SGS HISTORIAN - Issue 11

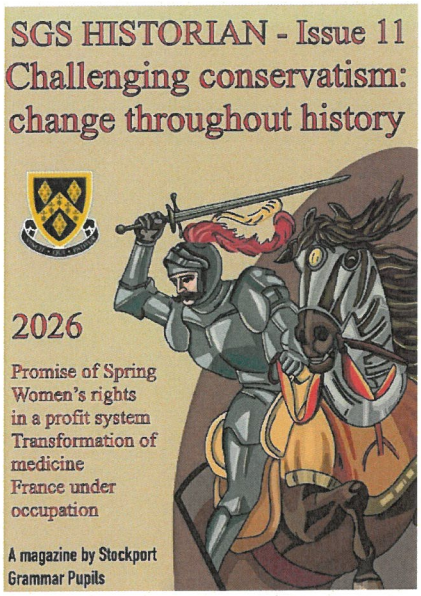
Challenging conservatism: change throughout history

2026

Promise of Spring
Women's rights in a profit system
Transformation of medicine
France under occupation

A magazine by Stockport Grammar Pupils

SGS Historian – Issue 11, Summer 2026



Cover produced by Tom Stanton [L6]
Editorial comments by Thomas Sinnott, Sadie Canty and Mr D J Stone

Editorial Comment

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced"- James Baldwin

In the 11th edition of the SGS Historian magazine by Lower Sixth Stockport Grammar School students, we expressed an interest in the theme of challenging conservatism and orthodoxy: change throughout history in many forms. This theme allowed for the examination of individuals and movements that confronted the vastly accepted ideologies and also how they transformed societies. From the Aztec Resistance to the Spanish Invasion and clashes between capitalism and feminism, our historians discover how conservatism has been challenged throughout history in a wide range of periods, from change instigated from above to representation of the underrepresented in pop culture, demonstrating that change can materialise in many forms. Writers were given the opportunity to write an article on a topic they are passionate about and that interested them, allowing for a wider variety of perspectives than what would be found in an exam paper. We hope you enjoy reading these articles as much as we enjoyed writing them.

Sadie Canty & Tom Sinnott [both in L2]

This year's issue of the SGS Historian focusses on the theme of challenges to orthodoxy and conservatism, in a choice made by this curious and talented group of Sixth Form students that in many ways reflects some of the trends we see emerging within society today. Today, centre right- and left-wing governments in the UK and Europe face challenges from the extremes as conservatism and democratic socialism grapple with the rise of populist leaders, parties and movements. There is much uncertainty, as there was in 1848, 1888, 1956 and in occupied France during WW2. Cultural challenges to conservatism are often reflected in the music of an era, as seen with The Smiths and in the music of Stockport. Often, the most significant challenges to conservatism come from those naturally conservative who are looking to reform to avoid revolution, such as with Mikhail Loris-Melikov. Some may consider progressive conservatism to have been the starting point for Liberalism. This has not been lost on this year's contributors and the result is a really fantastic summer read! Enjoy!

Mr D J Stone

Fall of Tenochtitlan

Written by Robert Morrison [L1]

The Mexica, also known as the Aztecs, were the largest and most powerful empire in North America in 1519, when their empire was defeated by the Spanish, led by Hernán Cortés, 800 Spaniards and between 100,000 and 200,000 indigenous Mexicans. Their capital was Tenochtitlan, built on Lake Texcoco, and was estimated to have had 300,000 people. It was the peak of technological expertise of the time, and the Mexica Empire oppressed and controlled hundreds of thousands of other Nahuas, the people native to central Mexico. Yet this empire, by the end of the 16th century, had diminished by around 90% and Tenochtitlan had fallen to the Spanish. How could such a large, powerful empire fall so quickly to such a small force?

Primarily, the Mexica did not expect any war nor conflict, and so were not prepared for battle which the Spanish waged. On 8th November 1519, when Hernán Cortés arrived in Tenochtitlan, he was welcomed as a visitor by Emperor Moctezuma II with open arms. However, Cortés had already created an alliance with certain Nahua populations in Mexico, whom he met on his way from the coast to Tenochtitlan, and already desired the immense wealth that was housed in Tenochtitlan. In July and August of 1519, Cortés made an alliance with the Totonac people in Cempoala, who sought liberation from the Mexica Empire. They gave Cortés a very detailed declaration of Tenochtitlan, and so, he ventured further inland to discover the city.

Figure 1: Hernan Cortes

As he moved further inland, he discovered the Tlaxcalans, a fierce race who were enemies of the Mexica, and perhaps rivalled them in strength. The two armies fought, and made peace, and in September 1519, they made an alliance to bring down the Mexica. The Tlaxcalans felt threatened by their presence, and the Spanish wanted their wealth and riches. Then, as the army marched towards the city, they picked up various small city states who were oppressed by the Mexica, alliances which continued to be made throughout the war with the Mexica. The Spanish arrived in Tenochtitlan on the 8th of November, accompanied by around 5,000 Nahuas and 500 conquistadores. He was invited into the city by the Emperor Moctezuma II, where he stayed as a guest. However, only six days later, on the 14th of July, Cortés took Moctezuma hostage and the war began, and the Spanish took control of Tenochtitlan. The Spanish took the immediate advantage in the war through their alliances with other Nahua people, and through their cunning use of a surprise attack on the welcoming Mexica.

The Mexica, however, did not possess the power to overthrow Cortés, and so the Spanish remained in control of the city until May 1520. Whilst Cortés was fighting in another conflict on the coast, against other Spaniards, the second in command, Pedro de Alvarado, slaughtered hundreds of the Mexica nobility, which sparked an enormous city-wide revolt, which turned the war in the favour of the Mexica. However, the Mexica were still not able to take their city back, but the power of the revolt did mean Cortés needed to return in order to save his men. When he returned, the Mexica managed to trap Cortés in his palace, and he was forced to ask the hostage Moctzeuma to ask the Mexica to quell the rebellion, but it was futile, and the Mexica hurled rocks and spears at their former emperor, believing he was at fault for the fall of the city, and believing that he was a traitor. He was injured and is thought to have either been killed by the Spanish, according to the Mexica, or to have died from his wounds, according to the Spanish. Either way, upon his death, the Spanish realised that their situation was dire, and they had to flee the city.

The Spanish attempted to flee on 1st July 1520, by using the floating causeways that led out of the city across Lake Texcoco. However, the Mexica were ready for their attempted escape, and slaughtered hundreds of the Spanish-Nahua coalitions. The Mexica used canals and the coast to throw spears at the fleeing Spanish and sank large parts of the floating bridge that led to the city, drowning hundreds of the Spanish. Also, the Mexica sank lots of their treasure that had been stolen by the Spanish, which was one of the main reasons that the Spanish had invaded the city. The Spanish suffered so many deaths that they had to regroup, and the conflict paused for around 10 months, with the Mexica once again in control of Tenochtitlan, with Cuitláhuac taking the throne.

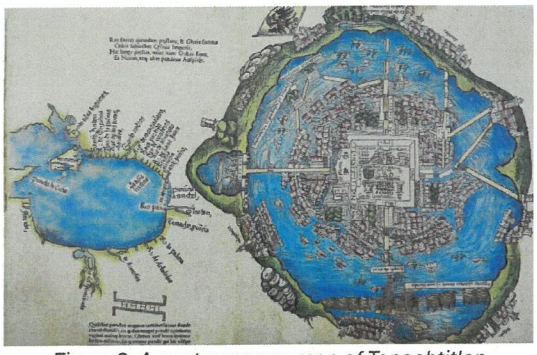


Figure 2: A contemporary map of Tenochtitlan

However, shortly after, he died of Smallpox, in December 1520. The Spanish weaponised smallpox in order to kill as many Mexica as they could without entering in to head on conflict, as the Mexica had never experienced the disease, as it was native to the old world, and many of them died to the new illness. The disease's first wave is thought to have killed 8 million indigenous people from all across the country. The smallpox epidemic significantly weakened the army of the Mexica, and the young Cuauhtémoc had to take the throne after Cuitláhuac died, at only around 20 years of age. He was inexperienced and unused to the horrors of war, and so was not the best leader to fight in a war with the Spanish, as his unending resistance spelled doom for the Mexica after they lost. Also, during the ten months of affliction with Smallpox, the Spanish spent the time regrouping and recovering. As the Mexica rebuilt their city and suffered from Smallpox, the Spanish forces created new, powerful alliances with even more Nahua populations. He enlisted hundreds of thousands of people from in and around Tlaxcala, where he rested,

and the sheer number of fierce Nahua warriors was a key factor in their victory.

Figure 3: A city under siege

In May 1521, Cortés returned to Tenochtitlan and besieged the city until August 1521. Cortés attempted to enter the city, which sat on a marshy island on Lake Texcoco, through the bridges that ran to the city from the shore of the lake, but the Mexica managed to stall his advance by destroying each bridge the Spanish made. However, in order to circumvent the destruction of the bridges, Cortés made use of his brigantines, armed sailboats, to attack the city. Not only did the Spanish manage to make their way to the city, in order to lay siege to it, but they also made use of their mounted cannons. The Spanish had both cannons and muskets, due to their superior resources in their homeland; the presence of iron in Spain and steel in Toledo. They were able to not only create such devastating weapons of war, but they were also able to forge steel plate armour, swords and chainmail.

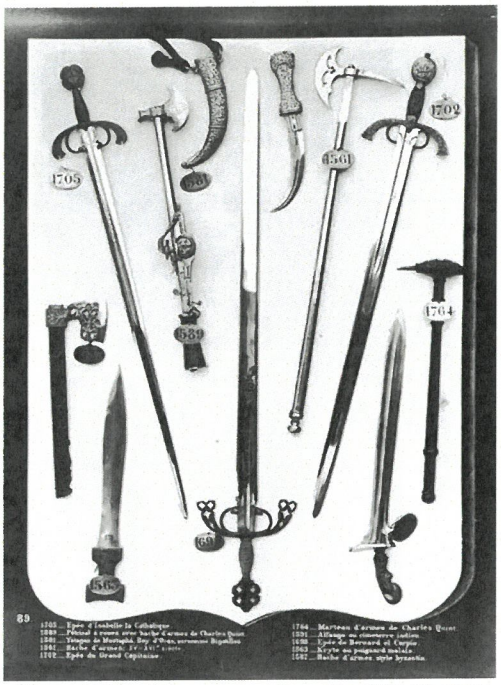


Figure 4: Spanish weapons from the 16th Century

These weapons exceeded both the technology of the Mexica, and their expectations. The Mexica were accustomed to use obsidian weapons, clubs of wood lined with shards of glass to create an edge, called a macahuitl. Therefore, their armour was made to combat this type of weapon, and so was light and agile, made from cotton soaked in saltwater. Neither their weapons nor their armour were ready for the steel from Toledo that the Spanish used, and so, many Mexica were killed in combat by the weapons.

Also, the Spanish made use of not only Smallpox, but also starvation throughout their siege to kill and weaken the Mexica. The pure strength of military technology, as well as the number of nahuas who aided the Spanish, overpowered the Mexica. They could not defend their city for too long, for the power of the cannons destroyed their defences, and the power of the swords killed their men, and on 13th August 1521, Cuauhtémoc was captured by the Spanish.

Cuauhtémoc's capture marked the end of the Mexica empire, and the beginning of the colonial period in Mexico. Cuauhtémoc was hanged in 1525, due to the fear that he might start an uprising. The Mexica suffered hundreds of thousands of deaths over the next eighty years, from disease and from slaughter. Also, the Mexica suffered cultural erasure, being forced to become Christian, being forced to marry the Spanish conquistadors, being forced to speak Spanish, and not being allowed to practice their own customs. Now, in 2026, the fall of Tenochtitlan is still felt, and the Mexica culture has been eradicated in large parts, along with their language and their people.

Figure 5: Cuauhtemoc awaiting execution

In conclusion, the Mexica Empire, one of the largest and most powerful of its time, fell in such a short period of time to so few conquistadores, due to the cruelty and cunning of the Spanish, their advancements in the weapons and arms, their alliance with the Tlaxcalans and their use of disease and starvation. The small number of the Spanish in comparison to the quantity of the Mexica was made up for by the enormous quantity of Tlaxcalans and Nahua people who aided the Spanish, overpowering the Mexica. Additionally, the cruelty and cunning of the Spanish allowed them to take the Mexica by surprise, giving them the upper hand in the war. Their use of disease too aided them, as it allowed the numbers of the Mexica to dwindle heavily without the need for confrontation. Finally, the possession of steel weapons and armour and cannons overpowered the Mexica in battle.

Figure 6: Statue commemorating Cuauhtemoc in Mexico City

A Spark of Rebellion: The Match Girls' Strike of 1888

Written by Sadie Canty [L2]

On July 5th 1888, approximately 1,400 women and girls employed in the Bryant & May match factory in East London walked out in protest at the working conditions in one of the most widely known labour disputes in the Victorian period.
The Match Girls' Strike of 1888 was much more than a simple challenge over the horrific working conditions and the low wages that the women and girls were restricted to, it was an instrumental challenge to conservatism in Victorian society. As a consequence of their actions, the Match Girls facilitated widespread political and social change.

The Conservative Context of Victorian Britain

Before the Match Girls could confront the conditions in the Bryant & May factory, they had to challenge the broader conservative and traditional values of Victorian Britain. Even though Victorian Britain was characterised by having the most powerful empire in the world, with its growing economy and high industry outputs, there was still deep inequality in society which was maintained in rigid class divisions. The widely accepted view in the Victorian era was that social order relied on people accepting their place in society, implying that society functioned best when everyone embraced their specific roles and did not seek to challenge them. Therefore, direct opposition to authority went against the traditional values that Victorian society was built upon, demonstrating that strikes and workers' protests were viewed as threats to social order.

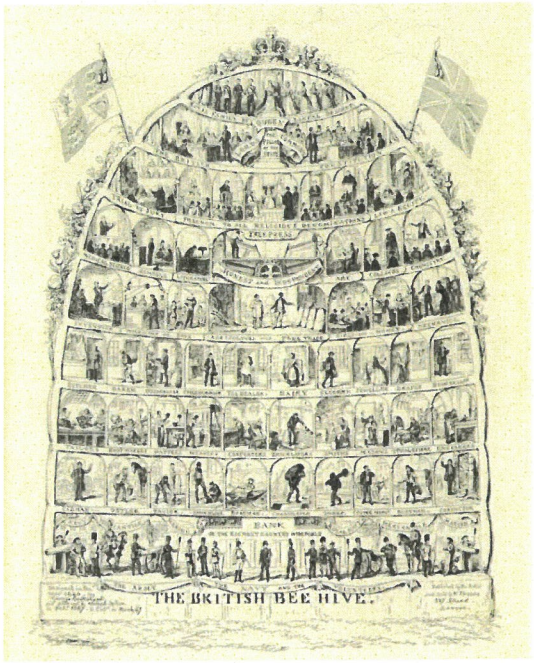


Figure 7: The Class System in Victorian England

Furthermore, the Victorian era was dictated by strict class divisions and the economic inequality that these divisions caused. The upper class were landowners and a part of the aristocracy, their wealth was mainly inherited, they held absolute power over politics and were largely ignorant to the hardships of the lower classes. The middle class grew as a result of the Industrial Revolution; people in this class ranged from factory owners to teachers. The working class was the predominant class and made up about 80% of the population; they were wholly reliant on their low wages and were mostly factory workers or skilled tradesmen. In Bryant & May, economic inequality was clear as there were vast differences between the factory owners and the workers. The owners obtained great profits through the exploitation of the match makers as they received low wages that didn't reflect the value of the work they completed. Consequently, the strike challenged the idea that factory owners should have absolute control

over the factory and demonstrated that collectively workers could challenge economic inequality and class structures.

Figure 8: Sinews of Old England, an image used to reinforce the idea of Separate Spheres

The conservative ideas of women in the Victorian era had to be confronted by the Match Girls in the Bryant & May factory; gender ideology was based on the idea of 'separate spheres'. Men were in the public sphere of politics and work whereas women were in the private sphere of raising children and running households. Even though women were expected to prioritise domestic life, working class women had to work because their families couldn't live off a single wage, but they were still expected to be obedient. Therefore, the Match Girls' Strike challenged the stereotypes that women were compliant and reliant on men.

The Victorians believed in a laissez-faire economic philosophy, meaning that economies thrive when left unregulated by the government. This approach led to rapid industrial growth but also huge social consequences. As factory owners weren't regulated, they could exploit their workers with low pay and poor working conditions; however, the workers had little protection and were limited in their ability to take action. The Match Girls challenged the view that workers should simply accept the poor treatment.

Life inside Bryant & May

The Bryant & May Match factory was located in the East End of London, an area that was linked with poverty and hardship. It was also one of Britain's largest match manufacturers. The women and girls that worked there were from working class families, for whom employment was essential for supporting themselves and their families. Therefore, even though the company was highly successful, the majority of the workers were underpaid and exploited, reflecting the inequalities in Victorian Britain that the strike challenged.
The Bryant & May Match factory was notorious for paying meagre wages and implementing harsh disciplinary techniques; the workers were paid on average four to eleven shillings per week. The women and girls had to arrive at the factory at 6:30am and work a fourteen-hour shift. In addition, many of the girls started working at Bryant & May from as young as thirteen years old. The workers had to stand all day and were limited to two scheduled toilet breaks; if they took any unscheduled toilet breaks then money would be deducted from their already low wages. Other ways their wages could be reduced further was through the system of fines that were enforced, including talking, having a disorganised workspace and even having dirty feet.

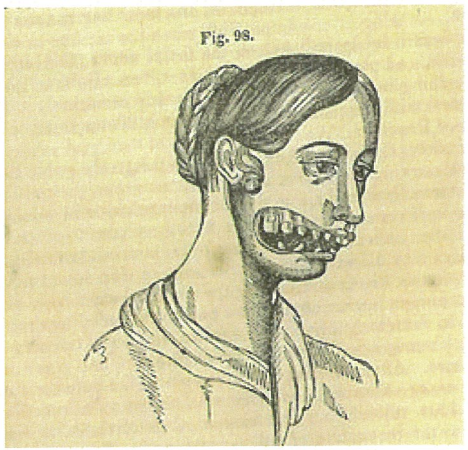


Figure 9: An image depicting Phossy Jaw

The matches in the Bryant & May match factory were made using white phosphorus which, when inhaled, resulted in symptoms including severe toothache and swollen gums which eventually led to the decay and rotting of the jawbone. This illness was known as 'Phossy Jaw' and workers who suffered from this often had to have parts of their jawbone surgically removed, with about 20% of cases leading to death. Furthermore, the dangerous working conditions that the Match Girls had to endure also included the workers eating meals in the rooms where the phosphorus was present, meaning they were in constant contact.

Bryant & May were fully aware of the consequences of working closely with white phosphorus, however, they chose to address the problem by ordering the women to have their teeth extracted when they got the first symptoms or face being sacked. Rather than accepting these conditions, the Match Girls questioned the authority of their employers and campaigned against the hazardous working conditions. Consequently, they laid the foundations for a strike that would challenge some of the most deep-rooted ideologies in Victorian Britain.

The role of Annie Besant and the road to strike

In the late 1880s, with awareness of working conditions in factories growing, the action by socialist reformer and journalist Annie Besant functioned as a trigger to the strike of the Match Girls. She became concerned about the conditions in the factory and directly met many of the women and girls to hear their experiences of the factory. On June 23rd 1888, Besant published an article called 'White Slavery in London' which revealed the brutal working conditions, described as a 'prison-house', and the treatment the women were enduring to the public. Besant's article questioned whether a prosperous industry justified the exploitation of workers and also forced the oppression to be addressed.

The Bryant & May factory denied the accusations that Besant reported on and tried to force the women to sign statements that contradicted the claims. However, many of the women had grown to resent the factory and its owners, so they refused to sign which further heightened tensions between them. Moreover, one worker was wrongfully dismissed as she was thought to have spoken to Besant, spreading further discontent in the factory. Bryant & May's response to the article highlights the conservative attitude towards authority in Victorian Britain; that it should not be questioned.

Figure 10: The Match Girls strikers

On 5 July 1888, the mass walkout of around 1,400 Match Girls from the Bryant & May factory occurred. Two of the leading members of the Match Girls Strike Committee were Annie Besant and Herbert Burrows, their leadership and organisation allowed for an effective campaign which eventually led to change for the workers. Another known strike leader was Sarah Chapman, who herself was a Match Girl.

As a response to the workers' strike, the factory owners reinstated the wrongly dismissed worker, but this had no effect on working conditions; the Match Girls used this opportunity to address their concerns. Even though it was Annie Besant who drew attention to the reality of the Bryant & May factory, ultimately the growing frustrations of the Match Girls, publicity of the truth and collective organisation meant that the strike was highly effective in achieving its goal.

Success and long-term impact of the strike

As the Bryant & May factory wanted to reverse their bad publicity, they were forced to make concessions to the Match Girls and as the public supported the women, there was little they could do. Public support for the women was prevalent due to the many donations to the appeal fund, which was set up by Annie Besant, including donations from the prominent institution of the London Trades Council. The factory owners agreed to improve the Match Girls' pay and working conditions, but most importantly, they agreed to remove the fine system that had further exploited the women of their full pay.

Therefore, the immediate successes of the strike proved that collective action could produce actual change and challenged the idea that the workers with low power couldn't challenge the authority and power of the factory owners.

The strike directly led to the creation of the Union of Women Match Makers, one of the first and most successful labour unions entirely for women in the UK. The union was created to protect workers' rights and continually enforce pressure for improvements for working women. As many Victorian trade unions were centred around men, the establishment of this particular trade union proved that female workers were capable of effective organisation and that they could have lasting impacts on labour politics.

Another effect of the Match Girl strike is that it acted as a catalyst for the rise of New Unionism, working class labour activists that set up unions for unskilled workers. The Match Girls changed perceptions about who could participate in collective action, proving that less represented groups could gain support and achieve their aims. The strike contributed to wider action that challenged conservative and traditional ideas about class and labour rights.

The Bryant & May match factory continued to use white phosphorus even

after the strike, nevertheless, the publicity that the strike generated meant that this method of match production had become a concern of the Home Office. In 1893, Special Rules of the Factory Act introduced the mandatory reporting of phosphorus poisoning to factory inspectors, however, Bryant & May regularly came to the Home Office's notice as records display five deaths from phosphorus poisoning and eleven cases of 'Phossy Jaw' between 1892 and 1898. Ignorant or, perhaps more likely, ambivalent to the effect of phosphorus on their workers, Bryant & May argued against a ban until 1901, where developments in technology meant that other manufacturing options were available. Therefore, Bryant & May stated that they were discontinuing the use of white phosphorus; the House of Commons would later pass the White Phosphorus Matches Prohibition Act in 1908.


REMEMBER THE POOR MATCH-GIRLS

who are exposed to the danger of "Phossy Jaw" —a loathsome disease engendered by the poisonous phosphorus used in the manufacture of common matches, and USE ONLY SALVATION ARMY SAFETIES. The Salvation Army Match Factory is conducted on ANTI-SWEATING and HEALTH-PRESERVING principles—25 per cent. higher wages and no health-endangering processes.

The Star says:—"Darkest England Matches BRING BRIGHTNESS TO SWEATED WORKERS, AND SCOTCH THE PHOSPHOR FIEND. The Salvation Army are raising the standard of comfort in the East End, and should be helped at least by every real sound reformer."

WATSON SMITH, F.I.C., F.C.S., Lecturer in Chemical Technology in the University College, London, writes:—"The sticks or stems of the Salvation Army Matches burn like wax."

Send penny stamp for new (illustrated) pamphlet on "Match Makers' Leprosy."

☞ *Shipping and Export Orders promptly executed.*

These Matches are sold in Two Sizes by all respectable Grocers and Oilmen, as cheap as any decent safety.

Full particulars of COMMISSIONER CADMAN, 101, Queen Victoria St., London, E.C.

Figure 11: Remember the poor Match-Girls

The Match Girls' Strike had wider successes than purely change in the Bryant & May factory; it assisted in the development of laws, encouraged other unskilled workers to help transform attitudes towards labour rights, and demonstrated that collective action could challenge established authority.

Figure 12: Figure 11: Blue Plaque commemorating the Match Girls Strike

Overall, The Match Girls' Strike of 1888 was significantly more than a simple conflict between workers and employers relating to poor working conditions and low wages. It was a fundamental challenge to the conservative ideologies that shaped Victorian society, defined by rigid class divisions, traditional gender roles and power hierarchies. With collective organisation and persistence, the Match Girls proved that even with their limited social power, they could cause considerable and lasting change. Their success improved the conditions at the Bryant & May factory but also stimulated further labour activism and workers' rights. More than a century later, the strike is still an influential case of how widely accepted systems can be challenged to initiate historical change.

Reassessing Imre Nagy's Legacy in the 1956 Hungarian Uprising

Written by Arthur Maddison [L4]

The 1956 Hungarian Uprising lasted only 15 days but deeply affected Soviet leadership and reshaped Khrushchev's tenure. Sparked by student protests on 23rd October, it quickly grew, and Imre Nagy was made Prime Minister the next day after a surge of public support. By 4th November, Hungary had moved toward independence and away from rigid Communist control, proving that Soviet autocracy could be challenged. Nagy's legacy endures as a "Martyr PM", remembered for pressing for kinder socialism and democratic reform in the Soviet sphere. His stand for Hungarian independence symbolises the bravery of smaller nations.

Born in Kaposvár, Nagy witnessed brutal inequality, creating early sympathy for the working class and an interest in socialism. During the First World War, he was captured by Russian troops while fighting for Austro-Hungary, placing him in Russia during the 1917 Revolution and exposing him directly to communism. He later joined the Bolshevik Party, siding with the communists in the Civil War.

Nagy returned to Hungary and worked with the illegal communist movement. After the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, communists faced exile, forcing Nagy to leave. From 1930, he spent 15 years in Moscow, active in communist circles. These years deepened his understanding of the Soviet system and helped him develop strong international ties. Nagy concluded that socialism should be adapted to local conditions rather than enforced through intimidation.

By the early 1950s, Nagy was seen as a moderate within the Hungarian Communist Party. He opposed Mátyás Rákosi's policies, arguing that Hungary should focus on the needs of ordinary people rather than rigid Stalinist rule. This made him a credible alternative to hard-liners, offering a more humane form of socialism while remaining a loyal communist.

Figure 13: Imre Nagy

The roots of Nagy's rise lay in Hungary's oppressive political landscape. The country was ruled as a one-party state under Rákosi, with extensive censorship, surveillance and political arrests. Hungarians craved an alternative, which Nagy offered, gaining popularity. The power of the Államvédelmi Hatóság (ÁVH), the secret police, affected thousands seen as threats to the regime. Nagy became a symbol of potential change, believing in a safer, more liberating alternative to Stalinist rule.

Hungary suffered economic hardship from heavy investment in industry, causing shortages of consumer goods and reducing quality of life. Nagy's upbringing shaped his belief in improving living standards, and his 'New Course' reforms, such as de-collectivisation, offered peasants opportunities to regain land. At the same time, students in Budapest demanded free elections and freedom of speech, and many turned to Nagy as a proven reformer. This made him integral to the uprising as the face of change.

Figure 14: Decapitated Stalinist statue

Nagy's return to power was sudden yet predictable as his stance gained support across the political spectrum, reinforced by memories of his 'New Course' reforms. On 23rd October 1956, protesters demanded his return, showing how, even out of power, Nagy remained the face of a new Hungary. His popularity united different social groups, and the uprising would have struggled without such a figurehead.

Despite passionate public support, the Communist Party was reluctant to restore Nagy. Hard-line communists feared that reinstating him would encourage opposition and weaken control. With his moderate reputation, Nagy was seen as too flexible to defend party orthodoxy. As protests intensified, the party came to view him as the only route back to stability, exposing its weakness and divisions.

After his reinstatement on 24th October, Nagy initially called for calm and for the uprising to be treated as a disturbance, not a revolution, hoping to preserve socialism while reforming it. This reflected his belief in gradual change. However, pressure from both revolutionaries and hard-liners pushed him towards increasingly radical measures, turning him from a moderate reformer into the figurehead of the uprising.

Nagy's decisions defined the uprising, moving Hungary away from the Soviet Union. He took a major step from authoritarian rule by introducing a multi-party system, breaking the structure Rákosi had established. By allowing banned parties to re-emerge, Nagy brought Hungary closer to democracy, which it had lacked since 1947. This decision was fuelled by student and worker demands for political change.

Nagy declared that Hungary would become neutral and withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, directly challenging Soviet control, as the pact was designed to keep states tied to Moscow. This laid the foundations for Hungary to seek independence, paired with Nagy's appeal to the United Nations (UN) for recognition and protection. These moves escalated tensions, raising the prospect of military intervention as Moscow viewed Hungary's actions as a threat to the Eastern Bloc.

These reforms heightened Soviet fears, making Hungary's intention to leave the Eastern Bloc clear. Nagy's rapid changes turned him from a moderate politician into the face of national revolution,

unifying many Hungarians while convincing Moscow that intervention was necessary. This shaped the uprising as a defining moment of rebellion against Soviet rule.

Soviet intervention combined negotiation and pressure. Moscow at first appeared willing to discuss the situation, even accepting Nagy's efforts to stabilise Hungary. However, as Hungary moved towards neutrality, Soviet leaders saw this as a direct threat to their authority. Troops were mobilised towards Budapest as the crisis shifted from internal unrest to a wider confrontation in which Hungarian withdrawal was no longer acceptable.

Figure 15: Hungarian freedom-fighters on a Soviet tank

Nagy tried to secure a peaceful resolution through negotiation with Soviet officials and appeals for international support. His appeal to the UN aimed to pressure Moscow. Nevertheless, these efforts failed as Soviet leaders became increasingly determined to reassert authority. Nagy's calm, diplomatic approach only delayed escalation, widening the gap between Hungarian demands and Soviet control.

On 4th November 1956, the Soviet Union launched a military invasion of Hungary to crush the uprising. The armed forces entered Budapest and other key cities, overwhelming the resistance. Nagy broadcast his appeal for help but received no meaningful support, forcing him to seek refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy, where he remained for 19 days before being arrested and later executed. This ended hopes of independence from Soviet control but elevated Nagy to martyrdom, cementing his legacy as the leader of an unsuccessful yet significant bid for Hungarian independence.

Nagy left the Yugoslav Embassy when Soviet and Hungarian officials assured him safety. He was arrested and taken into custody on 22nd November 1956 and secretly transported to Romania, where he could not influence events in Hungary. This arrest highlighted the Soviet determination to eliminate the leader of the uprising and any future challenge to Soviet rule.

Nagy spent the next two years in captivity, where a secret trial followed. Communists accused him of treason for attempting to overthrow the socialist state, while Nagy claimed he acted in the national interest. On 16th June 1958, he was hanged, providing finality to one of the most drastic threats to Soviet autocracy. With the trial behind closed doors, Nagy had no opportunity for public defence, allowing the government to construct a damning narrative. With Nagy's execution, many Hungarians saw him as a martyr for independence, while the Soviets painted him as a traitor to the state.

After Nagy's execution, Communists in Hungary tried to erase him from public memory. Discussion about him was heavily censored, and official accounts depicted him as a traitor. Even his burial place was concealed, and the government denounced his actions. This removal from public discourse ultimately

strengthened his legacy, making him one of the most enduring figures of the 1956 uprising.

After 1989, Nagy's reputation transformed. He was finally portrayed as a hero after decades of a negative government narrative. On 16th June 1989, Nagy and other victims of the uprising were reburied in a public ceremony before hundreds of thousands of Hungarians. The ceremony became a symbol of the end of communist rule and acknowledgement of Nagy's actions, turning him from a condemned figure into a national hero and restoring his legacy in Hungarian politics.

Following the reburial, historians were able to reassess Nagy's actions without restrictive censorship. Communist interpretations had presented him as a counterrevolutionary who threatened socialism, but many historians post-1989 viewed him as a reformer who sought a more independent Hungary. Others emphasise the complexity of his legacy, portraying him not as a revolutionary but as a moderate reformer pushed into radical change by the events of 1956. This reinterpretation has enhanced his legacy, presenting him as both a committed socialist and a defender of Hungarian self-determination.

Nagy's legacy symbolises Hungarian independence and democratic socialism. Rather than rejecting socialism, he tried to create a system that combined socialist principles with political freedoms. Without his willingness to challenge autocracy, he would not be seen as a lasting symbol of resistance to foreign domination. This memory of Nagy ensures his influence extends beyond 1956; his legacy reflects Hungary's broader struggle for democracy, independence and liberal reform.

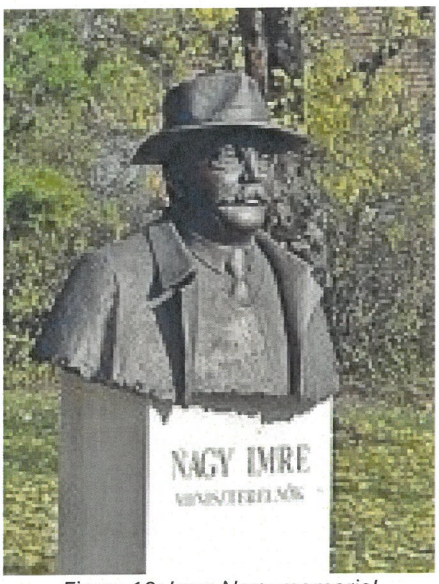


Figure 16: Imre Nagy memorial

Nagy's legacy remains relevant in debates over reform and revolution. His leadership highlighted how far a reformist can stray from the system itself. Nagy initially aimed to reform socialism, but external pressures led to changes so drastic that they directly challenged Soviet control. This makes Nagy a prime example in debates over whether it is better to bring about change gradually or drastically, reinforcing his status as a complex figure whose actions reveal the limits of reform under oppression.

In Hungary, Nagy holds a significant place in national identity as a symbol of courage and the fight for independence, with his rehabilitation in 1989 acting as a catalyst. He is remembered as someone who stood for political freedoms and resistance against Soviet autocracy, not as a failed communist leader. This has made Nagy a unifying national figure, representing democratic values and Hungary's struggle for independence.

Nagy's legacy is also relevant in the story of smaller nations pushing against modern superpowers.

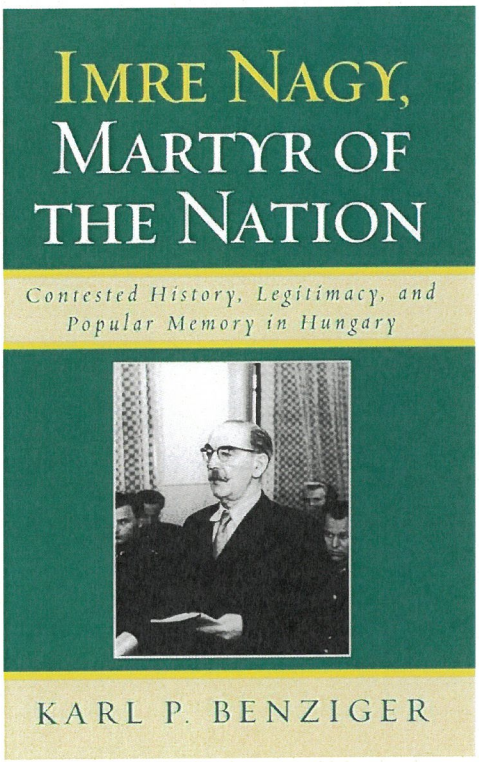
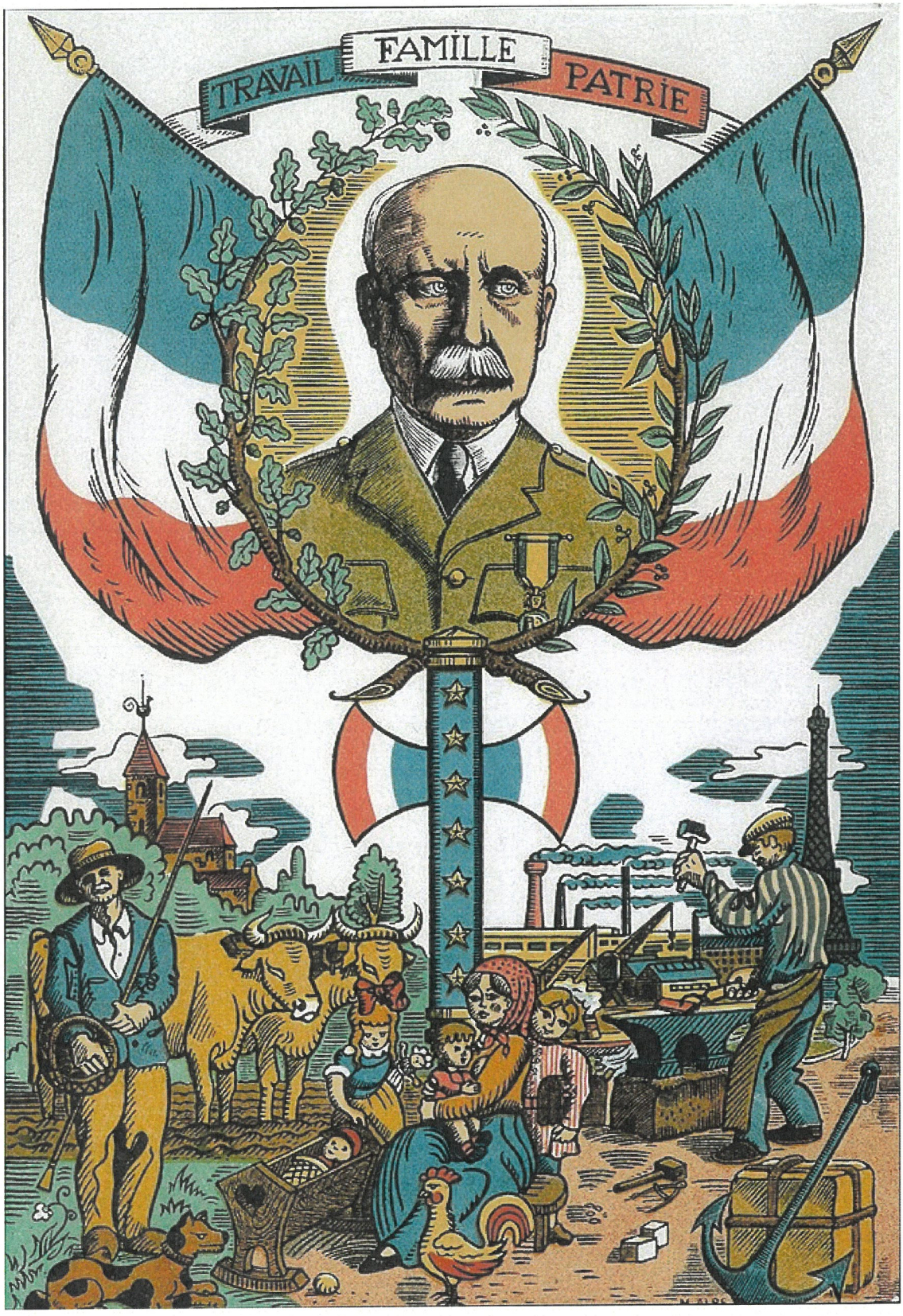


Figure 17: KP Benziger's book on Nagy's legacy

His attempt to withdraw Hungary from the Warsaw Pact highlighted both his ambition and the danger of resisting Cold War powers. His failure represents the limits of national independence when faced with overwhelming military and political pressure. This keeps Nagy's legacy relevant in the struggle for sovereignty, providing an example of a smaller state resisting a superpower and illustrating the consequences of challenging it.

Ultimately, Nagy's impact on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution is complex. He began as a reform-minded communist but ended as the key figure of a national revolution, shaped by public pressure and the environment around him. His leadership united Hungary and gave the rebellion legitimacy, escalating tensions with the Soviet Union and increasing the likelihood of intervention. His execution, damnation and rehabilitation further complicated his legacy as he was transformed from a condemned traitor into a national hero. Overall, this shows the importance of reassessing the legacy of historical figures: Nagy cannot simply be defined as a hero or a failure; his legacy reflects the tension between the extent of reform and the consequences of change under authoritarian rule.


TRAVAIL
FAMILLE
PATRIE

France under occupation: Governance and Resistance

Written by Eva Davies [L7]

During World War II, France became a nation divided not only by name and occupation, but by political ideals as well as competing systems of governance that reshaped France's political identity. The Battle of Britain in May to June 1940 was the major event that split France into two. Due to Hitlers air superiority and swiftness, France were forced into surrender, leading to the Franco-German armistice on 22nd July that created the two opposing zones of the occupied north and the Vichy south. These two states were contrastingly governed with the policy of the north being repression and the Vichy focused on conservatism. However, due to the total takeover of Nazi forces in 1942, resistance also became its own movement and detrimentally influenced the reshaping of French politics and the liberation itself, showing the hugely differing governance throughout France during the war.

What was the Vichy government?

Created by Marshal Phillipe Pétain, the Vichy government had formed itself following the divide after the Battle of Britain and with Paris being situated in the occupied north, the government planted itself in the centre of the unoccupied French state, in Vichy (hence the name). The Vichy was mostly self-autonomous until 1942 when the Germans occupied the whole of France. This government acted as a National Revolution which was due to the government's rejection of the democratic ideals of the French Third Republic and instead shifting to conservatism and focusing on catholic conservatism, agricultural nature and corporatism. A prime example of this was changing the French slogan from "liberté, egalité et fraternité" (liberty, equality and fraternity) to "travail, famille, Patrie" (work, family and country), showing the political shift over by the Vichy.

Figure 18: A map of occupied France 1940-44

The Vichy government also ruled through control by dissolving parliament, increasing censorship and outlawing trade unions and strikes. It also controlled citizens on a daily basis through rationing, banning divorce and making abortion a capital offence, showing the political spiral in the south. The strategy of '*Attentisme*' (*wait and see*) was additionally a key trait of governance by Pétain and prime minister Laval, which believed that courting Nazi Germany and assisting them would help reserve some French independence and secure them a favourable place in the post-war period and so Vichy decided to collaborate with Germany voluntarily, sending French workers to German factories and assisting in the deportation of allied prisoners, showing the harsh nature of this government. This is evidenced by Pétain's meeting with Adolf Hitler on 10th October 1940 at Montoire,

committing the French state to collaboration.

What's more is that without any initiation from Germany, the Vichy government enthusiastically initiated anti-Semitic policies, such as the "statut des juifs" in October 1940 that barred Jews from public life and later authorities helped with the roundup and deportation of around 75,000 Jews to German camps, with the majority of this number dead. The most notorious example of this was the round-up of 1942, the *vélodrome d'Hiver*. This evidence shows us the terroristic nature of this government as despite Vichy administrators and authority having full civil jurisdiction and governed the whole of Metropolitan France, they still managed to reign fear upon civilians. However, following the allied invasion of North America in November 1942, Germany completely occupied the previous 'free south' and reduced the Vichy to a puppet government renaming the state "zone sud", using it to generate funds for the nazi war machine and so became under the German occupied forces' governance.

How did the German occupied north differ in governance?

The north, titled the 'zone occupé', was under full German control, being almost fully administered by the German military called the Wehrmacht. This meant governance of rigorous control, including strict curfews and heavy militarisation. Censorship was also drastically increased in the north as all newspapers or literature, that were suspected to be anti-Nazi, were banned and shops could also be closed down if they were thought to be promoting anti-Nazi behaviour. This affected the glowing culture of France during this period, although surprisingly, many theatres remained in place, especially in Paris which was at the mercy of Hitler's love for arts and due to his enjoyment of Parisian architecture and theatre, most of it remained relatively untouched.

Figure 19: The Germans in Paris 1940

The preservation was also hastened by the aid of the allies during the liberation to protect their famous monuments while Hitler ordered for them all to be destroyed. This evidence shows the severity of Nazi control over the north. The deportations, punishment and hostage executions drastically increased in the north and so did the implication of the travail obligatoire (forcing people into German factories), but control could be mostly seen in Alsace and Lorraine to which the governance was totally Germanised and men were forcibly conscripted into the army.

Figure 20: German soldiers on parade in Alsace towards the end of the war - Alsace was the last French province to be liberated

The Nazis tended to heavily exploit France for its goods in order to feed the Nazi war efforts to which was evidently started in 1940 under the armistice, which stated France was to pay costs of maintaining the German occupation army which started at a staggering 20 million Reichsmarks daily as well as occupiers manipulating the exchange rate to 20 Francs per Reichsmark, quadrupling from the previous 5 francs. Germany's priority was making France become an economic tool, no matter the cost to the people, leading to mass unemployment (over 60,000 in Paris 1940) and the devastating decrease in quality of life for people in the north as the Germans used their produced goods to supply the Nazi army, leading to mass rationing and starvation throughout the north of France, especially in the capital of Paris where rationing caused great dissent among the population.

Figure 21: Petain meeting Hitler in 1942

Following Operation Torch, which was an allied invasion of French North Africa, Hitler decided to enforce full occupation of France. This was due to the ceasefire (named the Clark-Darlan agreement) made by Eisenhower to recognise Francois Darlan as French 'high commissioner' in North Africa and in exchange, ordered all French resistance to cease in Africa and cooperate instead. However, when Adolf Hitler heard of this deal, he at once ordered the occupation of Vichy France. The Nazis forced the Vichy regime as a puppet, in order to strengthen the Nazi war machine as well as a tool for their efforts. Hitler enforced this through strategic extortion, using the threat of harsher military occupation to force French leaders to enact Nazi orders, although, it can be argued that the Vichy was not an entirely passive puppet as the regime did willingly initiate its own anti-Semitic laws and collaborated to maintain domestic sovereignty, to which the extent of collaboration can be seen in 1944 when the extreme Nazi collaborator, national socialist Marcel Déat became involved with the control of the government.

Figure 22: Marcel Deat, pictured in 1940

Due to the nazi's deathly tight grip on the country, the north became a hotspot of underground resistance to the occupying forces, mainly generated in Paris, with the resistance moving outwards after the nazis full takeover. This rising resistance soared after 1942 and can be considered as a political movement of their own due to their outstanding contribution to the liberation and their profound impact on reshaping France's politics towards the end of the occupation.

How did the resistance contribute to politics?

After the total takeover over the dictator himself, resistance groups were stimulated to rise out of hiding and act against the government. The resistance was very prominent in rural areas, and these groups were called Marquis who were known to be previous, confident soldiers who had no fear to stand against occupiers, showing the start of the uprising of the resistance as a movement. There was an upsurge of volunteers in these groups after the allied American invasion to which the Germans responded with the initiation of compulsory insisting. Many men decided to dodge this service and became guerrilla fighters who were skilled soldiers that lived in the mountains. Many downed allies would also join due to the rescue program put out by resistants.

Figure 23: Simone Segouin, a celebrated French resistance fighter and partisan - photographed in 1944

The most powerful of these groups were known to be the Maquis of Vercors. These pockets of guerrilla fighters were equipped with air dropped US equipment and were very significant in the leading up to the uprising as they initiated, with the help of the west African colonial troop '*tiraileurs sénégalais*', the vectors uprising which, although unsuccessful, played a crucial part in the lead up and motivation for the liberation of Paris in 1944, showing their success as a movement of their own.

Groups of resistance in urban areas also played a crucial role in its own movement in the reshaping of politics in France and the liberation of Paris in 1944. City based networks, such as the Paris-based *Gloria SMH network,* mapped and monitored Nazi infrastructure, troops and smuggled vital data, used to aid allies during operations such as D-Day. These networks also engaged in industrial sabotage.

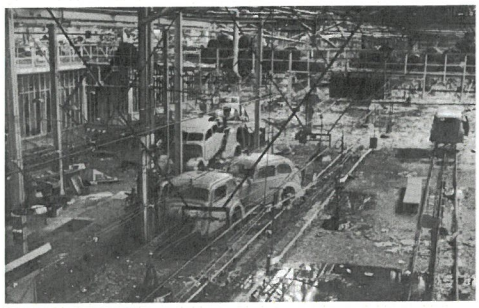


Figure 24: The aftermath of the Peugeot factory bombing

One famous example was in 1943 when resistants bombed the Peugeot factory, severely degrading German's vehicle and tank production to these. These groups also cut telephone lines and interrupted railway services which meant Germans had to rely on slower road transport, critically delaying their reinforcements during the Normandy campaign which was the allied operation that launched liberation for German-occupied Western Europe, including France itself. The networks also went underground, with presses (such as les *editions de Minuit)* fighting Nazi propaganda by spreading subversive ideas and coordinating civic obedience.

Finally, these resistants also organised humanitarian relief by forging documents and creating safe houses for Jews and

persecuted individuals, so urban resistance did play a huge role in the eventual liberation of France as well as during the occupation period.

Figure 25: French poster celebrating the liberation of France, with De Gaulle in the background

Overall, these separate governments and movements shaped French politics in unseen ways during the occupation 1940-44. On the whole, France's governance was most significantly changed during the occupation by the Nazi military regime which enforced severe repression and fear amongst the French population and although the Vichy government did have administration from 1940-42, making its own policies without German instruction, it was still made a tool of the Nazi regime after 1942, proving that the Nazi's overpowered the Vichy regime.

Figure 26: Pierre Laval, Vichy PM 1942-44, at his trial for treason in 1945. He was found guilty and executed by firing squad

Finally, the resistant movement did not play much of a role during the occupation but towards the end, it helped reshape the future of French politics by initiating the liberation of Paris which later led to the introduction of the new provisional government and so overall, each government played a large but different part in French politics during the occupation, giving the time period its historical meaning.

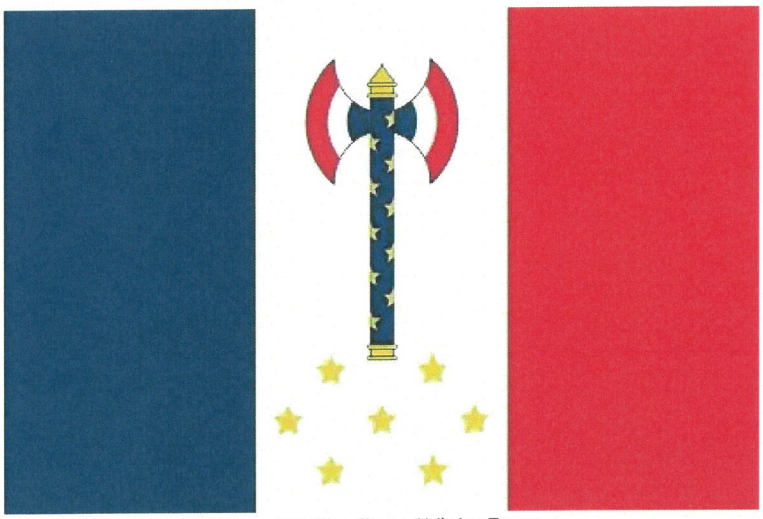


Figure 27: The flag of Vichy France

The Promise of Spring: The European struggle of 1848

Written by June Moore [L7]

Out of all years in the European continental consciousness, 1848 looms largest of all, a year of continent wide revolutions against an outdated and autocratic system which had emerged in the aftermath of the Congress of Vienna and the Napoleonic wars, yet this systems fragility ignored a certain quality that the old Atlantic revolutions of America and France had revealed, that a better pathway was possible, that winter could end and spring could come. Yet there is an innate tragedy in this year, these revolutions would either collapse from within their states such as in the German Confederation, be broken from external power intervention such as in Rome or Hungary, or would be hijacked by new autocratic forces such as in France. In many ways, the legacies of these revolutions are much like later events such as the Arab Spring of the early 2010s where revolutions burn out or are gradually dismantled, yet these revolutions in the long term laid the groundwork for later national unifications, set a continent-wide path towards democracy and it can be argued, solidified the idea of a continent wide democratic identity.

These revolutions had many causes. The Congress of Vienna of 1814-15 chaired by Austrian Minister-President Klemens Von Metternich had been set to weaken nationalist movements, which had previously been empowered in the Napoleonic Wars from the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy's dismantling into a number of mainly Habsburg led states from Modena to Tuscany to the

Figure 28: Europe as defined by the Congress of Vienna

replacement of the Confederation of the Rhine with the new German Confederation presided over by Austria. These actions of the Congress fuelled the burgeoning Italian and German Nationalist movements respectively, with Giovane Italia (Young Italy) formed by Giuseppe Mazzini in 1831 later to see figures such as Giuseppe Garibaldi joining its ranks later in 1833. These revolutionaries would organise protests through the 1830s and 1840s, such as 'Hambacher Fest' in Germany where 30,000 people gathered at Hambach Castle on 27th May 1832, which would be crushed by the Bavarian Army, or Young Italy's attempted rising in Sardinia-Piedmont in 1833, which was dismantled in its conspiracy stage. These revolutionary gatherings even in their failure would only add fuel to a fire that was burning brighter and brighter.

The unfulfilled promises of previous revolutions and reforms would also apply kindling to these flames. Chiefly in France where in July of 1830 the neo-absolutist King Charles X was toppled by various Liberal politicians from revolutionary veteran the Marquis de Le Fayette and, the rising liberal Adolphe Thiers and Louis Phillipes of Orleans was declared King. A period of liberalisation followed yet many would be dissatisfied with this new regime's

unwillingness to commit to revolutionary change, one such protest in June 1832 would be immortalised by author and at the time committed Orleanist Victor Hugo's novel 'Les Miserables'. By the 1840s, power chiefly rested in the hands of conservatives De Soult and Guizot who pushed for measures such as limiting the franchise only to those who paid 200 francs in tax and a crackdown on opposition meetings including the Campagne De Banquets. It would be a banquet cancelled on Guizot's order on 22nd February 1848 accompanied by a poor harvest from a continent-wide potato blight known as the 'hungry 40s' and economic downturn would combine to finally set the powder keg to blow.

Figure 29: The Parisian barricades of February 1848

With the cancellation of the banquet on the 22nd, mass protest followed sweeping the streets of Paris over the next 2 days leading to the resignation of prime minister Guizot on the 23rd followed by the abdication of Louis Phillipe the next day. A new constituent assembly would be convened in April with the elections securing a majority for republican factions such as Lamartine's moderate Republicans and Ledru-Rollin's socialists holding a wide majority. The Republic's provisional government was made up of moderates such as Alphonse Lamartine and more radical figures such as Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin having met at the Hotel De Ville in Paris. The first domino had fallen in the revolutionary wave.

Figure 30: 1848 in imagery - a false dawn?

Yet France was not the first state to see revolution, the first came in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies on 9th January, this triggering the Bourbon Monarchy to grant a new constitution on the 29th with Tuscany, Sardinia-Piedmont and the papacy making similar constitutional reforms through February and March. Austria, the heart of the autocratic order would additionally begin to buckle under the pressure with protests in Vienna beginning on 13th March triggering Metternich's dismissal, the symbol of the old order finally falling. Come April, a new more progressive constitution was proposed yet the empire's peripheral regions would begin to fall away, the Habsburgs would lose control of the majority of Lombardy-Venetia by late march with Sardinia-Piedmont under King Charles Albert joining the revolutionary conflict which would grow into the 1st Italian War of Independence. The brightest spark of revolution on the peninsula would burn in Rome, where Papal interior minister Pellegrino Rossi would be assassinated on 15th November 1848, this sparked a wave of radical and revolutionary anger

which saw the toppling of the papacy in February 1849, and the formation of a new Roman Republic led by Guiseppe Mazzini, the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius even seeing a tricolour placed in his hand, symbolic of the shift to revolutionary power.

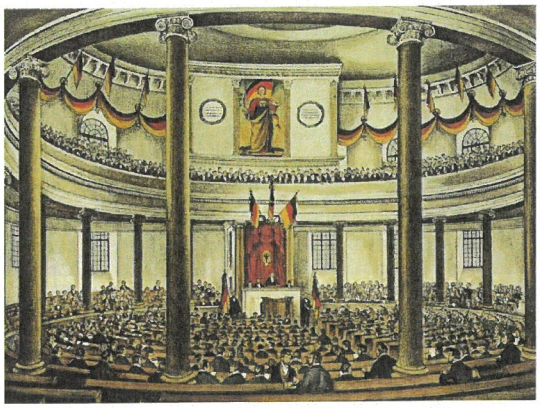


Figure 31: Frankfurt Parliament in 1848

Revolution would spread through Germany in the Spring with the Frankfurt parliament of the German Confederation meeting on 18th May with the intent to write a formal Pan-German constitution which elected Archduke John of Austria its regent in June, a noted liberal Habsburg. Yet the scale of progress in individual states varied greatly with Baden seeing full scale republican revolutions led by figures such as Fredreich Hecker and Gustav Von Struve attempting to organise a march on Karlsruhe in April. Prussia, the most influential state in the confederation outside of Austria, saw more moderate liberal reforms which brought liberal reformist Ludolf Camphausen to the minister-presidency, yet his rule would prove short lived with Prussia returning to reactionary government after a short liberal period, this would notably see the rise of one Otto Von Bismarck as a noted conservative.

Further revolutions bloomed in the Habsburg dominions, most notably in Hungary whose national Diet passed the March Laws which secured independent national and constitutional government for Hungary, a key figure behind this radical shift being Lajos Kossuth, a radical journalist and politician oft regarded as one of the great national heroes of Hungary. With Hungarian independence and the wars in Italy, the Habsburg domains seemed bound to collapse worsened by the Pan-Slavic Congress in June led by Czech historian František Palacký intent on plotting an independent path for Austrian Slavs. Well, with the continent swept by hope, what could possibly go wrong?

Figure 32: Louis Napoleon/Napoleon III

As with all great tragedies, these revolutions fell from a plethora of unresolved issues and questions. First of all being the rise of one Louis Napoleon, nephew of the old emperor whose waging of war had laid the groundwork for these revolutions. After having failed numerous times to perform Bonapartist coup d'etats, he finally secured a democratic mandate when elected to the National Assembly first in July then in September.

Figure 33: Garibaldi and his wife Anita defending Rome in 1849

His use of propaganda and tapping into support from the working class, who were still angered by the June Days crisis which saw workers violently suppressed with 1,500 killed, allowed him to sweep to the presidency in a landslide in December of 1848. With his newfound mandate he would turn to supporting the papacy in defeating the Roman Republicans to restore the exiled Pius IX, French forces would arrive in April and after a long and gruelling siege which saw Giuseppe Garibaldi lead the defence, Rome fell in July. Over the next 4 years, Napoleon would assert his control before crowning himself emperor of the second French Empire in 1852. The experiment had ended.

Figure 34: Battle of Novara, March 1849

The Habsburg Empire would see a similar reassertion of its dominions with Marshal Radetzky defeating the Italians at first Custoza, then decisively at Novara in March 1849, ending the Italian issue for Austria. The upstart Hungarian state which had fully severed ties with the Habsburgs in April 1849 would see a similar dismantling with aid from Russia led by Arch Conservative Nicholas I defeating Hungary by August. Austria, now led by arch-conservatives Kaiser Franz Joseph and Minister-President Felix Zu Schwartzenberg, had reasserted itself. Similarly, across the German confederation, reactionary forces reclaimed power and with Fredreich IV of Prussia's refusal to accept the German crown, the so-called 'crown from the gutter' triggered the experiment to collapse completely.

Figure 35: Flag of the Kingdom of Prussia

And so it may be wondered, what was it all for? After the dramatic failings of 48, many 48ers including Hecker fled to the USA, others like Kossuth scattered across Europe. Yet their efforts had sparked a fire in the soul of a continent and their fights would eventually see completion from the Austro-Hungarian Ausgleich securing Hungarian sovereignty in 1867, to Garibaldi's expedition of The Thousand bringing about the first Italian unification in 1861, followed by the fall of Rome in 1870. German unification in 1870 was brought

about not by the Revolutionaries but by the reactionary Bismarck.

The lesser Napoleon's dominion would crash and burn permanently ending French hereditary rule with Adolphe Thiers as the first President of the 3rd Republic. Much of the national questions asked in the spring, would see their answers in the Autumn.

In many ways then, 1848 was Europe's great what if? A question pondered for generations to come, yet this set a certain unwavering reality, across a whole continent.

Figure 36: The European People's Spring - 1848

That was a renewed identity of revolutionary struggle born from the hardships and crusades of those from Paris to Prague Venice to Vienna and Budapest to Berlin. The European ideals of democracy and liberty expressed in many ways from Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite to Einigkeit, Recht und Freiheit or Dio E Popolo. A land from the great blue Atlantic to the Uralic tundra had found their foundation myth of democracy and liberty in 4 numbers, 1848.

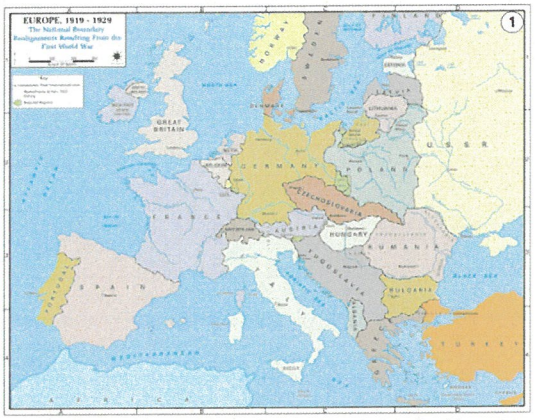
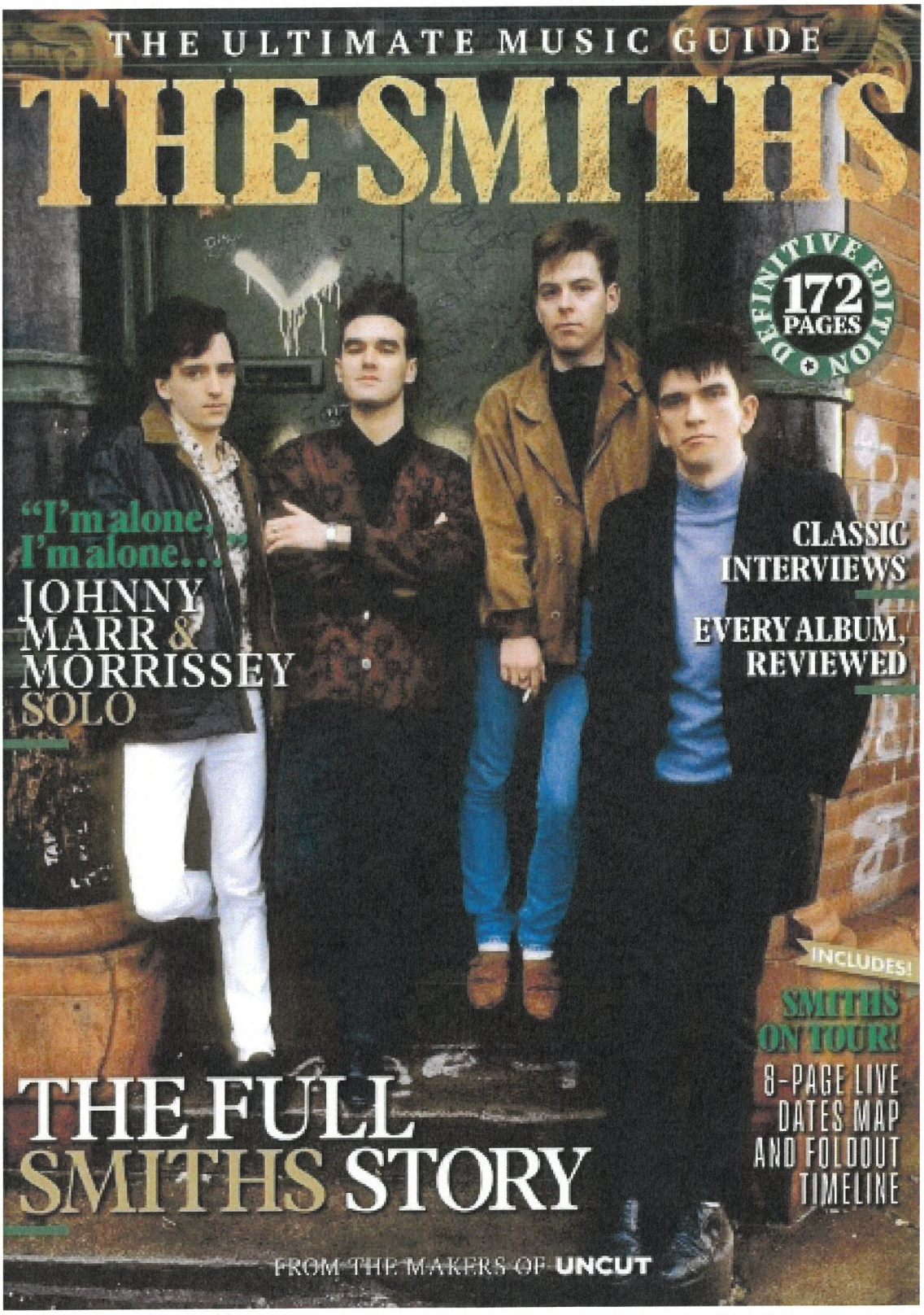


Figure 37: Europe in 1919, shaped to a significant degree by the events of 1848-49

Figure 38: The barricades synonymous with 1848


THE ULTIMATE MUSIC GUIDE
THE SMITHS
DEFINITIVE EDITION
172 PAGES
"I'm alone, I'm alone…"
JOHNNY MARR & MORRISSEY SOLO
CLASSIC INTERVIEWS
EVERY ALBUM, REVIEWED
INCLUDES!
SMITHS ON TOUR!
8-PAGE LIVE DATES MAP AND FOLDOUT TIMELINE
THE FULL SMITHS STORY
FROM THE MAKERS OF UNCUT

The Smiths: Working class identity and influence on pop culture

Written by Thomas Sinnott [L2]

Introduction to the Band

Many people still vividly remember 'The Smiths' to this day as the band that loved misery. With Johnny Marr's jangly riffs, Andy Rourke's groovy bass lines and their songs laced with macabre yet peaceful lyrics, The Smiths retain popularity to this day. However, people often overlook what The Smiths truly stood for, despite how often it is expressed through song titles and lyrics, influenced by romantic poets such as Oscar Wilde, accredited in 'Cemetery Gates' which in many ways are 'Louder Than Bombs'.

Origins and formation

The 1970's and 1980's were perhaps the most transformative years for the colourful and diverse Manchester music scene. It had called itself home to bands such as Joy Division, The Stone Roses and of course, The Smiths. As well as this, the rave scene in Manchester rose to fame, bringing to us venues like The Haçienda, which became one of their most played venues during their early days in 1983.

The Smiths formed in 1982 when 18-year-old guitarist Marr tracked down 23-year-old writer and singer; Steven Patrick Morrissey, turning up unannounced at his home in Stretford to propose a songwriting partnership, after the pair briefly met at a Patti Smith concert at the Manchester Apollo in 1978. Marr was already a fan of Morrissey's writing in bands such as the New York Dolls and wanted to start a band. The pair immediately bonded over a shared love for music and literature, laying the foundation for the group to succeed. However, The Smiths were nothing without their frequently overshadowed rhythm section, Andy Rourke, whom Marr had known from the age of eleven, and had learned to play various instruments with Marr in school bands and was invited to play bass guitar after the band's initial jam sessions. Mike Joyce, on the other hand, was unknown to the existing trio, and was only discovered after the band had trialled a different drummer, and then auditioned Joyce, who was originally a punk drummer, and joined in late 1982 to solidify the classic four-piece line up.

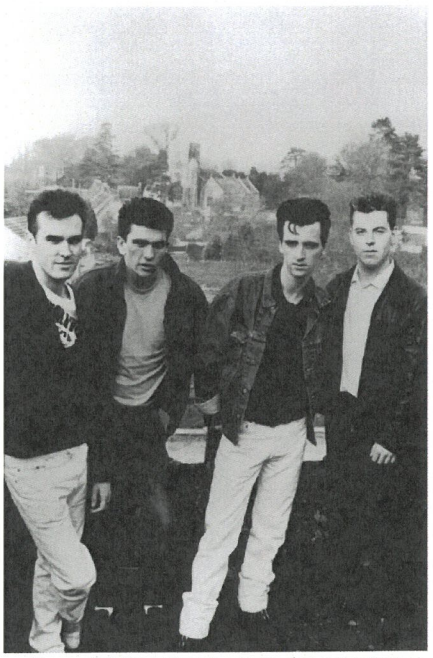


Figure 39: The Smiths in their early days

The quartet's first live performance, on the 4th of October 1982, was at, the now iconic, Ritz theatre in Manchester and with Morrissey deciding their intro music to be Klaus Noemi's operatic rendition of Henry Purcell's "The Cold Song" before his friend James Maker introduced the band in French before staying on stage to dance and play maracas, in a style somewhat resembling Bez from the Happy Mondays, who were also

circulating the blossoming music scene in Manchester around the same time. However, it is famously the only public show to feature Dale Hibbert on bass; who was replaced by Andy Rourke shortly after. It was not a headline show, but a student-oriented music and fashion showcase titled "An Evening of Pure Pleasure!", in which The Smiths served as an opening support act for the jazz-pop-salsa group 'Blue Rondo a la Turk'. Marr later recalled that the room was filled with "terror and vast emptiness" and with only up to 300 people attending, which consisted mostly of Marr's close friends, cheering the band on, the headliners' fans seemed unimpressed with the act. Their set for this gig ran for under 30 minutes, and the band reportedly played 'The Hand That Rocks The Cradle', 'Suffer Little Children' and 'Handsome Devil'.

Social Commentary

During the 1980s, the class divide in Britain was wide, due to Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government privatising many industries that were originally state controlled. This led to a massive economic boom, with middle- and upper-class business owners benefiting greatly from privatisation, and the average working population being left behind. This was most notable in northern towns and cities, built around coal mining projects, that were now neglected by the conservatives, leading to high unemployment rates and plunged regions, like Greater Manchester, into poverty.

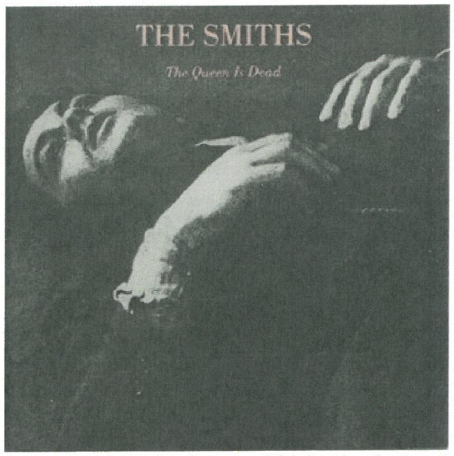


Figure 40: Album cover for The Queen Is Dead

This is represented heavily by The Smiths in 'Shoplifters of the World, Unite' which was taken from Karl Marx's 'Workers of the world, Unite!' and recontextualised a rallying cry for socialism into an anti-capitalist anthem of working class youth rebelling against the status quo. These ideas are further explored in the line 'England is mine, and it owes me a living' from 'Still Ill' and the direct reference to "the dole", as well as 'Nowhere Fast' (spoken about later) which links to the Royal family. In addition, themes of the Monarchy's abolition are prominent in 'The Smiths' music, with an album named 'The Queen is Dead' and a song sharing the title, in which, Morrissey sings 'The Queen is Dead Boys' insinuating that the death of the queen would be a cause for celebration rather than grief, highlighting his disdain for the monarchy. This likely stems from Morrissey's view on the class divide, and linking to the northern, working-class background the members rose from and represent, as shown in 'Nowhere Fast' as he jokes, 'the poor and the needy are selfish and greedy on her (Queen Elizabeth II) terms'.

Emotional value and views on Masculinity

'The Smiths' focus on isolation and loneliness stems from Morrissey's introverted youth. His lyrics come from a sense of alienation, frustration and quiet desperation of a society experiencing economic decline, personifying the struggles of a nation and making them relatable, aided by Johnny Marr's jangle-pop riffs, creating a sense of belonging and a platform for similar people to express themselves. This is paired with 'The Smiths' revolutionary ability to subvert traditional, stoic and aggressive masculine traits. Morrissey normalised emotional exposure for men, writing lyrics about loneliness, as previously shown, body dysmorphia and fear, while rejecting the typical male bravado.

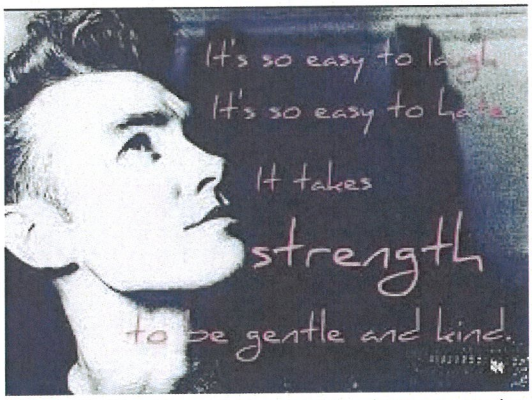


Figure 41: Morrissey challenging 80s views on emotion and masculinity

In songs like 'I know it's over' and 'Back to the old house', men are allowed to grieve lost love and embrace heartbreak, without having to keep an unbothered and 'masculine' image. These songs also express self-depreciation, validating any internal anxieties that listeners may experience.

The band also challenged institutionalised male violence and strict gender roles. This is shown through 'Barbarism begins at home' (covered by my band Summit at Manchester Academy 3 last January), as the song highlights the issue of domestic corporal punishment and violence, and through 'The Headmaster Ritual' corporal punishment in schools is critiqued.

In addition to this, The Smiths did a great deal in redefining intimacy and sensuality, writing songs such as; 'This Charming Man' and 'William It Was Really Nothing', which, respectively displayed a romantic and vulnerable image of a man, and challenged the societal pressure to quickly settle down and marry, altering the male posturing.

The end of The Smiths and decline in relationships

The fall of 'The Smiths' came in the summer of '87 after a tumultuous 5-year run. The collapse was mainly driven by Marr's growing frustration over Morrissey's musical inflexibility, as well as his exhaustion from acting as the manager of the band, as well as disputes with the Rough Trade record label. It is widely believed that Marr grew deeply frustrated with Morrissey's desire to cover 1960s pop artists, and that covering Cilla Black was his final straw.

GOODBYE, SMITHS

GROUP SPLITS, MORRISSEY TO GO SOLO

Figure 42: The end of The Smiths, reported in NME as Morrissey went solo

Moreover, Marr grew exhausted with the relentless schedule and work being put into their 4th and final album; 'Strangeways Here We Come', leading to his exit and eventually the band's demise before the record was even released. With the release coming in September of that year. After the band dissolved, Marr carried on playing guitar and making music with acts like The Electronic and The Pretenders, while Morrissey pursued a successful solo career, using Rourke and Joyce for his instrumentals.

Legacy

It is clear to see that 'The Smiths' altered the way popular music was perceived, bringing deep emotion and beauty together through song. As well as being a voice for the voiceless, 'The Smiths' acted as a mouthpiece for the working-class northern towns and people, who had often been neglected by the government, and allowed for a platform to rise for alternative styles and cultures to bloom. Whether it be the politics of the time, or views on masculinity and the toxicity surrounding it; 'The Smiths' used their music as both an escape, and as a form of protest against contemporary issues.

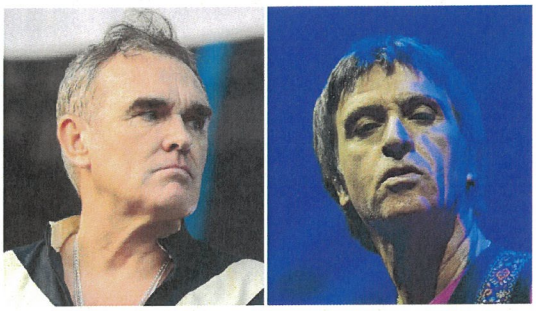


Figure 43: Morrissey and Johnny Marr - currently no reunion tour is planned, following speculation in 2024

Whilst Morrissey may be viewed now as a bigoted and hateful person due to his more recent controversies, 'The Smiths' will forever be remembered as a symbol of working class Britain, the vulnerable people of the world, and also as one of the biggest contributors to modern music, influencing bands such as 'Oasis', 'The 1975' and notably Jeff Buckley who covered 'I Know It's Over' and is subject to online debate over which version of the song is better. And finally, they will be remembered as one of the greatest British bands of all time, and in many eyes, the best.

Women's rights in a profit system: a historical contradiction

Written by Malak Hroo [L3]

When the International Women's Strike swept across a plethora of countries in 2017, the defining motive and slogan was deceptively simple: 'If our lives bring no inherent value to a patriarchal society, then produce without us.' By threatening to withhold both their professional labour and their domestic work, millions of women emphasised a flaw in our modern societal structure.

The correlation between the successful liberation of women and the capitalist system is not a story of gradual, concordant progress, but a fundamental inconsistency that dates back to the initial introduction of modern profit structures in the 16th century, challenging the orthodox assumption that historical progress and development are linear, but rather something that fluctuates, conclusively exposing the fact that social change can coexist with the persistence of older systems of inequality.

We live in an economy that prioritises revenue over rights but simultaneously demands women's participation as labourers and traditionally relies deeply on their subservience as unpaid caretakers. A major flaw is that the system cannot live without women's labour, but it also cannot afford to fully pay for it either.

We must look at the way that the profit system started and developed the structure of daily life to better understand this flaw. In pre-industrial European agricultural societies, the household was the primary unit for production where women, children, and men worked collectively in the field or at home to produce goods for survival; only the necessities. Whilst deeply patriarchal, the setup in this era did not rigidly separate 'economically valuable' work from 'worthless' household chores because everybody equally contributed to the home economy.

Figure 44: International Women's Strike of 2017

The industrial revolution dismantled this setup, where a sharp split was forced into human society, fundamentally segregating people based on their function in the workplace.

The public sphere was the world of factories, offices and wages, which effectively became defined as the masculine domain of 'real' economic work, whereas the private sphere became the world of the home, cleaning, cooking, and child-rearing. This became the defining domain of feminine domesticity, or the 'trad-wife' internet trope that we would better know today, where the fundamental principles of the post-industrial private sphere are aestheticized as, arguably, a means of reinforcing the rigid social expectations that confined women to domestic roles for much of modern history.

Figure 45: Women in the workplace, making munitions during WW2

This separation was not only of economic benefit, but also profoundly ideological, fuelled by internalised misogynistic stereotypes and reinforced through law, education, and social constraint. Women's public labour was often treated as temporary and secondary, rather than as stable participation in economic life. Their employment was frequently framed as an extension of their 'natural' domestic responsibilities rather than as a legitimate economic contribution. This ensured that their labour could be given or withdrawn depending on economic need, without fundamentally challenging the gendered structure of the workforce itself, completely excluding a woman's autonomous decision to thrive economically and socially.

By marginalising women's labour from recognised economic production, the profit system turned women's traditional labour into an invisible, demonetised background function. The legacy of this division remains evident in the chronic devaluation of women today.

This brings us to the core problem that social economists face — social reproduction. For a factory, office, or company to turn a profit, it needs workers who are fed, clothed, rested, and emotionally and physically stable, as well as a steady supply of future workers to eventually replace them.

Figure 46: Mariarosa Dalla Costa - Italian autonomist feminist and co-author of The Power of Women and the Subversion of Community

The everyday work required to sustain individuals and families is indispensable and extremely extensive, but this labour is often taken for granted and lies outside the boundary of economic appreciation and value. If corporations did in fact pay for the true value of cooking, cleaning, and childcare that keeps workforces functioning every day, corporate profit margins would inevitably collapse. As Italian theorist Mariarosa Dalla Costa famously argued, 'A woman's kitchen is an uncredited extension of the corporate assembly line.'

Over the past century, feminist movements have won numerous legal battles: the right to vote, the right to own property, and more, yet decades after these formal rights were written into the law, the material gap remains between men and women.

Figure 47: Working parents campaigning about the cost of childcare

Because childcare remains primarily privatised, a woman is prone to suffering from the 'motherhood penalty' that men simply do not experience. Staying home from work is not necessarily something of empowerment, but more an economic calculation that is impossible to resolve. Whilst women are looking after their children, their career progression takes a halt, but simultaneously, childcare services often cost more than a worker's rent, leaving no consistent income for a woman and economic struggles within an entire family that remains to be solved.

The low pay and devaluation of domestic labour in the form of nursing, elderly care, childcare and even teaching derives from the early stigmatisation of private sphere structures, as it mimics the unpaid labour that women are culturally expected to perform out of love, rather than for profit.

Figure 48: Wartime propaganda poster calling women to their duty

Dual independence became an increasingly significant issue where women were either needed in the workforce during economic expansion, then needed at home to absorb the shock of economic decline, treating women's autonomy almost like a volume slider. Is it truly autonomy if society picks and chooses when autonomy should be given?

Figure 49: WW2 propaganda poster actively highlighting roles where, albeit temporarily, governments wanted women to fill the gaps in the workforce

During moments of desperate economic need, such as world wars or post-war industrial booms, systematic barriers to women's employment are swiftly cast aside; propaganda shifts overnight to celebrate the working woman. However, after the transition from the chaos of conflict to peacetime economies and soldiers returning to civilian life, the ideological machinery regresses, the nuclear family is hyper-idealised, and cultural narratives pressure women to return to domesticity. This conditional sense of emancipation does not equate to sincere gendered freedom.

This dichotomy has evolved into an overlooked crisis of exhaustion. Although women have successfully entered the public workforce, private work in the home is often ignored, disregarded, and not socialised by the state. The result is a double day or second shift where women work full-time for a wage, only to return home to a second, unpaid shift of domestic management, which eventually eats into their earnings, rendering much of their income effectively meaningless.

Figure 50: Post-WW2 poster re-emphasising women's traditional roles running the home and balancing budgets as rationing continued

Ultimately, a system driven solely by the accumulation of profit cannot provide genuine liberation for women. Instead, it will always view human life as an expense to minimise rather than increase support for legally enshrined rights.

The historical fight for women's rights cannot only result in constant and exhausting competition in a broken market; it must challenge the thing that turns preservation of life into a private liability. In doing so, it criticises the conservative belief that legal reform alone constitutes liberation, revealing that progress requires a willingness to question established orthodoxies, as formal rights often do not translate into real life.

The Transformation of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century

Written by Will Jones [L7], inspired by "Science and the practice of medicine in the nineteenth century" by W.F.Bynum

By 1790, medicine was far from being modern, with doctors having limited ability to cure diseases as well as theories being uncertain or contradictory. Medicine was more closely linked to older traditions rather than laboratory science. It was more based around observations, experiences, and inheritance rather than experimental science, with things like germs, infections, cellular pathology, or modern physiology not being understood. Bloodletting was the deliberate removal of blood from the human body to prevent or cure an illness; this was based around the ancient belief that bodily fluids had to be balanced in order to be well.

Figure 51: Diagrammatic representation of the four humors

Another technique used was purging, where physicians believed that forcefully expelling the four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) through induced vomiting or bowel movements would restore health. It was at this point in history that this uncertain world of medicine started to shift towards the scientifically oriented profession by the late nineteenth century. This transformation in medicine can clearly be seen through the development of medicine throughout the 19th century in hospitals, community, and laboratory.

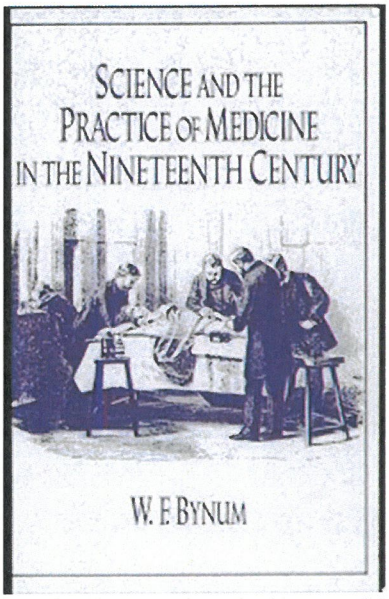


Figure 52: The inspiration behind the article!

The transformation of medicine in hospitals

Hospitals changed dramatically during the nineteenth century; initially, they appeared to be a place where doctors could observe diseases in patients, mainly from poorer backgrounds, as well as acting as a charitable institution for them. However, by the end of the nineteenth century they emerged as centres of highly effective treatments. The industrial revolution caused massive population surges in towns and cities; this led to undeniable demand for infirmary centres after the outbreak of cholera, typhoid and tuberculosis due to these population surges resulting in a lack of clean drinking water and poor sewage. Additionally, anaesthetics such

as ether and chloroform were introduced in the 1840s, which made hospital care safer and more effective, allowing surgeons to perform procedures without rushing. This was complemented with the discovery of germ theory by Louis Pasteur and the use of antiseptics reducing infection rates after surgery. Figures such as Florence Nightingale professionalised nursing into a respected, disciplined profession, where strict hygiene standards and proper ventilation could be enforced; this drastically improved patient survival rates. The 19th century also saw a massive boom in the creation of voluntary and specialised hospitals, where ambitious doctors could advance their own careers, benefiting patients with specific diseases.

Figure 53: Patients on a hospital ward

This shows how the rapid expansion of hospitals in the 19th century was driven by the urgent need to manage infectious diseases caused by things such as rapid industrialisation combined with the huge breakthroughs in modern medicine, surgery, and hygiene. This transformed hospitals from a feared, unsanitary place where people go to die into respected centres for treatment, training, and research. In the 18th century there was a 10% patient mortality rate in hospitals, meaning people would fear going to hospitals with there being a 1 in 10 chance that they would not return home. However, with the new antiseptic techniques adopted in the 19th century, mortality rates fell as low as 2% in hospitals, even with an increased volume of patients. During the Crimean War, Florence Nightengale reduced this from a 40% mortality rate down to 2% in the Scutari Hospital. Hospitals also became increasingly connected to medical education and laboratory science, where medical students could learn directly from bedside teaching; this grew an even stronger future in healthcare.

Figure 54: Florence Nightingale

Finally, it can be argued that hospitals helped to strengthen the authority and organisation of the medical profession, creating environments where doctors could standardise diagnosis, record cases more carefully, and develop specialised fields of medicine. By the late nineteenth century, hospitals were no longer simply refuges for the sick poor; they had become major institutions of scientific research, teaching, and professional medicine, proving the huge transformation of medicine in the nineteenth century.

The transformation of medicine in community

The 19th century saw a shift from traditional medical practices to modern healthcare, revolutionizing surgery and sanitation. This transformation also shifted the focus of community health from individual quarantine to organized public sanitation and government-led hygiene reforms. As already stated, the industrial revolution created overcrowded and unsanitary cities where cholera, typhoid, and tuberculosis were present everywhere.

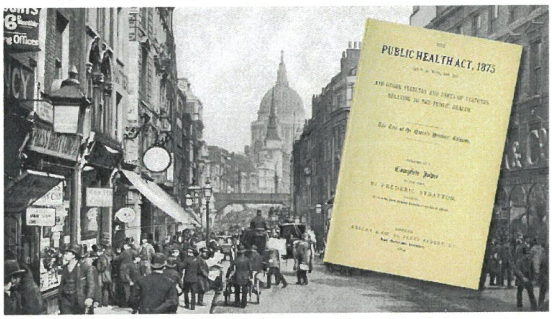


Figure 55: The Public Health Act of 1875 was one of a number of public health initiatives from 19th C British governments

Initially the government had operated on a "hands-off" policy, where your health was your problem, and any diseases or illnesses you had to deal with yourself. During the nineteenth century there was a gradual shift from this policy towards greater government involvement in public health and communal medicine. They began to accept responsibility for public health, leading to massive investments in clean water, sewage systems, and housing regulations.

Figure 56: Critical depiction of a doctor treating a patient in a 19th C pamphlet

The Apothecaries Act of 1815 and the Medical Act of 1858 established formal training and official licensing for doctors, meaning that prior to this there was not a unified, standardized medical team of apothecaries, surgeons, and physicians; essentially anybody could have been treating you.

The nineteenth century also saw increasing state involvement in health. Local and national governments introduced public health boards, vaccination programs, and sanitary reforms. Doctors gained new authority because they were seen as experts who could advise society on preventing disease, not just treating it. Additionally, later on in this century, bacteriology strengthened these developments by giving scientific explanations for the transmission of infectious diseases. This meant that public health measures became more effective now that germs were understood in relation to diseases.

Figure 57: Children queuing for vaccines

Another important thing to note is that communal medicine is not just about sanitation and epidemics but also about changing the relationship between medicine and society. People became more aware of their own health and well-being, especially with things like vaccination programs, as people could see how medicine had become more visible in their everyday lives. Furthermore, this was the time when statistical studies of birth rates, death rates, and disease patterns helped to create the idea that the health of populations could be measured and managed scientifically. This meant that industrial cities could now make health a collective issue rather than being something specific to a certain person.

Overall, it can be argued that medicine in the nineteenth century was transformed within communities by the growth of public health, preventive medicine, sanitation reform, and government intervention, all of which expanded medicine's social role and authority, whilst also moving away from the treatment of individual people and towards more of it being a socially collective role.

The transformation of medicine in laboratory

Prior to the nineteenth century, medicine had more relied on bedside observation, and during this century a gradual shift was seen away from this and more towards experimental science. The rise of this clinical laboratory shifted the focus of diagnosis from the patient's external symptoms to more microscopic analysis, chemical tests, and physiological measurements.

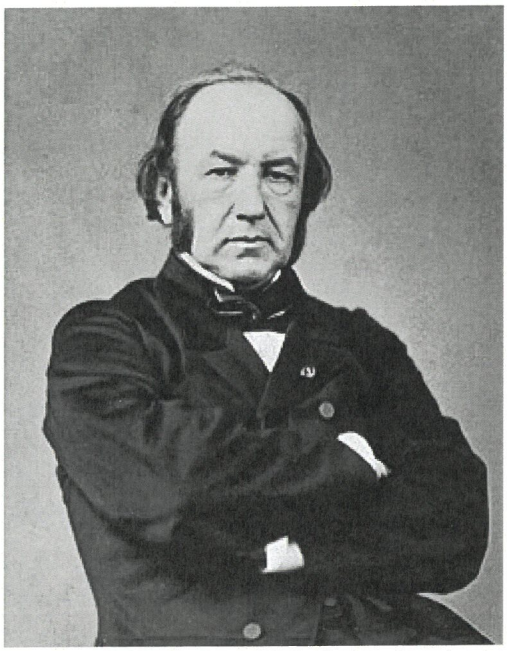


Figure 58: Claude Bernard, the father of modern physiology

Claude Bernard is a scientist who established that the bodily functions could be understood through uses of chemistry and physics; this meant that laboratories could now take reliable quantitative measurements when looking at symptoms to diagnose and prescribe more accurately, rather than relying on just observations. For example, the sphygmomanometer introduced mathematical precision to evaluating cardiovascular health, and the invention of the electrocardiograph helped establish cardiology as a formal medical speciality.

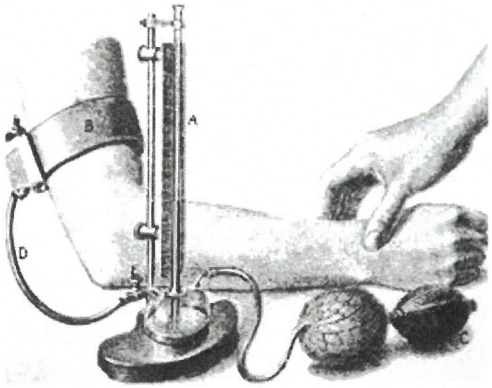


Figure 59: Bringing science into medicine

Initially, a disease was seen as a holistic imbalance of the bodily humours. Thanks to massive improvements in the microscope, medicine adopted a cellular view of disease. Rudolf Virchow demonstrated that illnesses originated from diseased cells and tissues; this allowed histological and biopsy analyses to be used in laboratories for diagnosing conditions like cancer.

Miasma theory was the belief that diseases were caused by "bad air", and until the latter half of the nineteenth century, this was the core belief of most people. This was until figures like Louis Pasteur, who was able to prove that specific microorganisms caused specific diseases, and Robert Koch, who developed laboratory techniques like agar culturing and bacterial staining, enabled practitioners to identify exact pathogens responsible for infections like tuberculosis and diphtheria.

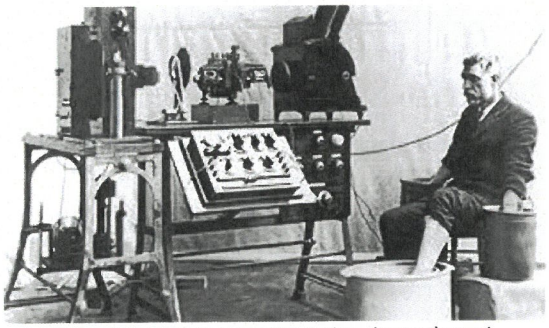


Figure 60: 19th C research led to dramatic and transformational medical advancements

Laboratories in hospitals were now able to analyse chemical levels in the body by routinely testing patients' urine and blood samples, allowing them to look out for diabetes and anaemia. Furthermore, the laboratory environment enabled the synthesis of targeted drugs and the birth of the modern pharmaceutical industry. Laboratories became the main centres of medical research because they depended on specialised equipment and scientific expertise. As a result, laboratory scientists, like doctors, gained greater authority, and medical education shifted from traditional apprenticeships to university-based scientific training.

Overall, laboratory medicine strengthened the links between scientific and clinical practice. Hospitals, laboratories, and medical schools could become connected institutions where research, diagnosis, and teaching worked together. The nineteenth-century laboratory transformed medicine by making it more experimental, scientific, and specialised, building the foundations of modern medicine.

Transformational Century

In conclusion, the nineteenth century saw major changes in medicine through huge developments in hospitals, communities, and laboratories. Hospitals changed from charitable institutions for the poor into respected centres of clinical observation, medical teaching for new students, and professional practices where doctors were respected, allowing them to study disease more orderly and consistently.

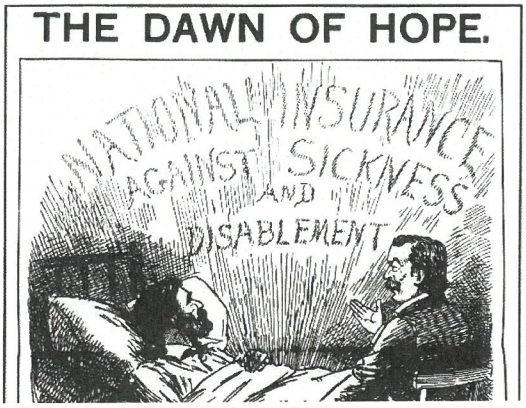
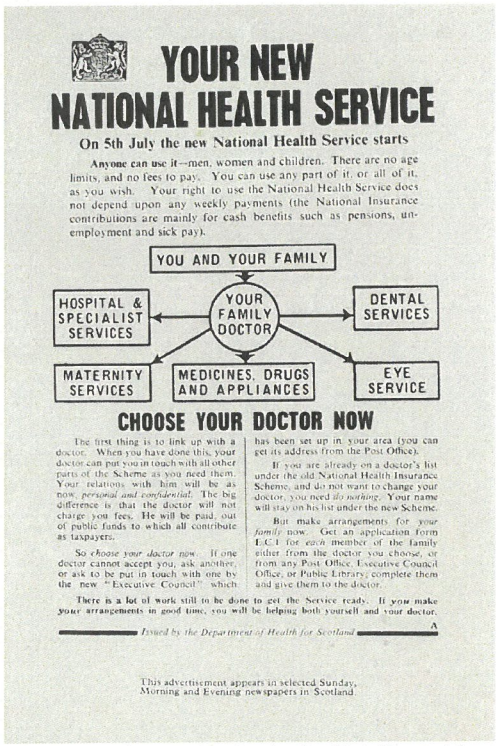


Figure 61: Following medical advancements came social reform, in the Liberal Reforms of 1906-14

With communities, medicine expanded beyond treating individual patients alone and became increasingly concerned with public health as a whole, sanitation with preventing disease spreading, and disease prevention, leading to greater government involvement and social reform.



YOUR NEW NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

On 5th July the new National Health Service starts

Anyone can use it—men, women and children. There are no age limits, and no fees to pay. You can use any part of it, or all of it, as you wish. Your right to use the National Health Service does not depend upon any weekly payments (the National Insurance contributions are mainly for cash benefits such as pensions, unemployment and sick pay).

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

HOSPITAL & SPECIALIST SERVICES

YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR

DENTAL SERVICES

MATERNITY SERVICES

MEDICINES, DRUGS AND APPLIANCES

EYE SERVICE

CHOOSE YOUR DOCTOR NOW

The first thing is to link up with a doctor. When you have done this, your doctor can put you in touch with all other parts of the Scheme as you need them. Your relations with him will be as now, *personal and confidential*. The big difference is that the doctor will not charge you fees. He will be paid, out of public funds to which all contribute as taxpayers.

So *choose your doctor now*. If one doctor cannot accept you, ask another, or ask to be put in touch with one by the new "Executive Council" which has been set up in your area (you can get its address from the Post Office).

If you are already on a doctor's list under the old National Health Insurance Scheme, and do not want to change your doctor, you need *do nothing*. Your name will stay on his list under the new Scheme.

But make arrangements for your *family* now. Get an application form E.C.1 for *each* member of the family either from the doctor you choose, or from any Post Office, Executive Council Office, or Public Library, complete them and give them to the doctor.

There is a lot of work still to be done to get the Service ready. If you make your arrangements in good time, you will be helping both yourself and your doctor.

Issued by the Department of Health for Scotland

This advertisement appears in selected Sunday, Morning and Evening newspapers in Scotland.

Figure 62: Without changes in the 19th C, would we have had the introduction of the NHS in 1948?

Whilst laboratories transformed medicine by introducing experimental science, pathology, and bacteriology, helping doctors understand disease through scientific research rather than observation alone, which it had solely relied on before this. Together, these three factors made medicine more organised, scientific, and authoritative. Proving that the nineteenth century was the turning point in medical history from traditional forms of medicine to a more modern, scientific one. This was the transformation of medicine in the nineteenth century.

The Sound of Stockport: A Town Shaped by Music

Written by Mr A L Power

When people think of great musical cities in Britain, places like Liverpool, London and Manchester often come to mind first. Yet just south of Manchester lies our very own Stockport — a town with a musical history far richer and more influential than many realise. From legendary rock bands to world-famous recording studios, Stockport has played a major role in shaping British popular music for more than sixty years.

Music in Stockport is not just part of the town's past; it is part of its identity.

One of the most important chapters in Stockport's musical story began in the 1960s. During this decade, the town became a regular stop for many of Britain's biggest acts. Venues such as the Offerton Palace Theatre, The Tabernacle and The Sinking Ship hosted performances from artists who would later become music legends. Even The Beatles performed one of their final club gigs at the Offerton Palace Theatre in June 1963. Around the same time, The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Kinks, Jimi Hendrix and Pink Floyd also played in Stockport.

Figure 63: The Davenport Theatre, now the SGS staff car park

The arrival of these artists helped create a thriving live music scene. Young people in Stockport suddenly found themselves at the centre of the cultural revolution that was sweeping across Britain. The 'Swinging Sixties' as it was famously labelled by Time Magazine was not just confined to inside the M25. Stockport had its own music venues that became places where new fashions, new ideas and new sounds could be explored. For many local teenagers, seeing these bands perform inspired dreams of forming bands of their own.

Figure 64: Strawberry Studios in Stockport

Perhaps the most famous location in Stockport's music history is Strawberry Studios on Waterloo Road. Opened in 1968, the studio became one of the most important recording spaces outside London. It was co-owned by members of the band 10cc, one of Britain's most inventive and successful pop groups.

At Strawberry Studios, 10cc recorded some of their greatest hits, including I'm Not In Love, a song that became a worldwide success and remains famous today. The studio quickly gained a reputation for innovation and creativity, earning the nickname "The Abbey Road of the North."

What made Strawberry Studios special was the variety of artists who recorded there. Over the years, musicians including Paul McCartney, Neil Sedaka and The Ramones used the studio. However, its greatest influence may have come during the rise of the Manchester

music scene in the late 1970s and 1980s. Joy Division recorded their groundbreaking album Unknown Pleasures there, while early recordings by New Order, The Smiths, James, John Cooper Clarke, The Stone Roses and The Charlatans were also created within its walls. The studio's influence on Pop Culture is still remembered today at Stockport History Museum which has a permanent exhibition centred on its history.

Figure 65: Strawberry Studios mosaic

Without Stockport, the sound of "Madchester" and alternative British music in the 1980s might have been very different.

Stockport also has connections to some extraordinary musical moments. In 1967, The Jimi Hendrix Experience performed twice in the town centre, playing at The Sinking Ship and The Tabernacle. Hendrix is now regarded as one of the greatest guitarists in history, making these performances remarkable pieces of Stockport's cultural heritage.

In addition to this, the story of David Bowie sleeping at Stockport Train Station is a famous piece of local music lore. After performing a solo gig at the Poco A Poco club in Heaton Chapel on April 27, 1970, Bowie missed his last train back to London and was forced to spend the night sleeping on the station platform. A blue plaque is now in place to permanently mark the event.

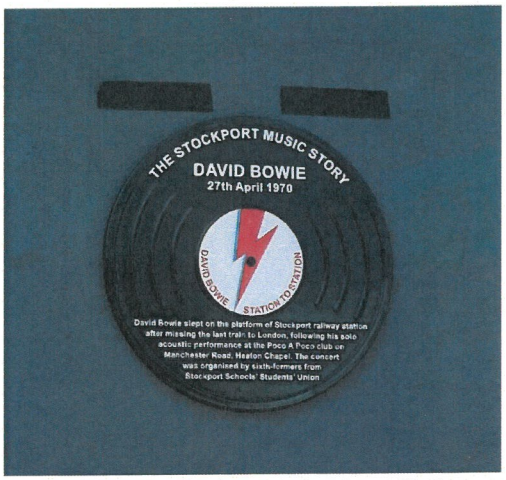


Figure 66: Bowie plaque at Stockport Station

However, music in Stockport has never been limited to rock and pop alone. The town also has a strong tradition of orchestral and community music. The Stockport Youth Orchestra, founded in 1956, has provided opportunities for generations of young musicians and helped launch several professional careers. Community music projects continue to thrive today, showing that music in Stockport belongs to everyone, not just famous performers.

In more recent years, Stockport's musical reputation has continued to grow through the success of modern bands such as Blossoms. Formed in Stockport in 2013, the indie rock band achieved national success with chart-topping albums such as 'Foolish Loving Spaces' and major festival appearances across the world. The band's connection to their hometown remains strong, and they have become important ambassadors for modern Stockport culture.

Figure 67: Does anyone recognise where The Blossoms might be?

The band even famously chose our school as the filming location for their hit single, 'Perfect Me.' Make sure you check out the video on YouTube to see how many locations from across our campus you can spot!

Today, the town is increasingly proud of its musical heritage. Projects such as the Stockport Music Story celebrate the people, venues and events that shaped the town's cultural identity. Music maps, walking tours, podcasts and plaques across the town help residents and visitors discover the hidden stories behind famous venues and performances.

Figure 68: Stockport Train Station Art

This renewed interest in Stockport's music history is part of a wider cultural revival taking place across the town. Old buildings have been restored, independent businesses have appeared, and music once again plays an important role in bringing people together.

What makes Stockport's musical story so special is that it connects local identity with global culture. Songs recorded in Stockport have travelled across the world. Artists who once played small venues in the town later became international stars. Yet behind all of this success remains the same idea: music can transform ordinary places into extraordinary ones.

Stockport may not always receive the same attention as larger cities, but its contribution to British music is impossible to ignore. From The Beatles to Blossoms, from Strawberry Studios to local youth orchestras, the town has produced a musical legacy that continues to inspire new generations.

The sound of Stockport is still being written.

Mikhail Loris-Melikov: the Count who could have saved the Romanovs?

Written by Mr D J Stone.

For any student of A Level Russian history, the question of who or what bore the greatest responsibility for the fall of the Romanovs is an open one. But could the demise of this more than 300-year-old dynasty have been averted with incremental reforms that could have eased Russia through the social changes caused by rapid industrialisation. Pragmatically "enlightened" and fundamentally conservative ministers, such as Witte and Stolypin, are widely lauded for their contrasting attempts to shore up support for the Romanovs through reform, alongside using the tools of repression to counter revolutionary threats. In this respect, Count Mikhail Loris-Melikov is often overlooked. Could his 1881 "constitution" could have been the spark for gradual, liberal change rather than worker, soldier and sailor unrest and revolutions thirty-six years later.

When looking at the traditionalist view of the causes of the February Revolution, the accepted consensus for many years, largely amongst Western, conservative historians, was that this was a top-down affair. A coup d'etat precipitated by a nervous aristocracy and officer cadre fearful of the impact of instability in the major cities adversely affecting the precarious position of the Russian Army in World War One. In contrast to 1905, when the loyalty of the nobility and the military was crucial in reestablishing autocratic control, in February 1917 these groups, perhaps alienated by Rasputin's influence or Nicholas's personal failings highlighted by the failure of Russia to meet the demands of total war, decided to bite the head off the snake. Provisional Government followed when neither Grand Duke Michael nor Tsarevich Alexei offered either a realistic or willing successor to maintain the Romanov line.

Figure 69: Photograph from the Lena Goldfields massacre 1912

Revisionist historians have taken a different position, aligned more perhaps with a fundamentally Marxist view of events, placing more emphasis on the significance of growing pressure and unrest from the proletariat – urban workers and strife in the countryside – exacerbated by the challenges of war leading to the strikes and desertions that led to the collapse of the Romanov dynasty. Those underlying issues extending from the failure of Emancipation to effect political, social and economic evolution in Russia, highlighted by the 1905 Revolution and, as late as 1912, the Lena Goldfields massacre, were supercharged by the collective and individual failures of the Russian leadership to mobilise the country to successfully fight the Austrians and Germans.

Some revolutionary leadership of the February protests (but not from the

Bolsheviks), the hardening attitudes of the Kronstadt sailors and the growing pressures from Liberals in the Duma, like the Progressive Bloc, meant that by late February 1917 the elites had no option other than to compel the Tsar to abdicate. If they had been given a realistic choice, repression of the protesters and tolerance of Nicholas would have been their preferred and default option.

Figure 70: Dimitry and Nikolay Milyutin - two key reforming influences on Alexander II at the time of Emancipation

But could the Romanov's have been saved before these events followed their course? If we look back at the period from Emancipation to 1914, numerous individuals could be held up as possible examples of men who could have changed the course of history, had circumstance or fortune played out differently for them. Maybe the Milyutin brothers could have embedded their progressive reforms if tragedy had not struck Alexander II, with the death of his eldest son and heir, Nicholas, in 1865; heralding in a period of reaction and counter-reform.

Perhaps Sergei Witte could have successfully carried Russia into the modern age in the early twentieth century, seeing through his industrial revolution from above, had he not been removed as Finance Minister in 1903 having been subjected to allegations of a Jewish-Masonic conspiracy by Interior Minister Von Plehve. Maybe Pyotr Stolypin's agrarian reforms could have prompted a British-style agrarian revolution to create a more reliable food supply that would then free up labour to work in factories and mines without fear of famine.

Figure 71: A farm visit at the time of Stolypin's Land Reforms

Yet more than eleven years would be needed for a societal change that started in Britain in the 1660s and took another 240 years to reach full fruition. As we know, Stolypin's intransigence, jealousy within court of his position and influence, and the Tsar's vacillation combined to ensure that after his death, Stolypin's reforms were mothballed.

So where does Mikhail Loris-Melikov fit into the picture here? Armenian by birth, he was born in 1826 and he was educated in St Petersburg. Like many young aristocrats, the army came calling and he served as a cavalry officer fighting in the Crimean and Russo-Ottoman Wars. His time in the army saw him develop many of the traits that would be reflected in his career as an administrator.

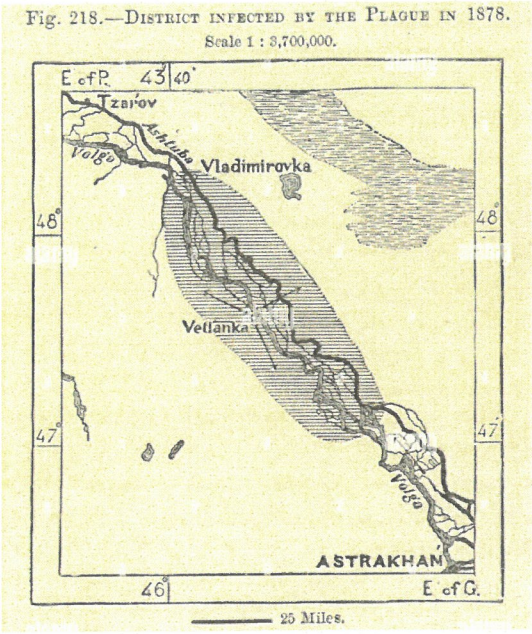


Figure 72: Area in the Lower Volga region affected by plague in 1878

In 1878, he was appointed temporary governor-general of the Lower Volga region, where his immediate challenge was to alleviate the impact of plague. He rose through the ranks of Alexander II's local government speedily and in August 1880, Loris-Melikov became the Minister of the Interior with exceptional powers.

Loris-Melikov had immediately set about seeking to combat the rise of radical terrorism, like the Nihilists, the Narodniks and the Peoples Will, by addressing the causes of peasant and worker discontent by introducing local government and economic reforms aimed at improving the lives of ordinary people.

Like many of the men referred to earlier and including Alexander II, Loris-Melikov's motivation for reform was not wholly altruistic. American academic Lee B Croft described him as a 'Dictator of the Heart". His desire to reform was not driven by a wish to introduce changes that would allow for wholesale political and societal change. On the contrary, Loris-Melikov, like Alexander II and Stolypin, believed that the surest way to secure the future of the Romanov autocracy was to introduce limited reforms that would exploit the fundamental conservatism of the Russian populace. The two most important considerations in most Russian people's lives, as late as 1914, were the Tsar and God – namely in the form of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Figure 73: The political cartoon from Puck shows the hope at the time that the proposed Constitution of 1881 would burst light over the Russian Nocturne

Loris-Melikov's proposed reforms were presented to Alexander II in January 1881. Despite its title, the plan offered only very modest moves toward a constitutional monarchy. Its central aim was to encourage cooperation between society and the government. To achieve this, Loris-Melikov proposed allowing a small number of elected representatives from the general population to participate in legislative bodies, though only with advisory powers. The emperor would still retain the exclusive right to initiate legislation.

Although later referred to as a "constitutional reform", the proposal contained nothing that truly matched the constitutional systems of Western Europe. That was never Loris-Melikov's intention and when presenting it, Loris-Melikov stressed that his ideas had no connection to Western constitutional models. Even so, Alexander II recognized

the symbolic importance of the proposal, remarking: "I have given my approval, but I do not hide from myself the fact that it is the first step towards a constitution."

Figure 74: An artistic depiction of the assassination of Alexander II

The project received unanimous approval from the Exclusive Consultation on 16th February, with the emperor himself participating. On 1st March, Alexander II informed Loris-Melikov that the proposal would be reviewed by the Council of Ministers in four days. Two hours later, he was assassinated.

His successor, Alexander III, acting on the advice of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, immediately dismissed both Loris-Melikov and the reform plan, initiating a period of conservative counter-reforms instead. The reformers, however, did not give up without a fight. In May 1882, the new Minister of the Interior, Nikolay Pavlovich Ignatyev, revived the idea of a representative assembly, this time in the form of a restored Zemsky Sobor; which had been a land parliament which met in the 16th and 17th Centuries, and for the first time under Ivan the Terrible! This project was strongly influenced by Slavophile thought. Yet the outcome was the same: Pobedonostsev blocked the proposal, and its author was removed from office.

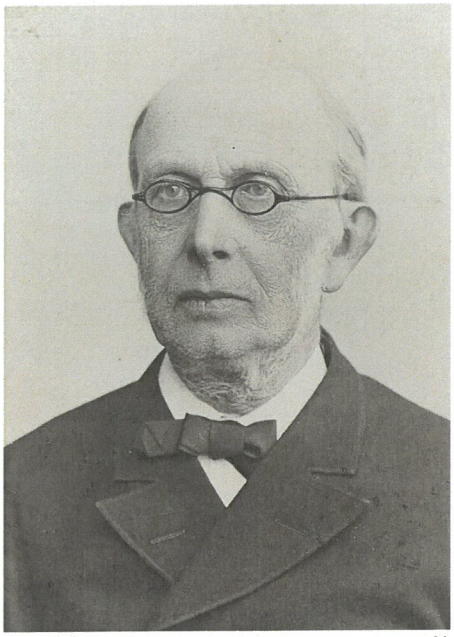
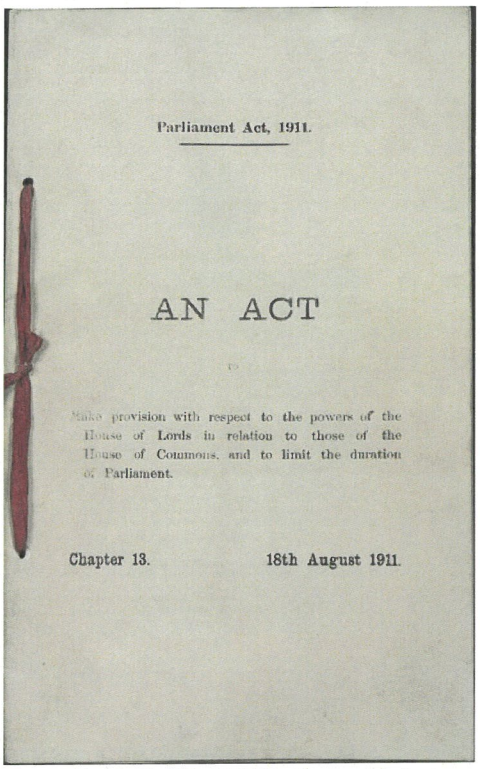


Figure 75: Konstantin Pobedonostsev - mentor of both Alexander III and Nicholas II

It is easy to see how the misfortune befalling Alexander II ensured that Loris-Melikov's reforms would not proceed under his son, but there are many ways in which we can look at what he was proposing and speculate as to how history might have taken a different course, even maybe saving the Romanovs, if these progressive changes had been given time and support to become a reality.

Alexander II's creation of the zemstvo as part of the local government reforms introduced at the start of his reign may have been limited in scope and power, but as he himself admitted constituted a first step towards more popular involvement in the political process. Rome was not built in a day, and if Loris-Melikov's reforms had proceeded within another decade of progressive rule by Alexander II beyond 1881, perhaps this would have made counter reform by his son much harder to effect had he succeeded to the throne in the 1890s?



Parliament Act, 1911.

AN ACT

to

Make provision with respect to the powers of the House of Lords in relation to those of the House of Commons, and to limit the duration of Parliament.

Chapter 13. 18th August 1911.

Figure 76: The 1911 Parliament Act

Seventy-nine years elapsed in Britain between the 1832 Great Reform Act, giving the vote to an underwhelming 5% of the population, and the 1911 Parliament Act, which established the legislative primacy of the House of Commons over the hereditary Lords. A national zemstvo would have been a stepping stone in the right direction upon which Russian constitutional monarchy and perhaps democracy could have been built.

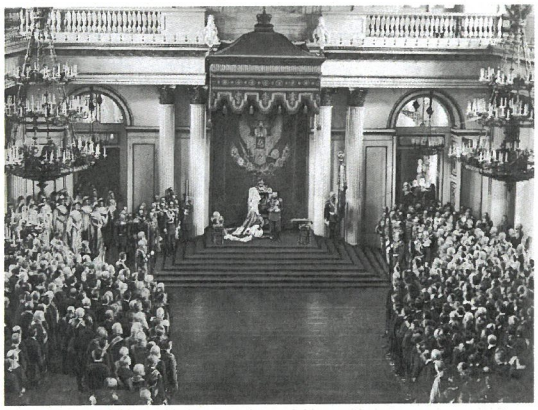


Figure 77: First meeting of the Russian Duma and the State Council, with the divisions clear to all in the split across the hall!

When a Duma finally did come in 1905, it was after a revolution as a reaction to concessions forced on Nicholas II, himself a committed absolutist resistant to any changes, in a political environment that had changed since 1881. The industrial spurt of the 1890s had brought about some urban societal changes, with radical and liberal opposition parties established and developing as political movements.

Figure 78: Pyotr Stolypin

The first Duma was created after the formation of the first soviet, in Petrograd in the summer of 1905. The first two Dumas, with SRs and Menshevik deputies in attendance, were never going to be able to work with a newly confident and determined Nicholas II, who post-Fundamental Laws emasculated the Duma and set about charging Stolypin with the task of using the army to repress revolutionary opposition. Maybe events would have played out differently if Loris-Melikov's changes had begun this process earlier, with the proactive support of the monarch rather than being a reaction to revolutionary challenge, ahead of the industrial spurt of the 1890's, perhaps lessening the prospect

of or need for revolutionary protest in 1905.

Of course, Loris-Melikov's reforms may ultimately have been undone in a number of ways. When we look at the succession, both Alexander III and Nicholas II were committed autocrats with a firm belief in divine right. Even a later succession would have almost certainly led to the powers of any consultative body being diluted; if not completely reversed. Alexander III was able to quickly and ruthlessly deal with the Peoples' Will in 1881, beginning a period of reaction to reverse many of the progressive changes of his father. Any Loris-Melikov inspired national zemstvo would have been a temporary measure, ripe for dissolution upon the accession of the new Tsar.

Figure 79: A Zemstvo Convention in 1905

The limitations of the zemstvo should also be considered to when reflecting on what Loris-Melikov's national zemstvo might have looked like. Limited to the towns and representative of the lower nobility, the tiny Russian middle classes and equally small, emerging Kulak class, there is little evidence to suggest that any national zemstvo would have had the power or inclination to address the growing social and economic pressures building from a peasantry hungry for land and food, and an emerging working class drifting slowly towards radical socialism and revolutionary political change.

Figure 80: Russian peasants during the 1891-92 famine

Success in alleviating the 1891-92 famine could be seen as an isolated example of zemstvo success amongst a wider picture of limited progress. Zemstvo progress in advancing education beyond the nobility was largely reversed with the restoration of Church control under Alexander III, which was maintained under Nicholas II. Resistance to Stolypin's proposed expansion of zemstvos into Poland can be seen as one of the contributing factors behind his assassination. For the masses, real progression may only have ever come in the form of soviets.

Figure 81: Statue of Tsar Reformer, Alexander II... but was it that simple?

It is all too easy for historians to view Alexander II's reign in a binary way – that he was either Tsar Liberator or a reactionary. Loris-Melikov's emergence has an important role to play in helping us understand how change over time is more complex than this. Alexander II's reformist tendencies, whatever his motivations, reemerged with Loris-Melikov and the proposed introduction of his reforms.

Figure 82: The failure of the Spartacists in 1919, which can be attributed to the ascendancy of democratic socialism in the form of Ebert and the SPD, leading the Weimar Republic after the abdication of Kaiser Willhelm II and defeat in WW1

Had Loris-Melikov's constitution come to fruition in 1881 and been allowed to grow, who is to say that a more moderate form of Socialism would not have emerged within a Russian Duma modelled on the German SPD or the British Labour Party, allowing thirty years of democratic evolution within the Romanov state before the events of the First World War; which Russia may have been better prepared for and less susceptible to revolutionary threat. Maybe Count Mikhail Loris-Melikov was the count who could have saved the Romanovs.

Figure 83: The Tomb of Count Mikhail Loris-Melikov (1824-1888)