

# Was rasputin to blame for the fall of the romanov dynasty? essay sample



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The Russian Tsar, Nicholas II, abdicated from power in 1917 bringing to an end the 300 year old Romanov dynasty. This essay will be looking at the reasons for his fall from power, how much Rasputin had influenced this and will ask was it Rasputin or did other factors bring the Romanovs down?

Rasputin was born in a small Siberian village at around 1869. Even at a young age he earned himself such a reputation for devoted debauchery that his birth name was replaced with the surname of Rasputin, which is Russian for 'debauched one'. He began wandering, eventually ending up at St. Petersburg at around 1903 and met up with a leading Orthodox priest who introduced him to St. Petersburg's high society. He rather quickly established a reputation for his holiness but also for his insatiable sexual appetite.

Within a matter of a few years he was introduced to the Tsar and Tsarina, Alexandra, who began to rely heavily on him to heal their sick son Alexei. Alexei had haemophilia, an illness he inherited from the Tsarina's side of the family which meant if he was cut then the blood would not clot and Alexei could bleed to death from the slightest of wounds. Alexandra was a deeply religious woman and was amazed at Rasputin's apparently magical healing powers, whom she believed was sent from God for the help of their sick son. The truth of the matter was Rasputin was a self-ordained holy man, although he most definitely had a certain mystical and hypnotic presence about him and it was more likely due to this that the Tsarina fell under his spell.

Rasputin used this special bond that had been formed between himself and Alexandra to influence the Tsarina, and in turn the Tsar, on matters of government decisions in the duma, a Russian parliament created in the

October Manifesto after the shocking events of Bloody Sunday. Members of the Imperial family, government figures and even many normal Russian citizens were shocked at how this ‘mad monk’ could have such control over the Tsar and Tsarina.

“The Tsar can change his mind from one minute to the next; he’s a sad man; he lacks guts,” said Rasputin, showing that Rasputin thought Nicholas was a man who was easily manipulated and that perhaps he needed a strong will like Rasputin to help him. Scandal soon followed the friendship between Rasputin and Alexandra, some propaganda even suggesting there was a sexual relationship shared by the two. There were many posters and postcards circulating around St. Petersburg depicting this idea. Nicholas, probably on behalf of the Tsarina (who would hear no wrong of ‘our dear friend’), banned any negative talk or rumours regarding Rasputin and his behaviour. This act in itself created more conspirators to believe Rasputin’s presence around the Imperial family was unhealthy, as it seemed Nicholas was covering matters up and it also backtracked on the promise of an end to censorship which was a key part of the October Manifesto.

World War One broke out in 1914 and the Russian army had suffered many early casualties, 3, 800, 000 dead within the first ten months. Nicholas then decided to take control of military affairs and headed to the front. This action had left Alexandra and Rasputin to make the governmental decisions back at home. If the Duma attacked Rasputin then it would be immediately suspended and even incompetent ministers kept their jobs because they sided with Alexandra and Rasputin. Angered by how Rasputin was seemingly controlling important decisions which should be left to experienced

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government figures, discontent in Russia was on the increase yet again. Even the staunchest supporters of Tsardom found it difficult to defend a system which allowed a nation in its greatest trial to fall under the sway of a debauched monk.

In December of 1916, in an attempt to save the monarchy, a group of aristocratic conspirators murdered Rasputin. However, this action made no difference and Nicholas abdicated from the throne. While in captivity, he and his family were murdered on the orders of Lenin. So Rasputin brought scandal to the Imperial family; he made the Tsar break his own October Manifesto; he influenced important decisions in World War One. But was he the only reason?

There are other factors to be considered when discussing the fall of the Romanovs. He was a rather weak person and had always lived in dread of his succession to the throne, “ I am not prepared to be Tsar... I have no idea of even how to talk to ministers”, he said to his brother on the day of their fathers death.

In his early years Russia was an unhappy place, there were strikes, crop failures, famine, riots and widespread protests against Tsarist oppression. Partly to distract the people from these problems but also partly because of a row over land in the Far East, Russia and Japan went to war in 1904. Nicholas believed it would be a short and victorious war, it was neither. All it did was highlight how ill prepared Russia was for war. The Tsars reputation had now reached new depths as the Russo-Japanese war was seen as a waste of lives and showed Nicholas up as being incompetent and arrogant. In

1905 protesters demonstrated before the Winter Palace but troops opened fire, killing and wounding thousands of innocent civilians. This event became known in Russia as ‘ Bloody Sunday’.

By the time the First World War had started Tsardom was probably at its highest level of popularity of Nicholas’ reign. Mainly due to his handling at this time of the war though, he squandered his chance. Equipment of every kind was in short supply and artillery was rationed to firing a limited number of shots a day. When Nicholas took control of military matters he effectively gambled the future of Tsardom on how Russia fared in the war. Alas, they did not fare well. This and the growing hostility towards Alexandra, whose interfering in matters of government and German nationality had caused great unrest, forced Nicholas’ advisors to advise him to stand down as Tsar.

In conclusion as to whether or not Rasputin was to blame for the fall of the Romanov dynasty it must be concluded that although Rasputin did have an influence in the increasing discontent felt by many Russians and their loss of faith in Nicholas’ ability to rule, there were many other reasons for the downfall of the Romanovs. Among these were the fact Nicholas was not a strong leader to begin with; the disastrous Russo-Japanese war; the awful event of Bloody Sunday; the Tsarina’s influence over him; his dreadful handling of World War One so that in the end he had no choice but to abdicate. Rasputin was another nail, but he was by no means the whole coffin.