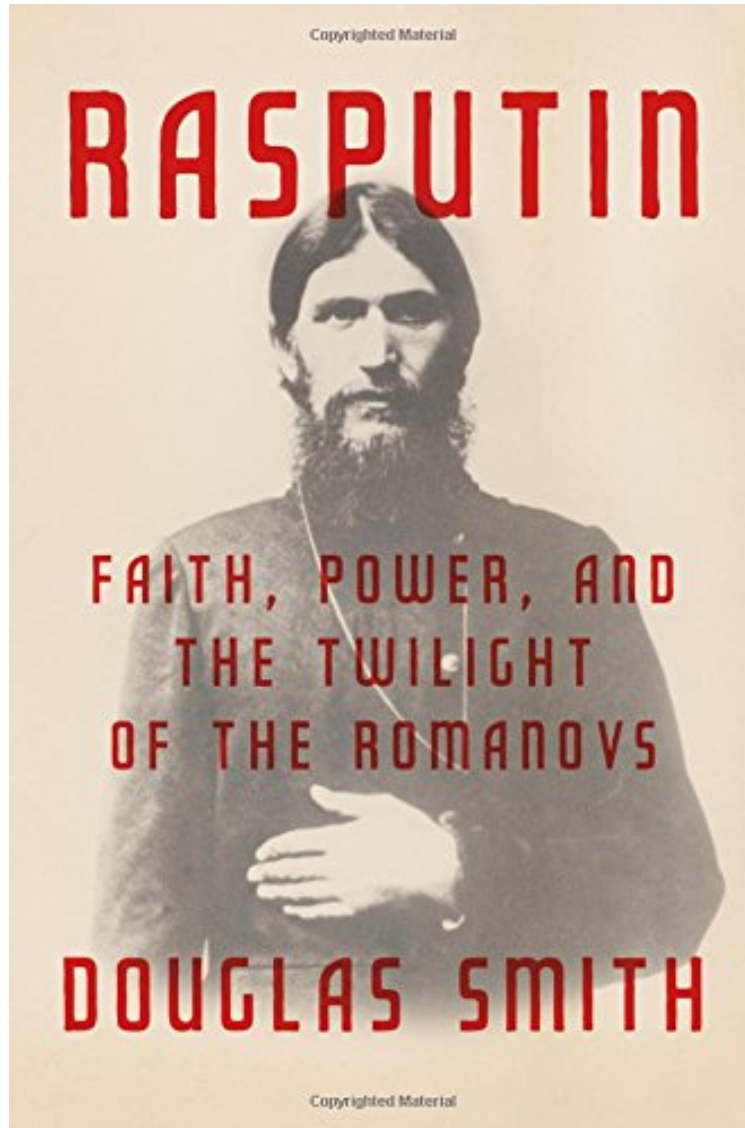


[Pdf free] Rasputin: Faith, Power, and the Twilight of the Romanovs

Rasputin: Faith, Power, and the Twilight of the Romanovs

Douglas Smith

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#38247 in Books Douglas Smith 2016-11-22 2016-11-22 Original language: English PDF # 1 236.98 x 1.90 x 6.311, .0 #File Name: 0374240841848 pages Rasputin Faith Power and the Twilight of the Romanovs | File size: 33.Mb

Douglas Smith : Rasputin: Faith, Power, and the Twilight of the Romanovs before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rasputin: Faith, Power, and the Twilight of the Romanovs:

37 of 38 people found the following review helpful. "Rasputin's story is a tragedy - and in his bloody, violent end, we can discern the story of Russia in the twentieth century." By Clay Garner 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 - "Rasputin's story is a tragedy, and not just that of one man but of an entire nation, for in his life—with its complicated struggles about faith and morality, about pleasure and sin, about tradition and change, about duty and power, and their limits—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: 1869–1904 Part Two OUR FRIEND: 1905–1909 Part Three SCANDALS; 1909–1911 Part Four A Time OF MIRACLES 1912–1914 Part Five WAR 1914–1915 Part Six THE FINAL YEAR 1916 Part Seven THE AFTERMATH 1917–1918 Epilogue

Smith 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: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." (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 biographer 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. 32 of 33 people found the following review helpful. Turning Russian history into an accessible page-turner is no easy feat! By Angela Ellis Having known little about Rasputin and even less about the times in which he lived, I was a little concerned that this incredibly thorough telling of his life would be more of an academic read than I was looking for. But I was pleasantly surprised to find a page turner that weaves a riveting tale of an intriguing, scandalous and mysterious man to rival any of the historical FICTION novels I favor. Besides the fact that Rasputin's life is filled with (many unfounded and often slanderous) stories of tabloid-worthy debauchery, the way his life is given context in the waning world of the Romanovs is equally fascinating. I definitely recommend this book to anyone looking for a well-written, accessible and interesting book. 36 of 38 people found the following review helpful. A well-researched and written look at a controversial historical figure. By Nick Nicholson A wonderful and well-written history of a complicated and enigmatic historical figure. Refusing to repeat the same narratives promoted by discounted sources, Smith examines new Russian sources and unexamined documents to form a fuller and more complex portrait of Grigorii Rasputin-Novy. Smith breaks the life of his subject down into independent relationships and events. Rasputin and Nicholas Alexandra, Rasputin and his family, Rasputin and his village, Rasputin and Anna Vyrubova. Also, he treats Rasputin's role in events such as the revolution of 1905, WWI, the Sukhokomlinov affair, individually. With such a mercurial and misrepresented character, and one upon whom many people have projected feelings and interpretations, it allows the reader to see for themselves the consistent characterizations: that he was utterly sincere, charismatic, loving, and deeply loving, but neither evil nor political in the way he has been characterized. What it truly reveals is the odious rot at the fringes of the Imperial family as well as in pre-revolutionary Russian society in general. Heartbreaking -- heartbreaking and familiar.

On the centenary of the death of Rasputin comes a definitive biography that will dramatically change our

understanding of this fascinating figure. A 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, *Rasputin* separates 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.

"[The] definitive biography of this most mysterious and controversial figure . . . Under Smith's probing eye, archives yield up impressive detail and previously unknown accounts that place Rasputin's life in a new, more realistic context." ?Greg King, *The Washington Post* "[Douglas Smith's] scrupulous, insightful and thorough study will surely be the definitive account of one of the most controversial personalities of Russian (and European) history . . . Mr. Smith's research busts various Rasputin myths through a careful analysis of contemporary sources and a meticulous attention to the archives . . . All of this Mr. Smith presents lucidly, vividly and sympathetically . . . Rasputin is sharply drawn and unmistakable." ?Edward Lucas, *The Wall Street Journal* "Douglas Smith has delivered the definitive biography [of Rasputin] that is brilliantly gripping, as hypnotic, wild and erotic in its revelations as the Mad Monk himself, sensitive in its human portrait, astute in its political analysis, superbly researched with rich new material gathered in faraway archives, and populated with the zaniest cast of the deranged Romanovs, depraved bishops, whores, mountebanks, adventuresses, mystics and murderers." ?Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Evening Standard* (UK) "The best biography of Rasputin and a splendid piece of work." ?Gary Saul Morson, *First Things* "From the opening pages of his colossal biography of Grigory Rasputin, the historian Douglas Smith dismantles many of the myths enshrouding the monk who exerted inordinate influence over Nicholas II and Alexandra, emperor and empress of Russia, during the twilight of the Romanov dynasty a century ago . . . In Mr. Smith's telling, Rasputin was neither a sinner nor a saint, and very much a product of his time." ?Steven Lee Myers, *The New York Times* "A large part of Smith's purpose is to debunk the endless myths surrounding his subject. Much of what has been purveyed as information on Rasputin is based on half-truths, urban legends and downright lies. This is not terribly surprising, though Smith has done remarkable forensic work to expose the full extent of the distortions. The more intriguing aspect of the book is the stripped-down portrait of Rasputin that emerges when all the apocryphal accruals have been removed." ?Stephen Lovell, *TLS* "Magisterial . . . This balanced, impeccably researched book is a revelation, as richly detailed and engrossing as any novel." ?Boris Dralyuk, *Los Angeles of Books* "Definitive." ?Anne Applebaum, *Harper's Magazine* "Powerful . . . [Douglas Smith] scoured diaries, letters, police files and archives to create the definitive portrait of a man whose deeply held religious beliefs were often overshadowed by such debauchery and drunkenness that he's fixed in the popular imagination as the 'mad monk.' It is a masterful display of storytelling." ?Patricia Treble, *Macleans* (Canada) "Substantial, meticulously researched, and fluently written." ?Rodric Braithwaite, *The Observer* (UK) "Superb and authoritative." ?Donald Rayfield, *Literary* (UK) "[Rasputin] is by far the most comprehensive account of Rasputin to date, brimming with complexities and fascinating detail, and stands as an enlightening re-evaluation of this crucial figure in Russian history." ?Helen Rappaport, *The Telegraph* (UK) "How much does the mythology misrepresent [Rasputin]? Was everything he did bad for Russia? These are the two central questions Douglas Smith sets out to answer in this astounding biography. And he succeeds, eschewing the gossip and innuendo that have long surrounded his subject to produce a well-rounded portrait of a complex individual." ?J.P. O'Malley, *The Mail on Sunday* (UK) "The definitive account of Grigory Rasputin's life and times . . . Smith not only reinterprets the work of his predecessors but also provides a wealth of new information about Rasputin . . . Far from uncovering banal reality behind Rasputin's supposed mystical talents, Smith instead explains how the man's forceful personality came to have such an impact on intelligent, learned people such as the Tsar and Tsarina . . . Smith's book reads like a revelatory work of revisionist history, unearthing a flesh-and-blood person from a century's worth of lies and exaggerations." ?Hank Stephenson, *Shelf Awareness* "Gripping . . . a fascinating, often entertaining biography." ?Gerard DeGroot, *The Times* (Saturday) (UK) "Utterly fascinating and forensically detailed . . . There are plenty of Rasputin biographies, but its superlative scholarship and attention to detail place this one in a class of its own." ?Dominic Sandbrook, *The Sunday Times* (UK) "[Smith] renders in great detail the ten years that Rasputin spent on the national stage, from 1906 until his murder in 1916. Sorting through the Rasputin mythology, Smith discards the apocryphal and weighs the plausible, balancing the extraordinary mix of mysticism and debauchery that made the peasant monk notorious. Digging through countless and often conflicting firsthand accounts and impressions, Smith gives Rasputin's mystique a depth and a fine edge missing from prior histories." ?Robert Legvold, *Foreign Affairs* "In this monumental and soul-shaking biography, historian and translator Douglas Smith demystifies the figure of Grigory Rasputin . . . With a Dostoyevskian flair for noir and obsession, Smith exposes the base motivations behind Rasputin's

enemies . . . [and] expertly handles the intricacies of the salacious scandals that enveloped the empire in anti-Rasputin hysteria and that eerily presaged the fall of the Romanovs in 1917 . . . Smith's depravity-laden history of turn-of-the-20th-century Russia hinges on his insightful readings of myth and motive, and their tragic consequences." ?Publishers Weekly (starred review)"[Smith] stuns with a scrupulously exhaustive biography of the monk's role in the Russian empire's fall and the rise of Bolshevism . . . His dedication to extricating Rasputin's experience from newly available Soviet Union primary sources and international archives surpasses all previous academic works in breadth and scope . . . Smith's study will surely be considered the seminal scholarly work on Rasputin, an essential read for students of Imperial Russia's downfall." ?Jessica Bushore, Library Journal (starred review)"[An] amazingly detailed, deeply researched biography. [Douglas Smith] carefully lifts the myths away from the real story, which nevertheless is presented here as a greatly compelling picture of a figure who at the zenith of his influence was known all over Russia." ?Booklist (starred review)"This brilliantly written, meticulously researched account of the life of Rasputin is the best, most complete and accurate I have ever read. Step by step, day by day, week by week, Douglas Smith tells the story from its humble beginnings, through its obscene sexual chapters, to its violent end. He describes how a peasant became 'our Friend' to the last emperor and empress of Russia. He explains why this dependency came at a terrible cost for the imperial couple, for their children, for Russia, and for the twentieth-century world. Readers will begin by saying that this is an impossible story to believe. They will read on because, in Douglas Smith's mesmerizing telling, it must be believed. And because it did happen." ?Robert K. Massie, author of Catherine the Great "In his research, comprehensive to the nth degree, Douglas Smith has dug up previously unseen archives, followed previously unexplored leads, and connected the dots across the Russian landscape. They're dots of blood. Rasputin reveals the true character of the man without minimizing his malign hold on the feckless Romanovs." ?Ken Kalfus, author of The Commissariat of Enlightenment "It is hard to imagine a historical figure more barnacled with myth than Rasputin. Douglas Smith unravels Rasputin's complex narrative in unprecedented detail, showing how he was a kind of chimera onto which could be hung all the ills of a disintegrating Russia. In the process, Smith vividly exposes the astonishing blindness of the ruling class that made its tragic end inevitable. A brilliant achievement." ?Rosemary Sullivan, author of Stalin's Daughter: The Extraordinary and Tumultuous Life of Svetlana Alliluyeva "In his magisterial, exhaustively researched work on Rasputin, Douglas Smith paints a rich, detailed portrait of one of history's most fascinating individuals while also chronicling the dramatic last days of the tsar. It's a wondrous read." ?Neal Bascomb, author of The Winter Fortress: The Epic Mission to Sabotage Hitler's Atomic Bomb "A big book about a big figure in the demise of tsarism. Douglas Smith supplies chapter and verse on the extraordinary life of Grigory Rasputin, the eminence grise behind the Romanov throne. Without denying the salacious and corrupt ways of the 'holy man,' the book brilliantly and thoughtfully defends Rasputin against the worst of the myths that swirled around him. A tour de force." ?Robert Service, author of The End of the Cold War: 1985-1991 and Lenin: A Biography "The most complete and masterful study of Rasputin that I've read. Douglas Smith's work is not only extraordinarily readable, but rich in detail." ?Robert Alexander, author of The Kitchen Boy: A Novel of the Last Tsar "Some years ago, when working on a historical novel, I had to read all the existing Rasputin biographies?and they do abound, in all literary styles and in many languages. What a pity that Douglas Smith's Rasputin had not yet been published; it would have saved me a lot of time. If you are interested in the story of the Romanovs' pet prophet, this is the book to read." ?Boris Akunin, author of The Coronation "A prodigious piece of scholarship. Douglas Smith's exhaustive and forensic examination of a wealth of new and previously unseen evidence finally lays to rest the tired old myth of 'the mad monk' and rightly positions Rasputin as a crucial figure in late Imperial Russian history." ?Helen Rappaport, author of The Romanov Sisters: The Lost Lives of the Daughters of Nicholas and Alexandra About the Author Douglas Smith is an award-winning historian and translator and the author of Former People and other books on Russia. Before becoming a historian, he worked for the U.S. State Department in the Soviet Union and as a Russian affairs analyst for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Munich. He lives in Seattle with his wife and two children.