

THE ROMANOV ROYAL MARTYRS

WHAT SILENCE COULD NOT CONCEAL

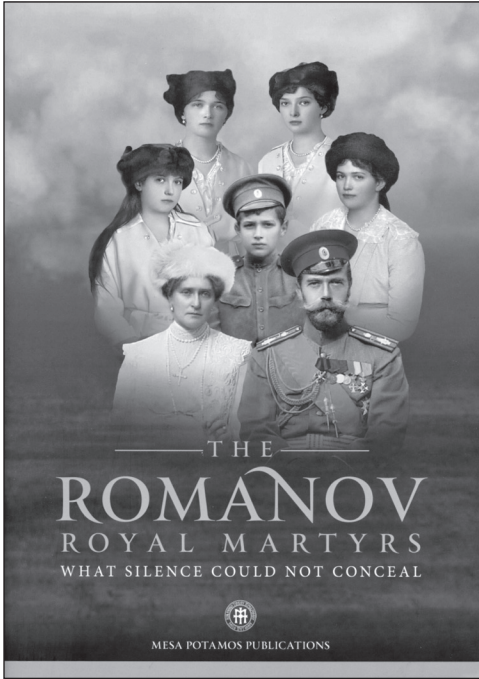
*By the St. John the Forerunner Monastery
of Mesa Potamos, Cyprus*

Reviewed by Monk Nicolas

OVER THE DECADES, when asked by visitors to the St. Herman Monastery what book or books in English we would recommend to them for a thorough, truthful, and, especially, Orthodox appraisal of the lives of Tsar Nicholas II and his family—the Romanov Royal Martyrs—we were at a loss. While some very good memoirs by people who had been close to the family had been published in English, they were virtually all out of print (most having been published in the 1920s) and were hard to find. Additionally, each one of those books contained only one point of view, and so a comprehensive picture from personal, historical, and spiritual perspectives was quite difficult to obtain.

Thanks be to God, this is no longer the case. In 2019 the Brotherhood of the St. John the Forerunner Monastery of Mesa Potamos, Cyprus published, first in Greek and then in English, the book we have been waiting for. Containing information gleaned from an enormous number of primary sources in several languages, *The Romanov Royal Martyrs: What Silence Could Not Conceal* is by far the most complete, accurate, and spiritually edifying publication in English on these great saints of the Orthodox Church.

Beginning with the childhood of Nicholas Alexandrovich Romanov, the future emperor of Russia, this book gives us an in-depth



picture of a highly intelligent, sensitive, and exceedingly pious man. Although, due to the early death of his father, Tsar Alexander III, Tsar Nicholas was not as well prepared as he should have been to take over the throne of his huge nation, we are shown how his determination to accept this responsibility as a duty entrusted to him by God Himself enabled him to preside over an astounding rate of growth in Russia in all spheres: educational, industrial, economic, etc.

Several prevalent myths about Tsar Nicholas' reign

are dispelled through the extensive use of reference materials, including state archives, letters, diaries, and memoirs written by a wide variety of people: those who personally knew the family, members of the government, and political supporters, as well as opponents. The truth is told about the disaster at Khodynka Field at the time of the inauguration,¹ so-called Bloody Sunday,² and, especially, the widespread conspiracy to

¹ Four days after Tsar Nicholas' coronation, an outdoor reception was organized, at which refreshments and souvenir cups were to be distributed. The crowd far exceeded expectations, and numerous people were killed or injured in the press.

² On January 9, 1905, a procession was organized by a socialist priest, Fr. George Gapon, with the aim of presenting a petition to the Tsar for the improvement of working conditions. Events spiralled out of control, and there were many casualties. This event was used by the Bolsheviks as a rallying cry for propaganda purposes. The facts demonstrated in this book show a very different story from the one that has been accepted for more than a century.

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overthrow the monarchy. Concerning the latter, for the first time in English the reader is informed as to how incredibly wide-ranging this conspiracy was, embracing not only revolutionaries and hostile politicians, but the tsar's generals and even members of his own extended family. When, on the day of his abdication, Tsar Nicholas wrote in his journal, "All around is betrayal, cowardice and deceit!" one can now understand precisely what he meant.

This book gives us a detailed and lively portrait of the entire family, illuminating their personalities and, especially, their spiritual lives. Tsaritsa Alexandra is shown for the deeply Christian woman she was, and the many slanders that Soviet and Western histories have heaped upon her are deftly dispelled. The mutual love among the members of the family and their profound love of Christ and holy Orthodoxy are demonstrated, showing why this family can rightly be regarded as patron saints for Christian families. The spiritual aspect of their lives becomes particularly evident in the chapters dedicated to their life after the abdication when, being in captivity, they consciously withdrew from all worldly considerations and delved more and more deeply into their devotion to Christ, preparing themselves for their ultimate sacrifice.

The Romanov Royal Martyrs is a well-written and engaging book. By the time one finishes it, one feels a kinship to these holy martyrs. A feeling of deep sorrow at what they were forced to endure is mixed with a feeling of reverence for what they became.

Taking part in the research for this book were Romanov historians Nicholas Nicholson, Helen Azar, and Helen Rappaport. This 514-page, lavishly illustrated classic includes a 56-page insert of photographs of the Royal Martyrs and of other figures connected with them, beautifully colored, with meticulous attention to historical accuracy, by Olga Shirnina.

The Romanov Royal Martyrs is available in the United States from Eighth Day Books in Wichita, Kansas (www.eighthdaybooks.com).