

# Grigory Rasputin

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So much has been written and said about Grigory Rasputin! This, for example, is what famed rock musician Ozzy Osborne, who dedicated a musical to Rasputin, said about him:



“Rasputin lived the rock’n’roll lifestyle before it was invented. He drank heavily, was a womanizer, disregarded personal hygiene and was linked with witchcraft and the occult. He was also famously hard to kill – his assassins had to poison, shoot and drown him.”

And here are the lines from the famous Boney M hit “Rasputin”:

“Ra - Ra - Rasputin, lover of the Russian queen,

There was a cat that really was gone.

Ra – Ra – Rasputin, Russia’s greatest love machine,

It was a shame how he carried on.”

Remember that refrain?

For most people around the world who have ever heard his name that is precisely the sort of image of Rasputin they have conceived.

However, nothing could be farther from the truth. Russian writer and publicist Vladimir Tsvetkov says:

“Grigory Yefimovich Rasputin is a unique, quite remarkable historical character, renowned all over the world. Of course, it’s highly unorthodox that some common Siberian peasant came to be so famous, as to make him a household name in any corner of the globe. Rasputin’s name can be found in all encyclopedias and reference books of the world, albeit he found his way there thoroughly demonized, as a negative character. However, in effect he was quite a different sort of person.”

So what was he like? We can find, perhaps, the most detailed answer in one of the best books, to date, about Grigory Rasputin, which is entitled “A Life for the Czar”. This excellently documented book bears the subtitle “The truth about Grigory Rasputin”. We shall be referring, in part, to the historical documents from that book. Its author is one of the most conscientious of contemporary Russian historians – Oleg Platonov. This is how he explains in the book the reason for his heightened interest in the personality of Grigory Rasputin:

“I was compelled to take up the history of Grigory Rasputin after my many-year stint studying the historical persona of last Russian Emperor and his family. The closer I became acquainted with documents, diaries, correspondence of this family, the more puzzled I grew over the imposed on us for decades image of Rasputin as the spawn of evil incarnate – a man totally without morals and utterly selfish.

This despicable portrayal was at odds with the lofty spirituality, morality, harmony and accord that characterized the family of the last Russian Czar. From the moment of the family’s acquaintance with Rasputin (in October 1905 ) right up until their tragic death, the Czar, his spouse and their children implicitly loved Rasputin and had complete faith in him as a man of God.”

They believed in him for they themselves were profoundly religious Orthodox Christians and could sense God's Grace emanating from Grigory Rasputin. This grace was the result of many years of devotional labors and feats in praise of God.

Grigory Yefimovich Rasputin was born in Western Siberia, in the village of Pokrovskoye, on January 23rd, 1869. He was the fifth child in the family of illiterate peasants Yakov and Vasilisa Rasputin.

One encounters this surname in Siberia quite often. It takes its origins from the word "rasputije", which in translation from Russian means "crossroads". People who lived on the crossroads, often received the nickname "rasputins", which later on evolved into the surname Rasputin.

Grigory Rasputin's native village Pokrovskoye is situated on the banks of the river Tura. The old Siberian tract connecting the heart of Russia's central regions with the most distant Siberian passed right through this place. The region between the towns of Tobolsk and Tyumen was the site of brisk cultural and economic life, crisscrossed by trade routes. Quite possibly this explains why a certain type of energetic and hyper-active people evolved in that area.

In regional studies of the mid-19th century people populating the area between the towns of Tobolsk and Tyumen were thus described:

"This was the handsomest tribe in all of Siberia... of sturdy build, with white skin, dark, eloquent eyes, well-shaped and agile frame, ruddy complexion, lively character, sprucely dressed, hard-working, quick-witted and deft."

Alas, Grigory Rasputin was an exception to the rule. Short of stature, he could boast neither robust health nor physical strength.

He grew up the only child in the family, since his three elder sisters and a brother all died. From an early age he was forced to work hard, helping his parents. He tended to the livestock, helped his father transport people and cargos, worked the land, caught fish, which was plentiful in the river Tura and the surrounding lakes.

In a word, he did what all the villagers did, and there was nothing particular to set him apart, besides his fragility of health. This latter was something traditionally scorned in peasant families, seen as a sign of impairment and invariably eliciting sneers and mockery. Subsequently, in his memoirs entitled "Life of a seasoned pilgrim" in May 1907 Grigory Rasputin wrote:

"A great many hardships befell me: whenever an error came about, I was always found at fault, even though I was blameless. I had to put up with a lot of jeering in the artels..."

All my life from the age of 15 to 28 was a long succession of illnesses. Every spring I spent no less than 40 sleepless nights. Sleep was like unconsciousness. Medicine was hopeless in my case. It was excruciatingly hard to endure all this, yet the work had to be done. Still, somehow the Lord helped me get through it all, and I never hired anyone to do my work. While St.Simeon of Verkhoturye treated my insomnia and lent me the strength to embrace the Truth."

St.Simeon of Verkhoturye, mentioned by Grigory Rasputin, lived and died in the first half of the 17th century. He is regarded as the Patron Saint of the Urals. Rasputin visited the monastery where the Saint's holy relics are kept and prayed to St.Simeon. As we determine from Rasputin's memoirs, he received the Saint's cure from the many-year long insomnia that had plagued him.

As any true Christian knows, "the deeper the sorrow, the closer is God". Thus, Grigory Rasputin, exhausted by sorrows, judging by his memoirs, often turned his thoughts to God and reflected on the means of salvation in this world.

In the early 1890's, already a married man, he suddenly feels the need for pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage was typical for Orthodox Russians. Both the rich and the poor set off on pilgrimages. The latter would set off for the holy places barefoot, with no more than a knapsack and staff in hand. So they walked from village to village, from town to town, covering hundreds and even thousands of kilometers. When they needed shelter for the night, they simply rapped on the window of any house, and they could be sure of a warm greeting, food and drink and a bed for the night. It was believed that a pilgrim was a man of God, and by helping him you were doing the Lord's will.



Historian Oleg Platonov in his book about Grigory Rasputin writes:

“There were those among the peasant folk who went on such pilgrimages not just once or twice in their lifetime, but on a regular basis – almost annually. They had their own homesteads, livestock, and upon returning home they continued as before. Grigory Rasputin, in his own words, was just such a regular, experienced pilgrim. He never abandoned his farmstead until his death, and wherever he might be, he always returned to his native village Pokrovskoye for the spring sowing and the autumn harvest.”

According to the historian, one could recognize true pilgrims by their outward appearance. They had a serious, severe air about them, a penetrating glance, their clothes were of rough, peasant-woven cloth, often with a rope round their waist instead of a belt. From underneath the clothes one might often catch a glimpse of a hair shirt or even chains. They carried a staff in their hand. If it was summer they walked about barefoot. That is about how Grigory Rasputin looked during his pilgrimages to the Holy sites, chiefly to the monasteries. It's a known fact he wore chains for three years.

In his memoirs Grigory Rasputin relates:

“I covered some 40 – 50 kilometers a day, in wind, storm and rain. I rarely ate. I carried no money on me – I never did have any. I could rely on God to send me the basic things I needed – people would give me shelter and food.

On more than one occasion I walked thus from Kiev to Tobolsk, without washing or changing my undergarments for half a year – doing this to test myself and gain such experience... Often I walked for three days running on the most meager of fare. On hot days I took a fast of not drinking, even though I worked with the day-laborers. I worked, and would take breaks to go into the bushes and pray. On many occasions as I did the ploughing, I would take a break to pray...

In pilgrimage I was called upon to endure diverse hardships; on occasion I had to flee from murderers pursuing me. All by the Grace of God!.. Wolves surrounded me more than once, yet fled instead of attacking. Robbers waylaid me on numerous occasions, and to them I'd say: “This is not mine, but the Lord's. Take it: I give it to you with joy...”

They would stop to ponder that, and say: “Where do you come from? Who are you?”

“I am a man,” I replied, “a brother to you, and devoted to God.”

Pilgrimage was not a self-purpose for Rasputin, nor a means of escape from life, it rather helped imbue common day life with spiritual content, endowing it with a loftier meaning.

Grigory Rasputin did not approve of pilgrims who had made a profession of their pilgrimage, and who shirked work. His memoirs contain the following words:

“Pilgrimage is needed only from time to time... I have seen many a pilgrim who wander thus for years. And they reached a point when, poor souls, the enemy of mankind sowed heresy in them, and, most importantly – disapprobation: they grew negligent and idle. There few of them, as far as I could see, who walked the road of Christ.

We, pilgrims, all find it hard to fight the enemy of humankind. Evil is born of exhaustion. That is

why there is no need for pilgrimage to continue for years. And if you should decide to do this, you must have great forbearance and spiritual resolve, be deaf and at times dumb – in other words, humble and meek, and even more than that – a simpleton. If you possess these qualities, then pilgrimage is an inexhaustible source of life-giving water for you...

A pilgrim needs to receive communion at each monastery, since he has great sorrows and exigencies. Communion gives joy to a pilgrim as the month of May brings joy to the earth.”

Grigory Rasputin is amazingly sincere in his memoirs. He fears not to communicate his weaknesses. Thus, he writes that occasionally he is gripped by “wicked designs, indescribable exhaustion, intolerable hunger and an overwhelming desire for intoxicating drink”. Grigory was aware that these were all temptations, and tried to fight them, difficult as it was. Thus, when after a long period of wandering he came to a village, he was swamped by a desire to gorge himself on food and drink. However, he fought this urge, and instead went to church, allowing himself to dwell on food and drink only after church service. Rasputin admitted that it took him “whole years” to fight sinful designs and weaknesses.

Grigory Rasputin’s longest pilgrimage was to the monasteries of Kiev. It was over 3000 kilometres from his native village of Pokrovskoye to Kiev!.. He covered some part of this distance on a steamboat, sometimes peasants gave him a lift in their carts, but a major part of the journey he covered on foot. He ate whatever peasants offered him, sometimes earning his food and travel expenses by doing day-labour. He took shelter for the night in sheds and haylofts, or out in the open fields on a hillock.

When after many weeks of journey Grigory saw the golden domes of Kiev’s holy sites, he fell to his knees and wept with joy. All through his life he retained his fascination for Kiev and the celebrated Kiev-Pechora Lavra.

Returning from his travels, Grigory resumed his peasant labors, never forgetting about prayers, either. In his stables he dug out a small cave and for eight years, in between church services he would go there to pray. He recalled:

“I would go off there and it was such a welcome retreat. In a confined setting one’s thoughts do not ramble. At times I would spend nights on end there.”

In the words of historian Oleg Platonov: “In the early 1900’s Grigory Rasputin was quite obviously a spiritually mature person, a “seasoned pilgrim”, as he referred to himself. Fifteen years of wayfaring and spiritual searching had transformed him into a man endowed with vast experience, well-versed in the vagaries of the human spirit, capable of extending useful advice. This could not but draw people to him. To begin with a small number of peasants from neighboring villages came to seek his advice, while later word of the seasoned pilgrim spread farther and farther. People began coming to him from afar. He invariably received them all, put them up at his home for the night, heard them out and gave advice.”

Prior to his pilgrimage Grigory Rasputin was as illiterate as all his village folk, since there was no school in Pokrovskoye. However, during his pilgrimage the monks taught Rasputin to read and write, and thus he was given a much-coveted opportunity to read spiritual literature. He knew the Holy Writ almost by heart.

Historian Oleg Platonov noted, “Later, when numerous ill-wishers began searching for the criminal content in this period of Rasputin’s life, they were unable to find it, and resorted to sheer fabrication and lies.”

During his fifteen years of pilgrimage Grigory Rasputin visited a great many monasteries. However, particularly important for him was his visit to the St.Nicholas Monastery in Verkhoturys, in the Urals. It was there he had a most pivotal encounter...

Well-known Russian historian Alexander Bohanov, author of books about the family of the last Russian Emperor Czar Nicolas II and about Grigory Rasputin, says, “Grigory Rasputin had a



spiritual mentor, a fact that for some reason is deliberately overlooked. This was a highly venerated Elder Makarius from St. Nicholas Monastery in Verkhoturyskoye.”

Elder Makarius had the reputation of a pious ascetic. He was a hermit who wore heavy chains under his robe. His first encounter with the Elder had a great impact on Grigory Rasputin. The author of the biography of Father Makarius believes that Rasputin’s acquaintance with the Royal family came about through the prayers of Elder Makarius, who discerned the true soul of this man and apprehended its foreordination.

The fact that he had an experienced spiritual Father, of course, helped Grigory Rasputin surmount obstacles of a spiritual nature, which invariably cross the path of any true Christian, striving for spiritual excellence.

So what were Grigory Rasputin’s spiritual ideals?

Historian Oleg Platonov notes:

“Neither Grigory Rasputin’s lifestyle, nor his convictions were at all singular. Quite the opposite, they fully conformed to the traditional ideals and views espoused by the Russian people, and embodied in the notion of Holy Rus”.

‘Holy Rus’ is a most capacious concept. Many a Russian philosopher puzzled over deciphering it. Yet, none of them had any success in coming up with a cut-and-dry definition for it. Nonetheless, we shall attempt to give a concise and very approximate definition of it.

Holy Rus – stands for Orthodox believers, with God’s help united by one common spiritual purpose – to organize their life in line with the Gospel and attain the Heavenly Kingdom. For people of Holy Rus spiritual and moral values always prevail over material values, while their objective in life is not personal gain and consumption, but the transformation of the soul. For people of Holy Rus their main incentive in life is love for God and for the people. Love, in their understanding, is at the core of the sum of things, and is a manifestation of God Himself. That is also how Grigory Rasputin perceived love, and wrote:

“Love is a gold coin that no one can determine the exact value of. It is more precious than anything created by God Himself... However, few comprehend it. While he who gains an insight into the truly priceless value of the “golden coin of love” – that person is so wise, he could teach Solomon himself... We all discourse about love, but tend to have heard more of it than actually experienced it personally. We ourselves are at a great distance from Love...

If you love, you shall never kill anyone. All commandments are submissive to love; it conceals all the wisdom...

No one ever receives love for naught. It shall not come to one who lives a life of repose and plenty. In fact, love tends to seek out the outcasts, who have suffered much, in other words, it chiefly comes to people of vast experience. It is with them one ought to converse about love, while one who has no experience can only distort its true notion.”

And where there is true love, there can be no room for greed. Here are the words of Grigory Rasputin himself:

“If you do not seek selfish gain for yourself, but instead seek to console people and embrace the

Lord with all your spirit, the demons shall shy away from you, and the sick shall be cured. You only need to do everything without filthy lucre. While if you preoccupy yourself with filling your belly, gaining fame and catering to your insatiable greed of money, you shall not receive the rewards neither here on earth, nor in the Heavenly Kingdom ...you shall be like a living corpse, as the Gospel says.”

Grigory Rasputin referred to hard work as the highest of virtues, and wrote this in his memoirs:

“The Czar himself lives off the hard work of a peasant laborer. All birds feed off the peasant’s work, even a mouse – it, too, forages for food thanks to the peasant.

Truly great is the peasant as he stands before the Lord. A peasant has no notion of balls, and rarely attends the theatre. Yet, he remembers that the Lord worked hard, and commanded us to do likewise. The peasant is God’s laborer! For him it’s the plow instead of entertainments, a drab peasant’s overcoat instead of splendid finery, and a tired horse instead of a dashing troika.

A peasant, even here on earth, is with Christ, while there, in the other world, Heaven long awaits him...”

In the words of historian Oleg Platonov, “the system of values of Holy Rus was crowned and harmonized by the notion of Czar’s rule. The image of the Czar personified the Homeland”. In Grigory Rasputin’s opinion, true ‘popular rule’ was embodied in the notion of Czarist rule. The Czar, he believed, was the more sublime expression of popular will, conscience and reason.

“...you must love your Motherland and your Czar - the Lord’s Anointed,” Grigory Rasputin wrote.

Historian Oleg Platonov poses the question: could the notions of Holy Rus, professed by Grigory Rasputin, be appreciated and embraced by a greater part of the educated society of his time? And he answers: “Of course, not”. A greater part of the Russian intellectual elite, oblivious of God and national traditions, looked upon the ideals of Holy Rus as something quite alien to them, a symptom of backwardness and retrograde. While custodians of the ideals of Holy Rus were looked down upon in those circles as obscurants.

The historian believes, “The rejection of the traditional ideals of Holy Rus by a greater part of Russian intelligentsia – therein lay the principle tragedy of Russian society of the early 20th century. That explains why Grigory Rasputin as a spiritual and public figure was historically doomed.”

As another well-known Russian historian Alexander Bohanov said in a television programme, “Rasputin is a sign, a symbol of a great dying Orthodox empire.”

However, we are somewhat running ahead of ourselves... We have yet to dwell on what inspired a Siberian peasant Grigory Rasputin to set off to the capital of the Russian Empire, St.Petersburg.

Deep in his heart Grigory Rasputin had long nurtured the hope of building in his native village a new church. But he lacked the money for this. So then in 1904 with no more than 1 rouble in his pocket he set off for St.Petersburg.

All along the way he economized, practically starving... Upon arriving in the capital, tired and hungry, he immediately went to the St. Alexander Nevsky Monastery to pay homage to the holy relics of the Saints there. He spent his last 5 kopeks to order a prayer service and buy a candle. After that, his spirits revived, he set off to an audience with the rector of the Theological academy Bishop Sergius Stragorodsky, who, incidentally, decades later in 1942, became Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. Alas, not only did the doorkeeper deny him access, but even dealt him a blow or two. So then Grigory fell to his knees before the man and explained the purpose





of his visit. The doorman took pity on him and announced his arrival to His Grace Bishop Sergius. As for what followed, this is how Grigory Rasputin recalled it:

“The Bishop summoned me, and then we began conversing. Telling me about St.Petersburg, he acquainted me with the streets, etc. Then he acquainted me with the highly-placed. And finally, it came to the Czar himself, who conferred a great favor upon me, giving me the money for building a church.”

At this point we need to make a clarification. From the moment when Rasputin had his first audience with the Bishop, a whole year passed before he was able to make the acquaintance of the Royal family. It was in the span of that year that Bishop Sergius acquainted Rasputin with diverse hierarchs in St.Petersburg.

While in Petersburg, Rasputin also made the acquaintance of John of Kronstadt, the future Saint, whom he greatly revered and considered an outstanding pastor. In his turn, John of Kronstadt looked upon Rasputin as a remarkable pilgrim, whose prayer was pleasing to God.

Simultaneously, out of caution, discreet inquiries were made about Rasputin, to the point that a letter of inquiry was dispatched to Grigory’s home place, yet no one had anything disparaging to say about him.

It was only after these inquiries had been made that Rasputin was presented to the Royal family.

Those were the times of trouble, revolution was brewing in Russia. In the words of historian Alexander Bohanov, “Czar Nicholas II ascended the throne on the eve of a volcanic eruption. Russia was that volcano – ready to erupt at any moment...”

Hardly surprising that at that troubled time, when revolutionaries were growing ever more restless, bombs were exploding and shots were fired here and there, people, more than ever before, needed spiritual guidance and support.

Historian Oleg Platonov wrote:

“In 1904-1906 Grigory made the acquaintance of dozens of representatives of the Russian elite society. The doors to high society salons were thrown open before him: he was summoned for prayers, to give spiritual advice or elucidate some religious issue. Grigory knew the Holy Writ practically by heart and was able to expound it most admirably. As a rule, he never rejected anyone’s summons.

For many of the high and mighty, “after the mire of intrigue and evil that was inevitably part of the court atmosphere” conversations with Grigory Rasputin were a welcome respite. Even the learned men and the clergy found him interesting.”

According to Oleg Platonov, for the Royal family Grigory Rasputin became an “embodiment of hopes and prayers”. Their encounters with him were not all that frequent, yet, notes the historian, “...since they were conducted tacitly, the court looked upon them as events of great significance – and something that became the talk of St.Petersburg the following day...”

When meeting with the Czar, Grigory kissed each member of the Royal family, and then proceeded with the unhurried conversations. Rasputin spoke of the life and needs of Siberian peasants, of the holy places he’d been to. He was listened to with attention, and never interrupted... The Czar and his spouse shared their cares and troubles with Grigory, first and foremost those connected with the weak constitution of their son Aleksey, heir to the throne, who suffered from hemophilia. As a rule, if he wasn’t too sick, the Czarevich was also present during these conversations.

Grigory Rasputin was the only person capable of helping the heir to the throne: the terrible illness that the best doctors were powerless to



cure, receded upon Rasputin's intervention. There were numerous testimonies of the truth of this, even on the part of those who personally loathed Rasputin."

Grigory formed a very confidential and touching relationship with the Royal offspring. For the latter their encounters with Grigory were a true joy, as borne out by the following letter written by Princess Olga to the Emperor (dated June 25th 1909):



"My dear, darling father! What glorious weather it is today! It's so warm... Little Anastasia and Aleksey are running barefoot. We are expecting Grigory this evening. What a joy! We are so anxious to see him," wrote the Princess.

As historian Oleg Platonov remarks, with each passing year Rasputin's relationship with the Royal family grew increasingly friendly and confidential. Grigory would leave his native village Pokrovskoye immediately the instant they summoned him. With the occasional rare exception, Grigory never claimed money from the Royal family for his private needs. At times he did receive their donations for charity purposes, as when he took 5 thousand roubles from them to build a church in the village of Pokrovskoye.

At the express desire of the Czar's family Rasputin was given a new surname by Royal decree – "Novykh" – from the Russian word "novyj" meaning "new". This word was one of the first pronounced by the heir to the throne upon first seeing Grigory. "Novyj! Novyj!" exclaimed the child. And this inspired the idea of conferring a new surname upon Rasputin...

According to historian Oleg Platonov, "all those years Rasputin led a strenuous life: coming over from the village of Pokrovskoye to St.Petersburg he was simply inundated with invitations and summons. Besides, he was constantly receiving people at the house where he usually lodged."

Grigory Rasputin was perfectly able to hold his own in high society. His demeanor exuded both confidence and independence. He was never reticent in speaking the blatant truth, a fact that wasn't to everyone's liking, no doubt. Historian Oleg Platonov noted, "Incidentally, Rasputin displayed such independence even prior to his acquaintance with the Royal family. Acting on impulse, he could think twice about meeting with some Count or Prince, and instead walk on foot to the town outskirts to speak to some tradesman or peasant. The aforementioned Counts and Princes couldn't but feel insulted by this 'common peasant's' independent ways, and many of them harbored a grudge against Rasputin.

By and by, rumors began to circulate about Rasputin. At the centre of these falsehoods was Nicholas II's Uncle – Grand Prince Nikolai Nikolayevich. The Grand Prince had suffered a fiasco in his attempts to use Rasputin as an instrument to manipulate the Royal family. The altercation between the Grand Prince and Grigory evolved into outright enmity."

It was from the Palatial residence of the Grand Prince that the first rumors about Rasputin's wanton and dissipated behavior started spreading...

After the falling-out with the Emperor's Uncle, Grand Prince Nikolai Nikolayevich and his entourage, Grigory Rasputin began to feel the pressure of ill-disposed towards him forces at work.

"It is hard to find salvation in secular life, all the more so in our times. All watch keenly over the one seeking salvation, as though he were some brigand, and all seek to ridicule him," Grigory Rasputin said.

In order to understand Rasputin, you need to bear in mind that at the start of the 20th century a critical, or even openly hostile attitude towards Orthodoxy was deemed a sign of 'good form' among a greater part of Russia's educated society. There were numerous instances of downright persecution of the clergy on the part of atheist-minded intelligentsia. Even great Russian saint



St. John of Kronstadt, who already in his lifetime was famed for miracle-making curing of the sick and prophesying, was hounded and persecuted. He was ascribed the most vile deeds: covetousness, greed, depravity, conniving with sects. Fabrication upon fabrication was piled up...

One unwittingly recalls the Minister for propaganda of Hitler's Germany Josef Goebbels, who maintained, "The more brazen the lie, the faster it spreads." "A lie has to be monstrous for others to believe it."

So why do people believe a monstrous lie?.. Psychologist Victor Sheinov in his literary effort *Tacit Manipulation of Man* notes:

"A monstrous lie cannot leave man indifferent. One invariably wants to share with others the sentiments that it arouses. "Can it really be true?!" reflects the person, and, although they might have doubts about the credibility of what they'd just heard, they nonetheless rush to pass the fabrication on to others down the line. In no time they are hearing the same lie from the mouths of other people, and quite soon one grows accustomed to the information that initially seemed monstrous and impossible. What operates here is also the effect of conformism: if everyone around is spreading this information, there must be some truth in it!"

Historian Alexander Bohanov agrees with this:

"People all around were spreading different lies and slander about Rasputin. It was hard not to believe them. While very often the truth (as we, historians, are well aware) isn't on the side of a majority."

And so, in a most artless and blatant manner Grigory Rasputin was maligned. In his homeland, in Siberia, they even trumped up a case where he was accused of abetting sects, preaching principles harmful to Orthodoxy. To a zealous Christian such as he, this accusation seemed absurd. Yet, he understood that such actions concealed the devil's intrigues, and reflected, as a true Christian:

"The Czar was most gracious, after listening to me he granted me money for building a church. I went home with great joy and addressed the clergy with the proposal to erect a new church. However, the enemy of mankind, the hater of all good deeds,... enticed everyone from the path of virtue. I am personally aiding the construction of a church, yet they seek to accuse me of vile heresy, and at times spew forth such nonsense, it's disgusting to speak of it. That is how strong the enemy is in digging a pit for man, and annihilating all good deeds. They accuse me as an advocate of the most base and vile sects, and the hierarch revolts."

Historian Oleg Platonov, upon studying numerous archival documents having bearing on the fate of Grigory Rasputin, wrote:

"I have before me the Tobolsk consistory proceedings, launched against peasant of the village of Porkovskoye, Tiumen county, Grigory Yefimovitch "Rasputin-the New", aged 42, for spreading false teachings... and forming a society of advocates of his false teachings. The case was opened on September 6th, 1907, closed and sanctioned by Tobolsk Bishop Antonius on May 7th, 1908..."

The case was fabricated so clumsily that it 'works' only against its own authors. No wonder the documents were never published. Nothing but allusions were made to its existence."

The historian mentions a very important detail – an ill-concealed animosity of the local clergy towards Rasputin. This is how he explains the reason for such ill-will:

"Rasputin's conflict with a certain part of the clergy had taken shape some time before, and was of a most principled nature. Rasputin believed that once someone had become a man of the church, that person had to give all of his soul to serving God. Rasputin vehemently renounced a purely mechanical, formal service of God. So exacting an attitude couldn't but set against him those clergymen, who tended to regard the Church as no more than an organization providing them with employment and a steady income."

Rasputin said, "...there is no spirit in church, yet an abundance of letters... And when Father John

of Kronstadt conducted the service, the spirit was present in the church, and thousands flocked to him for spiritual nourishment.

There are few such clergymen today... However, it is not to them that we go, but to God's Church!..

And still, one must honor the clergy! After all, clergymen pray for us”

Grigory Rasputin displayed a genuine Christian attitude towards those who vilified him. Thus, in his diary we find the following entry:

“...intrigues have been around for ever, it is not in man's power to fight them, but in the power of the Lord.”

Historian Oleg Platonov was intrigued by the fact of a well thought-out slander campaign against Rasputin. It was launched in 1910, as if at the wave of a wand by some unseen manipulator - simultaneously and in most of the press.

“It took me a while to get my bearings and grasp the mechanism of that smear campaign – where the clues led to, who benefited from the campaign and who stood at the root of it,” Historian Oleg Platonov writes.

A study of archive information and references enabled me to compile a list of perpetrators and the most active participants of that campaign...”

There were many representatives of the powers-that-be on that list. Oleg Platonov says that for a long time he failed to see what different people who participated in this smear campaign against Rasputin could possibly have in common... However, once, he writes:

“...I came across the book by Nina Berberova *People and Lodges* (Russian masons of the 20th century), based on archive materials and written testimonies of members of the Masonic organization. From the materials presented in the book, it follows that all people down on my list were masons.”

To understand just why the masons conceived this campaign of slander against Rasputin, you need to have some knowledge of the nature of their organization and its activity.

In Russia the first Masonic lodges emerged in the 18th century as branches of the West European ones, reflecting their political interests. The newfound Russian masons wished to west-Europeanize Russia.

“The stronghold of the Masonic infiltration in Russia was the part of the ruling class and educated society that was farthest from the popular masses, and as such knew next to nothing of the national traditions, roots and ideals, and even despised them,” Oleg Platonov writes. “This predetermined the anti-Russian character the Masonic movement adopted in this country, a fact that has hardly changed to this day.

Hiding behind slogans such as “Freedom, equality, fraternity”, “For the enlightenment and happiness of Mankind”, leaders of these Masonic lodges spun intrigues against representatives of state power and the Russian Church. The leaders of Masonic lodges never revealed their ultimate goals to rank-and-file members, since their organization was strictly clandestine. That's why sometimes it happened that unsuspecting honest folk were deceitfully tricked into joining the organization.

Internal relations within the Masonic lodges were founded on total subordination of lower ranking members to those at the top. While standing at the helm would be an individual with dictatorial authority.”

In the words of Oleg Platonov, Russian masons received their instructions from abroad. Their goal was to overthrow and assassinate the Russian Czar, and to destroy Orthodoxy.

In 1822 the existence of secret organizations in Russia was prohibited by law. However, in the

early 20th century Masonic emissaries from France once again established their lodges in Russia, recruiting an array of prominent political figures and writers. As for political identity, the masons were predominantly liberals. By 1908 there were no less than 18 Masonic lodges in Russia. Freemasonry had infiltrated all spheres of Russian life. It was preparing a revolution, aimed against the throne and the altars.

Not long before the organized slander campaign against Rasputin, in 1910, at a Freemason congress in Brussels they discussed the idea of undermining Russian Imperial power by discrediting Grigory Rasputin as a person in close proximity to the Czar and his family. And so the well-planned persecution began.

Rasputin look-alikes were used as a trump-card in this smear-campaign. Russian writer and publicist Vladimir Tsvetkov says that some question the existence of these Rasputin look-alikes, while others disclaim this outright, saying, "Show us these look-alikes. Prove they existed."

Nonetheless, there is proof of the existence of Rasputin look-alikes: in 1912 thirteen Rasputin 'clones' assembled in the town of Kharkov, quite evidently for the purpose of coordinating their actions. This fact was recorded by the Security department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Imperial Russia."

Made up to look like Rasputin, the hired actors organized drunken brawls in restaurants and taverns, called on prostitutes, bragged about their proximity to the Royal family, etc. At the orders of the Czar, these instances were investigated by reliable sources and never substantiated, yet both Rasputin himself and the Royal family suffered at the hands of this smear-campaign. Historian Oleg Platonov writes:

"One shouldn't think nothing was done to protect Rasputin from this vile slander. Attempts were made, repeatedly, yet they were brought to naught by the overwhelming torrent of leftist gutter press."

Member of the State Duma Vladimir Purishkevitch, on behalf of all who hated Czarist Russia, shouted from the Duma platform:

"While Rasputin lives, we cannot win!"

Several attempts were made on Rasputin's life. During one such attempt he received a serious knife wound, and spent over a month in hospital. With God's help, he recovered.

However, Grigory knew he would be killed. To support this – here's an excerpt from recollections of a lady-in-waiting to the Russian Empress Alexandra - a certain Anna Vyubova: "In a mysterious manner foreseeing the future," Vyubova wrote, "in the last year of his life Rasputin said to the palace superintendent's aide, General Spiridovitch:

"Without a doubt they will kill me, dear fellow! And you, too, shall perish. They shall kill you all, and Father and Mother as well." (Rasputin referred to the Czar and Czarina as 'Father and Mother').

Grigory Yefimovitch said these words with such force that Spiridovitch, who until that moment had never been susceptible to mysticism, insisted that two other witnesses to this scene were gripped by poignant sorrow. It became evident to them that Rasputin had just made a prophesy..."

"A physical removal of Rasputin was a logical conclusion of his moral annihilation that by then had been achieved by the cleverly manipulated smear campaign," Historian Oleg Platonov writes. "The image of satan incarnate, built up by the mass media, had fully supplanted the image of the real Rasputin. Of every ten people nine clamored for his death."

Grigory Rasputin was killed diabolically, in villainous cowardice, on the night of December 17th, 1916. Member of the Masonic society "Mayak", the feeble milksop Prince Yusupov, a gay whom Rasputin treated for a nervous and mental disorder, lured him into his palace to allegedly look in on his wife, who was gravely ill. In actual fact Yusupov's wife was out of town at the time.

We shall omit the details of the villainous assassination, since so much has been written about it all over the world in different languages. We shall only give you the names of those who are considered the actual killers, as well as Felix Yusupov's accomplices:

Freemason Vasiliy Maklakov. Member of the State Duma.

Right-wing radical Vladimir Purishkevitch.

Member of the Romanov dynasty Grand Prince Dmitry Pavlovich.

Doctor Lizavert.

Lieutenant Suhotin.

What little we know pertaining to the actual murder, we know from the words of the killers themselves. Should we believe them?.. Besides, some of those investigating the murder of Rasputin believe the actual murderers are not those who admitted committing the crime, but someone else... While these are no more than stooges. And that the killing was a ritualistic one. In a word, there are a great many different opinions and versions. Quite obviously we shall never know the real truth about this murder.

Historian Vladimir Lavrov says, "We know too much, and at the same time, there is too much we do not know."

Grigory Rasputin was buried on December 21st in complete secrecy. The funeral was attended only by the Royal couple with their daughters, lady-in-waiting Anna Vyubova, and another two-three people. Rasputin's numerous venerators were not allowed to attend. The funeral service was conducted by the Father Confessor of the Royal family...

Rasputin's death was a serious blow to the Royal family. Particularly sickening was the ill-concealed rejoicing of many from the royal entourage...

The killers went unpunished. According to some information, Rasputin, in the knowledge of his impending death, had requested the Royal couple in the case of his murder to refrain from meting out punishment, and allow God to deliver His will.

Presently, many in Russia insist that Grigory Rasputin be canonized as a Holy Martyr, who watched guard over the Royal family and gave his life for them. Icons of Rasputin have already been painted... yet, the Russian Orthodox Church, as represented by its hierarchs, calls upon the believers to show caution and abandon the idea of canonizing Grigory Rasputin. It is true, says the Church, Rasputin was, indeed, slandered and vilified, yet this does not necessarily signify he was a Saint. One must not go to the extremes.

Well, we shall wait. If Grigory Rasputin is, indeed, a saint, he shall announce himself by performing miracles in his name.

In the meantime, an unusual event takes place traditionally in St.Petersburg's environs, in Tsarskoye Selo, the site of Rasputin's initial interment... *Every year, on December 17th, the day of Rasputin's murder, the willow there blossoms out for just 15 minutes.* Many have witnessed this miracle.

Author of a recently published book about Grigory Rasputin writer Aleksey Varlamov said in a television programme:

"I insist on having my own judgment of Rasputin as a far from casual or accidental historical persona, certainly not someone who can be overlooked and cast off from history. Perhaps this explains why we are constantly addressing his persona, moreover, at different stages in our own history."

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