**Nicholas II of Russia**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*"Nicholas II" redirects here. For other uses, see* [*Nicholas II (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_II_(disambiguation))*.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Nicholas II** | |
| Tsar Nicholas II, c. 1909 | |
| [**Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Russian_rulers) | |
| **Reign** | 1 November [[O.S.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style_and_New_Style_dates) 20 October] 1894 – 15 March 1917 |
| [**Coronation**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronation_of_the_Russian_monarch) | 26 May [[O.S.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style_and_New_Style_dates) 14 May] 1896 |
| **Predecessor** | [Alexander III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_III_of_Russia) |
| **Successor** | **Monarchy abolished** *De facto* : [Georgy Lvov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgy_Lvov) (chairman of the provisional government) |
|  | |
| **Spouse** | [Alix of Hesse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandra_Feodorovna_(Alix_of_Hesse)) |
| **Issue** | * [Grand Duchess Olga Nikolaevna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Olga_Nikolaevna_of_Russia) * [Grand Duchess Tatiana Nikolaevna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Tatiana_Nikolaevna_of_Russia) * [Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Maria_Nikolaevna_of_Russia_(1899%E2%80%931918)) * [Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Anastasia_Nikolaevna_of_Russia) * [Tsesarevich Alexei Nikolaevich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexei_Nikolaevich,_Tsarevich_of_Russia) |
| |  | | --- | | **Full name** | | Nikolai Alexandrovich Romanov | | |
| **House** | [House of Holstein-Gottorp-Romanov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Romanov) |
| **Father** | [Alexander III of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_III_of_Russia) |
| **Mother** | [Maria Feodorovna (Dagmar of Denmark)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Feodorovna_(Dagmar_of_Denmark)) |
| **Born** | 18 May [[O.S.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style_and_New_Style_dates) 6 May] 1868 [Alexander Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Palace), [Tsarskoye Selo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarskoye_Selo), [Saint Petersburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg), [Russian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire) |
| **Died** | 17 July 1918(1918-07-17) (aged 50) [Yekaterinburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yekaterinburg), [Russian SFSR](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic) |
| **Burial** | 17 July 1998 [Peter and Paul Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_and_Paul_Cathedral), [Saint Petersburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg), [Russian Federation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia) |
| **Religion** | [Russian Orthodox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church) |
| **Signature** |  |

**Nicholas II** ([Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language): Николай II, Николай Александрович Романов, [tr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization_of_Russian) *Nikolai II, Nikolai Alexandrovich Romanov* [[nʲɪkɐˈlaj ftɐˈroj, nʲɪkɐˈlaj əlʲɪkˈsandrəvʲɪtɕ rɐˈmanəf]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_Russian)) (18 May [[O.S.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style_and_New_Style_dates) 6 May] 1868 – 17 July 1918) was the last [Emperor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Russian_rulers) of [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire), [Grand Duke of Finland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_of_Finland), and titular [King of Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_of_Poland). His official short title was **Nicholas II, Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias**. Like other Russian Emperors he is commonly known by the monarchical title [**Tsar**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsar) (though Russia formally ended the [Tsardom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsardom_of_Russia) in 1721). He is known as *Saint Nicholas the* [*Passion-Bearer*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passion-Bearer) by the [Russian Orthodox Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church) and has been referred to as *Saint Nicholas the Martyr*.

Nicholas II ruled from 1 November 1894 until his forced [abdication](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdication) on 15 March 1917. His reign saw Imperial Russia go from being one of the foremost [great powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_powers) of the world to economic and military collapse. Enemies nicknamed him **Nicholas the Bloody** because of the [Khodynka Tragedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khodynka_Tragedy), the [anti-Semitic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Semitic) [pogroms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pogroms), [Bloody Sunday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloody_Sunday_(1905)), his violent suppression of the [1905 Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1905_Revolution), his execution of political opponents, and his pursuit of military campaigns on an unprecedented scale.

Under his rule, Russia was humiliatingly defeated in the [Russo-Japanese War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Japanese_War), which saw the almost total annihilation of the [Russian Baltic Fleet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Baltic_Fleet) at the [Battle of Tsushima](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tsushima). The [Anglo-Russian Entente](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Russian_Entente), designed to counter [German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire) attempts to gain influence in the Middle East, ended the [Great Game](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Game) between Russia and the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_of_Great_Britain_and_Ireland). As head of state, Nicholas approved the Russian mobilization of August 1914, which marked the beginning of Russia's involvement in the [First World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I), a war in which 3.3 million Russians were killed. The [Imperial Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Imperial_Army)'s severe losses and the High Command's incompetent handling of the war, along with other policies directed by Nicholas during his reign, are often cited as the leading causes of the fall of the [Romanov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanov) dynasty.

Nicholas II abdicated following the [February Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/February_Revolution) of 1917 during which he and his family were imprisoned first in the [Alexander Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Palace) at [Tsarskoye Selo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarskoye_Selo), then later in the [Governor's Mansion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governor%27s_Mansion_(Tobolsk,_Russia)) in [Tobolsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tobolsk), and finally at the [Ipatiev House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ipatiev_House) in [Yekaterinburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yekaterinburg). In the spring of 1918, Nicholas was handed over to the local Ural soviet by commissar Vasili Yakovlev who was then presented with a written receipt as Nicholas was formally handed over like a parcel. Nicholas II; his wife, [Alexandra Feodorovna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandra_Feodorovna_(Alix_of_Hesse)); his son, [Alexei Nikolaevich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexei_Nikolaevich); his four daughters, [Olga Nikolaevna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olga_Nikolaevna), [Tatiana Nikolaevna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tatiana_Nikolaevna), [Maria Nikolaevna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Nikolaevna) and [Anastasia Nikolaevna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anastasia_Nikolaevna); the family's medical doctor, [Evgeny Botkin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugene_Botkin); the Emperor's [footman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Footman), [Alexei Trupp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexei_Trupp); the Empress' [maidservant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maidservant), [Anna Demidova](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Demidova); and the family's cook, [Ivan Kharitonov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Kharitonov), were [executed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_the_Romanov_family) in the same room by the [Bolsheviks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik) on the night of 16/17 July 1918. This led to the [canonization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonisation) of Nicholas II, his wife the Empress Alexandra and their children as [*passion bearers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passion_bearer)*,* a category used to identify believers who, in imitation of Christ, endured suffering and death at the hands of political enemies, on 15 August 2000 by the [Russian Orthodox Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church) within Russia and, in 1981, as martyrs by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, located in New York City.

At the time of his death, his net worth was $900 million, which is the inflation adjusted equivalent to $300 billion in 2012 US dollars.

**Family background**



Tsar Nicholas II of Russia with his physically similar cousin, [King George V of the United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V) (right), in German military uniforms in Berlin before the war; 1913

Nicholas was the eldest son of [Emperor Alexander III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_III_of_Russia) and [Empress Maria Feodorovna of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Feodorovna_(Dagmar_of_Denmark)) (formerly Princess Dagmar of Denmark). He had five younger siblings: [Alexander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_Alexander_Alexandrovich_of_Russia) (1869–1870), [George](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_George_Alexandrovich_of_Russia) (1871–1899), [Xenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Xenia_Alexandrovna_of_Russia) (1875–1960), [Michael](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_Michael_Alexandrovich_of_Russia) (1878–1918) and [Olga](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Olga_Alexandrovna_of_Russia) (1882–1960). Nicholas often referred to his father nostalgically in letters after Alexander's death in 1894. He was also very close to his mother, as revealed in their published letters to each other.

His paternal grandparents were [Emperor Alexander II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_II_of_Russia) and [Empress Maria Alexandrovna of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Alexandrovna_of_Hesse-Darmstadt) (born Princess Marie of Hesse-Darmstadt). His maternal grandparents were [King Christian IX](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_IX_of_Denmark) and [Queen Louise of Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise_of_Hesse-Kassel). Nicholas was of primarily German, as well as [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russians) and [Danish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danes) descent.

Nicholas was related to several monarchs in Europe. His mother's siblings included Kings [Frederik VIII of Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederik_VIII_of_Denmark) and [George I of Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_I_of_Greece) as well as the United Kingdom's [Queen Alexandra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Alexandra) (consort of [King Edward VII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Edward_VII)). Nicholas, his wife, Alexandra, and [Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiser_Wilhelm_II_of_Germany) were all first cousins of [King George V of the United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V). Nicholas was also a first cousin of both [King Haakon VII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Haakon_VII) and [Queen Maud of Norway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Maud_of_Norway), as well as [King Constantine I of Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_I_of_Greece). While not first cousins, Nicholas and Kaiser Wilhelm II were second cousins, once removed, as each descended from [King Frederick William III of Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_William_III_of_Prussia), as well as third cousins, as they were both great-great-grandsons of [Tsar Paul I of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsar_Paul_I_of_Russia). Nicholas and his wife, Alexandra, were also second cousins, as both descended from [Louis II, Grand Duke of Hesse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_II,_Grand_Duke_of_Hesse) and his wife, [Wilhelmine of Baden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelmine_of_Baden).

In his childhood, Nicholas, his parents and siblings made annual visits to the Danish royal palaces of [Fredensborg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fredensborg_Palace) and [Bernstorff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernstorff_Palace) to visit his grandparents, the king and queen. The visits also served as family reunions, as his mother's siblings would also come from England, Germany and Greece with their respective families. It was there, in 1883, that he enjoyed a brief flirtation with one of his English first cousins, [Princess Victoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Victoria_of_the_United_Kingdom). In 1873, Nicholas also accompanied his parents and younger brother, two-year-old George, on a two-month, semi-official visit to England. In London, Nicholas and his family stayed at [Marlborough House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlborough_House), as guests of his "Uncle Bertie" and "Aunt Alix," the Prince and Princess of Wales, where he was spoiled by his uncle.

**Tsesarevich**



Tsarevich Nicholas in Japan (1891)

On 1 March 1881, following the assassination of his grandfather, Tsar Alexander II, Nicholas became [Tsesarevich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsesarevich) and his father became Tsar Alexander III. Nicholas and other family members witnessed Alexander II's death because they were staying at the [Winter Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_Palace) in [Saint Petersburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg) where he was brought after being attacked. For security reasons, the new tsar and his family relocated their primary residence to the [Gatchina Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gatchina_Palace) outside the city, only entering the capital for various ceremonial functions. On such occasions, Alexander III and his family occupied the nearby [Anichkov Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anichkov_Palace).

In 1884, Nicholas' coming of age ceremony was held at the Winter Palace, where he swore his loyalty to his father. Later that year, Nicholas's uncle, [Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_Sergei_Alexandrovich_of_Russia), married [Princess Elizabeth of Hesse-Darmstadt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Elizabeth_Fyodorovna), daughter of [Louis IV, Grand Duke of Hesse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_IV,_Grand_Duke_of_Hesse), and his late wife [Princess Alice of the United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Alice_of_the_United_Kingdom) (who had died in 1878) and a granddaughter of United Kingdom's [Queen Victoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Victoria). At the wedding in St. Petersburg, sixteen year-old Nicholas met with and developed feelings for the bride's youngest surviving sister, twelve year-old [Alix of Hesse-Darmstadt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alix_of_Hesse-Darmstadt). Those feelings of admiration blossomed into love following her visit to St. Petersburg five years later, in 1889. She had feelings for him, in turn, but was a devout Lutheran who refused to convert to Russian Orthodoxy, eventually writing to Nicholas in 1893, telling him that they could not marry.

Eventually, in 1890, Nicholas, along with his younger brother [Grand Duke George](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_George_Alexandrovich_of_Russia), and their cousin, [Prince George of Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_George_of_Greece_and_Denmark) set out on a [world tour](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_journey_of_Nicholas_II), although, Grand Duke George fell ill and was sent home partway through the trip. Nicholas visited Egypt, India, Singapore and Bangkok receiving honors as a distinguished guest in each. In April 1891, while traveling through the city of [Otsu, Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otsu,_Japan), Nicholas was the victim of an [assassination attempt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%8Ctsu_incident). The incident cut his trip short, yet he was present at the ceremonies in [Vladivostok](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladivostok) commemorating the beginning of work on the [Trans-Siberian Railway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Siberian_Railway). In 1893, Nicholas travelled to London on behalf of his parents to be present at the wedding of his cousin, [George, Duke of York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V), to [Mary of Teck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_of_Teck). Queen Victoria was struck by the similar appearance of the two cousins, and the appearances confused some at the wedding. During this time, Nicholas had an affair with St. Petersburg ballerina [Mathilde Kschessinska](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathilde_Kschessinska).

Despite being heir to the throne, however, Nicholas's father failed to prepare him to become tsar. He attended meetings of the [State Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Council_(Russian_Empire)), yet as his father was only in his forties, it was expected that it would be several years before Nicholas would take the throne. [Sergei Witte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Witte), Russia's finance minister, saw things differently and suggested that to the tsar that Nicholas be appointed to the Siberian Railway Committee. Alexander argued that Nicholas was not mature enough to take on serious responsibilities, to which Witte replied that if he was not introduced to state affairs Nicholas would never be ready to understand them. Alexander's assumptions about living long and having years to prepare Nicholas for becoming tsar would be proven wrong, as by 1894, Alexander III was suffering from ill health.

**Engagement, accession and marriage**

See also: [Wedding of Nicholas II and Alexandra Feodorovna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wedding_of_Nicholas_II_and_Alexandra_Feodorovna)

In April 1894, Nicholas joined his Uncle [Sergei](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_Sergei_Alexandrovich_of_Russia) and Aunt [Elizabeth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Elizabeth_Fyodorovna) on a journey to Coburg, Germany, for the wedding of Elisabeth's and Alix's brother, [Ernst Ludwig of Hesse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Ludwig_of_Hesse), to their cousin, [Victoria Melita of Edinburgh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Melita_of_Edinburgh). Other guests included [Queen Victoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Victoria), [Kaiser Wilhelm II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiser_Wilhelm_II), the [Empress Frederick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empress_Frederick) (Kaiser Wilhelm's mother and Queen Victoria's eldest daughter), Nicholas's uncle, the [Prince of Wales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_VII), and the bride's parents, [Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Alfred_of_the_United_Kingdom) and [Marie Alexandrovna, the Duchess of Edinburgh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Maria_Alexandrovna_of_Russia) (sister of Alexander III).

Shortly after arriving in Coburg, Nicholas proposed to Alix and she rejected his proposal on the grounds that she could not convert to Orthodoxy. After the wedding of Ernst and "Ducky", however, the Kaiser had a talk with Alix, telling her that it was her duty to marry Nicholas and convert, as did Elizabeth, who voluntarily converted to Orthodoxy in 1892. After Nicholas proposed to Alix a second time, the two became officially engaged on 8 April 1894. For their parts, Nicholas's parents were reluctant to give the engagement their blessing, as Alix had made poor impressions on her visits to Russia, and only gave their consent after it became clear that Tsar Alexander's health was deteriorating. Queen Victoria had also been initially opposed to the match, because, while she had no objections against Nicholas personally, she had a dislike of Russia.



Official engagement photograph of Nicholas II and Alexandra, April 1894

That summer, Nicholas travelled to England to visit both Alix and the Queen. The visit coincided with the birth of the Duke and Duchess of York's first child, the future [King Edward VIII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Edward_VIII). Along with being present at the christening, Nicholas and Alix were listed amongst the child's godparents. After several weeks in England, Nicholas returned home for the wedding of his sister, [Xenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Xenia_Alexandrovna_of_Russia), to a cousin, [Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_Alexander_Mikhailovich_of_Russia) ("Sandro").

By that autumn, Alexander III was dying. Upon learning that he would at least be able survive for a fortnight, the Tsar had Nicholas summon Alix to the imperial palace at [Livadia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Livadia_Palace). Alix arrived on 22 October and the Tsar insisted on receiving her in full uniform. Ten days later, Alexander III died at the age of forty-nine, leaving twenty-six year old Nicholas as Tsar of Russia. That evening, Nicholas was consecrated by his father's priest as Tsar Nicholas II and, the following day, Alix was received into the Russian Orthodox Church, taking the name Alexandra Feodorovna.

Nicholas may have felt unprepared for the duties of the crown, asking his cousin and brother-in-law, Grand Duke Alexander, "What is going to happen to me and all of Russia?" Perhaps under-prepared and unskilled, Nicholas was not altogether untrained for his duties as Tsar. Throughout his reign, Nicholas chose to maintain the conservative policies favored by his father. While Alexander had concentrated on the formulation of general policy, Nicholas devoted much more attention to the details of administration.

Leaving Livadia on 7 November, Tsar Alexander's funeral procession, which included Nicholas's paternal aunt, [Queen Olga of Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olga_Constantinovna_of_Russia), the [Prince](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_VII), and [Princess of Wales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandra_of_Denmark), arrived in Moscow. After laying in state in the Kremlin, the body of the Tsar was taken to St. Petersburg, where the funeral was held on 13 November.

Nicholas and Alix's wedding was originally scheduled for the spring of 1895, but it was moved forward at Nicholas' insistence. Staggering under the weight of his new office, he had no intention of allowing the one person who gave him confidence to leave his side. Instead, [Nicholas' wedding to Alix](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wedding_of_Nicholas_II_and_Alexandra_Feodorovna) the wedding took place on 26 November 1894, which was the birthday of the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna, and court mourning could be slightly relaxed. Alexandra wore the traditional dress of Romanov brides, and Nicholas a [hussar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hussar)'s uniform. Nicholas and Alexandra, each holding a lit candle, faced the palace priest; a few minutes before one in the afternoon, they were married.

**Reign**



Coronation by [Valentin Serov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentin_Serov)



Nicholas II's Imperial Monogram



Nicholas II of Russia as Tsesarevich in 1892

Despite a visit to the United Kingdom in 1893, where he observed the [House of Commons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Commons_of_the_United_Kingdom) in debate and seemed impressed by the machinery of democracy, as well as a similar positive appraisal of the US Congress on an official visit to the United States as Tsarevitch, Nicholas turned his back on any notion of giving away any power to elected representatives in Russia. Shortly after he came to the [throne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throne), a deputation of peasants and workers from various towns' local assemblies (zemstvos) came to the [Winter Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_Palace) proposing court reforms, such as the adoption of a constitutional monarchy, and reform that would improve the political and economic life of the peasantry.

Although the addresses they had sent in beforehand were couched in mild and loyal terms, Nicholas was angry and ignored advice from an Imperial Family Council by saying to them: "... it has come to my knowledge that during the last months there have been heard in some assemblies of the zemstvos the voices of those who have indulged in a senseless dream that the zemstvos be called upon to participate in the government of the country. I want everyone to know that I will devote all my strength to maintain, for the good of the whole nation, the principle of absolute [autocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autocracy), as firmly and as strongly as did my late lamented father."

On 26 May 1896, Nicholas' formal [coronation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronation) as Tsar was held in [Uspensky Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dormition_Cathedral,_Moscow) located within the [Kremlin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kremlin). In celebration on 27 May 1896, a large festival with food, free beer and souvenir cups was held in [Khodynka Field](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khodynka_Field) outside Moscow. Khodynka was chosen as the location as it was the only place near Moscow large enough to hold all of the Moscow citizens.

Khodynka was primarily used as a military training ground and the field was uneven with trenches. Before the food and drink were handed out, rumors spread that there wouldn't be enough for everyone. The crowd rushed to get their share and individuals were tripped and trampled, suffocating in the dirt of the field. Of the approximate 100,000 in attendance, it is estimated that 1,389 individuals died and roughly 1,300 were injured.

The Khodynka Tragedy was seen as a bad omen and Nicholas found gaining popular trust difficult from the beginning of his reign. The French ambassador's gala was planned for that night. The Tsar wanted to stay in his chambers and pray for the lives lost, but his uncles believed that his absence at the ball would strain relations with France, particularly the 1894 [Franco-Russian Alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco-Russian_Alliance). Nicholas attended the party. The mourning populace saw Nicholas as frivolous and uncaring.

During the autumn after the coronation, Nicholas and Alexandra made a tour of Europe. After making visits to the emperor and empress of Austria-Hungary, the Kaiser of Germany, and Nicholas' Danish grandparents and relatives, Nicholas and Alexandra took possession of their new yacht, the [*Standart*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_yacht_Standart)*,* which had been built in Denmark. From there, they made a journey to Scotland to spend some time with Queen Victoria at [Balmoral Castle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balmoral_Castle). While Alexandra enjoyed her reunion with her grandmother, Nicholas complained in a letter to his mother about being forced to go shooting with his uncle, the Prince of Wales, in bad weather, and was suffering from a bad toothache.

The first years of his reign saw little more than continuation and development of the policy pursued by [Alexander III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_III_of_Russia). Nicholas allotted money for the [All-Russia exhibition of 1896](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Russia_exhibition_1896). In 1897 restoration of [gold standard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_standard) by [Sergei Witte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Witte), Minister of Finance, completed the series of financial reforms, initiated fifteen years earlier. By 1902, the [Trans-Siberian Railway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Siberian_Railway) was nearly completed; this helped the Russians trade in the Far East but the railway still required huge amounts of work.

**Initiatives in foreign affairs**

In foreign relations, Nicholas followed policies of his father, strengthening the [Franco-Russian Alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco-Russian_Alliance) and pursuing a policy of general European pacification, which culminated in the famous [Hague peace conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hague_Conventions_(1899_and_1907)). This conference, suggested and promoted by Nicholas II, was convened with the view of terminating the [arms race](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms_race), and setting up machinery for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. The results of the conference were less than expected, because of the mutual distrust existing between great powers. Still, the Hague conventions were among the first formal statements of the laws of war. In 1901 Nicholas II (and the famous Russian diplomat [Friedrich Martens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Martens)) were nominated for the [Nobel Peace Prize](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Peace_Prize) – for the initiative to convene the Hague Peace Conference and contribute to its implementation.

**Ecclesiastical affairs**

In 1903, Nicholas threw himself into an ecclesiastical matter regarding the canonization of [Seraphim of Sarov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seraphim_of_Sarov). The previous year, it had been suggested that if he was canonized, the imperial couple would have a son and heir to throne. While Alexandra demanded in July 1902 that Seraphim be canonized in less than a week, Nicholas demanded that he be canonized within a year. Despite a public outcry, the Church bowed to the intense imperial pressure, declaring Seraphim worthy of canonization in January 1903. That summer, the imperial family travelled to Sarov for the canonization.

**Russo-Japanese War**

Main article: [Russo-Japanese War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Japanese_War)



The Russian [Baltic Fleet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltic_Fleet) was annihilated by the Japanese at the [Battle of Tsushima](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tsushima).

A clash between Russia and the [Empire of Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_of_Japan) was almost inevitable by the turn of the 20th century. Russia had expanded in the Far East, and the growth of its settlement and territorial ambitions, as its southward path to the [Balkans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkans) was frustrated, conflicted with Japan's own territorial ambitions on the Chinese and Asian mainland. Nicholas pursued an aggressive foreign policy with regards to [Manchuria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchuria) and [Korea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korea), and strongly supported the scheme for timber concessions in these areas as developed by the [Bezobazov group](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksandr_Mikhailovich_Bezobrazov).

War began in 1904 with a preemptive Japanese attack on the Russian fleet in [Port Arthur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Port_Arthur), prior to a formal declaration of war.

With the Russian Far East fleet trapped at Port Arthur, the only other Russian Fleet was the [Baltic Fleet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltic_Fleet); it was half a world away, but the decision was made to send the fleet on a nine-month voyage to the East. Great Britain would not allow the Russian navy to use the [Suez Canal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suez_Canal), due to [their alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Japanese_Alliance) with the Empire of Japan and due to an incident where the Baltic Fleet mistakenly fired on British fishing boats in the North Sea. The Russian [Baltic Fleet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltic_Fleet) traversed the world to lift the blockade on Port Arthur, but after many misadventures on the way, was nearly annihilated by the Japanese in the [Battle of the Tsushima Strait](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tsushima). On land the [Imperial Russian Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Russian_Army) experienced logistical problems. While commands and supplies came from [St. Petersburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Petersburg), combat took place in east Asian ports with only the [Trans-Siberian Railway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Siberian_Railway) for transport of supplies as well as troops both ways. The 6,000-mile (9,700 km) rail line between St. Petersburg and Port Arthur was single-track, with no track around [Lake Baikal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Baikal), allowing only gradual build-up of the forces on the front. [Besieged Port Arthur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Port_Arthur) fell to the Japanese, after nine months of resistance.

Nicholas's stance on the war was something that baffled many. Nicholas approached the war with confidence and saw it as an opportunity to raise Russian morale and patriotism, paying little attention to the finances of a long-distance war. Shortly before the Japanese attack on Port Arthur, Nicholas held strong to the belief that there would be no war. Despite the onset of the war and the many defeats Russia suffered, Nicholas still believed in, and expected, a final victory, maintaining an image of the racial inferiority and military weakness of the Japanese.

As Russia continued to face defeat by the Japanese, the call for peace grew. Nicholas's own mother, as well as his cousin, [Emperor Wilhelm II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_II,_German_Emperor), urged Nicholas to open peace negotiations. Despite the efforts for peace, Nicholas remained evasive, sending a telegram to Wilhelm II on 10 October that it was his intent to keep on fighting until the Japanese were driven from Manchuria. It was not until 27–28 March 1905 and the annihilation of the Russian fleet by the Japanese, that Nicholas finally decided to pursue peace. Nicholas II accepted American mediation, appointing [Sergei Witte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Witte) chief plenipotentiary for the peace talks. The war was ended by the [Treaty of Portsmouth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Portsmouth).

**Anti-Jewish pogroms of 1903–1906**

Main article: [Anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Jewish_pogroms_in_the_Russian_Empire)

The Kishinev newspaper *Bessarabets*, which published anti-Jewish materials, received funds from [Viacheslav Plehve](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viacheslav_Plehve), Minister of the Interior. These publications served to fuel the [Kishinev pogrom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kishinev_pogrom). The government of Nicholas II formally condemned the rioting, dismissed the regional governor, the perpetrators were arrested and punished by the court. Leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church also condemned anti-Jewish pogroms. Appeals to the faithful condemning the anti-Jewish pogroms were read publicly in all churches of Russia. However, in private Nicholas expressed his admiration for the mobs, viewing anti-Semitism as a useful tool for unifying the people behind his regime.

**Bloody Sunday (1905)**

Main article: [Bloody Sunday (1905)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloody_Sunday_(1905))

[Play media](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/77/Czar_Nicholas_II_of_Russia_%281868-1917%29_%281905%29.ogv)



Tsar Nicholas of Russia mounts his horse (1905?), unknown cinematographer of the [Edison Manufacturing Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edison_Manufacturing_Company)

A few days prior to Bloody Sunday (9 (22) January 1905), the priest and labor leader [George Gapon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gapon) informed the government of the forthcoming procession to the Winter Palace to hand a workers' petition to the Tsar. On Saturday, 8 (21) January, the ministers convened to consider the situation. There was never any thought that the Tsar, who had left the capital for Tsarskoye Selo on the advice of the ministers, would actually meet Gapon; the suggestion that some other member of the Imperial family receive the petition was rejected.

Finally informed by the Prefect of Police that he lacked the men to pluck Gapon from among his followers and place him under arrest, the newly appointed Minister of the Interior, Prince [Sviatopolk-Mirsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyotr_Dmitrievich_Sviatopolk-Mirskii), and his colleagues decided to bring additional troops to reinforce the city. That evening Nicholas wrote in his diary, "Troops have been brought from the outskirts to reinforce the garrison. Up to now the workers have been calm. Their number is estimated at 120,000. At the head of their union is a kind of socialist priest named Gapon. Mirsky came this evening to present his report on the measures taken."

On Sunday, 9 (22) January 1905, Gapon began his march. Locking arms, the workers [marched peacefully](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent_resistance) through the streets. Some carried religious icons and banners, as well as national flags and portraits of the Tsar. As they walked, they sang hymns and the Imperial anthem, 'God Save The Tsar'. At 2PM all of the converging processions were scheduled to arrive at the Winter Palace. There was no single confrontation with the troops. Throughout the city, at bridges on strategic boulevards, the marchers found their way blocked by lines of infantry, backed by [Cossacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cossack) and Hussars; and the soldiers opened fire on the crowd.

The official number of victims was 92 dead and several hundred wounded. Gapon vanished and the other leaders of the march were seized. Expelled from the capital, they circulated through the empire, increasing the casualties. As bullets riddled their icons, their banners and their portraits of Nicholas, the people shrieked, "The Tsar will not help us!". Outside Russia, the future British Labor Prime Minister [Ramsay MacDonald](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramsay_MacDonald) attacked the Tsar, calling him a "blood-stained creature and a common murderer".

That evening Nicholas wrote in his diary:

Difficult day! In St. Petersburg there were serious disturbances due to the desire of workers to get to the Winter Palace. The troops had to shoot in different places of the city, there were many dead and wounded. Lord, how painful and bad!

[Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Olga_Alexandrovna_of_Russia) (Nicholas's sister) wrote afterwards:

Nicky had the police report a few days before. That Saturday he telephoned my mother at the Anitchkov and said that she and I were to leave for Gatchina at once. He and Alicky went to Tsarskoye Selo. Insofar as I remember, my Uncles Vladimir and Nicholas were the only members of the family left in St. Petersburg, but there may have been others. I felt at the time that all those arrangements were hideously wrong. Nicky's ministers and the Chief of Police had it all their way. My mother and I wanted him to stay in St. Petersburg and to face the crowd. I am positive that, for all the ugly mood of some of the workmen, Nicky's appearance would have calmed them. They would have presented their petition and gone back to their homes. But that wretched Epiphany incident had left all the senior officials in a state of panic. They kept on telling Nicky that he had no right to run such a risk, that he owed it to the country to leave the capital, that even with the utmost precautions taken there might always be some loophole left. My mother and I did all we could to pers­uade him that the ministers' advice was wrong, but Nicky preferred to follow it and he was the first to repent when he heard of the tragic outcome.

From his hiding place, Gapon issued a letter. He stated, "Nicholas Romanov, formerly Tsar and at present soul-murderer of the Russian empire. The innocent blood of workers, their wives and children lies forever between you and the Russian people ... May all the blood which must be spilled fall upon you, you Hangman. I call upon all the socialist parties of Russia to come to an immediate agreement among themselves and bring an armed uprising against [Tsarism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarism)."

**1905 Revolution**

Main article: [1905 Russian Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1905_Russian_Revolution)

With the defeat of Russia by a non-Western power, the prestige and authority of the autocratic regime fell significantly. Defeat was a severe blow, and the Imperial government collapsed in the revolutionary outbreaks of 1905–1906. In hopes of cutting short the rebellion, many demonstrators were shot as they tried to march to the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg; the Emperor's Uncle, [Grand Duke Sergei](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_Sergei_Alexandrovich_of_Russia), was killed by a revolutionary's bomb in Moscow as he left the Kremlin. The [Black Sea Fleet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sea_Fleet) [mutinied](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutiny), and a railway strike developed into a [general strike](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_strike) which paralyzed the country. Tsar Nicholas II, taken by surprise by the events, reacted with anger and bewilderment. He wrote to his mother after months of disorder:

It makes me sick to read the news! Nothing but strikes in schools and factories, murdered policemen, [Cossacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cossacks) and soldiers, riots, disorder, mutinies. But the ministers, instead of acting with quick decision, only assemble in council like a lot of frightened hens and cackle about providing united ministerial action... ominous quiet days began, quiet indeed because there was complete order in the streets, but at the same time everybody knew that something was going to happen — the troops were waiting for the signal, but the other side would not begin. One had the same feeling, as before a thunderstorm in summer! Everybody was on edge and extremely nervous and of course, that sort of strain could not go on for long.... We are in the midst of a revolution with an administrative apparatus entirely disorganized, and in this lies the main danger.

**Relationship with the Duma**



One ruble silver Coin of Emperor Nicholas II, dated 1898, with the Imperial coat-of-arms on the reverse. The Russian inscription reads:  
*B[ozheyu] M[ilostyu] Nikolay Imperator i Samoderzhets Vse[ya] Ross[ii].[iyskiy].*  
The English translation is, "By the grace of God, Nicholas II, Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias."

Under pressure from the attempted [1905 Russian Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1905_Russian_Revolution), on 5 August of that year Nicholas II issued a manifesto about the convocation of the [State Duma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Duma_of_the_Russian_Empire), initially thought to be an advisory organ. In the [October Manifesto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_Manifesto), the Tsar pledged to introduce basic [civil liberties](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_liberties), provide for broad participation in the State Duma, and endow the Duma with legislative and oversight powers. He was determined, however, to preserve his [autocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autocracy) even in the context of reform. This was signaled in the text of the [1906 constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Constitution_of_1906). He was still described as an autocrat, and retained sweeping executive powers. For instance, cabinet ministers were responsible only to him.

Nicholas' relations with the Duma were not good. The [First Duma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Duma), with a majority of [Kadets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_Democratic_party), almost immediately came into conflict with him. Scarcely had the 524 members sat down at the Tauride Palace when they formulated an 'Address to the Throne'. It demanded [universal suffrage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage), radical land reform, the release of all [political prisoners](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_prisoner) and the dismissal of ministers appointed by the Tsar in favor of ministers acceptable to the Duma.

Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna, the younger sister of Nicholas II, wrote, "There was such gloom at Tsarskoye Selo. I did not understand anything about politics. I just felt everything was going wrong with the country and all of us. The October Constitution did not seem to satisfy anyone. I went with my mother to the first Duma. I remember the large group of deputies from among peasants and factory people. The peasants looked sullen. But the workmen were worse: they looked as though they hated us. I remember the distress in Alicky's eyes."

Minister of the Court Count Fredericks commented, "The Deputies, they give one the impression of a gang of criminals who are only waiting for the signal to throw themselves upon the ministers and cut their throats. I will never again set foot among those people." The Dowager Empress noticed "incomprehensible hatred."

Although Nicholas initially had a good relationship with his prime minister, [Sergei Witte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergei_Witte), Alexandra distrusted him because he had instigated an investigation of [Grigori Rasputin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigori_Rasputin), and as the political situation deteriorated, Nicholas dissolved the Duma. The Duma was populated with [radicals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_radicalism), many of whom wished to push through legislation that would abolish private property ownership, among other things. Witte, unable to grasp the seemingly insurmountable problems of reforming Russia and the monarchy, wrote to Nicholas on 14 April 1906 resigning his office (however, other accounts have said that Witte was forced to resign by the Emperor). Nicholas was not ungracious to Witte and an Imperial Rescript was published on 22 April creating Witte a Knight of the [Order of Saint Alexander Nevsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Saint_Alexander_Nevsky), with diamonds (the last two words were written in the Emperor's own hand, followed by "I remain unalterably well-disposed to you and sincerely grateful, for ever more Nicholas.").

A second Duma met for the first time in February 1907. The [leftist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leftist) parties—including the [Social Democrats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democrats) and the Social Revolutionaries, who had boycotted the First Duma—had won 200 seats in the Second, more than a third of the membership. Again Nicholas waited impatiently to rid himself of the Duma. In two letters to his mother he let his bitterness flow, "A grotesque deputation is coming from England to see liberal members of the Duma. [Uncle Bertie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_VII_of_the_United_Kingdom) informed us that they were very sorry but were unable to take action to stop their coming. Their famous 'liberty', of course. How angry they would be if a deputation went from us to the Irish to wish them success in their struggle against their government."

A little while later Nicholas wrote, "All would be well if everything said in the Duma remained within its walls. Every word spoken, however, comes out in the next day's papers which are avidly read by everyone. In many places the populace is getting restive again. They begin to talk about land once more and are waiting to see what the Duma is going to say on the question. I am getting telegrams from everywhere, petitioning me to order a dissolution, but it is too early for that. One has to let them do something manifestly stupid or mean and then — slap! And they are gone!"

After the [Second Duma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Duma) resulted in similar problems, the new prime minister [Pyotr Stolypin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyotr_Stolypin) (whom Witte described as 'reactionary') unilaterally dissolved it, and changed the electoral laws to allow for future Dumas to have a more conservative content, and to be dominated by the liberal-conservative [Octobrist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octobrist) Party of [Alexander Guchkov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Guchkov). Stolypin, a skillful politician, had ambitious plans for reform. These included making loans available to the lower classes to enable them to buy land, with the intent of forming a farming class loyal to the crown. Nevertheless, when the Duma remained hostile, Stolypin had no qualms about invoking Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws, which empowered the Tsar to issue 'urgent and extraordinary' emergency decrees 'during the recess of the State Duma'. Stolypin's most famous legislative act, the change in peasant land tenure, was promulgated under Article 87.

The third Duma remained an independent body. This time the members proceeded cautiously. Instead of hurling themselves at the government, opposing parties within the Duma worked to develop the body as a whole. In the classic manner of the British Parliament, the Duma reached for power grasping for the national purse strings. The Duma had the right to question ministers behind closed doors as to their proposed expenditures. These sessions, endorsed by Stolypin, were educational for both sides, and, in time, mutual antagonism was replaced by mutual respect. Even the sensitive area of military expenditure, where the October Manifesto clearly had reserved decisions to the throne, a Duma commission began to operate. Composed of aggressive patriots no less anxious than Nicholas to restore the fallen honor of Russian arms, the Duma commission frequently recommended expenditures even larger than those proposed.

With the passage of time, Nicholas also began to have confidence in the Duma. "This Duma cannot be reproached with an attempt to seize power and there is no need at all to quarrel with it," he said to Stolypin in 1909. Unfortunately, Stolypin's plans were undercut by conservatives at court. Reactionaries such as Prince Vladimir Orlov never tired of telling the Tsar that the very existence of the Duma was a blot on the autocracy, which Tsaritsa Alexandra had always believed anyway. Stolypin, they whispered, was a traitor and secret revolutionary who was conniving with the Duma to steal the prerogatives assigned the Tsar by God. Witte also engaged in constant intrigue against Stolypin. Although Stolypin had had nothing to do with Witte's fall, Witte blamed him. Stolypin had unwittingly angered the Tsaritsa. He had ordered an investigation into Rasputin and presented it to the Tsar, who read it but did nothing. Stolypin, on his own authority, ordered Rasputin to leave St. Petersburg. Alexandra protested vehemently but Nicholas refused to overrule his Prime Minister, who had more influence with the Emperor.

By the time of Stolypin's assassination by [Dmitry Bogrov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dmitry_Bogrov), a student (and police informant) in a theatre in Kiev on 18 September 1911, Stolypin had grown weary of the burdens of office. For a man who preferred clear decisive action, working with a sovereign who believed in fatalism and mysticism was frustrating. As an example, Nicholas once returned a document unsigned with the note: "Despite most convincing arguments in favor of adopting a positive decision in this matter, an inner voice keeps on insisting more and more that I do not accept responsibility for it. So far my conscience has not deceived me. Therefore I intend in this case to follow its dictates. I know that you, too, believe that 'a Tsar's heart is in God's hands.' Let it be so. For all laws established by me I bear a great responsibility before God, and I am ready to answer for my decision at any time."

Alexandra, believing that Stolypin had severed the bonds that her son depended on for life, hated the Prime Minister. In March 1911, in a fit of anger stating that he no longer commanded the imperial confidence, Stolypin asked to be relieved of his office. Two years earlier when Stolypin had casually mentioned resigning to Nicholas he was informed:

This is not a question of confidence or lack of it. It is my will. Remember that we live in Russia, not abroad...and therefore I shall not consider the possibility of any resignation.

It never got that far. On 18 September 1911, in a procession where Stolypin's car was unprotected, Rasputin had coincidentally returned from his exile. As Stolypin's car passed him, Rasputin cried out in a loud voice, "Death is after him! Death is driving behind him!" Bogrov assassinated Stolypin in the Kiev theatre that night.

In 1912, a fourth Duma was elected with almost the same membership as the third. "The Duma started too fast. Now it is slower, but better, and more lasting," stated Nicholas to Sir Bernard Pares.

The [First World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) developed badly for Russia. By late 1916, Romanov family desperation reached the point that [Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_Paul_Alexandrovich), younger brother of Alexander III and the Tsar's only surviving uncle, was deputed to beg Nicholas to grant a constitution and a government responsible to the Duma. Nicholas sternly refused, reproaching his uncle for asking him to break his coronation oath to maintain autocratic power intact for his successors. In the Duma on 2 December 1916, Vladimir Purishkevich, a fervent patriot, monarchist and war worker, denounced the dark forces which surrounded the throne in a thunderous two-hour speech which was tumultuously applauded. "Revolution threatens" – he warned – "and an obscure peasant shall govern Russia no longer!"

**Tsesarevich Alexei's illness and Rasputin**



Tsarevich [Alexei Nikolaevich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexei_Nikolaevich), c. 1914

[Grigori Rasputin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigori_Rasputin)

Further complicating domestic matters was the matter of the succession. Alexandra bore Nicholas four daughters, [the Grand Duchess Olga](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Olga_Nikolaevna_of_Russia) in 1895, [the Grand Duchess Tatiana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Tatiana_Nikolaevna_of_Russia) in 1897, [Grand Duchess Maria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Maria_Nikolaevna_of_Russia) in 1899, and [Grand Duchess Anastasia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Anastasia_Nikolaevna_of_Russia) in 1901, before their son [Alexei](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexei_Nikolaevich,_Tsesarevich_of_Russia) was born on 12 August 1904. The young heir was afflicted with [Haemophilia B](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haemophilia_B), a hereditary disease that prevents blood from clotting properly, which at that time was untreatable and usually led to an untimely death. As a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, Alexandra carried the same [gene mutation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gene_mutation) that afflicted several of the major European royal houses, such as [Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prussia) and Spain. Hemophilia therefore became known as "[the royal disease](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haemophilia_in_European_royalty)". Alexandra had passed it on to her son. As all of Nicholas and Alexandra's daughters perished with their parents and brother in Yekaterinburg in 1918, it is not known whether any of them inherited the gene as [carriers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic_carrier).

Because of the fragility of the autocracy at this time, Nicholas and Alexandra chose not to divulge Alexei's condition to anyone outside the royal household. In fact, there were many in the Imperial household who were unaware of the exact nature of the Tsesarevich's illness. At first Alexandra turned to Russian doctors and medics to treat Alexei; however, their treatments generally failed, and Alexandra increasingly turned to [mystics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysticism) and holy men (or [*starets*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Starets) as they were called in Russian). One of these starets, an illiterate [Siberian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siberia), [Grigori Rasputin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigori_Rasputin), appeared to have some success. Rasputin's influence over Empress Alexandra, and consequently the Tsar, had grown stronger ever since 1912, when the Tsesarevich nearly died from an injury while the family was on vacation at the hunting lodges at [Bialowieza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bialowieza) and [Spala](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spala) (now part of [Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland)). The bleeding grew steadily worse until it was assumed that the Tsesarevich would not survive, and the [Last Sacrament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_rites) was administered on 10 October 1912. Desperate, Alexandra called Rasputin as a last resort, and the reply came, "God has seen your tears and heard your prayers. Do not grieve. The Little One will not die. Do not allow the doctors to bother him too much." The hemorrhage stopped the next day and the boy began to recover. Alexandra took this as a sign that Rasputin was a *starets* and that God was with him; for the rest of her life she would defend him and turn her wrath against anyone who dared to question him.

**European Affairs**

In 1907, to counter perceived German aggression, Russia and Great Britain signed the [Anglo-Russian Convention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Russian_Convention_of_1907). Great Britain had already entered into the [Entente cordiale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entente_cordiale) with France in 1904, and the Anglo-Russian alliance led to the formation of the [Triple Entente](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_Entente). The following year, in May 1908, Nicholas and Alexandra's mutual "Uncle Bertie" and "Aunt Alix," Britain’s King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra made a state visit to Russia, being the first reigning British monarchs to do so. However, they did not set foot on Russian soil. Instead, they stayed aboard their yachts, meeting off the coast of modern day [Tallinn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tallinn). Later that year, Nicholas was taken off guard by the news that his foreign minister, [Alexander Izvolsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Izvolsky) had entered into a secret agreement with the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, Count Alois von Aehrenthal, agreeing that, in exchange for Russian naval access to the Dardanelles and the Bosporus Strait, Russia would not oppose the Austrian annexation of [Bosnia and Herzegovina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina), a revision of the 1878 [Treaty of Berlin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Berlin_(1878)). When Austria-Hungary did annex this territory that October, it precipitated the [diplomatic crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnian_crisis). When Russia protested about the annexation, the Austrians threatened to leak secret communications between Izvolsky and Aehernthal, prompting Nicholas to complain in a letter to the Austrian emperor, [Franz Joseph](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Joseph_I_of_Austria), about a breach of confidence. In 1909, in the wake of the Anglo-Russian alliance, the Russian imperial family made a visit to England, staying on the [Isle of Wight](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isle_of_Wight) for [Cowes Week](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cowes_Week). In 1913, during the [Balkan Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_War_(1912%E2%80%9313)), Nicholas personally offered to arbitrate between Serbia and Bulgaria. However, the Bulgarians rejected his offer. Also in 1913, Nicholas, albeit without Alexandra, made a visit to Berlin for the wedding of Kaiser Wilhelm II's daughter, [Princess Victoria Louise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Victoria_Louise_of_Prussia), to a maternal cousin of Nicholas, [Ernest Augustus, the Duke of Brunswick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Augustus,_Duke_of_Brunswick). Nicholas was also joined by his cousin, [King George V](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_George_V) and his wife, [Queen Mary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_of_Teck).

**The Tercentenary**

In February 1913, Nicholas presided over the tercentenary celebrations for the Romanov Dynasty. On 21 February, a Te Deum took place at Kazan Cathedral, and a state reception at the Winter Palace. In May, Nicholas and the imperial family made a pilgrimage across the empire, retracing the route down the Volga River that was made by the teenage [Michael Romanov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_I_of_Russia) from the [Ipatiev Monastery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ipatiev_Monastery) in [Kostroma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kostroma) to Moscow in 1613 when he finally agreed to become tsar.

**First World War**

On 28 June 1914, [Archduke Franz Ferdinand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archduke_Franz_Ferdinand) was assassinated by [Gavrilo Princip](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gavrilo_Princip) in [Sarajevo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarajevo). Nicholas vacillated as to Russia's course of action. The outbreak of war was not inevitable, but leaders, diplomats and nineteenth-century alliances created a climate for large-scale conflict. The concept of [Pan-Slavism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-Slavism) and ethnicity allied Russia and Serbia in a treaty of protection, and Germany and Austria were similarly allied. Territorial conflict created rivalries between Germany and France and between Austria and Serbia, and as a consequence alliance networks developed across Europe. The [Triple Entente](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_Entente) and [Triple Alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_Alliance_(1882)) networks were set before the war. The assassination of Ferdinand tripped these alliance networks bringing each country into conflict with one another as each independently declared war. Nicholas wanted neither to abandon [Serbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbia) to the ultimatum of [Austria-Hungary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austria-Hungary), nor to provoke a general war. In a series of letters exchanged with [Kaiser Wilhelm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_II,_German_Emperor) of Germany (the so-called "[Willy and Nicky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willy_and_Nicky) correspondence") the two proclaimed their desire for peace, and each attempted to get the other to back down. Nicholas desired that Russia's mobilization be only against the Austrian border, in the hopes of preventing war with the [German Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire).



Nicholas II (right) with [Kaiser Wilhelm II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiser_Wilhelm_II) of Germany in 1905. Nicholas is wearing a German Army uniform, while Wilhelm wears that of a Russian hussar regiment.

However, his army had no contingency plans for a partial mobilization, and on 31 July 1914 Nicholas took the fateful step of confirming the order for general mobilization, despite being strongly counselled against it. On 25 July 1914, the council of ministers was held in [Krasnoye Selo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krasnoye_Selo) at which Tsar Nicholas II decided to intervene in the Austro-Serbian conflict, a step toward general war. He put the Russian army on "alert" on 25 July. Although this was not mobilization, it threatened the German and Austrian borders a looked like a military declaration of war.

On 28 July, Austria formally declared war against Serbia, bringing Germany into conflict with Russia and with France and [Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK) as Russia's allies. On 29 July 1914, Nicholas II sent a telegram to Wilhelm II ([The Willy-Nicky Correspondence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Willy-Nicky_Correspondence)), with the suggestion to submit the Austro-Serbian problem to the [Hague Conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hague_Conference) (in [Hague tribunal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permanent_Court_of_Arbitration)). Wilhelm II did not address the question of the Hague Conference in his subsequent reply. Count Witte told the French Ambassador Paleologue that from Russia's point of view the war was madness, Slav solidarity was simply nonsense and Russia could hope for nothing from the war. On 31 July, Russia completed its mobilization, but still maintained that it would not attack if peace talks were to begin. Germany then replied that Russia must demobilize within the next twelve hours. In [Saint Petersburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg), at 7pm, with the ultimatum to Russia expired, the German ambassador to Russia met with the Russian Foreign Minister [Sergey Sazonov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergey_Sazonov), asked three times if Russia would reconsider, and then with shaking hands, delivered the note accepting Russia's war challenge and declaring war.

The outbreak of war on 1 August 1914 found Russia grossly unprepared. Russia and her allies placed their faith in her army, the famous 'Russian steamroller'. Its pre-war regular strength was 1,400,000; mobilization added 3,100,000 reserves and millions more stood ready behind them. In every other respect, however, Russia was unprepared for war. Germany had ten times as much railway track per square mile, and whereas Russian soldiers travelled an average of 800 miles (1,290 km) to reach the front, German soldiers travelled less than a quarter of that distance. Russian heavy industry was still too small to equip the massive armies the Tsar could raise, and her reserves of munitions were pitifully small; while the German army in 1914 was better equipped than any other, man-for-man, the Russians were severely short on artillery pieces, shells, motorized transports, and even boots. With the Baltic Sea barred by German U-boats and the Dardanelles by the guns of Germany's ally, [Turkey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey), Russia initially could receive help only via [Archangel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arkhangelsk) which was frozen solid in winter, or via [Vladivostok](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladivostok), which was over 4,000 miles (6,400 km) from the front line. By 1915, a rail line was built north from Petrozavodsk to the Kola Gulf and this connection laid the foundation of the ice-free port of what eventually was called Murmansk. The Russian High Command was moreover greatly weakened by the mutual contempt between [Vladimir Sukhomlinov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Sukhomlinov), the Minister of War, and the redoubtable warrior giant Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich who commanded the armies in the field. In spite of all of this, an immediate attack was ordered against the German province of [East Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Prussia). The Germans mobilized there with great efficiency and completely defeated the two Russian armies which had invaded. The [Battle of Tannenberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tannenberg_(1914)), where an entire Russian army was annihilated, cast an ominous shadow over the empire's future. The loyal officers lost were the very ones needed to protect the dynasty. The Russian armies later had moderate success against both the Austro-Hungarian armies and against the forces of the [Ottoman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire), but they never succeeded against the might of the German Army.



Russian prisoners at the [Battle of Tannenberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tannenberg_(1914)), where the Russian Second Army was annihilated by German forces

Gradually a war of attrition set in on the vast [Eastern Front](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_(World_War_I)), where the Russians were facing the combined forces of the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires, and they suffered staggering losses. General Denikin, retreating from [Galicia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galicia_(Eastern_Europe)) wrote, "The German heavy artillery swept away whole lines of trenches, and their defenders with them. We hardly replied. There was nothing with which we could reply. Our regiments, although completely exhausted, were beating off one attack after another by bayonet ... Blood flowed unendingly, the ranks became thinner and thinner and thinner. The number of graves multiplied." Total losses for the spring and summer of 1915 amounted to 1,400,000 killed or wounded, while 976,000 had been taken prisoner. On 5 August, with the Russian army in retreat, [Warsaw](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw) fell. Defeat at the front bred disorder at home. At first, the targets were German, and for three days in June shops, bakeries, factories, private houses and country estates belonging to people with German names were looted and burned. The inflamed mobs then turned on the government, declaring the Empress should be shut up in a convent, the Tsar deposed and Rasputin hanged. Nicholas was by no means deaf to these discontents. An emergency session of the Duma was summoned, and a Special Defense Council established, its members drawn from the Duma and the Tsar's ministers.

In July 1915, King [Christian X](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_X_of_Denmark) of [Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denmark), first cousin of the Tsar, sent [Hans Niels Andersen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Niels_Andersen) to Tsarskoye Selo with an offer to act as a mediator. He made several trips between London, Berlin and Petrograd and in July saw the Dowager Empress [Maria Fyodorovna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Feodorovna_(Dagmar_of_Denmark)). Andersen told her they should conclude peace. Nicholas chose to turn down King Christian's offer of mediation.

The energetic and efficient General [Alexei Polivanov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexei_Polivanov) replaced Sukhomlinov as [Minister of War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_War), which failed to improve the strategic situation. In the aftermath of [The Great Retreat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Retreat) and the loss of the Kingdom of [Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland), Nicholas assumed the role of commander-in-chief after dismissing his cousin, [Nikolay Nikolayevich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_Nicholas), in September 1915. This was a mistake, as he came to be personally associated with the continuing losses at the front. He was also away at the remote HQ at [Mogilev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogilev), far from the direct governance of the empire, and when revolution broke out in [Petrograd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrograd) he was unable to halt it. In reality the move was largely symbolic, since all important military decisions were made by his chief-of-staff General [Michael Alexeiev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Alexeiev), and Nicholas did little more than review troops, inspect [field hospitals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_hospital), and preside over military luncheons.

The Duma was still calling for political reforms and political unrest continued throughout the war. Cut off from public opinion, Nicholas could not see that the dynasty was tottering. With Nicholas at the front, domestic issues and control of the capital were left with his wife Alexandra. However, Alexandra's relationship with [Grigori Rasputin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigori_Rasputin), and her German background, further discredited the dynasty's authority. Nicholas had been repeatedly warned about the destructive influence of Rasputin but had failed to remove him. Rumors and accusations about Alexandra and Rasputin appeared one after another. Alexandra was even accused of treasonous sympathy with Germany. Anger at Nicholas's failure to act and the extreme damage that Rasputin's influence was doing to Russia's war effort and to the monarchy led to Rasputin's murder by a group of nobles, led by Prince [Felix Yusupov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_Yusupov) and Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, a cousin of the Tsar, in the early morning of Saturday 17 December 1916 ([O.S.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style))(or 30 December 1916 in the Gregorian calendar).

**The collapse of his reign**

As the government failed to produce supplies, mounting hardship created massive riots and rebellions. With Nicholas away at the front from 1915 through 1916, authority appeared to collapse and the capital was left in the hands of strikers and mutineering conscript soldiers. Despite efforts by the British Ambassador, [Sir George Buchanan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Buchanan_(diplomat)), to warn the Tsar that he should grant constitutional reforms to fend off revolution, Nicholas continued to bury himself away at the Staff HQ ([Stavka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stavka)) 400 miles (600 km) away at [Moghilev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogilev), leaving his capital and court open to intrigues and insurrection.

By early 1917, Russia was on the verge of total collapse. The [army had taken](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscription) 15 million men from the farms and food prices had soared. An egg cost four times what it had in 1914, butter five times as much. The severe winter dealt the railways, overburdened by emergency shipments of coal and supplies, the final blow.

Russia began the war with 20,000 [locomotives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steam_locomotive); by 1917, 9,000 were in service, while the number of serviceable railway [wagons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wagon_(railroad)) had dwindled from half a million to 170,000. In February 1917, 1,200 locomotives burst their [boilers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire-tube_boiler) and nearly 60,000 wagons were immobilized. In Petrograd, supplies of flour and fuel all but disappeared. War-time [prohibition of alcohol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prohibition_of_alcohol) was enacted by Nicholas to boost patriotism and productivity, but instead damaged the treasury and funding of the war due to the treasury now being deprived of alcohol taxes.



One of the last photographs taken of Nicholas II, showing him at [Tsarskoye Selo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarskoye_Selo) after his abdication in March 1917

On 23 February 1917 in Petrograd, a combination of very severe cold weather and acute food shortages caused people to start to break shop windows to get bread and other necessaries. In the streets, red banners appeared and the crowds chanted "Down with the German woman! Down with [Protopopov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Protopopov)! Down with the war! Down with the Tsar!"

Police started to shoot at the populace from rooftops, which incited riots. The troops in the capital were poorly motivated and their officers had no reason to be loyal to the regime. They were angry and full of revolutionary fervor and sided with the populace.

The Tsar's Cabinet begged Nicholas to return to the capital and offered to resign completely. Five hundred miles away the Tsar, misinformed by the Minister of the Interior, [Alexander Protopopov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Protopopov), that the situation was under control, ordered that firm steps be taken against the demonstrators. For this task, the Petrograd garrison was quite unsuitable. The cream of the old regular army lay in their graves in [Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland) and Galicia. In Petrograd, 170,000 recruits, country boys or older men from the working-class suburbs of the capital itself, remained to keep control under the command of wounded officers invalided from the front and cadets from the military academies. The units in the capital, although many bore the names of famous Imperial Guard regiments, were in reality rear or reserve battalions of these regiments, the regular units being away at the front. Many units, lacking both officers and rifles, had never undergone formal training.

General Khabalov attempted to put the Tsar's instructions into effect on the morning of Sunday, 11 March 1917. Despite huge posters ordering people to keep off the streets, vast crowds gathered and were only dispersed after some 200 had been shot dead, though a company of the [Volinsky Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volinsky_Regiment) fired into the air rather than into the mob and a company of the [Pavlovsky Life Guards](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Pavlovsky_Life_Guards&action=edit&redlink=1) shot the officer who gave the command to open fire. Nicholas, informed of the situation by Rodzianko, ordered reinforcements to the capital and suspended the Duma. It was too late.

On 12 March, the [Volinsky Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volinsky_Regiment) mutinied and was quickly followed by the [Semenovsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semenovsky_Regiment), the [Ismailovsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Izmaylovsky_Regiment), the Litovsky and even the legendary [Preobrazhensky Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preobrazhensky_Regiment) of the Imperial Guard, the oldest and staunchest regiment founded by [Peter the Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_I_of_Russia). The arsenal was pillaged, the Ministry of the Interior, Military Government building, police headquarters, the Law Courts and a score of police buildings were put to the torch. By noon, the fortress of Peter and Paul, with its heavy artillery, was in the hands of the insurgents. By nightfall, 60,000 soldiers had joined the revolution.

Order broke down and members of the Duma and the Soviet formed a [Provisional Government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Provisional_Government) to try to restore order. They issued a demand that Nicholas must abdicate. Faced with this demand, which was echoed by his generals, deprived of loyal troops, with his family firmly in the hands of the Provisional Government and fearful of unleashing civil war and opening the way for German conquest, Nicholas had little choice but to submit.

**Abdication (1917)**

At the end of the "[February Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/February_Revolution)" of 1917 (February in the Old Russian Calendar), on 2 March ([Julian Calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_Calendar))/ 15 March ([Gregorian Calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_Calendar)) 1917, Nicholas II chose to [abdicate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdication). He first abdicated in favor of Tsarevich Alexei, but swiftly changed his mind after advice from doctors that the [heir-apparent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heir-apparent) would not live long apart from his parents, who would be forced into exile. Nicholas drew up a new manifesto naming his brother, Grand Duke Michael, as the next Emperor of all the Russias. He issued the following statement (which was suppressed by the Provisional Government):

In the days of the great struggle against the foreign enemies, who for nearly three years have tried to enslave our fatherland, the Lord God has been pleased to send down on Russia a new heavy trial. Internal popular disturbances threaten to have a disastrous effect on the future conduct of this persistent war. The destiny of Russia, the honor of our heroic army, the welfare of the people and the whole future of our dear fatherland demand that the war should be brought to a victorious conclusion whatever the cost.

The cruel enemy is making his last efforts, and already the hour approaches when our glorious army together with our gallant allies will crush him. In these decisive days in the life of Russia, We thought it Our duty of conscience to facilitate for Our people the closest union possible and a consolidation of all national forces for the speedy attainment of victory. In agreement with the Imperial Duma We have thought it well to renounce the Throne of the Russian Empire and to lay down the supreme power. As We do not wish to part from Our beloved son, We transmit the succession to Our brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, and give Him Our blessing to mount the Throne of the Russian Empire. We direct Our brother to conduct the affairs of state in full and inviolable union with the representatives of the people in the legislative bodies on those principles which will be established by them, and on which He will take an inviolable oath. In the name of Our dearly beloved homeland, We call on Our faithful sons of the fatherland to fulfill their sacred duty to the fatherland, to obey the Tsar in the heavy moment of national trials, and to help Him, together with the representatives of the people, to guide the Russian Empire on the road to victory, welfare, and glory. May the Lord God help Russia!

Grand Duke [Michael](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_Michael_Alexandrovich_of_Russia) declined to accept the throne until the people were allowed to vote through a Constituent Assembly for the continuance of the monarchy or a republic. The abdication of Nicholas II and the subsequent Bolshevik revolution brought three centuries of the Romanov dynasty's rule to an end. The fall of autocratic Tsardom brought joy to Liberals and Socialists in Britain and France. The United States of America was the first foreign government to recognize the Provisional government, and entered the war early in April. In Russia, the announcement of the Tsar's abdication was greeted with many emotions. These included delight, relief, fear, anger and confusion.

It is debatable whether Nicholas' enforced abdication was actually legal, and whether he had the right to abdicate on behalf of his son. As Nicholas had already abdicated he was therefore merely a subject of his son, and only Prince Michael as Regent had the right to change the succession. Some historians contend that Nicholas remained the Tsar, at least in theory, until his death.

**Final months and execution (1918)**



The Governor's Mansion in [Tobolsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tobolsk), where the Romanov family was held in captivity between August 1917 and April 1918

Nicholas desperately wanted to go into exile in the United Kingdom following his abdication. The British government initially offered him asylum in England, but this was over-ruled by King [George V](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V) who, acting on the advice of his secretary [Lord Stamfordham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Stamfordham), was worried that Nicholas' presence in the UK might provoke an uprising like the previous year's [Easter Rising](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_Rising) in Ireland. The French government declined to accept the Romanovs in view of increasing unrest on the Western Front and on the home front as a result of the ongoing war with Germany.

In August 1917, the [Kerensky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Kerensky) government evacuated the Romanovs to [Tobolsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tobolsk) in the Urals, allegedly to protect them from the rising tide of revolution. There they lived in the former Governor's Mansion in considerable comfort. In October 1917, however, the [Bolsheviks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolsheviks) seized power from Kerensky's Provisional Government; Nicholas followed the events in October with interest but not yet with alarm.

He continued to underestimate Lenin's importance. In the meantime he and his family occupied themselves with keeping warm. Conditions of imprisonment became more strict, and talk of putting Nicholas on trial grew more frequent. The Tsar was forbidden to wear [epaulettes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epaulette).

On 1 March 1918, the family was placed on soldier's rations, which meant parting with ten devoted servants and giving up butter and coffee as luxuries. What kept the family's spirits up was the belief that help was at hand. The Romanovs believed that various plots were underway to break them out of captivity and smuggle them to safety. But on 30 April 1918 they were transferred to their final destination: the town of [Yekaterinburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yekaterinburg), where they were imprisoned in the two-story [Ipatiev House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ipatiev_House), the home of the military engineer Nikolay Nikolayevich Ipatiev, which ominously became referred to as the "house of special purpose".

In May 1918, central Russia was invaded by the [Czechoslovak Legion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czechoslovak_Legion) ("White Czechs"). On 26 May they captured [Chelyabinsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chelyabinsk), executing all members of the local Soviet; on 31 May at Petropavlovsk they shot all 20 members of the local Soviet. The [Komuch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committee_of_Members_of_the_Constituent_Assembly) government formed on 8 June in [Samara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samara,_Russia) after the Czechs occupied the city. More than 5,000 people in the Volga region fell victim to this regime through the autumn of 1918.

**Execution**

See also: [Shooting of the Romanov family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_the_Romanov_family)

There are several accounts on what happened and historians have not agreed on a solid, confirmed scope of events. By [Yurovsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yakov_Yurovsky)'s (the chief executioner) account in the early hours of 17 July 1918, the royal family was awakened around 2:00 am, told to dress, and led down into a half-basement room at the back of the Ipatiev house. The pretext for this move was the family's safety—that anti-Bolshevik forces were approaching Yekaterinburg, and the house might be fired upon.

Present with Nicholas, Alexandra and their children were their doctor and three of their servants, who had voluntarily chosen to remain with the family—the Tsar's personal physician [Eugene Botkin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugene_Botkin), his wife's maid [Anna Demidova](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Demidova), and the family's chef, [Ivan Kharitonov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Kharitonov), and footman, [Alexei Trupp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexei_Trupp). A firing squad had been assembled and was waiting in an adjoining room, composed of seven Communist soldiers from Central Europe, and three local Bolsheviks, all under the command of Bolshevik officer [Yakov Yurovsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yakov_Yurovsky). The soldiers are often described as Hungarians; in his account, Yurovsky described them as "Latvians".

Nicholas was carrying his son; when the family arrived in the basement, the former empress complained that there were no chairs for them to sit on. Yurovsky ordered two chairs brought in, and when the empress and the heir were seated, the executioners filed into the room. Yurovsky announced to them that they had been condemned to death by the Ural Soviet of Workers' Deputies. A stunned Nicholas asked, "What? What?" and turned toward his family. Yurovsky quickly repeated the order and shot the former emperor outright.

The executioners drew revolvers and the shooting began. Nicholas was the first to die; Yurovsky shot him several times in the chest (sometimes incorrectly said the head, since his skull bore no bullet wounds when it was discovered in 1991). Anastasia, Tatiana, Olga, and Maria survived the first hail of bullets; the sisters were wearing over 1.3 kilograms of diamonds and precious gems sewn into their clothing, which provided some initial protection from the bullets and bayonets. They were stabbed with bayonets and then shot at close range in their heads.

An announcement from the Presidium of the Ural Regional Soviet of the Workers' and Peasants' Government emphasized that conspiracies had been exposed to free the ex-tsar, as well as how counter-revolutionary forces were pressing in on Soviet Russian territory, and that the ex-tsar was guilty of unforgivable crimes against the nation.

In view of the enemy's proximity to Yekaterinburg and the exposure by the Cheka of a serious White Guard plot with the goal of abducting the former Tsar and his family… In light of the approach of counterrevolutionary bands toward the Red capital of the Urals and the possibility of the crowned executioner escaping trial by the people (a plot among the White Guards to try to abduct him and his family was exposed and the compromising documents will be published), the Presidium of the Ural Regional Soviet, fulfilling the will of the Revolution, resolved to shoot the former Tsar, Nikolai Romanov, who is guilty of countless, bloody, violent acts against the Russian people.

**Identification**



Yekaterinburg's "[Church on the Blood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Saints_Resplendent_in_the_Russian_Land)", built on the spot where the Ipatiev House once stood

In 1979, the bodies of Tsar Nicholas II, Tsarina Alexandra, three of their daughters, and those of four non-family members killed with them, were discovered near [Sverdlovsk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yekaterinburg) by amateur archaeologist [Alexander Avdonin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Avdonin). In January 1998, the remains excavated from underneath the dirt road near Yekaterinburg were officially identified as those of Nicholas II and his family (excluding one of his daughters and Alexei). The identifications, performed by separate Russian, British and American scientists using [DNA analysis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DNA_analysis) concur and were found to be conclusive. Nicholas belonged to the paternal [haplogroup R1b](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haplogroup_R1b_(Y-DNA)); based upon Y-STR DNA test results on his remains, which have also been validated with results from a living relative. The Tsar belonged to the maternal [haplogroup T](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haplogroup_T_(mtDNA)) based upon [mitochondrial DNA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitochondrial_DNA) mutations: 16126C, 16169Y, 16294T, 16296T, 73G, 263G, and 315.1C. The DNA analysis also revealed that the rate and pattern of sequence substitutions in the [mitochondrial DNA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitochondrial_DNA) (mtDNA) control region (CR) is roughly twenty-fold higher than estimates derived from phylogenetic analyses. These results have implications for forensic applications and studies of [human evolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_evolution). The tests also determined that Nicholas II's mtDNA, as well as his [brother](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duke_George_Alexandrovich_of_Russia)'s exhibited single base [heteroplasmy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heteroplasmy#notable_cases). After the testing, the remains were finally interred at [St. Peter and Paul Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_and_Paul_Cathedral) in Saint Petersburg on 17 July 1998, eighty years after the executions. The ceremony was attended by then Russian President [Boris Yeltsin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Yeltsin), who said, "Today is a historic day for Russia. For many years, we kept quiet about this monstrous crime, but the truth has to be spoken."

In July 2007, 46-year-old builder Sergei Pogorelov (part of a team from an amateur history group who spent free summer weekends looking for the lost Romanovs) said that after stumbling on a small burned area of ground covered with [nettles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urtica) near Yekaterinburg he had discovered bones that belonged to "a boy and a young woman roughly the ages of Nicholas' 13-year-old hemophiliac son, Alexei, and a daughter whose remains also have never been found."

On 23 August 2007, acting on standard procedures, prosecutors reopened the investigation surrounding the deaths of the Imperial Family.

On 30 April 2008, DNA tests performed by a US laboratory proved that bone fragments exhumed in the Ural Mountains belonged to two children of Nicholas II, son [Alexei](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexei_Nikolaevich,_Tsarevich_of_Russia) (b. 1904) and daughter [Maria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchess_Maria_Nikolaevna_of_Russia_(1899%E2%80%931918)) (b. 1899), according to Russian news agencies. That same day it was announced by Russian authorities that the remains of the entire family had been identified.

On 1 October 2008, Russia's Supreme Court ruled that Nicholas II and his family were victims of political persecution and should be rehabilitated. In March 2009, results of the DNA testing were published, confirming that the two bodies discovered in 2007 were those of Alexei and his sister Maria.

**Sainthood**

Main article: [Romanov sainthood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanov_sainthood)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Tsar Nicholas II of Russia** | |
|  | |
| **Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II of Russia Royal Passion-Bearer Tsar Nicholas II of Russia** | |
| **Born** | (1868-05-18)18 May 1868 [Tsarskoye Selo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarskoye_Selo), [Saint Petersburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Petersburg), Russia |
| **Died** | 17 July 1918(1918-07-17) (aged 50) [Yekaterinburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yekaterinburg), Russia |
| **Honored in** | [Russian Orthodox Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church) |
| [**Canonized**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonization) | 1981 and 2000, Russia by Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and the Russian Orthodox Church |
| **Major** [**shrine**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrine) | [Church on Blood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_All_Saints,_Yekaterinburg), Ekaterinburg, Russia |
| [**Feast**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calendar_of_saints) | [17 July](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/17_July) |

In 1981, Nicholas and his immediate family were [recognized](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonization) as [martyred](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyr) [saints](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint) by the [Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church_Outside_Russia). On 14 August 2000, they were recognized by the [synod](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synod) of the [Russian Orthodox Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church). This time they were not named as martyrs, since their deaths did not result immediately from their Christian faith; instead, they were canonized as [passion bearers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passion_bearer). According to a statement by the Moscow synod, they were glorified as saints for the following reasons:

In the last Orthodox Russian monarch and members of his family we see people who sincerely strove to incarnate in their lives the commands of the Gospel. In the suffering borne by the Royal Family in prison with humility, patience, and meekness, and in their martyrs deaths in Yekaterinburg in the night of 17 July 1918 was revealed the light of the faith of Christ that conquers evil.

However, Nicholas's canonization was controversial. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad was split on the issue back in 1981, some members suggesting that the emperor was a weak ruler and had failed to thwart the rise of the Bolsheviks. It was pointed out by one priest that martyrdom in the Russian Orthodox Church has nothing to do with the martyr's personal actions but is instead related to why he or she was killed.

The Russian Orthodox Church inside Russia rejected the family's classification as martyrs because they were not killed on account of their religious faith. Religious leaders in both churches also had objections to canonizing the Tsar's family because they perceived him as a weak emperor whose incompetence led to the revolution and the suffering of his people and made him partially responsible for his own murder and those of his wife, children and servants. For these opponents, the fact that the Tsar was, in private life, a kind man and a good husband and father or a leader who showed genuine concern for the peasantry did not override his poor governance of Russia.

Despite the original opposition, the [Russian Orthodox Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church) inside Russia ultimately recognized the family as "passion bearers," or people who met their deaths with Christian humility. The Church does not, however, recognize the remains interred at Peter and Paul Cathedral as being those of the Imperial Family.

**Assessment**

Nicholas is generally considered to have been incompetent at the colossal task of ruling the enormous [Russian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire). Historian [Barbara Tuchman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara_Tuchman) gives a damning evaluation of his reign:

[The Russian Empire] was ruled from the top by a sovereign who had but one idea of government—to preserve intact the absolute monarchy bequeathed to him by his father—and who, lacking the intellect, energy or training for his job, fell back on personal favorites, whim, simple mulishness, and other devices of the empty-headed autocrat. His father, [Alexander III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_III_of_Russia), who deliberately intended to keep his son uneducated in statecraft until the age of thirty, unfortunately miscalculated his own life expectancy, and died when Nicholas was twenty-six. The new Tsar had learned nothing in the interval, and the impression of imperturbability he conveyed was in reality apathy—the indifference of a mind so shallow as to be all surface. When a telegram was brought to him announcing [the annihilation of the Russian fleet at Tsushima](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tsushima), he read it, stuffed it in his pocket, and went on playing tennis.

In Russia, Nicholas II faced widespread criticism after the victory of the Revolution. Pavel Bykov, who in Russia wrote the first full account about the downfall of the Tsar, denounced Nicholas as a "tyrant, who paid with his life for the age-old repression and arbitrary rule of his ancestors over the Russian people, over the impoverished and blood-soaked country". Soviet-era historians noted that Nicholas II was not fit to be a statesman. It has been argued that he had a weak will and was manipulated by adventurist forces. His regime was condemned for extensive use of the army, police, and courts to destroy the revolutionary movement. He was criticized for fanning nationalism and chauvinism. With the punitive expeditions and courts-martial during the 1905 Revolution, the monarch became known as "Nicholas the Bloody". Nicholas' reign was seen as a time of suffering for Russians.

[Robert K. Massie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_K._Massie) provides a more sympathetic view of the Tsar:

... there still are those who for political or other reasons continue to insist that Nicholas was "Bloody Nicholas". Most commonly, he is described as shallow, weak, stupid—a one-dimensional figure presiding feebly over the last days of a corrupt and crumbling system. This, certainly, is the prevailing public image of the last Tsar. Historians admit that Nicholas was a "good man"—the historical evidence of personal charm, gentleness, love of family, deep religious faith and strong Russian patriotism is too overwhelming to be denied—but they argue that personal factors are irrelevant; what matters is that Nicholas was a bad tsar .... Essentially, the tragedy

of Nicholas II was that he appeared in the wrong place in history.

**Ancestors**

Main article: [Ancestry of Nicholas II of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancestry_of_Nicholas_II_of_Russia)

|  |
| --- |
| **Ancestors of Nicholas II of Russia** |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 16. [Paul I of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_I_of_Russia) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 8. [Nicholas I of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_I_of_Russia) | | | |  | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 17. [Duchess Sophie Dorothea of Württemburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Feodorovna_(Sophie_Dorothea_of_W%C3%BCrttemberg)) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 4. [Alexander II of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_II_of_Russia) | | | |  | | | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 18. [Frederick William III of Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_William_III_of_Prussia) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 9. [Princess Charlotte of Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandra_Feodorovna_(Charlotte_of_Prussia)) | | | |  | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 19. [Duchess Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise_of_Mecklenburg-Strelitz) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 2. [Alexander III of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_III_of_Russia) | | | |  | | | | | | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 20. [Louis I, Grand Duke of Hesse and by Rhine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_I,_Grand_Duke_of_Hesse) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  | |  | 10. [Louis II, Grand Duke of Hesse and by Rhine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_II,_Grand_Duke_of_Hesse) | | | |  | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 21. [Landgravine Louise of Hesse-Darmstadt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Louise_of_Hesse-Darmstadt_(1761%E2%80%931829)) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 5. [Princess Marie of Hesse and by Rhine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Alexandrovna_(Marie_of_Hesse)) | | | |  | | | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 22. [Charles Louis, Hereditary Prince of Baden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Louis,_Hereditary_Prince_of_Baden) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 11. [Princess Wilhelmine of Baden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Wilhelmine_of_Baden) | | | |  | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 23. [Landgravine Amalie of Hesse-Darmstadt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landgravine_Amalie_of_Hesse-Darmstadt) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 1. **Nicholas II of Russia** | | | |  | | | | | | | | | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 24. [Friedrich Karl Ludwig, Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Beck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Karl_Ludwig,_Duke_of_Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Beck) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 12. [Friedrich Wilhelm, Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Wilhelm,_Duke_of_Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Gl%C3%BCcksburg) | | | |  | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 25. [Countess Friederike of Schlieben](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Countess_Friederike_of_Schlieben) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 6. [Christian IX of Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_IX_of_Denmark) | | | |  | | | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 26. [Landgrave Charles of Hesse-Kassel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landgrave_Charles_of_Hesse-Kassel) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 13. [Princess Louise Caroline of Hesse-Cassel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Louise_Caroline_of_Hesse-Cassel) | | | |  | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 27. [Princess Louise of Denmark and Norway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Louise_of_Denmark_(1750%E2%80%931831)) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 3. [Princess Dagmar of Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Feodorovna_(Dagmar_of_Denmark)) | | | |  | | | | | | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 28. [Landgrave Frederick of Hesse-Cassel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landgrave_Frederick_of_Hesse-Cassel) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 14. [Landgrave William of Hesse-Kassel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landgrave_William_of_Hesse-Kassel) | | | |  | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 29. [Princess Caroline of Nassau-Usingen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Caroline_of_Nassau-Usingen) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 7. [Princess Louise of Hesse-Kassel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise_of_Hesse-Kassel) | | | |  | | | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 30. [Frederick, Hereditary Prince of Denmark and Norway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick,_Hereditary_Prince_of_Denmark_and_Norway) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 15. [Princess Louise Charlotte of Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Louise_Charlotte_of_Denmark) | | | |  | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  | 31. [Duchess Sophia Frederica of Mecklenburg-Schwerin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duchess_Sophia_Frederica_of_Mecklenburg-Schwerin) | | | |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |

**Titles, styles, honours and Arms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Styles of **Nicholas II of Russia** | |
|  | |
| [**Reference style**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Style_(manner_of_address)) | [His Imperial Majesty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/His_Imperial_Majesty) |
| **Spoken style** | Your Imperial Majesty |
| **Alternative style** | Sir |

**Titles and styles**

* 18 May 1868 – 13 March 1881: *His Imperial Highness* Grand Duke Nikolay Alexandrovich of Russia
* 13 March 1881 – 1 November 1894: *His Imperial Highness* The Tsesarevich of Russia
* 1 November 1894 – 15 March 1917: *His Imperial Majesty* The Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias
* 15 March 1917 – 17 July 1918: *Mr.* Nikolay Alexandroviсh Romanov