

# **Nicholas and Alexandra Study Guide**

**Nicholas and Alexandra by Robert K. Massie**

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# Contents

Nicholas and Alexandra Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Part 1: Chapter 1.....	5
Part 1: Chapter 2.....	7
Part 1: Chapter 3.....	9
Part 1: Chapter 4.....	10
Part 1: Chapter 5.....	12
Part 1: Chapter 6.....	13
Part 1: Chapter 7.....	14
Part 1: Chapter 8.....	15
Part 1: Chapter 9.....	16
Part 2: Chapter 10.....	18
Part 2: Chapter 11.....	19
Part 2: Chapter 12.....	20
Part 2: Chapter 13.....	21
Part 2: Chapter 14.....	22
Part 2: Chapter 15.....	23
Part 2: Chapter 16.....	24
Part 2: Chapter 17.....	25
Part 2: Chapter 18.....	27
Part 2: Chapter 19.....	29
Part 3: Chapter 20.....	31
Part 3: Chapter 21.....	32
Part 3: Chapter 22.....	33



[Part 3: Chapter 23..... 34](#)

[Part 3: Chapter 24..... 35](#)

[Part 3: Chapter 25..... 37](#)

[Part 3: Chapter 26..... 39](#)

[Part 3: Chapter 27..... 40](#)

[Part 3: Chapter 28..... 42](#)

[Part 3: Chapter 29..... 44](#)

[Part 4: Chapter 30..... 45](#)

[Part 4: Chapter 31..... 47](#)

[Part 4: Chapter 32..... 49](#)

[Part 4: Chapter 33..... 51](#)

[Part 4: Chapter 34..... 53](#)

[Epilogue..... 54](#)

[Characters..... 55](#)

[Objects/Places..... 60](#)

[Themes..... 62](#)

[Style..... 64](#)

[Quotes..... 66](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 71](#)



# Plot Summary

Nicholas and Alexandra by Robert K. Massie is a book about the last Russian tsar, Nicholas II. Many people say that Nicholas was in the wrong place in history at the wrong time. He had the style and training to be a nineteenth century European ruler, but instead he was the tsar in twentieth century Russia at the time that the Russian empire was falling apart due to the pressures of the revolutionaries. The revolution brought the monarchy to an end in Russia, a very violent end; with any member of the Romanov family found murdered, as Lenin felt it was necessary.

This book traces the life of Nicholas II. Nicholas II was raised to be Tsar even though he wasn't ready for the role when it was cast upon him. He had just become engaged to Alexandra and married her soon after his father's death so he didn't have to face the role of Tsar on his own. She stood by his side then and for their entire lives. Alexandra was a German princess who thought she became thoroughly Russian but was never accepted by the Russian people. This became evident during and after the revolution.

The downfall of the Romanovs was a peasant holy man name Gregory Rasputin. He became know for his faith healing ways and this is how he became known to the Empress who had one son, the Heir Apparent, who suffered from hemophilia. Whether or not Rasputin performed the miracles they claimed he did is open for discussion, but he was the advisor that Alexandra turned to. When Nicholas went to live at military headquarters during World War I to lead his troops, Alexandra was left in charge of civil administration and Rasputin became her advisor, recommending men who would leave him alone and let him pursue his goals. This resulted in Alexandra being distrusted and hated by the population and eventually led to a member of the nobility leading the plot to murder Rasputin.

However, the murder of Rasputin could not save the monarchy. The revolution was too far advanced and there was too much hatred and distrust of the Romanovs. Nicholas received bad information that led him to downplay the seriousness of the revolution when it began. He stayed at the Stavka with his troops, telling the government in Petrograd to put a stop to the street violence. By the time he realized the significance and seriousness of the situation, it was too late. The Duma was sitting with the Soviet and a Provisional Government was in effect. It was thought that if Nicholas abdicated in favor of his son that they could save the monarchy but Nicholas foresaw the fact that he and Alexandra would have to leave the Russia, leaving Alexis behind and this he refused to do.

There are a lot of "ifs" regarding the fate of the Romanovs. If they had left the country when they could have, etc. The fact is that the hated Rasputin resulted in the end of the monarchy and this book tells the story of the Romanovs and how this happened.



# Part 1: Chapter 1

## Part 1: Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

The Tsar was the ruler of the Russian empire, an empire so vast that its Eastern borders had daybreak as night was falling on the Western border. The Tsar, or Emperor, controlled one sixth of the earth's land and had one hundred thirty million subjects of different nationalities. There were Slavs, Balts, Jews, Germans, Georgians, Armenians, Uzbeks and Tartars who lived in cities, towns, villages and rural areas. The lands suffered six months of severe winter every year. Most of these people, more than three-fourths, were peasants and even though they were free, they were not wealthy. They suffered from drought and famine and had to find food to eat somewhere. Many of them resorted to begging from the wealthy and found many of the coins they received ended up with the tax collector.

If the peasants complained about their lot in life, a squadron of Cossacks would arrive and literally whip them into shape. The peasants never cursed the Tsar, who they believed was unaware of their problems. They believed that he would help them if he knew what they were going through. Nevertheless, the Tsar was far away from their location, even with the coming of the railroads. The Trans-Siberian railroad, started in 1891, went from Moscow to the Pacific Coast and Moscow was the center of Russia in terms of trade, commerce and transportation.

Moscow was known as The City of Forty Times Forty Churches due to the myriad of onion-domed churches in the city. It was also the capital of Russia and where many princes and other royalty lived in their palaces mixed among the mansions of the wealthy merchants. The back streets contained the wood buildings and log cabins that were the homes of the working class. The Kremlin was located in the heart of Moscow. This was the famous walled city and the center of the Orthodox Church. It was the Church that allowed all classes to come together and mingle. However, Moscow was not the location of the Tsar. Peter the Great had relocated the royal family to St. Petersburg along the Neva, more than two hundred years earlier. This city was more European than Russian and its society spoke French instead of Russian.

The society of St. Petersburg had a life full of opera, theater, balls, ballets, banquets and parties with the 'season' lasting from New Year's Day until the beginning of Lent. The evening for society people never ended before 3 a.m. The finest balls were at the Winter Palace and given by royalty and these were the ones that people most desired attending. The balls would be attended by three thousand people, including staff and the Imperial balls would begin at 8:30 p.m. when Tsar Alexander III and his wife, Empress Marie would appear. Dinner would be served at midnight and the gala would continue until 1:30 a.m. when the royal couple would withdraw.

"Under Alexander III, the Russian system of autocracy appeared to work. The tsar personally was the government of Russia. His power was absolute, his responsibility



only to God. From the tsar, power flowed downward and was exercised across the empire by an army of ministers, governors, clerks, tax collectors and policemen, all appointed in the name of the tsar. No parliament existed, and the people had no say in their government. Even members of the Imperial family, the grand dukes and grand duchesses, were subject to the tsar's will" (Chapter 1, pg. 10). The tsar held total power but it worked even though he eliminated any opposition.

Tsar Alexander III and Empress Marie are a popular royal couple. They have five children, Nicholas, George, Xenia, Michael and Olga. Nicholas is the oldest and the inheritor of the throne.



# Part 1: Chapter 2

## Part 1: Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Nicolas was close to his brother George. He always wrote down the jokes his brother told and saved them. When George came down with tuberculosis, he was sent to the Caucasus with servants. Nicholas was raised at the palace at Gatchina located twenty-five miles outside St. Petersburg, where his father preferred to live. The children lived a Spartan existence, in spite of the opulence of the nine hundred-room palace. They bathed in cold water, and often went hungry due to court protocol that required that they were not served until after the other guests and had to leave when their father did. They ate better when they dined without their parents.

Nicholas was educated by a series of tutors in various subjects, including dance. The most important tutor was Constantine Petrovich Pobedonostsev, who became lay head of the Church by the time Nicholas assumed the throne. Pobedonostsev believed that the only way to have national unity was through unity of the autocracy and the Church and that any opposition to either should be crushed. He also did not believe in parliaments, universal suffrage, and freedom of the press or constitutions and tried to force all religions into assimilation by the Russian Orthodox Church. According to Pobedonostsev, the Jewish problem would not be solved until one third of the Jews emigrated, another third converted to Orthodoxy and the final third disappeared. This is the man who educated the young tsar and these are many of the views that came through in Nicolas in later years.

When Nicholas looked at the murder of his grandfather Alexander II, the Tsar Liberator, he felt that Pobedonostsev's views were justified. The Tsar Liberator's liberal reforms resulted in a multitude of assassination attempts until they finally succeeded in killing him. Nicholas was thirteen at the time when his father became emperor. Pobedonostsev's views dominated the thirteen years of his father's reign. Nicholas was taught to keep a diary from an early age and was fluent in German, English and French, in addition to Russian.

In 1890, when Nicholas finished his education, he didn't think he would be tsar for another twenty or thirty years so he took on the role of playboy, with his father's blessing. He put in an appearance at the meetings when he was required to but bolted as soon as he could. He attended numerous performances, sometimes more than one or two per day and several balls per week until the season ended with the beginning of Lent. There were fewer activities during Lent and he spent the time hunting and visiting with friends. Since he was always fascinated by the military, he received his own squadron of Horse Guards when he was nineteen and he went to the camp at Krasnoe Selo to live with them. Nicholas was very happy in this role.

In 1890, Nicholas and his brother begin a nine-month cruise. Nicholas is involved with several women at the time but none that his parents consider fitting for a future Tsar of

Russia. At the end of his voyage, he stopped in Vladivostok to lay the first stone in the Trans-Siberian Railroad station. He went to London to represent his family at the wedding of his cousin, King George and still carried on with the Russian ballerina Mathilde Kschessinska who eventually married a cousin of Nicholas'.





# Part 1: Chapter 3

## Part 1: Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Nicholas was taken with a German princess named Alix of Hesse. Alix was not popular with St. Petersburg society. The Tsar and Empress were known to be anti-German and favored an alliance with Princess Helene, the daughter of the Comte de Paris. Both Helene and Nicholas resisted any efforts to link them. Nicholas's desire for Alix was a bone of contention between him and his parents and his father didn't begin to consider such a match until a bout with influenza weakened him. Alexander and Marie finally agreed to allow Nicholas to propose to Alix.

Alix was always a happy child, the daughter of Grand Duke Louis and Princess Alice of England, a daughter of Queen Victoria herself. Princess Alice died when Alix was six years of age and her father kept in close touch with Queen Victoria. Tutors and governesses resulted in Alix being a proper English woman. Alix was twelve when she first met the sixteen-year-old Nicholas at the marriage of her sister, Ella, in St. Petersburg. They met again five years later in 1889 at which time Nicholas was quite taken with her. She regularly visited Ella in St. Petersburg or at Ella's husband's country estate.

Even though Alix felt that she loved Nicholas, she saw religion as the stumbling block to a match between them. A devout Lutheran, she questioned her ability to convert to the Russian Orthodox faith. She rejected other suitor's including Prince Edward who was first in line for the throne of England. Her brother, Ernest, became grand duke of Hesse Darnstadt and married in 1894. The wedding was attended by both Nicholas and Alix. Alix met Nicholas' train when it arrived in Coburg, and the next day, Nicholas proposed.

At first Alix said no, but eventually Queen Victoria talked her into it despite her fears over the religious differences. Alix's sister Ella had voluntarily adopted Orthodoxy after her marriage to Grand Duke Serge and told Alix it wouldn't be that different. The day after her brother's wedding, Alix agreed to marry Nicholas.

The family was overjoyed with the match between Alix and Nicholas. His last ten days are spent in constant jubilation and celebration with their families before Nicholas has to return to Russia. They are separated until June, when they meet in London. Nicholas presents Alix with a variety of jewels designed by Faberge and Alix begins lessons in her religious conversion. While Nicholas is in London, King Edward VIII is born to George and May, who ask Nicholas and Alix to be godparents of the future King of England. At the end of the six-week holiday, Nicholas returns to Russia.



# Part 1: Chapter 4

## Part 1: Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Upon his return to Gatchina, Nicholas finds his family very concerned about the health of his father. The Tsar finally agrees with the doctors and travel to the Crimea for a rest. The family has a summer palace at Livadia and Nicholas finally decides to travel there with them. The Tsar's health worsened steadily in the Crimea. Nicholas, knowing that his father is dying, wires Alix to travel to the Crimea, which she does. She informs Nicholas that she wants her religious conversion ceremony to take place as soon as she arrives. Nicholas makes the four-hour journey to Simferpol to meet Alix's train. When they return to Livadia, they find Tsar Alexander III waiting for them in full military dress. They receive his blessing and become formally engaged.

All of the attention was focused on the dying tsar so Alix did not receive the attention she normally would have received. Eventually she becomes upset about being ignored so much. After all, her fiancé will become the future tsar of Russia. Alexander III dies eleven days after Alix's arrival and Nicholas is now to become the Tsar of Russia. He tells his brother-in-law that he doesn't feel ready to become the Tsar. He doesn't know how to rule or to talk to the ministers. Later that afternoon, a group of family and officials gather to as the oath of allegiance is administered to Tsar Nicholas II by a priest.

The next day, Alix's conversion ceremony takes place in a chapel with only the priest, Nicholas and Marie in attendance with her. Nicholas announces, in his first Imperial Decree, the new religion, title and name of the Grand Duchess Alexandra Fedrovna. Alexander's funeral is delayed as plans are made to hasten the wedding of Nicholas and Alexandra, as Nicholas does not want to face the future without her. He and his mother want the wedding to take place at Lividia while Alexander is still in the house with them. His uncles want the wedding to take place in St. Petersburg after the funeral and their views eventually prevail and at the end of the week, the long train journey to Moscow is made with frequent stops for services and litanies. After an overnight rest in Moscow, the journey continues to St. Petersburg to the Cathedral of the Fortress of Peter and Paul. "In the procession, the new Grand Duchess Alexandra Fedorovna rode alone, thickly veiled, behind the rest of the family. As she passed, the silent crowd strained to see their young Empress-to-be. Shaking their heads, old women crossed themselves and murmured darkly, 'She has come to us behind a coffin'" (Chapter 4, pg. 45).

Royalty and other dignitaries gathered during that week for the funeral. The body lay for seventeen days in an open casket for the mourners to file past. Twice a day all of the royalty attended prayer services for the dead Tsar. A week following the funeral, Nicholas and Alexandra were married. The day also marked the birthday of the Empress Marie. There could be no reception or honeymoon because of the mourning for Alexander III. They spent their wedding night and their first winter at the Anitchkov



Palace with the Dowager Empress Marie since there had been no time to prepare a palace for the new Tsar and his bride.

After the requisite period of mourning, Marie and the others began to make their usually public appearances at performances and parties. Marie usually walked holding the arm of Nicholas while Alexandra walked behind with one of the grand dukes. Eventually, Alexandra began to turn bitter at this situation. There was also an altercation over the family jewels when Alexandra asked for them and Marie refused to follow tradition and give them to Alexandra. Marie finally relented before there was a public scandal. In the summer, Alexandra, vacationing with her husband and sister in Peterhof, discovered that she was pregnant. With Marie away vacationing in Denmark, they prepare their first house at Alexander's Palace at Tsarskoe Selo. The baby, a daughter the Grand Duchess Olga Nicolaievna was born in mid-November 1895.

# Part 1: Chapter 5

## Part 1: Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

May 1896 is the month of the Coronation of the new Emperor after the required year of mourning. The Coronation takes place in Moscow under the strict rules of history and tradition. The Tsar could not enter the city until the day before the coronation, which was a three-day event. People came from all over to see the coronation. Nicholas rode a white horse in the procession that entered the city. Marie rode in Catherine the Great's carriage and Alexandra followed in a separate carriage. The next day, on May 26, 1896 Nicholas II was crowned Tsar and Alexandra crowned the Empress. They were awake early that morning with their preparations for the coronation. Alexandra had to have her hair styled and learn how to work the clasp of her coronation cape.

At the appointed time, Nicholas and Alexandra left their apartment and descended the Red Staircase and entered the Ouspensky Cathedral, where the coronation ceremony was to take place. The lengthy ceremony lasted five hours. The Imperial Crown of Russia weighed nine pounds and had originally been designed for Catherine the Great. Following tradition, Nicholas put the crown on his own head, then Alexandra's, and then back on his own. After the ceremony, all paid homage to the Tsar. They ascended the Red Staircase as cannons and bells rang throughout the city. Afterwards, the coronation banquet was attended by seven thousand people. Tradition had Nicholas and Alexandra seated alone under a gold canopy for the feast, where they could be watched by the nobility. They spent the remainder of the day moving through the banquet halls greeting the guests.

The following day there was a celebration for the people of Moscow with their Emperor and Empress. The event was held in a field and enameled cups were given as souvenirs to those who attended and there was free beer. Some of the people waited outside all night for the festivities and a rumor that there would not be enough beer caused a riot in which hundreds were killed. Nicholas, wanting to cancel a ball given by the French that night, was over ruled by his uncles. The evening was uneasy for everyone. Even though the royal couple visited the hospitals and provided for the families of the deceased, the event was viewed as a bad omen.

After the coronation, the royal couple traveled abroad visiting other monarchs, including Queen Victoria. The traveling is the usual custom following a coronation. The visit to France was not a visit to relatives and was important to both countries since they both need each other as an ally against Germany. The French trip was very successful and the royal pair was warmly greeted.

# Part 1: Chapter 6

## Part 1: Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

Marie functioned somewhat as an advisor as the new Tsar carried out his official duties. He found his four uncles quite difficult to deal with and he would be dealing with them for the first ten years of his reign as Emperor. As Tsar, he was also the head of the House of Romanov and the manager of the Imperial estate. The Romanov fortune was in the hundreds of millions of dollars but they were usually short of cash. They had seven palaces and fifteen thousand officials and servants that had to be paid and fed. Family members also had to be given an allowance by the Tsar in addition to various charitable causes.

Nicholas wanted business conducted in Russian. He even insisted on Russian being spoken with his children. The only one he spoke English to was Alexandra whose Russian was not very good. He was not good at dealing with his subordinates and he knew it. He made it clear that he intended to follow his father's principles in his autocratic rule that did not put him in good standing with the liberals who wanted changes. The work of the revolutionaries would now continue since there was no hope for change under the rule of Nicholas II.

Nicholas was especially weak in international affairs. He never learned anything in this area during his father's reign. He called for an international conference to limit armaments that did not impress the European governments although they did have a conference. They agreed on rules of warfare and a court of arbitration but not on arm limitations. During this time, there were Russian writers, play writes and composers who were famous internationally. A Russian scientist, Ivan Pavlov, even won the Nobel Prize in 1904. Petipa's choreography made the Imperial Ballet the best in the world along with Diaghilev and Fokine and their Ballet Russe. Nicholas believed that the best of the arts should be available to the ordinary people.

The Romanov family grew with the addition of three more daughters Tatiana, Marie and Anastasia. Nicholas contracted typhoid fever in 1900 and was nursed back to health by his wife. Alexandra, pregnant with Anastasia, could not even attend the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901, even though she wanted to. Alexandra had been raised in the Victorian era in a court that was quite conservative, compared to the standards of Russia. To many in St. Petersburg society, she was considered a prude. The fact that she was excessively shy did not help her image in Russia and she could not interest them in knitting for charity. During this time, Marie spent most of her time abroad visiting family or at her villa on the French Riviera.



# Part 1: Chapter 7

## Part 1: Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

The Russian countryside had a variety of manor houses, where the squires lived, and villages where the peasants lived. Most had a similar social structure with the local nobility, bureaucrats, professional classes, and then the lower working classes. Most of these towns were conservative in nature. Simbirsk was a typical town of the 1890s with no railroad stop and no highway. It was also the home of Alexander Kerensky and Vladimir Lenin. Lenin was the son of a schoolteacher and administrator whose older brother had been hanged for his part in an attempt on the life of the Tsar. Lenin was expelled from the University of Kazan and, after the family farm was sold, he studied law and passed the exams. After this, he began to read the writings of Karl Marx and in 1893 announced to his mother that he was moving to St. Petersburg.

In St. Petersburg Lenin secured employment in a law office and joined a Marxist study group. He traveled abroad for the first time in 1895 when he went to Geneva to meet George Plekhanov. Plekhanov was a noted Marxist who had been in exile for more than twenty years, at the time. After several weeks of traveling around Europe, Lenin returned to Russia with a lot of revolutionary literature. He was active in organizing strikes and printing and distributing revolutionary literature and spent a year in a St. Petersburg jail and three years in exile in Siberia. Exile, at this time, meant that the exiled person had to live in the required area but could make his own living arrangements. Vladimir worked on his book *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* while keeping in touch with Russian revolutionaries.

While in St. Petersburg, Vladimir had met Nadezhda Krupskaya, a woman he was friendly with. She was a schoolteacher who he had met at some of his meetings. She arrived in Shushenskoe a year after Vladimir, also exiled. She brought her mother with her. Within a few months, on July 10, 1898 they were married. They were all very happy in Siberia. Vladimir's exile ended before his wife's, so he returned to St. Petersburg before she did. While she was still in Siberia, Vladimir traveled abroad and worked as an underground organizer. He was already well known in the revolutionary movement. While in Germany, he writes for a revolutionary magazine called *Iskra* where he adopts the name of Lenin.

Krupskaya joins her husband in Munich when her exile ends. They move to London in 1902 following *Iskra* when it moved. At a 1903 unity conference held in Belgium, the Russian group was told to leave the country within twenty-four hours. They returned to London to continue their conference where a rift was occurring between Lenin and Plekhanov. Lenin's views prevailed and his group became known as a Bolshevik. The other group became known as the Mensheviks. Kerensky was the other revolutionary to come out of Simbirsk. He became a revolutionary during his student days in St. Petersburg.



# Part 1: Chapter 8

## Part 1: Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

Nicholas was the cousin of Kaiser William II of Germany who did what he could to help the young tsar. William became Kaiser six years before Nicholas became Tsar and was more experienced than Nicholas. As a youngster, the future Kaiser fell in love with Alexandra's sister, Princess Elizabeth. He visited the family often in Darmstadt where his behavior was rude and arrogant. When Ella married the Grand Duke Serge, William refused to have anything to do with her and became engaged to another German princess. William was known for his rudeness and bad behavior, even with his own family.

Since William and Nicholas engaged in constant correspondence, William tried to get Nicholas to dissolve Russia's alliance with France but Nicholas maintained his country's alliance with the French. The Russian alliance with the Chinese was not successfully maintained under William's onslaught. Nicholas managed to negotiate a ninety-nine year lease on Port Arthur with the Chinese. This gave the Russians an ice-free port that they did not have without Port Arthur. They extended the Trans-Siberia Railroad across Manchuria, which the Russians temporarily occupied during the Boxer Rebellion.

Russia decided it needed Korea to guarantee its own security and invaded the country, which guaranteed a war with Japan. The Japanese were willing to let the Russians have Manchuria but not Korea. The Russians felt that they could easily win any war with Japan without much effort. William promoted a war between Russian and Japan but Nicholas still hoped for a peaceful settlement. The Japanese attacked in February 1904. Even though the Russians had superiority at sea, the Japanese gained the advantage after their first attack sunk a ship with Russia's most distinguished admiral. After that, they invaded through Korea and other places. Port Arthur surrendered in January 1905.

Nicholas visited his troops as they were about to leave for the front, but he did not visit the front. His uncles advised against it. Instead of holding balls and banquets, the season in St. Petersburg devoted itself to making bandages and war supplies in its banquet rooms. The Russians lost another sea battle on May 27, 1905 when Togo attacked in the Straits of Tsushima. This battle and the swift defeat of the Russians shaped the strategy for World War I where naval battles were avoided. Nicholas realized that Russia could not beat the Japanese and opted for a peace conference that Roosevelt had offered to mediate.

After the war, Europe knew that they did not have to fear the weakened Russia. William and Nicholas met and Nicholas signed an alliance with Germany. The French would be invited to join their alliance if they so desired. The treaty was never enforced due to opposition in both capitals.



# Part 1: Chapter 9

## Part 1: Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

The Russian Minister of the Interior, Plehve, imposed strict policies on the students and also hated Jews. His policies resulted in many Jews becoming revolutionaries. This resulted in a pogrom in the town of Kishenev on Easter Day in 1902. Forty-five Jews were killed and more than six hundred houses were destroyed. Even though the perpetrators were brought to justice, Plehve remained in office until his assassination in July 1904. Before his death, he organized a worker's movement through a priest, Father George Gapon whose purpose was to steer workers away from revolutionary ideas. Their grievances would be handled by their employers. This movement was called the Assembly of Russian Workingmen.

Upon receiving news of the Russian defeat at Port Arthur, a strike occurred at the Putilov Steel Works in St. Petersburg. The strike spread until it involved thousands of workers with Gapon as the leader. Nicholas arrived in St. Petersburg for the Blessing of the Waters on January 19. Gapon informed the government he would lead a march to the Winter Palace on January 22 and that he wanted to give a petition to the Tsar. Worried ministers brought in additional troops as reinforcements. The day of the march became known as Bloody Sunday since the troops opened fire on the marchers. The leaders were expelled from the city.

After the march, the attitude toward the Tsar changed. There were calls for revolution against the Romanovs. Gapon now became a revolutionary and went into hiding in Finland but because of his previous ties to the police, he was distrusted and found hanged in April 1906. Nicholas and Alexandra both supported the army even though they condemned the actions of the working class. Alexandra still believed that the Tsar was loved by all. They discovered that Bloody Sunday was only the beginning. The Grand Duke Serge was assassinated three weeks later in Moscow. Ella eventually founded the Convent of Mary and Martha and became the abbess, retreated from the social life in Russia.

In October 1905, there was a nation wide strike. There was a new workers organization headed by Leon Trotsky. Soldiers were stationed at building all over the city waiting for something to happen. Nicholas explored various options with his advisor Witte. They could use the troops to quash the rebellion for a while or they could give the workers their rights and have a constitution and a state Duma or assembly. Under Sergius Witte, Russia received its first constitution and parliament under the Imperial Manifesto of October 30, 1905. Russia was now a semi-constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament and rights for the people.

The situation did not improve with the new form of government. The upheavals and violence continued throughout Russia. Pogroms occurred in Odessa and Kiev and there were movements for independence in Poland and Finland. A takeover occurred in





Moscow and a provisional government was established. Troops had to be brought in from St. Petersburg to restore order. Lenin returned to Russia to lead the Bolsheviks and the Tsar became bitter as the situation worsened. Witte tried to maintain his position with the Tsar by abrogating most of the provisions of the manifesto. Eventually, Nicholas requested and received Witte's resignation.

There was one high point during this period and that was the August 12, 1904 birth of Alexis. Cannons fired across Russia with their three hundred shots signaling the birth of a male heir. Within six weeks, they knew the baby had a problem when he hemorrhaged. The child had hemophilia. "It is one of the supreme ironies of history that the blessed birth of an only son should have proved the mortal blow. Even as the saluting cannons boomed and the flags waved. Fate had prepared a terrible story. Along with the lost battles and sunken ships, the bombs, the revolutionaries and their plots, the strikes and revolts, Imperial Russia was toppled by a tiny defect in the body of a little boy. Hidden from public view, veiled in rumor, working from within, this unseen tragedy would change the history of Russia and the world" (Chapter 9, pg. 114).

## **Part 2: Chapter 10**

### **Part 2: Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis**

Alexis' hemophilia was hidden from everyone with only a few people at Tsarskoe Selo aware of the condition. The Imperial Park at Tsarskoe Selo is the site of two palaces, the Catherine Palace and the Alexander Palace. Nicholas and Alexander lived in the Alexander Palace. Five thousand infantrymen were stationed at the Park for the protection of the royal family. The royal children did their lessons in the palace with various tutors. They were attended to daily by various physicians with specialists for the hemophilia of Alexis. The main meal of the day was at midday, even though Alexandra was usually absent. Both Nicholas and Alexandra preferred simple dishes for meals rather than the lavish rich dishes of the French chefs. After lunch, the children would return to their classes, Alexandra would go for a carriage ride and Nicholas would ride with friends until teatime at four. After tea, the Tsar received callers until 8 pm when dinner was served. The time after dinner was spent with family many times with the Tsar reading aloud to them. At eleven, they had evening tea and then retired for the evening. This was the daily routine of the Romanovs.



## Part 2: Chapter 11

### Part 2: Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

The four daughters of Alexandra had their quarters above their mother's boudoir. The oldest daughter was Olga. She was an avid reader and was closest to her father. Her sister Tatiana was eighteen months younger and closest to her mother. She was also very outspoken and sure of herself and very eager to go out into society. Marie was the prettiest of the four daughters and liked to paint. Anastasia was the youngest of the girls. She was a tomboy with a flair for languages. The four sisters collectively signed their names as OTMA, the first letter from each of their first names. Since they had very little contact with children outside the palace, they were close to each other and their servants. They had a weekly outing outside the palace with their aunt on Sundays when they went to St. Petersburg. The girls did attend military reviews, concerts and other public functions, mostly with their father. The older two daughters were supposed to make their official debut in 1914 but did not because of World War I. "The girls remained secluded with the family at Tsarskoe Selo. By 1917, the four daughters of Nicholas II had blossomed into young women whose talents and personalities were, as fate decreed, never to be unfolded and revealed" (Chapter 11, pg. 136).

The family worshipped little Alexis but was well aware of his hemophilia. He had two bodyguards, Derevenko and Nagorny and everyone tried to restrain his behavior and actions so he wouldn't be hurt. This was hard on the child who wanted to ride bikes and play tennis. He had all kinds of expensive toys that his parents hoped would keep him busy and was not allowed to play much with other boys, even his numerous cousins.

## Part 2: Chapter 12

### Part 2: Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

The hemophilia in the Romanov prince is traced back to Queen Victoria, who was a carrier of the defective gene. Two of her daughters were also carriers, which is how their male children, born to the royal houses of Russia and Spain, had the disease. They believe that Queen Victoria had a spontaneous mutation that resulted in the gene since the disease was never in her family. Victoria's son, Leopold, had the disease and Victoria was very protective of him, just as Alexandra was of her son. Leopold was Alexandra's uncle and he and Alexandra's brother both died when Alexandra was too young to remember. Alexandra had a nephew that died of the disease a year before Alexis was born.

The genetic nature of hemophilia had been known for almost one hundred years so Alexandra should have suspected that she could be a carrier but it was possible that she was ignorant of the knowledge. Alexandra was more affected by Alexis's affliction than normal because of her desire to give Russia a male heir. Their laws had been changed to prevent succession from passing through a female heir. Without a male heir, succession would have passed through to the families of Nicholas's uncles. Alexandra dealt with Alexis's affliction by praying constantly. This is how she came into contact with Gregory Rasputin.

Since Alexandra did not have many friends in Russia, there were few, if any, friends that she could turn to for support in dealing with her son's disease. The one friend she did have was Anna Vyrubova. Anna had married a survivor of the Battle of Tsushima at the Tsar's urging. The marriage fell apart within a few months but Anna became close to both the Tsar and his wife. They moved her into a house on the Imperial Palace grounds so she was close to visit as they often took their evening tea with her. Anna wasn't interested in social events or material things and never asked for anything. It was through Anna that Alexandra first met Rasputin. Anna was the person through which Rasputin and the Empress communicated. Alexandra wouldn't give Anna an official lady-in-waiting position because she wanted her as a friend.

Much of Alexandra's medical problems were deemed to be psychosomatic and tied to her situation with Alexis. She misses many official functions due to her health, especially following any illness of her son. She and Nicholas travel to a German spa upon the recommendation of the doctor and the Empress Marie. The spa treatments did not cure her ailments and many of their problems stemmed from the fact that Alexis's hemophilia was kept a secret. His parents feared problems for him and pressures on the Tsar and monarchy if Alexis's condition was made known. Instead, they were subject to numerous rumors about the child's condition. Alexandra remained remote, which resulted in the distaste and criticism of the Russian people.



## Part 2: Chapter 13

### Part 2: Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

The Romanovs spent every spring in the Crimea and every June they cruised through the Finnish fjords. In August, they went hunting in Poland, returning to the Crimea in September and to the Tsarskoe Selo in November. They followed the same pattern every year and traveled on the royal train with its blue cars. Because of the danger of revolutionaries, there were two identical royal trains and traveled a few miles apart. Travel on the train was hot and stuffy so the train would stop wherever there was a cool spot or water for the travelers to wade in.

The royal yacht, the Standart, was always accompanied by naval torpedo boats. The Tsar, who only worked two days a week when they were cruising, had a stream of boats going to and from the Standart with information and officials. The officials were not allowed on deck. Nicholas would often take his children for long walks through the villages. Alexandra very rarely left the yacht due to her sciatica. Usually Anna or one of the girls stayed onboard and kept her company until Nicholas and the children returned at teatime. Everyone was asleep by eleven.

One afternoon, during tea, the yacht struck a rock and began to sink. Alarms sounded and the lifeboats were lowered. The boat did not sink though because it had watertight compartments. It was repaired but the family had to transfer to the navy ship for the night and then to Marie's ship for the rest of their trip. In 1909, they sailed the Standart to England for the last time. However, the Crimea always remained their favorite place in all of Russia. The Crimea was the home of the Moslem Tartars and represented an area where the Romanovs could relax. Because of this, they always tried to spend their Easter's there. Easter was the end of the Orthodox Church year and was services were well attended throughout Russia. After the services, came the Easter festival that consisted of a big banquet with feasting on many delicacies denied during Lent. Every year Nicholas ordered Faberge eggs for his mother and wife. The design of the eggs was left entirely to Faberge. A total of fifty-six of these eggs were created for Alexander III and Nicholas II.



## Part 2: Chapter 14

### Part 2: Chapter 14 Summary and Analysis

By the summer of 1912, three of the girls were teenagers with Anastasia 11 and Alexis 8. The Romanov family was ready to leave for Spala in Poland where Alexis became quite ill. This was at their annual hunting lodge. Alexis was injured during a fall in a boat and experienced a serious hemorrhage in the groin and thigh while they were in Spala. The doctors, Ostrogorsky, Rauchfuss, Federov and Derevenko, arrived from St. Petersburg. The Empress stayed by the child's side throughout the crisis, which lasted for two weeks. The first eleven days were so strenuous on Alexandra that her hair began to turn gray. The child was in so much pain that he hoped he was dying so his ordeal would end.

The child's illness did not alter the household routine. Visitors continued to arrive at the lodge and to hunt with the Tsar. In the evenings, Alexandra would appear briefly to act as hostess, as the Romanovs continued to hide the illness from the world that only fed the rumors that circulated. One night the child's condition was so bad that they all thought he was going to die. At this point Alexandra called Rasputin who assured her that the child would not die. Later that day the bleeding stopped which Alexandra believed to be a miracle. With the crisis past, the household returned to normal, although Alexandra remained by Alexis's side for several weeks. After a month, the royal family returned to Tsarskoe Selo.

## Part 2: Chapter 15

### Part 2: Chapter 15 Summary and Analysis

Rasputin was very unkempt. He never bathed, his nails were dirty and his hair was greasy. Just as many women found him disgusting, others found him an alternative to the perfumed officers. Most of his power over people was more of less like a hypnotic power. Rasputin was considered to be a miracle healer and held in such high esteem by the Empress, that she sent them to two Russian Prime Ministers when they were in office. Both men, Peter Stolypin and Vladimir Kokovtsov commented on his eyes and of his hypnotic effect on people. Rasputin reported back to Alexandra about these interviews and the two men watched their popularity and reputations fall in the palace.

Rasputin was known to be a starets or man of God but many considered him to be fraudulent since he did not renounce temptation or worldly goods. He was married with three children and lived in a house in his village that his friends purchased for him. Born in western Siberia, he earned a reputation as a seer where he was a child and identified a horse thief. He also earned the nickname of Rasputin, which means dissolute because of his carryings on with women. At this time, there was a religious sect that believed that contact with God was made through sexual encounters done in a ritualistic setting. Rasputin was accused of an association with this group, known as the Khlysty, but his accusers could never prove it. The only thing he would admit was that he believed that sin was the way to holiness.

Rasputin had been accepted by the priests in St. Petersburg who advised Alexandra to talk to him. Rasputin used to visit the empress and Alexis before Alexis's bedtime when he would tell the child stories. Alexandra believed that Rasputin from a representative from God and that he could help her son. How he helped the child and stopped the bleeding, whether it was hypnosis or what, is still a matter of discussion. The important point was that Alexandra believed that Rasputin healed the child.



## Part 2: Chapter 16

### Part 2: Chapter 16 Summary and Analysis

As Rasputin's successes with Alexis multiplied, his dress changed from the rough peasant style of clothing to the finery of the nobility, complements mostly of Alexandra. He was always surrounded by wealthy women once he was accepted at the Imperial Court and preaching his personal beliefs of sin leading to holiness, he experienced many conquests. The women couldn't be exonerated of their sins if they didn't commit any sins. Nicholas finally barred Rasputin from his daughters' bedrooms or to be in a room when they were in their nightgowns. Alexandra's sister Ella and others tried to break Rasputin's hold on Alexandra that caused a rift between Ella and Alexandra.

The sexual exploits of Rasputin caused an uproar in St. Petersburg in 1911. Complaints to Alexandra by the Tsar's cousins did not change Alexandra's views of Rasputin. Then the Church began an investigation and brought their complaints to the Tsar and then to Alexandra. Confronted by the Empress, Rasputin satisfactorily answered her questions and the Bishop found himself the new Bishop of the Crimea. Many of Rasputin's critics disappeared. The Metropolitan Anthony was found dead soon after complaining to the Tsar.

The monk Iliodor was a friend of Rasputin and warned him about his sexual escapades. When Rasputin tried to rape a male, Iliodor confronted and beat him. When word reached the palace, Iliodor and his and other involved parties were sent into seclusion. After this, letter supposedly written by Alexandra to Rasputin began to appear in public with the suggestion that they were lovers. Iliodor becomes a revolutionary and plots the assassination of various officials and has the plot discovered by the police. He went into hiding and formed an organization of women wronged by Rasputin. The organization's purpose was the castration of Rasputin. Iliodor eventually escaped to Finland.

In spite of his influence with the Romanovs, Rasputin did not visit the Alexander Palace very often, and when he did, he was usually at the home of Anna Vyubova. Alexandra thought that Rasputin was hated by so many people because he was accepted by the Romanovs.





## Part 2: Chapter 17

### Part 2: Chapter 17 Summary and Analysis

Peter Stolypin was the prime minister of Russia in 1906, having been appointed by the Tsar. Stolypin tried to deal with the problems that Russia was experiencing. When terrorist attacks occurred they were dealt with and the culprits being brought to justice with many of them being hanged. His own villa was the target of a terrorist bomb a month after he took office with the attack being a response to government repression. Russia was basically an agricultural economy at this time with more than three quarters of the population involved in farming in some aspect. It was Stolypin who did away with communal farming and introduced the concept of private property. A peasant who withdrew from the commune could receive his share of the land. The Tsar even sold four million acres to the government for sale to the peasants in the above manner. More than nine million peasants had their own farms by 1914 and this resulted in the new landowners supporting the government.

The First Imperial Duma appeared in May 1906. Everything to do with it had to be put together very quickly since there were no political parties before this time. The Constitutional Democrats and the Octobrists formed almost overnight to fill the void. The first thing the new Duma did was to present an Address to the Throne that demanded, among other things, release of political prisoners, universal suffrage, etc. Then prime minister Goremykin rejected their demands. In July 1906, Stolypin dissolved the Duma by posting a royal decree by Nicholas. The opposition couldn't get the parliament reinstated until Stolypin intervened and reminded the Tsar that his signature was on the paper authorizing the Duma.

They went on to organize a second Duma. Nicholas did not like the Duma and wanted to do away with it, but couldn't so he waited. In three months, he got his chance when a delegate called for the people to overthrow the government. This resulted in troops being brought in from St. Petersburg and the Duma being dissolved. They eliminated the idea of universal suffrage and had a landed country gentry as the basis for the Third Duma. This Duma was more or less rather conservative and got along well with Stolypin and helped to try to develop a government. They began to question expenditures and other things that were basically the prerogative of the throne. Stolypin's confidence in the Duma increased and a Fourth Duma was elected in 1912. Nicholas had advisors and friends who cautioned him against the Duma, called a blot on his monarchy. Some tried to convince him that Stolypin was a traitor.

Stolypin also tangled with Rasputin when he investigated and brought his complaints to the Tsar. He banished Rasputin who left Russia for a long trip to Jerusalem. In 1911 during a disagreement with Nicholas Stolypin asked to be relieved of his duties in having the Tsar accept his resignation. Nicholas refused the resignation and worked out a compromise with Stolypin where he could dissolve the Duma for three days at a time and rule by decree.



Stolypin was in Kiev with the Tsar and riding through the streets in a procession. Rasputin was in the crowd and started saying that death was following Stolypin. The next day Stolypin was assassinated while attending an opera with Nicholas and his daughters, Olga and Tatiana. The assassin was named Mordka Bogrov and he was eventually hanged and four police officials were disciplined but it was also believed that Stolypin's murder was the work of the police. After Stolypin's death, Kokovtsov took over his position. Stolypin was one of the people who opposed Rasputin. Kokovtsov was prime minister for two years before he was removed by Nicholas who was affected by the pressures of Rasputin to have Kokovtsov removed. The new prime minister was Goremykin. Rasputin had become the power behind the throne, willingly or not, and one there he was hard to dislodge.



## Part 2: Chapter 18

### Part 2: Chapter 18 Summary and Analysis

"In 1913, the gilded world of the European aristocracy seemed at its zenith. In fact, fashionable society, like the rest of mankind, stood one step from the abyss. Within five years, three European empires would be defeated, three emperors would die or flee into exile and the ancient dynasties of Hapsburg, Hohenzollern and Romanov would crumble. Twenty million men, aristocrats and commoners alike, would perish" (Chapter 18, pg. 235). They should have seen the signs of danger in 1913 but they continued their lavish lifestyles while the poor suffered. It was also the eve of the First World War and age of industrialization. The contrasts were greatest in Russia.

The year 1913 was the year of the Russian tercentenary marking three hundred years of the monarchy. The Tsar and others hoped the festivities would restore faith in the monarchy and quell some of the unrest. In preparation for the tercentenary, the Romanovs moved to the Winter Palace even though none of them really liked it there. The opening ceremony was held in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan and the Nevsky Prospect was packed with spectators. Michael Rodzianko, president of the Duma, arranged seats for the Duma members, and upon their arrival, they found Rasputin sitting in one. Rasputin was physically removed by Rodzianko. A series of balls followed the ceremony with the daughters and the empress appearing. The Romanovs celebrated the tercentenary by making a pilgrimage to trace the route of the first Russian Tsar. Nicholas and his family were wildly greeted along the trip route. Alexandra still thought that there was still a strong bond between Nicholas and the people. The festivities made Nicholas want to travel more through Russia.

The first Romanov Tsar was Michael, who assumed the throne at the age of sixteen. He was the grandnephew of Ivan the Terrible and was crowned Tsar on July 11, 1613. His is the route to Moscow that Nicholas and his family traced in their pilgrimage. Probably the most famous Romanov was Peter the Great who was Michael's grandson and ruled for thirty-six years beginning in 1689. He toured Europe for one and one half years, which made him the first Tsar to have left Russia. It was Peter who developed the Russian navy and the science academy. The other important figure was Catherine the Great who was a minor German princess who married Peter III, the grandson of Peter the Great. Peter III was killed in a fight and Catherine became Empress. There were doubts as to whether or not her son Paul was the son of Peter III so the original Romanov line may have ended. Catherine's grandson Alexander I defeated Napoleon and was followed by his brother Nicholas I. Nicholas II was the grandson of Nicholas I.

Nicholas and Alexandra could not see their inadequacies as rulers but the Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna did and before she died said that they would be the last generation. They brought about the disintegration of the empire. Members of the Imperial family were supposed to have the Tsar's permission to marry but many of them ignored it and did as they pleased in regards to marriage and divorce. The Tsar's own



brother Michael left Russia and married a commoner, figuring that if Alexis died he would be next in line for the throne and then wouldn't be able to marry whom he wanted.

Once the festivities of the tercentenary were over, the nation returned to its unrest. In 1912, there was a massacre with two hundred killed at the Lena Gold Mines. This situation was investigated by Kerensky who condemned the police for their actions. Kerensky was a critic of government and was elected to the Duma as such. In 1913, a strike began that spread across the nation and by July 1914 involved more than one and one half million workers. The end of the monarchy was near.



## Part 2: Chapter 19

### Part 2: Chapter 19 Summary and Analysis

To celebrate Alexis's return to health eighteen months after his Spala illness, the Tsar decides to take his son on an all male outing. They and their companions set out in two cars into the mountains in the Crimea. The outing did all of them good. At this time, Alexis's older sister Olga was eighteen and there were talks of marriage matches. Olga made it clear that she was Russian and wanted to remain in Russia. The year was 1914 and the Romanovs were sailing on the Standart when news arrived of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo.

Serbia had its own revolutionaries trying to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire, most prominent among them was the Black Hand. Franz Ferdinand was the heir apparent to the Austrian throne, even though he had married a commoner. This caused much dissension in his family. While driving to a ceremony in Sarajevo, a bomb explodes in one of the cars in his procession. They proceed to city hall for his speech and revise their route after the speech because of the bombs. The drivers get confused and turn on one of the streets in the original plan and the Archduke and his wife are both shot by Gabriel Princip who was part of the Black Hand. Most of the European government did not think that the assassination would lead to war.

While cruising through the fjords, Alexis fell on the Standart and sprained his ankle. The next day they learned that there had been an assassination attempt on Rasputin. A woman from Iliodor's group stabbed him in the abdomen. They performed surgery in Tyumen and Rasputin's life hung in the balance for two weeks until he started to recover. After their cruise, the royal family returned to Tsarskoe Selo and awaited the arrival of the French king, due the next day. A new French ambassador Maurice Paleologue, had arrived several weeks earlier and was keeping a dairy of the events that occurred. Paleologue's visit was highlighted with a round of festivities and balls.

The next day the Tsar learns of the ultimatum presented to Serbia by Austria. Austria demanded the right to send their own investigators into Serbia. Among other things, Austria demanded the dissolution of Serb nationalist societies and the dismissal of anti-Austrian Serb officers. Austria, who wanted to go to war, wanted a response within forty-eight hours. The demands were given in such a way that they could not be accepted. Serbia appealed to its protector Russia, and found the Tsar saying he prefers peace but failing this would not ignore Serbia's situation. Russia is not in a position to withstand a war for another six or seven years as the Tsar tells his Ambassador to Bulgaria and that war must be avoided. He tried to find someone who will act as a mediator between Serbia and Austria. Austria rejected the Serb reply and shelling began on July 29, 1914 as Austria began shooting into Belgrade. The Tsar orders the mobilization of troops along the Austrian border.



In Germany, the Kaiser honors his agreement with his friend, Austria. Now Nicholas and William are on different sides as World War I begins. William thought the problems would be resolved and was surprised when fighting began. He felt that Germany would not have to become involved as long as Russia did not get involved. Despite the attempts of William and Nicholas, they cannot stop the mobilizations. Germany declares war on Russia.



## Part 3: Chapter 20

### Part 3: Chapter 20 Summary and Analysis

On August 2, 1914, the day after the declaration of war by Germany, the Tsar announced the news at the Winter Palace to a square packed with thousands of people. They attended the service in the Salle de Nicholas with the icon the Vladimir Mother of God. Tsars invoke the blessing of the icon during wars. Men enlisted in the military throughout Russia and a crowd stormed the German embassy and vandalized its furnishings and artwork. Many people lost interest in the revolution due to the war and thought that they would have an easy time against Germany.

Nicholas and Alexandra traveled to Moscow to begin the war by following the tradition of asking for God's blessing in the Kremlin. Alexis had to be carried into the ceremony since the eleven-year-old could not walk. Returning to Tsarskoe Selo, Nicholas banned the use of vodka for the duration of the war. This wasn't his smartest move since the taxes on the sale of vodka contributed to the government revenues and Nicholas's decree cut off the revenues just as the nation went to war and needed revenues. Another change instituted by Nicholas occurred on August 31, 1914 when he changed the name of St. Petersburg to Petrograd.

Rasputin and Witte were against the war. Rasputin sent a letter stating that fact to Nicholas through Anna Vyubova. He says that Russia will not survive the war, which angers Nicholas when he reads it. Witte returns to Russia to try to talk the Tsar into withdrawing from the war but his unsuccessful. In the meantime, soldiers left for war, knowing they would never see their families again. Russia was not prepared for war, which is why the Tsar was so reluctant to get involved. Russia's railroads were not complete and the journey to the front too much longer than for other countries. Industry was not very advanced compared to the rest of Europe. Russia had to limit the amount of ammunition their soldiers could use in one day because of shortages.

Because Russian mobilization was so slow, this left Germany with the chance to eliminate France before the Russians were even on the scene. The French did what they could to help the Russians since the French well-being depended on a speedy response by the Russians. At the urging of the French, the Russians attacked before they were ready to and sustained heavy losses.



## Part 3: Chapter 21

### Part 3: Chapter 21 Summary and Analysis

The Tsar wanted to command the army himself once the war began but his ministers advised against it. The field headquarters was at a camp called Stavka that was along the Polish railway with the supreme command headed by Grand Duke Nicholas. This was the Russian headquarters for World War I until the Tsar's abdication. Moreover, it was where the British military attaché, General Sir John Hanbury-Williams, to Petrograd was based. The Emperor Nicholas II visited these headquarters but left the commanding to the Grand Duke.

In November 1914, Nicholas went to visit troops who were fighting in the Caucasus and in fall of 1915, he brought Alexis to live with him at the headquarters. Nicholas hoped that the eleven year old would help bolster troop morale and also that the experience would be educational for the future heir. He himself did not have much training when he assumed the throne and he didn't want Alexis to be in the same position. The separation was hard on Alexandra who had never been separated from the child for long. Alexis was happy to be out of the Alexander Palace. He wore the uniform of a private and reviewed the troops with his father.

A series of losses forced the relocation of the Stavka from Poland to the town of Mogilev in Russia. Alexis slept in a cot in his father's room. The child was allowed to play outside with other children, under the watchful eye of his nurses. There were various foreign military attaché's at the Stavka and Alexis became good friends with them. In October, Alexis traveled to the front with his father and among other activities, visited the wounded in their hospital tents.

The Empress and the four daughters also visited the Stavka to see her husband and son. They would live on the train when they visited. The Tsar sent his wife constant news of Alexis. The child had some injuries but not as serious as the Spala injury. During these times, Nicholas cared for Alexis since the child's hemophilia was still being kept a secret. While traveling, the child caught a cold and suffered from a nosebleed. Instead of returning to the Stavka, they went to Tsarskoe Selo. The Empress sent for Rasputin who came, made the sign of the cross over the child and then told his worried parents that he would be okay. The next day, the bleeding stopped, and the Emperor returned to the Stavka. The Empress credits Rasputin with saving the child; others credit the doctors who cauterized the vessel. Alexis did not return to the Stavka for six months in May 1916. This was to be his last visit before the revolution.





## Part 3: Chapter 22

### Part 3: Chapter 22 Summary and Analysis

The Russians fought against the Austrians and made their way to Vienna and Budapest. At the urging of the worried French, they had to turn away from Vienna and Budapest to assist their French allies against the Germans. Because of this move, they lost their chance to crush the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Even though the Austrians were easier to fight than the Germans were, one quarter of the Russian army had been killed, injured or imprisoned by the end of 1914. The losses were so heavy among the Russian officers because they considered it cowardly to take cover, even when confronted with bullets. This meant that there had to be continual replacements. The Tsar finally told the officers to take cover instead of walking into bullets.

The Germans targeted 1915 as the year to force the Russians out of the war. They mounted fierce attacks against the Russians. Due to their heavy losses and retreats, there was a shortage of weapons. The Grand Duke Nicholas was staging a massive retreat as he tried to preserve his army. By the summer of 1915, half of the army had been destroyed and there were no balls or festivities anymore. The national mood was low and there was an intense distrust of anything German. Cruel stories began to circulate about the Empress and there were calls to end the rule of the Tsar.

Nicholas returns to the front. His position was secure as long as his army was advancing. Nicholas was at his palace as the retreat continued. He received news of the defeats. He and Alexandra went into Petrograd to pray at the Fortress of Peter and Paul and then to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan. That evening, Nicholas summoned his ministers and announced that he planned to move to the Stavka and lead the army. The ministers were against the move saying they wanted to keep the image of the Tsar separate from the defeat. In actuality, the Tsar was a figurehead with the army being run by his Commander in Chief, Michael Vasilevich Alexeiev.

"Thus, the military collapse of 1915 played a major part in all that was to happen afterward. For it was the tragic and bloody defeat of the army, which weakened the grip of Grand Duke Nicholas and persuaded the Tsar to take personal command of the troops. By going to the army, hundreds of miles from the seat of government, the Tsar gave up all but a vague, supervisory control over affairs of state. In an autocracy, this arrangement was impossible; a substitute autocrat had to be found. Uncertainly at first, then with growing self-confidence, this role was filled by the Empress Alexandra. At her shoulder, his 'prayers, arising day and night,' stood her Friend, Rasputin. Together they would finally bring down the Russian Empire" (Chapter 22, pg. 322).



## Part 3: Chapter 23

### Part 3: Chapter 23 Summary and Analysis

Alexandra filled her time with volunteer and hospital work for the war effort. The Catherine Palace was being used as a hospital. The Empress even enrolled in nursing courses for the war effort, taking Olga, Tatiana and her friend Anna Vyubova with her. After two months, Alexandra was a certified war nurse. She constantly wrote Nicholas of her activities. After the revolution, 630 letters were found in Ekaterinburg, none of which was ever intended for publication. They were filled with details of the family's day-to-day life and Alexandra's advice to her husband regarding his demeanor.

Rasputin became a staunch ally of Alexandra. Rasputin lived in an apartment at 64 Gorokhovaya Street. This was in a section of Petrograd near the Fontanka Canal. The police monitored who came and went at his home and Rasputin, in time, became friendly with the detectives that were monitoring him. At one point, a drunken Rasputin was arrested for exposing himself with a full report sent to the Tsar. Rasputin had a powerful hypnotic personality that overpowered even heads of state, like the empress. However, no one could ever convince Alexandra of the evil of Rasputin. She always saw him as a Holy Man and healer and accepted his advice regarding the appointment of ministers and other things having to do with politics. All Rasputin wanted was to be left alone so he recommended people who would see that he was left alone. In the end, many attribute the collapse of the monarchy to the involvement of Rasputin.



## Part 3: Chapter 24

### Part 3: Chapter 24 Summary and Analysis

Alexandra has been the Russian empress for twenty-one years in fall of 1915. She was rarely interested in politics or government affairs and rarely even mentioned them to the Tsar unless it involved Rasputin. When Nicholas left Tsarskoe Selo to head the army, Alexandra had to fill in for the administrative functions of government in Petrograd. She relied on Rasputin as an advisor when he came to the selection of ministers. Rasputin judged men by their view of him and his life style not by their ministerial capabilities. During this time Goremykin had wanted to resign but the Tsar would not allow it. When the Tsar took over the Army and the ministers opposed him and threatened to resign, he said he would not accept their resignations and replace them until he was ready to.

The sixteen months of Alexandra's decision-making resulted in constant dismissals and reshuffling of positions. Goremykin was finally dismissed in February 1916. Other ministers who wanted nothing to do with Rasputin met the same fate. Goremykin, Polivanov, Sazonov - all were driven out. Russia lost her most capable ministers during this period. In October 1916, Alexander Protopopov, from the town of Simbirsk, was appointed Vice-President of the Duma, of which Kerensky was a member. Portopopov, who suffered from advanced syphilis, met Rasputin when he consulted the healer for his medical condition. The appointment caused a stir and Protopopov was accused of being a turncoat.

Soon Rasputin became interested in the war and the date and time of attacks. He was passing information to the army much to the chagrin of General Alexeiev who was concerned for security reasons. When they went through the Empress's papers after the abdication, they found her in possession of a map of the troops on the front. Only the General and the Emperor had copies of this map. The Tsar would tell his wife not to reveal any military information he revealed to her but that did not stop Alexandra from passing on the information to Rasputin. Rasputin was interfering with a great detail in Russian offensive in June 1916. When Rasputin disagreed with the order of the Tsar to Brusilov to stop the attacks. The Tsar finally gave in to the demands of Rasputin and Alexandra and the offensive was halted.

By October 1916, all of the ministers who had signed a letter opposing the Tsar's move to head the army were gone. At this point, Russia was beginning to disintegrate as scandals and mutinies were beginning to occur. Russia did not have enough resources to make munitions and railroads. Nicholas and Alexis went to Kiev to inspect the troops and hospitals and also to visit Marie who living there. She also urged him to get rid of Rasputin and Sturmer who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of Council of Ministers. There was an uproar in the Duma at this time where they also wanted to be rid of the two men. The Tsar agrees to the removal of Sturmer and finds Rasputin opposing him.



The new prime minister was Alexander Trepov, who did not like or support Rasputin. In order to get rid of Rasputin, he had to first get rid of Protopopov. Obviously, Alexandra, under the influence of Rasputin, opposes the removal of Sturmer and Protopopov. The Empress prevails over Proropopov, and the correspondence indicates a serious quarrel between the Imperial couple. They even tried bribing Rasputin, but it didn't work. Rasputin's influence over the Imperial couple caused an uproar in Petrograd in October 1916. When the season began, suspicion of German spies was at its highest. Sturmer and the Empress were both suspect so much so that after the abdication, the Alexander Palace was searched for a wireless. They assumed that Rasputin was a paid German spy although there has never been any evidence to support this accusation.

Alexandra, in spite of her hospital work, was still despised by most of the Russian people. Some considered her guilty of treason and others considered her to be a mistress of Rasputin. By the end of 1916, it was obvious to all that changes were going to occur at the top. There were rumors of plots against the Tsar. The Tsar's family warns the Tsar of the outside influence on Alexandra and to stop listening to her advice. Even Ella came to visit Alexandra to talk about Rasputin. They did not part on friendly terms.



## Part 3: Chapter 25

### Part 3: Chapter 25 Summary and Analysis

There was a twenty-nine year old prince named Felix Yussoupov who was the heir to the largest fortune in Russia. His mother, who had lost three older sons, dressed Felix in dresses until he was five. He and his brother liked to dress in their mother's gowns, wigs, and jewels and then go out in public and walk around. Felix married a niece of the Tsar, Irina, in 1914. Felix had also been to see Rasputin for an illness and concluded that Rasputin was the cause of the destruction of the monarchy and had to be killed. He enlists the aid of other conspirators who decide to poison Rasputin in the cellar of Felix's palace on December 29. Rumors of the plots spread and reach Rasputin.

Rasputin writes a letter that becomes famous after his death. He states that he doesn't think he will be alive on January 1. He also says that if he is killed by commoners or peasants, the Tsar and his family will have nothing to worry about. The Tsar will remain on the throne and the Romanovs will rule for hundreds of years. However, if Rasputin is killed by nobles, the Romanovs will be killed by the Russian people within two years. The killers will flee from Russia and there will be no nobles for twenty-five years. Rasputin knows that he will not live and becomes very selective of where he goes and which invitations he accepts.

Rasputin accepts an invitation to visit Felix at his palace. Felix tells him he will meet his wife, Princess Irina, who is really out of town in the Crimea at the time. Anna Vyubova, when she learns of the midnight invitation for tea, tries to dissuade Rasputin, finding midnight to be rather late for a visit. Alexandra finds out from Anna and tells Anna that Irina is in the Crimea. Rasputin meets with Felix who feeds him poisoned cakes and wine and serenades him as he waits for an absent Irina to appear from the party she is supposedly hosting upstairs. After two and a half hours, Rasputin is still sitting there waiting for Irina, in spite of all of the poison. Felix goes upstairs to talk to the other conspirators about a Rasputin who wasn't very affected by the poison. They agree with Felix that Felix will shoot Rasputin, which Felix does when he returns to the cellar. Rasputin runs out of the cellar and into the snow, with the conspirators following him. They continue to fire at Rasputin. When Rasputin finally fell, they started beating him with a club and later threw him through a hole in the frozen Neva River. His body was found several days later with water in his lungs. After the poison, shootings and beating, he died of drowning.

The Empress ordered an investigation since a drunken Purishkevich had told a policeman that they had just killed Rasputin, when he knocked on the door and asked about the noise. Anna writes the Tsar with what she knows. Alexandra becomes frantic, as there is no sign of Rasputin. On January 1, 1917, divers find his body in the river. Three of the known murders, Felix, Purishkevich, and Grand Duke Dmitry, are cheered as heroes in Petrograd. To the peasants in the countryside, the death of the peasant Rasputin made him a martyr.

Nicholas was not very concerned about the death of Rasputin. He too resented the intrusion, especially in the last few months. However, the Tsar was worried about his wife. He could not remove Rasputin before because of Alexandra's belief in him regarding Alexis.



## Part 3: Chapter 26

### Part 3: Chapter 26 Summary and Analysis

That winter the Tsar remained in seclusion at Tsarskoe Selo and rarely left his quarters and spent his evenings in his wife's boudoir with Anna and the family. Visitors noticed a marked change in the Tsar and were worried about him. Alexandra held up under the strain. Rasputin had always told her that her son would die and she would lose her crown if Rasputin died. Alexandra had Anna moved into an apartment in the Alexander Palace since she was receiving threatening mail since the assassination. Alexandra and Nicholas continued to receive reports about Protopopov.

The murder of Rasputin changed nothing in the Russian government. Sturmer had been replaced. Protopopov still had the confidence of the Empress, and most of the other ministers barely mattered to her. A visitor to the palace, General Sir Henry Wilson, who had known Alexandra since she was a child, commented on the situation. "'What a tragedy there is in that life,' he wrote. Nevertheless, when he left Russia a week later, he added, 'It seems as certain as anything can be that the Emperor and Empress are riding for a fall. Everyone - officers, merchants, ladies - talks openly of the absolute necessity of doing away with them'" (Chapter 26, pg. 386).

The murderers of Rasputin were trying to save the monarchy, as they tried to do away with the power that was influencing Alexandra and causing so much trouble. The Tsar, they thought, would then be free to make the right choices and save the monarchy and Russia. The murder intensified the rift in the Romanov family as family members and friends traveled to Tsarskoe Selo to beg Alexandra to stay out of politics and administrative affairs. They were all claiming that the revolution was coming from above, not from below. There were even talks of plots among members of the royal family to do away with Alexandra.

The war went on as the Imperial government crumbled. This was watched by the various ambassadors. The French and British ambassadors asked the Tsar to appoint a government favorable to the Duma, as this was the only way to save the government. They pointed out to Nicholas that if a revolution occurred, they could not count on most of the army for support to defend the Romanovs. On February 23, Rodzianko advises the Tsar that the revolution is imminent unless the Tsar finds a way to keep Alexandra from interfering in official matters and the Tsar handed control to his son with a regent. Nicholas ignored all of the warnings. After two months of rest, Nicholas decided to return to the front. Five days later, the government collapsed.



## Part 3: Chapter 27

### Part 3: Chapter 27 Summary and Analysis

The first week of March 1917, had winter in Petrograd with freezing soldiers listening to news of the front, women standing in long bread lines and unemployed workers milling around the city. The previous week, Kerensky had called for the removal of the Tsar even if it means using terrorist's methods at a meeting of the Duma. Since this was treason under Russian law, Protopopov began proceedings to prosecute Kerensky, which meant Kerensky had to be deprived of his immunity.

The huge wartime loss of men meant the farms were not feeding the people and there were shortages of food and fuel. The Russian railroad had diminished during the war that made it harder to transport food and fuel. The shortages led to higher prices. Amidst all of this misery, revolutionaries had no definite plans. Lenin was still living in Zurich. On March 8, there was violence among those in the breadlines as people broke into the bakeries and helped themselves. The next day, the same thing occurred. The Cossacks troops appeared, but without their whips. By Saturday, a strike began and spread through Petrograd.

The Cabinet tried to get Nicholas to return to Petrograd. Nicholas was being misinformed of events by Protopopov and believed the problems to be minor. The Tsar ordered the troops to restore order the next day, Sunday. As the protesters took to the streets on Sunday, they found signs posted banning public meetings and ordering strikers back to work on Monday or they would be sent to the front. As the crowds grew, the soldiers opened fire and two hundred people were killed. Some troops refused to fire. Rodzianko notified the Tsar of the seriousness of the situation that night. Nicholas orders troops from the front to the capital to restore order. He orders the Duma dissolved and announces that he will return to Petrograd in a few days.

On March 12, the troops in Petrograd began to mutiny and join the revolution. By sunset, there were more than 66,000 soldiers that had joined the revolution. The Cabinet walked out and gave themselves up to the protection of the Duma. They decided to ignore the Imperial Order, which dissolved the Duma. Rodzianko, although he was loyal to the Tsar, assured the revolutionaries that the Duma would not dissolve and would function as government. The Duma and all of the political parties met and tried to appoint an executive committee to take charge of the troops.

At the same time, there was another organization that formed, the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies. This was comprised of one soldier from each unit and one worker representative for every thousand workers. Kerensky managed to bring them all under the roof of the Duma. The Duma needed some representatives from the revolutionaries. Both sat in different chambers of the Tauride Palace with Kerensky bridging the gap between them. Within a few days, Kerensky was elected Vice-Chairman of the Soviet and Minister of Justice in the provisional government. He saved



the lives of the prisoners who surrounded to arrest. Even Protopopov presented himself and received protection.

By the morning of March 13, the city was in the hands of the provisional government. The only part that wasn't was the Winter Palace where there were fifteen hundred troops that were loyal to the Tsar. By March 14, the Duma and the provisional government had control as units from Tsarskoe Selo joined the revolution. The revolution took place in the city of Petrograd. There were still millions of Russians across the country and many of the war allies hoped that the Tsar could retain his throne.



## Part 3: Chapter 28

### Part 3: Chapter 28 Summary and Analysis

Nicholas writes to Alexandra of his loneliness and missing Alexis and playing dominoes. Riots were occurring and the revolution beginning and the Tsar is writing about missing playing dominoes with his son. Even though headquarter received reports the next morning, it seems apparent that Nicholas didn't know of the serious nature of the situation until March 11. The people who fed the information to the Tsar, Protopopov and Voeikov, fed him bad information so he was misinformed. He was told about disorders in the streets, not outright revolution. On March 12, a note from Alexandra told him how serious it was and he made plans to return to Tsarskoe Selo. He also received reports as he traveled back to the area.

One hundred miles from Petrograd the Tsars train halted and was boarded by a soldier bring them news of revolutionary troops ahead on the tracks. The decision was made to detour to Pskov. This was the headquarters of the Northern Group of Armies. Its commander, General Ruzsky was waiting on the deserted platform when the Tsar's train arrived. Nicholas is told the news of all of the defections, including his own personal guard. Nicholas had Ruzsky send word to Radzianko that he was willing to offer a Duma with a prime minister. Radzianko tells him that it is too late and that he is barely hanging on and that there is much hatred of Alexandra.

At this point, many people still thought they could save the monarchy if Nicholas abdicated in favor of his son with his brother, the Grand Duke Michael, as Regent. The general consensus of opinion of the various generals was that Nicholas had to abdicate. Wanting to avoid Civil War Nicholas announces that he will abdicate in favor of his son. Nicholas signed the document on March 15 at 3 pm. In addition, his Imperial Majesty Tsar Alexis II was the Emperor of Russia at the age of twelve. It was decided to hold the document for the arrival of Guchkov and Shulgan, which was six hours away. Six hours was enough time for Nicholas to discuss his son's medical condition. They also figured that Nicholas and Alexandra would be exiled abroad and would not be allowed to take the future Tsar with them. Nicholas made another decision.

When Guchkov and Shulgan arrive, Nicholas tells them he plans to renounce his throne instead of abdicating in favor of his son. He turns the throne over to his brother Michael. The documents are drawn and signed. News spreads throughout Russia that the Tsar has abdicated. On March 22, 1917, the provisional government receives official recognition from the United States.

Members of the royal family reacted in different ways, most of them concerned about their own situation. Most were more upset about Nicholas removing his son than at the abdication of Nicholas himself. Many members of the government felt the same way and some wondered if Nicholas could legally do so. They were not aware that Alexis had hemophilia. Michael, at Gatchina, was notified by a telegram from Nicholas. He



decided to travel to Petrograd to make his decision there. Many people in Petrograd saw no reason to replace one Romanov with another. They wanted a Republic, not another monarchy. Michael, in Petrograd, decides to abdicate unless he is officially offered the throne by a constituent assembly. Michael also signed a deed of abdication. This was the end of the Romanov dynasty.

Nicholas received permission to say goodbye to the troops. There was a ceremonial farewell at Stavka where he also said goodbye to the foreign advisors. Nicholas said he hoped that he and his family could retire to the Crimea. He did not want to leave Russia. Marie and his sister arrived at the Stavka on his second day there. She stayed for three days, living on her train. On March 21, Nicholas and Alexandra are both arrested for their own safety and Nicholas travels back to Tsarskoe Selo, and Marie leaves for Kiev.



## Part 3: Chapter 29

### Part 3: Chapter 29 Summary and Analysis

On March 12, Alexandra sent word to her friend Lili Dehn that she wanted her to come out from Petrograd on the train, which Lili did. Alexandra had not paid much attention to what was happening in Petrograd that weekend since three of her children had measles. The three sick children were Alexis, Olga, Tatiana along with Anna Vyrubova. While Lili is visiting, Alexandra learns of the mutiny of the soldiers. Lili decides to stay at Tsarskoe Selo instead of returning to Petrograd and they keep news of the events from the children. Rodzianko advises Alexandra and the children to leave Tsarskoe Selo but the message is intercepted and sent to the Tsar who orders a train made ready without Alexandra being told about it. However, it was too late by the next morning for a train to be readied not that it mattered since Alexandra refused to leave due to the illness of the children.

There were still troops that were loyal to the Tsar that were around the palace. They receive news that a mob of three thousand is on their way to attack the palace so they wait for them. Some revolutionaries did arrive but were scared off by rumors of how well defended the Alexander Palace was. Alexandra expected the Tsar to arrive the next morning on March 14 so she was up early and told he was delayed. In the meantime, the Duma had worked out a truce trying to keep the Alexander Palace from being attacked. The next morning the troops deserted the palace and they were without electricity and water. Servants who came from Petrograd brought news of the Tsar's abdication, which Alexandra refused to believe. By late afternoon, word of Michael's abdication arrived.

With the provisional government fully in control, Nicholas and Alexandra are allowed to communicate. Late on March 18 Guchkov, the Minister of War and General Kornilov, a soldier came to Tsarskoe Selo to see if Romanov family needed protection or supplies. After this, Alexandra burned much of her correspondence. General Kornilov returned on March 21 to arrest Alexandra. He explains that she and Nicholas are being arrested for their own protection and that the plan is for them to travel Murmansk and then to England once the children have recovered. A Captain Kotzebue was left in charge of the palace. After Kornilov's departure, Alexandra tells the children of the abdication and that their father will return the next day. The next day the train arrives in Tsarskoe Selo and Nicholas is reunited with his wife and family.



## Part 4: Chapter 30

### Part 4: Chapter 30 Summary and Analysis

Nicholas has to have advance permission to go outside of the palace, even for a walk in the park. Soldiers appeared and blocked his path every way he tried to go and pushed him back with their guns. He went back into the palace and Lili and Alexandra, who had been watching from an upstairs window, began to grasp what revolution met. A group of soldier came and said they had orders to bring Nicholas to the Fortress of Peter and Paul but upon questioning it was found that all they wanted to do was to see Nicholas. That night another group arrived and dug up Rasputin's remains and burned them on a bier of pine logs. This was exactly what Rasputin had predicted.

The group inside the palace included some people who decided to stay with the royal family. The captive group found that everything going in and out of the palace had to be inspected by the guards. The guards would bring out chairs and cushions to sit on while on duty and were even found to be asleep several times. When they were off duty, they would wander around the palace, in and out of people's rooms. Mostly they wanted to see Alexis. When the children recovered their health, their lessons resumed, being given by the adults around them. Nicholas and the others kept up on world events by the papers and magazines they were allowed to read. He was worried about the army's performance at the front.

For the first time in twenty years, Nicholas did not have to work. He could spend all of his time with his family. He tried to ease the transition to captivity for his wife who spent most of her day in her daughters' room and visited Anna in the evening with her husband. Nicholas and Alexandra were known as Citizen Romanov and Alexandra the German among the Petrograd population. Kerensky was charged with the safety of the Romanovs and decided to see them on April 3. He and his group went through the private rooms of the family and group. Kerensky orders Lili and Anna moved to Petrograd. Lily was released the next day; Anna spent five months in captivity.

Six days later Kerensky was back again to investigate Alexandra and the pro-German activities. He tried to separate her from the family but gave in to the protests of sick children needing their mother. Nicholas was the one who had to live apart and the separation lasted for eighteen days. Alexandra was questioned once for an hour. He asked both Nicholas and Alexandra about the selection of ministers and the frequency of the changes. Kerensky felt that the charges of treason were unfounded.

Colonel Eugene Kobylinsky becomes the officer in charge of them in May. He is not a revolutionary and does what he can to keep the family comfortable. The family took daily walks for the fresh air and planted a vegetable garden in spring. Nicholas also sawed the dead trees for firewood, which was piled up around the park. They never knew what the next day would bring. It would not have been difficult to move the

Romanov family to a port where they could leave the country, but no one was willing to take the chance.



## Part 4: Chapter 31

### Part 4: Chapter 31 Summary and Analysis

The Provisional Government was trying to get the Romanov family to a place of safety. This was one of their goals. They were not political enemies any further and they passed a law against capital punishment to head off demands for Nicholas's execution. They sent a request to England for asylum for Nicholas and his family. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George agreed to accept the Romanovs if the Russians paid the bills. The Soviet knew of the plan because Kerensky had announced that he would personally escort them to Murmansk. The Soviet didn't have the strength to move the Romanovs to the Petrograd prison and the Provisional Government didn't have the strength to move them to Murmansk by train. The only thing that the Romanovs ever knew was that the King and Queen of England were asking about the Romanovs. Due to opposition in the population, the British government eventually withdrew its offer.

Lenin was living in Switzerland when the revolution occurred in Petrograd. He did not view the situation as a proletarian revolution but as replacing one form of capitalism with another. He sent a telegram to his Bolsheviks on March 25 that they should distrust Kerensky and the new government. On April 9, Lenin and seventeen exiles passed through Germany to return to Russia. The Germans wanted a Russian government that wasn't committed to continuing the war and that wasn't what they had with the Provisional Government. They arrived in Petrograd to a cheering crowd that Lenin addressed from a balcony at the former home of the ballerina Kschessinska that was now the headquarters of the Bolsheviks.

Not all of the revolutionaries were prepared to accept Lenin's dogma that was based on Marxist theory. Most believed that they had to work with the Provisional Government in the transition period and because of this, they supported it. Lenin did not support the Provisional Government but called for its overthrow on the day after his return to Petrograd. Most people dismissed Lenin as a has-been after his speech, which was known as the April Thesis. May 17th marked the return of Trotsky from exile in New York and he went to work with Lenin. At this time, due to resignations, Kerensky became Prime Minister and Minister of War.

Lenin called for the Russian withdrawal from World War I. This was the biggest feat of Russia's allies who pressured Russia to stay in the war. The United States made loans to the Provisional Government contingent on the Russian participation in the war. Lenin's anti-war position had him labeled as a German spy and he had to escape to Finland. All of this made it clear that it was dangerous for the Romanov family to stay in the Petrograd area and Kerensky suggested they be moved to away from the capital. Nicholas suggested Livadia and Kerensky said it was under consideration along with several other sites. Kerensky decided the Crimea was too far and the train would have to pass through too many populated areas. Kerensky eventually decided on the site of Tobolsk in western Siberia and his decisions was based on the security of the railroads.

The transfer of the Romanov family to Tobolsk was a secret from most of the government. Troops who had served at the front were selected as guards to be sent with the family. It was decided which members of the group would travel to Tobolsk. Kerensky arranged for the Tsar's brother Michael to visit to say good-bye. After some problems of organizing the train, the family finally departed for Siberia, where they were told they would be able to leave after the meeting of the Constituent Assembly in November.



## Part 4: Chapter 32

### Part 4: Chapter 32 Summary and Analysis

The Romanovs traveled to Siberia in a luxury train, even though it was not the royal train. They were allowed to bring some palace treasures and jewels with them. Traveling with the Romanov family were two valets, six maids, ten footmen, three cooks with four assistants, a wine steward, a butler, and their two pet dogs. The train's restaurant car also contained wines from the palace wine cellar. The soldiers followed on a second train. The trains did not stop at the stations that were deserted when the trains went through. The train window shades also had to be drawn when they went through a town. The trip to Siberia took four days.

The train reached Tyumen around midnight on August 17. There was still another two hundred miles to Tobolsk by river. They transferred to the steamer *Rus* for the last leg of the trip. The Romanovs were all on deck when the steamer passed by Pokrovskoe, the home of Rasputin. Arriving at Tobolsk, Kobylinsky went ashore to inspect the governor's house, which was to be the quarters of the Romanovs. He found it empty of furnishings and in need of repair. He had to hire workers to paint, repair the electricity, furnish the house, etc., before the Romanovs could move in. After eight days of remodeling, the house was ready for the Romanovs on August 26. The house was too small for the entire group so some of them lived in a commandeered house across the street. A fence was built to contain the family on the grounds so they couldn't wander around or visit across the street. Some of the maids lived in the town and Dr. Bolton was allowed to have a small medical practice.

The Tobolsk population was still loyal to the Tsar so the situation was as explosive as it had been in Petrograd. It was much safer for the royal family. Kobylinsky remained in charge until September when Vasily Pankratov and Alexander Nikolsky arrived to take charge of the captives. They were civilian commissars who were revolutionaries who had returned from exile. Kobylinsky remained in charge of the guards. "Nevertheless, the family was not markedly affected. They had endured worse treatment at Tsarskoe Selo, and they remained unafraid and hopeful for the future. All of the survivors remarked that, despite the narrow confinement, the peaceful autumn months in Tobolsk were not wholly unpleasant" (Chapter 32, pg. 475).

For Nicholas, the biggest lack in Tobolsk was news. He could gather enough information to know that Kerensky and the Provisional Government were failing. The Bolsheviks were gaining in strength and power. As the situation was coming apart in Petrograd, Lenin returned from Finland on October 23. In November, the Bolsheviks took key positions in the Petrograd area without any bloodshed. On November 8, the ministers surrendered. Kerensky went into hiding and never again returned to Petrograd and left Russia through Murmasnk for fifty years of exile, and with him went the dream of a democratic Russia.



Nicholas watched as the events took place in Petrograd. He felt that Kerensky should have helped Kornilov in fighting the Bolsheviks. He began to regret his abdication when Lenin and Trotsky came to power. Life in far off Tobolsk was barely affected by the revolution. Alexandra wrote to Anna Vyubova of their routine with lessons for the children and the confinement to a small fenced area in the yard of the house. The full force of the Siberian winter hit Tobolsk and the group amused it self by acting out skits and plays. This kept them all amused.

As the meaning of the revolution reached the soldiers of Tobolsk, they became more hostile and less responsible to the leadership and command of Kobylinsky. They imposed stricter conditions on the Romanovs and Kobylinsky wanted to resign. In February, he and other soldiers of the Imperial Army were demilitarized by order of the Bolshevik government. Money had to be sent to Tobolsk for the support of the Romanovs. Since it never arrived, the family had to learn to budget what they had and to let go of some of their servants. The local people in the area would send them packages of food.



## Part 4: Chapter 33

### Part 4: Chapter 33 Summary and Analysis

Some people in the captive group began to think of trying to escape, since there was no Bolshevik government in Tobolsk. Monarchist organization had considered the idea of escape before and existed to help the Romanovs but Nicholas always insisted that his family not be separated. Since Kerensky had promised them freedom by the Spring of 1918, they saw no reason to consider escape. Nevertheless, representatives of the various monarchist organizations began to appear in Tobolsk. Boris Soloviev, the son-in-law of Rasputin, was one of them and he established himself in Tyumen. The followers of Rasputin were undaunted by the revolution.

Soloviev contacted Alexandra through one of her maids and Alexandra had faith in him. However, Soloviev had set himself up two hundred miles away where everyone who came on behalf of the royal family went through him and handed over to him whatever money they brought for the Romanovs. Eventually many of these groups began to question Soloviev about his plans. In January, the Bolsheviks took control of Tyumen and no rescue attempts were made. Most of the money never reached the Romanovs, but Soloviev became famous as the man who tried to rescue them.

Alexis sustained another injury at Tobolsk, which resulted in the most serious bleeding since Spala. As he was recovering, the Bolsheviks arrived in Tobolsk. Alexandra sensed the seriousness of the situation. Kerensky's government had fallen and Lenin was in charge now. The Russians wanted an end to the war and the Germans imposed a high price - the loss of Poland, Finland, the Baltic States, the Ukraine, the Crimea and almost all of the Caucasus. Lenin agreed to these terms since he had promised peace. This was the Treaty of Breast-Litovsk that was criticized by both Nicholas and Alexandra.

The family was moved to Ekaterinburg, which was revolutionary and anti-tsarist long before it was popular. The Ural Regional Soviet had asked Moscow for permission to transfer the Romanov family to Ekaterinburg. On April 22, Commissar Vasily Vaslevich Yakovelev arrived from Moscow leading 150 troops. He was supposed to move the family from Tobolsk but given the condition of Alexis, his ordered were changed to only remove Nicholas and whatever party he wanted to take with. Nicholas at first refused then was told that he couldn't. Nicholas and his group thought they were going to take him to Moscow to try to force him to sign the peace treaty with Germany. Alexandra debates whether or not to accompany Alexandra. Alexandra decides that she and Marie will accompany Nicholas and they leave in a rickety carriage.

Their little caravan of carriages and carts travel to Tyumen, where the party is transferred to a train. Yakovlev could not send the train on the direct route to Moscow through Ekaterinburg without having his prisoners removed there so they went by the Eastern route through Omsk. The Ural Soviet Presidium in Ekaterinbug was informed that the train was traveling in the wrong direction and informed the West Siberian Soviet



in Omsk to block the train. The train was surrounded and Yakovlev went into town to talk to the Soviet. Moscow ordered him to turn the Romanovs over to the Ural Soviet in Ekaterinburg where the people were very hateful of Nicholas.

Nicholas's brother Michael was trying to have the royal family brought to Moscow. Germany needed some way of stopping the revolutionary plans of Lenin, and the possibility of the Kaiser supporting the reinstatement of the monarchy was not impossible as a way of stopping Lenin.



## Part 4: Chapter 34

### Part 4: Chapter 34 Summary and Analysis

A house in Ekaterinburg was commandeered for the use of Nicholas and Alexandra. A fence was built around it and it, the Ipatiev, was known as The House of Special Purposes. The lower floor was converted to offices for the guards: the upper floor was the residence for the Romanov family. This was April 1918. Soon the Duchesses received a coded message from their mother telling them to dispose of their medicines. Medicine was a code word for jewels. The staff at Tobolsk started sewing the jewels into the clothing. In May, Colonel Kobylinsky was relieved of his command by troops from Ekaterinburg. This Red Guard unit was headed by Rodionov who check the condition of Alexis on a daily basis.

The children and their party left Tobolsk on May 19, when Alexis was well enough to travel. The children arrived in Ekaterinburg the next day and carried their belongings from the train. The remainder of the party met different fates. Some were sent to prison, some sent to live with the Romanovs and some were freed. Those living with the Romanovs had twelve people crammed into five rooms but they were happy because of the arrival of the children. The guards were rude and crude and pilfered the Romanov luggage. Alexis's nurse, Nagorny was arrested when he tried to stop a soldier from taking a chain of icons from the boy. He was shot several days later in prison.

The Chairman of the local Soviet in Ekaterinburg claimed that the town was full of monarchists that flocked there after the arrival of the royal family. He believed that they were trying to help the family escape and spoke of letters that were confiscated. Some of the letters did get through to Nicholas and the family stayed up all night fully dressed ready to be rescued at the end of June. There was no rescue attempt and on July 4, the guards were relieved by a group of Maygars hired by the Cheka. They were commanded by Jacob Yurovsky. The Ural Soviet had decided to execute the Tsar as soon as they had him in Ekaterinburg but they were afraid to act on their own. Sverdlov and Moscow were informed of the change in guards.

At this time, the Russians were under siege because of foreign troops landing at various places. Civil war had erupted between the White Russians and the Red Russians. When it looked like a surrounded Ekaterinburg could only last for three days, they decided to execute the royal family and destroy any evidence of the act. They search the woods looking for a place to hide the remains and find an abandoned mineshaft. They then bought drums of gasoline and sulfuric acid.

The murders were performed on July 16. At midnight, they were awakened and told to dress. They had to leave because of the approach of the Whites. They were put in a semi-basement room and told they were waiting for cars to arrive. Yurovsky entered and announced that they would all be shot, and the shooting began. They were all killed.

# Epilogue

## Epilogue Summary and Analysis

The bodies were taken to the abandoned mine in what was called the Four Brothers, where they were dismembered and burned. Bones were dissolved with sulfuric acid with the ashes thrown into the water at the bottom of the mine. It took Yurovsky's group three days to complete the task. Eight days after the murders, the Whites took Ekaterinburg. Examination of the house revealed no sign of the Romanovs, but the evidence indicated a massacre had taken place. In January 1919, a special investigator was appointed by the White government in Siberia. They found the mine with its evidence of the belongings of the Romanovs.

The official announcement was that the Tsar had been executed. The rest of the family was lost in the evacuation of Ekaterinburg. After a year, the Bolsheviks admitted that the family had been killed. They arrested and tried twenty-eight people and executed five of them for the murder of the Tsar. Lenin felt that the murder of the Romanovs was necessary. Any member of the Romanov family that was found was murdered so any who could leave Russia did so.

"Here, precisely, is the point. Had it not been for the agony of Alexis's hemophilia, had it not been for the desperation, which made his mother turn to Rasputin, first to save her son, then to save the pure autocracy, might not Nicholas II have continued retreating into

The role of constitutional monarch so happily filled by his cousin King George V? It might have happened, and, in fact, it was in this direction that Russian history was headed" (Epilogue, pg. 530).



# Characters

## Nicholas II

Nicholas is the oldest child of Tsar Alexander III and Empress Marie. As such, he becomes the Tsar upon his father's death. Nicholas, as most royalty, was raised to be the ruler. His family supervised his choice of a wife, preferring matches other than the one he made with Princess Alix. The Romanovs had a successful marriage with the birth of four daughters and one son. The son, Alexis had hemophilia. Nicholas is the last Tsar, since he was the one on the throne when the Russian Revolution occurred in 1917. Nicholas was faced with unrest in Russia almost from the beginning of his rule. He tried to deal with the situation by consenting to a constitution and a parliament, which made Russia a semi-constitutional monarchy that began to come apart as soon as it was formed. When the revolution began, he abdicated his and his son's rights to the throne. He did not want to cause a civil war or be separated from his son. He and his family are executed in Ekaterinburg in 1918.

## Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov

Ulyanov went by the name of Lenin and was one of the leaders of the Revolution. He also grew up in Simbirsk with Kerensky. Vladimir was born in 1870 to a father who was the son of a freed serf. His father was a mathematics teacher who rose through the ranks and became an administrator. His older brother Alexander was arrested in 1887 for his involvement in a plot to kill the Tsar and was hanged. Vladimir was expelled from the University of Kazan for taking part in a demonstration and his mother bought a farm and made him the manager, as she tried to save him from the same fate his brother had suffered. They had to sell the farm. He studied law and passed the examinations but was not a successful lawyer. He was forced to leave Russia but returned to lead the Bolsheviks after the semi-constitutional monarchy was formed. He was in exile in Zurich when the revolution began and he returned to Petrograd.

## Gregory Rasputin

Rasputin was a Russian peasant who was said to be a faith healer. He was married and the father of three children. He did not renounce material goods or temptation as did other holy men which is why some people considered him to be fraudulent but he was well known across Russia. Rasputin was born and named Gregory Efimovich in the western Siberian village of Pokrovskoe, the son of a farmer who once worked as a coachman for the royal family. He earned the reputation of a seer when he identified a horse thief as a child. While working on the farm one day he told his father that he had a vision and had to make a pilgrimage. He returned from a monastery in Greece after two years and became known as a man of God. He was accepted in St. Petersburg as a holy man and became friends with cousins of the Tsar who introduced him to those at



the palace. Rasputin begins to function as an advisor to Alexandra and is involved in the selection of ministers. He is assassinated by a cousin of the Tsar and other nobles who hope to save the monarchy.

## **Alix**

Princess Alix Victoria Helena Louise Beatrice is a German princess who marries Nicholas. She is from Hesse-Darmstadt, a grand duchy in Germany. She takes the name Alexandra and is crowned Empress when Nicholas is crowned Tsar. She has five children with Nicholas, four daughters and one son. The granddaughter of Queen Victoria was always uncomfortable in Russian society. She felt that all of the balls and banquets were meaningless. By the time of the revolution, Russia was involved in World War I against the Germans and Alexandra was hated by many, because of her involvement with Rasputin. Many accused her of treason but Kerensky found no evidence of this during his investigation.

## **His Imperial Highness Alexis Nicolaievich**

Alexis was the last child born of Nicholas and Alexandra on August 12, 1904. As the only male, he was the heir to the throne. As a sufferer of hemophilia, he lived in a more protected environment than he normally would as heir. The hemorrhaging meant that he suffered immense pain and could not play normally. At the age of thirteen, he was executed along with his family in Ekaterinburg.

## **Sergius Witte**

Witte was a Russian whose father was Dutch. He was educated in Russia at the University of Odessa where he hoped to become a mathematics professor. Instead, he went to work for the Southwestern District Railroad and became an administrator. He held various government positions under Alexander and Nicholas. It was Witte who negotiated the peace that ended the war with the Japanese and Witte who advised Nicholas to give the workers a constitution to try to stop the revolution. Witte authored the Imperial Manifesto which gave Russia a constitution and a parliament but immediately took away many of its provisions trying to maintain his own good standing with the Tsar.

## **Father George Gapon**

Gapon was a priest who worked for the Minister of the Interior Plehve in trying to steer the workers away from the revolutionary movement. After his march to the Winter Palace became a massacre, he went into hiding and became a revolutionary. He was distrusted by the Socialists because of his former ties to the police and was found hanged in April 1906 in Finland.





## Alexander Fedorovich Kerensky

Kerensky was one of the leaders of the Russian Revolution. He came from the town of Simbirsk on the Middle Volga River where he grew up with Lenin since he was the administrator of the school that the young Lenin attended. Kerensky became known for his defense of political prisoners and for his investigations of social incidents. He is one of the members of the Duma. When revolution occurs, he's sent to investigate the captive Alexandra, who it was felt was engaging in pro-German activities. In May 1917, he became Prime Minister and Minister of War.

## Peter Arkadyevich Stolypin

Stolypin was the Russian prime minister from 1906 to 1911. He was a devout monarchist who tried to bring about changes that were in sync with the popular will. He was born in 1863 in Baden-Baden while his mother was visiting the spa and educated in St. Petersburg. Stolypin was governor of Saratov province during the revolution of 1905 which he quelled with minimal loss of life. He became Minister of the Interior in 1906 and moved to St. Petersburg. He became prime minister in July and is eventually assassinated in Kiev in 1911.

## Empress Marie

The Empress Marie was the wife of Tsar Alexander III. She was a princess, Princess Dagmar, of Denmark and a sister of the Princess Alexandra who became the Queen of England. She took the name Marie Fedorovna before her marriage. She was the mother of Nicholas and four other children. She survives the revolution and returns to Denmark and lives in the palace of her nephew.

## Tsar Alexander III

Alexander III was the Tsar of Russia and married to the Empress Marie. He is the father of Nicholas. The Tsar and his family live in the St. Petersburg area since he prefers St. Petersburg to Moscow. The Tsar prefers the palace at Gatchina to the Winter Palace so he spends most of his time at Gatchina until the season begins. His wife prefers St. Petersburg.

## Queen Victoria

The Queen of England is the grandmother of Princess Alix, who becomes of the wife of Nicholas. She is the one who talked Alix into accepting Nicholas's proposal. It is in London that Alix and Nicholas spend six week's with Granny after the announcement of their engagement.



## **Grand Duchess Olga Nicolaievna**

Olga, the first child of Nicholas and Alexandra, was born in mid-November 1895. She accompanies them into captivity after the revolution and is killed at Ekaterinburg at the age of twenty-three.

## **Vladimir**

Vladimir was the oldest brother of Alexander III and uncle of Nicholas. Vladimir's official titles included Commander of the Imperial Guard and President of the Academy of fine Arts.

## **Alexis**

Alexis was one of the uncles of Nicholas. He was the Grand Admiral of the Russian Navy.

## **Serge**

Serge, the husband of Elizabeth, was also one of the uncles. He was the Governor General of Moscow.

## **Paul**

Paul was the fourth uncle and the one that was the least troublesome for the Tsar.

## **Tatiana**

The Grand Duchess Tatiana is the second child of Nicholas and Alexandra, born in June 1897 and killed at Ekaterinburg in 1918.

## **Marie**

The Grand Duchess Marie, the third child of Nicholas and Alexandra, is born in October 1898 and is executed with the family at Ekaterinburg in 1918.

## **Anastasia**

The fourth child of Nicholas and Alexandra, the Grand Duchess Anastasia, was born in June 1901 and dies in 1918 at Ekaterinburg with her family.



## **Kokovtsov**

Kokovtsov was the Finance Minister who was in Kiev in 1911 with Stolypin and the Tsar when Stolypin was assassinated. Kokovtsov was appointed as Stolypin's successor.

## **Prince Felix Yussoupov**

Felix, the husband of a niece of the Tsar, is the wealthiest man in all of Russia. Having been to Rasputin for his healing services, Felix concludes that Rasputin is a big danger to the monarchy and must be killed. He enlists several co-conspirators who decide to poison Rasputin.

## **Jacob Yurovsky**

Yurovsky is the head of a Maygar unit supposedly hired by the Cheka and sent to Ekaterinburg to execute the Tsar and his family.



## Objects/Places

### Moscow

Moscow is the capital of Russia. It is the center of the commerce, trade and transportation for the country.

### St. Petersburg

St. Petersburg is a city on the river Neva. It is where the Winter Palace is located and also the area where the Tsar Alexander and Empress Marie preferred to reside.

### Gatchina

Gatchina is the site of a palace where the Tsar Alexander III prefers to live. It is about twenty-five miles southwest of St. Petersburg.

### Hesse Darnstadt

Hess Darnstadt is the grand duchy in Germany that is the home of Princess Alix.

### London

London is the home of Queen Victoria who is the grandmother of Princess Alix. Nicholas and Alix spend six weeks there with the Queen after the announcement of their engagement.

### Simbirsk

Simbirsk is a town on the Volga River where Kerensky and Lenin grew up.

### Shushenskoe

Shushenskoe is a town in Siberia near the Mongolian border where Lenin spent three years in exile.



## **Straits of Tsushima**

The Straits of Tsushima was the site of a decisive naval battle where the Japanese, lead by Togo, sunk the Russian fleet. This brought on the peace conference that lead to the peace.

## **Tsarskoe Selo**

Tsarskoe Selo was the residence of Nicholas and Alexandra, located fifteen miles South of St. Petersburg. This is the site of the Catherine Palace and the Alexander Palace.

## **Sarajevo**

Sarajevo is the place in Serbia where Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie are assassinated. This is the event that led to the outbreak of World War I.

## **The Standart**

The Standart was the Imperial yacht.

## **The Stavka**

The Stavka was the camp that was the Imperial headquarters of the Russian army during World War I.

## **Tobolsk**

Tobolsk is a town in western Siberia where the Romanov family was sent and held prisoner until their transfer to Ekaterinburg.

## **Ekaterinburg**

Ekaterinburg is a Siberian town that was radical and hated the Tsar. The family was sent there and executed.



# Themes

## Hemophilia

The disease of hemophilia and its effects is the underlying theme of the book. The Heir Apparent, Alexis, had the disease and this affected the actions of his parents, the Tsar Nicholas and the Empress Alexander. The disease, which appeared in the family of Queen Victoria, affected a large part of European royalty. The disease caused Alexandra and Nicholas to come into contact with the starets Gregory Rasputin, the faith healer. Rasputin believed that the way to salvation was through sin; you couldn't be absolved if you didn't sin. He was an uncouth womanizer but Alexandra believed that he was a miracle worker and saved Alexis's life many times when he was hemorrhaging. If Alexis hadn't had hemophilia, Alexandra wouldn't have clung to Rasputin so much. When Nicholas went to live at the Stavka to lead his troops during World War I, leaving Alexandra to run the administrative affairs of the monarchy, she turned to Rasputin as an adviser and he had free reign in selecting ministers and other officials. Rasputin was hated by the Russians as Alexandra herself came to be hated.

The hemophilia of Alexis affected Nicholas's decision when he abdicated. He abdicated for his son as he didn't want to be separated from the sick child. He might have chosen a different route if the child weren't stricken with the disease. The fact that Alexis had the disease was kept secret from the Russian people since only those insiders at the court knew of the child's affliction. Alexandra herself suffered strain from the child's disease and this left her disabled and unable to attend many functions that she should have attended. Nicholas and Alexandra might have done things very differently if their child did not have hemophilia, but the fact that he did is one of the biggest reasons given for the end of the Romanov dynasty.

## Effects of Being Out of Touch

Another recurring theme throughout the book is how out of touch with everyday life and the reality of the peasants' situation and Nicholas, and especially Alexandra were. Neither ever realized how bad living conditions were for the poor. If they had, it might have altered the course of the revolution, but the poor, especially in the city, blamed the monarchy for their conditions. Their dislike of Alexandra had to do with her standoffish nature. She had her Victorian ways about her and her dress, and this is what they held against her from the beginning. Russian society was based on parties and balls. Raised in the British tradition in Germany, Alexandra was into doing things for charity, not spending all of her time partying. She found out that even as Empress, she couldn't make Russian society conform to her likes and dislikes.

Once Alexandra took up so openly with Rasputin, this dislike turned to outright hatred. There was talk not only of affairs with Rasputin, but of Alexandra's loyalty. The Empress was accused of being pro-German during the war because of her German background



and Rasputin was accused of being a German spy. There were even charges of treason against her that were investigated by Kerensky when Alexandra and Nicholas were in captivity in Tobolsk..

Much of what happened and how it happened had to do with both Nicholas and Alexandra being out of touch with the population. Alexandra thought that the populace loved the Tsar and would support him no matter what happened. She couldn't conceive of them not being loyal to the Tsar. Nicholas also had feelings along these lines or they wouldn't have taken the street violence and revolts seriously.

## **Contrast Between the Classes**

Another underlying theme of the book as to do with the difference between the haves and the have-nots. The royalty and upper classes were wealthy beyond words. They were displaying this wealth all over St. Petersburg with their balls and banquets and jewels. While they are partying, the poor women are standing in the cold waiting in bread lines. Many of the poor were begging to stay alive. This is the reason for the social unrest and many strikes throughout the city during this period.

Women like Alexandra did not understand poverty or not having enough food to eat so in many ways it is difficult to blame Alexandra for her attitude. Working as a nurse and making bandages does not solve the problem of class difference. This is one of the reasons why Alexandra was so far out of touch with the majority of the population. She did not understand them or their lifestyle just as they did not understand her upbringing or lifestyle.

The oppression of the poor and the sheer poverty of the working class are the biggest factors leading to the revolution. The workers were demanding rights that the government didn't want to give them. Nicholas was on the right track with the constitutional monarchy but the changes didn't happen fast enough to save his monarchy.



# Style

## Perspective

The author, Robert K. Massie, is the father of a hemophiliac, and this is how he became interested in the Romanov family. He is a writer and author who found something in common with the last Tsar and his family through both of their sons being stricken with the same disease. Massie was interested in how the Romanov family dealt with the disease that came from the genetic lineage of Queen Victoria. His knowledge of hemophilia and its recurrence through the family of Queen Victoria is evident throughout the book. His experience as the parent of a hemophiliac also gives him a special insight into the feelings and actions of many of the Romanov characters as they deal with the disease on a daily basis.

Massie is well qualified to write the book since he is a writer who majored in history at Yale and Oxford. His attention to detail and knowledge of the events has to impress the reader as well as his insight in living with the disease and what it means for the parents. Alexandra and Nicholas come across as human and real in terms of being parents to a sick child. This is because of the author's ability to inject insight and understanding into a mother and father dealing with their suffering child. The reader has to be impressed by the method of presentation of the material.

## Tone

The book is written in the third person with the narrator being the author. The book is written in a straightforward objective matter but it reads like a novel. The facts are presented without much emotion. The author's personal views on the revolution or politics very rarely come across. At no time does the author try to force his views on the reader. His knowledge of hemophilia comes across at different points in the book where he explains different things about the disease or how parents react to the disease and the suffering of the child.

The book is smooth reading, almost like reading a novel. Books that are historical can be dry and boring but this one isn't. The author tells the tragic story of the Romanovs within its historical context and his style of writing makes it hard for the reader to put the book down since the reader always wants to know what happens next. The author's style allows the reader to come to know the characters of Nicholas and Alexandra. Since he is interested in how they dealt with hemophilia as parents, it is natural that these two characters, the main characters of the book, should be the two that are presented most completely. The humanness of the characters as powerful and wealthy monarchs dealing with the illness of their child has to have an effect on the reader.



## Structure

The book is structured quite well. There are four parts and an epilogue to the book. Each part is divided into chapters that are for the most part chronological even though it does jump around a bit at times, but not enough for the reader to have to backtrack or look for information. The scene in Europe and Imperial Russia is set in Part I. Part 2 is mostly devoted to discussions of the characters. This is the part of the book where the reader gets to know most of the characters. Part 3 has to do with how the family dealt with the hemophilia of Alexis and with World War I and the revolution. Part 4 deals with events taking place during the revolution, including the execution of the Tsar and his family. The Epilogue is basically what happened in the aftermath - Romanov family members being killed, Romanov family members in exile, what happened to the Romanov wealth, some of the strategy and actions of the post-revolutionary Russian government.

There is a section of pictures, which helps humanize the characters for the reader. A table in the front with the cast of characters helps the reader to keep track of them but Massie does such a good job that it really isn't necessary. There are also tables with the family trees of Alexandra and Nicholas at the end of the book. There is a large section of Notes that shows the depth of the author's research and allows the reader to check various quotes and facts. All in all, the book is very readable, and the structure is part of the reason why. It is a simple structure that works very well for the book.



## Quotes

"In this book, my purpose has been to weave together from all the threads, and interpret in the light of modern medicine and psychiatry and of the common experience which all families affected by hemophilia necessarily share, and account of one family whose struggle with the disease was to have momentous consequences for the entire world." (Introduction, pg. viii)

"As the year 1894 began, Nicholas's fears appeared remote. Tsar Alexander III, only forty-nine years old, was still approaching the peak of his reign. The early years had been devoted to reestablishing the autocracy in effective form. Now, with the empire safe and the dynasty secure, he expected to use the great power he had gathered to put a distinctive stamp on Russia. Already there were those who, gazing confidently into the future, had begun to compare Alexander III to Peter the great." (Chapter 1, pg. 12)

"No one better understood the significance of the death of the Tsar than the twenty-six-year-old youth who had inherited his throne. 'I say tears in his blue eyes,' recalled Grand Duke Alexander, Nicholas's brother-in-law. 'He took me by the arm and led me downstairs to his room. We embraced and cried together. He could not collect his thoughts. He knew that he was Emperor now, and the weight of this terrifying fact crushed him.'" (Chapter 4, pg. 43)

"Then, for the first time and only time in his life, the Tsar entered the sanctuary to receive the sacrament as a priest of the church. As Nicholas walked up the altar steps, the heavy chain of the Order of St. Andrew slipped from his shoulders and fell to the floor. It happened so quickly that no one noticed except those standing close to the Tsar. Later, lest it be taken as an omen, all those were sworn to secrecy." (Chapter 5, pg. 54)

"Between the Empress and the aristocracy it became an unhappy cycle of dislike and rebuff. In her own mind, Alexandra found the explanation for this by telling herself that they were not real Russians at all. Neither the jaded nobility, nor the workers who went on strike, nor the revolutionary students, nor the difficult ministers had anything to do with the real people of Russia. The real people were the peasants, she had seen during her summer at Ilinskoe. These humble people, multiplied into millions, who walked through the birch groves on their way to the fields, who fell on their knees to pray for the Tsar, were the heart and soul of Holy Russia. To them, she was certain, she was more than just an Empress; she was Matushka." (Chapter 6, pg. 74)

"But the Bjorko treaty was never invoked, and the private Willy-Nicky correspondence soon dwindled away. Thereafter, the Kaiser's influence over the Tsar also faded rapidly. But Nicholas's eyes were opened late. By 1905, he had lost a way and his country was rushing full tilt into revolution." (Chapter 8, pg. 99)



"It was during this period that those who say Nicholas regularly, without knowing about Alexis, began to notice a deepening fatalism in the Tsar. Nicholas had always been struck by the fact that he was born on the day in the Russian calendar set aside for Job. With the passage of time, this fatalism came to dominate his outlook. 'I have a secret conviction,' he once told one of his ministers, 'that I am destined for a terrible trial, that I shall not receive my reward on this earth.'" (Chapter 9, pg. 114)

"Alexis, his parents reasoned, was the Heir to the Throne of the world's largest and most absolute autocracy. What would be the fate of the boy, the dynasty and the nation if the Russian people knew that their future Tsar was an invalid living under the constant shadow of death? Not knowing the answer and fearing to discover it, Nicholas and Alexandra surrounded the subject with silence." (Chapter 12, pg. 163)

"Whatever it was that Rasputin did or did not do, there was only one judge of this effectiveness who mattered. This was the Empress Alexandra. She believed that Rasputin was able to stop Alexis's hemorrhages and she believed that he did it through the power of prayer. Whenever Alexis began to recover from an illness, she attributed it exclusively to the prayers of the Man of God." (Chapter 15, pg. 204)

"If any man outside of the Imperial Family could have saved Imperial Russia, it was the burly, bearded country squire who served as Prime Minister from 1906 to 1911, Peter Arkadyevich Stolypin. A man of the country with roots in the rural nobility, Stolypin had little in common with either the great figures of the princely aristocracy or the dry, professional civil servants who scrambled diligently up the ladders of promotion to the seats of power in the St. Petersburg bureaucracy. Stolypin brought to the Imperial government a clean, strong breath of youth and fresh country air." (Chapter 17, pg. 215)

"Alexandra was a faithful patron. When government ministers or bishops of the church leveled accusations at the starets, she retaliated by urging their dismissal. When the Duma debated 'the Rasputin question' and the press cried out against his excesses, the Empress demanded dissolution of the one and suppression of the other. She defended Rasputin so strongly that it became difficult for people to dissociate in their minds the Empress and the moujik. If she had determined to hate all of his enemies, it was not surprising that his enemies decided to hate her." (Chapter 17, pg. 234)

"The Tsar's closest friends at the court became persuaded that the Sovereign could do anything by relying on the unbounded love and utter loyalty of the people. The ministers of the government, on the other hand, [and] ... the Duma ... both were of the opinion that the Sovereign should recognize that conditions had changed since the day the Romanovs became Tsars of Russia and lords of the Russian domains." (Chapter 18, pg. 239-240)



"The end of the Old World was very near. After three hundred years of Romanov rule, the final storm was about to break over Imperial Russia." (Chapter 18, pg. 250)

"It was sheer coincidence that placed the two assassination attempts, the one at Sarajevo and the one at Pokrovskoe, so close together in time. Yet the coincidence alone is enough to provoke a tantalizing bit of speculation: Suppose the outcome of these two violent episodes had been reversed. Suppose the Hapsburg Prince, a well-meaning man, the heir and the hope of a crumbling dynasty, had lived, while the surging life and mischievous influence of the Siberian peasant had ended forever. How different the course of that long summer - and perhaps of our twentieth century - might have been." (Chapter 19, pg. 259)

"They never tired of asking me what he did and said ... with a candor which utterly amazed me [the Empress] said that all his life the Tsar had suffered from his natural timidity and from the fact that, as he had been kept too much in the background, he had found himself badly prepared for the duties of a ruler on the sudden death of Alexander III. The Tsar had vowed to avoid the same mistakes in the education of his own son.' Suppressing her own terrible fears, the Empress agreed with her husband." (Chapter 21, pg. 298)

"The thrilling sense of national unity which had so profoundly moved the Tsar in the Winter Palace and the Kremlin had evaporated, and in its place surged all the old suspicions, quarrels and hatreds." (Chapter 22, pg. 314)

"But if Nicholas did not always gratify his wife's entreaties, he rarely confronted her with an overt refusal. This was especially true in any matter involving Rasputin. Toward the starets, the Tsar's own attitude was one of tolerant respect tinged with an amiable skepticism.... The having left the management of internal affairs in the Empress's hands, Nicholas regularly deferred to her suggestions in the appointment of ministers. And it was her choice of ministers, proposed by Rasputin, beseechingly pressed on and unwisely endorsed by the absentee Tsar, which lost the Tsar his throne." (Chapter 23, pg. 342)

"By the end of 1916, some form of change at the top was regarded as inevitable in Russia. Many still hoped that the change could be made without violence, that the monarchy could be modified to make the government responsive to the nation. Others felt that if the dynasty was to be preserved, it had to be brutally purged." (Chapter 24, pg. 365)

"According to Yussoupov, Rasputin suggested that Nicholas should abdicate in favor of Alexis, with the Empress installed as Regent. One year before he finally acted,



Yussoupov concluded that Rasputin's presence was destroying the monarchy and that the starets had to be killed." (Chapter 25, pg. 371)

"Kerensky, the Duma's most vociferous advocate of revolution, said later, 'No party of the Left and no revolutionary organization had made any plan for a revolution' None was needed. Revolutionary plots and political programs became insignificant in the face of the growing hunger and bitterness of the people. 'They [the revolutionaries] were not ready, wrote Basil Shulgin, a monarchist deputy, 'but all the rest was ready.'" (Chapter 27, pg. 397)

"The Tauride Palace, an eighteenth-century building presented by Catherine the Great to her favorite Prince Potemkin, possessed two large wings; one was the chamber of the Duma, the other, formerly the budget committee room of the Duma, was given to the Soviet. Thereafter, wrote Kerensky, 'two different Russias settled side by side: the Russia of the ruling classes who had lost (though they did not realize it yet) ... and the Russia of Labor, marching towards power, without suspecting it.'" (Chapter 28, pg. 404)

"The line of guards with fixed bayonets, the restriction of government to a corner of the park and, especially, the humiliation of his father were hard for Alexis to understand and to bear. He had seen his father treated only with respect and reverence, and he blushed with shame whenever an incident occurred. Alexandra, too, flushed deeply when her husband was insulted, but she learned to keep silent." (Chapter 30, pg. 453)

"At one point, Beneckendorff got Kerensky's attention and asked him before witnesses how long the Imperial family would stay in Tobolsk. Kerensky confidently assured the Count that, once the Constituent Assembly had met in November, Nicholas could freely return to Tsarskoe Selo or go anywhere he wished. Undoubtedly, Kerensky was sincere. But in November he himself was a fugitive from the Bolsheviks." (Chapter 31, pg. 468-69)

"Despite the government's narrow triumph over the July Uprising, General Kornilov, now Commander-in-Chief of the Army, concluded that the government was too weak to resist the growing power of the Bolsheviks. Accordingly, at the end of August, Kornilov ordered a cavalry corps. to occupy Petrograd and disperse the Soviet. He proposed to replace the Provisional Government with a military dictatorship, keeping Kerensky in the Cabinet but assuming the dominant role himself." (Chapter 32, pg. 475-760)

"Nicholas himself raised one serious obstacle whenever the question of escape was mentioned: he insisted that the family not be separated from one another. This increased the logistical problem: an escape involving a number of women and a handicapped boy could not be improvised. It would require horses, food and loyal soldiery. If it was to take place in summer, it would need carriages and bots; if it was



planned for winter, there would have to be sledges and possibly a train." (Chapter 33, pg. 485)

"Lenin's openly pronounced goal was world revolution; even now, his creed was exerting a pull on the war-weary soldiers and workers of Germany. With this in mind, the German government had a growing interest in restoring in Russia a monarchy which would crush the Bolsheviks and at the same time be friendly to Germany. Nicholas and Alexandra were known to be bitterly hostile to Germany. But the German government presumed that if it was the Kaiser who saved them and restored them to the throne, the Russian sovereign would be grateful and submissive to the German will." (Chapter 33, pg. 501)

"The commander of the Red military forces was asked how long Ekaterinburg could hold out against the Whites. He reported that the Czechs already had outflanked the city from the south, and that Ekaterinburg might fall within three days. Upon hearing this, the Ural Soviet decided to shoot the entire family as soon as possible and to destroy all evidence of the act." (Chapter 34, pg. 513)

"I did not ask any further questions and considered the matter closed. Actually the decision was not only expedient but necessary. The severity of this summary justice showed the world that we would continue to fight on mercilessly, stopping at nothing. The execution of the Tsar's family was needed not only in order to frighten, horrify, and dishearten the enemy, but also in order to shake up our own ranks to show that here was no turning back, that ahead lay either complete victory or complete ruin .... This Lenin sensed well." (Epilogue, pg. 520)

## Topics for Discussion

Who was Pobedonostsev and how did his views influence Tsar Alexander III and Nicholas?

Did Alexandra have a realistic view of the Russian population's condition and views regarding the Tsar and the monarchy?

Who was Rasputin and what role did he play with the Romanov family?

What was the significance of the Russian alliance with France after the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand?

Why is it said that Rasputin cost the Tsar his throne?

Why did Nicholas abdicate his and Alexis's rights to the throne?

Why did Lenin say the Romanovs had to be killed?