



Rushcliffe School

Everyone at Rushcliffe School will be given the chance to shine brightly

I'm not looking at them through rose-tinted spectacles, either. Alix became more and more political, grew far too powerful, a disastrous meddler. She was vindictive, extremely unwise, and so hysterical that she was close to madness.

If Alexandra had died after 10 years, Nicholas may have been regarded as quite a successful monarch, but the problem was that he gave more and more power to her. They didn't see themselves as politicians: they said that they were sacred monarchs and were utterly rigid in their view of themselves, while wiser tsars such as Alexanders I or II – or even Alexander III – were more flexible. But Nicholas was utterly rigid and also duplicitous with everyone: part of that was shyness, which we can forgive, but part of it was a sort of slyness that he thought he could do what he wanted. So they both definitely made monumental errors all the way through.

How would you like to change our view of this dynasty, this period, and this country?

The more we can understand how Russia sees itself, its soul and aspirations, the more we will be able to handle the world today. And what happened from Michael I onward is a huge part of that history.

You see many of the same interests then that you see in Russia today. For example, the whole of Romanov history is the story of trying to gain control of Ukraine.

That's how important the country is to them. Crimea, the place where the grand prince of Kiev converted to Orthodoxy, where Catherine the Great and Potemkin launched their fleet at Sebastopol, these are the things that made Russia a Middle-Eastern power. In 1772, Catherine's fleet was bombarding Syrian ports and occupying Beirut, which brings us right up to the Russian presence in Syria today.

So all around there are these huge echoes in the past, and reading this book will hopefully help people understand Putin's Russia today.