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"[Rasputin](#)" redirects here. For other uses, see [Rasputin \(disambiguation\)](#).

In this Eastern Slavic naming convention, the [patronymic](#) is [Yefimovich](#) and the [family name](#) is [Rasputin](#).

Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin (Russian: Григорий Ефимович Распутин, IPA: [ɡrʲɪˈɡorʲɪj (j)ɪˈfʲiməvʲɪtɕ rɐˈspʊtʲɪn]^[1] 21 January [O.S. 9 January] 1869 – 30 December [O.S. 17 December] 1916^[2]) was a [Russian peasant](#), an experienced traveler,^[3] a [mystical faith healer](#), and trusted friend of the family of [Nicholas II](#), the last [Tsar](#) of the [Russian Empire](#). He became an influential figure in [Saint Petersburg](#), especially after August 1915 when Nicholas took command of the army fighting in [World War I](#). Advising his wife, [Alexandra Feodorovna](#), in countless spiritual and political issues, Rasputin became an easy scapegoat for Russian nationalists, aristocrats and liberals.

There is uncertainty over much of Rasputin's life and the degree of influence that he exerted over the extremely shy Tsar and the strong-willed Tsarina.^[4] Accounts are often based on dubious memoirs, hearsay, and legend.^[note 1] While his influence and position may have been exaggerated by society gossip and his own drunken boasting^[8] his presence played a significant role in the increasing unpopularity of the Imperial couple.^[9] Rasputin was murdered by monarchists who hoped to save [Tsarism](#) by ending his sway over the royal family.

Contents
Early life
Turn to religious life
Healer to Alexei
Controversy
Assassination attempt
Yar restaurant incident
 The Memoirs by M. Paléologue
World War I
Rasputin and Alexandra
Government
 Imperial Duma
 Trepov and Protopopov

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Born	21 January 1869 <div></div> <div> Pokrovskoe, Siberia, Russian Empire</div>
Died	30 December 1916 <div></div> <div>(aged 47)<div> Petrograd, Russian Empire</div></div>
Cause of death	Assassination
Occupation	Peasant, pilgrim, healer, adviser
Spouse(s)	<div><div>Praskovia Fedorovna Dubrovina</div></div>
Children	<div><div>Mikhail, Anna, Grigori, Dmitri, Matryona, Varvara, Paraskeva</div></div>
Parent(s)	<div><div>Efim Vilkin Rasputin & Anna Parshukova</div></div>

Murder

Assassination

Days following

Towards the February Revolution

The Provisional Committee

Contemporary evidence

British Secret Intelligence Service

Works

Perception

Persistent errors

In popular culture

Notes

References

Bibliography

External links

Early life

Grigori Rasputin was born the son of a well-to-do peasant and postal coachdriver (*yamshchik*) in the small village of Pokrovskoe, in the Tobolsk Governorate (now Yarkovsky District in the Tyumen Oblast) in the immense West Siberian Plain. The parish register contains the following entry for 9 January 1869 [O.S.]^[note 2]: "In the village of Pokrovskoe, in the family of the peasant Yefim Yakovlevich Rasputin and his wife,^[note 3] both Orthodox, was born a son, Grigory."^{[12][13][14]} The next day, he was baptized and named after St. Gregory of Nyssa, whose feast day is on 10 January.^[15]

Grigori was the fifth of nine children, perhaps the only who survived.^{[16][17]} He never attended school, as there was not one in the area.^{[18][a]} In Pokrovskoe, a village with 200 dwellings and roughly a thousand inhabitants, Grigori was regarded as an outsider, but one endowed with mysterious gifts. In 1884, Rasputin acquired a reputation as a brawler and a libertine.^[3] Having a rude attitude towards the district head, he was locked up in jail for two nights; according to Doulas Smith this is the only mention of Rasputin's criminal past.^[20]

On 2 February 1887, Rasputin married Praskovia Fyodorovna Dubrovina (1865/6–1936) and their first three children died young.^[note 4] In an unknown year (1892, 1897?), Spiridovich suggested after the death of a child.^[21] Rasputin left his village, his wife, parents and spent several months in a monastery in Verkhoturys.^[22] Outside the monastery lived Starets Makary, a hermit, whose influence led him to give up tobacco, alcohol, and meat. When he returned to the village, he had become a fervent and inspired convert.^{[23][24]}



Pokrovskoe, along the Tura River in 1912. Rasputin raised money for (the decoration of) the church ^[10] that was built c. 1906 and destroyed in 1950. Photo by Sergey Prokudin-Gorsky^[11]

Turn to religious life

Rasputin's claimed vision of Our Lady of Kazan turned him towards the life of a religious mystic. Many times he went on a pilgrimage, but usually he went home in Summer to help his family for sowing and the harvest. By 1900, Rasputin was identified as a *strannik*,^[25] a religious wanderer, visiting holy places on foot and exchanging teaching for hospitality. Rasputin is sometimes considered a *yurodiviy* ("holy fool"),^[26] and a *starets* ("elder"), but he did not consider himself a starets,^[22] as these lived in seclusion and silence. To label him as simple, holy fool is problematic, as Rasputin was often described as intelligent.

According to Oleg Platonov, Rasputin criticized the local priest who had a mechanical way of praying. In 1902, private gatherings in his house had to be abandoned because of all the attention that he received from locals.^[27] Rasputin decided to spend some time in Kiev, almost 3,000 km (1,860 miles) from his village, where he visited the Monastery of the Caves. In Kazan, he attracted the attention of the bishop and members of the upper class.^{[28][29]} His interpretations of the Scriptures were so keen and so original that even learned churchmen liked to listen to them.^[30] Rasputin then traveled to the capital to meet with John of Kronstadt and acquired donations for the construction of the village church. He carried an introduction to Ivan Stragorodsky, the rector of the theological faculty.^[31]

Spiridovich thinks that Rasputin arrived in St Petersburg in the middle of 1904. Rasputin went to Alexander Nevsky Lavra to seek sustenance and lodgings. Theophanes of Poltava was amazed by his tenacious memory and psychological perspicacity, and he offered to allow Rasputin to live in his apartment. Either he or Countess Sophia Ignatieva introduced Rasputin to Milica of Montenegro and her sister Anastasia, who were interested in Persian mysticism,^[32] spiritism, and occultism. On 31 October 1905, Milica presented Rasputin to Tsar Nicholas and his wife Alexandra who had settled in Peterhof Palace because of all the unrest in the capital.^[33]

Prior to his meeting with Rasputin, the Tsar had to deal with the Russo-Japanese War, Bloody Sunday, the Revolution of 1905, bombs, and a ten-day general strike in October. In a city without light, street cars, and railway connections, the *Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias* was willing to sign the October Manifesto, to agree with a constitution and the establishment of the Imperial Duma. He gave up part of his unlimited autocracy. For the next six months, Sergei Witte, a reformist, was the first Russian Prime Minister, but by the end of the year, the real ruler of the country was Dmitri Trepov because of continuing bloody fighting against police and soldiers in the streets.^[34] In April 1906 Witte was succeeded by the conservative Ivan Goremykin and the Russian Constitution of 1906 was introduced. The Tsar, regretting his 'moment of weakness', retained the title of autocrat and maintained his unique dominating position in relation to the Russian Church.^[35] The supreme autocratic power remained in the hands of the Emperor, who owned his authority to God alone.^[36]



Makary, Theophanes of Poltava and Grigori Rasputin



Alexander Nevsky Lavra



Bloody Sunday (1905). Shooting workers near the Winter Palace (1905). Painting by Ivan Vladimirov

Healer to Alexei

On 13 October 1906, Rasputin paid a visit to the Imperial family staying at Peterhof and presented an icon.^[37] On request of the Tsar, he visited the next prime minister, Pyotr Stolypin. A few weeks before, 29 people had been killed on Aptekarsky Island in a bomb attack by the Maximalists and two of Stolypin's children were wounded. Rasputin was invited to pray.

On 6 April 1907, Rasputin was invited to Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo, this time to see Tsesarevich Alexei, the heir. The boy had suffered an injury which caused him painful bleeding. By then, it was not known that Alexei had a rare form of hemophilia,^[note 5] a disorder due to the lack of just one protein.^{[38][39]} The doctors could not supply a cure, and the desperate Tsarina invited Rasputin.^[40] He was able to calm the parents and their son, standing at the foot of the bed and praying. From that moment, Alexandra believed Rasputin was Alexei's savior.

Pierre Gilliard,^[41] the French historian Hélène Carrère d'Encausse,^[42] and journalist Diarmuid Jeffreys speculated that Rasputin's healing practice included halting the administration of aspirin, a pain-relieving analgesic available since 1899.^{[43][44]} Aspirin is an antiaggregant and has blood-thinning properties; the mechanism of action of aspirin is that it prevents clotting and promotes bleeding, which could have caused the hemarthrosis at the root of Alexei's joints swelling and pain.^{[45][46]}

In September 1912, the Romanovs were visiting their hunting retreat in the Białowieża Forest; on 5 September, the careless Tsesarevich jumped into a rowboat and hit one of the oarlocks. A large bruise appeared within minutes. Within a week the hematoma reduced in size.^[47] In mid-September, the family moved to Spała (then in Russian Poland). On 2 October, after a drive in the woods, the "juddering of the carriage had caused still healing hematoma in his upper thigh to rupture and start bleeding again."^[48] Alexei had to be carried out in an almost unconscious state. His temperature rose and his heartbeat dropped, caused by a swelling in the left groin. A constant record was kept of the boy's temperature. On 10 October, a medical bulletin appeared in the newspapers,^[49] and Alexei received the last sacrament. His condition improved at once, according to the Tsar. The positive trend continued throughout the next day.^[50] According to Nelipa, Robert K. Massie was correct to recommend that psychological factors do play a part.^[51]

It is not exactly clear on which day, either 9,^[52] 10, or 11 October, the Tsarina turned to her lady-in-waiting and best friend, Anna Vyrubova,^{[53][54]} to secure the help of the peasant healer, who at that time was out of favor. According to his daughter, Rasputin received the telegram on 12 October.^[55] The next day he seems to have responded, with a two telegrams, including the prophecy: "The little one will not die. Do not allow the doctors [c.q. Eugene Botkin and Vladimir Derevenko] to bother him too much."^[56] If Maria Rasputin was right about the day her father replied "the longstanding claim that Rasputin had somehow alleviated Alexei's condition is simply fictitious".^[57] On 19 October, Alexei's condition was considerably better and the hematoma disappeared, but he had to undergo orthopedic therapy to straighten his left leg.^[58]



Rasputin with his children



Alexandra Feodorovna with her children, Rasputin and the nurse Maria Ivanova Vishnyakova who later claimed that Rasputin had raped her during a visit to Verkhoturys Monastery, photo from McManus-Young Collection (1908)

The court physician, Botkin, believed that Rasputin was a charlatan and his apparent healing powers arose from his use of hypnosis, but Rasputin took only a few lessons as his teacher Gerasim Papnadato was expelled from St. Petersburg in 1914.^{[59][60][61]} Felix Yusupov, one of Rasputin's enemies, suggested that he secretly drugged Alexei^[62] with Tibetan herbs which he had obtained from a "quack doctor", Peter Badmayev, but his three envelopes with powder were politely rejected by the court.^{[63][64]} For Fuhrmann, these ideas on hypnosis^[65] and drugs flourished because the imperial family lived such isolated lives.^[66] (Since the Revolution of 1905 they lived almost as much apart from Russian society as if they were settlers in Canada.^{[66][67]}) For Moynahan, "There is no evidence that Rasputin ever summoned up spirits, or felt the need to; he won his admirers through force of personality, not by tricks."^[68] For Maria Rasputin and Vladimir Sukhomlinov, it was magnetism. For Shelley, the secret of his power lay in the sense of calm, gentle strength, and shining warmth of conviction.^[69]



The hunting lodge in Spala

Controversy

Even before Rasputin's arrival, the upper class of St Petersburg had been widely influenced by mysticism. Individual aristocrats were obsessed with anything occult.^{[70][71]} In those days, Imperial Russia was confronted with a religious renaissance, a widespread interest in spiritual-ethical literature and non-conformist moral-spiritual movements, an upsurge in pilgrimage and other devotions to sacred spaces and objects. The "God-Seeking" were shaping their own ritual and spiritual lives (e.g. Helena Blavatsky, George Gurdjieff, and Pyotr Ouspensky).

Alexandra worried a lot about herself, her son and his condition; she had invited her physician 42 times within two months.^[72] Earlier Papus had visited Russia three times, in 1901, 1905, and 1906, serving the Tsar and Tsarina both as physician and occult consultant.^[73] After the healer Nizier Anthelme Philippe died, Rasputin came into the picture.

In his religious views, Rasputin was close to the so-called Khlysts, an obscure Christian sect with strong Siberian roots, who affirmed "the existence of a perpetual warfare between flesh and spirit"^[74] calling themselves "Men of God". In September 1907, the 'Spiritual Consistory' of Tobolsk accused Rasputin of spreading false doctrines: kissing and bathing with women.^{[75][76]} According to Oleg Platonov: "The case was fabricated so clumsily that it 'works' only against its own authors. No wonder the documents were never published. Nothing but allusions were made to its existence."^[10] In Summer 1908, Theofan traveled to Siberia and examined all the documents from the Tobolsk inquiry, but failed to find anything of interest.^[77] According to Smith Rasputin usually welcomed his female followers with a kiss, even if he saw them for the first time.^[78]

While fascinated by Rasputin in the beginning, the ruling class of St Petersburg began to turn against him as he had privileges no one else had, easy access to the Imperial family. On 8 December 1908, Rasputin brought his wife to Tsarkoe Selo.^[40] In 1909, within four months, Rasputin had visited the Romanovs six times.^[79] sometimes unexpected. It seems Rasputin "knew how to amuse and enliven the little boy".^[80] Alexandra was in conflict with her mother- and sister-in-law about her continuing patronage of Rasputin. In



Rasputin, Hermogen and Iliodor in 1906. Alexandra ordered Hermogen banished to a monastery after he beat Rasputin with a crucifix 16 December 1911; Iliodor went into exile after the attack by Khioniya Guseva in June 1914.

March 1910, the press started a campaign against Rasputin.^[81] Nikolai Pavlovich Sablin and Charles Sydney Gibbes were sent to Rasputin to find out more.^[82] Theofan lost his interest and Stolypin wanted to ban him from the capital.^[note 6] When Rasputin arrived in St Petersburg, he returned to his home village within three weeks and took his daughter for education to Kazan.^[83]

Rasputin had lost his anonymity and in early 1911, was instructed either by the Tsar,^[84] or the Council of Ministers to join a group of pilgrims.^[85] Rasputin first visited the Kiev Pechersk Lavra and then Pochayiv Lavra in western Ukraine. From Odessa, the pilgrims sailed to Constantinople, Smyrna, Ephesus, Patmos, Rhodes, Cyprus, Beirut, Tripoli, and Jaffa. Around Lent 1911, Rasputin arrived in Jerusalem and the Holy Land.^[86] On his way back, he visited his right-wing friend Iliodor who gathered huge crowds in Tsaritsyn. When Vladimir Kokovtsov became prime minister, he asked the Tsar permission to authorize Rasputin's exile to Tobolsk, but Nicholas refused. "I know Rasputin too well to believe all the tittle-tattle about him."^[87]



"On Sundays after Mass, he would usually meet people in the house of some aristocratic admirer and talk to them." Rasputin (left) and his daughter Maria (right) in 1914.

In 1912, Hermogen, who told Rasputin to stay away from the palace, repeated the rumours that Rasputin had joined the Khlysty. Iliodor, hinting that Rasputin was Alexandra's paramour, showed Makarov a satchel of letters, one by the Tsarina and four by her daughters written in 1909 and 1910.^[88] The given^[89] or stolen^[90] letters were handed by Kokovtsov to the Tsar,^{[91][92]} but using a hectograph the content was spread through the capital. Kokovtsov offered Rasputin 200,000 rubles, equaling \$100,000, to leave the capital. He also ordered the newspapers not to mention Rasputin's name in connection with the Empress.

There is little or no proof that Rasputin was a member of the Khlysty,^[94] but he does appear to have been influenced by their practices,^{[95][96]} accepting some of their beliefs, for example, those regarding sin as a necessary part of redemption.^{[97][98]} Suspicions that Rasputin, a good dancer,^{[99][100]} was one of the Khlysty tarnished his reputation right until the end of his life.^{[101][102][note 7]} The Holy Synod frequently attacked Rasputin, accusing him of a variety of immoral or evil practices. Finally, Nicholas II accepted investigations on Rasputin. The new bishop in Tobolsk, Alexey V. Molchanov, started to investigate the case on 1 September 1912. Two months later the bishop concluded Rasputin was an "orthodox Christian ... who sought the truth"^[106] and the investigations were stopped.^{[62][66][107]} Rasputin had become one of the most hated people in Russia,^[108] but after the Spala incident, Rasputin regained influence at court and also in church affairs.^[109]



Ecstatic ritual of *Khlysts* ("radeniye"). In September 1907 Rasputin had to appear for the Ecclesiastical court of Tobolsk, accused of being a Khlyst. No evidence was found.^[93]

On 21 February 1913, Rodzianko ejected Rasputin from the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan shortly before the celebration of 300 years of Romanov rule in Russia. He had established himself in front of the seats which Rodzianko, after great difficulty, had secured for the Duma.^[110] Rasputin's behaviour was discussed in the Fourth Duma,^[111] and in March 1913, the Octobrists, led by Alexander Guchkov, commissioned an investigation on the close relation between Rasputin and the Tsarina. The emperor and his wife referred to Rasputin as Grigori, our "Friend" or "Holy man", avoiding his last name.^[note 8] Worried about the threat of a scandal, the Tsar asked Rasputin to leave for Siberia; but a few days later, at the demand of the Empress, the order was cancelled. Late 1913 Rasputin had become an influential factor

in Russian politics.^[113] Nicholas decided to criticize the politicians.^[114] The Tsar dismissed Kokovtsov on 29 January 1914.^[115] He was replaced by the decrepit and cynical Ivan Goremykin,^[116] and Pyotr Bark as Minister of Finance.

Assassination attempt

On 27/28 June, Rasputin arrived from the capital in Pokrovskoe.^[117] Around 3:00 pm^{[118][119]} on Sunday 12 July [O.S. 29 June] 1914,^[75] Rasputin went out from the house in reply to a telegram he had received from the Tsarina on the threat of war.^{[120][121][122][123][124]} At that moment, he was suddenly approached by what looked like a beggar. When Rasputin was checking his pockets for money, this woman, the 33-years old Khionia Guseva who had her face concealed with a black kerchief, pulled out a dagger.^[125] She stabbed Rasputin in the stomach, just above the navel. Rasputin asserted that he ran down the street with his hands on his belly. Guseva claimed that she chased him, but Rasputin grabbed a stick from the ground and hit her.^[118] Covered with blood, Rasputin was brought into his house. A doctor from a neighboring village gave first aid. The next day, Alexandr Vladimirov arrived from Tyumen and assessed the mesentery was scraped.^[126]



Rasputin in his salon among admirers early 1914, most likely on his birthday; his father is the 4th from the right. His telephone is visible on the wall. Photo by Karl Bulla.

On Thursday, Rasputin was transported by steamboat to Tyumen, accompanied by his wife and daughter. The Tsarina^[127] sent her own physician, Roman Vreden^[128] and after a laparotomy and more than six weeks in the hospital, where he had to walk around in a gown, unable to wear ordinary clothes, Rasputin recovered. On 17 August, he left the hospital,^[129] by mid-September he was back in Petrograd. According to his daughter Maria Rasputin was never the same man afterwards and started to drink dessert wines.^{[130] [131]} (N.B. Since the beginning of the war, the manufacture, and sale of vodka was forbidden and the state merely lost one third of its revenue. It is likely Rasputin drank sweet or semi-sweet Crimean or Georgian wine.^[132]) Rasputin believed that Iliodor and Vladimir Dzhunkovsky had organized the attack.^{[133][134]}



Rasputin in the hospital

A few days later Iliodor, dressed as a woman, fled all the way around the Gulf of Bothnia to Christiania.^{[135][note 9]} Guseva, a fanatically religious woman who had been his adherent in earlier years, "denied Iliodor's participation, declaring that she attempted to kill Rasputin because he was spreading temptation among the innocent."^[137] On 12 October 1914, the investigator declared that Iliodor was guilty of inciting the murder, but the local procurator decided to suspend any action against him for undisclosed reasons.^[138] Guseva was locked in a madhouse in Tomsk and a trial was avoided.^[139] The Tsar ordered more measures to protect Rasputin's life.

Yar restaurant incident

From October 1914, Stepan Petrovich Beletsky, head of the police, exercised 24-hour surveillance of Rasputin and his apartment.^[140] Two sets of detectives were attached to his person;^[141] one was to act undercover.^[142] From 1 January 1915 modified reports from Okhrana spies — the "staircase notes" — had

to provide evidence about Rasputin's lifestyle.^[143] They were given to the Tsar in an attempt to convince him to break with Rasputin.^[144] In reading it, the Tsar observed that on the day and hour at which one of the acts mentioned in the document was alleged to have taken place, Rasputin had actually been in Tsarskoe Selo.^{[145][146]}



Yar restaurant, on the St. Petersburg chaussée, around 1910. Photo by Adolph Erichson

On 25 March 1915, Rasputin left for Moscow by night train. On the next day, he was followed by eight Okhrana policemen. On the evening, he is said, while inebriated, to have opened his trousers and waved his "reproductive organ" in front of a group of female gypsy singers in the Yar restaurant.^{[147][148]} According to Smith in the original police report, there is "not one word about Rasputin being drunk, about any insulted Gypsy chorus girls, about indecent language, public exhibitionism, and most critically, about any arrest."^[149] They were celebrating a business deal and had invited two journalists.^{[150][151]} A few days later a waiter assessed the story as bunkum when talking to Gerard Shelley.^[152] An unreliable report was presented in June; the police did not interview any singer or witness in the restaurant. The footballer and secret agent R. H. Bruce Lockhart mentioned he saw everything with his own eyes;^[153] Smith proves he lied. The incident did not happen in Summer, and in April Lockhart stayed in Kiev.^[154] Also for Bernard Pares, it was taken that the police were the enemies of Rasputin, and that the many stories which reached the public were simply their fabrications.^[155]

The Memoirs by M. Paléologue

The incessant retreat in Galicia and the rumours of heavy losses have given rise to a lot of swearing and gossip, according to A. Spiridovich.

Friday, June 11, 1915: There has been unrest in Moscow for several days. Rumours of treason were circulating among the crowd and accusations have been made openly against the Emperor, the Empress, Rasputin and all the influential persons at Court. Yesterday grave disorder broke out and it is continuing to-day. A large number of shops belonging to Germans, or with signs with German terminations, have been looted.

Saturday, June 12, 1915: Order has been restored in Moscow. Yesterday evening the soldiers had to use their arms. At first the police let the rioters do as they liked, by way of giving vent to the feelings of anger and humiliation which the Galician defeats have aroused among the citizens of Moscow. But the agitation assumed such a scale, that it has become necessary to suppress it by force.

Sunday, June 13, 1915: The disorders in Moscow have been particularly serious owing to one element to which the press descriptions have not alluded. On the Krasnaïa Plotchad, the famous "Red Square," which has witnessed so many historical scenes, the mob insulted the Royal Family, demanded that the Empress should be incarcerated in a convent, the Emperor deposed and the crown transferred to the Grand Duke Nicholas, Rasputin hung, etc.

There were also stormy demonstrations at the gates of the Convent of Martha-and-Mary, the abbess of which is the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, the Empress's sister and widow of the Grand Duke Sergei. This charming woman, who spends her whole life in devotion and good works, has been smothered with insults, for the people of Moscow have long been convinced that she is a German spy; they even go so far as to allege that she is hiding her brother, the Grand Duke of Hesse, in her convent.

All this news has caused the greatest consternation at Tsarskoye Selo. The Empress is violently attacking Prince Yusupov, the Governor-General of Moscow, for allowing the imperial family to be exposed to such outrages by his lack of judgment and moral weakness.

Yesterday the Emperor received the President of the Duma, Mikhail Rodzianko, who urged him very strongly to convoke the Imperial Duma at once. The Emperor gave him a sympathetic hearing, but has not given the slightest inkling of his intentions.^[156]

On June 19, 1915, after anti-German pogroms in Moscow, which he could not quickly stop, he was dismissed from the post of chief of the Moscow Military District, and on September 3, 1915 — from the post of commander-in-chief over Moscow.^[157]

World War I

See also: World War I

After the First Balkan War, the Balkan allies planned the partition of the European territory of the Ottoman Empire among them. During the Second Balkan War, the Tsar tried to stop the conflict since Russia did not wish to lose either of its Slavic allies. Rasputin warned the Tsar not to become involved and promoted a peaceful policy in the "Petersburg Gazette".^{[161][162]} Rasputin became the enemy of Grand Duke Nicholas, a panslavist, his brother Peter and their wives Milica and Anastasia of Montenegro, eager to go to war and push the Austrians out of the Balkans.^{[163][164]}

On 25 July [O.S. 12 July] 1914, the Tsar received a formal appeal for help from the Serbs, the beginning of the July Crisis. The Council of Ministers decreed war preparations starting on the next day, and partial mobilisation as a precaution against the Austro-Hungarian Empire.^[165] On the 26th, Rasputin spoke out against Russia going to war; he begged the Tsar to do everything in his power to avoid it.^[166] On the 27th, Anna Vyrubova asked Rasputin to change his mind on the war, but he stuck to his position.^[162] On the 28th, Austria declared war on the Kingdom of Serbia, leading to a partial mobilization of Russia. Then Sazonov joined with the military leaders in successfully pressing general mobilisation on Nicholas II.^[167] In the morning of the 29th, the wavering Tsar signed both a partial against Austria and a general mobilization with Austria and Germany. From the hospital, Rasputin sent several telegrams to the court through Vyrubova, expressing his fears for the future of the country. "If Russia goes to war, it will be the end of the monarchy, of the Romanovs and of Russian institutions."^[168] "Such was his worry that his wound opened up and began to bleed again." (After his return to Petrograd Rasputin "spoke of the war only in ambiguous and apocalyptic terms, showing that he did not approve of it and foresaw great misfortunes.")^[169]

A flurry of telegrams between the Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Tsar^[170] led to the cancellation of Russian general mobilization; the Tsar chose a partial mobilisation in the evening.^[171] As it would make a rapid general mobilisation impossible, Nicholas II met with protests from Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov. According to Samuel Hoare: "I believe myself that, had he not insisted upon general mobilisation on July 30th, the Emperor would have continued to hesitate, and Russian mobilisation ... would never have been possible".^[172] On the 31st Germany demanded that Russia stopped general mobilisation. ^{[note 10][note 11]} "On 1 August 1914, Germany declared war on Russia, turning the Third Balkan War into a continental and, within a few days, a world war."^[178]

Russia hoped that the war would last until Christmas, but at the end of 1914 the situation on the Eastern front had become disastrous. The size of the Russian army was enormous; neither the transport nor the armament production was sufficient.^[179] In the big cities, there was a shortage of food and high prices and the Russian people blamed all on "dark forces". In the end of May shops and houses in Moscow, owned by

Germans, were attacked.^[180] The crowd called for the Empress to be locked up in a convent, like her sister Ella.^[181] In June/July, the Tsar dismissed four ministers, N.A. Maklakov, I.G. Shsteglovitov, V.K. Sabler and Sukhomlinov; the latter one on charges of abuse of power, inactivity, and high treason. They were replaced by Polivanov, A.A. Khvostov, N.B. Shcherbatov, and A.D. Samarin. When the German army occupied Warsaw in August 1915, the situation looked extremely grave because of a shortage in weapons and ammunition.^[note 12] Nobody had expected according to Sukhomlinov the war would take so long. On August 9, 1915, Sazonov, foreign minister, announced: "The government dangling in mid-air, with no support neither from below or above."^{[183][184]} The country was almost on the brink of a final bankrupt. The situation was so serious that there were rumours of revolution and talk of a separate peace with Germany.^[185] Lenin wrote an article for the Zimmerwald Conference, convened by anti-militarist socialist parties, calling for the defeat of the Russian government.^[186] He rejected both the defense of Russia and the cry for peace; instead, he promoted a civil war. Trotsky, an Ukrainian, declared: "The right of nations to select their own government must be the immovable fundamental principle of international relations."^[187]

On 23 August 1915, the Tsar Nicholas took supreme command of the Russian armies, and replaced not only Grand Duke Nicholas but also Nikolai Yanushkevich, hoping this would lift morale. As he was absolutely incompetent in military matters, his action disturbed the Entente Powers and delighted the Germans.^[189] He was undoubtedly led to this fateful decision by the insistence of the Tsarina and of Rasputin^{[190][191]} who were, according to Nikolay Maklakov, the Interior Minister the only ones who supported the Tsar in his decision. According to A.D. Samarin "The supreme leader of the people cannot simultaneously be a subordinate military commander."^[192] (The Tsar had the rank of colonel.) According to Sukhomlinov, the Tsar was unusually certain about his decision.^[193] Probably, as he felt 'the heavy burden of political leadership slipping from his shoulders with immense relief'.^[194] However, his frequent absences from the Russian capital proved to be dire consequences for himself as well as for Russia. Nicholas's physical distance from the capital created a political vacuum. This void was filled, with the encouragement of her husband, by the empress.^[195]

All the ministers, even Ivan Goremykin, realized that the change would put Alexandra and Rasputin in charge and threatened to resign.^{[196][197]} Rodzianko expected his decision would harm the dynasty. All the Romanovs despised his decision; Duchess Maria Pavlovna wasn't the only one who feared the Empress would "be the sole ruler of Russia". The Progressive Bloc "announced that it was willing to work with the government if Nicholas would appoint ministers that enjoyed true popular support."^[198] It demanded an adjournment of the Duma and the forming of a new cabinet, a "government of confidence".^[199] The Tsar, unconvincible, rejected these proposals. The Imperial Duma was sent into recess on 3 September by an ukaze and would not gather again until 9 February 1916. On 26 September Nikolai Shcherbatov was replaced by Alexei Khvostov, a candidate from the extreme right. On 27 September, the Duma deputy Vasily Maklakov published his famous article in the *Moscow Gazette*, describing Russia as a vehicle with no brakes, driven along a narrow mountain path by a "mad chauffeur".^[200] On 26 October Alexander



Entrance of Gorochovaia 64 near the Tsarskoe train station. Rasputin's 5-room apartment, No. 20, paid by either the Empress,^[158] Alexander Taneyev or the banker Dmitry Lvovich Rubinstein, was on the third floor and had a view into the courtyard.^[159] From May 1914, he lived there with his housemaids Dunya and Katya Pecherkina, his niece Anna and his two daughters, who were students at one of Petrograd's private colleges. "There was no sign of luxury in the flat. Nothing but bare, painted boards, hard deal chairs and a simple table."^[160]

Krivoshein resigned as minister of State Property.^[201] All the ministers who were in "opposition", except for Count Ignatiev, were dismissed in the months that followed the summer crisis and their démarche.^[202]

Rasputin and Alexandra



Alexandra Feodorovna in the Mauve Boudoir in the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoe Selo (c. 1909)

Meeting with Alexandra personally possibly once or twice a month, Rasputin became her personal adviser through daily telephone calls or weekly meetings with Vyubova. According to D. Smith: She really thought that they needed somebody who was strong, who could guide Nicholas as he led the country.^[203]

Rasputin's personal influence over the Tsarina had become so great that it was he who ordered the destinies of Imperial Russia while she compelled her weak husband to fulfill them.^[204] According to Pierre Gilliard, "her desires were interpreted by Rasputin, they seemed in her eyes to have the sanction and authority of a revelation."^[205] According to Nicholas V. Riasanovsky:

"Thus a narrow-minded, reactionary, hysterical woman and an ignorant, weird peasant - who apparently made decisions simply in terms of his personal interest, and whose exalted position depended on the empress's belief that he could protect her son from hemophilia and that he had been sent by God to guide her, her husband, and Russia - had the destinies of an empire in their hands."^[206]



Ivan Goremykin. "Seventy-five years of age, a conservative, and a life-long bureaucrat, he was, in his own words, 'pulled like a winter coat out of mothballs,' to lead the government ..."^[188]

On 19 August 1915, after an unsuccessful attempt to discredit Rasputin and the Tsarina in a newspaper, Prince Vladimir Orlov^[62] and Vladimir Dzhunkovsky, the latter had fabricated the Yar incident, were discharged from their posts, followed by further restrictions on the liberty of the Press ^[207]. The Tsar then pronounced the relationship between Rasputin and his wife to be a private one, closed to debate.^{[208][209][210][211]} (Nikolai sent a letter to Nicholas II begging him to deprive Empress Alexandra of power and a sixteen-page tract on the misdeeds of the prime minister, Stürmer.^[212])

Around 15 November 1915 Alexandra and Rasputin advised the Tsar in military strategies in Latvia where the Germans were stopped at the Daugava.^[213] It seems the two also dominated the Holy Synod. When Samarin, a prominent critic of Rasputin, was appointed in the Holy Synod, Rasputin left for Siberia,^[214] but Alexandra sent a cable telling him to return to the capital.^[215]

On 6 December 1915 Rasputin was invited to see Alexei when the boy had returned from Stavka (in Mogilev) because of a cold, and nosebleeds.^[216] According to Gaillard "The Imperatritsa once again attributed the improvement in the Tsesarevich's health to Rasputin's prayers, she remained convinced that the child had been saved thanks to his help."^[217]

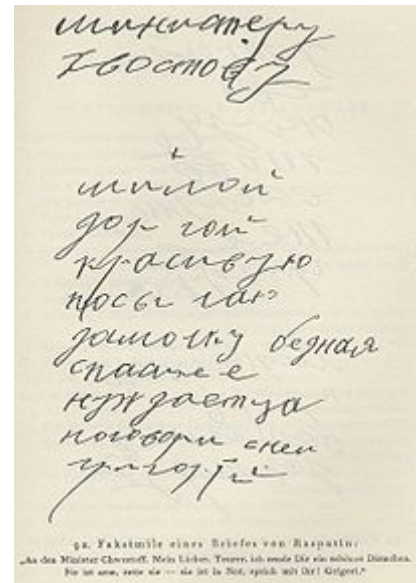
Government

Nicholas's hostility to parliamentarism emerged at the very beginning of his reign in 1894; to him, it would cause Russia to disintegrate.^[218] According to S. Kulikov: "Nicholas was pursuing the entirely specific idea of gradually replacing absolutism with dualism, rather than with parliamentarism."^[218] After Nicholas issued the October Manifesto in 1905 granting civil liberties and a national legislature, the Committee of Ministers was replaced with a Council of Ministers. In the middle of 1907 it became clear that the revolution was over and had been replaced by reaction. On July 1, 1914, the Tsar suggested that the Duma - half of the deputies were nobles - should be reduced to merely a consultative body. On 25 August 1915 the Progressive Bloc, including the Cadets, the Progressists, the Zemstvo Octobrists, the Right-wing "Union of October 17, the Right "Center", and even the more progressive wing of Nationalists, neighbors of the reactionary Black Hundreds, was formed.^{[219][220]} It had the support of the press, the public opinion and, to a considerable extent, most of the Council of Ministers as well.^[221] The deputies tried to bring the Council "uninterested in reform"^[222] under control of the Duma,^[223] but their demands for a "ministry of confidence" were not received by the Tsar."^[224]

In late 1915, there was a shortage of food and of coal in the big cities; Alexander Trepov was appointed as crisis manager in the Minister of Railways. Five key ministries would gather on a more regular basis to solve the transport question.^[225] In November 1915 Rasputin told Goremykin (or the obstinate Tsar) it was not right not to convene the Duma as all were trying to cooperate; one must show them a little confidence.^[226] In January 1916, Rasputin was opposed to the plan to send the old Goremykin away.^[227] who had persuaded the Tsar to reject the proposals of the Progressive Bloc for a government of confidence.

On 20 January 1916 Boris Stürmer was appointed as Prime Minister. (In Berlin regarded as an indisputable sign of a desire to open negotiations for peace).^[228] According to B. Pares, Stürmer was prepared to pose as a semi-liberal and would try in this way to keep the Duma quiet. The new chairman of the Council was not opposed to the convening of the Duma, as Goremykin had been, and he would launch a more liberal and conciliatory politic. The Duma gathered on 9 February, on the condition not to mention Rasputin.^[229] The deputies were disappointed when Stürmer made his indistinct speech. For the first time in his life, the Tsar made a visit to the Taurida Palace, suggesting he was willing to work with the legislature. According to Milyukov Stürmer would keep his further dealings with the Duma to a minimum.^[229]

In the meantime, Khvostov and Beletsky had concocted a plan to kill Rasputin; the only way to get rid of him.^[230] What happened is hard to understand as every author has a different view on the intrigues between Khvostov, who was not appointed as Prime Minister,^{[231][232][233]} and Beletsky who was keen to become minister of the interior himself,^[234] or seems to have been fed up with his superior.^[235] Khvostov was told to contact Iliodor and buy his manuscript, as he tried to bribe the Tsarina with publishing "The Mad Monk", his book on Rasputin.^[236] Khvostov repeated the rumour which accused Rasputin of working for a separate peace and suggesting that Alexandra, Vyrubova, and Rasputin were German agents or spies.^{[237][238][239][240][241][242] [243][244]} His plan to arrange the murder of Rasputin became public knowledge. Rather paranoid, Rasputin went to Alexander Spiridovich, head of the palace police, on 1 March. He was constantly in a state of nervous excitement. Khvostov, failing in protecting Alexandra and Rasputin, had to resign within three days and was banished to his estate.



Rasputin's awkward handwriting in a request to minister Khvostov. From: René Fülöp-Miller (1927) Rasputin: The Holy Devil. According to Shelley he was taught handwriting by the Tsarina.

Boris Stürmer was then appointed on the Ministry of Interior, the most powerful of all, which had under its control governors, police, and a Special Corps of Gendarmes, the uniformed secret police. He had risen to the status of virtual dictator.^[245] In the same month, Minister of War Alexei Polivanov, who in his few months of office had brought about a recovery of the efficiency of the Russian army, was removed and replaced by Dmitry Shuvayev. According to Victor Chernov, the campaign of the party of the Empress and Rasputin was waged steadily against the eight ministers who "had resisted the removal of the commander in chief (Grand Duke Nikolai), and one after the other they were discharged."^[246] According to Giles Milton:



The right-wing Alexei Khvostov, a cunning, ambitious young man

British intelligence reports, sent between London and Petrograd in 1916, indicate that the British were not only extremely concerned about Rasputin's displacement of pro-British ministers in the Russian government but, even more importantly, his apparent insistence on withdrawing Russian troops from World War I. This withdrawal would have allowed the Germans to transfer their Eastern Front troops to the Western Front, leading to a massive outnumbering of the Allies and threatening their defeat. Whether this was actually Rasputin's intent or whether he was simply concerned about the huge number of Russian casualties (as the Tsarina's letters indicate) is in dispute, but it is clear that the British perceived him as a real threat to the war effort.^[247]

By Spring 1916 the army had been boosted by another two million soldiers and equipment. On 18 March, at the request of France, the Russian army started the Lake Naroch Offensive, which was an utter failure. Rasputin met on Lake Ladoga with Gerard Shelley, whom he told he planned to go to the front,^[248] though General Mikhail Alekseev refused to see him. He would resign immediately when Rasputin appeared at the front. In a letter dated 5 May 1916, the Tsar asked his wife not to tell Rasputin about his plans concerning the Brusilov Offensive as troops were sent from Riga to the south. Early July, Aleksandr Khvostov, Alexei's uncle, not in good health, was appointed as Minister of the Interior and Makarov as Minister of Justice. Foreign Minister Sazonov, decisive when the war started, pleaded for an independent and autonomous Russian Poland. He was demoted on 10 July and the office given to Stürmer. On 21 July, the minister of agriculture Naumov refused to participate any longer in the government. According to Vladimir Gurko, the Council of Ministers as a whole declined continually in importance.

Around 6 September, Alexander Protopopov had been invited as Minister of the Interior. Placing the vice-president of the Duma in a key post might improve the relations between the Duma and the throne.^{[249][250]} Protopopov made himself ludicrous when he expressed his loyalty to the Imperial couple, and his contacts on peace and credit in Stockholm (without being authorized) became a scandal.^[note 13] Protopopov had changed sides and would not support the demands for constitutional reforms, he rapidly became Enemy Number One of the 'progressive forces'.^[259] When Protopopov raised the question of transferring the food supply from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of the Interior, a majority of the zemstvo leaders announced that they would not work with his ministry. His food plan was universally condemned by the Council of Ministers.^[227]

On 24 October (O.S), the Kingdom of Poland was established by its occupiers Germany and Austria. On 26 October, Sukhumlinov, who had been released from prison on instigation of Alexandra, Rasputin, and Protopopov.^[260] This gave rise to a spate of rumours concerning the Empress's pro-German sympathies.^[261] The opposition parties decided to attack Stürmer, his government, and the "Dark forces".^[262] A strongly prevailing opinion that Rasputin was the actual ruler of the country was of great psychological importance.^[263]



Alexandr Protopopov and Kabinet in September 1916

Imperial Duma

On 1 November, the government under Boris Stürmer^[265] was openly attacked by Pavel Milyukov in the Imperial Duma. In his speech "Rasputin and Rasputitsa" he spoke of "treachery and betrayal, about the dark forces, fighting in favour of Germany"^[266] with the name of the Empress at the head of his list.^[250] He highlighted numerous governmental failures, concluding that Stürmer's policies placed in jeopardy the Triple Entente. After each accusation, many times without basis and lying intentionally, he asked "Is this stupidity or is it treason?" and the listeners demonstrated their belief that it was treason.^{[267][268]} It was published in newspapers with a large number of empty spaces, as a result of censorship. It was said there was not a single typewriter in Russia which had not been used to copy Milyukov's diatribe. His illegally printed speech was spread in flyers (according to Alexander Spiridovich by Puriskevich' hospital train) on the front and at the Hinterland.^[269] Stürmer and Protopopov asked in vain for the dissolution of the Duma.^[270] On 4 November Ivan Grigorovich and Dmitry Shuvayev declared in the Duma that they had confidence in the Russian people, the navy, and the army; the war could be won. Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, his older brother George and his younger brother Nikolai, all requested the Tsar to fire Stürmer and Aleksei Bobrinsky, the minister of agriculture (and a spokesperson for landed interest).^[271] As a concession to the Duma Stürmer was succeeded by Alexander Trepov, the minister of Transport. The Duma sessions were postponed for a week to allow the new administration to review the situation and to draw some conclusions from the increasingly complicated situation.^[267]



Pavel Milyukov succeeded in firing the engines of radical protest in the country.^[264]

On 19 November, the day the Duma was opened Trepov tried three times to begin his speech, but he was drown out from the benches. The popular Vladimir Purishkevich held a two-hour speech, accusing the government of "Germanophilism" and stifling "public initiative."^{[272][273]} The monarchy – because of what he called the "ministerial leapfrog" – had become "fully discredited".^{[274][275]} The trouble was that the different ministries did not cooperate. (According to Sukhomlinov, the ministers were not allowed to cooperate directly, without contacting and approval of the Tsar.^[276]) To Lieven "each ministry was an empire unto it self."^[277] Purishkevich, a buffoon character, stated that Rasputin's murky influence over the Tsarina had made him a threat to the empire: "While Rasputin is alive, we cannot win".^[278]

Prince Felix Yusupov was impressed by the remarkable speech.^[279] The next day, he visited Purishkevich, who quickly agreed to participate in the murder of Rasputin. Also, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich received Yusupov's suggestion with alacrity, and his alliance was welcomed as indicating that the murder would not be a demonstration against the [Romanov] dynasty.^[280] Yusupov then approached a young officer Sergei

Mikhailovich Sukhotin (1887–1926), a friend of his mother. Sukhotin served the Life Guards Infantry Regiment,^[281] but recuperating from injuries in Hotel Astoria, changed into a casino and hospital for (wounded) officers.^[282]

At the beginning of November, the Progressive Bloc decided again to stress the demand for a responsible government,^[283] that is, for a real parliamentary government^[224] Perhaps V. Chernov was more precise when he wrote "the bloc did not even demand a ministry responsible to the Duma. It left the appointment of the individual ministers as a prerogative of the monarch, and was anxious only for a personal composition of the ministry to assure the confidence of the broad groups of society; i.e., e a ministry formed from the Bloc."^[284] According to Figes, there was practically no one ... who did not see the need for a fundamental change in the structure of the government.^[264] Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich of Russia, Dmitri's father, tried to persuade Nicholas to change his policy on his nameday (6 December) ^[285] and accept a new constitution in order to save the monarchy.^{[note 14] [note 15]} Also, Rodzianko told Nicholas the truth, after being urged by the Tsar's mother and sisters.^[289] To him, it was clear Alexandra should not be allowed to interfere in state affairs until the end of the war.



Rasputin and the Imperial couple.
Anonymous caricature in 1916

Alexander Guchkov, an Old Believer and strong opponent of Nicholas II, came "to the painful conclusion the situation could only improve when the Tsar was sent away",^[290] Guchkov reported that five members of the Progressive Bloc, including himself, Kerensky, Nekrasov, Konovalov, and Tereschenko would consider a coup d'etat, to force the government to make concessions to the Duma.^[291] Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, prince Lvov and general Mikhail Alekseyev, who believed secret strategic information had gone through the hands of Alexandra and Rasputin, attempted to persuade Nicholas to send the Empress away either to the Livadia Palace in Yalta or to England.^[292] (For Paléologue, Alexandra Feodorovna was too impulsive, wrong-headed and unbalanced to imagine a political system and carry it out logically.) "Prince Lvov and General Alekseev made up their minds that the Tsarina's hold on the Tsar must be broken in order to end the pressure being exerted on him, through her, by the Rasputin clique."^[293] Alexandra, who bombarded her husband with advises, suggested to her husband to expel Guchkov, Milyukov, Polivanov, and Prince Lvov to Siberia, to dismiss Trepov and Makarov and to send the Duma deputies home, at least until February.^{[294][295][296]} Then the Duma would lose and Rasputin would gain influence. "To the Okhrana it was obvious by the end of 1916 that the liberal Duma project was superfluous, and that the only two options left were repression or a social revolution."^[297]

Trepov and Protopopov

On 10 November 1916 the bellicose Alexander Trepov had been appointed as the new prime minister, but he could not count on a favourable reception. He made the dismissal of the exceedingly nervous Alexander Protopopov, who never had "any effective proposal for the solution of any of the grave and critical problems",^[298] an indispensable condition of his accepting the presidency of the Council. On 11 November Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich wrote a candid letter to his brother warning him that the political situation was tense:

The public hatred for certain people who allegedly are close to you and who are forming part of the present government has, to my amazement, brought together the right, the left and the moderate; and this hatred, along with the demands for changes are already openly expressed.^[299]



Alexander F. Trepov

The Tsarina tried to keep Protopopov appointed on his influential position carrying out the duties of the minister of the internal affairs.^[300] Both Alexandra and Protopopov traveled to Stavka. The Tsar wrote to his wife: "Please, don't bring our Friend", but Rasputin and Vyrubova would send five telegrams to support her.^{[301][302]} Trepov was furious and threatened to resign.

On 17 November, Nikolai Pokrovsky, pro-British like Trepov, was appointed as foreign minister. On 31 November, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg tried to initiate a peace-making process^[303] and to end the war on base of his Septemberprogramm (1914). On 2 December,^[304] Trepov ascended the tribune in the Duma to read the government programme. The Prime-Minister wasn't allowed to speak and had to leave the rostrum three times. Being advised by Trepov, Pokrovsky said that Russia would never sign a peace treaty with the Central Powers which caused a storm of applause in the Tauride Palace.^[305] According to Puriskevich, Alexandra managed Russia as her boudoir, and attacked Rasputin: "an illiterate moujik shall govern Russia no longer!"^[306] On 3 December Grand Duke Paul asked his nephew to remove Protopopov and Stürmer, and install a government that had the confidence of the people ... before it is too late.^[307]

The 'peace offensive' was bound to fail,^[308] the terms too vague to be taken seriously.^{[308][309][310]} The allies refused an intermediation by president W. Wilson on 18 December [O.S. 5 December] 1916.^[311] On the same day, Harold Williams (or John Hanbury-Williams) wrote to Lloyd George:

No one has the faintest idea what the Emperor will do. He has been at Tsarskoe Selo for some days, but the only thing that has been done is to appoint a Minister for Foreign Affairs, mainly I suppose because there had to be a minister to reply to the German peace proposals. The new Minister [Pokrovsky] is a very honest and hard working man, though he is not a diplomat. He will certainly not take any part in separate peace talk, and altogether I think that for the moment the idea of a separate peace is knocked on the head. But if Milyukov and the other Duma speakers had not smashed Stürmer God only knows what might have happened. On the whole the general feeling is cheerful. The country is united and absolutely determined. The gang is cornered, its intrigues are exposed, and it seems impossible that the fate of such a huge Empire should remain much longer at the mercy of the plotting of a hysterical woman with a depraved peasant.^{[312][313]}

On 7 December, the cabinet demanded that Protopopov should go to the Emperor and resign. At the request of the Tsar, his wife, Anna Vyrubova and Rasputin combined Protopopov, who had only asked for a temporarily sick leave, was kept in office. Trepov, having failed to eliminate Protopopov, tried to bribe Rasputin in the following days.^{[315][316]} With the help of general A.A. Mosolov,^[317] his brother-in-law, Trepov offered a substantial amount of money, a bodyguard and a house to Rasputin, if he would leave politics.^{[318][319][320]} Rasputin refused and hardly left his house, except a visit to Vyrubova.

On 12 December, Trepov went to Stavka. The Tsar wrote to his wife:

Well now, about Trepov. He was quiet and submissive and did not touch upon the name of Protopopov. Probably my face was ungracious and hard, as he wriggled in his chair. He spoke of the American note, of the Duma, of the near future and, of course, of the railways. He, unfolded his plan concerning the Duma - to prorogue it on the 17th of December and reassemble it on the 19th of January, so as to show them and the whole country that, in spite of all they have said, the Government wish to work together. If in January they begin blundering and making trouble he is prepared to hurl thunders at them (he told me his speech in brief) and close the Duma finally.^[321]



In 1908, Fräulein Anna Vyrubova "openly became his fanatical admirer, the driving force of his cult, and was at the head of his loyalists".^[314] According to Stürmer, she was mesmerized by Rasputin; for Pierre Gilliard and Spiridovich Vyrubova had been "ignorant and devoid of common sense" when she entered the court.

Rasputin suggested to keep the Duma closed till February; Alexandra and Protopopov supported him.^[322] On Friday, 16 December Milyukov stated in the Duma: "... maybe [we will be] dismissed to 9 January, maybe until February", but in the evening the Duma was closed until 12 January, by a decree prepared on the day before.^[323]

In the afternoon Rasputin returned from the "banya" at 3 p.m. Around 8 p.m., he told Anna Vyrubova, who presented him a small icon, signed and dated at the back by the Tsarina and her daughters,^[324] of a proposed midnight visit to Yusupov in his palace. Protopopov, a late visitor who only stayed ten minutes, begged him not to go out that night.^{[325][326]}

Nelipa thinks what happened next was intentionally timed; both Grand Duke Dmitry and Purishkevich, assisting at the front, had arrived in the city. Rasputin was murdered on the night after the Duma went into Christmas recess. According to Nelipa, "the forthcoming recess would eliminate the otherwise predictable uproar from any of the delegates at the Tauride Palace, had the murder been arranged a few days earlier."^[327]

Murder

There are very few facts between the night Rasputin disappeared (Saturday, 17 December) and the following Monday when his corpse was dredged up from the river. "As far as the Yusupov Palace is concerned, the Police had no right to make inquiries unless invited to do so. The Director of Police was unable to ask the simplest of questions such as who was present at the palace on the night," and "nothing other than a cursory search was allowed inside."^[328] So the murder of Rasputin has become something of a legend, some of it invented, perhaps embellished or simply misremembered.



On the left side of the Moika Palace was Felix' apartment with the basement underneath

Assassination

Yusupov, who had met Rasputin in the past six weeks for treatment, invited Rasputin to the Moika Palace, intimating his wife, Princess Irina, would be back from Koreiz and Rasputin could meet her after a housewarming party. (She later denied she was involved and sued MGM).^[329] After midnight, Prince

Felix went with Dr. Stanislas de Lazovert to Rasputin's apartment. Yusupov did not use the regular stairs at this unseemly hour, but a stairwell for servants in the courtyard. After half an hour, they returned to the recently refurbished palace, where a sound-proof room, part of the wine cellar, had been specially prepared for the crime with carpets, stain-glass lamps, and furniture. Four bottles, containing different kinds of sweet wine, were placed either in a window, a side-board or on a table. Waiting in his drawing room on another floor were the fellow conspirators: Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, Purishkevich, his assistant Lazovert and Sukhotin. Perhaps some women were invited but Yusupov did not mention their names; Radzinsky suggested Dimitri's step-sister Marianne Pistohlkors and film star Vera Karalli.^[330] Smith came up with Princess Olga Paley and Anna von Drenteln.^[331] Somewhere in the building were a major-domo and a valet, waiting for orders.^[332]



Felix Yusupov (1914) married Irina Aleksandrovna Romanova, the only niece of the Tsar.

According to both Yusupov and Purishkevich, a gramophone in the study played interminably the Yankee Doodle when Rasputin came in.^[333] Yusupov mentions in his unreliable memoirs, he then offered Rasputin tea and petit fours laced with a large amount of potassium cyanide. According to the diplomat, Maurice Paléologue, who in later years rewrote his diary, they discussed spirituality and occultism;^[334] the antique dealer Albert Stopford wrote that politics was the issue.^[335] Purishkevich, a teetotaler, mentions he could hear bottles were opened. Felix played his guitar and sang some gypsy ballads. After an hour or so, Rasputin was fairly drunk.^[note 16] Yusupov went upstairs and came back with a revolver. Rasputin was shot at close quarters by Felix sitting left of him. The bullet entered the chest under the heart, it left the body on the right side.^[337]



Basement of the Yusupov Palace on the Moika in St Petersburg, refurbished in Renaissance style, where Grigori Rasputin was murdered

According to Maria Rasputin, it went all very quick; no sweets, no guitar nor record playing. Rasputin would have become suspicious as Yusupov's wife never showed up.^[338] According to Yusupov's protégé, Victor Contreras, Lazovert who was assigned to poison the wine and cakes for Rasputin, couldn't do it. After the murder, Lazovert seems to have written a letter to Yusupov, where he reported that he, the doctor, who gave the oath of Hippocrates, found no strength to add the poison.^[339]

However, Yusupov did not succeed in killing Rasputin. According to Maria Rasputin, the bullet wounds were slight. After a while, "Rasputin opened his eyes and became aware of his predicament."^[342] He struggled up the stairs to reach the first landing, opening an unlocked door to the courtyard, which had been—not long before—used by the conspirators. Alarmed by the noise, Purishkevich went down and fired at Rasputin four times, missing three times. Only one bullet penetrated the right kidney and lodged into the spine.^[343] Rasputin never reached the gate,^[344] but fell into the snow. According to Nelipa, both shots were fatal; he would have died within 10–20 minutes, but when the body made a sudden movement, one of them placed his revolver on the forehead and pulled the trigger.^[note 17] Sukhotin put on Rasputin's fur coat, his galoshes, and gloves. He left together with Dmitri Pavlovich and Dr. Lazovert in Purishkevich's car,^[347] to suggest that Rasputin had left the palace alive.^[348] Because Purishkevich's wife refused to burn the fur coat and the rubber^[349] galoshes^[350] in her small fireplace in the ambulance train, the conspirators went back from the Warsaw station to the Moika palace with these large items.^[351]

Two city policemen on were on duty, and heard a "rapid fire" of gunshot sequence.^[344] They had also seen cars coming and going and discussed the issue on the Pochtamtsky Bridge. One of them questioned Yusupov's butler for details, but was sent away.^[352] Twenty minutes later, he was re-invited to the palace. Purishkevich boasted he had shot Rasputin, and asked the policeman, aware of his mistake, to keep it quiet for the sake of the Tsar.^{[353][354][355][356][357][358][359]} However, this policeman told his superiors everything he had heard and seen.^[360]

After the body was wrapped in a broadcloth, Dmitri and his fellow conspirators drove in the direction of Krestovsky island.^[361] The sentry on the bridge was asleep which allowed the murderers to draw up quite close to the railing and throw the corpse into a hole in the ice of the Malaya Nevka River. They forgot to attach weights to the feet to make the body sink. They drove back without noticing that one of Rasputin's galoshes was stuck between the pylons of the bridge.

Days following

The next morning, around 8 a.m., Protopopov phoned, and asked Rasputin's daughters where their father was. At eleven, he still had not shown up. When the police arrived, they searched the apartment for compromising correspondence with the Tsarina.^[364] In the meantime, Rasputin's disappearance was reported by Maria to Vyrubova.^[365] When Vyrubova spoke of it to the Empress, Alexandra pointed out that Princess Irina was absent from Petrograd. When Protopopov mentioned the story reported by the policemen at the Moika, where Purishkevich boasted he had killed Rasputin, they all began to believe that he had been lured into an ambush.

On the Empress' orders, a police investigation commenced and traces of blood were discovered on the steps to the backdoor of the Yusupov Palace. When interrogated, Felix explained the blood with a story that by accident one of his sporting dogs was shot by Grand Duke Dmitri. In the early afternoon, traces of blood were detected on the parapet of the Bolshoy Petrovsky bridge and one of Rasputin's galoshes was found under the bridge.^[366] Maria and her sister affirmed it belonged to their father. With twilight approaching the search had to be abandoned until the following morning. In the evening, Yusupov tried to leave the capital, and pay a visit to his wife, but he was stopped at the train station.

The next day, it was sunny, but the temperature dropped to -14 C. The river was frozen. The police concentrated upon the vicinity of the Petrovsky bridge. Then the Neva shores were explored by divers, but the ice seriously hampered their work which produced no result.^[367]

When an Uhlenhuth test showed, the blood was of human origin they refused to tell where the body was. Felix and Dmitri were placed under house arrest in the Sergei Palace and without permission of her husband.^[368] Felix and Dmitri both tried to gain access to the empress. The Tsarina refused to meet the two but said they could explain to her what had happened in a letter. Purishkevich assisted them writing and left the city at ten on Sunday evening, heading to the front.



Felix's private apartment was on the east side of the palace, Embankment 94. Between the basement and his rooms, halfway up, was a door opening onto a cobbled forecourt of the house adjoining. The photo shows the courtyard (belonging to Moika Embankment 92, also owned by the Yusupovs) and the secret door (between the first and second window on the right).^{[340][341]}



Pochtamtsky or Postoffice Bridge



The wooden Bolshoy Petrovsky Bridge, from which Rasputin's body was thrown into the Malaya Nevka River

On Monday morning, 19 December,^[369] Rasputin's beaver-fur coat and the body were discovered close to the river bank, 140 meters west of the bridge.^[370] The police and government officials arrived within 15 minutes. In the late afternoon, it was decided the frozen corpse had to be taken to the desolate Chesmensky Almshouse. On the next day, Makarov was fired, hindering a police investigation, as he had given Felix permission to leave for the Crimea. In the evening, an autopsy on the thawed corpse by Kosorotov, a forensic expert, in a poorly lit mortuary room^{[362][371]} established that the cause of his instant death was the third bullet in his frontal lobe. (Kosorotov's official report is still missing.^[372])



Rasputin's corpse on a sledge. "The body is that of a man of about 50-years old, of medium size, dressed in blue embroidered hospital robe, which covers a white shirt. His legs, in high leather boots, are tied with a rope, and the same rope ties his wrists.^[362] The twine that had originally bound the hands had snapped allowing the hands to separate by the time the corpse was uplifted onto the ice. The corpse stiffened with raised arms."^[363]

On 21 December, Rasputin's body was taken in a zinc coffin from the Chesmensky Almshouse^[374] to be buried in a corner on the property of Vyrubova ^[62] and adjacent to the palace.^[375] "The weather was grey, with 12 frost". The burial at 8.45 in the morning was attended by the Imperial couple with their daughters, Vyrubova, her maid, and a few of Rasputin's friends, such as Lili Dehn, Protopopov and Colonel Loman. It is not clear whether Rasputin's two daughters were present, although Maria Rasputin claimed she was there.^{[376][377]} On the 22nd, Irina's father, Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, wrote his brother to close the case. After a week and without an interrogation or a trial, the Tsar sent Grand Duke Dmitry Pavlovich, and Yusupov into exile.^{[378][379]} He ensured that Rasputin's murder would never become a matter for the court to judge.^[380] On Saturday, 24 December, Dmitri left at two in the morning for Qazvin in Persia; Felix for Rakitnoe, his estate near Belgorod. The police were ordered to stop their inquest. ^{[381][382]} Neither Puriskevich, nor Sukhotin, nor Lazovert was punished at all. On Sunday, 25 December, the Imperial family gathered with Rasputin's widow and children at Anna Vyrubova.^[383]



Chesmensky Almshouse^[373]

Towards the February Revolution

On 27 December, a hesitating Nikolai Golitsyn became the successor of Trepov, who was dismissed. Golitsyn pleaded with the Emperor he was ill and to cancel his appointment, citing his lack of experience with politics.^[384] On 3 January Dmitry Shuvayev, who did not speak any foreign language, was succeeded by Mikhail Belyaev as Minister of War, likely at the request of the Empress.^[385]

"In the seventeen months of the 'Tsarina's rule', from September 1915 to February 1917, Russia had four Prime Ministers, five Ministers of the Interior, three Foreign Ministers, three War Ministers, three Ministers of Transport and four Ministers of Agriculture. This "ministerial leapfrog", as it came to be known, not only removed competent men from power, but also disorganized the work of government since no one remained long enough in office to master their responsibilities."^[274]

The Duma President Mikhail Rodzianko, Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna and British ambassador Buchanan joined calls for Alexandra to be removed from influence, but Nicholas still refused to take their advice.^[386] Many people came to the conclusion the problem was not Rasputin.^{[387][388]} According to

Rodzianko the Empress "exerts an adverse influence on all appointments, including even those in the army." For Katkov "Protopopov became indispensable at the palace as adviser, source of information and executor of the Empress' schemes."^[389] On 11 January the Duma opening was postponed to the 25th.^[390] No one exactly knew when they would resume their deliberations. On 14 January an messenger, sent by Georgy Lvov, proposed to Grand Duke Nicholas in Tiflis that he take control of the country. , saying that the army would not support a coup.^[273] On January 24, the Central Military and Industrial Committee of Petrograd appealed to the people to be prepared for universal demonstration at the opening of the Duma.^[391] On 29 January eleven members of the workmen's group of the Committee have been arrested, charged with belonging to revolutionary parties and fomenting a labor movement with the ultimate aim of transforming Russia into a Social Democratic republic. Milyukov pointed out that the Duma was now the center of the attention of the entire country, that only the Duma must and could dictate to the country the conditions of the struggle against the government, that it alone must unify this entire struggle and offer suitable slogans.^[392] A conference in Moscow of various independent organizations called to consider the food problem was forbidden.^[393] According to Maxim Gorki there were 36,000 wagons full of various goods and foodstuffs stranded along the lines, but there are no locomotives to move them, and where locomotives can be found the majority are not in working condition. All stores in town were exhausted. By January 1917 there had been 1,200,000 desertions and the number was still increasing.^[394] On 14 February police agents reported that army officers had, for the first time, mingled with the crowds demonstrating against the war and the government on Nevsky Prospekt. Kerensky and Chkheidze took the opportunity to attack the Progressive bloc and the Cadets, accusing them of "lack of will to act".^[395] According to Kerensky Andrei Ivanovich Shingarev attacked the medieval regime?^[396] For Milyukov the next step was a palace revolution with the assistance of officers and troops.^[397] A change of monarchs might be the way out of the blind alley ...^[398] "Chief among them was the desire to bring the war to a successful conclusion in conjunction with the Allies; and the very cause of their opposition was the ever deepening conviction that this was unattainable under the present government and under the present regime."^[250] On 8 February, at the wish of the Tsar, Vasili Maklakov, together with Protopopov ..., drafted the text of the manifesto on the dissolution of the Duma (cancelled and scheduled to resume on 14 February 1917).^{[399][400]} On 14 February mass demonstrations broke out. On 15 February Kerensky made a speech in the Duma that almost called for the assassination of the emperor.



The abdication of Nicholas II on March 2, 1917. In the royal train: Minister of the Court Baron Fredericks, General N. Ruzsky, V.V. Shulgin, A.I. Guchkov, Nicholas II. ([State Historical Museum](#))

The February Revolution began, as it seems, on the 22 February when the Tsar had left for the front.^[401] (Due to heavy snowstorms, tens of thousands of freight cars were stuck on the tracks, with the bread and fuel.) The next day (International Women's Day) women in Saint Petersburg joined the strike, demanding an end to Russian food shortages, the end of World War I; the latter slogan made the movement not merely alien to the Duma, but positively hostile to it.^[402] On 24 February all the newspapers of Petrograd ceased publication simultaneously with a general strike in almost all the factories. On the 25th the whole of St Petersburg came out into the streets; in the late afternoon four people got killed. The Tsar ordered Sergey Semyonovich Khabalov, an inexperienced and extremely indecisive commander of the Petrograd military district to suppress the "impermissible" rioting by force.

On the 26 February the center of the city was fenced off; the bridges were barricaded. To Duma did not gather as most parties disagreed, but compromised by calling a meeting of the leaders for midday and the Duma session for 2 p.m. on the next day.^[403] In the evening mutiny broke out in the barracks of the Pavlovsky Regiment. Rodzianko received an ukaze from his Majesty that he had decided to interrupt the Duma until April, leaving it with no legal authority to act.^[404]

[note 18] According to Buchanan: "It was an act of madness to prorogue the Duma at a moment like the present."^[406] On Monday 27th, the Kadets, in a so-called "unofficial" sitting, insisted that the Duma go immediately into official session, in defiance of the imperial order of dissolution. The majority and Rodzianko did not agree. The Duma, the only center of authority commanding respect, refused to head the revolutionary movement.^[407]--> According to Kerensky "this refusal to continue in session formally was perhaps the greatest mistake of the Duma."^[408] Between noon and two o'clock the delegates decided to form a Provisional Committee for relations with persons and institutions on the question of restoring public order and quiet in the capital, lead by Rodzianko and backed by major Moscow manufacturers and St. Petersburg bankers. Around 3 p.m. the Tauride Palace was occupied by crowds, armed soldiers and public and took over the defense of the building. In the Marinsky Palace the Council of Ministers of Russia held its last meeting at 4 p.m. (In between Ivan Shcheglovitov was already arrested; Protopopov was sent home? According to Kerensky that happened on the 24 February.^[409]) The council formally submitted its resignation to the Tsar when they became aware they were cut off from the telephone. The government moved to the Admiralty building.



General Kornilov and the head of the Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky, with his guards in Tsarskoe Selo after they arrested the Empress Alexandra, on 8 March 1917

The Provisional Committee

The first meeting of the Provisional Committee ordered the arrest of all the ex-ministers and senior officials.^[410] In the middle of the night Milyukov announced the Provisional Committee had taken over the power, controlling the troops and heading the revolt; Rodzianko agreed to head it as such, became its (vulnerable) leader. -->

On 28 February, at five in the morning, the Tsar left Mogilev, (and directed also Nikolay Iudovich Ivanov to Tsarskoe Selo) but was unable to reach Petrograd as revolutionaries meanwhile controlled train stations around the capital. Around midnight the train was stopped at Malaya Vishera, turned, and in the evening of 1 March Nicholas arrived in Pskov. In the meantime the units guarding the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo left for Petrograd, "declared their neutrality", and thus abandoned the imperial family. Then the Provisional Committee agreed with the Petrograd Soviet to create the Provisional Government of Russia. Rodzianko invited Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich and Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich to put their signatures to the drafting of the Manifesto, in which Emperor Nicholas II recommended to introduce in Russia the constitutional system. (The Tsarina refused, and Nicholas II said that he was unable to understand the position of a constitutional monarch, who reigns but does not govern.^[411]) Wednesday, 1 March, was the worst day, according to Stopford.^[412] Because of the opposition of the Kadets in the Duma, e.g. Kerensky?, Rodzianko gave up the idea to meet the Tsar.^[413] On 2 March (?) Nicholas agreed to send troops back to the front and permitted general Nikolai Ruzsky to open negotiations with Rodzianko.^[414] The Tsar proposed him forming a government, except the appointment of the Ministers of War, Marine and Foreign Affairs?^[415] At some time Prince Lvov and not Rodzianko was chosen as the head of the government? Later that day Nicholas agreed to accept a ministry responsible to the legislative chambers.^[416] In the evening Vasily Shulgin and Guchkov arrived at Pskov to persuade the Tsar, accompanied by Vladimir Freedericksz, to resign,^[417] which he had already done in favor of his son on the condition that he remain with me until his majority, with my brother Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich of Russia as regent. Guchkov was astounded at the ease with which Nicholas consented to abdicate. For V. Chernov "the Russian throne had been recognized as the personal property of each Tsar, with the right to grant it to whomever he wished."^[418] The time of the abdication was given as 3 p.m., the moment when the decision was taken, so as to forestall allegations that it took place under pressure from the Duma delegates.^[419] The next day the Provisional Committee and the Provisional Government assembled at the

Grand Duke who was not particularly enchanted by his brother's imperially generous gift.^[420] He declared that he would accept to power of state only if it would be offered him by the future Constituent Assembly.^[421]

After his grave was found in the park around Alexander Palace, the coffin was taken to the town hall but then to the Imperatorsky pavilyon railway station of Tsarskoye Selo. It was taken on order of Georgy Lvov, the prime minister, to Imperial stables in the capital and arrived in the morning of 10 March. Around midnight F.P. Kupchinsky, a former poet and war journalist, drove out of town, with a special permission of V.A. Yurevich, the mayor and head of the Petrograd City Militia, to pass the revolutionary guards. The truck went in the direction of Polytechnical Institute, situated in the forest. As a propagandist of cremation since 1906 it is likely he knew how to destroy the remains without a trace. Accompanied by six students Rasputin's corps was burned in the furnace of a steam boiler between 3 and 7 in the morning.^{[423][424][425][426][427]}

It was a carefully planned action with a well-thought-out propaganda cover according to Sergey Fomin.



Imperial stable (1917)



The boiler room of the Petrograd Peter the Great Polytechnic Institute where Rasputin was cremated.^[422]



Post-mortem photograph of Rasputin showing the bullet wound in his forehead

Contemporary evidence

The official police report, with details gathered in two days, and stopped with the idea the murder was solved, is unconvincing. "Unfortunately, after the Soviets came to power, many of the documents that formed part of the official secret investigation have either been destroyed, or have disappeared."^[428] What is left are the biased accounts of 19-year-old Maria Rasputin and the murderers, the 29-year-old Felix Yusupov and 47-year-old Vladimir Purishkevich, and others as Iliodor. The theatrical details of the murder given by Felix have never stood up to scrutiny. He changed his account several times; the statement given to the Petrograd police, the accounts given whilst in exile in the Crimea in 1917, his 1927 book, and finally the accounts given under oath to libel juries in 1934 and 1965 all differ to some extent.

"When asked [in 1965] by his attorney as to his motive killing Rasputin, he announced that he was motivated by his 'distaste for Rasputin's debaucheries.' This represented a major shift from his argument since 1917 that emphasized that he was motivated solely by patriotism for Russia."^[429]

His role in the murder has been called into question, being consumed by the thought that "not a single important event at the front was decided [during the war] without a preliminary conference" between Alexandra and Rasputin.^[430] According to D. Smith: "People have just read Yusupov for almost 100 years now and assume he's telling the truth, when it's clearly a work meant to self-justify killing a man in cold blood."^[431]

Concerning the details of the murder, not even the murderers could give consistent accounts. Differing opinions ranged from the colour of his 'fantasia style' shirt he wore,^{[134][432]} how many times Yusupov went up the stairs, to whose weapon or car was used^[433] or even where he was finally wounded. Neither Purishkevich nor Yusupov mentioned the close quarter shot to the forehead.^[434] Purishkevich said he fired at Rasputin from behind at a distance of twenty paces and hit Rasputin in the back of the head. Unfortunately there is no photo of the rear of Rasputin's head.^[435]

The caliber of the weapon that was used cannot be measured.^[436] "The hypothesis that the gunshot to the head was caused by an unjacketed bullet (of British origin) is not supported by the forensic findings or police forensic photographs."^[437] Nelipa, with twenty years experience in the medical pathology field, thinks it is not very likely a Webley .455 inch and an unjacketed bullet was used because its impact would have been different.

According to the 1916 autopsy report by Dmitri Kosorotov, two bullets had passed through the body, so it was impossible to tell how many people were shooting and to determine whether only one kind of revolver was used. "Kosorotov never stated that different caliber weapons were responsible."^[438]



The second bullet came from
Vladimir Purishkevich

British Secret Intelligence Service

There were two officers of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) in Petrograd at the time. Lieutenant Oswald Rayner and Captain Stephen Alley, born in a Arkhangelskoye Palace near Moscow in 1876, where his father was one of the prince's tutors. Rayner knew Yusupov since they had met at University of Oxford.^[439]

According to Sir Samuel Hoare, head of the British Intelligence Service in Russia: "If MI6 had a part in the killing of Rasputin, I would have expected to have found some trace of that".^[440] "Hoare later came to the realization that in the days after the murder, Russian "rightists" had been trying to frame the British for the crime, and him, in particular.^[441] Hoare, Rayner, and presumably the rest of the mission, knew of the plot ...^[442] but "the archives of the British intelligence service (MI6) do not hold a single document linking Rayner, Hoare, or any other British agent or diplomat to the murder."^[443]

Works

- In 1907, Grigori Efimovich Rasputin published *Life of an experienced pilgrim* (<http://www.omolenko.com/en/rasputin/st-grigori-rasputin-life-of-an-experienced-pilgrim.htm>).
- In Summer 1915, *My Ideas and Thoughts* (<http://www.omolenko.com/en/rasputin/st-grigori-rasputin-ideas-and-thoughts.htm>)

Perception

Rasputin was more multifaceted and more significant than the myths that grew up around him:

- Rasputin was neither a monk nor a saint; he never belonged to any order or religious sect,^[448] He was a strannik, who impressed many people with his knowledge and ability to explain the Bible in an uncomplicated way.^[449] According to Baroness Sophie Buxhoeveden, he was a "starets in making."^[145]
- According to Lili Dehn, Rasputin spoke an almost incomprehensible Siberian dialect.^[62] According to Andrei Amalrik, Rasputin "never produced a clear and understandable sentence. Always something was missing: the subject, the predicate or both."^[450] He spoke little and was limited to short, jerky and often incomprehensible phrases, jumping from one topic to another. According to Gerard Shelley, he had a voice that once heard could never be forgotten.
- It was widely believed that Rasputin had a gift for curing bodily ailments. "In the mind of the Tsarina, Rasputin was closely associated with the health of her son, and the welfare of the monarchy."^[451] According to G. Shelley, he fitted in with their creed and plan for the regeneration and salvation of Russia.^[452]
- Brian Moynahan describes him as "a complex figure, intelligent, ambitious, idle, generous to a fault, spiritual, and – utterly – amoral." He was an unusual mix, a *muzhik*, prophet and [at the end of his life] a party-goer.^[453] Many Russian cities have a strip club called Rasputin.^[454]
- "At first sight, Rasputin looks like a symbol of decadence and obscurantism, of the complete corruption of the imperial court in which he was able to float to the top. And so he has usually been treated in the history books. The temptation to wallow in the rhetoric of the lower depths in describing him is almost irresistible. And yet the truth is somewhat simpler: Rasputin was only able to play the part he did because of the dispersal of authority which very much deepened after Stolypin's death, and because of the bewildered and unhappy isolation in which the royal couple found themselves."^[455]
- "To the nobles and Nicholas's family members, Rasputin was a dual character who could go straight from praying for the royal family to the brothel [bathhouse] down the street."^[456] "Rasputin actually attributed half the propaganda against him to Grand Duke Nicholas."^[457] The myth about his dirty fingernails was just part of the campaign of the aristocracy against him.^{[65][458]}
- For Victor Chernov, Rasputin provided a mixture of sexual with religious hysteria and was an unwitting agent;^[459] people around Rasputin were interested in strategic information.
- The cases around Rubinstein and Manuilov were fabricated to harm Rasputin,^[460] who never cared much about money and gave it away as soon he had received it.^{[461][462]} He had built up a reputation of being a generous man. According to Vladimir Bonch-Bruевич Rasputin liked to say, "One must live for the common people, one must think about



A strannik (Странник) by Vasily Perov



Everyone who met Rasputin remarked on his eyes and how hypnotic they were. His "shining steel-like" or "bright and brilliant" and "intelligent" eyes became legendary.^[444] According to Shelley they seemed to emit soft, velvety rays, caressing one almost as one feels the caress of a melodious voice. According to Theofan, Paul Kurllov and Count Kokovtsov he had "piercing" eyes;^[445] to Yusupov his eyes were "phosphorescent"; to Tamara Karsavina he had the eyes of a maniac;^[446] Elena Dzhhanumova wrote in her diary, "What eyes he has! You cannot endure his gaze for long."^[447]

them".^[463] Besides alms Rasputin spent large sums in restaurants, cafes, music halls and in the streets ...^[104]

- In Summer 1916, Anna Vyrubova, Lili Dehn, and Rasputin went to Tobolsk, Verkhoturys and his home village. Most of the villagers were strongly against Rasputin's returning to Petrograd. This he refused to do. Even the Tsarina was wondering why Rasputin came back to the capital.^[62]
- The conspirators, who did not accept a peasant being so close to the Imperial couple, had hoped that Rasputin's removal would cause the Tsarina to retreat from political activities. They also believed that Rasputin was an agent of Germany, but he was more of a pacifist, and opposed to all wars.^{[265][464][465]} The troubles of the country were attributed to him and the Tsarina.
- The energetic Rasputin showed an interest in going to the front to bless the troops, but Grand Duke Nicholas, threatened to hang him if he dared to show up. It is mentioned in the Memoirs of Anton Denikin.^[466] A similar story is connected with General Mikhail Alekseev, the successor of Grand Duke Nicholas, who refused to meet him in Spring 1916.^[467]
- Rasputin came to be seen on both the left and the right as the root cause of Russia's despair.^[468] On the left, he was despised as an enemy of democracy while for many on the right he was damaging the monarchy. His eventual murderers were nobles who believed his disappearance would strengthen the throne.^[469]
- According to Shelley, in Britain, most were convinced that Rasputin was a dangerous person and that it would help the cause of the Allies if he was forcibly removed.^[470]
- For the *Russian Morning*, "The murder of Rasputin would change nothing, for he was never the reason for Russia's problems, only one of the symptoms. The reason lay in Russia's eternal "darkness born of irresponsibility and political arbitrariness."^[471]
- The provisional government was afraid that Rasputin's grave, which was later discovered, would become a place of religious pilgrimage, and that the memory of him would not be turned into a legend by the Black Hundreds.
- In August 1917, the Russian poet Alexander Blok started to work for the Extraordinary Commission of Inquiry for the Investigation of Illegal Acts by Ministers and Other Responsible Persons of the Czarist Regime,^[472] established on 4 March 1917, to transcribe the interrogations of those who knew Grigori Rasputin.^[473] Between 1924-1927, the report, "The fall of the Tsarist regime", was published.^[474] In 1995, a missing part, the XIII section, a 500-page document, was on sale. It was bought by Mstislav Rostropovich on an auction and investigated by Edvard Radzinsky and ^[475] suggest that [some] accusations about Rasputin's sexual dissoluteness were false.^[476]
- "The damage inflicted by Rasputin was enormous, but he tried to work for the benefit of Russia and the dynasty," Gurko assessed "and not to harm them."
- In March 1918, the new Bolshevik government took the highly controversial decision to sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, which enabled the new Communist state to take Russia out of the War, to the evident alarm of Britain and her allies.^[477]
- In Russia, Rasputin is seen by many ordinary people and clerics, among them the late Elder Nikolay Guryanov, as a righteous man.^[478] However, Alexy II of Moscow said that any attempt to make a saint of Rasputin, Josef Stalin and Ivan the Terrible would be "madness."^{[479][480]}



Ergorov bathhouse c. 1910 in St Petersburg



In 1992, the Museum of Grigory Rasputin in the selo of Pokrovskoye, Tyumen Oblast was set up

- In 1920, Maria Rasputin and her husband, Boris Soloviev, fled to Vladivostok and they settled in France. In 1935, she moved to the United States, where she worked as a tiger-trainer in the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. In her three memoirs – it is hard to find out which one is the most reliable,^[481] probably the first one, certainly not the last one^[482] – she painted an almost saintly picture of her father, insisting that most of the negative stories were based on slander and the misinterpretation of facts by his enemies.

Persistent errors

- The date of Rasputin's death is sometimes recorded as being 16 December 1916 (Old Style), or 13 days later on 29 December 1916, using New Style,^[note 19] but the murderers left after midnight for Rasputin's apartment when his guards were gone. The initial attempts to kill Rasputin began on the 17 December and it is supposed he died within between 3:00 and 4:00 am.^[483]
- There was alcohol in his body, but no water found in his lungs^{[484][485]} and no cyanide in his stomach according to Kosorotov.^{[486][487][488]} Maria Rasputin asserts that her father did not like sweet things and avoided pastry;^[489] after the attack by Guseva, he suffered from hyperacidity and avoided anything with sugar.^[490] She and Simanovitch, doubted he was poisoned at all.^{[102][491][492]} According to Douglas Smith, no one would have survived exposure to potassium cyanide as described in Yusupov's story.^[493]
- Also, the "drowning story" became a fixed part of the legend, but Rasputin was already dead when thrown into the water.^[494] "There is no evidence that Rasputin swallowed water after being pushed into the Neva or that he had freed his arm to make the sign of the cross."^[495]
- Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated on Sunday, 28 June [O.S. 15 June] 1914; Rasputin was attacked in his home village *two weeks later* on Sunday, 12 July [O.S. 29 June] 1914, so it is not "one of the great coincidences of history"^[496] as Colin Wilson stated.

In popular culture

Main article: Grigori Rasputin in popular culture

After his death, the memoirs of those who knew Rasputin became a mini-industry. The basement where he died is a tourist attraction. Numerous film and stage productions have been based on his life. He has appeared as a fictionalized version of himself in numerous other media, as well as having several beverages named after him. More than 150 items on Rasputin-like bands, comics, and other products bear his name.

- In a lost silent film, *The Fall of the Romanovs* (1917), Iliodor played himself.
- *Rasputin and the Empress* is a 1932 film about Imperial Russia. The film's inaccurate portrayal of Prince Felix and Irina Yusupov as Prince Chegodieff and Princess Natasha caused a major lawsuit against MGM.
- *Rasputin's End* (1958) is an opera in three acts; (libretto by Stephen Spender, music by Nicolas Nabokov).
- *Rasputin the Mad Monk* (1966) is a horror film with Christopher Lee as Rasputin.



Drawing of Rasputin by Elena Nikandrovna Klokacheva in State Hermitage Museum

- *I Killed Rasputin* (1967) a biographical film directed by Robert Hossein. Gert Fröbe stars as the main subject, Grigori Rasputin.
- Tom Baker turned in a chilling yet sympathetic performance as Rasputin in the 1971 film *Nicholas and Alexandra*.
- In 1975, Elem Klimov finished a film about Rasputin called *Agony*. The road to screening took him nine years and many rewrites, still the script has most of the myths and legends. The final edit was not released in the USSR until 1985, due to suppressive measures partly because of its orgy scenes and partly because of its relatively nuanced portrait of Tsar Nicholas II.^[497]
- The disco single "Rasputin" (1978) by the German-based pop and disco group Boney M references Rasputin's alleged affair with Alexandra Fyodorovna. The tune is based on the Turkish song "Kâtibim". This song was later covered by the band Turisas.
- *Rasputin*, an opera, was written by Jay Reise on his own libretto on request of New York City Opera and was devoted to Beverly Sills. The world premiere took place on the 17th September 1988.
- Rasputin was portrayed by Alan Rickman in the 1996 HBO biographical television film "Rasputin: Dark Servant of Destiny".
- Rasputin was depicted as the vengeful antagonist in the 1997 American animated film *Anastasia*, in which his speaking voice was performed by Christopher Lloyd and his singing voice by Jim Cummings.
- In 2003, Einojuhani Rautavaara composed *Rasputin*, an opera in three acts.
- In 2011, Josée Dayan directed a French-Russian produced a film on Rasputin for television called *Raspoutine* starring Gérard Depardieu in the role of Rasputin and Vladimir Mashkov as Nicholas II
- Rasputin was the subject of the BBC Radio 4 series *Great Lives*, first aired on 1 January 2013.^[498]
- Rasputin is the subject of a musical theatre production, *Ripples to Revolution*, by Peter Karrie^[499]
- With the aim of casting Leonardo DiCaprio as Rasputin, Warner Bros. have bought the rights to a screenplay by Jason Hall.^[500]
- The Russian series *Grigori R*, directed by Andrey Malyukov, began on Russian TV on 27 October 2014 with Vladimir Mashkov as Rasputin and Andrey Smolyakov as the investigator Smitten.^{[501][502]}



Anna Theodora Krarup painted several portraits of Rasputin, this one signed 13 XII 1916.

Notes

1. Colin Wilson said in 1964, "No figure in modern history has provoked such a mass of sensational and unreliable literature as Grigori Rasputin. More than a hundred books have been written about him, and not a single one can be accepted as a sober presentation of his personality. There is an enormous amount of material on him, and most of it is full of invention or willful inaccuracy. Rasputin's life, then, is not 'history'; it is the clash of history with subjectivity."^[5] See also Wilson's book *The Occult: a history* (1971), where he writes on p. 433, "Rasputin seems to possess the peculiar quality of inducing shameless inaccuracy in everyone who writes about him." "Of the diabolical schemer portrayed by Sir Bernard

Pares there is no sign." [1] (<http://selfdefinition.org/colin-wilson/Colin%20Wilson%20-%20The%20Occult.pdf>) According to Dominic Lieven, "more rubbish has been written on Rasputin than on any other figure in Russian history."^{[6][7]}

2. All the dates are in Old style unless New Style is mentioned.
3. His parents were Efim Vilkin Rasputin (24 December 1841 – autumn 1916) and Anna Parshukova (1839/40 – 30 January 1906)
4. His children were Michael (29 September 1888 – 16 April 1893); Anna (29 January 1892 – 3 May 1896); Grigori (25 May 1894 – 13 September 1894); Dmitri (25 October 1895 – 16 December 1933); Matryona (26 March 1898 – 27 September 1977); Barbara (28 November 1900 – 1925); Paraskeva (11 October 1903 – 20 December 1903)
5. hemophilia B was widespread among European royalty, see Haemophilia in European royalty.
6. In 1911, Yeniseysk Governorate was designated as the place of exile for vagrants. In 1913, there were already 46.700 exiles living in the region.
7. The basis for the denunciation of Rasputin as a Khlyst was mixed bathing, a common custom among the peasants in many parts of Siberia.^{[103][104][105]}
8. His enemies charged his name derived from the verb 'rasputnichat', which means "to lead a dissolute life" and "to be drunken and dissipated".^[112] Others suggested the noun 'Rasputnik', a debauchee, 'Rasputitsa', spring and fall periods in which, because of heavy snow or rain, unpaved roads are impassable, 'Rasputye', a place where several roads part, 'rasput', a crossroads or "Rasputiny" meaning dissolute, lewd, wanton, lecherous, immoral, profligate.
9. The former monk Iliodor had written a book on Rasputin, entitling it "The Holy Devil" (1914). It was an appalling and libelous account alleging amorous ties between Grigori Rasputin and the Empress.^[136] Maxim Gorki published his manuscript.
10. For more details on Causes of World War I see A.J.P. Taylor,^[173] R.J. Evans^[174] and James Joll (2007) "The origins of the First World War". In recent years academic historians have reassessed the exchange of the Willy–Nicky correspondence.^{[175][176][177]} They paid special attention to the telegram of Nicholas II dated July 29, 1914
11. On 1 September [O.S. 19 August] 1914, St Petersburg by ukase changed its name to Petrograd, in order to remove the German words 'Sankt' and 'Burg'.
12. "For a period of time in 1915 up to 25% of the Russian soldiers were sent to the front unarmed, with instructions to pick up what they could from the dead."^[182]
13. From 16 April till 20 June Milyukov, the leader of the right wing of the Cadet party,^[251] Protopopov and a delegation of 16 delegates (6 members of the State Council and the 10 members of the Duma) had visited France, and England.^[252] Protopopov stayed behind and traveled to Sweden, where met the German industrialist and politician Hugo Stinnes, Knut Wallenberg, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs,^[253] Hellmuth Lucius von Stuedten, the former German ambassador to Russia, then in Sweden, and Fritz M. Warburg, a banker and member of the Warburg family on 23 June.^{[254][255][256][257]} Protopopov was extremely open about his attempt. According to Chernov: "The Warburg interview opened up a career for Protopopov and made him acceptable as minister. Above all, it won him the favour of Rasputin and the Empress."^[258] It seems that Berlin did not take such meetings seriously: seen the identity of the members, and the lack of any clear authority.
14. On the day of his coronation the Tsar swore to preserve the autocracy. He was convinced to keep it intact for his son. In the Russian Constitution of 1906 the Tsar retained an absolute veto over legislation, as well as the right to dismiss the Duma at any time, for any reason he found suitable. He was bound by law immediately to hold elections in order to summon a new one.^[286]

15. Zinaida Yusupova, Alexandra's sister Elisabeth,^[287] Grand Duchess Victoria, Prince Michael and the Tsar's mother tried to influence the Emperor or his stubborn wife^[62] to remove Rasputin, but without success.^[288] For years the Tsar's niece Duchess Marie was openly hostile to Alexandra.
16. Most sources say Yusupov offered Rasputin Madeira but according to Kosorotov he smelled of cognac. It is possible he drank imported Malvasia Madeira, or Madeira from the Crimea. The Yusupov family owned a private vineyard in Massandra, near Yalta, where since 1892 sweet or semi-sweet fortified wines such as madeira, port, sherry, but also champagne were produced. His palace in Koreiz had two wine cellars.^[336]
17. According to Nelipa the third gunshot will never identify Rasputin's killer in the manner Cook proposed.^{[345][346]}
18. On February 8, 1917 on request of the Emperor N. Maklakov and Protopopov drafted the text of a manifesto to dissolve the Duma.^[405]
19. This discrepancy arises due to the fact that the Gregorian calendar was not introduced into Soviet Russia until February 14, 1918, see Old Style and New Style dates & Adoption of the Gregorian calendar in Eastern Europe.

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