

The Age of Realism: 1850-1871

The Austrian Empire

As was true elsewhere in Europe, industrialization brought not only economic change, but social change as well. In Austria, the rise of an urban proletariat served to challenge the autocratic rule of the Habsburgs. Military defeat in Italy and, later, Prussia forced great changes on the Austrian empire. The Compromise of 1867 created the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, with each part of the empire receiving its own constitutional government under a single monarch, Francis Joseph. The compromise did very little to satisfy the desires of the ethnic nationalities whose members remained under the power of the ethnic Germans and Magyars.

Imperial Russia

Russia's defeat in the Crimean War highlighted the need for greater reform—it was obvious to the tsar and the conservative leadership that Russia was falling drastically behind the western European powers. Tsar Alexander II attempted to address the deficiencies of the Russian system. One of the first reforms was the abolition of serfdom in 1861. Later, in 1864, Alexander II created local assemblies called *zemstvos*, which allowed for limited self-government.

Reformers in Russia demanded further change as the number of radical groups increased in number. Violence against Russian officials grew more frequent, culminating in the assassination of Alexander II by members of the People's Will. Convinced Alexander's death resulted from reform measures he had made, his son and successor, Alexander III, turned back to the repressive rule associated with autocratic Russia.