



Nicholas II: Last of the Tsars

Marc Ferro

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One of the world's preeminent historians, Marc Ferro is a leading member of the Annales School of France and a recognized authority on early twentieth-century European history. For well over two decades, in volumes such as *The February Revolution of 1917* and *October 1917*, he has demonstrated an unsurpassed skill in capturing the social and political forces that led to the Russian Revolution. Now Ferro turns his considerable talents to the biography of one of the pivotal figures of that era, Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia. For this important new biography, Ferro has searched extensively in Russian archives to illuminate Nicholas's character. What emerges is a vivid portrait of a reluctant leader, a young man forced by the death of his father into a role for which he was ill-equipped. A conformist and traditionalist, Nicholas admired the order, ritual, and ceremony identified with the intangible grandeur of autocracy, and he hated everything that might shake that autocracy—the intelligentsia, the Jews, the religious sects. His reign, as Ferro documents, was one of continual trouble: a humiliating war with Japan; the 1905 revolution that forced Nicholas to accept a constitutional assembly, the Duma; the international crisis of 1914, leading to World War I; and finally the Revolution of 1917, forcing his abdication. Throughout, we see a Tsar who was utterly opposed to change and to the ferment of ideas that stirred his country, who felt it was his duty to preserve intact the powers God had entrusted in him. Ferro also provides an intimate portrait of Nicholas's personal life: his wife Alexandra; his four daughters, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia, sisters so close they signed letters "O.T.M.A.," the initials of their Christian names; his son and heir Alexis, who suffered from hemophilia; and the various figures in the court, most notably Rasputin, whose ability to revive the frequently ailing Alexis made him in

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