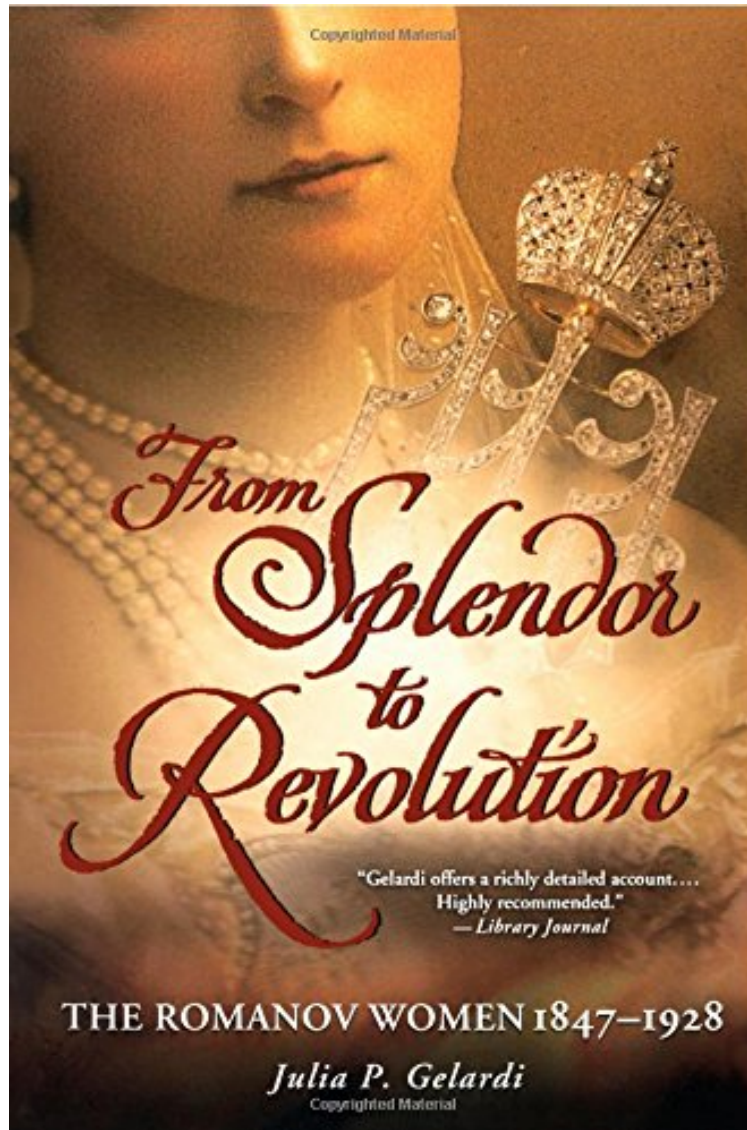


(Free) From Splendor to Revolution: The Romanov Women, 1847--1928

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Julia P. Gelardi

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Julia P. Gelardi : From Splendor to Revolution: The Romanov Women, 1847--1928 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised From Splendor to Revolution: The Romanov Women, 1847--1928:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Misleading information By Nic This is the second historical chronicle by Ms. Gelardi that I have read and included in my vast library on the royal personages of pre World War I Europe. The book itself is not a difficult read and is filled with information that one would find difficult to attain about

these four women if one wasn't familiar with the subjects. Ms. Gelardi pays a great deal of attention to her four subjects and does give a great deal of insight into their personalities and their positions. My main problem with Ms. Gelardi is that she feels she must have the expected "villians" in her retinue. She falls back onto the old charges about the Empress Alexandra that many authors used to excuse the Romanov's for the blame of the failure of their own empire. Blaming the Empress Alexandra as the reason for the Russian Revolution is about as absurd as it would be to just blame Nicholas II. But aside from that she makes an unsuccessful attempt to paint Alexandra as woman who didn't have the best of relationships with her children which anyone who has made a study of the last Tsar and his wife is completely erroneous. Some of the more glaring falsehoods that Ms. Gelardi attempts to lay at the feet of her subjects are baseless. She briefly talks about the famous fire at Greek Palace at Tatoi and implies that there was a common belief that the fire that took quite a few lives of royal retainers was orchestrated by the King. Anyone who has made a study of these personages knows full well that the theory Ms. Gelardi leaves the reader with is not an accepted historical fact. And to make her assertion she fails to tell her readers that the King and the Queen and many of the royal family were trapped by the fire at Tatoi. She then goes on in a chapter where she decides she will declare that Queen Olga of Greece, one of her prime subjects was not as beloved in Greece as most have come to think over the ages. Fact was that when Constantine was forced into exile the first time with pretty much all of the Greek royal family and his son Alexander became King that Queen Olga was one of the few representatives of the Greek Royal family who was allowed to remain in Greece and was one of the few Greek members of the royal family who was allowed to be at the side of King Alexander I when he died. The Greek government would not allow Queen Sophie to be at her son's side but did indeed allow Queen Olga. Olga was quite well respected in Greece and Gelardi's attempt to diminish the respect the Greek people had for her was rather disconcerting. She then goes on to paint Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna's daughter Beatrice who married into the Spanish Royal family who because of her own behavior was forced with her husband to leave Spain as a victim rather than the reason for their removal. Beatrice was a known antagonist and enemy of Queen Victoria Eugenia and a vicious gossip and intriguer. She attempts repeatedly to raise the position and reputations of Victoria Melita and Marie, two of Marie A's other daughters. I found it particularly amusing when she attempted to hold up Queen Marie's personal reputation by only addressing the one illegitimate child she bore and failed to address the second one and failed also to address the miscarriage of a possible third illegitimate child. Ms. Gelardi is predisposed to her favorites and that's to be expected but when you are writing a biographical expose then you can't play fast with the facts or the details. You can't hold up a woman to ridicule who led a rather exemplary personal life to one who couldn't figure out who's bed she was going to sleep in next. The one saving grace about this book is that we do get a great deal of information about Marie Alexandrovna and Queen Olga. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The Best Book Ever On The Lives Of The Families Of The Romanov Grand Dukes By Philip L. Tudor There is a large group of readers who are entranced with the last imperial dynasty of Russia, the Romanovs, and the immediate aftermath of their downfall. I think the fixation with this topic has a great deal to do with the off the chart luxury of the Romanov family's lives, which has likely never been paralleled since; as well as interest in how a dynasty that had so much in absolute power and immense wealth, could lose it all during the short reign of Nicholas II (causing the Romanov family to run for their lives). By the time most readers of the genre would buy this title, that story is already familiar. What this book does is fill in the blanks that have never been covered in depth. Splendor to Revolution: The Romanov Women primarily focuses on previously unexplored in detail female members of the Romanov family as well as their husbands, lovers and children. In the course of doing this, it discloses for the first time I have seen whose idea it was to shoot on "Bloody Sunday" and who gave the final order. The book also makes crystal clear a fact usually overlooked in books on the topic: that one Grand Duke's family posed a consistent threat to Nicholas II and his father. While the book describes homes such as the Vladimir Palace in detail, there are no photos of the dwelling, so I found it worth my time to use the internet as an adjunct to the book to actually see what was described in detail. Moreover, the book traces the paths of Romanov grand duchesses who actually moved down several notches in lifestyle to marry into other courts and rule other countries, as nothing could match the opulence of St Petersburg and the entire Romanov family's lifestyle. Thus, we often see these new queens of other countries making frequent visits home to Russia. Whether you have read numerous books about this topic, or are just entering into the Romanov fetish reading crowd, I would suggest at least reading the first few chapters of "The Family Romanov" by Candace Fleming. It has been characterized as a "young adult to adult" book, but I have a doctoral degree and it presented facts to me that I previously did not know. So many books drool over the incomparable luxury of the Romanovs' lives, but this was not because Russia was wealthier than other European countries before WWI. The Romanovs lived in such luxury simply because they stole more from their citizens than any other group of European aristocracies. The wealth disparity in Russia at the time makes the Walton Family look like poor angels; and when you read the book which is the topic of this review, as it goes on about the kindness and fabulous qualities of the women described (which usually boils down to their ability to throw a good party and smile and talk a lot while throwing it), it's good to remember that they did not have the slightest concern for the living conditions of 99% of the population, except to the extent that they wished to keep in place conditions which worked peasants and factory workers to DEATH so the aristocracy could have a blast. So, in the end result, all of the

women described in *Splendor to Revolution* were evil at heart, and looking to soak that last ounce of blood out of the workers who died to create their lifestyle. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful biographies of lesser-known Russian royals. By TRAM1951 The author of this book suggests a very good point at the beginning when she states that there are plenty of biographies (even autobiographies) of the more famous Russian royals, but not of the four subjects of her book. Much has been written about one of the women, Maria Feodorovna, wife and mother of Tsars Alexander III and Nicholas II, respectively; but her three sisters-in-law are less well-known. All four of them are fascinating women of huge importance to the history of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. Unfortunately, they have been largely overlooked and appear as asides or footnotes in the more famous biographies of the period. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the book is the author's ability to keep the reader straight on the names. Royal Russians had a penchant for naming their children similarly: Nicholas, Alexandra, Marie/Maria, Olga, Alexander, etc.; and, of course, they were interrelated. It was nothing for first cousins to marry first cousins. (Not true among the Russians as much as the Germans and English.) I didn't feel "snowed" or overwhelmed amid the relatives. Parts of the book require slower reading to achieve this clarity, but there is a deliberate attempt on the part of the author to make it easy on a reader who is not already familiar with the Romanov family. The book also has a truly fine gallery of photographs. They are not the usual stock pictures of famous rulers; they are from previously unpublished family albums. (If not unpublished, then little-known.) Highly recommended.

This sweeping saga recreates the extraordinary opulence and violence of Tsarist Russia as the shadow of revolution fell over the land, and destroyed a way of life for these Imperial women. The early 1850s until the late 1920s marked a turbulent and significant era for Russia. During that time the country underwent a massive transformation, taking it from days of grandeur under the tsars to the chaos of revolution and the beginnings of the Soviet Union. At the center of all this tumult were four women of the Romanov dynasty. Marie Alexandrovna and Olga Constantinovna were born into the family, Russian Grand Duchesses at birth. Marie Feodorovna and Marie Pavlovna married into the dynasty, the former born a Princess of Denmark, the latter a Duchess of the German duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. In *From Splendor to Revolution*, we watch these pampered aristocratic women fight for their lives as the cataclysm of war engulfs them. In a matter of a few short years, they fell from the pinnacle of wealth and power to the depths of danger, poverty, and exile. It is an unforgettable epic story.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . While providing insight into famously doomed Empress Alexandra Romanov, Gelardi (*Born to Rule*) focuses on four lesser known but indomitable women who achieved glory at the height of czarist Russia's global power only to witness its fall to revolution. Danish-born Empress Marie Feodorovna (Nicholas II's mother) and three of her sisters-in-law: Greek Queen Olga, Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, and Duchess Marie Alexandrovna, developed from four extravagantly indulged girls into dominant matriarchs who still could not prevent the decline of royalty and centuries-old traditions. Relating the drama and tragedy of royal life, Gelardi ably weaves in the extended family ties that connected most European rulers, including Queen Victoria, while also including helpful genealogy charts. Gelardi's narrative framework of the four Romanov women's long lives works well to explain not only the realities of the European courts and alliances but also the unique aspects of the Russian dynasty, which suffered repeated assassination attempts even during the age of splendor, resulting in young Nicholas II's observation of his grandfathers murder, possibly hastening Russia's slide to revolution. 16 pages of bw photos. (Feb.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. From Booklist Independent historian Gelardi has done her homework, drawing on an impressive array of primary and secondary sources to deliver a joint biography of four women who were part of Russia's imperial dynasty in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two of the women, Queen Olga of Greece and Marie Alexandrovna, Duchess of Edinburgh, were born Romanovs, and two, Empress Marie Feodorovna and Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, married Romanovs. Against the backdrop of a tumultuous period in Russian history, this is really a book about an extended family, with a family's sorrows, joys, squabbles, and scandals, albeit on a very grand scale. Even with the helpful genealogical charts, it's easy to get lost in a thicket of names, and the prose style is often as bland as a press release (As patroness of the Russian Red Cross, Marie Feodorovna oversaw the philanthropic organization's numerous important projects, assuring that they ran well or came to fruition). Still, this is an absorbing account that will appeal to Russian history buffs and to those who enjoy reading about royals. --Mary Ellen Quinn Independent historian Gelardi has done her homework, drawing on an impressive array of primary and secondary sources to deliver a joint biography of four women who were part of Russia's imperial dynasty in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. . . . Against the backdrop of a tumultuous period in Russian history, this is really a book about an extended family, with a family's sorrows, joys, squabbles, and scandals, albeit on a very grand scale. . . . this is an absorbing account that will appeal to Russian history buffs and to those who enjoy reading about royals. Booklist Relating the drama and tragedy of royal life, Gelardi ably weaves in the extended family ties that connected most European rulers, including Queen Victoria, while also including helpful genealogy charts. Gelardi's narrative framework of the four Romanov women's long lives works well to explain not only the realities of the European courts and alliances but also the unique aspects of the Russian dynasty, which suffered repeated

assassination attempts even during the age of splendor, resulting in young Nicholas II's observation of his grandfather's murder, possibly hastening Russia's slide to revolution. Publishers Weekly (starred review) Gelardi does an exceptional job of relating the last years of the Romanovs via the formerly underutilized perspectives of the women behind the men. While Orlando Figes's *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* used Tolstoy's *War and Peace* as its framework, telling some of the same story, Gelardi offers a more richly detailed account, sure to captivate those with a deep interest in Russian and interrelated European history. Highly recommended. Library Journal