**The Tsar’s Abdication**

Strikes broke out, first in Petrograd (formerly St Petersburg), then other cities, but Nicholas II failed to judge the import of the situation and refused to leave his command post at the front. On 11 March, the Chairman of the Duma, Mikhail Rodzianko, sent the tsar a desperate telegram, ‘The situation is serious. Measures must be taken at once; tomorrow will be too late. The capital is in a state of anarchy; troops of the Petrograd garrison cannot be relied upon. The Government is powerless to stop the disorder… General discontent is growing… Your majesty, do not delay. Any procrastination is tantamount to death.’ Nicholas wrote in his diary, ‘this fat Rodzianko has written me lots of nonsense, to which I shall not even deign to reply’. Nicholas did, however, do as he had warned – on 12 March, he dissolved the Duma.

Finally, Nicholas decided to return to Petrograd – but it was too late. On 15 March 1917, the tsar was forced to abdicate, thus ending the three-century-old Romanov dynasty. Few mourned its passing.