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The Last Days Of The Romanovs: Tragedy At Ekaterinburg



Synopsis

Helen Rappaport, an expert in the field of Russian history, brings you the riveting day-by-day account of the last 14 days of the Russian Imperial family, in this first of two books about the Romanovs. The brutal murder of the Russian Imperial family on the night of July 16 to 17, 1918, has long been a defining moment in world history. *The Last Days of the Romanovs* reveals in exceptional detail how the conspiracy to kill them unfolded. In the vivid style of a TV documentary, Helen Rappaport reveals both the atmosphere inside the family's claustrophobic prison and the political maneuverings of those who wished to save - or destroy - them. With the watching world and European monarchies proving incapable of saving the Romanovs, the narrative brings this tragic story to life in a compellingly new and dramatic way, culminating in a bloody night of horror in a cramped basement room.

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Customer Reviews

Lots of detail regarding the family before their unjust murders. The author gives many details about each of the military men in charge of the family, their freedoms (which were few and almost none at the end), diet, family members health issues and social allowances. Very good read if you have an interest in this tragic family.

Very well written, thorough account of the sad last days of the Romanov family. I especially like that each chapter told exactly what happened that day, one hundred years ago. I had just finished

reading Nicholas and Alexandra by Robert Massie. That book did a great job of telling this story up until the very last days because when it was written in 1967 not much was known. Written in 2008, Last Days fills in the missing pieces and these two books make good companions.

Honestly, even though I knew what would befall the Romanovs, my heart was hammering in my chest during the last thirty pages of this book! It was more emotional and stirring and gut-wrenching than any suspense novel I've ever read. Helen Rappaport has a true gift for making the truth exciting while creating anxiety for the reader to learn everything about this tragedy. I adored her book, THE ROMANOV SISTERS, but THE LAST DAYS OF THE ROMANOVS is more concise, with more interesting history and politics. I am truly fascinated by the Romanov dynasty. Illustrated with photos, this comprehensive history, although sad and graphic, is an important statement for us all. Rappaport also includes new discoveries of just the last ten years that are important new revelations. The deaths of the Romanovs changed history in so many ways and as Rappaport says of the new memorials built to the family, "....see in their reverence for the martyred Imperial Family a way of atoning for the past, for the depredations of 73 years of Communism, for the loss of Russian national and spiritual identity." Please read this book and weep.

This book is a very detailed account of what supposedly happened to the Romanov family. I had some issues keeping names, dates, and places straight, and it really was more information than I was expecting, which is not the author's fault. If you're looking for many specific details about the the Romanov's last days, then this is the book for you.

"Last Days" is written with authority and flair and a lot of cracks are filled. You get a very intimate picture not only of the players on this tragic stage but of the political seething taking place all over Russia, including Ekaterinburg. I did not realize that Ekaterinburg was in the early 1900s an important iron and coal mining city and although tucked far away in the Siberian Urals, it was not provincial. Ekaterinburg was belligerently anti-tsar which Nicholas knew and he remarked that the Urals were the last place he wanted to go. But there were many monarchists in the city, too, and Ekaterinburg seemed about to boil over. The totally inept Nicholas is described by the author in this unforgettable way: "How had this devout, insistently dull and dogmatic little man whose primary interest was family life come to be demonized as the repository of all that was corrupt...?" The chapter titled "The man with the cigarette," an in depth sensitive analysis of the Tsar, is extraordinary. The author describes, as noted by many people, Nicholas' "finest, kindest most

velvety blue eyes" which he inherited from his Danish mother. But behind the eyes "lay a whole hidden world." Nicholas seemed to be interested in only three subjects-his family, the weather and food. He had no curiosity, no friends and was pathologically timid. He was like the court of the Sleeping Beauty who slumbered on and on oblivious to what went on outside the palace. Nicholas never wanted to be tsar and his huge bear-like father Alexander III sneered at him for being girly. In captivity "a physical and spiritual weariness overwhelmed him." It is easy to see his disintegration in the photos of him in which he becomes an old man over night, great black bags appearing under his eyes, his face sunken, the eyes shuttered. As a solution to their problems the imperial family tucked themselves away in Tsarskoe Selo and the other palaces, seldom seen and out of touch, the hand of the tsar not on the wheel of state. During the tsar's regime 3741 people were executed for political crimes and thousands more sent to Siberia. Nicholas acquired the name of Nicholas the Bloody even though it's likely he knew nothing of many of the executions. A man more unfit to be autocrat of all the Russians can't be imagined. Born on the feast day of Job, Nicholas identified with the saint to the point that he felt God was punishing him and from there perhaps it wasn't perhaps too far fetched for him to imagine himself on the road to Golgotha. The chapter entitled "The lady in the wheelchair" probes the psyche of Empress Alexandra. Alexandra, although exceptionally beautiful, had no charm. She was socially extremely inept, but her shyness was taken for hauteur and the aristocracy loathed her. She bore five children, all large babies, and her health gave way as she aged mostly due to the constant psychological turmoil which ravished her body. Her total absorption and worry about Alexey, her hemophilic son, turned her into a virtual invalid. Nevertheless, She was a manipulator and tried to force the Tsar into taking more action as autocrat, "be Ivan the Terrible." The four beautiful daughters are given a chapter of their own. They did not look alike nor did they resemble each other in personality, but they formed a tightly knit group, referring to themselves as OTMA, their initials. Olga at 22 became the most introspective during their captivity and kept to herself when she could. Her face was rather broad and she had a snub nose, but she was very Russian in looks, resembling her father, whom she adored. Tatiana at 21 was perhaps the most classically beautiful of the girls. She was Alexandra's favorite and Tatiana waited on her mother and was constantly at Alexandra's beck and call. Maria at 19 was the most popular Grand Duchess with the Ipatiev house guards. The building, called the House of Special Purpose, would be the Romanovs' final prison and the site of their execution. Friendly, with an impish smile, Maria was a big flirt who got in trouble with the family for being too cozy with their jailers. What Maria wanted from life was motherhood and a big family. She would much rather have been a hausfrau than a royal. The famous Anastasia at 17 had mellowed a bit from being a little devil, a tom boy who

climbed trees, pinched and pulled the hair of her various cousin playmates. She was a wit and a mimic, the family's entertainer, not subdued even in the Ipatiev house. Alexey (Rappaport's unusual spelling) became at his birth the hub of the family, its *raison d'être*. An exceptionally beautiful child, the discovery of his hemophilia struck Nicholas and Alexandra to the core. Many times near death, the boy grew from a very spoiled toddler into a lad of great sensitivity to the sufferings of others. Alexey tried to be all-boy, doing dangerous things he shouldn't like barreling down a set of stairs on a sled and bruising his groin. He was laid up for weeks with his unclotted blood surging into his joints, pressing on the nerves, resulting in excruciating pain. Although he suffered so much, Alexey was a beacon of hope. "Last Days" presents a lot of information about famous contemporaries of Nicholas II, including Kaiser Wilhelm, George V, Woodrow Wilson, and the man at the center of the Russian revolution, Vladimir Lenin. Lenin is the arch-villain in the murder of the Romanovs- "he was a cold and cynical thinking machine with a sophisticated and flexible mind." When the family is aroused in the early morning hours of July 17, 1918 and walk down the 23 stairs to the basement of the Ipatiev House (one step for each year in Nicholas' reign) you shudder. You know what is going to happen and yet the sheer horror will tug at your heartstrings anew. But I felt a little quiver of satisfaction when the author tells us that Alexey's beloved spaniel Joy survived the massacre and was taken to England to live out his days in glorious peace. Joy, however, was not a King Charles spaniel, a toy breed, but a much larger Springer spaniel..-

My daughter in law first inspired my interest in The Romanov family and history. After reading her copy of "Nicholas and Alexandra", I wanted more detail and information so I began doing a little research and found this book. I was particularly interested in the lives of the Tsar and his family post-abdication and this wonderful book filled in a lot of blanks and Ms. Rappaport did an exquisite job of focusing on my area of interest and also blending in pre-abdication history which expanded my knowledge and answered many questions I didn't initially yet consider. I highly recommend this book; for me it was LITERALLY a page turner and richly composed.

Extremely well researched. Even though I know how the story ends, I could not put this book down. Read this one after reading some of Helen Rappaport's more recent books.

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