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Grigori Rasputin - I

Lead: On the morning of December 17, 1916 two fishermen found a boot near a blood stained hole in the ice-covered Neva River, just below the Petrovski Bridge in central Saint Petersburg. Two days later police found a corpse. Rasputin was dead.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: The naked and bound body that floated against the riverbank that winter day, had come a

long way. Born in Siberia in the 1860s, by the time he was 15 years old Grigory Yefimovich had such a reputation for sexual conquests that his neighbors took to calling him Rasputin, the Russian word for debauchee. Some years after his marriage in 1883, while plowing the family plot, he had an ecstatic religious experience, he said he saw an Orthodox saint, the Black Virgin of Kazan and this convinced him that he should leave home and devote his life to spiritual pursuits. The local clergy resented this self-anointed monk, but the peasants loved and feared him. He was direct, simple, and physically intimidating. In his wanderings he gained renown as a starets, a holy

man who reputedly possessed the power to heal the sick and predict the future.

By 1905 he had come to the attention of important members of the Orthodox hierarchy who in turn introduced him to members of the Russian Royal family. He met the Tsar Nicholas II and his wife the Tsarina Alexandra, and became a fixture around the palace, gradually insinuating himself into the royal couple's trust and because of this offending nearly everyone else in the government and imperial family.

Few in Russia were aware but the Tsarevich, sole heir to the throne,

young Alexis, aged 5, suffered from the debilitating blood disease, hemophilia. Even the smallest cut could cause uncontrollable bleeding which could lead to death. In 1908 Rasputin was summoned during a hemophilic attack and either through coincidence or perhaps hypnosis, seemed to heal the boy. From that point, Alexandra's confidence in Rasputin's advice and wisdom was unshakable. Thus, began one of the most bizarre episodes in Russian history which may have helped bring a Revolution. Next time: the mad monk.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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