

# The Death of Rasputin

By RUSSELL BAKER

WASHINGTON, April 10—It was difficult to assassinate Rasputin, as the many readers of "Nicholas and Alexandra," among others, can testify.

A group of "high noblemen," according to the World Book Encyclopedia, decided that the assassination was necessary because Rasputin, although he "had common sense," was "selfish, greedy and dissolute." They invited him to a palatial residence in St. Petersburg and served him poisoned tea.

Rasputin was not deleteriously affected.

Several of the attending Princes held a hurriedly called conference. They had read about hurriedly called conferences being held at the White House whenever Presidents had a nasty crisis; as Princes, they felt more entitled to hold hurriedly called conferences than Presidents, but had never had a pretext for holding one.

Rasputin's failure to respond fatally to the poisoned tea seemed the ideal pretext. The conference was held in a billiard room while several other Princes sat in the library with Rasputin, who was imbibing his third glass of poisoned tea and dilating sentimentally upon summer nights of his childhood when he had caught lightning bugs on the steppes of Russia.

The conferees, realizing that poison was counterproductive, decided to use cigarettes on Rasputin.

Cigarettes did not do the job. In fact, cigarettes seemed to strengthen Rasputin. After chain-smoking the first three packs, he called for more poisoned tea.

Prince Ilskozhky, meeting with assassination experts in the kitchen, accepted their proposal to raise Rasputin's cholesterol to a lethal density and induce a heart attack.

Accordingly, Rasputin was quickly served four fried eggs, a rack of pork chops and a tureen of gravy.

"What a nice surprise!" Rasputin said when the Prince placed the food before him. As he examined the meal, however, his smile faded in disappointment.

"Could I have some toast on the side," he said. "Swimming in thick, rich butter."

Baron Boyer-Sevitzky, watching behind the screen, saw Rasputin finish his meal, heard him call for some more pork gravy and buttered toast, watched him finish another pack of cigarettes and another glass of poisoned tea, and thought—as he later told historians—that Rasputin was getting healthier with each lethal ingestion.

Incensed at the injustice of a world in which the strong and the noble and the people who hated selfishness, greed and dissolution could not ex-

pediciously dispose of a raffish nuisance, Baron Boyer-Sevitzky rushed upon Rasputin and stabbed him several times in vital organs.

Rasputin frowned and said to Colonel Klopotsky, one of his noble hosts, "I hate to seem like a poor guest, but I should very much like to have two more fried eggs and some Band-Aids."

"Can't you take a hint?" Colonel Klopotsky replied.

Simultaneously, he drew his pistol and fired it several times into Rasputin. Rasputin fell to the floor, apparently dead. Prince Kurilonsky said, "Whew!" which is the Russian equivalent of, "I think there's a light at the end of the tunnel."

While the noblemen were toasting their victory in caviar, however, Rasputin rose on one elbow and said he would appreciate it if someone could find him one more pork chop somewhere in the kitchen.

The noblemen fell upon him with

## OBSERVER



Russian postcard, 1924

clubs and beat him until he seemed lifeless.

They then dragged him outside—the temperature was 70 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit—and left the body in the blizzard. As they were re-entering the palace, they were startled to hear Rasputin speak to them.

"A little more of that tea would taste mighty good on a night like this," he called.

In a group, they lifted him from the snow, shot him several more times, carried him to the river and threw him in among the ice floes.

"Next time," shouted Rasputin, as he was coming up for the eleventh time, "I am not going to be so quick to overlook bad manners."

As he waded out of the river on the far side, hungering for another cigarette, his mouth set for a restorative plate of fried eggs, a whole squadron of nobles bombed him from 30,000 feet.

Rasputin's dying words were heard only by the light of the cold northern star. "Something I did," he said, "must have made me a threat to the national security of the United States."