

Russia from the Kievan Rus':  
Part Six  
Marist CLS



## The Decembrist Revolt

- During the last years of Alexander's reign, 1821–22 those desirous of change moved towards more concrete plans and began to write constitutions for the future
- By 1825 there were two centers of this activity. In St. Petersburg, where most of the guard regiments were stationed
- Several hundred officers formed the Northern Society, with the aim of overthrowing the monarchy and proclaiming a constitutional state.



## Background to the Decembrist Revolt

- On November 19, 1825, Tsar Alexander I suddenly died at the age of only forty-seven, while on tour of the Crimea, far from the capital or any other large city
- That word did not reach St. Petersburg until December added to confusion:
  - Succession law of 1797 normally pointed to the childless Alexander's younger brother Konstantin
  - But it was not generally known that Konstantin had abdicated the throne in 1822 by written agreement with Alexander
- When Nicholas, the brother next in line for the throne obtained personal confirmation of these arrangements, he confronted the Decembrists with a superior military force
- The subsequent trials and punishments were surprisingly mild, and Nicholas I began this first years of his reign smoothly



## Nicholas I

- The new tsar could now turn to ruling the country, which he did with an iron hand
- He was nearly twenty years younger than Alexander and therefore entirely missed the reign of his grandmother Catherine
- His formative years were those of the defeat of Napoleon, with his upbringing narrowly military rather than educated as a future ruler
- Nicholas was convinced that only autocracy could prevent the spread of revolution, liberalism, and constitutional government



## Early Years of the Rule of Nicholas I

- Nicholas set up a series of committees to consider the needs of the country and even to wrestle with the issue of serfdom
- Conclusion: any attempt to change the system would lead to a massive revolt
- One important positive measure was the codification of Russian law, a massive task entrusted to the capable hands of Michael Speransky (pictured right)
- In 1835 his committee published a code of law derived from carefully collected Russian precedent Speransky's code remained the basis of Russian law until 1917
- Nicholas was himself enthusiastic about the project, as it fitted his image of himself as the stern yet just monarch, careful of the law as well as of his own authority.

**Michael Speransky**



## Economic Progress Under Nicholas I

- The colonization of the southern steppe continued, and Odessa emerged as a major port, exporting the growing surplus of Russian grain to Europe
- A serf system industrial capitalism made its first appearance
- Textile factories powered by imported English steam engines were built starting from the 1790s
  - Workers were mostly serfs of wealthy noble families
  - Smaller entrepreneurs, even former serfs began to prosper along with townsmen who began to start small enterprises in and around St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other towns and villages of the Russian interior.

## A Vision of the *Typical Serfs* in 1830



КРЕСТЬЯНЪЪ ВЪ РОСЛАВСКОЙ ГУБѢ; 1830 Г.

## Tsar Nicholas I and Industrialization

- Established the first commercial high schools
- Set a protective tariff
- Took a major role in the construction of Russia's first railroads, the line from the capital to the Tsarskoe Selo (1837)
- The first higher level engineering school in 1828 with the St. Petersburg Technological Institute
- Nicholas was cautious about industrialization, fearing a large industrial base, as the seedbed of revolution as well as fundamentally unnecessary
- Serfdom, with its increasingly backward agriculture, and capital tied up in serfs and large estates remained a barrier to rapid expansion

## Constructed by George Washington Whistler



## The Role of Count S. S. Uvarov

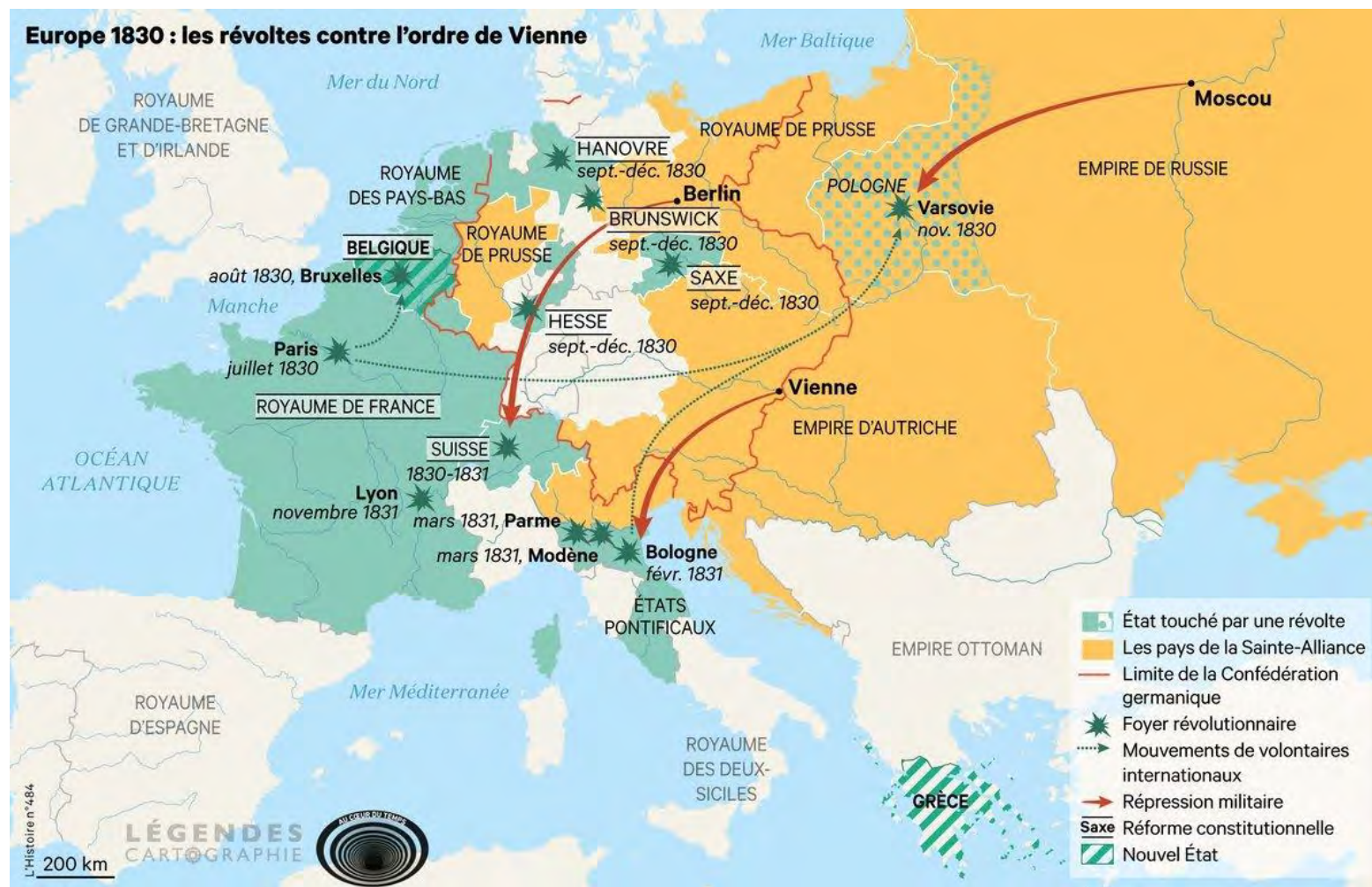
- A cosmopolitan in education, more comfortable in French than in Russian, appointed by Nicholas as Minister of Education
- In 1832 he sent around a rescript to the ministry's institutions informing them that their task was to encourage "autocracy, Orthodoxy, and nationality," and thus was born the doctrine of official nationality, as it came to be called
- The Imperial court included numerous Baltic Germans, Finns, and even conservative Polish aristocrats, and could hardly advocate a purely Russian state; nationality was still more a vague idea than a strict ethnic principle. The result was a contradictory mix of ideas, a mix that remained until the end of the old regime in 1917
- In his leadership roles, Uvarov set high standards for excellence in education which enormously increased the competence of the new government hires and prepared the government to address the SERF PROBLEM





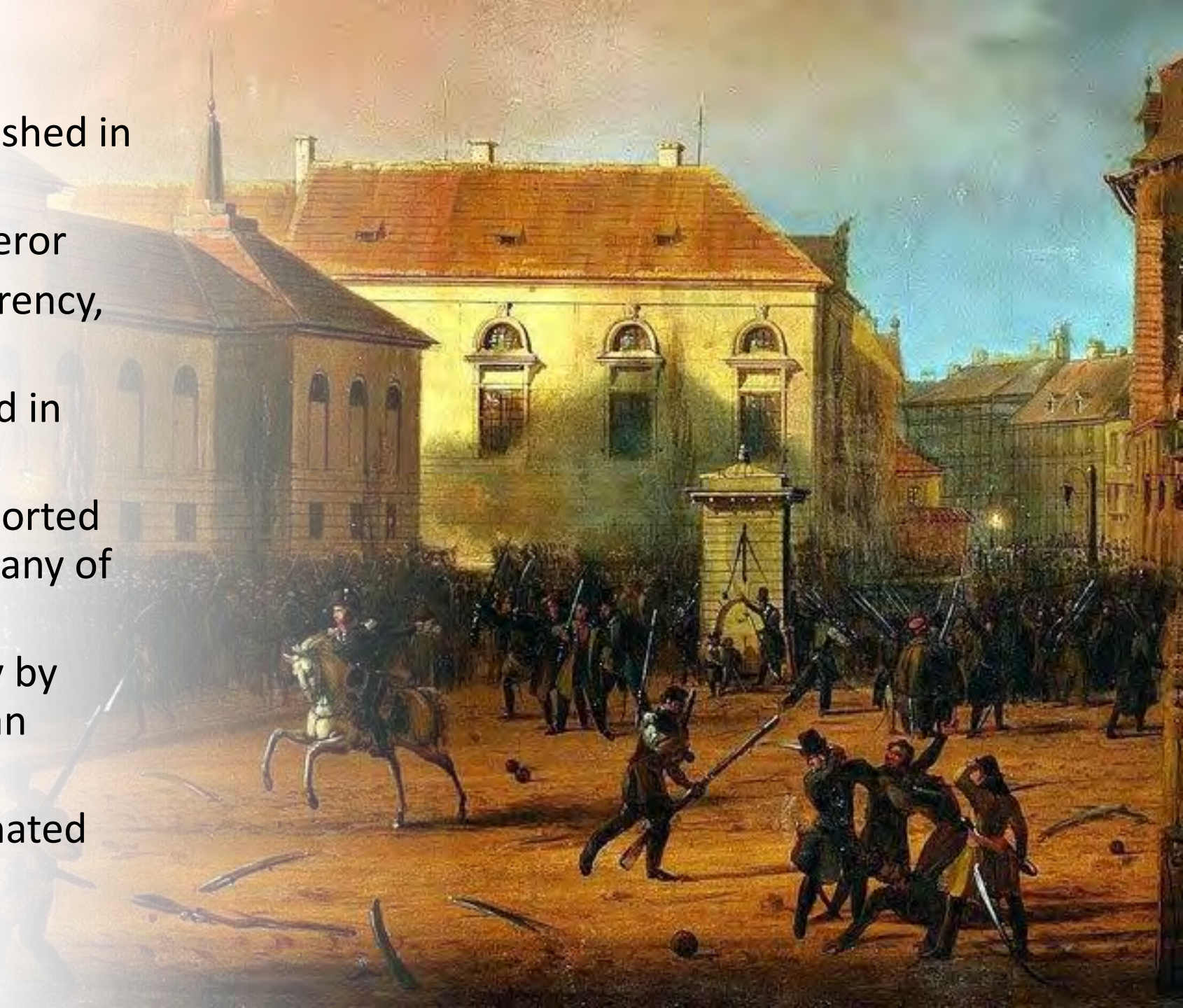
## Challenges to Stability

- Greek Revolution 1821-1829
- 1830 Revolutions in Western Europe
- Egyptian –Ottoman War 1832-1833
- Further revolution 1848-49



## Polish Uprising of 1830

- “Congress Poland” was established in 1815:
  - Ruled by the Russian Emperor
  - Own legislature, army, currency, school system
  - Official business conducted in Polish
- The uprising in 1830 was supported mainly by upper-class Poles many of whom later fled the country
- Uprising not supported widely by Polish, Ukrainian or Belorussian peasants
- Organic Statute of 1832 eliminated much of this autonomy



# Crimean War



- The original cause of the Crimean War was the competition between the French Empire, proclaimed in 1852 by the nephew of Napoléon Bonaparte, crowning himself as Napoléon III, and the Russian Empire, over the protectorate of the "Holy Land" (Palestine with Jerusalem).
- After its consecutive victories over the declining Ottoman Empire in the 18th century, Russia had obtained the status of a Christian "protector power" over the Christian subjects of the Sultan on the Holy Land.

## The Motivations for Dealing with Serfdom

- Russia's loss in the Crimean War upended its position as supreme land power in Europe that seemed guaranteed in 1815
- The largest army in Europe, could not move efficiently around the large border expanse
- Serfdom prevented the army from going over to a reserve system, as no one wanted serfs who had extensive military training
- Alexander II accession at death of Nicholas was the signal for reform

## Alexander II – Reigned 1855 until Assassinated in 1881



# Alexander II 'Tsar liberator'



- Influenced by Crimean War and Russia's defeat.
- Embarked on extensive reform of Russian government and society.
- 1861 - Alexander II abolished serfdom.
- However this did not mean they were absolutely free. They had to pay redemption payments and live in mirs (communes) managed by elders of the community.
- Peasants could not leave the mir without permission from the elder.
- The elder would distribute the land accordingly .
- Famines followed (1891 - causing widespread loss of life)

- Judicial Reforms of 1864: Trials became open to the public, and a jury system was introduced
- Educational Reforms eased restrictions on universities, allowed more autonomy with an increase in the number of educational institutions and students in Russia. The Zemstvo schools, aimed at educating the rural populace, were also established
- Local Government Reforms creating the Zemstvo, a form of local elected assembly, which dealt with local issues like infrastructure, medical care, and education. This provided a measure of local self-government
- Military Reforms of 1874 included universal conscription, reduction in service duration, and modernization of training and equipment.

- The reign of Alexander II witnessed a relaxation in strict censorship laws. This led to a flourishing of literature and journalism
- He supported the construction of railways (notably the Trans-Siberian Railway) and stimulated other infrastructure projects to enhance connectivity as well as other measures to promote the settlement and development of Siberia
- Alexander II attempted to integrate the Grand Duchy of Finland (an autonomous part of the Russian Empire) more closely into the empire, although this was met with Finnish resistance
- Alexander II's reign was not without controversy; discontentment among various factions led to multiple assassination attempts on the emperor, with a successful one in 1881 ending his life.



## **Alexander Pushkin 1799-1837**

- The founder of modern Russian literature and developer of a simpler, more visceral Russian language style
- Known for numerous poems, especially "Ruslan and Ludmila" and "Eugene Onegin," as well as dramas such as "Boris Godunov", and prose works
- Russian Music Composers built upon his works, such as in the operas of Glinka, Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky



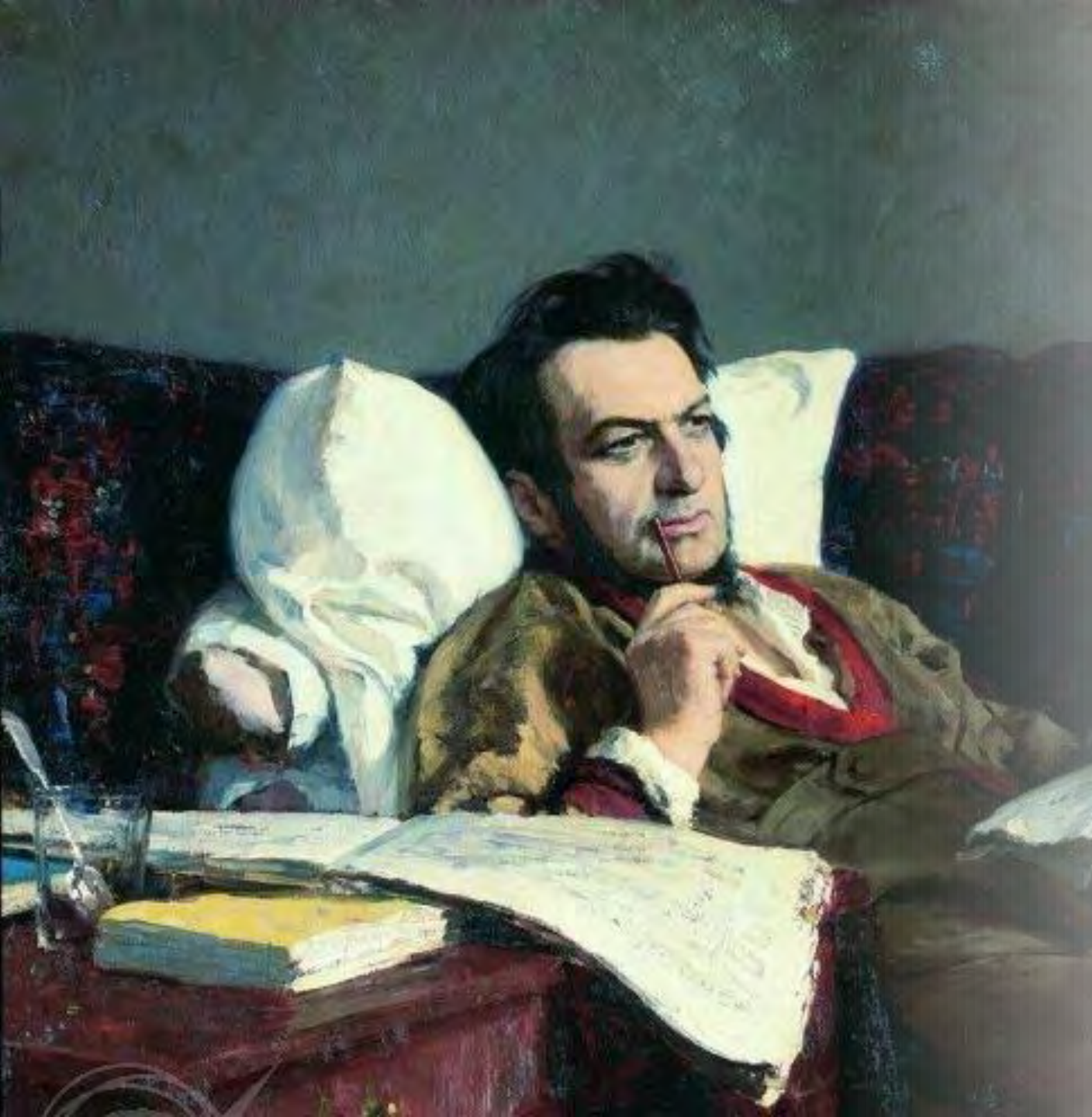
## The Inconsequential Man\* In Eugene Onegin

\* one who is coldly rational, who has seen so much that he can no longer enjoy the simple pleasures:

“Onegin emerges as a man with no purpose in life, neither a career nor an absorbing occupation, well educated in European culture but contributing nothing to the Russia around him. In contrast Tatiana, for all her girlish naiveté, is the deeper and stronger character, the prototype of many of the women in Russian literature. The book had phenomenal success and later Tchaikovsky was to turn it into his own greatest opera.”

From “A Concise History of Russia” by Paul Bushkovich





## **Mikhail Glinka 1804-1857**

- Composer who used Russian folk tunes and themes
- Inspired other composers to explore and incorporate their own country's traditions into their works
- Colorful and innovative orchestration techniques, particularly in works like "Ruslan and Lyudmila"
- He introduced a uniquely Russian approach to the operatic form, emphasizing the importance of the chorus as well as integrating traditional melodies



## Nikolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky 1792-1856

- Russian mathematician; he developed, independent of two others, including Gauss, Non-Euclidian Geometry, leading to:
- Einstein's Theory of Relativity
- Other Cosmological envisioning
- Daring modern architectural designs
- Out-of-the-Box thinking about diverse STEM disciplines, as well as artistic and philosophical explorations

## Sofia Kovalevskaya 1850-1891

The first woman:

- in the WORLD to obtain a doctorate in mathematics
  - In Northern Europe appointed as a Full Professor
  - As editor of a prestigious scientific journal
- \* Despite her obvious talent for mathematics, she could not complete her education in Russia. At that time, women were not allowed to attend universities in Russia and most other countries



## Pale of Settlement 1795-1917

- The three partitions of Poland between 1772 and 1795, resulted in Catherine the Great seeking to keep Jews out of the main parts of the Russian Empire, hence the creation of the Pale
- Included parts of present-day Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, and western Russia
- At its largest extent, it covered an area of about 1.3 million square kilometers.



## Alexander III 1881-1894

- Known as “The Peacemaker”
- Tightened censorship and exiled thousands of liberals/radicals to Siberia
- Fostered Orthodoxy at the expense of other confessions, imposed the Russian language and Russian schools on his German, Polish, and Finnish subjects, and destroyed the remnants of German, Polish, and Swedish institutions in the outlying provinces
- Strongly promoted industrial development in concert with Count Sergei Witte



## Underlying Origins of the Russian Revolution

- Tsarist decline; between two points:
  - 1814 victory over Napoleon
  - the assassination of Czar Alexander III
- With these two events, we see the importance of:
  - No political counter-balance to the state
  - isolation of the educated classes from the common people
  - rural backwardness and poverty that drove so many peasants to seek a better life in the industrial towns
  - coercive basis of authority in Russia
  - the EVENTUAL extremism of the socialist intelligentsia



- Weather catastrophes caused the peasants of south-east Russia to face starvation in the summer
- The seeds planted the previous Fall had barely time to germinate before the frosts arrived; limited winter snowfall did little to protect the young plants during the severe winter
- Spring brought dusty winds that blew away the topsoil; as early as April, the long dry summer began. There was no rain for one hundred days.

## Famine of 1891







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- By the Fall, the famine area spread from the Ural mountains to Ukraine, an area double the size of France with a population of 36 million people
  - The peasants weakened, living on 'hunger bread' made from rye husks mixed with goosefoot, moss and tree bark, which made the loaves turn yellow and bitter.
  - Those who had the strength packed up their meagre belongings and fled wherever they could, jamming the roads with their carts. And then cholera and typhus struck, killing half a million people by the end of 1892.

- People often believed the obstinate bureaucracy had withheld food relief until it had ‘statistical proof’ that the population had no other means of feeding itself
- Public outrage worst over the government’s postponement of a ban on cereal exports until the middle of August, several weeks into the crisis
- Merchants rushed to fulfil their foreign contracts, and foodstuffs which could have been used for the starving peasants vanished abroad



FAMINE-STRIKEN VILLAGERS WHO HAVE LEFT THEIR HOMES ON THE WAY TO ST. PETERSBURG.

“10,000 villagers arrived last week at St. Petersburg, and many more are expected.”—SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

## American Relief Arrives

