

RUSSIA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: FROM PETER THE GREAT TO CATHERINE THE GREAT (1696–1796). By *A. Lentin*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1973. viii, 139 pp. \$8.75.

Professor Lentin, author of a scholarly translation of Shcherbatov's *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*, has written a brief history of eighteenth-century Russia for British and Canadian sixth formers as well as for the general reader. The exposition is lucid and concise throughout, and the organization alternates skillfully between lively narrative and sensible commentary. The author considers his subject from the point of view of Westernization, eliminating discussion of the problems confronting Russia as a multinational empire (surely a wise decision given his space limitations). He assumes no prior knowledge of Russian history, but evidently presupposes knowledge of European history, as well as a proficiency in French, on the part of the reader.

The bibliography contains titles in Western languages and Russian, including some of interest to specialists, such as Russian provincial universities' *Ucheniie zapiski*. However, mention must be made of a few works that could have been included: Makogonenko's *Radishchev* (the source for many citations by the Western biographers listed), K. A. Papehnl's *Freedom of Expression in 18th-Century Russia*, and Georg Sacke's articles on Catherine's reign.

The plates are well chosen. The bronze bust of Peter I by Rastrelli the Elder seems to catch the cruelty of Peter which Lentin tends to muffle. Lentin provides apt and useful statistics on the size of armies, casualties, exports, books published, inflation, population, schools, but no statistics on the deaths required to build the northern capital, or the number of *strel'tsy* executed. The reader will get no inkling of Peter's vigorous personal participation in this bloodletting, or of his cruelty and sadistic sense of humor. The author is rather indulgent and indirect on Catherine's private life.

Many of Lentin's statements are open to question. The profile of the nobility is well sketched, but were they a homogeneous class (p. 58)? And did they feel their new post-Petrine strength enabled them to "bargain and compromise with the autocrat" (p. 68)? The author himself assures us (p. 69) that Peter III's *Manifesto concerning the Freedom of the Nobility* was *not* the result of pressure. Were "frugality and parsimony" the rule in estate management (p. 102), or did the nobility struggle to "keep pace with the rising costs of Westernized living" and go increasingly into debt to the state (p. 100)? As for the peasants, Lentin has Peter making them all serfs, either bonded or crown (p. 32). The author makes other assertions which not all readers will accept. Muscovy did not suffer only defeat in the seventeenth century (p. 20): the conquest of the left bank Ukraina was a big victory. The whole corps of the *strel'tsy* was not beheaded: though over a thousand perished, the majority survived and many were deported to found the *Streletskaiia Sloboda* on the Volga River. Odessa is not at the mouth of the Dniester (p. 96). If Catherine "defied Britain" with her League of Armed Neutrality (p. 98) it was not sustained; she soon quipped to the British envoy that it was a League of Armed Nullity.

The copy-editing is lax. Endings get dropped from some foreign words (*Shpitsrut*, *Konferents*); we read that the clergy was to be the "mouthpiece of

absolution [absolutism?]" (p. 22), and that Peter's newspaper was "badly [baldly?] factual" (p. 40). But these are small matters that can easily be attended to in the next edition of this highly readable introduction.

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FIVE SISTERS: WOMEN AGAINST THE TSAR. Edited and translated by *Barbara Alpern Engel* and *Clifford N. Rosenthal*. Foreword by *Alix Kates Shulman*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975. xxxvi, 261 pp. Illus. \$8.95.

Five Sisters is a collection of translations of memoirs of five women who were members of Russian revolutionary populist organizations in the 1870s and 1880s. The translators are to be congratulated for making available in English a fascinating set of documents which provide information and insights into several important issues: the experiences of these radical activists as *women*, the broad social and intellectual milieu in which they functioned, their daily experiences, the relationships and the ambience of the revolutionary circles of the 1870s and 1880s, as well as glimpses of peasant and factory life in which these women sporadically took part as propagandists. The five women range from visible revolutionaries—such as Figner and Zasulich, who were not only well known for their deeds but who held decision-making positions among the populists—to rank-and-file participants such as Praskovia Ivanovskaia, whose contribution to the movement was mundane daily drudgery. Taken together, these memoirs are of great interest to students of women's history, of Russian social history, and of the history of revolutionary movements (both Russian and European). The book is, perhaps, potentially most valuable for the non-Russian specialist who wishes to compare women or revolutionary groups in Russia with those of other countries. Unfortunately, neither the beginning student of Russian history nor the non-specialist is given a sufficiently detailed and concrete context in which to place these memoirs. Indeed, many of the events which the memoirs narrate are unintelligible because of the lack of either a fuller introductory section or a more detailed critical annotation of the texts themselves. On the other hand, if the translators intended the book primarily for the Russian specialist who has no need of such background information, the introduction could have provided a more detailed narrative and more interesting analysis of the history of women in nineteenth-century Russia. The translators should have decided more precisely for whom the book was intended and, accordingly, written a longer and more appropriate introductory essay.

Despite this shortcoming, this collection is a fine contribution not only to the literature on women's history, but to Russian history as well. One hopes that it will inspire successors.

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