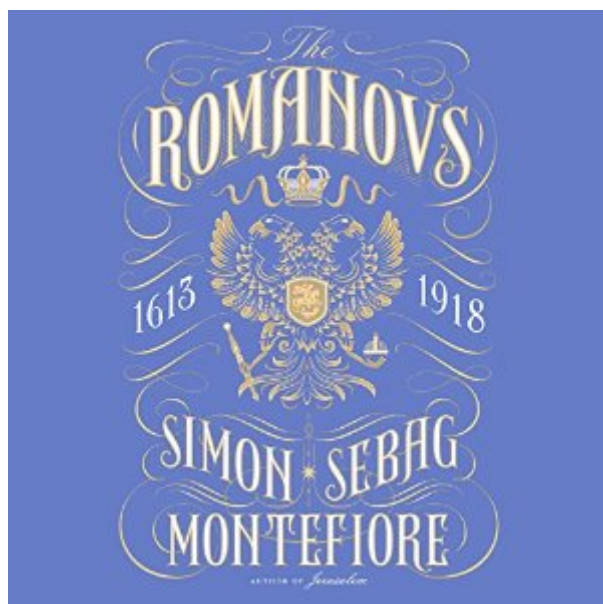


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# The Romanovs: 1613-1918



## Synopsis

The Romanovs were the most successful dynasty of modern times, ruling a sixth of the world's surface for three centuries. How did one family turn a war-ruined principality into the world's greatest empire? And how did they lose it all? This is the intimate story of 20 tsars and tsarinas, some touched by genius, some by madness, but all inspired by holy autocracy and imperial ambition. Simon Sebag Montefiore's gripping chronicle reveals their secret world of unlimited power and ruthless empire building, overshadowed by palace conspiracy, family rivalries, sexual decadence, and wild extravagance, with a global cast of adventurers, courtesans, revolutionaries, and poets, from Ivan the Terrible to Tolstoy and Pushkin to Bismarck, Lincoln, Queen Victoria, and Lenin. To rule Russia was both imperial-sacred mission and poisoned chalice: Six of the last 12 tsars were murdered. Peter the Great tortured his own son to death while making Russia an empire and dominated his court with a dining club notable for compulsory drunkenness, naked dwarfs, and fancy dress. Catherine the Great overthrew her own husband (who was murdered soon afterward), enjoyed affairs with a series of young male favorites, conquered Ukraine, and fascinated Europe. Paul I was strangled by courtiers backed by his own son, Alexander I, who in turn faced Napoleon's invasion and the burning of Moscow, then went on to take Paris. Alexander II liberated the serfs, survived five assassination attempts, and wrote perhaps the most explicit love letters ever composed by a ruler. The Romanovs climaxes with a fresh, unforgettable portrayal of Nicholas II and Alexandra, the rise and murder of Rasputin, war, and revolution - and the harrowing massacre of the entire family. Dazzlingly entertaining and beautifully written from start to finish, *The Romanovs* brings these monarchs - male and female, great and flawed, their families and courts - blazingly to life. Drawing on new archival research, Montefiore delivers an enthralling epic of triumph and tragedy, love and murder, encompassing the seminal years 1812, 1914, and 1917, that is both a universal study of power and a portrait of an empire that helps define Russia today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**A Study of Personal Power**The study of Sebag Montefiore of Russian rulers (after Catherine the Great and Stalin) possibly touches its pick with the Romanovs. This is the epic story of a family in power for more 300 years in one of the vastest territories of the world. In his book the author reveals the character of the members of the Romanov dynasty and of its complex court, their behavior, accomplishments, passions, and obsessions. Set on the foreground of political and social events, their private and public life is vividly analyzed (because at that level everything personal is political.) As the author says, this is a study of character and the distorting effect of absolute power on personality. It tells the story of absolutism in Russia and its repercussions in the last one hundred years. Sebag Montefiore shows a rare ability in making his historical narration captivating giving three-dimensionality to his characters that emerge naturally from the pages of diaries, letters, and other documents. The prologue is a synthetic essay on Russian history, an exquisitely written introduction that prepares the reader to embark in a fascinating yet articulated journey. Sebag Montefiore argues how scholars needs not to fall in the danger of writing history backward and insists on the essentiality of skepticism that requires verification and analysis. Here he adds that his aim is to follow the invisible, mysterious alchemy of power to answer the essential question of politics expressed by Lenin: who controls whom? The book starts introducing the young innocent Michael Romanov who reluctantly accepted to take a throne that nobody wanted.

What an amazing read, this book is both shocking and enthralling, I literally could not put it down. It's a story of power, love, glory, magnificence, and lust, it is totally accessible, and reads like a movie of a family saga, no wonder it had been compared to Game of Thrones, and the TV series the Tudors. It's a story about Russia that explains so much of what's happening today in 2016. The book travels all the way from Ivan the Terrible to the last Tzar Nicholas II, but it also continued right up to Stalin and Putin. The debauchery, the sex, the violence, and the cruelty are beyond belief. A family saga filled with ambition, glamour, sadism, and sexual excess. Brides are poisoned, fathers tortured their sons to death, sons kill fathers, wife murder husband, giants and freaks are collected, dwarfs

are tossed and slaughtered. It's a most colorful collection of characters you can imagine, there's not a boring page. It's also about character and personality, some of the strongest Romanovs were women, who were portrayed so sensitively, and some of the stupidest and cruelest were women too. In one sense this book is all about power and in another it's all about character and family. So much of the story is told in moving love letters, such as between Nicholas and Alexandra. Montefiore starts the book with a teenage boy called Michael Romanov who becomes Tzar in 1613, and over 300 years later another little boy Alexei Romanov is murdered with his entire family including his sisters and their parents in 1918. It's an unfortunate and heartbreaking beginning of book.

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