**PODCAST PLAN ABSTRACT**

* **Proposed Title**
  + **Bloodshed Memoir**
* **Proposed Topic**
  + Historical assassinations that changed the world or countries in which they occurred.
  + Historical eras will range from antiquity to modern day, different countries
    - Examples
      * Julius Caesar, Abraham Lincoln, Qassem Suleimani
* **Proposed Format**
  + Serious storytelling
  + Historical figures/eras selected randomly
* **Proposed POV/Approach/Style/Voice**
  + **Serious, thoughtful, authentic storytelling**
  + **Scripted narration by myself** 
    - **Introduce self, same intro on every episode**
* **Proposed Episode Frequency**
  + **30-45 minute episodes**
  + **New episodes weekly**
* **Why are you the right person to launch this particular podcast?**
  + **Finding out why leaders are assassinated-Political, social, judicial?**
  + **Finding motives behind the killers**
* **Who is your intended audience?**
  + True-crime listeners
* **Why is your podcast needed?**
  + True-crime style podcast among most popular, 3rd most popular according to Statista
* **Are there any podcasts that are serving as your inspiration?**
  + Sword and Scale, Criminal

It is the early hours of the morning of Wednesday July 17, 1918 when the smoke from gunfire begins to clear from the small basement. Two once occupied chairs are now empty, their previous occupants now lying dead on the floor. Several screams and moans of pain are now clearly heard. The job has not been finished. The killers reenter the room, and two women attempt to fight back, only to be shot and bayonetted to death. Now the bodies must be moved. As bedsheets are wrapped around the bodies, one person, a female, sits up, writhing in pain. She covers her face as more bayonets enter her body, and she is shot…one…more…time.

Hello, I’m Sal Ramirez, and this is the first episode of Bloodshed Memoir, a podcast that investigates infamous assassinations in history and its effect on the world. This week we dive into the assassination of Nicholas II of Russia and the entire Romanov family. Let’s begin.

When we think of assassinated rulers or leaders, we are often left wondering: what did they do that was so bad that an execution was required? This is no different in the assassination of Tsar Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia. As we look into his life and death, we will begin to paint a picture of the man who was the last of a 300-year-old dynasty.

Nicholas was born in Pushkin, Russia on May 6, 1868 to the heir to the Russian throne, Alexander Alexandrovich and his wife Maria Feodorovna, a princess from Denmark.[[1]](#footnote-1) Oddly enough, Alexander rose to the throne after his father, Alexander II, was assassinated by a revolutionary bomber. Nicholas II was 13 at the time of his grandfather’s passing, and at 19 entered into the Army. Only seven years later, at the age of 26, Nicholas II inherited the throne from his father, who died suddenly of kidney disease. This left Nicholas II to lead a nation with very little experience with state affairs. It was noted that he told a close friend that he did not want to be a Tsar and that he knew nothing about running a country. In the same month of his father’s death, he married a German princess, Alexandra. A 20-something year old in charge of a country with an outsider wife? How could this get any worst for the Russian people?

First impressions are everything in this world. Even when we prove ourselves to someone as being capable, they’ll always remember that awkward first meeting or that mistake that caused us to come to know that particular person. For Nicholas II, this was no different. He was officially crowned Tsar of Russia in 1896, and during the celebration, many spectators were trampled to death, all while the new Tsar was completely unaware of the situation. This looked terrible to the people, as Nicholas and Alexandra celebrated that night while the commoners were mourning in the streets.[[2]](#footnote-2)

This was only the beginning of his blunders. In 1904, he began the Trans-Siberia Railway, which was too close for comfort for the Japanese, who had a foothold of Eastern Asia, particularly, Korea. This led to an attack from Japan, and after a year of fighting, the Russians had been decimated. [[3]](#footnote-3)It was an embarrassing loss which the Russian people used as fuel for the already growing fire. 1905 must have been the year of the idiot king, as this year his gaffes were so incredible, it seems almost made up. At the beginning of 1905, protestors stormed the streets of St. Petersburg. These protestors asked for better working conditions and a type of representative government to take some of the power from the Tsar. But this was Tsar Nicholas II, he believed in the autocracy of his reign, and he was chosen by God to lead Russia. This was not going to happen. Although he was not present in St. Petersburg, he would ultimately be blamed for what came next.

The soldiers at St. Petersburg fired upon the crowd not once, not twice but five separate times, once at the Narva Gate, and four volleys fired at the Nevsky Prospekt, the main street in St. Petersburg.[[4]](#footnote-4) This injuried and killed protestors and innocent bystanders alike, as if any of them could be considered guilty of any wrongdoing. The effect, socially and politically, was felt almost immediately. The Tsar reported low numbers of deaths and injuries. Those opposing his government exaggerated the numbers. If you were a commoner at this time, and you already thought your leader wasn’t all there, who would you believe? Many people already began to distrust the Tsar more and more. This was believed to have started the Revolution of 1905, which turn peasants against the Tsar, created military mutinies, and incited many worker strikes. This day, the 22nd of January was and will forever be known as Bloody Sunday.

To alleviate some tensions, Nicholas II created the Duma, a sort of congress that would work as a type of representative government.[[5]](#footnote-5) This would effectively remove Nicholas’s law making power, which he did not fully accept. The problem with his making of the Duma was that Nicholas reserved the right to overturn any of their decisions and even dissolve it if they did anything that displeased him. Technically speaking, the Duma was worthless and he dissolved the two Duma’s that took place. Another quick note to point to Nicholas’s embarrassing foreign policy actions was the meeting with the German emperor William II. The Russian Tsar promised an alliance with Germany, even though Russia was already allied themselves to Germany’s enemy, France. If the Tsar was any more laughable with these policies, this would be a comedic podcast.

Then, years later came the Great War. By 1915, Russia had inflation, was struggling to keep it’s people fed and the armies were suffering many defeats. Against all advice, the Tsar removed his father’s cousin, Grand Duke Nicholas, from command of the armies in favor of a new commander who had never been in war.[[6]](#footnote-6) You guessed it. Tsar Nicholas II, who up to this point was not the best of leaders, was now the supreme commander of Russia’s armies. He did not lead every military decision on the battlefield, but the role took him away from home, leaving the Tsarina, Alexandra, as the unofficial head of the government.

Alexandra was already seen as an outsider, a German, a possible traitor of Russia. But her influences did not actually come Germany at all, but from a home-grown mind. From a person who was already deeply rooted within the Romanov family. Step in one of the most mysterious and strange people in all of history. Grigori Rasputin. Go ahead and stop for a second. Google him. His face is nightmare fuel in itself. He was a hypnotist, a mystic, a holy man, a type of witch healer, if you will. The only reason he was kept around was to help the future Tsar, the Tsarevich Alexei, the sick son of Nicholas II. The heir apparent, Alexei, was born with hemophilia, which weaken him and at times, would put him in a wheelchair. Rasputin had a way with Alexei and seemed to be able to help him through his pain and times of sickness, so the Romanov’s kept him around.[[7]](#footnote-7) There is no evidence to show how Rasputin would stop Alexei’s bleeding, but he was able to, miraculously, then why not keep him around?

But being alone with the Tsarina, who was informally in charge of the government, started terrible rumors. Some say that Rasputin put the family under a spell, and he was really the man in charge. Others say that he and Alexandra were having an affair, and he was cementing his future rule of Russia. He was more of a background figure of the Romanov’s since 1905 when he first met the family, but not until 1915, was he a more prominent figure of government. It seemed to many that the government was a puppet, and Rasputin was pulling some strings while the Tsarina pulled others. A mystic man and a German were in control of the Russian government. If people did not think it was time for change, then they were living in another country. The stage for death was set. And Rasputin would take the first bullet.

In 1916, Rasputin took three bullets, two to the body and one to the forehead. His body, dumped into a river. The desired effect of the murder was to remove the Rasputin influence over the Romanov’s. But it was already too late for many Russians who wanted to see the Tsar removed. The Romanov’s needed to be removed, either voluntarily or by force.

In all we have looked at so far, there is much common knowledge of the Romanov family. Nicholas II was not a well-liked leader in Russia, and that is an understatement. But what at times we fail to see in stories like these is the human side of things. In a new book, *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, the author’s begin to show us an entirely new side of the family that has never been seen before. The Romanov’s were a royal family, but in their memoirs, used for this book, they prove they were a close family first, before the royalty title.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Nicholas II, like any royal prince, needed to be married to a princess. In fact, Russian law stated that if a prince married a commoner, their children could not ascend onto the throne. The best choice was France, as an alliance with the French would become useful later for Russia. But Nicholas II had his eyes set on a German princess, Alexandra. This young woman, in her early 20’s, left everything she knew to be with a man she loved in Nicholas II of Russia.

Within a year they had their first daughter, Olga in 1895. Two years later, Tatiana arrived, followed two years later by Maria, then two more years by the youngest daughter Anastasia. In 1904, the long-awaited male heir was born, Alexei. This family, in the eyes of Nicholas II, was finally complete. In his journals, Nicholas points to a fierce devotion to his wife and children and his religion, possibly more so than to the country he was supposed to run.

This book also points to many things that most historical contemporaries have been telling for years. The four sisters were all unique, intelligent, and talented in their own ways, not plain, brainless, women born only to find a royal to marry. They, like their mother and father, were completed devoted to their Orthodox Christian views. They were also devoted to their country to the point of servicing as nurses during the Great War, encountering every day Russian soldiers. One story spoke of Grand Duchess Tatiana, while at the age of 17, performing gruesome surgeries during the Great War, without so much as blinking, showing great skill and determination. The devotion to family and country was evident in their diaries and historical stories that have now come to light.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Another trait about the children was their complete innocence while growing up in the family. One of the stories written about the children from a priest was about a time of confession. Based on the confessions of the children, or lack thereof, the priest was afraid he would be the one to introduce certains “sins” to these very innocent children. This was not because they were sheltered in any way. What separated them was their upbringing, their education, and their religion and faith. These were all extremely talented and extraordinary children.

Alexandra, as the Tsarina, was herself somewhat shy and did not want the spotlight. She, like most European princesses, had prepared her entire life to marry a royal, follow her husband’s religion, and become completed devoted to him and his country. Alexandra did just that, famously becoming fully ingrained in the Orthodox faith. This in turn became a large part of the children. While all European princesses of the time were raised to accept whatever religion their future husbands hold, the four Russian Duchesses were raised Orthodox. Part of their requirement as princesses was to remain Orthodox and build churches wherever they go to start a family. Their faith was their main guide in life, which oddly enough, gave them a sense to accept whatever happened to them, as God would be the one who controlled what happened in their lives.

Towards the end of the Great War was the beginning of the end for Nicholas II. In March of 1917, riots had disturbed the peace in St. Petersburg. Nicholas sent troops to try to stop these events but had acted too late. The Duma called for Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate, or resign, as the emperor of Russia. On March 15, Tsar Nicholas II renounced the throne but did not pass leadership to his son Alexei. He instead called on his younger brother Michael to assume the throne, which Michael immediately refused. The provisional government placed the Romanov’s in Pushkin, Nicholas’s birthplace to await removal of the family to England.

The English king, on the other hand, was very wary of situation and refused the Romanov’s entry into England. He feared the people of England would disapprove of the move of the Russian Royal family to England, a move that would have surely saved the lives of the Romanov’s. Not long after, the provision government was overthrown by another political party.

That political party was the Bolsheviks. Their main leader was none other than Vladimir Lenin. Sound familiar? If it doesn’t, hit the history books. If we don’t learn history, we are doomed to repeat it. I know that’s a cliché, but it still happens so you tell me if we’re not learning. Lenin lead a charge of communism throughout Russia, a country eager for change after years of bad leadership and war failures. The future prosperity for the poor of Russian was at hand and the Tsar needed to go.

Thanks to the Bolsheviks, the Romanov’s were taken to Yekaterinburg to what was called the House of Special Purpose. Here the Romanov’s lived their last days, unknowingly. A few of their servants were allowed to stay with them, but slowly, their daily lives were changed. Sometimes, they were not even allowed outside, and others were not allowed in. One thing that was fairly prevalent was the priest going in and out of the house. The Romanov’s, even at their worst, remained faithful to their faith in God and put their trust in Him.

One of the stories from a priest was that the final church service held in the house had a somber, yet hopeful feeling. At one point, the entire family fell to their knees at the same time and began to pray. Almost sensing that the end was very, very near. And indeed it was.

The Bolsheviks met resistance in what was called the White Army, people loyal to the Tsar. They fought to return the Tsar to his throne while the Red Army of the Bolsheviks fought to keep the new Soviet government in control. On the night of July 16, Lenin issued an order to a commander of the secret police, Yakov Yurovsky, that an execution needed to take place that night. Lenin mentions that the “trial”, code for execution, of the Romanov’s cannot be tied back to him. He felt that as long as the Romanov’s are alive, the White Armies advancing on the Bolsheviks will have a person to rally towards. [[10]](#footnote-10)

There is a nervousness in the house, some perceive it, others do not. The Romanov’s had been hiding valuables for days within their clothes, hiding jewels sewn into their clothing. Olga and her mother Alexandra work on filling more clothes with jewels as the rest of the family walks around the garden. Late that night, on the morning hours of the 17th, Yurovsky awakens the family, telling them they need to move to a basement for safety. Immediately, the family dresses. Maybe they’re finally moving somewhere else. Maybe the White Army is close and could save them. The girls dress in white blouses and black skirts, all laces with unseen jewels. Alexei and Nicholas dress in military attire, Alexei wearing a jewel encrusted vest underneath. Three of their servants come with them, one taking two pillows full of jewels and valuable. Anastasia carried her dog, Jimmy with her.

As they arrive in the basement, Alexandra asks for chairs. Yurovsky obliges, bringing in two chairs for Alexandra and Alexei. He whispers to one of his helpers that the heir wants to die in a chair. Almost sounds like the heir should die on a throne.

The basement is quiet. The light from one lightbulb hanging from the ceiling brings no comfort. Then seven men walk into the basement with Yurovsky. He pulls a gun, and an order. The order simply states that Nicholas II has been ordered to be executed, to which Nicholas only answers, “What? What?” No more time is given. Alexandra and Olga attempt to bless themselves as Nicholas receives bullets to his back. Alexandra and two other servants received gunshots to the head. The amount of bullets sprayed in the small room quickly fills the room with cracks and smoke. In the commotion, Yurovsky orders the firing to stop, but it continues.

They leave the room to allow the men to take a breath, the basement full of gunsmoke. And that’s when the sounds come from the room. Cries of pain and despair. How are they not dead. The jewels had acted as bulletproof vest for the girls and Alexei. Yurovsky entered the room and Tatiana and one of the servants, Anna, attempted to attack the one of killers, but met their fate by way of bayonets, followed by having their brains splattered across the room. The remaining girls were huddled against the wall, injuried but alive. Bayonets pierced their bodies to finish them off. Alexei, still alive moved along the floor. The bayonet would not completely pierce his jewel vest, so a quick bullet to the head killed the last male Romanov. Even Jimmy, Anastasia’s dog, was killed, as if leaving it alive would allow it to assume the Romanov throne. As the cleanup began, the bodies were being moved out to a waiting truck. One of the girls did in fact attempt to move and cried out, covering her face. She was immediately shot in the head.

Upon arriving at the site of a mine, all the bodies were stripped of clothing, and most of the jewels removed. The bodies were dumped down a mineshaft, picked specially for this job. They were then covered in lime to dissolve the bodies. As it turned out, the mineshaft was too shallow and grenades were used to attempt to bring the shaft down over the bodies to no avail.

The bodies were removed from the mineshaft and an attempt was made to move to another mine, then a decision to just bury them was made. The ground was too hard. It was as if these bodies were not meant to be buried, or dead. Or maybe the plan was not fully thought out. Either way, the bodies had to go somewhere. Their truck stalled on the road, and it seemed as if the truck had decided where the bodies would be buried. The bodies were beaten in the face with rifles and thrown into a single grave, except to Alexei and one sister who, after much mutilation, could not be identified. Those two were burned and their remains buried at a different site, in an attempt to keep the remains separate to avoid people finding all the Romanov’s together.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The official report is that Tsar Nicholas II was executed, and his family killed in the escape from the House of Purpose. With no one left that could take the throne legally, the Bolshevik’s took complete control and the communist party of Russia started the new world with Soviet Russia.

After all this, you might ask yourself, how does this affect me? How does this man’s death really change history, or even affect me today? Why do I even care? Well, here it is. Lenin and Communism are almost synonymous. If it wasn’t for Lenin and his Bolsheviks, we would have never had years of fear in the Cold War. We would have never had a space race, or the nuclear arms race. And if we really think about it, World War II would have been lost to Germany, if not for the millions of Soviet soldiers that gave their lives not only for Russia but for all the Allied Forces in Europe and the world. Maybe Nicolas II or his son Alexei would have join Nazi Germany in the war since Tsarina Alexandra was German, and the world would be a completely different place. I’d hate to say their deaths were worth it, but were they? Maybe we could have them move to the US and become America’s Royal family. We’ll never know what this hapless leader with a beautiful family would have become in later years. But this is history, and it cannot be changed.

Thanks for joining me this week on this first episode. I hope I stirred in you a interest in Russian history. This series of events made the world we know today and shaped how we view Russia, the USSR and communism. Tell your friends about this podcast, give us a like on Facebook.com/bloodshedmemoirs, or visit us at bloodshedmemoirs.com. This show was written and produce by me. Join us next week, as we take a look at a Prime Minister who went from ferocious military leader to pacifist, and how the price of peace was his life.

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10. Mayo, Jonathan. “A minute-by-minute breakdown of how the doomed Russian Tsar and his family were executed, as his daughters had their agony prolonged when bullets failed to kill them due to diamonds sewn into their tops.” Dailymail.co.uk. 16 July 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Minute. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)