The History of the Twentieth Century
Episode 27
"Too Soon to Thank God"
Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

In A.D. 98, the Roman historian Tacitus described a people he called the Veneti, living between the eastern fringe of Germania (or Germany) and the western edge of Sarmatia. He admitted that he wasn't sure if these people qualified as Germans or Sarmatians. They went around plundering like the Sarmatians, but they lived in houses like the Germans. These Veneti may be the earliest reference to the people we know today as Slavs.

By the beginning of the 19th century, Slavs are among the largest ethnic groups in Europe, and Slavic peoples occupy close to half the total land area of Europe. And yet, there was only one nation in Europe actually governed by Slavs – the Russian Empire. And in an age of rising nationalism, even by the end of the 19th century, we can add to that list only a couple more small states – Serbia, the semi-independent Bulgaria, and little Montenegro.

Slav nationalism – it's gonna be a thing.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 27. Too Soon to Thank God.

The first unambiguous references to the people that we now call Slavs come from Byzantine sources during the reign of Justinian I. The Slavs would become one of the many challenges the declining Roman Empire would have to deal with. The Slavs' word for themselves in the old days was *slovena*, which you can easily recognize as the root of our modern ethnonym Slovene. This was incorporated into Greek as *sklabenoi,* and then into Medieval Latin as *sclavus*. Now, the classical Latin word for slave was *servus*, which you can see is the root of our modern English words "service", "servant", and "serf". But our English word "slave" comes from *sclavus*, which goes back to Slav, and supposedly reflects the fact that in the early Middle Ages, Slavs were seen primarily as slaves, or potential slaves. Which in turn means that it's not a coincidence that in modern English, "Slav" and "slave" are similar words. This is assuming you accept this derivation of *sclavus*, which many linguists do, although there are some who dispute it, and believe that the resemblance between the two words is just a coincidence.

For more on the relationship between the Slavs and the Byzantines, I'll have to refer you to Robin Pearson's *The History of Byzantium Podcast*. I've been listening to *The History of Byzantium Podcas*t since Robin started doing it back in 2012. He does a tremendous job, and I recommend his podcast very highly, even if you think you wouldn't be interested in the history of Byzantium, check it out. I think you'll be surprised.

Bear in mind that what we know about this period we know because the Byzantines kept good records. There were no doubt many interesting stories to be told about Slav conflicts with their other neighbors – the Bulgars, the Avars, the Goths, the Germans, and so on – but we don't know those stories, because none of these people left behind any historical writings.

There's a period in here called the Great Migration, when peoples without written languages were moving across Europe, assimilating, separating, fighting wars; and a lot of what we think we know about these times we have to take by inference. Until recently, the accepted idea was that huge, ethnically homogenous tribes like the Slavs would just pack up and move to some other territory, displacing the ethnic group that already lived there. The more modern view of these movements is nuanced, and still subject to debate. But today we more typically think in terms of these so-called "tribes" more closely resembling confederations of different groups that may have different ethnic origins, and instead of one tribe displacing another tribe, it might be more useful to think of that second tribe as having been joined into the confederation, perhaps by force, perhaps voluntarily, or more likely some combination of the two.

So for example, those of you who have listened to *The History of Rome Podcast* know that in ancient times, there were peoples in what we now call the Balkans known as Illyrians and Dacians and Thracians. These people just don't exist anymore. Or do they? I'll come back to that question. But the traditional view would be that they were displaced by the Slavs, while a more modern commentator might prefer to say "assimilated".

To make a long story short (because, let's face it, I'm getting pretty far afield from the history of the 20th century here), after the Great Migration was over and the dust was settled, virtually all of Europe east of Finland and Germany and north of Greece and Turkey is now settled by people who call themselves Slavs, and this is true in our modern world, with a few exceptions, like Albania, Hungary and Romania. I'll come back to them.

I don't think I'm giving away too much to reveal that ethnic conflicts and rivalries in this region in Europe are going to be a big deal throughout the 20th century, and ethnic tensions continue to simmer in Slavic lands to this day. These ethnic tensions play out amid arguments concerning who really is or isn't a Slav, and which ethnic groups occupied which piece of ground during what time of history, so you have to tread lightly here, but I'm going to stick my neck out this far: In our modern times, there is no unitary Slav culture. There are different Slav ethnic groups with different cultures and traditions. Some of these cultures and traditions were likely assimilated from their neighbors, which is one of the reasons why their cultures are different in the first place. Different Slav ethnic groups likely have different non-Slavic peoples in their ancestries to varying degrees. Similarly, non-Slavic ethnic groups who neighbor Slav territories, like the Romanians and the Hungarians and even the Germans and the Greeks, likely have some measure of Slavic ancestry and cultural influence.

From around the 9th to the 12th centuries, Slavic communities converted to Christianity. A great deal of credit for this conversion is traditionally given to St. Cyril and Methodius, two brothers from Thessalonica in the Byzantine Empire, who worked as Christian missionaries among Slavs in the Balkans. They're credited with translating the Bible into the language that we now call Old Church Slavonic, and in the process, giving the Slavs a written language, using an alphabet derived primarily from Greek, but augmented with letters and adaptations from some other old writing systems. This Slavic writing system is known today as Cyrillic, after St. Cyril, because I suppose calling it "Methodiodic" would get a little awkward.

Cyril and Methodius lived before the Great Schism between Eastern and Western Christianity, and they did not see themselves as evangelizing on behalf of one rite over the other. After the schism, some Slavs practiced Orthodox Christianity, and looked to Constantinople for religious leadership. Other Slavs practiced Roman Catholic Christianity and looked to Rome, usually the peoples in closest contact with the Germans and the Italians, who were also doing missionary work among the Slavs. It's easy to tell who's who, all you have to do is see whether a given Slav nation uses Roman or Cyrillic letters to write its language. Catholic Slavs, like Poles and Czechs and Slovaks and Slovenes and Croats, use the Roman alphabet. Orthodox Slavs, like Russians and Ukrainians and Serbs and Bulgarians, use the Cyrillic alphabet. There are also Muslim Slavs, most notably the Bosniaks. They also use the Cyrillic alphabet.

The Slav peoples of Europe are generally subdivided into three groups: East Slavs, West Slavs, and South Slavs. East Slavs include Belarussians, Ukrainians and Russians, and the cultural influences on those people include the Greeks, the peoples of the steppes, and even Scandinavians. They are Orthodox. West Slavs include Poles, Czechs and Slovaks. Cultural influences on these people came mostly from the west, meaning Germans, and specifically the Holy Roman Empire. The Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia were actually part of the Holy Roman Empire. These people are Catholic.

In the 9th century, the Magyars, a people of the steppes, migrated westward to what we today call Hungary. They settled in the great Hungarian Plain and in the Danube River valley. In the century following the Magyar migration, Germans began to migrate down the Danube River valley, and these two ethnic groups met near a place where the Leitha River empties into the Danube. These German-speaking settlers in the Danube valley became what we today call Austrians. The Magyars living in the Hungarian Plain became what we call today Hungarians. And the Leitha River is the traditional boundary between Austria and Hungary. And thus begins the history of Austria and Hungary, and the story of how they became the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, which is a story for another episode. But don't worry, we'll get to it. But for now, the important thing is that these two migrations had an important effect on the Slavs. They cut off the South Slavs in the Balkans from their brethren to the north. Moreover, the Balkans have a rugged, mountainous terrain, which is part of the explanation for how the Slavs of the Balkans got separated into so many different little ethnic groups.

Cyrus Sulzberger, a *New York Times* reporter and CIA agent, once described the Balkans as "a gay peninsula filled with sprightly people who ate peppered food, drank strong liquors, wore flamboyant clothes, loved and murdered easily, and had a splendid talent for starting wars."

The Slavs of the Balkans, the South Slavs, are a mix of several ethnic subgroups, and can be either Catholic or Orthodox, or Muslim. The presence of Islam in the Balkans is of course a result of hundreds of years of rule by the Ottoman Empire. South Slavs include Slovenes, Croats, Bosniaks, Serbs, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Macedonians, and other, smaller groups.

Now, as I mentioned at the top of the episode, at the beginning of the 19th century, in 1801, there was only one Slavic state in the whole world: The Russian Empire. Now, I'm cheating a little bit here, because there was a Polish kingdom for over 800 years, and as I've already mentioned in previous episodes, in a series of three partitions in the year 1772, 1793, and 1795, the Kingdom of Poland was divided among Prussia, Austria, and Russia. After the last partition, the Kingdom of Poland was gone from the maps entirely.

The vast majority of Poles, over 80%, found themselves in the Russian Empire after 1795. In Russia in particular, efforts to extinguish the Polish language and culture and national identity were comprehensive and brutal. As a result, there was a great deal of Polish emigration during the 19th and early 20th century, much more so than any other Slavic nation. So much so that one can speak of a Polish diaspora. France was a popular European destination for Polish emigrés, owing to longstanding ties between these two nations. Even larger numbers of Poles emigrated to the western hemisphere, principally Canada and the United States. At one time, it was said that Chicago, Illinois, was the second-largest Polish city in the world. In our day, there are some 20 million people of Polish ancestry living outside of the borders of Poland. That's about half the population of Poland itself. Of these 20 million, about half of them live in the United States, including your host.

But this unfortunate situation, of there being no independent Slav nation other than Russia, only lasted until about 1804, depending on how you look at it. That was the year that the Serbs rose up in revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Some 10 years of conflict with the empire led to a compromise: A semi-independent Serbian state. Later, in 1876, this Serbian state attempted to seize the Ottoman province of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and incorporate it into Serbia. This conflict was one of the events that triggered the Russo-Turkish War of 1877. That war ended after the Congress of Berlin in 1878. There had been appalling Ottoman massacres of Christians, and so the great powers of Europe attempted to impose terms that would protect Christian minorities in the Balkans. That congress resulted in the full independence of Serbia, and the full independence of Montenegro, which was a small Ottoman territory that traditionally had been a semi-independent prince-bishopric within the Empire. Montenegrins, by the way, the Slav people of Montenegro, identify as a separate ethnic group, and one that likely has considerable Illyrian heritage, although it's hard to say because again, no written records.

As for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the compromise of the Congress of Berlin was that this territory would remain formally part of the Ottoman Empire, but be administered by Austria-Hungary, partly for the protection of Christians in the province, partly to ensure against further attempts by Serbia to annex the territory. In future episodes of this podcast, we will check back from time to time and see how well that arrangement is succeeding in keeping the peace in the Balkans. And that, my dear listener, is my idea of a sly joke.

The Congress of Berlin also gave Bulgaria semi-independent status within the Ottoman Empire. Bulgarians are a Slavic people whose ancestry and heritage incorporates the Bulgars of old, and also likely the Thracians of ancient times. And so, at the beginning of the 20th century, we have three fully independent Slavic states (Russia, Serbia, and Montenegro), plus the semi-independent Bulgaria. But before we leave the Balkans, let me say a few words about the non-Slavic nations and peoples of that region.

First of all, we have Greece, which exists as an independent nation at the beginning of the century, though with less territory than the Greek nation as we know it today. Greeks are, of course, ethnically and linguistically Greek, although modern Greeks are likely to have more than a touch of Slavic ancestry, a result of Slavic migrations of long ago.

Albania is not a state yet, but stay tuned, that's coming soon. Albanians are not a Slavic people. They regard themselves as the heirs of the Illyrian people who lived on the east coast of the Adriatic in ancient times. Farther north, along the old Illyrian coast, which in 1901 is part of Austria-Hungary, you find Slavic people who also share that Illyrian heritage and cultural connections to Italy, a fact which Italian nationalists of the time regard as very, very important. We also have Romania, a country and a people that, as their name implies, regard themselves as descended from the Roman peoples of the region: Dacians, for sure; Thracians, maybe; and perhaps some Illyrians, too, why not? And a touch of Slav? Maybe.

You probably already know some of the history of how fractious the Balkans have been. I hope this little survey is helping you understand how it got that way. With the benefit of hindsight, we modern people can easily see that any attempt to keep these different Balkan ethnic groups within the borders of one or two or three larger, multiethnic empires is doomed to failure. But in 1901, most world leaders couldn't see that.The Ottoman Empire was clearly in decline, but the Austrians saw this as their great opportunity to take advantage of Ottoman weakness to gobble up these various ethnic enclaves and incorporate them into Austria-Hungary. The Austrians dreamed of the day when their empire would reach all the way to Thessalonica, giving the Austrians a port and a naval base on the eastern Mediterranean.

The Russians also saw an opportunity to take advantage of Ottoman weakness, and to take advantage of Austrian weakness. Because at the beginning of the 20th century, Austria is well on its way to becoming a majority Slavic state. The leaders of the Russian Empire think, with good reason, that this is an untenable situation. Slavs in the Balkans would much rather be ruled by other Slavs than by a bunch of German-speaking aristocrats, and so the ideology of pan-Slavism arose. The Russian government also looks longingly at Constantinople and the Dardanelles, and like the Austrians, are dreaming of the day when they have a port in the eastern Mediterranean.

And this brings us to Russia. Russia is far and away the largest and most important Slavic state, and I hope I'm not giving away too much if I tell you that Russia is destined to play a leading role in The History of the Twentieth Century. So yeah, we should get ourselves up to speed on what's going on in Russia.

[music: Rimsky-Korsakov, Polonaise from *Christmas Eve*]

There was a proto-Russian state, the Rus', really a confederation of Eastern Slavs, as early as the 9th century. You might as well consider it a proto-Ukrainian state as well. There were almost certainly Scandinavians in this confederation, although to what degree the Rus' were Scandinavian is a matter of historical dispute. The expanding Rus' state came up against the Khazars, and would push their way through Khazar territory to the Black Sea, eventually conquering and absorbing the Khazar state. One of the consequences of this expansion was that the Magyar people, who had been living as Khazar vassals, got squeezed out and forced westward into the Hungarian Plain, which had consequences for the Balkan Slavs, as we've already seen.

The Rus' drive southward was partly motivated by a desire for trade with the wealthy Byzantine and Arab empires. The Rus' and the Khazars and the Byzantines coexisted for a while, sometimes as trading partners, sometimes fighting wars against each other. The Rus' converted to Orthodox Christianity, partly through the efforts of St. Cyril and Methodius, and embraced the Cyrillic alphabet. Byzantine culture and scholarship infiltrated Rus' culture, and trade with the Romans and the Baltic region helped the Rus' to prosper. The weakening of the Byzantine Empire and the rising strength of German, Hungarian and Polish powers to the west caused the Rus' confederation to decline, and it eventually disintegrated into small principalities that by the 13th century ended up as vassals of the Mongol Empire.

But as the Mongols receded, these principalities began to reassert themselves, the most powerful one being the Grand Duchy of Moscow. The Grand Dukes of Moscow eventually began claiming the title "Prince of All the Russias". Within a few years after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453, Moscow began proclaiming itself the successor to the Byzantine Empire. This was partly because the then-reigning Grand Duke, Ivan III, was married to the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI; and partly because, after the fall of Constantinople, Moscow became the most powerful Orthodox state left standing.

Not quite a hundred years later, in 1547, the Grand Duke Ivan IV took the title of Czar, a word derived from Caesar, although in Russian it means something closer to "king" than "emperor". But Ivan claimed powers and privileges comparable to those of the emperors of old, with the blessing of the Russian Orthodox Church, and thus began a long Russian tradition of absolute power in the hands of a single monarch. This tradition got off to a rocky start with Ivan, who came to be known as, yeah, you guessed it, "Ivan the Terrible". But the Russians stuck with it, and Ivan's reign kicked off a period of rapid expansion.

Ivan's dynasty only lasted as far as his son, Feodor. After a period of turmoil known as the Time of Troubles, a time of Polish and Swedish intervention into Russian affairs, Mikhail Romanov became Czar, beginning 300 years of rule by the Romanov dynasty.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the Russian Czar Peter the Great began a program of westernization of Russia, and this is the beginning of the development of Russia as a major power, and the decline of its rivals, Sweden and Poland. Under Peter, Russia acquired a portion of the Baltic coast, and there he built a new capital city, St. Petersburg. Peter also reasserted the ideal of an absolute autocracy, and was the first czar to claim the title Emperor.

Russia continued to expand in territory and influence. By the early 19th century, Russia had absorbed most of Poland and all of Finland, and was peeling off territory from the Ottoman Empire, as well as Persia and China. Russia's position was much enhanced after repelling Napoleon's invasion in 1812. Nowadays, we tend to look at this campaign as a dress rehearsal for Operation Barbarossa, but at the time of course it was viewed as something quite different. Russia, a country that many Europeans thought of as primitive and backward, had taken on the most powerful military machine Europe had ever seen, and crushed it. That gave Russia a seat at the Congress of Vienna, and sealed its position as a European great power.

The expansion of Russia became a cause of concern for the British. If you look at a map of the Old World, you can see how the British Empire includes holdings all around the periphery of the Eurasian landmass, from Britain itself to Gibraltar and Malta and Cyprus, to the Suez Canal and large portions of Africa, to India and Singapore and Australia and Hong Kong. As we well know, it takes a lot of ships to keep this far-flung empire knitted together, and that's why Britain has the greatest navy in the world. But the simple fact that Russia controls the Eurasian heartland means that Russia's huge armies, at least in theory, can access many of Britain's colonial frontiers without the bother of boarding ships. And the Russian Empire is still expanding. As the 19th century unfolded, the Russian Empire widened its borders further at the expense of the Ottomans, the Persians, and the Chinese. I mentioned back in episode 7 that during this period of history, the one constant in European affairs is the hostility between France and Germany. But this rivalry between Britain and Russia you can regard as the second most important fact in European affairs. This rivalry, though, is not based on any competition in Europe. The British liked to stay aloof from strictly European disputes, but hey, the Empire is very important to them, and they see Russia as the biggest danger to it.

One of Britain's nightmares is a large Russian army moving south from Central Asia and swarming into British India. And you know, I have to say (granted, with the benefit of hindsight), that it seems a hugely improbable scenario. But the British took it very seriously at the time, and Britain's other nightmare was the Russians capturing Constantinople and becoming a naval power in the eastern Mediterranean, where lies the Suez Canal, which is the British Empire's jugular vein.

The possibility of the Russians taking Constantinople was much-discussed during the 19th century, and it was an intriguing prospect for a state that sees itself as the successor to the Byzantine Empire. There are the pragmatic matters of gaining access to the Mediterranean, as well as the simple fact that Russia is a major grain exporter, and more than half of Russia's foreign trade passes through the Bosphorus, making it Russia's economic lifeline. And apart from these strategic reasons to covet Constantinople, there were the cultural and religious considerations. The Russians call Constantionple *Tsargrad* – the Emperor's City. There was a spiritual, even mythic attraction to reversing the Ottoman seizure of the city in 1453 and restoring Orthodox rule over the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarch. And bear in mind, too, that at this point in history, in the late 19th century, Constantinople is a majority Christian city. So from the Russian point of view, the goal is not so much conquering Constantinople as it is liberating it.

The Crimean War saw the unlikely alliance of Britain and France combining forces in pursuit of the goal of keeping Russia bottled up in the Black Sea and out of the eastern Mediterranean. Russia was defeated in that war, and soon afterward, it got a new emperor, Alexander II.

And it seems a recurring theme in Russian history that military defeats lead to internal reforms. It's almost as if the Russian people are willing to make sacrifices if the end result is a greater and stronger Russia, but they become demanding and sullen when their country's humiliated abroad, and it begins to appear that all their sacrifices were in vain. Actually, when you think about it, that's not very strange at all, is it?

But one good example of this is how unrest in the wake of the Crimean War led to the end of serfdom in Russia in the 1860s. As we've seen before, in other places where serfdom was abolished, this wasn't necessarily an immediate boon to the serfs themselves. Some serfs lost their feudal rights and got nothing in return, and found themselves unemployed and landless. Others were given inadequate plots of land, along with the news that they were now heavily indebted to the previous landowner. Many serfs began working on communal properties that belonged to the peasants collectively, but could not be subdivided or sold.

Despite these kinks, Russia began industrializing in the late 19th century, and the economy grew quickly after the emancipation of the serfs. In the 1860s, Russia acquired portions of Manchuria from China, and sold Russian America to the United States, which tells you something about Alexander II's priorities.

I already mentioned the next conflict, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877. That war, by the way, would be the 11th between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The coming Great War would be the 12th, and last. Slavic Orhtodox communities in the Balkans were resisting Ottoman Turkish rule, and Russia was happy to intervene on their behalf. Like taking Constantinople, intervention in the Balkans is strategically attractive because it expands Russian power and influence among a group of people who might be predisposed to accept Russian rule, as well as philosophically attractive because it's justified by Russia's traditional claim as the protector of Orthodox Christianity, as well as pan-Slavic notions of Russia as protector of its Slavis "little brothers".

Harsh Ottoman repression in the Balkans have made the Russians look like heroes to the Serbs and the Bulgarians. Although, before you get too carried away with this idea of Russia as the defender of religious and cultural minorities, it's probably worth remembering how the same Russia is doing its best to grind Polish language and culture into extinction, as well as oppressing Muslim religious minorities in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Anyway, Russia won the war, and expanded its borders. Russians almost achieved the dream of occupying Constantinople, but were deterred when the British moved their fleet into the region. In the Balkans, the Russians forced Turkey to recognize a new and very large Bulgarian state. But this agreement led to the intervention of other great powers at the Congress of Berlin, which reduced the size of Bulgaria out of concerns that a large and powerful Slavic state in the Balkans would be destabilizing.

That Congress of Berlin, by the way, was also an important moment in the history of imperial Germany, a state that's not yet a decade old. Hosting one of these big pan-European conferences to determine the future of the continent and fine-tune the Concert of Europe – that was an important sign of Germany's new status as a major world power. Berlin was now a peer of power capitals like London and Vienna, which had hosted similar conferences to resolve past international disputes.

And it was an important moment for Russia's relationship with Austria. Russia and Austria had traditionally been allies. They had fought shoulder-to-shoulder against Napoleon. When revolutions threatened to overthrow the Austrian Emperor, it was Russia who sent in troops to restore imperial authority. When Germany rose to the rank of a great power, it became part of a three-way alliance, the Three Emperors' League. But the instability in the Balkans put a lot of stress on the Three Emperors' League, as Austria and Russia became competitors to fill the power vacuum in the Balkans left by the decline of the Ottoman Empire. This left Germany as Russia's only real ally. Germany tried to play the role of honest broker between the Austrians and the Russians for a while, but it became increasingly obvious that someday soon, Germany is going to have to pick a side.

The Emperor Alexander II was relatively liberal, and something of a reformer (by Russian standards, anyway), as you might be able to tell from his emancipation of the serfs. He also set up a system of local government councils called *zemstvos*, with elected representatives, although representation was weighted in favor of nobles, clergy and landowners. This would be the first time there would be any kind of elections in Russia, and the first time ordinary Russians had even a small say in the government of their country. The emperor's power over national and international affairs, though, remained absolute.

Alexander II would brutally repress a Polish uprising in 1863, and Poland would be exempted from Alexander's liberalizing reforms. It was Alexander who outlawed the Polish language, and made it a crime to print texts in Polish, or even to speak the Polish language in public.

In foreign affairs, Alexander II strove to maintain peaceful relations with the other European powers, except for the whole, you know, "war with Turkey" thing. He stuck it out with the Three Emperors' League, and regarded France with suspicion, especially after the overthrow of Napoleon III and the unstable Third Republic that followed. You may recall from episode 7 the ups and downs of the Third Republic in its early days, and all that looked pretty much like anarchy from the point of view of a Russian autocrat.

Of course, Russia itself wasn't exactly a model of stability. There was an assassination attempt on Alexander II by a radical in St. Petersburg in 1866. In 1867, a Polish nationalist tried to kill the emperor at the Paris Exposition of that year. There was another attempted shooting in St. Petersburg in April 1879, and in December of that same year, a failed attempt to blow up the emperor's train. Two months later, a bomb went off in the dining room of the Winter Palace, killing 11 people, but the emperor and his family were late to dinner that night, and so they were unharmed.

Finally, on Sunday, March 13, 1881, the emperor was riding in his bulletproof carriage through St. Petersburg, when a member of a left-wing revolutionary group called the People's Will named Nikolai Rysakov tossed a bomb under the hooves of the horses drawing the carriage. The resulting explosion killed one person and wounded several bystanders, but only slightly damaged the carriage. The emperor opened his door, and climbed out of the carriage to look around, as the police seized Rysakov.

The emperor's guards were urging him to leave the scene as soon as possible, but it was already too late. There was a second bomber in the crowd, a fellow People's Will member and ethnic Pole named Ignacy Hryniewiecki. He lifted up a second bomb, reportedly calling out: "It is too soon to thank God!" It landed at Alexander's feet. The explosion killed the assassin, shattered the emperor's legs, and tore a hole through his abdomen. He was carried back to the Winter Palace, but died a little while later.

We'll have to stop there for today, but I hope you'll join me next week on *The History of the Twentieth Century* as we continue the story of Russia. We'll take a look at Alexander II's two successors: His son, Alexander III, who is remembered as a large man with a bushy beard, gruff style, and a weakness for peasant shirts; and his grandson, Nikolai II, who is remembered as the man who brought the Romanov Dynasty, and the Russian Empire, crashing down into ruin. That's next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

Oh, and one more thing. Some historians mark the assassination of Alexander II as the inspiration for the anarchist movements' so-called "propaganda of the deed" and the coming wave of anarchist assassinations, although Alexander's own assassination was not perpetrated by anarchists. Ironically, the assasination of Alexander II did not bring reform to Russia, but quite the opposite. Alexander II had been drawing up plans for a Russian constitution and elected parliament, the Duma, on the day he was killed. His successor, Alexander III, concluded from his father's assassination that Russia was not ready for liberalization. Instead, he declared a state of emergency and granted broad new powers to the Okhrana, the imperial secret police; a state of affairs that would more or less continue until the revolution of 1917.

[music: Closing Theme]