

The Last Diary of Tsaritsa Alexandra (Annals of Communism Series)

By Tsaritsa Alexandra

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The last Tsaritsa of Russia, Alexandra Feodorovna, was murdered with her family on the night of 16-17 July 1918 by agents acting on behalf of the revolutionary Bolshevik government. The story of the demise of the Romanov dynasty has been recounted many times. This book - the recently declassified 1918 diary of Alexandra - aims to provide something no other account could do: a glimpse of the Tsaritsa's thoughts and activities from 1 January 1918 until the night of her death. As the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, Alexandra wrote in English, though her native language was German and she became fluent in Russian after her marriage to Nicholas. The 1918 diary takes us into her private world, revealing the care she lavished on her children during this period of revolutionary turmoil, how she felt towards her husband, Tsar Nicholas, and what she imagined about the profound struggle - between past and present, old and new worlds, the sacred and the profane - then occurring over the destiny of Russia. The diary reveals that even in her most intimate reflections, she remained the representative of a great system of belief that had prevailed for hundreds of years in Russia and that she and Nicholas hoped to perpetuate. We see in detail the daily confrontation between this system of belief and the reality of the modern world that had, in every sense, broken free of her and Nicholas's control. The Tsaritsa's diary is accompanied by an introduction by Robert Massie. A biographical portrait of Alexandra, the introduction places her in the historical context of the revolution, her marriage to Nicholas, and the events that encompassed her, her family, and her nation.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal
For the first time since the Romanov papers were carried off from the execution site at Ekaterinburg, most of the handwritten diaries of Tsaritsa Alexandra have been released to Russian scholars. In his lengthy introduction, Robert Massie (The Romanovs, LJ 10/15/95) has drawn on this translation by Kozlov (deputy director of the State Archive of the Russian Federation) and archivist Khrustalev to bolster information found in his own works. Very little of substance is added to the discussion of Alexandra by this cryptic diary, which takes on significance not so much for what it says but for the organizational patterns and styles that it assumes as the events of the final months of 1918 ebb and flow. Save for the introduction, this book is not necessary for most library collections. Recommended for academic libraries with Russian Revolution collections.?Harry V. Willems, Southeast Kansas Lib. Sys., Iola
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From Kirkus Reviews
Sketchy diary notes from Alexandra's final days of captivity will interest only experts and the most dogged devotees of the doomed Romanovs. The collapse of the Soviet Union has enabled publication, for the first time in complete form, of the final diary of Tsaritsa Alexandra, edited by two staffers of the State Archive of the Russian Federation. Alexandra's diary conveys the tightening restrictions (i.e., painted windows, less outdoor time) imposed on the Romanovs during their final months under house arrest. It also attests to her intense religious faith and her boundless love for her children, especially the tsarevitch. But its style is terse and dry; notations are mere jottings, and full sentences are rare. Helpful footnotes include biographical details, explanations of religious terms, and excerpts of other diaries. (Nicholas's diary, with its narrative drive and attention to the outside world, stands in stark contrast to his wife's inwardly turned journal.) This perfunctorily written text receives an overwritten presentation. Nicholas and Alexandra author Massie and Jonathan Brent (editor of Yale University Press), who both contribute introductions, assert that the secret significance of Alexandra's diary lies in its tedium: the tsaritsa's personal record of time, weather, Russian Orthodox holidays, and birthdays. Such details, Massie claims, record ``her symbolic accommodation of the new and her resistance to the destruction of a traditional order of thought, action, and belief.'' Brent's approach is guided by both semiotics and psychoanalysis; in Alexandra's recourse to a private language he finds ``a complicated relationship to herself.'' The implication is that one must read Alexandra's diary as a semiotic text encoding the clash between the old and new, the sacred and the profane. Readers who are inclined to accept this task will find food for thought in the tsaritsa's diary. Those skeptical about having to decode the diary's ``mute pathos and ironic witness'' will simply be bored. -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

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