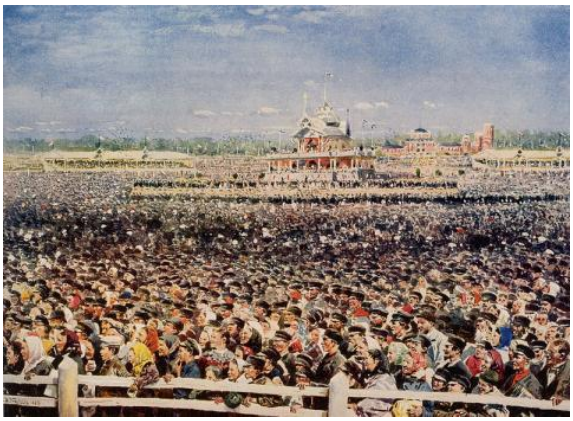
AWESOME stories

ENTER RASPUTIN



0. ENTER RASPUTIN - Story Preface

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3. NICHOLAS OUT-OF-TOUCH

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6. RASPUTIN'S MURDER

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8. HOUSE ARREST

9. EXECUTION IN SIBERIA

10. THE DEATH SCENE

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12. WHERE WERE THE BODIES?

13. WHO REALLY DIED?

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15. EIGHTY YEARS LATER

16. THE ROMANOV FAMILY

Vladimir Yegorovich Makovsky (1846-1920) created a painting which depicts Russian peasants awaiting their celebratory gifts following the wedding of Nicholas II and his bride, Alexandra (one of Queen Victoria's granddaughters). The massive crowd was at Moscow's Khodynka Field on the 18th of May, 1896. In this scene, we see no hint of the tragic stampede which soon followed. Makovsky created this work for the Royal Family. It is dated (in the lower-left corner) 1897. Image online via Wikimedia Commons. Click on it for a better view.

Nicholas II made many bad decisions when he was Tsar.

Following his marriage to Alexandra, and his coronation as the new Tsar, Nicholas held a customary banquet for his subjects. This traditional coronation feast turned into a stampeding mass of humanity as people—trying to grab morsels of food—crushed each other. How had such a disaster—known as the "Khodynka Tragedy"—occurred?

> *Gaudy tents had been set up with sweets on Khodynka Meadow* [outside the city of St. Petersburg]. *Mugs were to be given out as well, coronation mugs with seals - and all for free. But forgotten ditches lay between the tents and the crowd that had gathered on the evening of the 17th* [of May, 1896] *... Forgotten thanks to the sloppiness of those in charge.*
>
> *Many were those who had come for the free refreshments; at least half a million crowded around - the crush was so great a bullet could not have slipped through. Everyone was waiting for the present-giving to commence. Then shouts rang out - people were suffocating in the crowd. Someone thought the dainties were being passed out! They pressed in. As this mass of bodies began to move, they fell into the trenches, and the crowd trampled over their heads, crushed their rib cages.* (Edvard Radzinsky, *The Last Tsar: The Life and Death of Nicholas II*, page 53.)

About two thousand people died. Nicholas and Alexandra were devastated by the catastrophe and wanted to cancel plans for a ball to be held in the new Tsar's honor. (They were dissuaded by the Tsar's uncles who thought it rude to disappoint European royals and officials who had already arrived for the celebrations.)

Nicholas—who never wished to be Tsar in the first place—was learning what it was like to be torn between his own desires and the recommendations of his advisers. As Radzinsky observes:

> *He had not wanted to be tsar, he had not wanted to distress his mother, he had not wanted anyone to be killed, he had not wanted Alix to be sad. Yet all those things had come to pass. That was what it meant to be tsar.* (*The Last Tsar: The Life and Death of Nicholas II*, page 56.)

As the years of his rule passed, Nicholas fought a war with Japan—in 1904—because he thought his country

needed an ice-free Pacific port. It was a disastrous move which ended in stinging defeat. Russia had to surrender to Japan.

This embarrassment did not sit well with the Russian people.

When World War I broke out:

- Nicholas decided to assume personal command of Russia's military. He miscalculated his ability as a military leader.

- When support for the war eroded because people were starving, he could do little about it.

- When riots began in St. Petersburg (this link takes you to the War Office Arch during the time of the Romanovs), he was at the front—not in the city where his presence my have made a difference.

These mistakes did not sit well with his military generals.

Nicholas II made some bad decisions when he was Tsar. But no decision was worse than allowing Rasputin to become a part of the royal family.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ENTER-RASPUTIN-Death-of-a-Tsar-Romanov-Execution

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ENTER-RASPUTIN-Death-of-a-Tsar-Romanov-Execution

Media Stream

Map: Depicting Moscow and St. Petersburg
Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-Depicting-Moscow-and-St.-Petersburg

Street Scene: St. Petersburg
Image online, courtesy the photographium.com website.
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http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Street-Scene-St.-Petersburg

Rasputin - Who Was He?

Clip from "Rasputin: Dark Servant of Destiny" (1996) - award-winning film for television. Copyright, HBO, all rights reserved. Clip provided as fair use for educational purposes.

Director
Uli Edel

Writer
Peter Pruce

Studio
HBO

Starring

Tamas Toth (Young Rasputin)
Alan Rickman
Greta Scacchi
Ian McKellen
David Warner
John Wood

Run Time: 104 minutes
View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rasputin-Who-Was-He-