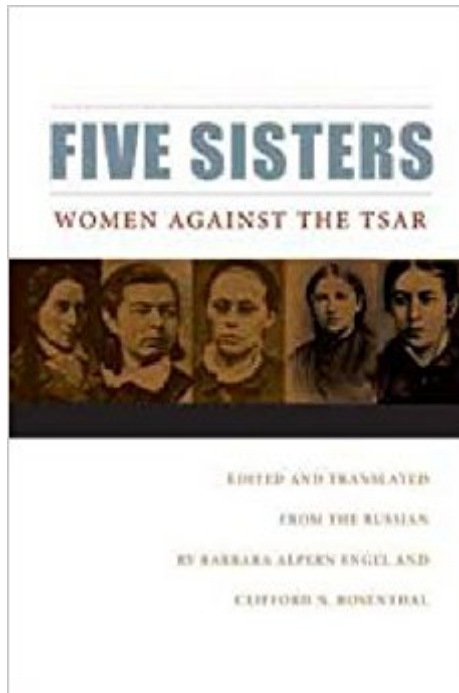


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Five Sisters: Women Against The Tsar



Synopsis

Violent movements that opposed the existing political order erupted all over Europe in the course of the 19th century. Nowhere was revolutionary violence more visible and dramatic than in Russia. There, revolutionaries took the lives of dozens of people, most, though not all of them, high officials. Accepting the label of terrorist as a badge of honor, the revolutionaries insisted upon the morality and justice of their cause, and they were fully prepared to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of it. Unlike most people considered terrorists today, Russian revolutionaries selected their targets carefully, focusing on those whom they regarded as responsible for the oppressive political and social order and mourning unanticipated civilian casualties. The goal: the replacement of the current order by one that would genuinely represent and serve the people. The daring young women who tell their stories in this book shared this goal and participated actively in efforts to realize it. Vera Figner presided over the remnants of the People's Will after it assassinated Tsar Alexander II. Vera Zasulich's attempt to assassinate the governor of St. Petersburg made her a heroine to Western European leftists as well as much of the Russian public. Olga Liubatovich belonged to one of the first groups of revolutionary propagandists to take jobs as factory laborers. Praskovia Ivanovskaia became a typesetter for the printing press that presented the movement's goals to a broader public. Elizaveta Kovalskaia, a peasant by birth, envisioned terror as the means to relieve economic oppression. Along with a new introduction, Barbara Engel and Clifford Rosenthal provide an updated list of suggested readings in this edition of their classic work of translation. Students and specialists of Russian history and women's studies, as well as general readers, will find these memoirs to be a fascinating record of a tumultuous time.

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Barbara Engel is Distinguished Professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She is the author of *Between the Fields and the City: Women, Work and Family in Russia, 1861-1914*, *Women in Russia: 1700-2000*, and most recently, *Breaking the Ties that Bound: The Politics of Marital Strife in Late Imperial Russia*, as well as of numerous articles. Clifford Rosenthal worked for ten years as a translator of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia. Subsequently, he led a national association of credit unions serving low-income communities for more than three decades, twice consulting with the Russian credit union movement as a member of an international delegation.

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