Slavic movement: the political and cultural union of all Slavic peoples.

The Western Slavs comprised the Poles, the Czechs and the Slovaks. The Poles were already under Russian Nomination. The Czechs and Slovaks were at this time subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, though in past centuries the Czech Kingdom of Bohemia had a proud history of its own. It had been part of the Holy Roman Empire since 950, and achieved the height of its power in the 14th century. It was then the strongest state in central Europe, and the King of Bohemia had first place among the secular Electors of the Emperor.

Both the Czechs and the Slovaks, like the Poles, were Roman Catholics, but at the beginning of the 15th century Bohemia, inspired by John Hus, became the stronghold of Protestantism. Led by Ziska, and then by Procopius the Great - a priest turned strategist - the Hussites waged twelve years of successful war in defence of their faith, and for a further two centuries Bohemia retained her independence and her Protestantism. Then in 1620, in the first phase of the Thirty Years War, the Bohemians were crushed at the Battle of the White Hill. The Protestant religion was ruthlessly exterminated by the Habsburg Emperor. Bohemia came under complete Austrian Catholic domination - the Bohemian crown being made hereditary in the Habsburg family - and the Czechs were reduced to a state of serfdom. When the Holy Roman Empire finally collapsed they were passed on to the successor Austrian Empire.

The Slovaks, for most of their history, had been ruled by the Magyars of Hungary. The Magyars, a non-Slavic people of Mongol-Turkish origin, had settled in the Hungarian plain in the 9th century. They were independent until 1526, when they were conquered by the Turks. In 1699 an Austrian Imperial army, following Sobiesky of Poland's victories over the Turks (see Chapter 9), drove the latter from Hungary. The Magyars and Slovaks were then transferred to the dominions of Austria.

The idea of Pan-Slavism was started by the Slovak poet Kollar early in the 19th century. It spread quickly to Bohemia, and its first concrete manifestation was the Czech revolt of 1848, when they held a pan-Slavic conference at Prague to discuss the union of all Slav races. The revolt was easily suppressed by Austria, with the acquiescence of the Tsar Nicholas I. Nicholas, as we have seen, was rigidly opposed to any liberation movements, and the Russian government at that time was not interested in Pan-Slavism. As already mentioned, Nicholas actively assisted Austria in the same year to defeat the Hungarians in their powerful bid for independence. But this independence was achieved eighteen years later in 1866 after the defeat of Austria by Prussia. Thenceforth the Hungarians took an equal place with the Austrians in the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary, and ruled in partnership with Austria over their Slav subjects.

The Southern Slavs consisted of the Croats and Slovenes of the northern part of what is now Yugo-Slavia, the Serbs and Montenegrans in the south, the Bosnians - a mixture of Serbs and Croats and the Bulgars, though the latter were originally a Hunnish race. The Croats and Slovenes are Roman Catholic, the Serbs and Bulgars Greek Orthodox. The spirited Serbs have always regarded themselves as the champions of South Slavic independence, and have been traditional enemies of the Bulgars, on whom they looked down as not being of pure Slav descent.

For many centuries these various Southern Slav races were separate entities. In the 10th century and again in the 13th there were Bulgarian Empires which rivalled the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire. In the middle of the 14th century the Serbian national hero Stephen Dushan held sway from the Danube to the Aegean (including Bulgaria) and had dreams of succeeding to the Imperial Byzantine throne. But he died before he had time to consolidate his Balkan empire sufficiently to resist the growing power of the Ottoman Turks. On the field of Kossovo (1389) the Turks overwhelmed the combined Slav forces, and Serbs and Bulgars came under Turkish rule.

In 1453 the Turks took Constantinople and ended the Byzantine Empire, and during the rest of the 15th century they overran the whole Balkan peninsula, the last to succumb being the Montenegrins in their mountainous country. They were never wholly subdued. Apart from the Montenegrins, who regained their independence a hundred years later, it was not until the 19th century that the Turkish grip on the Southern Slavs began to loosen. Then, after many revolts, the Serbs gained partial self-government under a hereditary prince.

The northern branch of the South Slavs, the Croats, were independent until about 1100, when they came under Magyar rule. In the Hungarian revolt against Austria in 1848 the Croats, led by Jellacic, assisted the Austrian Emperor and won separation from Hungary, though still in the Austrian Empire. But after the establishment of the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary in 1866 Croatia again became subservient to the Magyars.

To complete the picture of the Balkans in the middle of the 19th century. the Greeks and the mainly Moslem Albanians are not Slavs; nor are they Roumanians, who speak a Latin-derived language and claim descent from the Roman colonists in the old province of Dacia in the Roman Empire, For centuries they were under Turkish rule in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. As we have seen the principalities were united after the Crimean War to become the Kingdom of Roumania with partial independence from the Turks.

Pan-Slavism was clearly a menace to the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian Empires, the more so when this policy was adopted by Russia. In 1875 a revolt against Turkish misrule broke out in Bosnia. Serbia and Montenegro declared war on Turkey in support of their fellow Slavs, and a Bulgar rising followed. The Turks quelled the revolt, with much brutality in Bulgaria. Now Russia, in her new role, came to the rescue, with the object of carving up some of the Turkish Empire into Slav states which would be puppets of Russia. She carried all before her and forced the Turks to sign a treaty of which the main feature was the creation of a large independent Bulgaria, to be administered under Russian tutelage. The Bulgars rather than the Serbs had been selected by Russia as the leading Slavic race in the Balkans.

This Russian advance alarmed Britain, who prepared for war to keep the Russians away from Constantinople. Britain was supported by Austria, who had her own designs on Turkish territory. So the Tsar Alexander II, who could count on no allies, agreed to the arbitration of the Powers. At the Congress of Berlin (1878) called by Bismarck., British interests in the near East were safeguarded, Austria's influence extended, and the Tsar's Pan-Slavist ambitions checked. Bulgaria became independent; but it was a smaller Bulgaria than the Tsar had desired, and it was to be under Turkish, not Russian, protection. Bosnia, while remaining under Turkish suzerainty, was to be administered by Austria. The full independence of Roumania of a small Serbia, and of Montenegro were recognised.

The Congress of Berlin was far from settling the problems of the Southern Slavs. They were no more united than before. Many Serbs and Bulgars in Macedonia were still subject to the Turks. And more Slavs than ever were under the administration of the Austrian Emperor.

Chapter 15. Autocracy and Repression (1881-1901).

The reign of Alexander III (1881-94) and the first ten years of the reign of his son Nicholas II was a period of suppression of all progressive movements and curtailment of the reforms of Alexander II. The guiding spirit was Pobedonostev, a Slavophil Tsarist, who as tutor to Alexander III and later as his close friend and adviser moulded the Tsar's political opinions. An all-Russian parliament was anathema. The people must be ruled by a strong and fatherly Tsar. They must be allowed no freedom of opinion, nor freedom of religion. The latter was a new manifestation of government repression, instigated by Pobedonostev, who became Procurator of the Holy Synod (Controller of the Russian Church). He was perturbed by signs of independence of thought amongst theologians, and by the influence of the Startsi - saintly monks, famed for their holiness, honesty and opposition to injustice. Pobedonostev repressed all forms of dissent from the Orthodox Church. Protestants, Roman Catholics, and particularly the Jews, were persecuted - a persecution which extended to all non-Russian subjects of the Tsar.

This period was also one of great industrial expansion, organised by Count Witte, a railway director and then from 1892 to 1903 Minister of Finance. Rapid development of Russian industry had followed the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, and in the 1870s there was widespread railway construction. In the last decades of the century huge concentrations of factories grew up in the main cities, chiefly in St Petersburg and Moscow.

At the same time the discontent of the ever growing population of overworked, poorly paid and poorly housed factory workers provided a happy hunting ground for the revolutionaries of the Social Democrat Party.

In 1892 a young lawyer Ulyanov (Lenin) joined the party. He started work as an agitator in St Petersburg, until arrested by the Security Police - a well established body in Tsarist Russia (whose system was later copied by Communist Russia and Nazi Germany). Lenin then spent a year in gaol and several in Siberian exile.

After release he lived abroad, mainly in London or Switzerland, and organised revolutionary propaganda by means of a newspaper which was smuggled into Russia. Lenin was a fanatical visionary, convinced that he was fated to be the leader of a victorious Russian revolution. Vigorous in body, powerful of mind, clear of purpose, efficient in the conduct of affairs, he soon gained a position of authority amongst his fellow revolutionaries. He had no scruples; and no sacrifice by the people - misery, war, starvation - was too high a price to pay for the establishment of the Communist system, first in Russia and then in the rest of the world.

At a conference of the Social Democrats held in London in 1903 the party split into two: the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks wished to admit to the party all sympathisers with its aims, and to decentralise authority to local branches. The Bolsheviks would admit only active and bigoted revolutionaries, who must be willing to lay down their lives for the cause, and who must obey all orders of the central committee. The old leader Plekhanov joined the Mensheviks. The Bolsheviks were led by Lenin.

By now discontent and opposition to the government had reached such a pitch that the Tsar's chief adviser, Witte., though a believer in authoritarian rule, was convinced of the need for constitutional reform. But Nicholas II still believed in the divine right of autocracy. Nicholas was a devout and high principled man in private life, but feeble in intellect and, though sometimes obstinate, feeble in will. He could not believe that revolution in Russia was near. He dismissed Witte and took the advice of Plehve, a ruthless reactionary. Plehve tried to divert the rising passions of the populace by intensifying the repression and "Russification" of subject peoples - Poles, Finns, Armenians, Tatars; by promoting massacres of the Jews, and by adopting an adventurous policy in Korea which might lead to a successful war with Japan and consequent bolstering up of the Tsarist regime.

Chapter 16. *China and Japan: The Russo-Japanese War.*

In the closing decades of the 19th century the Russian advance in the Far East had been resumed. After the foundation of Vladivostok (1860) the next Russian ambition was penetration into Manchuria. The opportunity arose in 1895 when she intervened, with Germany and France, to save China from the loss of Manchurian territory to Japan as a result of a Sino-Japanese war. Russia was rewarded by permission to build the Chinese Eastern Railway across northern Manchuria from central Siberia to Vladivostok. She then (1898) extorted from China the lease of the Liaotung peninsula in southern Manchuria and the naval base of Port Arthur.

This and other encroachments in China by the European nations caused the Chinese "Boxer" rising, an attempt to drive out all foreigners. The Boxers were defeated by an allied European (including Russian) force, and in the course of the fighting Russia seized southern Manchuria. By the treaty which concluded the rebellion Russian occupation of Port Arthur was confirmed and her position in Manchuria was consolidated.

But Russia's designs in the Far East were now bringing her up against a more formidable foe - Japan, which in the course of thirty years had been transformed from a state of medievalism to one of advanced western-type civilisation. She had been prevented in 1895 from reaping the reward in Manchuria of her victory over China - a reward obtained instead by Russia, which so became Japan's arch-enemy.

Japan was determined to retain a footing in Korea, which Russia now coveted. In contravention of an agreement between the two countries to respect Korean independence the Russians introduced many "advisers" into Korea and sought to monopolise Korean trade. For support Japan turned to Britain, who recognised her emergence as a new world power and Britain agreed (1902) to help Japan if in a war between Japan and Russia any other country assisted Russia. With this safeguard against outside interference Japan, after the failure of further negotiations with Russia, made a sudden attack on Port Arthur (1904) which started the Russo-Japanese War.

The Russian peasants had little idea what it was all about. Tens of thousands of them were transported across Siberia to the far east where, badly led and inadequately supplied, they met with complete defeat. In a little over a year Japan captured Port Arthur, drove the Russians from southern Manchuria, and destroyed the Russian navy. The Russian Baltic fleet sailed round Africa to the far east, to be annihilated at Tsushima.

This profitless and exhausting war gave added impetus to revolutionary movements in Russia, and the government, harassed by peasant risings, strikes and mutinies made peace (1905). Port Arthur went to Japan, and Korea was recognised as a Japanese sphere of influence. Both sides agreed to evacuate Manchuria. Russia's ambitions in the east were halted for forty years.

Chapter 17. *Towards Revolution (1904-1914)*

The disasters of the war with Japan (in the course of which Plehve was assassinated by a Social Revolutionary), added to conditions at home, led to a naval mutiny, a general strike, and a spontaneous revolt of the peasants - the revolution of 1905. Factory committees (Soviets) were set up by the strikers, who demanded freedom of the person, a national parliament with legislative power, and a vote for all men. Trotsky was one of the organisers; and Lenin returned to Russia to urge the strikers to go still further and demand a republic. The frightened Tsar recalled Witte and agreed to an elected parliament (Duma). This satisfied the Liberals, who now helped to restore order. The troops remained loyal to the government, the strike leaders were arrested, and the peasant rebellion crushed. Lenin managed to escape.

So ended the 1905 revolution, and in 1906 the first Duma was duly elected. But Witte, by creating an upper house of persons appointed by the Tsar, and by obtaining a large loan from France, succeeded in making the government practically independent of the Duma. Witte, having saved the Tsar and autocracy, was then dismissed. The Tsar disliked him and found in Stolypin a successor more personally acceptable. Stolypin was firm in repressing all revolutionary movements, but hoped to maintain constitutional system and steer the thoughts of the people away from revolution by agrarian and other reforms.

Most of the Radicals had boycotted the election, so the largest party in the Duma was the progressive branch of the Liberals - the Constitutional Democrats, known as the "Cadets". Finding that the Duma after all had little power, the Cadets passed a vote of censure on the government, whereupon Stolypin dissolved the Duma.

A second Duma was elected in 1907, this time including a number of Social Democrats. The government ordered the Duma to expel these revolutionaries. The Duma refused, and was dissolved. But Stolypin wanted a Duma to exist, and one which would co-operate with him. So he sent most of the Social Democrat deputies of the second Duma to Siberia and changed the electoral law, greatly increasing the representation of the gentry to the detriment of the peasants and factory workers.

The third Duma (1907-12) and the fourth (1912-16) were elected on this restricted franchise and contained a majority of moderate Liberals (known as Octobrists). Most of these deputies were able, intelligent and patriotic men, and sometimes their advice or criticism was accepted by the government. But they had no power. Russia was still an autocracy.

For some years after 1905 the peasants and the factory workers were quiescent. Many of their leaders had been killed or exiled, and the trades Unions had been suppressed. But amongst the peasants the idea was still growing, spread by the Social Revolutionary Party, that all the land was theirs by right. So Stolypin decided to create a class of rich peasants upon whom he hoped the government would be able to rely in opposing revolution. He made it possible (1906) for enterprising peasants to withdraw from the village commune and set up on their own. This new class were called Kulaks. But in the next ten years only about one tenth of the

peasants became Kulaks. Nine tenths remained in the village commune, very poor, and staunch supporters of the Social Revolutionary Party.

Meanwhile the factory workers gradually recovered their nerve, and by 1912 strikes were again widespread. Stolypin had been assassinated in 1911. In the first half of 1914 over a million took part in strikes. The government was surrounded by enemies. Anarchists, Social Democrats (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) leading the factory workers, Social Revolutionaries leading the peasants. Even the moderate Liberals, were exasperated by the government, and by the state of affairs at the Tsar's court. The opinions and actions of the weak-minded Tsar, and his choice of ministers, were largely controlled by his wife. She was an hysterical and superstitious woman, passionately devoted to trying to cure her only son of haemophilia, and she fell completely under the influence of a group of mystic "healers", the most powerful of whom was, a scoundrelly monk, Rasputin. Through the Tsarina, Rasputin, an arch-reactionary, controlled the Tsar.

To internal troubles was added growing unrest among the national minorities, particularly the Poles and the Finns, as a result of the government's policy of Russification.

In the summer of 1914 revolution seemed imminent. But at the end of July came the First World War, and amongst the masses thoughts of revolution were temporarily set aside. The patriotic Russian people rallied to the support of the Tsar.

Chapter 18. *Towards World War.*

The crushing victories of Prussia over Austria in 1866 and over France in 1870, and the consequent foundation of the German Empire, radically changed the political situation in Europe. Germany became the predominant military power, and Bismarck the central figure in international affairs. His first aim was to maintain the status quo in Europe and guard against any resurgence of France. With these objects the "Dreikaiserbund" (the league of the three emperors - of Germany, Austria and Russia) was formed in 1873, in spite of the strained relations which had existed between Russia and Austria since the Crimean War and the friction between them on the Pan-Slav issue.

At the Congress of Berlin, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1878, Russia, as we have seen, was deserted by Germany and Austria and suffered a diplomatic defeat. The Dreikaiserbund was severely shaken, but it survived. Indeed, it was renewed in 1881 and again in 1884. But before that Bismarck had seen that he would have to choose between Russia and Austria; and he chose Austria. In 1879 he concluded a secret treaty with Austria, providing for mutual assistance in the event of attack by Russia. This "Dual Alliance", which committed Germany to the support of Austria-Hungary against Pan-Slavism, remained in being until the First World War and was extended to the "Triple Alliance" in 1882 by the accession of Italy.

Meanwhile France, isolated since her defeat in 1870 and striving to resume her leading position in Europe, sought an ally with whom to balance the Triple Alliance. In 1888 the terms of the German-Austrian treaty of 1879 were made public, and Russia too now needed another friend. So came about the rather incongruous partnership of despotic Russia and republican France who, after several years of negotiation, entered into a defensive alliance in 1894.

The Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy was now confronted by the Dual Alliance of France and Russia. Britain hovered between the two camps. Her aversion to Russia was traditional, based on her fears of Russian intentions towards India and the Mediterranean. But in Germany the Kaiser William II, ambitious and unstable, was now at the head of the efficient and immensely powerful German military machine; and the Kaiser, having dismissed Bismarck, made no secret of his aims: the extension of German influence through the Balkans, Turkey and the Middle East, the building of a powerful navy, and the expansion of the German colonial empire. So Britain chose what seemed the lesser of two evils and concluded "ententes" with the Dual Alliance powers with France in 1904 and with Russia in 1907.

Any international dispute was likely to lead to war between the rival groups, and the most fruitful source of trouble was Pan-Slavism. Since 1878 the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which 12 million Germans and 10 million Magyars ruled in partnership over 25 million Slavs and 3 million Roumanians, had seemed progressively more probable. Racial nationalism was one of the themes of the times, and this feeling was becoming acute among the Croats. They had long been loyal to the House of Habsburg, but their Hungarian masters were unsympathetic, and the independence of their fellow Slavs in Serbia was a great attraction. There was a

severe crisis in 1908 when Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Serbo-Croat provinces which, by the treaty of 1878, she administered under Turkish suzerainty. The Serbs were furious, and their protest was supported by Russia. But Russia was weak after the Japanese war and the 1905 revolution, and a threat from the Kaiser was sufficient to make her back down. So war was averted. But the tension was heightened, and the Balkan situation was not improved by the existence in the Serbian army of a secret society known as the Black Hand, whose avowed object was the unification of all the Southern Slavs under the Serbian crown. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, was reputed to favour the admission of the Slavs to equality with the Austrians and Magyars in a tripartite state, but even that seemed unlikely now to satisfy the ambitions of Serbia.

The first explosion occurred, however, not in Austria, but in Turkey. Here the autocratic and corrupt regime of the Sultan Abdul Hamid collapsed in 1909 in a revolution led by the "Young Turks". Henceforth they wielded the power, and they introduced a regime of methodical and efficient tyranny. This drove the Greeks, Bulgars and Serbs to the surprising formation in 1912 of a Balkan league which, still more surprisingly, drove the Turks in six weeks from all Europe outside Constantinople. After much diplomatic activity a new map of the Balkans was drawn by the Powers, whereupon Bulgaria, feeling that she had been inadequately rewarded, turned upon her recent allies. The Serbs and Greeks, helped now by the Roumanians, were too strong. Bulgaria was defeated and had to submit to a humiliating peace.

The net result, to Austria's dismay, was the rise of Serbia to a pre-eminent position in the Balkans. Many of the Austrian leaders advocated a war to crush Serbia before it was too late. This idea was rejected. However, in June 1914 the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was assassinated by a Bosnian fanatic, and Austria decided that it was time to settle with the Serbs. Russia supported Serbia, and mobilised. Probably, if Germany had exercised a restraining influence on her Austrian ally, war would have been once more averted. But Germany did the opposite, and the First World War began.

Chapter 19. - The First World War.

The war started with an Austrian invasion of Serbia, which was stoutly and successfully resisted by the Serbs. The Balkan campaign, however, was soon dwarfed by the titanic struggle developing on the three German fronts. In the west the Germans invaded France and nearly reached Paris. In the east the Russians, honouring their agreement with France, invaded Germany, to suffer a severe defeat at Tannenberg. But the Russian advance, by drawing German forces to the east, helped France, assisted by an unprepared Britain, to stabilise the front in the west.

Despite the defeat at Tannenberg the Russian armies continued with an offensive against Austria, and overran Galicia. But in 1915 Germany having failed to break through in the west, switched their main effort to the east. The Russians, with inadequate ammunition, clothing and supplies were driven back with enormous losses across Poland, a disastrous retreat from which they never fully recovered.

Meanwhile Italy had had second thoughts about the Triple Alliance and had declared war on Austria. And Turkey, torn between friendship for Britain and enmity for Russia, had been persuaded by her newfound German friends to enter the war on her side. This involved Russia in a new campaign in the Caucasus, and cut her sea communications with her allies through the Mediterranean.

To re-open this route and supply Russia with much needed munitions Britain undertook the hazardous Gallipoli campaign. This failed; and the failure encouraged Bulgaria to join the central powers. The Serbs, still bravely resisting the Austrians, were attacked in the rear by the Bulgars and were driven into the mountains of Albania, from where the remnant of their army was rescued by an Allied fleet.

In 1916 the Anglo-French armies turned to the offensive in the west, but like the Germans failed to break through. Russia too came back with a big offensive against the Austrians. Under their ablest general, Brusilov, they achieved some resounding successes, but for the last time. The Russian victories brought Roumania into the war on the Allied side, only to be rapidly and completely overrun by the Germans, so extending to the Black Sea the front that Russia had to hold.

In 1917 came the long expected Russian revolution (described in the next chapter). After the first phase of the revolution, with Kerensky in power, the Russian armies remained in the field, and indeed undertook an offensive in Galicia. This was a disastrous failure, and the armies began to disintegrate. In November, with the second phase of the revolution, Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized power. They started peace negotiations with Germany in December; and after a breakdown in these negotiations, when the Germans resumed their advance and threatened Petrograd (as St Petersburg had been renamed at the beginning of the war), peace conditions were agreed in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. The Bolsheviks gave up the Ukraine and all the border territories. Independent governments were set up in Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, and the Baltic provinces of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia under German nomination and protection; and in the trans-Caucasian provinces of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan under German and Turkish influence.

Meanwhile the loss of Russia to the Allies had been more than counter-balanced by the entry into the war of the United States, caused largely by the German campaign of unrestricted sinking of merchant ships by submarines. This reinforcement in morale, material and manpower was eventually decisive. It immediately rendered more secure the Allies' command of the sea, held from the outset by Britain with the assistance of the fleets of France and Japan (which had early entered the war as Britain's ally); and it intensified the effect of the slow but powerful weapon of blockade.

The end of the war came in the autumn of 1918. An Allied force based on Greece (which after much wavering had joined the Allies) knocked Bulgaria out of the war. This was quickly followed by the defeat of Turkey after a British campaign in the Middle East, and then by the collapse of Austria; and at last the French, British and American armies broke the German resistance on the western front.

During 1919 a Peace Conference at Versailles re-drew the map of Europe, based on the principle of self-determination of peoples eloquently expounded by President Wilson of the United States. Bolshevik Russia was not represented at the conference. She was instead engulfed in civil wars and foreign invasions which lasted from early 1918 until late 1920. (This phase will be described later - see Chapter 21.)

The European peace treaties at last brought to fruition the ambitions of the subject Slav peoples. During the war two brilliant exiles, the Slovak Masaryk and the Czech Benes, had inspired enthusiasm in Britain, France, and in President Wilson, for the liberation of the Czecho-Slovak people. Their propaganda had been so successful as to cause mass desertions from the Austrian army - which with its large Slav content had been a weak link in the central alliance - and they reaped their reward at the peace conference in the creation of the republic of Czecho-Slovakia.

The dreams of the South Slavs too were realised. In the kingdom of Yugoslavia Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Montenegrins were at last united.

In the war the Poles had fared worst of all. Split between the armies of Germany, Austria and Russia, for none of whom they wanted to fight, they saw their native land become the chief battleground of the eastern front and suffer terrible devastation. Then, by a remarkable turn of fortune, all three of their oppressors collapsed; and by the peace treaties Poland, after more than a century of extinction, came to life again, including her corridor to the Baltic isolating East Prussia.

Roumanian's reward was the acquisition of Bessarabia from Russia and of Transylvania, where Roumanians had been subject to Hungary, and where Hungarians were now to be subject to Roumania. And Austria and Hungary, stripped of all their erstwhile possessions, and of the House of Habsburg, were left as two small republics with no access to the sea.

The independence of Finland and of the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia was recognised.

Chapter 20. *The Revolution.*

From 1914 to 1917 the Russian armies fought with the greatest of courage. But their officers could not match the Germans in efficiency, their transport system was chaotic, their munitions and equipment were grossly inadequate, and as a result their casualties were very heavy: over four million were killed or wounded in two and a half years. Moreover the Government was incompetent, and many of its members - selected by Rasputin - were opposed to the war. Public enthusiasm for the war was shattered by the disasters of 1915, and criticism of its management became widespread. The Duma succeeded in getting some ministers dismissed, but Rasputin's influence remained undiminished. At the end of 1916 some aristocrats murdered Rasputin in an effort to save the situation, but by then it was too late. Food was short in the towns, and the Russian people, tired of the casualties, and no longer with any confidence in the Tsar or his inept and corrupt ministers, were ripe for revolution.

In 1905 the revolution had failed because the troops remained loyal. But in 1917 the situation was different. Many revolutionaries had been conscripted into the army, where they had been spreading their doctrine; and the soldiers themselves realised that they were bearing terrible losses and hardships on behalf of a government which was uninterested in supplying them, of ever in winning the war. But in spite of the fact that the troops were now likely to mutiny rather than support the government in putting down riots, the revolutionary leaders were not sure of this, and in fact there was no call for the people to revolt. The revolution just happened. In March 1917 shortage of bread caused riots in Petrograd. Strikes and demonstrations followed. Most of the troops in Petrograd mutinied, and refused to support the police in dispersing strikers. They then joined with the factory workers in capturing the government offices. The Tsar's Government collapsed, and a few days later the Tsar abdicated. The Duma appointed a provisional committee, headed by Prince Lvov and including all parties except Social Democrats (Mensheviks and Bolsheviks) to govern the country and continue the war.

Simultaneously, however, factory Soviets (workers' councils) came into being and in Petrograd joined together to form the Petrograd Soviet Council, consisting of Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. The people were more inclined to obey the Soviet Council than the Duma's provisional committee, but after negotiations between the two "governments" Kerensky, an eloquent and picturesque Social Revolutionary and vice-president of the Soviet, agreed to join the Duma's government, and the Soviet agreed to support it. The Government thus became one of all parties except Mensheviks, who joined it later, and the Bolsheviks, who remained hostile. Arrangements were made for a new Duma to be elected by universal suffrage, the Tsar and his family were arrested and removed to Siberia, and the country was now in theory a republican parliamentary democracy.

But in practice the Government had little authority. In the towns the workers obeyed the Soviets, and the Government had some power so long as the Soviets supported it. But in the villages the Government was disregarded. Peasant Soviets took complete control, seizing all the land from the gentry and burning and pillaging their houses. Moreover in the factory Soviets in the towns there were a number of Bolsheviks, who opposed the Government and the continuation of the Tsar; and in

April their leader, Lenin, reached Petrograd from Switzerland, his passage across Germany having been arranged by the German General-Staff. Aply supported by Trotsky, who arrived from the United States in May, he set to work to undermine the Government.

However, in spite of its difficulties the Government went on with the war. Kerensky, now War Minister, visited the front to inspire the army with a new revolutionary discipline and ordered the offensive in Galicia in early July - which, as we have seen, was utterly defeated.

The Bolsheviks thereupon called for a workers' rising to overthrow the Government. But the move was premature. The workers were hesitant, and Kerensky found enough troops to suppress them. Many of the Bolshevik leaders, including Trotsky, were imprisoned. Lenin escaped to Finland. But Kerensky, now prime minister (Prince Lvov had resigned), was faced with a new adversary. He fell out with the Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov, whose aim was to liberate the Government from Soviet domination, and to become dictator himself. To obtain help against this "counter-revolution" Kerensky released the Bolshevik leaders from prison. Kornilov was defeated, but Kerensky now found himself dominated by his Bolshevik allies, who made rapid headway among the factory workers and in October secured a majority in the Petrograd Soviet Council, Trotsky becoming its chairman.

Meanwhile the military front against the Germans had been crumbling. The soldiers were forming their own Soviets, and thousands deserted and went home to the villages to secure their share of the land. The Bolsheviks decided that the time was ripe to overthrow Kerensky's government. They proclaimed a threefold programme - immediate peace, all the land for the peasants (who had already taken it), and all power to the Soviets.

On 5th November (23rd October by the Russian calendar) Trotsky directed a general revolt of workers and soldiers in Petrograd. Kerensky went to the front for troops to suppress the Bolsheviks, but the troops supported the rising and Kerensky fled to France and later to exile in the United States. In Petrograd the revolutionaries took possession of the government offices, fortresses, arsenals and factories. Within a week all opposition was crushed. A new central government was set up by the Bolsheviks - the Council of Peoples' Commissars, with Lenin as prime minister and Trotsky as commissar for foreign affairs. It also included Stalin. The Council was responsible to the workers' Soviets. It immediately signed an armistice with Germany, and won the support of the peasants' Soviets by giving official sanction to the seizure of the land.

Meanwhile the election of a new Duma, as arranged by the Lvov-Kerensky government, had been proceeding. The result was a large majority for Kerensky's Social Revolutionary Party : 420 of them as against about 170 Bolsheviks and 110 of other parties. The Duma met in January 1918, and was immediately dispersed by Bolshevik "Red" troops. The Bolshevik government was now supreme, answerable only to the congress of representatives of the Soviets (factory, peasants' and soldiers' Soviets), through whom they had some measure of control of the people.

Some of the first acts of the new government were: the nationalisation of all banks, all factories, and all the land (instead of it going to the peasants); the setting up of a secret police (following the precedent of Tsarist days) to prevent any counter-

revolution; and the suppression of the Church - all Church property was confiscated and religious instruction in schools abolished.

In March 1918 the Bolsheviks signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany. In the same month the government was moved back to the old capital, Moscow, and the Bolsheviks renamed themselves the Communist Party. In July the Soviet Constitution was promulgated. Elections to Soviets were on an occupational rather than territorial basis, and the factory workers were more strongly represented than the peasants. The bourgeois "non-toiling" classes, including the clergy, had no vote. There was no secret ballot, and all parties except the Communists were banned. (At that time there were only about 300,000 actual members of the Communist Party.) The Congress of Soviets elected the Council of Peoples' Commissars. But the real government was the "Politbureau", the inner group of the central committee of the Communist Party. And Lenin, as leader of the Communist Party as well as being Prime Minister was dictator of Russia.

Chapter 21. *The Survival of Communism: Lenin and Trotsky*

The third phase of the Revolution – civil wars and foreign invasions – started at the beginning of 1918 before the Bolsheviks had settled with Germany at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. In January there was a revolt of the Don Cossacks, led by General Kornilov. After the withdrawal of the Germans this developed into a full scale war in the Ukraine between the Communist "Red" army and Tsarist "White" forces commanded, after Kornilov's death, by General Denikin, and supported for a time by a French force based on Odessa. The campaigns ranged backwards and forwards across the Ukraine throughout 1919, causing widespread devastation; and after the Communists had driven out the "Whites" the Ukraine was invaded by the Poles. It was not until the end of 1920 that the country was cleared, and the Ukraine became a Soviet republic.

Denikin's operations extended to the Caucasus where he, and later General Wrangel, prevented the Communists for two years from gaining control of the Trans-Caucasian provinces. Wrangel then evacuated his "White" forces from Black Sea ports in British and French ships; and Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were combined to form the Trans-Caucasian Socialist Soviet Republic.

At the same time as this civil war in the south the Communists were waging another one in central Russia and Siberia. The Social Revolutionaries of the Duma which had been dispersed in January 1918 organised resistance to the Communists from a headquarters set up at Ufa near the Ural mountains, and they merged with another rival "government" formed at Omsk in Siberia. The combined forces came under the command of the conservative Admiral Kolchak, whose Siberian "White" army was not finally defeated by the Communists until early 1920. Involved in this war were the Czech legions. They were Czechs who had been captured by the Russians from the Austrian armies and who, after the Russian collapse, set out to march across Siberia to Vladivostok, with the object of re-joining the war in Europe on the Allies' side.

On their way they joined the Siberian "Whites" in their struggle with the Communists, and for a time in 1919 the Czechs controlled most of the trans-Siberian railway. The Communists did not gain complete control of Siberia until the end of 1922 when the Japanese withdrew from Vladivostok, which they had taken the opportunity to seize in 1917.

While engaged in these civil wars the Communists also had to contend with an Allied invasion in the north. A British, French and American force established itself at Murmansk and Archangel on the White Sea in the summer of 1918. Before the collapse of Germany the Allies' object here was to support any Russian government which would continue the war. After November 1918 their object was to assist the Russian "Whites" to overthrow a Communist government whose avowed aim was world revolution. The British and Americans, however, were unwilling to provide more than material and financial aid to the Whites, and the Allied force withdrew in October 1919, just when another White when under General Yudenitch was advancing on Petrograd from Estonia. This invasion was forced back by the Bolsheviks who, however, recognised the independence of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland.

Finally the Poles, glorying in their new found liberty, and under the inspiring leadership of Pilsudski, set out to reconquer the great Polish domains of old (before the partitions of Poland in the 18th century). This brought them into conflict with the Communists in White Russia and Lithuania in 1919, and in 1920 - as already mentioned - they invaded and rapidly overran the Ukraine. A Communist counter offensive drove them back, and the Red Army reached Warsaw. However, Pilsudski, helped by the French, repulsed the Reds and saved his country from Communism. Moreover he gained a frontier with Russia well to the east of the "Curzon" line (the boundary decided upon by Allied arbitration) and brought 4 million Russians under Polish rule.

It is remarkable that the Communists, coming to power when the country was in a state of chaos, managed to survive these assaults from every point of the compass. The main reasons for their survival were probably: first, the ruthless efficiency of the Communist government; secondly the lack of co-operation between their enemies; and thirdly - but most important - the loyalty of the majority of the Russian people. They believed that the Communists would bring them a better life than their miserable existence in the past, and they were willing to fight and slave in the factories to preserve the revolution. The town workers provided the main support, while the villagers hated the Whites more than they did the Communists; during the civil war they suffered atrocities from both.

And so Trotsky, who became Commissar for War, succeeded in raising, supplying and equipping a Red Army of five million men with which, having given up the old Russian possessions of Poland, Finland and the Baltic states, he cleared Russian soil - including the Ukraine and Transcaucasia - of the active enemies of Communism. The country was later (1923) organised as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), there being four members of the union: Russia, the Ukraine, White Russia and Transcaucasia.

Chapter 22. *The Early Years of Communism under Lenin.*

One consequence of the civil war was the development in 1918 of a policy of ruthless "war-Communism". Any opposition to requisitioning of food or property, or hesitation to comply with government decrees, was liable to bring instant death. During this period the Tsar and his family were murdered in a cellar at Ekaterinburg in the Urals, where they had been confined. And after Lenin was wounded (August 1918) by a Social Revolutionary assassin the "Red terror" period really began, when anyone could be executed on suspicion. This ruthless aspect of Communism might have developed in any case, but the civil war accelerated it.

In 1920 the ravages of the wars brought the danger of starvation to the cities and the armies; so the "food levy" was introduced, under which all food grown by the peasants in excess of their bare needs had to be handed over to the government. The result was that the peasants saw no point in growing any surplus, so the production of grain steadily decreased. The situation was aggravated by droughts in 1920 and 1921. In a famine in 1921 about a million died.

There were many peasant risings and factory workers' riots; and in February 1921 there was a mutiny of the sailors of the Kronstadt garrison, which was suppressed with difficulty and after much bloodshed. Lenin therefore decided that he must gain the co-operation of the peasants in growing more food, and he introduced (March 1921) his "New Economic Policy" (NEP). The peasants, after paying a fixed grain tax to the government, were allowed to sell any further surplus in the open market; and in the towns some of the smaller factories were restored to private ownership. At the same time there was some abatement of the Red Terror, and an educational programme was started aiming at the elimination of illiteracy. (About 70% were illiterate in 1918.) Lenin indeed looked forward to the time when every peasant could read and write, and his cottage would have all the benefits of electricity.

The NEP greatly increased the output of grain. It also produced a class of rich peasants (Kulaks) - perhaps 5% of the whole - and a class of rich traders in the grain, known as NEP men. These prosperous classes were hated by the Communists, and their existence caused a split in the party, which came to a head after the death of Lenin in 1924. (He had been an invalid since suffering a stroke in 1922.)

One group, led by Trotsky, wanted to revoke the NEP which led to such inequality amongst men. Stalin and the majority thought that it was too early yet to coerce the peasants, and that to do so would bring about again the food crisis of 1921. Trotsky also advocated the immediate and active prosecution of world revolution, by using the Red army to assist the workers in other countries to overthrow their governments. Stalin considered that it was necessary to remain at peace and first consolidate the establishment of Communism in Russia. The struggle for power lasted for over three years, and then Stalin, who held the key position of Secretary General of the Communist Party, prevailed. Trotsky went into exile in Mexico, where he was later murdered. And Stalin, the dour son of a Georgian cobbler became dictator of Russia until his death 26 years later.

Lenin himself was made a legendary figure by the Communists. No honour was too great for him, and no criticism could be heard of the man who had guided Communism through the years of revolution and survival.

Chapter 23. Stalin: The Consolidation of Communism in Russia: Foreign Policy.

In 1928 Stalin launched a two-fold policy: collectivisation of the farms, and the first "Five Year Plan" in industry. Although the NEP had increased grain output there was still not enough for the towns. Mechanisation of agriculture was necessary. This required large farms, which could only be formed by encouraging the Kulaks or by reverting to communal working. The Communists felt secure enough by now to coerce the peasants, and in 1929 collectivisation started. It was strenuously resisted by the Kulaks; they destroyed some 150 million animals rather than lose them to the Communists, and they ceased to sow crops, resulting in a famine in 1932-33 in which over two million died. But Stalin held firm to his policy. The Kulaks 3 or 4 million of them - were 'liquidated', that is killed or sent to forced labour camps. And the peasants, unwilling at first, in time became reconciled to collectivisation. In the late 1930s concessions were made to them: they were allowed to have private gardens and sell the produce, and also to breed and sell their own livestock.

The first Five Year Plan (1928-32) aimed at the development of heavy industry - iron, steel, coal, oil, electricity, and in particular tractors for the farms. Anything to improve the standard of life of the people - clothes, furniture - had to wait; and the workers, toiling under conditions amounting to slavery, received in payment only a bare subsistence ration of food. Nevertheless propaganda stirred them to enthusiasm and, despite periodic "purges" of skilled engineers and technicians, by which the Communists hampered their own efforts, the achievements of the first Five Year Plan, though short of the targets set, were very substantial.

In foreign affairs the period until 1932 was one of gradual recognition of the Soviet Government by Western powers: but their attitude remained unfriendly owing to the activities of the Communist "Third International", the organisation set up to spread the doctrine of communism amongst "workers" throughout the world.

During the second Five Year Plan (1932-1937) the policy of compulsion and terror was somewhat relaxed. Wages were paid in money, with the enticement of bonuses for overtime and exceptional output; concessions - already mentioned - were made to the peasants; religion, at first ruthlessly persecuted, began to be tolerated; and some consumer goods were produced or shops. At the same time discipline in the armed forces was found to require a privileged officer class, and in fact the Communist society was far from classless. But the standard of living remained terribly low; the people were still in the grip of the secret police and hermetically sealed against the infiltration of unwelcome truth from the outside world.

Within the Communist Party Stalin consolidated his own position by a series of purges. About a million were expelled from the party in 1933, and in the course of the next five years Stalin "liquidated" many of his associates whom he suspected of plotting against him, including some of the ablest generals in the Red Army. It is estimated that in 1937-38 over 70% of the senior army officers - some 400 of them - were executed.

Outside Russia, in the new states of central and eastern Europe, Communist propaganda made little headway. In most of them the large agricultural estates were

divided up between the peasants, and the peasant owners resisted the spread of Communism. But in Germany the Communists multiplied rapidly. They were forestalled, however, and later suppressed, by Hitler and the Nazis, who came to power in 1933- Hitler established a totalitarian state on the Russian model, having already seen it successfully imitated by Mussolini in Italy. German Nazism and Russian Communism had in common the complete suppression of liberty, but they were bitterly opposed to each other, the Nazi creed being based on the superiority of the Nordic German race. Hitler's aim was world domination, and an eventual clash between Germany and Russia seemed certain.

Meanwhile in the Far East the Japanese had occupied Manchuria in 1931, and their aggressive policy on the mainland of Asia was a threat to the eastern territories of the USSR.

Faced with these dangers Stalin abandoned the Communist doctrine that all capitalists were inevitably enemies, and in 1934. Russia joined the League of Nations, which she had previously consistently denounced. This might have brought in a period of cooperation between the Soviet Union, Britain and France. (Japan and Germany had already withdrawn from the league, and the United States never joined it.) But the western powers mistrusted Stalin, and although, in accordance with his new policy, the activities of the Third International (Comintern) were clamped down, Britain and France were still apprehensive of the spread of Communism. So their co-operation with the Soviet Union was half-hearted. And in 1936 Hitler strengthened his position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union by arranging the Anti-Comintern (i.e. anti-Russian) Pact of Germany, Italy and Japan.

These external dangers had their influence on affairs within Russia. In the Third Five Year Plan the emphasis was on re-armament the production of amenity goods was once more postponed. And the trend towards co-operation with the western powers was perhaps reflected in a new and apparently democratic constitution which was adopted in 1936. The vote was given to all adults, the secret ballot was introduced, and the All-Union Congress of Soviets, re-named the Supreme Soviet, was to be elected direct on a territorial basis.* But democracy was more apparent than real. There was still only one political Party - the Communists* - and the election, instead of being between rival candidates, consisted of a single vote for or against a nominated candidate or list. The nominations were largely controlled by the local Communist cell, and the vote was very rarely negative. So the great majority of the members of the Supreme Soviet were Communists. The new constitution also included a declaration of civic rights - freedom of speech, freedom from arbitrary arrest etc - which in fact the Russian people did not enjoy.

From 1936 to 1939 the clash between Nazism and Communism was rehearsed when Germany and Russia actively assisted the opposing sides in a civil war in Spain; and the period of halting co-operation between Russia and the West continued. But this did not deter Hitler. In March 1938 he annexed Austria; and in September that part of Czecho-Slovakia inhabited by three million Germans. In this crisis Russia offered to combine with France and Britain in resisting Hitler and defending Czecho-Slovakia. But Britain and France, unprepared for war and deluded by Hitler's assertion that this was his last territorial demand in Europe, refused the offer and acquiesced in the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia. Encouraged by this, Hitler annexed the rest of the country in March 1939. This brought about a reversal of British policy and *pledge to Poland - which, with its corridor to the sea cutting off East Prussia was clearly marked down as Hitler's next prey of ,help should her independence be

threatened. France joined in this impracticable pledge, impracticable because geographically Britain and France could not help Poland unless allied with Russia.

Negotiations between the three countries were started, but moved very slowly because of the mutual suspicion between the two sides. Stalin mistrusted the western powers after their action or lack of action - in the Czech crisis, and their pledge to Poland without consulting him. Moreover the Poles were reluctant to accept Russian aid, knowing that it would mean Russian occupation of their territory.

Meanwhile Hitler's reaction to the Polish pledge was an even more remarkable reversal of policy. To forestall the conclusion of a British - French - Russian alliance against him he swallowed his aversion to Communism and sought an agreement with Russia, despite the existence of the Anti-Comintern Pact. Stalin, though apprehensive of Hitler's ultimate designs for eastern expansion, appears to have thought it safer at this stage to come to terms with him. He dismissed Litvinov, the foreign minister of the co-operative period with the West, and appointed Molotov in his place. Molotov's task was to persuade Hitler to send the main weight of the German attack westwards. The result was an agreement between Germany and Russia in August 1939, concluded while the Russians were still negotiating with Britain and France. In return for Russian neutrality when he attacked Poland Hitler gave Stalin a free hand in eastern Poland and the Baltic states (a condition which had been an obstacle to a Russo-British agreement). Stalin also probably hoped that the western democracies and Nazi Germany would cripple each other, leaving the way clear for Communism.

Having secured Russian cooperation Hitler invaded Poland on 1st September 1939. Two days later, honouring their pledge, Britain and France declared war on Germany.

* The Supreme Soviet was divided into two Chambers : the Soviet of the Union composed of deputies from each electoral district of 300,000 inhabitants, and the Soviet of Nationalities consisting of a fixed number of representatives from each of the republics of the USSR. There were now eleven of these republics - "Russia" (population about 110 million), Ukraine (about 40 million) and White Russia (about 10 million); the three Transcaucasian republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan; and five republics in Central Asia: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Khazakstan and Kirghizstan.

* Membership of the Communist Party - which carried with it many privileges - was confined to a very small proportion of the population. Before the Second World War membership probably never exceeded 3 million.

Chapter 24. *The Second World War.*

Western Poland was overrun by the German army in a few weeks. Eastern Poland was then invaded by the Russians, and Hitler and Stalin divided Poland between them.

There then ensued a winter of desultory skirmishing on the western fronts, while Hitler was preparing for his western offensive, and while Britain was trying to make up for lost time in re-arming.

During the winter Stalin, to strengthen his position against Germany, concluded treaties with the Baltic states - Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia - giving Russia the right to establish bases on their territory; and in July 1940 he incorporated these states into the USSR. He made similar demands on Finland. The Finns refused. The Russians thereupon invaded Finland, where they encountered unexpectedly stubborn resistance. After a costly campaign lasting 15 weeks Stalin imposed his terms on the Finns.

In April 1940 Hitler opened his western "'blitz', and in two months subjugated Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France. Britain was left alone to fight Germany and Italy's Mussolini having entered the war to share the spoils. Britain, however, saved herself from invasion by defeating Hitler's attempt to gain mastery of the air over south-eastern England.

Unable to subdue Britain, Hitler turned his attention to the east again. He had no illusions that the pact with Russia would survive longer than it suited Stalin to keep it in being; and his over-riding political desire was the eradication of Communism. So he decided to settle with Russia before returning to finish off Britain. Further spurs to the Russian adventure may have been an underestimate of Soviet strength after her difficulties in overcoming Finland, and perhaps intoxication with the large scale strategic plans for the invasion.

Before launching his attack he wished to make his southern flank secure. Already during the winter of 1940-41, Hungary, Roumania and Bulgaria had succumbed to German pressure and joined the "Axis" powers. But Yugoslavia refused to conform, and as Italian invasion of Greece was stoutly resisted. So in the spring of 1941 the German armies swept through Yugoslavia and Greece, and Hitler was supreme in south eastern Europe. He was now ready to invade Russia, and in June 1941 he struck.

The Germans, with contingents from Italy, Roumania, Hungary and Finland, invaded Russia with about three million men on a 2,000 mile front from the White Sea to the Black Sea. This force may have been superior in numbers to the immediately opposing Russian armies, and it was a lot more mobile. The German armoured formations soon overran the Russian defences, and huge numbers - probably well over a million - were surrounded and captured. In less than a month the Germans advanced 450 miles, three quarters of the way to, Moscow. But by the end of the year the advance was halted in front of Leningrad (as Petrograd had been renamed), Moscow, and Rostov on the Sea of Azov. Many factors contributed

to the German failure to gain a decisive victory : the dogged Russian resistance, their "scorched earth" policy, the mud and snow of the Russia's autumn and winter, the poorly developed road system (which handicapped the German motorised troops), and the apparently limitless reserves brought up from deep in Russia.

During this year the main British effort was in the Near East. After an unsuccessful attempt to stem the German tide in Greece, the British Empire armies in North Africa repulsed a German/Italian drive on Egypt.

At the end of the year Japan joined her German and Italian allies in the war. Her first action - an attack on the American fleet in harbour without the formality of declaring war - was an ill-advised move. It immediately brought the United States into the war on the side of Britain and Russia. The United States, led by President Roosevelt, had already been affording Britain the greatest possible assistance short of declaring war; now for the second time, she was to throw her full weight into a world conflict.

In 1942 the Japanese quickly overran the British possessions in Far East and threatened India. They were, however, heavily engaged on the Asiatic mainland in a war with China which had been in progress since 1937, so they did not add to their commitments by attacking Russia. Russia nevertheless had to maintain forces in the Far East owing to the Japanese danger, and was hard put to it to withstand the continued German onslaught. This was resumed in June, the German armies having needed time to recover from an exhausting winter combating the rigours of the Russian climate and the Russian counter-offensive.

The main German thrust in 1942 was in the south, with the object of cutting off Russia's oil supplies from the Caucasus and Persia. The Germans reached the Caucasus but, with a large part of their forces diverted to besiege the city of Stalingrad, which they failed to take, the offensive was held. In November the Russians went over to the attack. The German army near Stalingrad, which Hitler refused to allow to retreat, was surrounded and captured; and the larger forces further south in the Caucasus were extricated with difficulty.

The turning point in the war came at the end of 1942. Just before the Russian victory at Stalingrad the British gained a decisive success over the "Axis" armies threatening Egypt; and American land forces made their first appearance in the campaigns against Germany and Italy when an Anglo-American army landed in Morocco and Algeria. And the Americans now had the initiative in the war in the Pacific against Japan.

During 1943 a general Russian offensive drove the Germans back nearly to the Polish frontier, and Anglo-American armies cleared North Africa of the enemy and invaded Italy. Stalin now felt that Britain and the United States should relieve Russia of the main burden of the land war by an invasion of Europe from the west. An undertaking of this magnitude, however, took time to prepare, particularly as both Britain and the United States had been unready for war in the first place, and Britain had lost vast quantities of equipment when evacuating the continent on the fall of France. The western allies, meanwhile, drew off some German troops by their invasion of Italy, and gave Russia much material assistance by sending her military equipment by the northern sea route and also through Persia. And they greatly weakened Germany by an intensifying air bombardment of industrial centres. Germany's position was also being undermined by resistance movements in the occupied countries of Europe, of which one of the most successful was that organised

by the Communist Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia. These movements, encouraged and helped by the Allies, played a not inconsiderable part in the eventual liberation of Europe from the German yoke.

In 1944 the Russian offensive continued; and in June the western Allies invaded France. Thereafter the Germans were steadily driven back on both fronts, though they rallied sufficiently to hold the Russians on the line of the Vistula at the end of the year and to launch a last, but unsuccessful, counter-attack in the west. At the beginning of 1945 Germany was invaded from east and west, and in Italy the German armies disintegrated and Germany was completely overrun. Hitler committed suicide rather than fall into the hands of the Russian conquerors of Berlin. Italy had previously capitulated, and the British-American forces were now deployed to the Far East. Russia also prepared to take part in the war with Japan, but before any real actions had taken place the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan by the Americans finished the war.

Under the terms of surrender Germany, Austria and Japan were to be subject to military occupation for an indefinite period. Germany and Austria were each divided into four zones, to be occupied by Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union. Berlin and Vienna, both in the Russian zones, were similarly divided between the four powers. And the principles governing the control of Germany, pending a peace settlement, were decided upon by the leaders of the United States, Britain and Russia at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945.

All the countries which Hitler had conquered regained their freedom. Of these Poland had probably fared worst under German occupation, partly because of her large population of Jews*, whom Hitler abominated. Millions of Poles had been subjected to the squalor, indignities and tortures of the concentration camps, and huge numbers systematically murdered. Nor did those who had fallen under Russian rule in eastern Poland escape lightly. Hundreds of thousands were transported to Siberia, to face the rigours and privations of labour camps, and they did not regain their liberty until long after the German invasion of Russia. Many of them then fought in a Polish army on the side of the western Allies.

Russia did not restore to Poland all the territory she had occupied in 1939- With the agreement of Britain and the United States she annexed a large slice with about 11 million inhabitants, mainly Russians, which had been taken from Russia by Poland in 1919. Poland was recompensed by receiving a comparable area of eastern Germany, including the whole of East Prussia except the northern part (with the capital) which went to Russia. The new Polish-German frontier (the Oder-Neisse line) was further west than Britain and the United States thought reasonable but they could not prevent the Poles from taking over up to that line.

The territories of the USSR were also considerably extended elsewhere. Part of eastern Finland had been ceded to Russia in 1940 and became part of a new Karelo-Finnish SSR. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, annexed in 1940, had become three more Soviet Republics; and they resumed that status after the withdrawal of the Germans. In 1940 also Bessarabia had been seized from Roumania to form part of a Moldavian SSR, an arrangement which was confirmed after the war thus bringing the number of Socialist Soviet Republics to sixteen. Finally the eastern tip of Czecho-Slovakia was ceded to the Ukrainian SSR, and in the Far East Russia acquired the Kurile Islands and the southern half of Sakhalin from Japan. (The occupation of Japan was carried out mainly by the Americans.)

The population of the USSR was now some 200 million, and Russia emerged from the war as a rival to the United States for the position of the leading world power.

*Poland's Jewish population dates from medieval times, when Casimir the Great (1333-70) and other Kings of Poland gave shelter to many Jews from the persecution by the countries of western Europe.

Chapter 25- - The Iron Curtain.

The western democracies hoped that as a result of the war-time alliance Stalin would abandon the principle of Communist world-domination and would co-operate in the maintenance of peace. At first there seemed to be some justification for this hope. Russia joined the new world organisation, the United Nations whose charter was based on there being unanimous agreement between the "Big Five" - the United States, Britain, France, the USSR and China on all major political questions.

It soon became evident, however, that Stalin had no intention of co-operating, and that his plan was the gradual extension of Communist government to all countries, these governments to be subservient to Soviet Russia. Membership of the United Nations was used as a means of spreading Communist propaganda and of maligning the so-called imperialistic United States and Britain. And Russia's powerful position as one of the Big Five (who had permanent seats on the Security Council) enabled her to prevent settlement of disputes and so keep the world in a state of tension and unrest, favourable to the spread of Communism. In order not to appear in too small a minority in the United Nations, she obtained membership as separate nations: for the two largest Soviet Republics (apart from the Russian SSR) - the Ukraine and Belorussia (White Russia). And as soon as any other country came under Communist control it automatically supported Russia on all important issues.

Stalin's technique for subjugating successive countries to Soviet domination was one of apparently peaceful revolution from within. The Communist Party in the country concerned first simulated agreement with the moderate Socialists and so achieved some key positions in the government and administration. Then although often representing only a minority in the country, it seized power by a sudden coup, backed by the menace of the Red Army. The country was then quickly converted into a "police state", with no freedom of expression, and all opposition to the Communists was suppressed. By 1949 Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Roumania had all been subjected in this way, and an "iron curtain" drawn against all contact with the democracies. Yugoslavia also became Communist under Marshal Tito, but Tito later had the courage to disagree with Stalin; and Yugoslavia alone of European Communist states succeeded in maintaining an independent policy.

Greece was saved from being drawn behind the "iron curtain" by American and British assistance to the Greek government in their struggle against Communist insurgents. Finland also succeeded in maintaining her independence and in remaining outside the iron curtain. And the danger of a Communist coup in Italy and the further spread of Communism in western Europe was averted largely by the economic aid provided by the United States in a "European Recovery Programme".

The western democracies of Europe, forced into a policy of military, as well as economic, defence against further Russian expansion, banded together in the "Western Union", consisting of Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. This defensive alliance was then expanded in the "North Atlantic Treaty", to include the United States, Canada, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Portugal, Greece and Turkey. In Germany Russian policy rendered impossible the formation of a unified German state other than a Communist one, and the country remained divided into a democratic Western Germany and a Communist-controlled Eastern Germany. In

1955 Western Germany joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. In the Far East the Soviet Union supported the Chinese Communists, under Mao Tse-tung, in their struggle against the Nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek. In the earlier stages of this struggle, which started in 1927, the Soviet leaders had given Mao no assistance. They were doubtful of the potential of the Chinese Communists and disapproved of their basing their revolution on a peasant revolt. This was contrary to the Soviet dogma that the urban workers must be the basis of a Communist regime. The Chinese civil war was interrupted by a truce during the Japanese invasion and the Second World War, but was then resumed. On this resumption the United States gave financial and material aid to Chiang, but the Soviet Union now gave effective support to Mao. By the end of 1949 the Communists had driven the Nationalists from the mainland of China and established a "People's Republic" with Mao Tse-tung at its head.

By 1950 a large part of the world was divided into the two opposing groups : the Communist-controlled states and the N.A.T.O.. Stalin had become absolute master of the 200 million inhabitants of the USSR and of another 90 million behind the iron curtain in Europe; all the Slav countries except Yugoslavia, and the non-Slavs of Hungary, Roumania and East Germany.

Chapter 26. - The Soviet Union after Stalin.

Stalin died in 1953. Then followed several years of "collective leadership" until Khrushchev., son of a miner, established himself at the top. In his later years Stalin had been glorified by the nation with an almost god-like status., a "personality cult" which was denounced by Khrushchev. He denounced Stalin's greed for power, his megalomania, and his purges, and blamed him for any Soviet failures in foreign policy, such as the break with Tito of Yugoslavia.

Khrushchev also announced a policy of "peaceful co-existence" with the Western powers, and cut the defence budget in order to pay for more consumer goods at home.

A relaxation of the Soviet's iron control over her satellite countries after Stalin's death led to rising national aspirations, culminating in a Hungarian revolt in 1956. The Hungarians wanted free elections and the end of the one-party dictatorship. The revolt was firmly suppressed by an invasion by the Soviet army. And in Russia itself, although criticism of the regime did not now meet with immediate execution, it was not encouraged. The writer Boris Pasternak was prevented (1958) from accepting the Nobel prize for literature for his novel "Dr Zhivago", which was banned in Russia as a "hostile political act".

In spite of the declared policy of peaceful co-existence no agreement could be reached between the Soviet Union and the West on the major requirements for the furtherance of such a policy - a degree of disarmament and freedom of intercourse between the Communist world and the rest. There was a limited extension of such intercourse - for instance in the sporting world - but on the Soviet side under strict government supervision. Individual freedom of movement, into and out of the Soviet Union, remained impossible.

Under these circumstances the United States - the USSR's rival super-power - adopted a policy of containment of Communism, trying to prevent its further extension anywhere. The United States own security against possible Soviet aggression was based on her preponderance in nuclear weapons and her lead in space technology.

Her confidence was, however, shaken in 1957 when the Russians launched the first space satellite into orbit round the Earth, thus demonstrating their scientific ability and their power to launch and aim nuclear devices with precision. The Soviet's scientific advance was emphasised in 1961 when the Russian Yuri Gagarin became the first man to orbit the Earth.

The Soviet leaders consistently tried to exploit anti-Western feeling in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where they succeeded in establishing a Communist base in the Western hemisphere in Fidel Castro's Cuba. In 1962 Khrushchev tried to set up a nuclear missile base there, and brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. But firm American pressure persuaded him to withdraw. On the other hand a long drawn-out American attempt to contain Communism in the Far East by helping South Vietnam to resist Communist aggression from North Vietnam eventually ended in failure.

In 1964 Khrushchev was deposed, charged with hasty decisions (e.g. Cuba) and, in his turn, with a "personality cult". He was succeeded as First Secretary of the Communist Party (the post of real power in the Soviet Union) by Brezhnev, and as Chairman of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister) by Kosygin. (Khrushchev had held both posts.) The new leadership continued Khrushchev's policy of trying to achieve peaceful co-existence with the West but at the same time strengthened rather than decreased the Soviet armed forces. They also continued to exploit difficulties in the Western powers' foreign policies for instance the problem of getting a settlement in the Middle East between the Arab states and Israel - and to exacerbate, through the Communist parties in the Western democracies, the domestic problems of those countries. Relations between the Soviet Union and the embryo third super-power, China, might have been expected to be cordial after the Soviet's aid to the Chinese Communists in their victory over the Nationalists and the establishment of a Communist regime in China. But during the 1960s there was increasing disagreement and rivalry between the two great Communist powers. To the traditional mutual suspicion between the Russians and the Chinese was added a fierce dispute over the principles of Marxist-Leninism and an attempt by China to detach from the Soviet Union the allegiance of the smaller Communist states. The quarrel was largely the work of the Chinese leader, Mao Tse-tung, to whom the Russians retaliated by accusing him of a "personality cult". In the late 1960s relations between the two nations rapidly deteriorated, culminating in armed clashes in 1969 along the frontier of eastern Siberia.

Back at home, and in the satellite countries, the events of 1956 were re-exacted in the late 1960s. The writer Solzhenitzyn, like Pasternak before him, was barred from accepting the Nobel prize for literature because of his attacks on the restrictions on freedom. (And in the early 1970s a campaign was launched to suppress dissent among the intelligentsia.) And in 1968 an attempt in Czecho-Slovakia to establish freedom of speech, of the press, and of religion, was ruthlessly suppressed - as in Hungary in 1956 - by an armed invasion.

So, in the early 1970s, though the terrorism of the Stalin era has been disavowed - and in religion a sort of modus vivendi reached after the Second World War between the Church and the atheist Communist state continues* - there is still no real freedom in Russia. The Secret Police (KGB) remains as powerful as ever. And the Soviet Union's repressive grip on her eastern European satellite states remains unabated.

But at the same time the Soviet leaders have, in the early 1970s, shown an apparent increasing willingness to co-operate with western nations in such matters as space exploration and trade and possibly even in some limitation of armaments though the forces of the Warsaw Pact powers (Russia and her satellites) greatly outnumber the N.A.T.O. forces in Europe.

*About two thirds of all churches have been closed under the Communist regime, but there are still some 30 million practising members of the Orthodox Church, headed by the Patriarch of Moscow. And many of the minority nationalities practise their own religion - independent Christian Churches in Armenia and Georgia, Roman Catholics in Lithuania and the western Ukraine, Lutherans in Latvia and Estonia, Moslems (about 20 million in all) in the central Asian and Transcaucasian republics, and over 2 million Jews.

Appendix I. Rulers of Russia.

Grand Princes of Moscow.

1325-1341	Ivan I Kalita (Moneybag)
1341-1353	Simeon I
1353-1359	Ivan II
1359-1389	Dmitri Donskoi
1389-1425	Basil I
1425-1462	Basil II
1462-1505	Ivan III (the Great). Assumed title of Tsar after his marriage in 1472.

Tsars of Russia.

Ivan III	
1505-1533	Basil IV
1533-1584	Ivan IV (formally crowned as Tsar in 1547).
1584-1598	Feodor I
1598-1605	Boris Godunov
1605	Feodor II
1605-1613	(conflict between rivals)

Romanoffs

1613-1645	Michael Romanoff
1645-1676	Alexis
1676-1682	Feodor III
1682-1689	Ivan V
1689-1725	Peter I (the Great)
1725-1727	Catherine I
1727-1730	Peter II
1730-1740	Anna
1740-1741	Ivan VI
1741-1762	Elizabeth
1762	Peter III
1762-1796	Catherine II (the Great)
1796-1801	Paul
1801-1825	Alexander I
1825-1855	Nicholas I
1855-1881	Alexander II
1881-1894	Alexander III
1894-1917	Nicholas II

(Revolution) Dictators of U.S.S.R.

1918-1924	Lenin
1924-1927	(struggle between Stalin and Trotsky)
1927-1953	Stalin
1953-1957	(collective leadership)
1957-1964	Khrushchev
1964-	Brezhnev

Appendix II. Population Statistics.

U.S.S.R. Population (1971) - about 244 million.

Density of population - about 28 per square mile. (for comparison - U.S.A. 58 psm)

Races

Russian 129 million, Ukrainian 41, White Russian 9, Uzbek 9, Tatar 6, Kazakh 5, Azerbaijani 4 ½, Armenian 3 ½, Georgian 3 ¼, and between 1 and 3 million each - Lithuanian, Moldavian, Tadzhik, Polish, Kirghiz, Turkoman, Latvian, Estonian.

Most of the minority national populations speak their own language.

Republic	Population	Nationality	Main Towns
Russian SFSR	130m	Russian 83% and (38 national minorities)	Moscow (capital) 7.1m Leningrad 4m Gorky 1.1m Novosibirsk (Siberia) 1.1m Kuibyshev 1m Sverdlovsk (Siberia) 1m And 12 others over ½ m
Ukraine	47m	Ukrainian 75% Russian 25%	Kiev (capita) 1.7m Kharkov 1.25m Odessa 900,000 And 5 others over ½ m
Byelorussia (White Russia)	9m	White Russian 80% Poles	Minsk (cap) 950,000
Georgia (Transcaucasia)	4.7m	Georgian 67% Armenian Russian	Tbilisi (Tiflis) (cap) 900,000
Azerbaijan (Transcaucasia)	5m	Azerbaijani (Turkic) 75%	Baku (cap) 1.3m
Armenia (Transcaucasia)	2.5m	Armenian 90%	Erivan (cap) 800,000
Moldova	3.6m	Moldovians 65% Ukrainian Russian	Kishinev (cap) 370,000
Lithuania (Baltic)	2.4m	Lithuanian 80% Russian Poles	Vilna (cap) 380,000
Latvia (Baltic)	2.4m	Letts 57% Russian 30%	Riga (cap) 740,000
Estonia (Baltic)	1.3m	Estonian 68% Russian 25%	Tallinn (cap) 370,000
Uzbekistan (Central Asia)	12m	Uzbek (Turkic) 65% Russian	Tashkent (cap) 1.4m
Kazakhstan	13m	Russian 42%	Alma-Ata (cap) 750,000

(Central Asia)		Kazakh (Turkic) 33%	
Kirghizia (Central Asia)	3m	Kirghiz 44% (Turkic) Russian 29%	Frunxe (cap) 440,000
Tadjikistan (Central Asia)	3m	Tadjik (akin to Persian)56% Uzbek 23%	Dushambe (cap) 390,000
Turkmenistan (Central Asia)	2.2m	Turkmen 66% Russian Uzbek	Ashkhabad (cap) 260,000

The Karelo-Finnish SSR was incorporated in the Russian SFSR (the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic) in 1956.