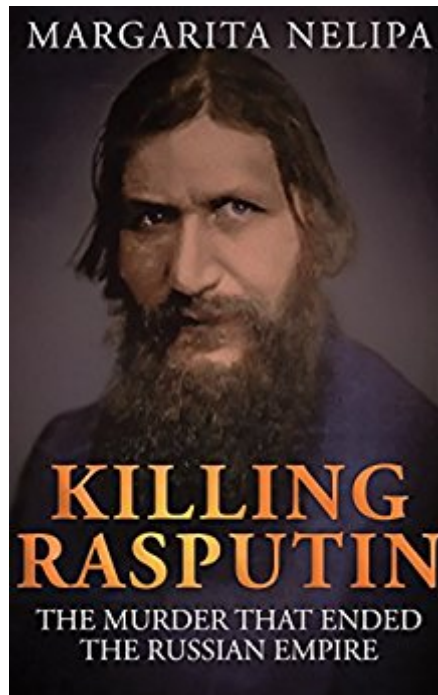




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KILLING RASPUTIN: The Murder That Ended The Russian Empire



Synopsis

"You can almost hear the whispering conspiracies and intrigues in the court of Nicholas and Alexandra. ... A dramatic history with a touch of true crime."--Steve Jackson, New York Times bestselling author of NO STONE UNTURNED

At last a book about the so-called "Mad Monk" of Imperial Russia that lays to rest the myths and reveals the truth about one of the most controversial characters in human history while exploring the impact his murder had on a dynasty, a people, and a country. Written in three parts, KILLING RASPUTIN begins with a biography that describes how a simple unkempt "holy man" from the wilds of Siberia became a friend of Emperor Nicholas II and his empress, Alexandra, at the most crucial moment in Russian history. Part Two examines the infamous murder of Rasputin through the lens of a "cold case" homicide investigation. And lastly, the book considers the connection between a cold-blooded assassination and the revolution that followed; a revolution that led to civil war and the rise of the Soviet Union.

Unique about this book on Rasputin, is that the author combines Russian heritage (her parents were forced out of Russia during World War II and arrived as refugees in Australia in 1948) with medical science and legal training. Nelipa relied on Russian-language sources that she translated rather than depend on the interpretations of others. Her primary sources include police documents and witness testimonies, an autopsy report, diaries, letters and memoirs written in their native language by the participants in these historic events. Secondary sources include Russian-language newspapers and other publications from that era. The narrative is copiously referenced and augmented with photographs (including graphic forensic photographs) and other documents, some of them published here for the first time. Step into the imperial court of a 300-year-old dynasty in its final days with one of the most fascinating characters ever to grab our imaginations, judge whether Margarita Nelipa makes her case regarding his death, and if you agree that it was "the murder that ended the Russian empire."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As someone who bought and thoroughly enjoyed the author's previous work on Rasputin, I thought I would buy the updated version on kindle to see what has changed. But the story is so engaging, I found myself reading it in its entirety. It is an amazing work, which manages to reconstruct from original material (remarkable that it has survived let alone brought to us now in sometimes gruesome detail) the murder of Rasputin - the early attempts on his life, the conspirators and their plot, and the police investigation that uncovered the facts. This I found the most compelling sections of the book - in particular the careful way in which Nelipa presents the original evidence, and then lays out what seem to be eminently reasonable suppositions based on that evidence. The book also contains a vivid picture of a dissolute aristocracy that was behind the plot and that also sought to destroy the reign of Nicholas II. The revelation that Nicholas' own close relatives, including his mother, condoned or conspired with the murder and sought to denigrate Alexandra and Nicholas, was particularly shocking. And as well, there is in effect, woven through the book, a biography of Rasputin that dispels the common myths about his life and character and helps to explain the mystery of how a Siberian peasant became so close to the imperial family and how this access was used by others to attack them. The description of how Rasputin came to be autopsied, buried, dug up and cremated forms an interesting coda to his life's story. There are many pictures and documents - the last one, of Nicholas' daughter Maria's sketch of the Rasputin family home while on the way to what would prove to be their place of execution, is particularly touching. It would be better if the kindle allowed hot linking from the text to the

document rather than having to manually go to the list of documents at the end, but that is a minor issue.

The commonly accepted outlines of Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin's life are as follows. Of Siberian peasant stock, he became a religious mystic, after claiming to have had a vision of the Virgin Mary. His religious beliefs conveniently allowed him to indulge himself to the full as long as he later repented and despite his scandalous private life he became an influential figure at the court of Russia's last Tsar, Nicholas II, because the Tsarina Alexandra believed that he alone possessed the power to staunch the bleeding of the haemophiliac heir to the throne, the Tsarevitch Alexei. As this medical condition was a state secret the people could not understand the attention paid to this mad monk and rumours deeply damaging to the imperial family, that Rasputin was sleeping with the Tsarina and the royal princesses, circulated after the Tsar left Alexandra and Rasputin in charge of Petrograd whilst he assumed nominal command at military headquarters in 1915. Rasputin's political meddling, using his influence with the Tsarina to appoint and dismiss ministers, contributed to political instability and severely damaged Russia's war effort. Thus it was that Prince Felix Yusupov hatched a plot to murder Rasputin in December 1916, to strengthen the Tsar's damaged authority. As befits a larger than life character, Rasputin's death has attained a mythical status, with him allegedly ingesting fatal amounts of poison, being repeatedly shot and bludgeoned but only finally succumbing to drowning after his body was dumped in the River Neva. In *Killing Rasputin* (an expanded and updated version of her 2010 book *The Murder of Grigori Rasputin*) Margarita Nelipa has sought to challenge the orthodox account, unravelling the many myths surrounding Rasputin's life and death, as well as assessing the latter's significance. Indeed, the revised book is subtitled *The Murder That Ended the Russian Empire*. This last aim is explored in the last part of the book, whilst its first part chronicles Rasputin's rise to influence, and the second investigates the events of his murder. The story of Rasputin's extraordinary life is very interesting but also already well documented, although Nelipa's book can claim to be the first Western source to provide photographic evidence of Rasputin's date of birth (on 9 January 1869), a fact which had been shrouded in mystery until 1992. Nelipa states that her "disbelief that a British secret agent [Sir Samuel Hoare] was implicated in murdering Grigori

Rasputin's story is a thesis first put forward in Oleg Shishkin's 1998 book, *To Kill Rasputin* (2000) but popularized in the UK by Andrew Cook's 2004 BBC documentary and 2005 book - *Rasputin: The Man Who Shot Liberty Bells*. "gave me the determination to study all the original material related to this murder case." Nelipa's trawl through the Russian primary material seems commendably exhaustive, which makes it rather surprising that she makes no mention of Keith Jeffery's 2010 history of MI6, based upon unrestricted access to the surviving files of the Secret Intelligence Service, which supports her in rejecting any idea of agency involvement in the crime. Most controversial is Nelipa's analysis of the reasons for the February revolution, writing that "The constant barrage of insinuations and conjectures by Duma representatives destabilized the imperial government and had the field commanders remained loyal to the emperor and to their Oath of Allegiance and focused solely on military matters, the Duma would not have succeeded in its quest for change." This is simply untenable given that Tsarism had manifestly failed in the primary duty of any state, namely, to defend its citizens from external attack. Nelipa's forensic examination of the evidence, much of it new, is praiseworthy and her book should alter our understanding of Rasputin and particularly of how he died. The trouble is that in the process she may have fatally drained Rasputin of colour. A Rasputin who is not sexually depraved is simply not as interesting as one who is. In John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Bells* the reporter Stoddard concludes "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." Nelipa has done much to expose the legend of Rasputin but not enough to deal it a mortal blow.

Margarita Nelipa has tackled the Rasputin murder with the keen eyes of both a historian and a true crime author. This is not your typical true crime fare, nor could it be. To unravel what happened to Rasputin you have to understand the inner court politics and the myriad of figures and gadflies that ensnared the royal family.. This book is more like an academic study of the murder of the monk, rather than a standard true crime story. In that respect I liked it. It is the kind of book you might expect from a university press, burrowing deep in the details necessary to set the stage for the events that led to Rasputin's demise. My only struggle with the prose was navigating the often confusing names of the characters. There were a few times I confused some characters because their names were so similar. This is not a complaint but more of a warning for

readers. If you are looking for a simplified account of Rasputin's death, this is not the book for you. This book bridges the gap between the rigor of a historian's keen eye and the tantalizing lure of a sordid murder. Ms. Nelipa's research seems three-steps beyond solid. I found a swelling pang of envy in the depth of her digging. She has most likely broken new ground in the murder of Rasputin, though I confess this is not my field of study. I will say this, she has given me as a reader, a much more in-depth understanding of the man as both a historical figure and the victim of a heinous murder. Overall, I found it a nice break from the usual menu choices for true crime. If you enjoy in-depth historical research intertwined with a murderous saga that had a mark on history, then this is a book for you.

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