**Introduction**

With Nicholas II's departure for field headquarters, Alexandra's authority over the home front and matters of state increased. The following photograph shows the tsarina's confidante, Rasputin, surrounded by a devoted circle of admirers. Mounting anxiety about the vagaries of Rasputin's behavior and his enormous influence on the tsarina, who believed that he could alleviate her son's hemophilia, prompted a group of court conspirators to assassinate the dissolute monk in December 1916.

