Ra-Ra-Rasputin:
The Fall of a Hyper-Sexualized Interpretation

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Shot dead but sprung back to life with the smashing hit "Rasputin" by Boney M, Rasputin's legacy managed to live on beyond his untimely death in 1916. Rasputin has become a recognizable name that many people know of, but he is such a controversial figure in Russian history that even the origin of his name is debated.[1] Rising out of the Siberian peasantry, Grigori Efimovich Rasputin (1864–1916) gained favor with social circles in St. Petersburg after traveling on several pilgrimages across Europe and the Middle East.[2] His travels eventually led him to meet the tsar and tsarina.[3] Tsar Nicholas II (1868–1918) desperately needed someone to treat his son Tsarevich Alexei Nikolaevich (1904–1918). Alexei suffered from hemophilia, a genetic condition that causes his blood to not clot when cut or bruised. After medical experts informed the family that it was untreatable, the family turned to a "Holy Man." After one particularly bad injury, the royal physician said that the boy would not recover. This prompted Rasputin to conduct his first healing on Alexei, in 1906. It is said that after touching the boy and praying over him, the hemorrhaging stopped, and the boy made a recovery.[4] This ability to "cure" Alexi would solidify his role in the Russian court. The tale of Rasputin's rise to power has held consistent over time, but his fall from power and the ultimate cause of his death has been debated. The old revolutionary side focuses more on the sexual immorality of Rasputin, while the Western view focuses more on his grasping of power in the Russian Court. While both early Soviet-era and modern historians recognize the same causes for his descent from power, they differ in the importance of one cause over another. Utilizing the lens of the Soviet revolutionaries and Western interpretations, "Rasputin," the Euro disco craze, captures the revolutionary interpretation, and illustrates how the Soviets would even reject their own tale.

Rasputin's rise to power was at a time of major turmoil and social reconstruction in Russian society. The Great Reforms, from 1855–1890, attempted to alleviate some pressure built by the working class and work toward a constitutional monarchy.[5] These reforms, including industrialization and emancipating the serfs, ultimately resulted in even more hostility from the peasantry. Proving the nobility right, the reforms resulted in the peasants becoming upset with the

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[1] Rasputin made many enemies, and they spread false accusations that they tagged him with the name Rasputin. They believe it means "the dissolute" due to his "licentious sexual conduct as an adolescent." (*Dictionary of the Russian Revolution*, 474) Since then the name has been shown to have been in his family line since the times of Catherine the Great. The bad connotation given by the name would cause him to try and shed the name and replace it with "Novyi," meaning "new", but he would ultimately fail in the effort.

[2] George Jackson and Robert Devlin, eds., *Dictionary of the Russian Revolution* (CITY: Greenwood Press, 1989), 474–75.

[3] Joseph Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life* (CITY: Praeger Pub Text, 1990), 16.

[4] Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 25-26.

[5] Anthony Miller, "Why Reform?" *Great Reforms & the Crimean Syndrome, Lecture* Notes, Hanover College, November 8, 2022.

inflation of land and nobles succumbing to poverty.[6] Following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II (1818–1881), Russia entered a period of counter-reforms. This period aimed to retain some of the powers that the Crown had released. The Crown illustrated this by reinstating censorship restrictions, enshrining eastern orthodoxy into the educational curriculum, and re-establishing police presence.[7] The revoking of the reforms and general animosity towards the crown boiled over on January 9, 1905, when Father Georgii Gapon (1870–1906) led a march to deliver a petition to the tsar at the Winter Palace. Tsar Nicholas II ordered the military to open fire on the crowd, and it resulted in the deaths of well over a hundred people. Becoming known as "Bloody Sunday," this massacre began the Revolution of 1905.[8] Occurring at the same time, the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) unveiled the incompetency of the Romanovs as rulers.[9] With this major conglomeration of social reforms and failures, how does Rasputin fit into the picture? Like a spark on a field of dry tinder, Rasputin was one of the many catalysts that ignited the Bolshevik Revolution.

Rasputin arrived in St. Petersburg in 1905 and slowly gained influence over the royal family. Becoming the tsarina's favorite among the Russian Court was rather simple for Rasputin. All he had to do was "heal" her hemophiliac son, Alexei. Among members of the court, his adherence to the Khlysty sect drove his decline. The Khlysty sect's rituals were reported to entail the "ship" (congregation) holding hands and chanting at night in basements (due to it being illegal to practice). During the chanting, the leader of the ship would whip anyone who broke the formation. Most notably, after the chanting, the group would fall to the floor and engage in group intercourse.[10] The revolutionary interpretation highlights the hyper-sexualization of Rasputin by predominantly focusing on his adherence to the Khlysty sect.

Fülöp-Miller, the author of *Rasputin: The Holy Devil*, recounts the life of Rasputin using the lens offered by the monk-priest Iliodor, an enemy of Rasputin and author of the pamphlet *Rasputin: The Holy Devil*. Although Fülöp-Miller, an Austria-Hungarian, isn't a historian who believes in the revolutionary interpretation, he utilizes a series of soviet documents and "facts" to recount the life of Rasputin down to mere minutes in some stories. The pinpoint accuracy of minute-by-minute stories sends up signs of inaccuracy. Fülöp-Miller exclaims, "[W]ith wonderful academic pedantry, a collection of false facts and dates, wrong persons and places, was put together with an air of exactness that is hardly ever to be met with in biographies founded on fact."[11] As

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[6] Anthony Miller, "The Shock," *Great Reforms & The Crimean Syndrome*, Lecture Notes, Hanover College, November 8, 2022.

[7] Anthony Miller, "Counter-Reform: Alexander III, 1881-1894," *Counter Reform and Revolt*, Lecture Notes, Hanover College, November 15, 2022.

[8] Gregory L Freeze, *Russia: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 214–15.

[9] Anthony Miller, "Russo-Japanese War," *Bloody Sunday and the 1905 Revolution*, Lecture Notes, Hanover College, November 22, 2022.

[10] Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 6.

[11] Need footnote.

someone aware of the inaccuracies, he is able to craft a depiction of Rasputin without subscribing to it. On the other hand, his knowledge of its inaccuracies may create a space for him to exaggerate stories to the point that readers question, "how could anyone believe this?"

In these exaggerated stories, Rasputin was accused of many things, from pretending to be a priest all the way to having sexual relations with children. While these are terrible on their own, the Duma, an elected parliament established in the *October Manifesto,* would charge him with being a Khlysty.[12] In a conversation between the president of the Duma and the tsar, they discuss Rasputin's membership with the Khlysty sect:

> [Rodzianko] produced a photograph of the starets wearing a pectoral cross . . .
>
> The Tsar replied:
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> 'Yes, this is really going too far. He has no right to wear a pectoral cross.'
>
> 'It's blasphemy, your Majesty . . . here is another photograph. It's a 'Khlysty ship' . . . Here is Rasputin . . . with two young men . . . It's a 'ship' bearing its inmates towards fornication.'[13]

In the conversation between the tsar and the president of the Imperial Duma, the president would attest many things, like him committing blasphemous actions, homosexuality, and most importantly, sexual promiscuity. The Duma would protest to have Rasputin removed from St. Petersburg permanently. The tsar would refuse to banish him.[14]

In the following years, Rasputin's position in court would only get stronger. While attaining more power, his accusations of sexual deviance against him only grew. While Rasputin was gaining influence over the tsarina, not until World War I would he have major influence over policies. During these times, he would be placed under police surveillance and the following reports were recorded:

> 21 February. Nicolai Alexeievitch Glazov visited Rasputin by car, bringing with him several bottles of wine; having been joined by Rasputin, they both drove to the Great Northern Hotel to see Terekhov-Miklashevskaia [a courtesan]. They stayed with her for one hour and fifty minutes.
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> 11 March. At 10-15 in the morning Rasputin was overtaken by the watch in Gorokhovaia Street and followed to No. 8, Poushkinskaia Street to the prostitute Tregoubova, and thence to the baths.
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> 3 April. Rasputin brought a woman with him, who spent the night in his flat.[15]

The police surveillance shows several instances of Rasputin allegedly engaging in sexual behaviors. Instances like these would build his reputation for immoral promiscuities. Not only

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[12] "Rasputin: The Holy Devil," Reprinted from M.V. Rodzianko, *The Reign of Rasputin: An Empire's Collapse* in *Imperial Russia: A Sourcebook, 1700-1917* (Academic International Press, 1999), 481.

[13] "Rasputin: The Holy Devil," Reprinted from M.V. Rodzianko, *The Reign of Rasputin,* 483.

[14] "Rasputin: The Holy Devil," Reprinted from M.V. Rodzianko, *The Reign of Rasputin,* 483.

[15] "Okhrana Surveillance Report on Rasputin," www.alexanderpalace.org (Alexander Palace), accessed November 9, 2022, https://www.alexanderpalace.org/palace/rasputinreport.php.

building his reputation but the accumulation of official reports could also be used against him in courts of law.

With the onset of World War I and failing strategies, Tsar Nicholas would directly take the reins of the front lines. In the process, he would leave Tsarina Alexandra and Rasputin to run the government.[16] The tsarina and Rasputin had rumors of an affair, being publicly addressed by the Duma, since 1912.[17] With the capital being abandoned by the tsar, the rumors would grow and aid in the rebellion. Fülöp-Miller explains, "mmediately after the collapse, it became necessary to supply the masses as quickly as possible with blood-curdling stories about the Imperial Court, in order to rouse and maintain in them the spirit of rebellion, and, for that reason, this figure of Rasputin was offered to the public as the one authentic portrait."[18] Even after Rasputin's death in 1916, he would be used by revolutionaries as an amoral character used to stoke the fires of revolution. The postcard below was distributed in 1917 among a collection of other pornographic postcards. The caption on the postcard[19] reads "'Autocracy.' The postcard plays on the double meaning of the word *derzhit* — the verb 'to hold' but equally the root of the word 'autocracy' (*samoderzhavie*)."[20] Rasputin's hold on the Empress makes him the true ruler of Russia…" Historians Figes and Kolonitskii write, "[pornographic postcards, films, and stories], after all, had become almost part of the official version of events leading to the downfall of the monarchy in so far as, after the February Revolution, they were freely repeated by the press as 'facts', and to some extent believed by people such as Blok who sat on the Provisional Government's Extraordinary Commission of Inquiry into malfeasance of the

Figure 1: Pornographic postcard distributed by 1917

[16] Anthony Miller, "Collapsing Order," *The February Revolution,* Lecture Notes, Hanover College, November 29, 2022.

[17] "Rasputin: The Holy Devil," Reprinted from M.V. Rodzianko, *The Reign of Rasputin, 1700-1917*, 485.

[18] Fülöp-Miller, *Rasputin: The Holy Devil*, V.

[19] Houghton Library, *Autocracy*, 1917, postcard, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917*, 1917.

[20] Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 1999), 12.

court."[21] Believing the tales to be true, the revolutionary interpretation emphasized the hyper-fixation of Rasputin's sex life with the tsarina ultimately to bring down the monarchy.

In an attempt to unravel the strings of misinformation, a debate arose around Rasputin's adherence to the Khlysty. Author of *Rasputin and the Russian Revolution*, published in 1917, Princess Catherine Radziwill writes that western European courts were accustomed to the occult, but Russian society had many deep religious sects that were "given to all kinds of excesses and to attacks of pious madness."[22] She continues to explain that there are a series of other cults doing far worse. The Philipovtsy believed in salvation through suicide, leading to mass suicides. The Dietooubitsy (nicknamed baby killers) believed it was their duty to kill newborn infants to remove them from the powers of evil. Finally, the Stranglers believed they must suffer a violent death to enter the gates of heaven.[23] While these cults may be doing things she detests as more morally corrupt than the Khlysty, it does not counteract the illegality of the Khlysty sect.[24] Her justifying his enrollment in the sect suggests that she, a Western, early 20th-century historian, believes he was a member. In the preface to his book, Fülöp-Miller reports that the revolutionaries' mob mentality led to the development of an "equally ill-founded life of Rasputin" to support their cause.[25] A modern, Western historian Joseph Fuhrmann writes, "Rasputin was not a [Khlysty]—nor did members of the group mingle sex and worship. Splinter groups practiced 'holy intercourse,' but most khlysty were devout pentecostalists who condemned such behavior."[26] He is definitively defining his position that Rasputin was not a member of the cult. Another late 20th-century pair, Jackson and Devlin, write, "[I]t is unlikely that [Rasputin] joined the sect in any formal sense."[27] Challenging the rumors about Rasputin's worship, Fuhrmann, Jackson, and Devlin are turning the focus away from Rasputin's sexual deviance. The early 20th century was a time of conflicting ideas around Rasputin's adherence to the cult, illustrated through Radziwill and Fülöp-Miller opposing positions. As time progressed, the Western interpretation—as illustrated through Fuhrmann's and also Jackson's and Devlin's views—has agreed that Rasputin was never actually a part of the Khlysty sect.

Diving into the modern interpretation, historians now believe that Rasputin's influence and ultimate demise resided in his yearning for power. John T. Fuhrmann explored the life of Rasputin through well-tracked and analyzed sources. He spent nine years working on his book *Rasputin: A*

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21 Figes and Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution*, 121.

22 Catherine Radziwill, *Rasputin and the Russian Revolution* (New York, NY: Public Ledger Company, 1917), https://ia600200.us.archive.org/29/items/cu31924027016819/cu31924027016819.pdf, 26.

23 Radziwill, *Rasputin and the Russian Revolution*, 27-28.

24 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 6.

25 Fülöp-Miller, *Rasputin: The Holy Devil*, V

26 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 7.

27 Jackson and Devlin, eds., *Dictionary of the Russian Revolution*, 474.

Life.[28] Having dedicated this much time to a project shows a sign of having a special interest in its success and possible groundbreaking reporting. This suspicion has diminished over time although acceptance of his theory was common at the time the book was published. Fuhrmann's story of Rasputin would start with his humble beginnings as a Siberian peasant. To Western historians, his peasant status would be the initial cause of his hatred among the nobles.[29] Nobles and peasants have long had feuds throughout Russian history, but the abolishment of serfdom exacerbated the issue.[30] On top of the cultural differences between nobles and peasants, the nobility especially hated that Rasputin was able to rise above them. A peasant from Siberia gained more influence over the government than the nobles in the Russian court. Although his status made him unpopular with the nobles, the royal family loved his status as a peasant. Their romanticized ideas of peasants solidified Rasputin as one of the most influential people in the Russian court.[31]

Using his position in court, Rasputin applied his influence to divide the Holy Synod, the top council of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Rasputin was initially very useful to the church. Fuhrmann explains, "Grigori appeared on the scene at the precise moment church leaders were seeking people of his type. The bishops were worried about the Church and feared it was losing contact with ordinary people . . . . Experts were amazed at his knowledge of scripture and his ability to present settled doctrines in a fresh, original way."[32] Although it was the official religion, the church was in turmoil. The "New Generation" was challenging the church's position in society. They were pushing for science to be used to plan society instead of the church.[33] The church would initially accept Rasputin to try and overcome the disconnect between the church and the people. This soon changed, though. Often after meeting with Rasputin, church officials would turn away from him. In December of 1911, two priests, Iliodor and Hermogen, would finally turn against Rasputin after hearing of his promiscuity. They tried to have him banished from Russia for three years, but Rasputin got to the tsar before they could. He recounted his side of the story, and it resulted in both Iliodor and Hermogen being stripped of their titles.[34] Fuhrmann writes, "Rasputin's clash with Hermogen and Iliodor confirmed the public's conviction the Grigori was all-powerful and could defeat any foe."[35] Next, he toppled the head of the church. He used his power and influence over the tsar to have Serge Lukyanov, Director General of the Holy Synod,

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28 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, IX.

29 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 54.

30 Anthony Miller, "Exploring Emancipation," *Great Reforms and The Crimean Syndrome*, Lecture Notes, Hanover College, November 15, 2022.

31 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 54.

32 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 14-15.

33 Anthony Miller, "'New People': Revolution, Terror, and Intelligentsia," *Counter-Reform and Revolt*, Lecture Notes, Hanover College, November 15, 2022.

34 Fuhrmann, Rasputin: A Life, 82-83.

35 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 84.

removed. Lukyanov, in support of Iliodor, made a report discrediting Rasputin as a holy man. This would upset Alexandra, and she had Lukyanov removed from the synod.[36] In a report to the tsar, Rodzianko, president of the Duma, tells stories about how Rasputin's adherence to the Khlysty sect had divided church officials, and how they were persecuted for speaking ill of Rasputin.[37] Clearing the church out of his way, Rasputin removed most opposition from the church to his reign with Alexandra.

With the onset of World War I and the removal of Tsar Nicholas II from the government, Rasputin had unchecked power. The political cartoon below, entitled, "Russia's Ruling House,"[38] illustrates how the public viewed Rasputin's role in the government. They viewed him as a puppet master, pulling the string of the tsar and tsarina. The power the public perceived became an issue when they suspected him of being a German sympathizer. Rasputin's opposition to xenophobia and war would spark suspicion of him being pro-German.[39] His unchecked power and alleged German support would result in his bad reputation ballooning. Illustrating his infamousness, "poet Mariana Tsvetaeve noted, 'One man's name was on everyone's lips, that of Grigori Rasputin' . . . Prince Zhivkov recalled, 'People did not understand each other, they did not have a common language but rather tore at each other, inflicting blows and charges of blame.' Exasperated hosts and restaurant owners finally posted signs that proclaimed: 'No talking about Rasputin here!'"[40] Rasputin became so infamous that public outrage was boiling over.

He became targeted and assaulted by various officers. The ultimate assault would come on December 16, 1916. A Russian Aristocrat Felix Yusupov, would poison his wine, shoot him in the head, and then drop him, through a hole in the ice, into the Neva River where he most likely died from drowning.[41] Although Yusupov's motivations are not officially known, Fuhrmann narrows them down to two plausible but not verifiable options. One suggests that Yusupov had tried to initiate a sexual relationship between himself and Rasputin. Maria Rasputin claimed that Yusupov sought revenge for being rejected. The second option is that Yusupov thought Rasputin was trying to unseat his cousin, Tsar Nicholas II. Rasputin said, "[T]he empress is a very wise ruler. She is a second Catherine [the Great]; but as for him, well he is no Tsar Emperor, he is just a child of

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36 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life,* 74.

37 "Rasputin: The Holy Devil," Reprinted from M.V. Rodzianko, *The Reign of Rasputin,* 481.

38 N. Ivanov, *Russia's Ruling House,* n.d., Book, *Rasputin: The Holy Devil,* n.d.

39 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life,* 191.

40 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life,* 191.

41 Jackson and Devlin, eds., *Dictionary of the Russian Revolution,* 477.

God."[42] Yusupov took this as a direct threat to Nicholas. Recruiting others, Yusupov attained a team, including Vladimir Purichkevich and two others. Fuhrmann claims that Purichkevich's motivation was that he feared Rasputin was undermining the authority of the tsardom.[43] The modern perspective acknowledges Rasputin's sexual deviance, but its main focus resides on his power to disrupt the Holy Synod and how his murderers were motivated by Rasputin's power over the tsar.

Rasputin was a legend during and after his time. The tales about him, overshadowing his life, left a vacuum of biographies and art.[44] One of these art forms was a song entitled "Rasputin," by Boney M., released on the album *Nightflight to Venus*. The song would become a hit across worldwide markets.[45] The song recounts rumors about Rasputin's rise and fall from power. When the song was released in 1978, the story of Rasputin was in the later stages of the shift between the revolutionary and modern interpretations. Still, the song predominantly retells stories of Rasputin's sexual promiscuity, focusing on the revolutionaries' version of the story.

The first chorus and the verse that follows can be broken down into 3 sections, revealing the imbalance between the two interpretations. The first is influenced by revolutionary interpretations, and it reads, "Ra Ra Rasputin, lover of the Russian Queen\Ra Ra Rasputin, Russia's greatest love machine."[46] The second section, the modern aspect, expresses his influence. The song notes, "He ruled the Russian land and never mind the Czar\In all affairs of state he was the man to please."[47] The final section of the chorus reverts to the sexualized interpretation, stating, "But he was real great when he had a girl to squeeze\For the queen he was no wheeler dealer\Though she'd heard the things he done\She believed he was a holy healer\Who would heal her son."[48] These lines show a two-to-one imbalance in narratives.

The rest of the song reveals an even more exacerbated imbalance. The song alternates between men and women singing to develop themselves as foils. When the men sing, they are progressing the story, such as explaining his murder or emphasizing power. When the women sing, it is focusing on how great Rasputin was and how he was a lover. For example, using the first stanza of the song:

Men: There lived a certain man in Russia long ago.

Women: He was big and strong, in his eyes a flaming glow.

Men: Most people looked at him in terror and in fear.

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42 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 198.

43 Fuhrmann, *Rasputin: A Life*, 199.

44 Jackson and Devlin, eds., *Dictionary of the Russian Revolution*, 477.

45 "Boney M Rocks Russian Booties," *Billboard: End of Year Charts*, December 23, 1978, World Radio History, https://worldradiohistory.com/Archive-All-Music/Billboard/70s/1978/Billboard%201978-12-23.pdf.

46 Boney M, *Rasputin*, Vinyl (Hansa Records, 1978).

47 Boney M, *Rasputin*.

48 Boney M, *Rasputin*.

> Women: But to Moscow chicks he was such a lovely dear\he also was the kind of teacher women would desire.[49]

These lines establish the men's roles as storytellers and the women's roles as sympathizers. Using this baseline to assess the rest of the song reveals some lines that have double entendre. Outside of the chorus, the women sing four times about his promiscuity, with lines like "though he was a brute they just fell into his arms" and "'come to visit.' They kept demanding and he really came."[50] This last lyric specifically has a double entendre as it advances the story of him going to the house where he died, or it is illuding to him having sexual relations with the women, emphasizing the ejaculation. These hyper-sexualized lines fall right into the narrative that was pushed by the revolutionaries that portrayed Rasputin and the royal family as corrupt and immoral.

Would this song, based on immorality, be accepted by the Soviet Union? No, for although the song was released in an era of détente with western media, the Soviet government "closely censored, anything resembling pornography."[51] The government banned Boney M from performing the song in Moscow, even though the Soviets permitted the band to play in the USSR.[52] Similarly, the Soviets tried to prevent the performance of the song at the eastern European song competition, Intervision. The 1979 Intervision Song Contest, held in Sopot, Poland, was much like Eurovision, a contest to mesh the Eastern bloc together through music and propaganda.[53] Boney M would end up performing the song,[54] even after the Soviet Union asked them not to. Like during the fall of the Romanovs, the song would catch on in the USSR, and the government failed to respond to the private market.[55] By the 1970s, the revolutionary interpretation, displayed in the song "Rasputin", was rejected by the Soviets and had been phased out by modern historians. Soviet leadership's recusal of pornography, illustrated through the song, symbolizes how they turned on the ideas of sexual immorality when it became convenient for them.

Understanding these perspectives allows space to understand their significance. The revolutionary perspective would be vital to the Revolution of 1917. The dramatization and usage of pornography would shape the face of revolution and keep the embers burning. This perspective does not place Rasputin's person as a very significant person in the course of Russian history. If revolutionaries believe him to be the symbol of the toxic and corrupt tsardom, they are valuing his

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[49] Boney M, *Rasputin*.

[50] Boney M, *Rasputin*.

[51] S. Frederick Starr, "The Rock Inundation," *The Wilson Quarterly (1976-)* 7, no. 4 (Autumn, 1983) (1983), 67.

[52] Starr, "The Rock Inundation," *The Wilson Quarterly*, 67.

[53] Anna Piotrowska, "About Twin Song Festivals in Eastern and Western Europe: Intervision and Eurovision," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* vol. 47, no. 1 (June 2016), 123–35.

[54] VEVO, "Boney M. - Rasputin (Sopot Festival 1979)," YouTube, May 29, 2015, https://youtu.be/16y1AkoZkmQ.

[55] Starr, "The Rock Inundation," *The Wilson Quarterly*, 67.

legacy of immoral sexual deviance more than himself. On the flip side, the modern interpretation places Rasputin's person as a significant figure. By placing him as the first domino to fall in a line of assassinations, Rasputin was a puppeteer of the government. His leading the government would place him as a historically significant figure in a time of major social dysfunction.

The web of lies used to push the Revolution of 1917 would ultimately be disproved as the main cause of his descent from power. Fülöp-Miller portrayed Rasputin's life from a revolutionary perspective. He told of Rasputin as sexually promiscuous and claimed he was a Khlysty. Using his membership in the cult to undermine him, revolutionaries believed he had infected the royal family, even to the extent of an alleged affair with the tsarina. The usage of pornographic content continued to advance the revolution in the following years after Rasputin's death in 1916. Transitioning into modernity, a debate arose around Rasputin's adherence to the Khlysty sect. In the early 20th century, historians debated the case of his membership, but as time progressed, late 20th-century historians agreed on his absence from the sect. They acknowledged that he was promiscuous, but he was not a Khlysty. Further elaborating on the modern perspective, according to Fuhrmann, Rasputin's status as a peasant caused the Duma and nobles to hate him. He divided the Holy Synod, setting himself up for when he ruled alongside Alexandra. Even then, people viewed Rasputin as a puppet master pulling the strings of the Russian government. His control over the government ultimately led to his assassination by a group led by Felix Yusupov. This group's motivations for murder aid the modern interpretation as the group feared his influence. Utilizing the two historical lenses to evaluate the song "Rasputin" by Boney M revealed that even the Soviets would turn against their interpretation. The Soviets' perspective in the 1970s led to the song being banned due to its Western ideologies. When the revolutionary perspective was no longer useful to the Soviet government, they banned it due to its pornographic nature. Today, Rasputin's significance has shifted from a focus on his legacy to his personal influence in the government. His role in Russian history and the reasons for his descent have been debated, and the historical consensus seems to have shifted in the direction that Rasputin was important to the Revolution of 1917 and that he was not a cult member, but was simply craving too much power.

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Lecture Notes

Anthony Miller, *Great Reforms & the Crimean Syndrome, Lecture* Notes, Hanover College, November 8, 2022.

Anthony Miller, *Bloody Sunday and the 1905 Revolution*, Lecture Notes, Hanover College, November 22, 2022

Anthony Miller, *Counter Reform and Revolt*, Lecture Notes, Hanover College, November 15, 2022.

Anthony Miller, *The February Revolution*, Lecture Notes, Hanover College, November 29, 2022.