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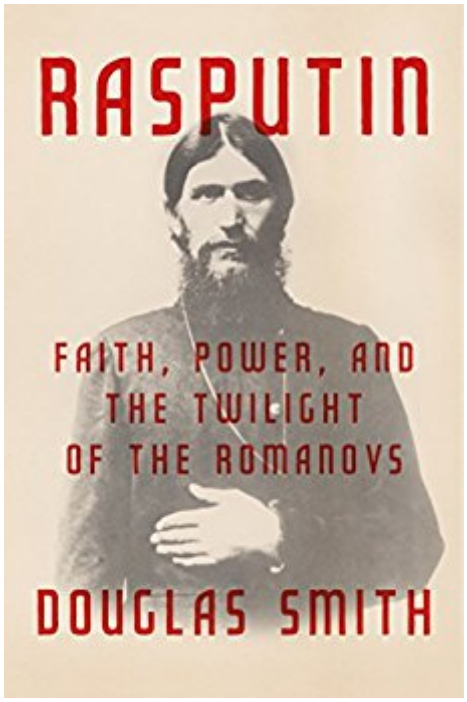
# Rasputin: Faith, Power, And The Twilight Of The Romanovs

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## Synopsis

On the centenary of the death of Rasputin comes a definitive biography that will dramatically change our understanding of this fascinating figureA hundred years after his murder, Rasputin continues to excite the popular imagination as the personification of evil. Numerous biographies, novels, and films recount his mysterious rise to power as Nicholas and Alexandra's confidant and the guardian of the sickly heir to the Russian throne. His debauchery and sinister political influence are the stuff of legend, and the downfall of the Romanov dynasty was laid at his feet.But as the prizewinning historian Douglas Smith shows, the true story of Rasputin's life and death has remained shrouded in myth. A major new work that combines probing scholarship and powerful storytelling, Rasputinseparates fact from fiction to reveal the real life of one of history's most alluring figures. Drawing on a wealth of forgotten documents from archives in seven countries, Smith presents Rasputin in all his complexity--man of God, voice of peace, loyal subject, adulterer, drunkard. Rasputin is not just a definitive biography of an extraordinary and legendary man but a fascinating portrait of the twilight of imperial Russia as it lurched toward catastrophe.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Smith presents a detailed, day-to-day explanation of Rasputin. However, this work is more than just a description of Rasputin's life. Smith covers various aspects of prewar Russian culture. Analyses the Romanov family, the Orthodox clergy, the peasant reaction, the Russian aristocracy, the fascination with the occult, all by Rasputin's life.From introduction - ''RasputinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s story is a tragedy, and not just that of one man but of an entire nation, for in his lifeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •with its complicated struggles about faith and morality, about pleasure and sin, about tradition and change, about duty and power, and their limitsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •and in his bloody, violent end, we can discern the story of Russia itself in the early twentieth century. Rasputin was neither a devil nor a saint, but this made him no less remarkable and his life no less important to the twilight of tsarist Russia.''Introduction: The Holy Devil?Part One HOLY PILGRIM: 1869Ã ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ1904Part Two OUR FRIEND: 1905Ã ƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ1909Part Three SCANDELS; 1909-1911Part Four A Time OF MIRACLES 1912-1914Part Five WAR 1914-1915Part Six THE FINAL YEAR 1916Part Seven THE AFTERMATH 1917-1918EpilogueSmith explains Rasputin's beginning as a holy man - ''Stranniki , holy wanderers or religious pilgrims, were a common sight in old Russia. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the idea of undertaking pilgrimages to holy places was widespread, among the rich and poor. If the rich could afford to travel by carriage, the poor had to make do with their own two feet, a knapsack in their hands. Wandering from village to village, the pilgrims relied on the generosity of strangers for food and a place to stay for the night.'' (22) This insight helped me understand Rasputin's role was a common one, not unique to him. He just played it better than others. ''Often, however, they went hungry and slept out under the stars. They dressed in little more than rags and were typically barefoot. Many wore fetters. It was not an easy life. In 1900, there were about a million pilgrims in Russia, forever wandering from one holy place to the next in search of salvation and enlightenment. As they went the pilgrims would repeat the Jesus Prayer: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (22) Wow, a million!This drive to mysticism, to the occult, to extremes, added real insight to the Russian mind. It provided a way to understand Rasputin's influence. (and maybe Lenin)Smith explains - ''I knew from the beginning that the only chance I had to get closer to the true Rasputin was to go back to the archives, to seek out the documents created during his lifetime before the myth of Rasputin had fully taken shape. It proved an unusually arduous undertaking. The trail led me to seven countries, from Siberia and Russia, across Europe, to Britain, and finally the United States. The first obligation of every biog-rapher is to establish the objective, external facts of a life, something that has been lacking in our knowledge of Rasputin. And so I sought every bit of information that could place Rasputin squarely in his world:

where he was on any given day, what he was doing, whom he met, what they discussed. I wanted to track Rasputin through time, to drag him out of the ether of myth and down into the banalities of daily life.''Smith has done this here. In fact, he provides so much detail on the "banalities of life' that many pages are just that - banal. ''This, it seemed to me, was the only way to extricate Rasputin the man from Rasputin the legend. A curious thing happened, however, as I was following the footsteps of this elusive, real Rasputin. The deeper I went into my research, the more convinced I became that one of the most important facts about Rasputin, the thing that made him such an extraordinary and powerful figure, was less what he was doing and more what everyone thought he was doing.''The extensive research is astounding. Many times I puzzle, 'How can he know that?' Hundreds of players are described and quoted. Various explanations are offered for events. Who can know for sure? The amount of gossip and slander is overwhelming. Who can absorb it?This work could serve as a textbook in Russian history. Does not read like a novel, perhaps closer to a court document. Was Rasputin holy man, a devil, or a holy devil?One hundred two black-and-white photographs. No index in kindle edition. Print edition contains index.At least six hundred sources are listed in back. Around one thousand footnotes. Tremendous work.

Rasputin (1869-1916) was born in Western Siberia in an obscure village. He had little formal schooling but was literate. He married a peasant woman and was the father of three children. Rasputin was a very charismatic holy man with riveting eyes. He traveled widely in the Russian Empire visiting monasteries and holy sites. He remained a Russian Orthodox believer until his murder though he was often investigated and distrusted by eminent religious figures. Rasputin became famous for his close relationship with Tsar Nicholas, his German born wife Alexandra and family,. Rasputin often prayed and revived Alexis the son of Nicholas who suffered from hemophilia. Rasputin was murdered by aristocratic conspirators and his frozen body was recovered from the Neva River in December 1916. The book is great in separating fact from fiction. Rasputin had a voracious sexual appetite, was tolerant of Jews and was a devout Christian believer. He was not evil and was not a German spy. Much myth has surrounded him and he comes off as a complex man in this stunning and well researched biography by Dr. Douglas Smith. In this book you will learn about Rasputin but also about the end of the Romanov dynasty in the tragedy of World War I and the Communist takeover of the nation. An excellent biography!

Douglas Smith recounts such a bizarre story with numerous characters who played a role in Rasputin's rapid rise to influence and his ultimate demise that I found some of the episodes almost

unbelievable. His research and documentation is extensive.He has a tendency to present multiple versions of controversial accounts of specific incidents which at times bogs the narrative flow of the book considerably. In some respects his conclusions make him almost an apologist for Rasputin as he tends to dismiss a few of the more sordid stories about Rasputin albeit after presenting alternative versions. Despite these more critical observations I was almost constantly fascinated and engaged while reading this and the facts surrounding Rasputin's life and personality are some of the strangest things I've ever read. I would recommend persevering through the endless litany of confusing Russian names which is also at times distracting to follow. Regardless I recommend this book by Douglas Smith as he relates a most astounding and intriguing biography.

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