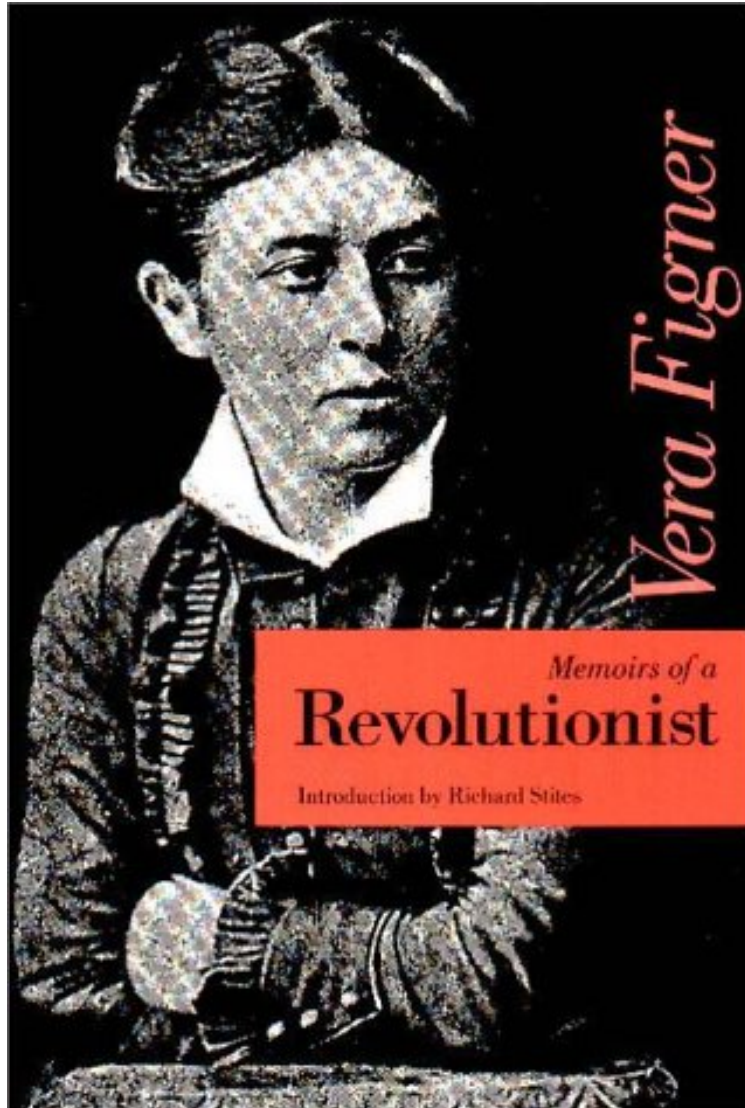


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Memoirs of a Revolutionist

Vera Figner

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Vera Figner : Memoirs of a Revolutionist before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Memoirs of a Revolutionist:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Quite an interesting read. By SamiaCI was using this book as an artifact for a paper I was writing about women revolutionaries, and Vera Figner fit that role perfectly. The voice in which she writes is enthralling. A good read for anyone interested in women in politics, Russian history, and radical revolutionaries. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Love this BooksBy D. Collins Insight into the mind of one of the most influential revolutionists of all time. What a wonderful and telling read. 2 of 3 people found the

following review helpful. VERA FIGNER: REVOLUTIONIST By Nancy Morse I don't really want to say I love this book, as a five-star-rating is to indicate, but a friend loaned me his copy and I realized that you can not swiftly read such a book about a revolutionist in Russia. So I had to buy a used copy of this book and gnaw my way through it, in order to return his to him. Half of the book tells of the revolutionaries' procedures in trying to uncorrupt a country full of wealthy people who do not want change, and literally have enslaved these people who do all of the work - the people who grow the food, the cotton and wool for goods. "The people at the top do not work, they do not help anyone," and so on. This, in the mid-eighteen-hundreds is what Vera finally realized, having come from a family of "privilege," that she had to try to do something about changing the situation. She learned that murdering a leader might be the only effective way to get people's attention. Of course, in Russia there were always spies and you had to learn how to get false identification papers, even just to get out of the country to safety for the time being. The railways were continually watched. If you were gone for a while you might be able to quietly re-enter and resume your activities. If you were imprisoned, somehow, in the mid-eighteen hundreds you could escape. You sat for months in prison until your trial came up, anyway and people died, people committed suicide. If you had no friends or family, there might be no one who would feed you or provide you with a blanket. And the blanket might be confiscated or snatched away by another prisoner. You might, after sentencing, get sent to Eastern Siberia for hard labor - which would be a death sentence, most likely....frozen to death, starved to death, worked to death. While the editor of this book advised the reader to read this book in its well-translated form by going first to the second half of the book where Ms Figner depicts her twenty-two years of imprisonment that started as a sentence of execution, then was changed to life imprisonment and then she was released some twenty-plus years later....I decided I had better find out about the goings-on of revolution before I read her thoughts in the second half. What I learned is that a common laborer or farmer knew no way to organize, did not dare risk any such thing and had no vision, no scope, no hope. When these people were finally over-taxed so heavily that they were starving because food grown was sent elsewhere - so they still had no hope, they were incapable of even accepting help as they were so fearful and remembered well the past. When the Revolutionaries managed to kill Alexander II, Alexander III was now in charge. People would still report someone, for a lot of reasons, no matter who was now the leader. No big change would occur as the country of this type has always had other people running things anyhow, with the leader being told what to agree to, what to deny. And some of them delighted in exerting power. When pled with, these kinds of people and leaders made things worse to show how much in control they were. There was no hope. I see how Lenin and Stalin continued this. Call it what you want...Socialism, Communism....it always seems that there is some advisor or powerful person/people who are really the ones in charge. The only difference was that under Communism people who had jobs and privileges got paid whether working half-heartedly at jobs they were assigned. The goal was to give everyone a job, according to his ability and his need. But someone was always in charge of deciding what person got what assignment. There was no incentive for increasing production by working hard or to create a better product. Incentive was lacking. Under Communism the State owned and controlled everything. Theoretically, while Socialism seems ideal it appears to rarely work....who knows why. Unions were a good idea in other countries till they also became powerful and corrupt. There is just something wrong with humans that they cannot be peaceful. Someone always wants more. So, back to this book: They finally realized that there WAS NO OTHER WAY THAN TO KILL THE ONES IN POWER. But it did not seem to change anything. This is really scary. We Americans need to be paying attention. Did anyone see the video asking some U. of Texas students who won the Civil War? Granted, the video must have shown only the stupid ones. Some of the answers: "Was that World War I???" "Did it happen in America?" "The South won, didn't it???" "I don't know...." "What war was that???" "Are we in trouble folks? We don't know what we have had till we are near losing it?" The friend who loaned me his copy seems to think that it is wrong in America to have a great amount of wealth in the hands of a few Americans. But there is a huge difference. Anybody in this country could have done the same thing. In America enterprising people always found a way because they were not restricted by laws from making a living. If you were without any money at all, in America you could still find a way - perhaps like the "ragpicker." He was careful to eat cheaply, and find a place to stay till he could afford his own place to work and live above it. A lot of grocers started out this way and their families were able to live above the rented store. Because education was free his children were taken care of during the day. He collected and sold rags, lived on next-to-nothing....and worked, worked, worked. Eventually, in this hypothetical story, let's say he got a store-front to rent, and kept himself working hard. He got a small stock of inexpensive merchandise and made a small profit. He eventually could buy better and better stock and develop his trade. He could advertise. He continued to live penuriously. Do you know what happened in a lot of these families? Just like in Asia and in Europe, the sons and sons of sons continued the tradition. Steinweg is Germany (Steinway to us) is a good example. Another example but in this country, was F.E. Olds who made outstanding brass band instruments. He refused to cut corners. His son let the workers run the company after his father died and this son continued to drive his expensive car, play golf at the country club and drink a lot of whiskey. The business ended up on the auction block and no one much wanted it by then as it was bankrupt and standards had been changed. We have seen cases where someone thought they could just spend and spend what it took their fathers to build. I wanted to read about a country where no one ever had the chance to do this. And here in our own country are examples of squandering

that opportunity. A lot of lessons are here in this book. Vera Figner makes it crystal clear that we had better pay attention. For anyone, there was opportunity in America like perhaps nowhere else. Capitalism, while not perfect, is better than anything else out there, so far. Short of living in a monastery, a person has to be a realist. Those with the money should not be able to cleverly (hiring a clever accountant or lawyer, that is) avoid paying taxes. But look at the good things that people in the past did. In spite of Henry Ford's being a skinflint, he created jobs. In spite of his hating everyone, he produced a reliable, CHEAP (relatively speaking) mode of transportation. Andrew Carnegie produced gorgeous and lasting libraries all over the country for people to have access to information. This was before the internet. "We are living in an age where brevity seems to be valued and nobody reads long books anymore." But, by golly, some of us do. I do. Do you? nancy morse....77 and loving it!

Born into the comforts of the Russian aristocracy in 1852, Vera Figner as a child harbored the fairy-tale dream of one day becoming tsarina. By the age of thirty-two, however, Figner had become one of Russia's most vocal revolutionaries, a terrorist and member of the Executive Committee of the People's Will party, and a prisoner sentenced for life for her involvement in the assassination of Alexander II. In this classic memoir, Figner recounts her journey from aristocrat to revolutionary, candidly relating the experiences that shaped her ideas and provoked her to political action and violence. As she reflects on her own lifelong commitment to improving the lives of ordinary Russians, she reveals much about the concept, structure, and leadership behind the radical movement in late nineteenth-century Russia. In his incisive introduction to this edition, Richard Stites discusses the importance of the memoir as a personal testimony and provides background for understanding a courageous woman's role in the struggle for political change.

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