

Screenplay for the film "1915 — Grigori Rasputin. Historical Chronicles with Nikolai Svanidze" written by Marina Zhukova, translated by AI, and preceded by a summary also written by AI

Screenplay Summary:

In 1915, as the Russian army retreats and the empire begins to crumble, Grigori Rasputin stands at the centre of a drama of mysticism, power, and decay.

Close to Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra, he is seen by them as the voice of the "Russian land" and as a quasi-sacred intercessor, especially for the sick heir, Tsarevich Alexei.

Around him cluster grand dukes, Montenegrin princesses, ministers, policemen, and church hierarchs, all seeking protection, influence, or money.

Rasputin imposes his coarse language, his familiar "ty," his rough manner, and plays on the ambitions of everyone to install or topple ministers, bishops, and prime ministers.

While the press begins to attack the "holy man" for his debauched life, censorship still tries to shield him.

Behind the scenes, safe apartments and secret rooms in the Peter and Paul Fortress are arranged for his meetings with the highest leaders of the empire.

The contrast is brutal between the war at the front – shell shortages, retreats, colossal losses, millions of refugees – and the nights of revelry in Petrograd.

In Moscow, tension explodes into anti-German pogroms: pharmacies, shops, and factories are sacked, the police stand aside or even lead the gangs.

This diffuse fury, noted by the French ambassador, appears as an early symptom of the revolutionary outbursts to come.

Against the backdrop of military disaster, scandals, and accusations of espionage and treason (such as the trial of War Minister Sukhomlinov), Rasputin's influence over the imperial couple seems increasingly dangerous for the state.

On his advice, Nicholas II dismisses Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich and assumes command of the army himself, leaving the capital and government even more exposed to intrigue.

By late 1916, a group of conspirators from the very top of society – young Prince Felix Yusupov, monarchist deputy Purishkevich, a grand duke, and several officers – decide that, to save Russia and the monarchy, Rasputin must die.

Their plan is to lure him to the Yusupov palace, to a carefully prepared basement room, and poison him with cyanide-laced cakes and wine.

The elimination of the "sacred peasant" is meant to spark a national recovery, but instead comes on the eve of the final collapse of the Russian Empire.

Screenplay

The year is 1915. The Russian army is in retreat. The withdrawal at the front turns into anti-German pogroms in factories, shops, and private apartments in Moscow. In Zurich, Lenin dreams of turning the world war into a civil war. In the spring of 1915, in Berne, Switzerland, a women's conference is held with Krupskaya, Clara Zetkin, and Zinoviev's wife Lilina taking part. The ladies do not

support Lenin's dream of civil war. They vote for the slogan: "Working women of all countries, unite!"

At exactly the same time, the starets Grigori Rasputin is having his legendary binge at the restaurant "Yar".

At the height of the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 revolution, the Russian emperor Nicholas invited from Paris the French medium, Doctor Pinos. The purpose of this invitation was Nicholas's desire to consult the spirit of his father, Alexander III, on the means of pacifying the country.

It was decided that the most suitable place to summon the spirit was the nursery of the heir Alexei, who had not yet even turned one. The spirit of Alexander III, it was said, appeared unfailingly during the mediumistic séances. Nicholas probably felt like Hamlet. The heir Alexei, obviously, did not see his grandfather's spirit, because he was asleep.

In his diary, Nicholas left no information about his father's advice; however, on 1 November 1905 there appears the entry: "We drank tea with Militsa and Stana, made the acquaintance of a man of God, Grigori, from the Tobolsk province."

For his part, the man of God Grigori from the Tobolsk province, that is Grigori Rasputin, later shared his recollections of his meeting with Russia's first couple: "When the revolution raised its head high, they got very frightened. And they started packing their things to go hide somewhere. I spent a long time persuading them to spit on all those fears and reign. They kept refusing. I started stamping my foot at them and shouting. The sovereign lady gave in first, and then the tsar. The tsarina raised her hands and, with tears, said: 'Grigori! If all people rise up against you, I will not abandon you, I will not obey [them].'"

The tsarina, who was not lacking in willpower, kept her word. But even the weak-willed Nicholas remained so firm on this point that one can say he sacrificed the crown just to keep Rasputin by his side.

Rasputin treated the crowned couple harshly, confidently, and casually. It was the signature style of an experienced trainer. Maurice Paléologue, the French ambassador to Russia, wrote that in Rasputin's colourful and verbose speech, the tsar and tsarina heard, or thought they heard, "the voice of the Russian land." Therefore, by not renouncing Rasputin, the last Romanovs, in accordance with the Russian tragic tradition, in a certain sense gave their lives for the people. It is, in general, striking that the Russian tsar shared the classic views of the Russian intelligentsia, firstly about the people, and secondly about how one ought to love the people. In the Romanovs' case they did not even have to "go to the people": the people, in the person of Rasputin, came to them themselves. The essence of Rasputin's famous hypnotic power lay precisely in the fact that the Romanovs took Rasputin for the people. And he really was flesh of the flesh of the people.

At an interrogation in the Cheka – not the famous Cheka, but the first one, organised by the Provisional Government after the February Revolution – on 6 April 1917, Rasputin's associate, the famous high-society homosexual Prince Andronikov, recounted: "It was Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich who found Rasputin. The grand duke's dog fell ill. He ordered the veterinarian that the dog must get well. The vet said he had a spell-caster in Siberia who could cast a spell over the dog. They sent for the spell-caster. It turned out to be Mr Rasputin. By accident or not, but the fact is, the dog did not die. Then he cured the fiancée of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich."

It was with her, the Montenegrin princess Anastasia, in her first marriage Duchess of Leuchtenberg, called at home Stana, and with her sister Militsa, that Nicholas was drinking tea when he saw Rasputin for the first time. It was these two sisters who dragged the miracle-worker Rasputin into the palace.

The former prime minister Witte points explicitly to the main goal of the Montenegrins in the Rasputin affair: “First of all they had the desire to get as much money as possible. In general, these ladies fastened themselves very tightly to Russian money.” Later, in emigration in Antibes, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich had money to live on. Stana was thrifty. Rasputin personally blessed the marriage of the grand duke and the Montenegrin. And, it must be said, not only in gratitude for letting him into the Winter Palace. Montenegrin No. 1 and No. 2, Scylla and Charybdis of the Russian court, Stana and Militsa, were ready-made clients for him.

The father of Rasputin’s murderer Felix Yusupov, Felix Yusupov senior, recalls: “Once in Crimea I met Grand Duchess Militsa in a carriage with some stranger. I bowed to her, but she did not return my bow. Later I asked her why. She answered: ‘Because you could not have seen me. I was with Doctor Philippe. And when he wears his hat, he and his companions are invisible.’”

The charlatan Doctor Philippe was at the palace before Rasputin. Rasputin replaced him.

Petrograd. From police reports.

24 November. Rasputin came home very drunk and immediately left again. He returned at two in the morning completely drunk.

3 December. Rasputin left the apartment and returned drunk.

5 December. Rasputin came back at three in the morning drunk.

7 December. Rasputin came home at five in the morning rather drunk.

15 December. Rasputin and Lieutenant-Colonel Ezersky set out by motor-car for the “Villa Rodé” restaurant, and at two in the morning surveillance left them there.

20 December. Rasputin and Metropolitan Pitirim’s secretary Osipenko went to the “Villa Rodé” restaurant. Rasputin came home about seven in the morning dead drunk.

December 1915 was not an exceptional month. Police reports for the whole of 1915 record an equally monotonous picture. The drunkenness, meanwhile, must not mislead anyone. It was simply one of the accepted rules of the game. The game itself was played in an absolutely sober fashion.

In 1915 the mass media took on Rasputin for the first time. The French ambassador to Russia fixes this with a specific date – 29 August. Until that day censorship and the police had protected Rasputin from any criticism in the newspapers. At the beginning of 1912 there appeared a series of articles condemning Rasputin for immorality under article 1001 of the Code, that is, for pornography. But the articles were seized, and the courts, under pressure from the Minister of Justice Shcheglovitov, upheld these seizures. In one of the Moscow printing houses, the type was broken up and the text of a prepared pamphlet about Rasputin destroyed, which greatly annoyed the empress’s elder sister, Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fyodorovna, who had read the text of the pamphlet and was counting on its effect at Tsarskoe Selo.

From the interrogation of former Minister of the Interior Protopopov at the Provisional Government’s Cheka on 21 July 1917:

— There were such articles about which I directly indicated that they could not be printed. I gave instructions, and instructions were given to me.

— Who gave you instructions?

— Tsarskoe Selo. They told me the press had to be curbed; they said: “How can you allow this, is it even possible?”

Nicholas complained: “I don’t understand, is there really no way to have my will carried out?” War Minister Polivanov recalled that he knew of a circular that forbade writing about Rasputin.

In 1915 there was a real breakthrough. The campaign against Rasputin was opened by the newspaper *Bourse News* (*Birzhevye Vedomosti*). It told openly of debauchery, intrigues, theft, scandalous links with the highest bureaucracy and the highest clergy. The paper at the same time avoided any hint at his closeness to the tsar and tsarina, but posed the question of whether the collusion of the bureaucracy with Rasputin was not the most terrible accusation against the regime.

The public admired that the Minister of the Interior, Prince Shcherbatov, had allowed the publication of this article, but unanimously predicted that he would not long keep his portfolio.

About a week after the article appeared, in the first days of September 1915, during a walk Rasputin said to the police bodyguard accompanying him: “Yes, lad, my soul is grieving so much I’ve gone deaf.” The guard asked him: “Why is it so with you?” – “Because, lad, bad things are happening in the country, and the damned newspapers write about me, they irritate, I’ll have to go to court.”

Minister of the Interior Prince Shcherbatov was removed from his post in mid-September. In his place Alexander Khvostov, a long-time patient of Rasputin, was appointed.

Khvostov recalled that once, at his wife’s request, he wanted to be treated for nail-biting and turned to a doctor-hypnotist, but the latter could not help Khvostov, saying that he, Khvostov, had a powerful force of will. Then Khvostov turned to Rasputin, and he felt Rasputin’s hypnotic power on himself very clearly. Later he would often dance for Rasputin at his apartment at No. 64 Gorokhovaya Street.

They usually met in safe houses. One of them was rented for three or four months on Italian Street, another – in a lane on the Fontanka near the Ministry of the Interior. This apartment was furnished personally by the chief of gendarmes, Colonel Komissarov, who, by the way, after the revolution, became an employee of that very Cheka. Komissarov equipped a dining room in the safe house, supplied it with everything needed for business lunches and dinners, and placed there, under the guise of a footman, a married surveillance agent.

In this same apartment Rasputin also met with the head of the Police Department, Beletsky. His department was responsible for political intelligence. After Minister of the Interior Shcherbatov’s dismissal over the article about Rasputin and Khvostov’s appointment to the Interior Ministry, Beletsky, with Rasputin’s blessing, became “comrade,” that is, deputy, minister of the interior.

For secret meetings with candidates for high state posts the casemates of the Peter and Paul Fortress were also used. The daughter of the fortress commandant, General Nikitin, was a fervent admirer of Rasputin. She would go into town to fetch Rasputin and bring him in her carriage to the fortress. There, in Miss Nikitina’s room or in a casemate, Rasputin met the future prime minister, Stürmer. Goremykin’s departure from the post of prime minister was, for Rasputin, already a decided matter. On 14 June 1917, at an interrogation, Stürmer admitted that he had met Rasputin at the Peter and Paul Fortress. At the same interrogation he stated that the day after his appointment, he, the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian state, went to a compulsory meeting with Rasputin in the apartment of Madame Orlova, an actress of a private theatre, in the Lerme building.

He was unable to explain why such a strange place was chosen for the meeting. He said: "Because there was no other place."

Stürmer for the prime minister's post was proposed by the Metropolitan of Petrograd, Pitirim. With Pitirim, Rasputin was on familiar "ty" terms. Strictly speaking, that is not exact, because Rasputin addressed everyone as "ty." With Pitirim, Rasputin was on "ty" and on "you scoundrel." At Pitirim's monastery, Rasputin also arranged meetings with ministers. At the same time Pitirim constantly explained to everyone that he did not know Rasputin.

Khvostov recalls: "There was a big embarrassment. Pitirim assured me he did not know Rasputin, and I found Rasputin at his place."

It was to Rasputin that Pitirim owed his appointment to Petrograd. First Pitirim was bishop of Tula, but in reality his cell-attendant Mitrofanych ran the diocese, being in the most intimate relations with the bishop. Then he was transferred to Vladikavkaz, where his cell-attendant became Osipenko, later Rasputin's inseparable friend, who, according to one version, was Pitirim's illegitimate son, and according to another, was in the same sort of relations with him as his predecessor. After that Pitirim was transferred to Samara, and then he became Exarch of Georgia. On 23 November 1915, Pitirim unexpectedly received an appointment to the capital. On the motives for this appointment, Rasputin admirer Mrs Zhukovskaya recalls: "Rasputin jumped up from the table and clapped his hands: 'Ah, madam, dear lady... to hell with your consistory, and we'll push that son of a bitch Pitirim into the metropolitans, oh madam, dear lady, what's the Synod to me, I know myself. What's the Council to me, I spit on the Church, what's the patriarch to me, to hell with him, what's Pitirim, what matters is that it's as I said!'"

Sergei Yulievich Witte said that "the Church with us has turned into a dead bureaucratic institution, and church service into service to earthly gods. We are gradually becoming less Christian than the adherents of other Christian confessions. We are gradually becoming the least believing of all."

By the way, about the Synod. The Synod is a bureaucratic body headed by a layman. It was created by Peter I to control and govern the Church. In the Synod Rasputin had friends – the head of the economic administration, the chief secretary, and the treasurer. The treasurer was an informant for Rasputin. Rasputin had sexual relations with the treasurer's wife.

The appointment of the new chief procurator, Samarin, was a big surprise for Rasputin. With his predecessor Sabler, Rasputin was on good terms; he would say about him: "Why, Sabler recently bowed to my feet. For ripening him into a procurator." And Rasputin would act out how Sabler bowed to him. And now, suddenly, instead of Sabler there was Samarin, who hated Rasputin and did not hide his hatred.

Samarin remained in office from July to September 1915. The very procedure of his dismissal is curious. Samarin came to Headquarters (the Stavka) to see Nicholas and began to speak about the influence of "dark forces." The tsar was amiable, invited him to dinner; at dinner, the sovereign's amiability increased further. Samarin returned to Petrograd enchanted. The next morning Nicholas wrote a note to the prime minister: "Yesterday I forgot to tell Samarin that he was dismissed. Please take the trouble to tell him."

After Samarin's dismissal, Rasputin did not calm down. Since he had already installed Khvostov at the Ministry of the Interior, it was a relative of Khvostov, Volzhin, who was appointed chief procurator of the Synod. Then Khvostov intrigued in the hope of getting the prime minister's post.

The intrigue did not work. Khvostov was already ready to kill Rasputin with his own hand. But then Nicholas, under Rasputin's direct influence, appointed as head of government the aforementioned Stürmer, whom Rasputin himself called "the little old man on a string." Khvostov was removed from the Interior Ministry, and his relative Volzhin lost the post of chief procurator of the Synod. In his place Nikolai Rayev was appointed, who had previously been head of the Higher Women's Courses. Khvostov, leaving office, took as severance a million state roubles.

When communication with Rasputin in safe apartments was not enough for high officials, they sent their wives to Gorokhovaya 64, where Rasputin lived.

The study in Rasputin's apartment was furnished with leather furniture. It was there that Rasputin's meetings with the ladies of Petersburg high society took place. Then Rasputin would see the lady out with the words: "Well now, little mother, everything is in order." After finishing receiving his lady visitors, Rasputin usually went to the bathhouse located across the street. The promises he made in such cases were always fulfilled.

In contrast to the daytime business visits, the nights in Rasputin's apartment were noisy. Rasputin had the misfortune to have as his neighbour a Synod official, Mr Blagoveshchensky. Here is what he recalled: "I am writing in my study, and behind the wall a very large, merry company has gathered. By midnight musicians arrived, ten or twelve people, from some entertainment garden. Operetta tunes turned into a wild dance. Several times Georgian songs were sung. Then, apparently, 'the master himself' sang and danced solo.

That day the kitchen window was open, the curtain raised. It was mostly ladies and girls who came into the kitchen for snacks, fruit, wine, and fruit drinks. 'The master himself' ran into the kitchen several times. They washed all the dishes themselves, there were no servants; the ladies tidied everything."

From the spring of 1915 the main German offensive began on the eastern front, that is, against Russia. By spring the Russian army was already feeling the shell famine in full measure. The Germans sensed the weakness. For every ten enemy shells we replied with one. In a telegram from the commander of the South-Western Front, Nikolai Iudovich Ivanov, one of our most able generals (he is writing to Chief of Staff Yanushkevich): "The remaining stock of cartridges in my hands does not cover a quarter of a complement." A shortage of rifles was also felt. The desperation of the front command is evidenced by a telegram proposing to arm infantry companies with axes mounted on long handles.

As a result of the terrible losses in the infantry, there were not enough officers. They were transferred into the infantry from the cavalry. Thus, at his own request, the husband of Grand Duchess Tatiana Konstantinovna, Konstantin Bagration, moved into the infantry. He commanded a company under General Brusilov and was killed in his very first battle, shot in the forehead.

By September 1915 the Russian Empire had completely lost Poland, Lithuania, part of Latvia and Belorussia. The cities of Warsaw, Vilna, Kovno, Grodno, Brest were abandoned. Contemporaries called this nightmare "the great retreat." Our army was losing 200,000 men a month killed and wounded; in 1915 almost a million soldiers and officers were lost as prisoners. Forty thousand of the best officer corps of the 1914 call-up had been practically wiped out.

The officer schools, working by an accelerated method, were graduating 35,000 officers a year. Now, for 3,000 soldiers there were ten officers of not the best qualifications. They did not know

how to be fathers to their soldiers and, as it turned out, neither did they know how to be servants of the tsar.

Besides that, already by the beginning of the war two-thirds of the officers – from second lieutenant to colonel – were of either peasant or petty-intelligentsia background. Those graduates of the junker schools later enveloped in legend were one-quarter peasants.

The permanent representative of the British command in Russia, Colonel Knox, spoke with Russian soldiers. Here is their understanding of tactics: “We’ll retreat as far as the Urals, and in the enemy army there will be only one German and one Austrian left. We’ll take the Austrian prisoner, and we’ll kill the German.”

The general withdrawal of the Russian army was accompanied by the flight of enormous masses of the population. One fifth of Russia’s population either fled or ended up under occupation. The associate of the murdered Stolypin, Alexander Vasilyevich Krivoshein, wrote: “Of all the trials of the war, the exodus of refugees is the most serious and the hardest to cure. Disease, grief, and poverty move together with the refugees onto Russia. They create panic and destroy all that remained of the surge of the first days of the war. The next migration will lead Russia into the darkness of revolution.”

War Minister General Polivanov said in August 1915 that all that remained was to believe in the boundless spaces, the impassable mud, and the mercy of Saint Nicholas the Miracle-Worker, protector of Holy Russia. On the other hand, the same Polivanov said that a national misfortune would occur when events approached Tver and Tula.

At the same time, in the First World War in Russia no one had the simple and brutal idea of barrier detachments, when NKVD divisions stood behind the backs of frontline soldiers and drove them forward with machine-gun fire. Instead, an extremely worried Chief of the General Staff, General Yanushkevich, wrote from Headquarters to Nicholas: “It is necessary to promise each soldier-peasant a plot of land for faithful service. Like a drowning man grabs at a straw, I am trying to find any way out of the present situation.”

A strange thing: it was exactly this that Rasputin was saying at the same time. In his opinion, monastery and state lands should be divided among the landless participants in the war. “Some of the landlords’ lands should also be given and distributed among the soldiers,” said Rasputin.

In the third ten-day period of March 1915, Rasputin arrived in Moscow to pray in the Kremlin at the grave of the hero of Russia’s Time of Troubles at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Patriarch Hermogenes. There was no information about this, but all Russia learned how Rasputin spent the evening of 26 March.

From the report of the head of the security department, Martynov, to the assistant minister of the interior for police affairs, General Dzhunkovsky:

“On 26 March, at about 11 o’clock in the evening, the well-known Grigori Rasputin arrived at the ‘Yar’ restaurant, accompanied by two ladies and the journalist of Moscow and Petrograd newspapers, Nikolai Nikolaevich Sedov. After taking a private room, they summoned the publisher of the newspaper *News of the Season*, hereditary citizen Kugulsky.”

It must be said that Rasputin’s invitation of representatives of the mass media to “Yar” attracts attention. It is quite possible that Rasputin wanted publicity for what would happen at “Yar.” He built his plan on this publicity, intending, in addition to drinking, to derive extra pleasure, to

promote himself and to play to a wide audience – from the restaurant onlookers to Tsarskoe Selo. It's a pity there was no television.

Back to the security report. Rasputin invited a women's choir, which sang and danced the maxixe and the cakewalk. The cakewalk is a pre-war dance of American blacks. The maxixe was heard everywhere. Even the operation of cash registers in shops was accompanied by the tune: "The maxixe is a charming dance, ta-ra-ta." Car horns played the same thing. In Ilf and Petrov's *The Golden Calf*, the brass horn of the legendary "Antelope Gnu" emits these merry sounds, already old-fashioned in Ostap Bender's time.

Furthermore, while dancing the maxixe, partners could kiss. But for Rasputin, "kissing" was beneath a man's dignity. I continue the quotation from the report. First, drunk, Rasputin danced a Russian dance. Then his behaviour took on a completely outrageous character of some kind of sexual psychopathy: he exposed his genitals and, in that state, continued talking with the singers, handing them notes with the inscription "Love selflessly."

When the choir director remarked on the indecency of such behaviour, Rasputin replied that he always behaved like that in front of women. Then he started confiding in roughly these terms: "This caftan was given to me by the 'old woman' (that is, the empress); she sewed it herself. Eh, what would 'She' say if she were to see me now!"

The head of Moscow's police, General Adrianov, wanted to report personally to the sovereign about the scandal at "Yar," and came to Tsarskoe Selo in full dress uniform. But the commandant of the Imperial Palaces, General Voyeykov, did not let him see the tsar. Subsequently Adrianov wrote a memorandum to the effect that Rasputin had not staged a scandal at "Yar."

Deputy Minister of the Interior, General Dzhunkovsky, personally handed the sovereign his note about the scandal in Moscow, and then on 1 June made a detailed report to Nicholas in which he set out his views on Rasputin and on Russia, indicating the corrupting influence and power of Rasputin which threatened the state and the dynasty. A second, even more detailed report to the sovereign, Dzhunkovsky made on 4 August.

On 10 August Rasputin said to one of Dzhunkovsky's agents: "Well, your Dzhunkovsky..." and he gave a whistle.

Five days after that whistle Nicholas dismissed Dzhunkovsky.

After the scandal at "Yar," on his doctor's advice, Rasputin went to his homeland, the Tobolsk province, to the village of Pokrovskoe. Then he returned to Petrograd for a week and again left for Pokrovskoe on a steamboat called "Tovar-par."

On the steamboat, drunk, Rasputin made the soldiers sing in chorus, called the waiter a crook, saying that he had stolen 3,000 roubles from him. Finally, he allowed himself to speak disrespectfully of the empress and her daughters, and in the end fell asleep in his cabin and wet himself.

To be fair, it must be said that sometimes Rasputin provoked the strongest anger in Nicholas. There were periods when Nicholas would not even let him appear before his eyes, but Rasputin always said in his own defence that he was, like all men, a sinner, not a saint. "Not a saint." And on that point the sovereign found it difficult to argue.

Once in Pokrovskoe Rasputin went to visit his brother Nikolai. Their father also came there and began to revile his son Grigori in the foulest language. Rasputin jumped up from the table like a madman, pushed his father out into the yard, knocked him to the ground, and began to beat him with his fists. The father cried out: "Don't hit me, you scoundrel!" They had to be pulled apart. Once he had recovered, the old man cursed his son even more fiercely, threatening to tell everyone that he knew nothing, and that the only thing he knew was how to hold the servant girl Dunya by her soft parts.

Against the background of the German offensive and the withdrawal of the Russian army, talk of espionage and of German domination in the economy and the organs of state administration became extremely popular in Moscow. Idle chatter turned into an information campaign in the newspapers *Za Rossiyu (For Russia)*, *Vremya (Time)*, and *Vecherniye Izvestiya (Evening News)*. An outbreak of cholera at the Prokhorov factory – now Trekhgorka – was interpreted as a German terrorist act.

On 26 May 1915, at six in the evening, the owner of the Prokhorov factory called Moscow's chief of police Adrianov: "In the name of God, as a citizen and factory owner I beg you to stop the movement of the crowd." General Adrianov answered: "When a crowd is marching with the portrait of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor and singing 'God Save the Tsar,' I will not disperse it."

A pogrom began. Already the day before, leaflets with the addresses of German trading firms had been distributed. A tearoom in Dorogomilovka served as a meeting point for special squads. The leader paid the demonstrators three roubles a day.

On the morning of 28 May, they smashed up the famous Ferrein pharmacy on Nikolskaya Street. Eighty litres of alcohol were found there and immediately drunk. Then the crowd moved on to the Brocard perfume factory, now "New Dawn", where the most popular perfumes "Persian Lilac" and the soaps "People's," "Rural," and "National" were produced. At Keller's pharmacy even the parasite tinctures were drunk.

By two in the afternoon on 28 May the crowd had gathered on Red Square. On Red Square the crowd was already demanding Nicholas's abdication, the empress's tonsuring as a nun, and the throne to be given to the supreme commander, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich. Then the pogrom moved further through the city and spread to the suburbs. It was the first non-Jewish pogrom in the history of Russia.

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By evening all the German shops had been destroyed. Grand pianos were dragged out and smashed. Music shops on Petrovka, Kuznetsky Most, and Bolshaya Lubyanka were swept clean. The manuscripts of the poet Boris Pasternak, who worked as a tutor in the house of the major businessman Moritz Philip, were lost.

The police nowhere hindered the pogromists; sometimes they even headed the gangs. On Myasnitskaya Street, some high official was seen while things were being thrown out of a third-floor window nearby. There were murders. At the Schroeder factory, they dragged out the owner, his wife, and their two children – they were tortured and thrown naked into a ditch to drown.

At the same time, two Russian subjects, Dutchwomen by origin, were killed. In the wine warehouses of Genke, the arriving police found 32 people killed in drunken brawls.

At the Arbat Gates about thirty people were engaged in the pogrom. Around them stood a crowd of several hundred simply watching. On Tverskaya Street, ladies in hats picked up scattered pieces of silk. The Martha and Mary Convent was under heavy guard – rumours spread among the people that a subterranean telephone line for communicating with the Germans had been found there, belonging to Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fyodorovna, the convent's founder.

Elizaveta Fyodorovna was referred to only as Lizka – even by the doorman of the governor-general's house.

Students from the university were seen among the pogromists. Then people stopped distinguishing what was German and what was Russian.

At the "Skorokhod" factory people tried to stop the pogromists, telling them the factory was Russian. The pogromists replied: "We know, but the shoes are too good."

After three days, troops began to disperse the pogromists. Weapons were used for the first time in Kamergersky Lane, opposite the Art Theatre.

During the period of the pogroms fell the brief governorship-general in Moscow of Prince Felix Yusupov senior, father of Felix Yusupov junior, Rasputin's future murderer. It must be said that he made personal attempts to calm the crowd, riding out on horseback accompanied by two Cossacks. An action, clearly, of great courage, but ineffective. Then Governor-General Yusupov, who was also commander of the Moscow Military District, took the decision: "The only possible way to calm the Russian people consists in the removal of all Germans from Moscow and in forbidding them to take Russian citizenship."

In family photographs, Governor-General Yusupov, in a white tunic, looks remarkably like Stalin. This likeness is accidental. Prince Yusupov, through his wife Count Sumorokov-Elston, was the son of the illegitimate son of the Prussian king Frederick William IV. Although Prince Yusupov looked a lot like Stalin, it hardly befitted the grandson of Frederick William to expel Germans. Moreover, such a loss of self-control is unexpected for Prince Yusupov. There exists another rare photograph. The remarkable Russian artist Valentin Serov, in the family estate of Arkhangelskoye near Moscow, the ancestral estate of Yusupov's wife, is drawing the head of the prince's favourite horse. Only the horse's head. But with what composure, standing at attention, in full dress, Yusupov stands on the rug and holds his horse! And it is obvious that he has been standing like that not for five minutes.

The Germans were not expelled from Moscow, but the anti-German pogroms in Moscow, in the opinion of the French ambassador to Russia Maurice Paléologue, bore witness to Russia's readiness to revolt against everything lying beyond her western borders. In addition, the incredible ferocity freely unleashed on Moscow in May 1915 was the first symptom of the year 1917.

On 11 June 1915, War Minister Sukhomlinov, who had begun the war, was removed from office. He was then put on trial on charges of state treason, as well as for abuse of office.

On 11 June, the day of his dismissal, Nicholas sent Sukhomlinov a message: "Dear Vladimir Alexandrovich! The interests of Russia and the army require your departure at the present moment. How many years we have worked together, and we have never had any misunderstandings. I thank you sincerely for all your work. God be with you. Sincerely respecting you, Nicholas."

According to State Duma chairman Rodzianko, Rasputin said: "I arrive at Tsarskoe Selo and see that papa (that is, the sovereign) is sitting looking sad. I stroke his head and say: 'What are you sad about?' He says: 'They are all scoundrels around me. There are no boots, no rifles – we have to attack, and we can't attack.'"

According to the same chairman Rodzianko, the supreme commander, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, lamented: "Already back in January I said that I cannot wage war without shells, without rifles, and without boots."

Apart from his inability to supply the army, Sukhomlinov was charged with links to a spy group headed by Gendarme Colonel Myasoedov. Myasoedov's guilt was never fully proven, but he was hastily hanged. Sukhomlinov ended up in the Peter and Paul Fortress. Rasputin had never felt particular sympathy for Sukhomlinov, yet suddenly he worried about his health and began to lament: "General Sukhomlinov must be released, so that he does not die in prison, otherwise things will not be right. To release a prisoner is to rebirth a sinner into a righteous life."

Soon Sukhomlinov was transferred from the fortress to house arrest. Sukhomlinov denied guilt in treason, expressed hope of being acquitted in court, and knew that Rasputin was pleading for him at his wife's request. Sukhomlinov said of his wife that her chief fault lay in her extraordinary beauty

and grace, to which even the tsar had paid attention. Rasputin also paid attention to Elena Sukhomlinova. Her husband's house arrest, in every sense, was vivid proof of that.

In addition, Rasputin provided assistance to the emperor's wife. Through bankers close to him he secured for the empress a reliable channel by which she had the opportunity, during the war, to provide financial help to her poor Hessian relatives in Germany, whom Kaiser Wilhelm did not value at a penny and who repaid him with hatred.

Already in 1911, two ladies – namely, Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna and Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna, daughter of Montenegrin King Nicholas – had quarrelled. After the quarrel, Anastasia Nikolaevna, who had once brought Rasputin to Alexandra Fyodorovna, immediately began to hate Rasputin.

Anastasia Nikolaevna's husband, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, the supreme commander at the beginning of the war, also at once ceased to love Rasputin and even began to beg the tsar to expel, as he put it, "that vile muzhik."

Nothing came of it. Rasputin kept his anger.

The Russian army's failures gave Rasputin the occasion to satisfy his old malice, and on 23 August 1915, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich was removed from the post of supreme commander. That same day the sovereign, by his own decree, appointed himself to the vacant post.

On the eve of this, the overwhelming majority of the members of the Council of Ministers had signed a collective protest against the dismissal of Nikolai Nikolaevich. In the opinion of one of the signatories: "We are sitting on a barrel of gunpowder, and just one spark is needed for everything to blow up into the air; the emperor's acceptance of the command is not a spark but an entire candle thrown into a gun arsenal."

In other words, Nicholas is neither a strategist nor a tactician, and, in addition, his presence at Headquarters will mean that the governance of the country will be completely neglected.

Rasputin, in a drunken state, boasted publicly that he had "chased off Nikolashka," meaning the grand duke. All the ministers who had signed the protest were dismissed from their posts.

On 24 November 1915 Nicholas set off for Headquarters in Mogilev together with the heir Alexei. It is not impossible that psychologically this trip by Nicholas was explained by his desire to throw everything up and, at least for a time, get away from Petrograd.

Rasputin almost confirms this: "Papa listens to me with difficulty; he is ashamed."

The imperial train bound for Mogilev jolted over the rail joints. The heir to the Russian throne looked through the carriage window as all children do, pressing his nose close to the glass. When the train switched tracks at a junction, from a barely noticeable jolt blood suddenly poured from the boy's nose straight onto the glass. The father was in a complete panic. No medical means helped his son, ill with haemophilia. Nicholas gave the order for an urgent return back to Tsarskoe Selo. Back to Rasputin.

Immediately on arrival they telephoned Rasputin and asked him to come. But Rasputin did not go; he later said that he had done this deliberately, to torment the sovereign a little. They say Rasputin possessed power over the boy and knew how to calm him. In addition, he once made a favourable long-term prediction: the heir's illness is dangerous only up to the age of eighteen; after that he will

be completely free of the disease. Alexei was shot without living two weeks to his fourteenth birthday.

On 2 June 1915, the factory owner, metallurgist, financier, millionaire Alexei Ivanovich Putilov had a conversation with the French ambassador to Russia, Maurice Paléologue. Lighting a cigar, Putilov said the following: “The days of tsarist power are numbered. It has perished irretrievably. Revolution is inevitable. Any pretext may serve – a strike, hunger, a mutiny in Moscow, or a palace scandal. The greatest crime of tsarism is that it would not admit, alongside its own bureaucracy, any other centre of political life. And on the day when the officials surrender it, the Russian state itself will disintegrate.”

A year later, on 19 November 1916, the monarchist deputy, Black Hundreds member, defender of autocracy Vladimir Mitrofanovich Purishkevich delivered from the rostrum of the State Duma, for the first time, a speech of accusation not only against Rasputin but also against the empress.

Excerpts from this speech were delivered to Nicholas at Headquarters:

“The evil comes from those dark forces and influences that cause people to rise to high posts who cannot occupy them... From the influences headed by Grishka Rasputin... The tsar’s ministers are marionettes, whose strings have been taken into the hands of Rasputin and Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna – the evil genius of Russia and of the Tsar, alien to the country and to the people.”

Rasputin sent his own telegram to Headquarters: “Purishkevich railed insolently, but not painfully. My peace remains undisturbed.”

On 20 November, Purishkevich received a telephone call from the young Prince Felix Yusupov. He asked for a meeting to clarify certain questions connected with Rasputin’s role at court. He said it was inconvenient to talk about this over the telephone.

That same day Felix Yusupov sent his wife Irina, daughter of Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, a letter in plain text: “My dear darling. I am terribly busy working out a plan to destroy R. Everything will take place in the middle of December. I kiss you and the baby strongly. Felix.”

Irina replied to Felix: “The main swinishness is that you decided to do everything without me. In my opinion, that is monstrous swinishness. I can see you are wildly enthusiastic and ready to climb the walls. I kiss you tight. Irina.”

Felix realised that he had not been mistaken in his choice of wife. He was counting on her participation. Rasputin had long wanted to meet the young Princess Yusupova. Irina was supposed to play the role of bait in the plot. The entire plan of the murder was to be carried out by Felix, Purishkevich, Lieutenant of the Preobrazhensky Regiment Sukhotin, and Grand Duke Dmitry Pavlovich. Then Purishkevich brought in the Red Cross doctor Lazavert, whom he trusted completely.

It was decided to lure Rasputin to the Yusupov palace on the Moika and finish him off by poisoning.

On the evening of 16 December, everything was ready for the plan’s execution. The basement in which they decided to receive Rasputin had changed beyond recognition. Carpets, curtains, Chinese vases in niches, massive old Yusupov furniture, a mass of pretty trinkets. On a sideboard that had been brought in – a crystal crucifix, Italian work of the sixteenth century. In the middle of the room stood the table at which Rasputin was supposed to drink his last glass of wine.

The conspirators gathered at eleven in the evening. For the poison, cakes with pink cream were chosen. Doctor Lazavert put on rubber gloves, took crystals of potassium cyanide, and ground them into powder. Then he lifted the top of each cake and sprinkled the lower part with the poison. The dose was enough to kill several people. They decided to put the poison into the glass at the last moment, so it would not lose its strength. When they had finished with the cakes, Doctor Lazavert changed into a chauffeur's outfit, Prince Yusupov put on his fur coat, they got into the car, and drove out to get Rasputin.