

PEASANT IDENTITIES IN RUSSIA'S TURMOIL: STATUS, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY
IN VIATKA PROVINCE, 1914-1921

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

From 1914-21, the Russian countryside underwent an enormous social and political transformation. World War I and civil war led to conscription into the tsarist, Bolshevik, and anti-Bolshevik armies, removing over fourteen million young male peasants from their villages. Revolution destroyed the centuries-old peasant-landlord relationship, redistributed land among the peasantry, democratized the countryside, and allowed villages to install autonomous governing bodies. War and social turmoil also brought massive famine and government requisitioning of grain and possessions, killing thousands of peasants and destroying their means of existence. The Bolshevik victory, a defining event of the twentieth century, was ultimately determined by the temporary support of the peasantry, the vast majority of Russia's population.

This project studies the interaction between peasants and government in the Russian province of Viatka from the beginning of World War I to the end of the Civil War in 1921. In doing so, it will advance how scholars understand the nature of the Revolution, peasant-state relations, and peasant society and culture in general. On the

one hand, I analyze Russia's changes through a study of peasant responses to tsarist, Provisional Government, and Soviet recruitment into the armed forces; requisitioning of grain and possessions; and establishment of local administrations. In examining peasants' language and interaction with the state, I show how the population adopted, rejected, and helped to shape government power, just as it shaped them. The destruction of the tsarist system created an ideal environment for the rural populations to break free from traditional roles. Indeed, political and social turmoil helped to fashion new peasant identities and social relationships. On the other hand, I strive to understand the diverse peasant experiences by conducting a case study of the internal dynamics and cleavages in the countryside. My study underscores that the experiences of war and revolution and participation in Russia's national transformation differed for peasants based on a complex interaction of their geographic locale, social status within the village, gender, age, and ethnicity. This project thereby paints a more complicated picture of Russia's peasantry and peasant-state relations as a whole.

To the memory of two great historians and personal inspirations,
William Chazanof and Allan K. Wildman

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is nothing in Russian history darker than the fate of Viatka and her land.

--Nikolai Ivanovich Kostomarov, nineteenth-century historian.¹

From 1914-22, the Russian countryside underwent an enormous social and political transformation. World War I and civil war led to conscription into the tsarist, Bolshevik, and anti-Bolshevik armies, removing over fourteen million young male peasants from their villages. Revolution destroyed the centuries-old peasant-landlord relationship, redistributed land among the peasantry, democratized the countryside, and allowed villages to install autonomous governing bodies. War and social turmoil also brought massive famine and government requisitioning of grain and possessions, killing thousands of peasants and destroying their means of existence. The Bolshevik victory,

¹ Quoted in B. V. Gnedovskii and E. D. Dobrovol'skaia, Dorogami zemli Viatksoi (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo iskusstvo, 1971), 5.

one of the defining events of the twentieth century, was ultimately determined by the support of the peasantry, the vast majority of Russia's population.

This project studies the interaction between peasants and government in the Russian province of Viatka from the beginning of World War I to the end of the civil war. It analyzes Russia's changes through a study of peasant responses to tsarist, Provisional Government, and Soviet recruitment into the armed forces; requisitioning of grain and possessions; and establishment of local administrations. In examining peasants' language and modes of interaction with the state, it shows how the population adopted, rejected, and helped to shape government power, just as it shaped them. The destruction of the tsarist system created an ideal environment for many of the rural populations to break free from traditional roles. Indeed, political and social turmoil helped to fashion new peasant identities and social relationships. This project examines the diversity of peasant experiences by conducting a case study of the internal dynamics and cleavages in the countryside. It underscores that the experiences of war and revolution differed for peasants based on a complex interaction of their geographic locale, status within the village, gender, and ethnicity.

Several scholars have argued that the key to understanding the social changes in the countryside, and Bolshevik attempts to draw the peasants into the Soviet regime, lies

in a broad range of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional relations.¹ In doing so, they have provided a solid foundation for further study of the peasantry during this era. However, their studies are largely limited to the Black Earth region of South-Central Russia. Although this concentration is understandable, given the region's large population and agricultural output, this focus has led to an incomplete, misleading portrait of a homogenous Russian peasantry. Viatka province is an ideal model to test the heterogeneous nature of the countryside.² Viatka's ecology, land-tenure system, and social structure differed from the Black Earth region and shared many elements with other under-studied regions of Russia. Through examining Viatka province this study questions the long-held paradigm, based on studies of the Black Earth region, that peasants tried to close themselves off from the outside world.

Previous scholarship on the peasantry has largely argued that peasants had two political goals: to redistribute all the land and resources as they saw fit, and to achieve a mythical freedom from the outside world. I argue that the peasants of Viatka sought out

¹ V. P. Danilov, Sovetskaia dokolkhoznaia derevnia: sotsial'naia struktura, sotsial'nye otnoshenia (Moscow: Nauka, 1979); V. V. Kabanov, Krest'ianskoe khoziaistvo v usloviakh 'voennogo kommunizma' (Moscow: Nauka, 1988); Dorothy Atkinson, The End of the Russian Land Commune, 1905-1930 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983); Orlando Figes, Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution (1917-1921) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

² The Soviet government disassembled Viatka province in 1929 and conglomerated it with Gorky region. In December 1934, following the assassination of Sergei Kirov, a native of Viatka, the government recreated the region as Kirov oblast (region). Today Kirov is one of the only regions in Russia that has not reverted to its pre-Revolutionary name.

the state and actively worked to be part of the larger polity. While land was important to peasants' economic livelihood, they both used it as a tool to engage the state and thought beyond their local plots of land. Therefore, the peasants were complex and active agents in Russia's political transformation.

This project is also a study of power--how state power affected village politics, how peasant elites dominated their societies, how peasants understood their subaltern or subordinate position in society, how peasants influenced state power, how the power relationships altered Russian society and its polity, and how Russia's turmoil tore the power system asunder. It discusses peasant experiences during a time when power was multipartite without one major central source. It thereby examines the interconnections of power and identity between peasant and non-peasant society during a time of great social and political upheaval. How power affected state and peasant identity and how peasants in turn shaped and affected power is the overarching theme of this dissertation. Below it lay interwoven discursive ribbons of citizenship, ritual, and the myth of popular political participation.

Each of the major state authorities (the tsarist, Provisional Government, and Soviet) attempted and failed to achieve hegemony over their population. Hegemony requires more than a coercive government. The government establishes its dominance

through official persuasion and popular complicity, rather than merely by brute force. As Ranjit Guha argues, hegemony is a fluctuating process within the state of dominance in which persuasion outweighs coercion. While I agree with Guha's assessment of hegemony, I believe that persuasion and coercion can fluctuate rapidly and are felt by individuals as well as groups.³ Dominance and its condition of hegemony thereby influence identity and one's relationship to the polity. I examine the relationship between the dominator (the various states and their cultural and political elites) and the dominated (the peasantry). In the tumultuous eight years, both actors in this diametrical pair changed considerably. The state evolved from tsarist, to liberal democratic, to Soviet and in some places anti-Soviet, and then to Bolshevik. The peasantry also changed as huge numbers of males left from and returned to the village during the war and civil war, new leaders emerged during the Revolution, and whole families were destroyed as casualties of political changes.

³ Ranjit Guha, Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 100-151. Guha realigns Antonio Gramsci's dialectic image of domination and hegemony in favor of hegemony as a fluctuating process within domination. See also Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds. and trans. (New York: International Publishers, 1992); Ilena Rodríguez, "Reading Subalterns Across Texts, Disciplines, and Theories: From Representation to Recognition," in The Latin American Subaltern Reader, Ilena Rodríguez, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 11-12, 31. Joseph V. Femia, Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Robert Bocock, Hegemony (Chichester: Ellis Horwood Limited, 1986); John Scott, Power (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 71-91.

Through the times of turmoil the diametrical power relationship did not shift--the state remained the dominator and the peasants the dominated. However, this relationship was more complicated than one with two distinct groups and a clear aggressor and victim. The peasantry influenced the state and its politics, breaking down the barriers between dominated and dominator. Moreover, rural populations did not always act as a cohesive unit. Different peasant populations moved in and out of the local state administration and villagers experienced war and revolution differently.

The Identity of Viatka Province

Viatka province lay amidst the tall pine trees and meandering rivers beyond the Volga, hundreds of miles from Moscow. Nestled in the northeast corner of European Russia (north of Kazan, on the foothills of the Ural Mountains), the province occupied a vast physical space. At the turn of the twentieth century, Viatka was one of the largest provinces in European Russia at 89,160 square miles, with a surprisingly large population of 3,369,000, equal to that of Sweden.⁴ In 1914, Viatka had the second largest rural population of all the Russian Empire's provinces.⁵

⁴ S. N. Kosarev, Zemel'noe ustroistvo v Viatskoi gubernii (Viatka: Gubernskaia tipo-litografiia, 1917), 1. Viatka was 134,500 square versts.

⁵ Rossiiia 1913 god: Statistiko-dokumental'nyi spravocchnik (St. Petersburg: BLITs, 1995), 18-22.

Viatka historically resided on the border between central Russia and the Siberian periphery. Finno-Ugric peoples, Tatars, and smaller Slavic tribes inhabited the region in the tenth century and developed large settlements and a vibrant trade. Novgorod, a commercial partner of the Hanseatic League, established economic ties with the region and incorporated it into its empire in the fourteenth century. Following the decline of Novgorod, Muscovy integrated the territory into its kingdom in the next century. The first Russians to colonize Viatka came in the twelfth century, but they began systematic colonization only in the sixteenth century, establishing monasteries and economic networks, and by the eighteenth century constituted a majority of the region's population.⁶ The Russian Orthodox Church began mass conversions of the local indigenous populations in the late eighteenth century and most Udmurts and Maris converted to Orthodoxy, although some non-Christian religious practices and ideas persisted into the twentieth century.⁷ In 1780, Russia's rulers finally established Viatka as a province unto itself.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars and literary figures painted an image of Viatka as a remote wasteland, caught between the crossroads of East and West,

⁶ A. V. Emmausskii, Istoriia Viatskogo kraia v XII-seredine XIX veka (Kirov: Kiorvskaia oblastnaia tipografiia, 1996).

⁷ Paul Werth, At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

and North and South. Viatka's liminal state created a space for writers to endow it with their own dreams, criticisms, and images.⁸ Viatka's population, economy, and society were "backward" and its distance from civilization punctuated by its function as a land of political exiles. The Imperial state exiled many noted political figures to Viatka, such as Aleksander Lavrentevich Vitberg, Vladimir G. Korolenko, Felix E. Dzerzhinsky, and Alexander Herzen. In their writings, these exiles largely shaped the lasting negative image of Viatka to the rest of Russia.

Viatka is best known through its most famous exile, the nineteenth-century philosopher and revolutionary Alexander Herzen. His recollections in My Past and Thoughts (*Byloe i dumy*) described his time in the province from 1835 through 1837. For Herzen, Viatka was both the eastern wildness of Siberia, and the western despotism of Russian officials. For example, when Herzen first arrived in the province he met an officer forcing a group of Jewish boys to Siberia. Herzen used Viatka to confront

⁸ Other liminal spaces in Russia included Siberia, the Caucasus, and Kazan. See Mark Bassin, Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Yuri Slezkine, Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); and Robert P. Geraci, Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). See also Maria Todorova, Imagining the Balkans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). All of the above works have intellectual connections to Edward Said's concept of "orientalism." See Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

Russia's inhumane Siberian exile system, and their treatment of Jews.⁹ Herzen described the province's power-hungry governor as an "eastern satrap," (*vostochnyi satrap*) and its bureaucracy as filled with incompetent clerks with "no education and no moral conceptions."¹⁰ Viatka's remoteness fostered tyranny and corruption. Herzen thereby used Viatka's administration to give an overstated critique, an extreme version, of Russia's government as a whole.

Viatka's image was not solely pejorative. Some authors, such as Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii, saw Viatka's unspoiled nature as paradise. Other writers sprinkled compliments of Viatka's beautiful landscape among their larger complaints of the region.¹¹ However, the dominant discourse painted Viatka in dark hues. The negative imagery is also not unique to Viatka province. Other areas of Russia were certainly called the *glush* (backwater), but Viatka embodied the extremes of this image of the remote countryside. Present-day scholars have continued this negative picture of Viatka

⁹ Alexander Gertsen, *Byloe i dumy*, t. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1962), 210-211.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 213, 220.

¹¹ See A. A. Titov, ed., *Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii: Religioznyi i obshchestvennyi iskaniiia* (Paris: Rodnik, 1929).

under the tsarist regime. As one author writes, “the vast Viatka region gradually became one of the most backwater and ‘[G-d] forsaken’ of the Russian provinces.”¹²

Geography and Peoples

Viatka's ecology, land-tenure system, ethnicity, and social structure differed from the Black Earth region, shaping a diverse Viatka agricultural economy. For example, in contrast to Central Russia's land-hungry, but soil-rich, former serf peasantry, Viatka had a soil-poor, historically non-serf peasantry who largely owned their own land. Similar to peasants in northern Russia, much of the Viatka peasantry supplemented their agricultural economy with forestry and handicraft production. Like much of northern Russia, Viatka's landscape was marked by state-owned land, ninety percent of which was forest. In 1911, the state owned 78 percent of all the forests and 35 percent of all the land, the peasantry in Viatka owned approximately 60 percent of land.¹³

The region's geography and ecology also shaped the legal composition of the peasant population. Most of Viatka's peasants (90 percent) were former state peasants, unlike the Black Earth region's predominately former privately owned serf population. Viatka did have a small former-private serf population, living mostly in the southern

¹² V. P. Danilov, Rural Russia under the New Regime, Orlando Figes, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 49.

¹³ Sadyrina, Oktiabr v Viatksoi gubernii (Kirov: Kirovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1957), 12.

portion of the province and amounting to 4.3 percent of the total peasant population.

Finally, Viatka had a few former appanage peasants (6.1 percent of the peasant population), who had been owned by members of the tsar's family before emancipation.

State peasants received larger land allotments than private serfs after their emancipation from serfdom in 1866 and in the beginning of the twentieth century owned on average 14-16 *desiatins* of land (37.8-43.2 acres), in comparison to former private serfs' 6.1 des. (16.47 acres) and former appanage peasants' approximately 8 des. (21.6 acres) of land.

Most of Viatka's peasants did not suffer from land hunger to the extent that peasants in the Black Earth region did. During the Revolution, peasants in Viatka could wait for land reform laws, rather than autonomously seizing land as happened in the Black Earth region. Former state peasants also did not have a single individual, like a landlord, on whom to focus their aggression in the coming years. They also had a greater propensity than former serfs to engage state officials and the local administration, based on a history of personal contact with a number of elites (including state and zemstvo officials).

Throughout the province, an average peasant household of 6.1 members held 8.6 des. of arable land, 1.9 des. of hayfield, and 16. des. of total land.¹⁴ Viatka's peasant structure was thus a composite of northern Russia (former state and free peasants) and the Black Earth region (former private serfs).

¹⁴ Statisticheskii Spravochnik po Viatskoi gubernii, 1917 (Viatka: Tipo-litografiia, 1917).

Land ownership and types of land in part dictated how peasants of Viatka reacted to the revolutionary land reform measures during the revolutionary years. Unlike the Black Earth region, peasants and the state owned the vast majority of the land in Viatka, as seen in Table 1.1. The state owned much of the coveted forest, which many peasants needed for woodworking, hunting, and firewood. This area would become an arena for struggles between state and peasants during this period.

landownership categories	farmstead	arable	hayfield	pasture	forest	totals	% of usable land	unusable land	Total land
allotment land	237,962	4,958,237	1,036,425	309,974	1,472,821	8,015,419	62%	340,578	8,355,997
land bought by peasantry	483	42,198	14,507	1,915	9,850	6,8953	0.53%	7,532	76,485
privately owned land ¹⁵	1,300	20,686	18,191	7,479	514,056	561,712	4.30%	37,533	599,245
state land ¹⁶	234	34,513	12,300	1,335	4,050,342	4,098,724	31.70%	892,622	4,991,346
former royal lands	12	12,125	5,931	1,445	43,815	63328	0.50%	15,506	78,834
peasant land bank	2	56,941	4,779	542	2,004	64,268	0.50%	3,383	67,651
church and monastery land	2,741	21,690	7,969	1,003	4,236	37,639	0.30%	3,723	41,362
city land	2,759	1,444	7,466	3,277	7,876	22,822	0.18%	4,781	27,603
other lands ¹⁷	24	102	174	12	91	403	0%	4775	5178
totals	245,517	5,147,936	1,107,742	326,982	6,105,091	12,933,268	100%	1,310,433	14,243,701
percentage of total land	2%	39.80%	8.60%	2.50%	47.20%	91%		9%	100%

Table 1.1: Land Ownership in Viatka Province, 1909-1911 in *desiatins*¹⁸

¹⁵ Includes all peasant associations and organizations and land bought by single peasants not over 50 des.

¹⁶ Includes forests, industrial land, aquatic areas, mills, areas near settlements, mountains, and artillery registry.

¹⁷ Such as land owned by the railroad, zemstvo, schools, and hospitals.

There were three main agricultural zones in the province: North, Central, and Southern.¹⁹ Forests and a harsh climate dictated the economy of the northern portion of the province (approximately north of Viatka city, including Orlov and Slobodskoi *uezds* [regions]). The sand and clay soil of this area and the short growing season made it impossible to cultivate most of the standard peasant crops. Indeed, peasants could usually not begin sowing the fields until mid-May and it was not unheard of to have frost in July. Most peasants based their livelihoods on forestry and a non-agricultural economy. They engaged in handicrafts (*kustar*), making bast shoes (*laptias*) and other wood products. Because land was plentiful, some peasants in northern Viatka still practiced slash and burn farming at the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁰ Presumably due to the relatively harsh climate, the northern section had the lowest population density of the province. Most of the settlements were small and remote and communes tended to include only a single village. The northern *volosts* (hamlets) covered vast amounts of space. Peasants who needed administrative aid, such as the *volost* court or hospital, had to travel up to a hundred miles.

¹⁸ Table adapted from A. S. Bystrova et al., eds., Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii: Sbornik dokumentov (Kirov: Kirovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1957), 77.

¹⁹ For an overview of Viatka's agricultural conditions, see A. Novikov, comp., Ekonomicheskiia nuzhdy Viatskago kraia (po dannym zemskoi statistiki) (Viatka: Tipografiia Maisheeva, 1896).

²⁰ Kosarev, 2.

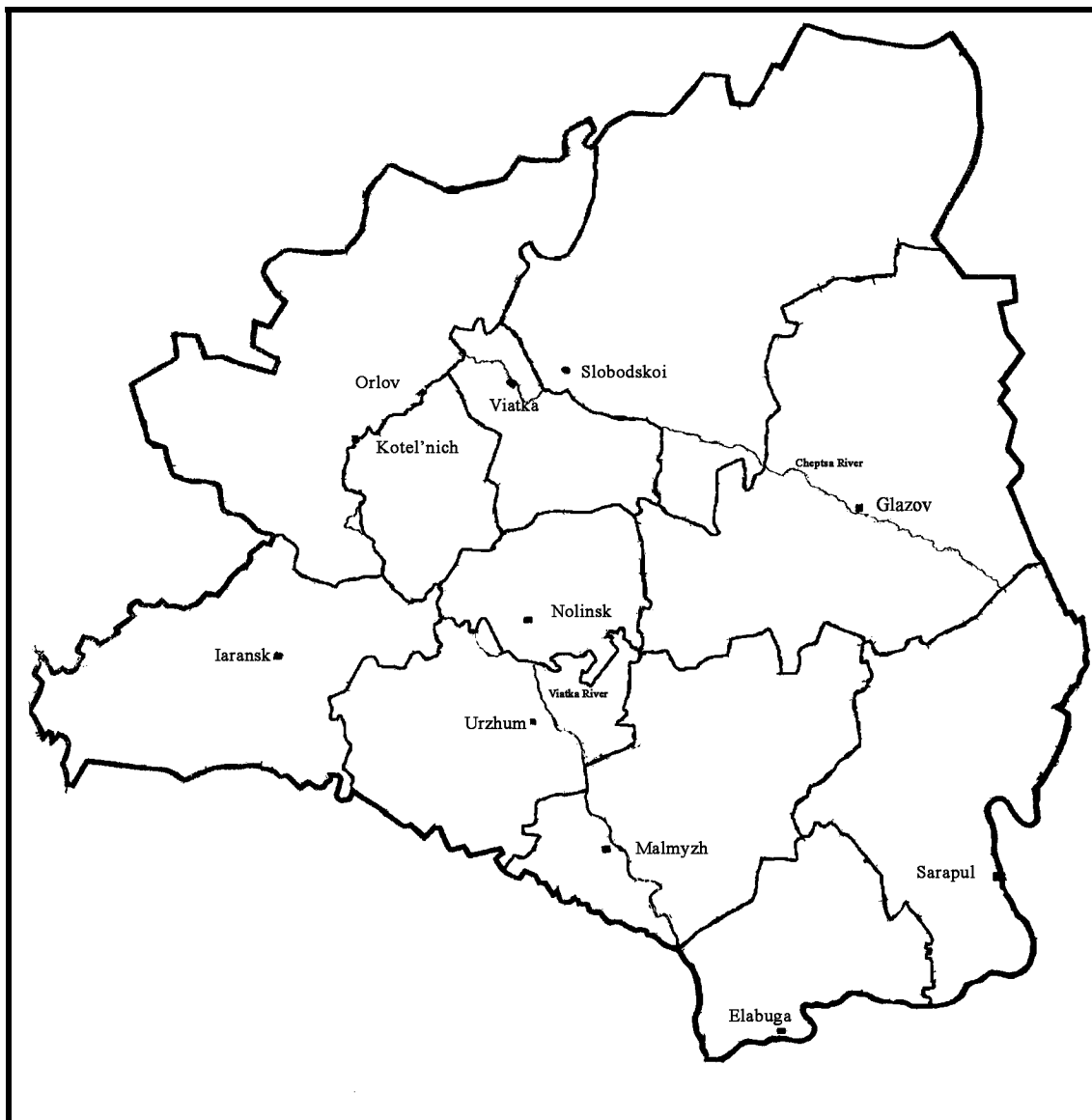


Figure 1.1: Map of Viatka Province

Central Viatka (including Viatka, Kotel' nich, Nolinsk, and northern Glazov *uezds*) enjoyed a slightly better climate and topography than the North. The region's growing season was one to two weeks longer than the North, and its soil was mostly a mixture of sand and loam. The railroad and the city of Viatka assured that central Viatka had a strong administrative apparatus and closer network with the national political and economic world.

Southern Viatka (Iaransk, Urzhum, Malmyzh, Elabuga, Sarapul and the southern half of Glazov *uezds*) was the breadbasket of the province. The milder weather and higher-quality soil allowed peasants to grow a broader range of food. Some villagers in the southern-most districts even had fruit gardens. The left bank of the Cheptsa river had the province's only fertile black earth soil and was the heart of the region's lively agricultural economy. Southern Viatka had a denser population than the North. Villages tended to be larger and communes usually consisted of more than one village. Izhevsk and Votkinsk, in southeast Viatka, housed most of the province's heavy industry.

Although Viatka's population lived predominately in the countryside, urban areas influenced the region's rural economy and society. At the beginning of the twentieth century the city of Viatka had a bustling economy and a growing population of 25,000 inhabitants (about the same size as the cities Vladivostok, Vladimir, and Vologda). As the province's capital, peasants traveled to the city to lodge complaints with the

government, make pilgrimages to the Trifonov monastery, and use the city's market to sell and buy goods. The city also enjoyed a lively cultural life, in part due to the influx of political exiles who were centers of intellectual circles and a burgeoning underground revolutionary movement.²¹

Viatka had a significant non-Russian peasant population of Udmurts and Maris--both Finno-Ugric peoples--as well as Turkic Tatars, who together accounted for over half of the population in much of the South and East of the province.²² In the late-tsarist era, there was wide public debate about how Russia's various peoples fit into the Empire. Russia's educated elite saw the Russian peasantry as both the heart of Russian tradition and as uncultured, backward, unclean, and half-pagan.²³ If Russian peasants were bad, non-Russian peasants were worse. Russian cultural elites saw non-Russian peasants as a magnification of the Russian peasantry's ills. Ethnographers placed non-Russian peoples into a hierarchy of culture, based on their assumptions of organic nationality.

²¹ Naselenye Rossii za 100 let (1897-1997). Population of Russia: 1897-1997. Statisticheskii sbornik. Statistical Handbook (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po statistike, 1998), 58-59.

²² Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetской vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 24-26. For a general description of Viatka's non-Russian population, see M. Ostrovskaia, Iz istorii viatskikh inorodtsev (Kazan: Tipolitografiia imperatorskago universiteta, 1912). In the early twentieth century Udmurts were known as Votiaks and Maris as Cheremisi. These terms now have pejorative connotations. For the sake of simplicity and cultural sensitivity, I use the terms Udmurts and Maris throughout the dissertation.

²³ Stephen Frank, Crime, Cultural Conflict, and Justice in Rural Russia, 1856-1914 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 9-10, 276-306; Cathy A. Frierson, Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7-17, 182-195.

Ethnographers studying Russia’s “others” found a variety of differences among the nationalities, from young savages to more advanced, yet still unenlightened nations.²⁴ In Viatka, Tatars were below Russians, followed by Maris, with Udmurts taking up the rear.

<i>Uezds</i>	Viatka	Kotel'nich	Nolinsk	Orlov	Glazov	Sarapul	Malmyzh	Slobodskoi	Urzhum	Elabuga	Iaransk	Total	%
Russian	202879	340251	222476	263374	249292	328659	174636	247600	242533	153312	407016	2832028	77.5
Udmurt	1	0	0	0	185188	124153	81273	7544	983	57225	0	456,367	12.5
Mari	0	797	0	0	0	1720	12278	0	81129	8724	67761	172409	4.7
Tatar	23	5	17	0	9627	8202	69640	5163	17633	34693	103	145106	4.0
Teptiar	0	0	0	0	0	5147	0	0	0	10820	0	15967	
Bashkir	0	0	0	0	0	6063	0	0	0	5440	0	11503	
Permiak	0	0	0	7474	4630	0	0	0	0	0	0	12104	
Besermian	0	0	0	0	9177	356	0	2	0	0	0	9535	
Other²⁵	5	28	11	16	58	483	18	0	28	4	3	654	
Total	202908	341081	222504	270864	457972	474783	387578	260579	342306	270218	474883	3655943	100

Table 1.2: Ethnic composition of the Viatka provincial countryside in 1913

Alexander Herzen dabbled in ethnographic writing while exiled in Viatka. As was typical of borderland studies of non-Russians in the mid-nineteenth century, Herzen ranked the progress of Russian, Mari, and Udmurt peasants with Russians as the most

²⁴ Nathaniel Knight, “Grigor’ev in Orenburg, 1851-1862: Russian Orientalism in the Service of Empire?” *Slavic Review* 59 (spring 2000): 78-80, 97-100; Knight, “Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses: *Narodnost’* and Modernity in Imperial Russia,” in Yanni Kotsonis and David Hoffmann, eds. *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices* (New York: Macmillan Press, Inc., 2000), 41-61; Charles Steinwedel, “To Make a Difference: the Category of Ethnicity in Late Imperial Russian Politics, 1861-1917,” *Russian Modernity*, 67-86. Ethnographers clearly thought in terms of nations and believed that Tatars and Udmurts, for example, were distinct and organic nations. Viatka’s non-Russian peasant population did not have the same sense of their group as nations, as discussed below.

²⁵ Others include Poles, Jews, Germans, Estonians, French, Roma, Komi, Finns, and so forth.

advanced, Mari as maturing, and Udmurts as primitive savages. Herzen described Udmurts as shy and simple people; pagans who spoke an incoherent language without the grammatical rules necessary for coherent speech. Mari in contrast, “do not have the [Udmurts'] shyness. They are wild and persistent. The [Mari] are much more attached to their customs and religion. The [Udmurts] are small, and physically weak; the [Mari] in general are more robust and stronger.”²⁶ Ethnographers and historians echoed Herzen’s description of Udmurts and added that they lagged behind Russians in cultural evolution.²⁷ Many state officials had similar negative images of Udmurts and Mari, describing them as “brown mice” and “filthy people.”²⁸

²⁶ Alexander Gertsen, Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh, t. 1 (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1954), 371.

²⁷ D. K. Zelenin, Kama i Viatka: Putevoditel i etnograficheskoe opisanie prikamskago kraia (Viatka: Tipografiia Ed. Bergmana, 1904), 74-75. Zelenin also repeats the ethnographer N. Blinov’s views of the Udmurts. On the question of cultural evolution see Geraci’s discussion of the ethnographer I. N. Smirnov, Window on the East, 202-207. Negative portrayals of non-Russians in the Viatka region were not limited to Russians. J. Rives Childs, the head of the Kazan division of the American Relief Administration, engaged in classic anthropological orientalist description in his report on his travels through southern Viatka. He portrayed himself as the white man journeying through both the unblemished and savage wilderness. Childs recounted his ride near Sarapul as, “through the heart of a Russian forest and where the majesty of nature had been left almost undisturbed by human hands.” The author stated that while Sarapul’s villages were “more modern” than those in the Tatar republic, the peasants were nearly savage. “I am sure that from my contact with the Russian peasants that I have been given an understanding of the darkness of the mind of the average Russian but I doubt exceedingly if it is possible for one who has never been in Russia to fully measure the profundity of this darkness. One sometimes feels after conversation with them that they are little better than animals and yet again they give manifestation of so much human feeling that one is inevitably led to the conclusion that given only the chance which human beings merit and which has been denied the Russians for so long and they will prove themselves.” Non-Russian peasants, however, were racially inferior to the near-savage Russian peasants, with the “notoriously lazy” Bashkirs, like the “votyaks and Permians, much inferior to the Russians and even to the Tartars.” (sic.)

In the 1890s, the perceived lack of Udmurt culture, potential paganism, and savagery gripped the Russian media. In the notorious Multan Case a group of seven Udmurts in southern Viatka was falsely convicted of human sacrifice. It took three retrials, the intervention of the famous writer Vladimir Korolenko, and a public campaign to bring the Udmurt peasants their eventual acquittal.²⁹ The public uproar over the chance that Udmurts were engaging in human sacrifice highlighted the popular view that non-Russians needed cultural advancement and more stringent Christian teachings.

According to the state and elites, the best means to raise the cultural level and evolution of non-Russians was through education. Formal education among non-Russian peasants was limited before the mid-nineteenth century due to the lack of government programs.³⁰ While the number of schools grew in the late-nineteenth century, the

Hoover Archives, American Relief Administration, New York office, box 30, folder 30-2, Report of an inspection of Ossa, Sarapool (Perm Government) (sic.) and of Votskaia oblast (July 19-28, 1922).

²⁸ Quoted in E. I. Kiriukhin, "Iz istorii natsional'nogo stroitel'stva v Viatskom krae," Voprosy istorii Kirovskoi oblasti, 6.

²⁹ The Multan Case gripped Russia's public imagination at the turn of the twentieth century and continues to enjoy great scholarly interest. The Multan Case has become a cornerstone in shaping the Udmurt national heritage. Geraci, ch. 6; see also his article "Ethnic Minorities, Anthropology, and Russian National Identity on Trial: The Multan Case, 1892-96," The Russian Review 59 (October 2000): 530-554. G. V. Korolenko, ed. Delo multanskikh votiaikov, obviniaivshikhsia v prinesenii chelovecheskoi zhertvy iazycheskim bogam (Moscow: Tipografiia russkie vedomosti, 1896); L. S. Shatenshtein, Multanskoe delo 1892-1896 gg. (Izhevsk: Udmurtskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1960).

³⁰ P. Luppov, Narodnoe obrazovanie sredi votiaikov so vremeni pervykh izvestii o nikh do 1840-kh godov (istoricheskii ocherk) (Viatka: Tipografiia i khomolitografiia Maisheeva, 1898).

number of students remained low. In the beginning of the twentieth century, only 5.3 percent of Udmurts were literate (compared to 17.2 percent of Russians). However, as Steven Duke shows, government and local initiatives from the late nineteenth century until the beginning of World War I spurred the growth of schools, literacy, and school attendance for non-Russians throughout the country.³¹ In 1916, literacy had grown to 14.7 percent among Udmurt males and 37 percent of Udmurt households had at least one literate or semi-literate member.³² Udmurt boys represented a slightly higher percentage of the school population than they did as a percentage of the whole population.³³

Images of non-Russians as backward and primitive also shaped state policies during the tsarist era. Although large armaments factories in Izhevsk and Votkinsk were situated in the middle of Udmurt regions, very few Udmurts actually worked in the factories. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Viatka governor stated that

³¹ Steven Duke, "Educating Non-Russians in late Imperial Russia: An Historical Study of Education Development in a Multiethnic Setting, 1885-1914" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1999), 292-296.

³² Nauchno-Otraslevyi Arkhiv Udmurtskogo Instituta Istorii, Iazyka i Literatruy Ural'skogo Otdeleniia RAN (hereafter NOA UIIIaL URO RAN), op. 2-N, d. 10, tom 1, l. 13ob. L. S. Khristoliubova, "Prosveshchenie i razvitie nauki," in Narody povolzh'ia i priural'ia: Komi-zyriane. Komi-permiaki. Mariitsy. Mordva. Udmurty, N. F. Mokshin et al., eds. (Moscow: Nauka, 2000), 490.

³³ See statistics cited in Wayne Dowler, Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1860-1917 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 212-213.

Udmurts “do not have the ability to do factory work. Moreover, they do not know Russian. They will be more useful for the region in agricultural production.”³⁴

The large non-Russian peasant population thereby influenced official politics and elite conceptions of Viatka more broadly. Elite views of hierarchy among the nationalities would continue to inform state policies throughout the First World War, Revolution, and civil war and shows one of the main continuities in tsarist and Soviet policies. Ethnic identity also shaped everyday peasant experience.

The nationalities interacted and lived side by side, and individual ethnicities saw themselves as distinct groups, defined themselves in relation to other ethnicities, and had general negative stereotypes of local nationalities.³⁵ Despite scholars’ and administrators’ pejorative images of non-Russians, economic interaction among the nationalities flourished. Markets and fairs were multi-ethnic meeting points where Russian, Udmurt, and Mari peasants traded goods with one another. Peasants of southern Viatka highly valued their intricate market system. For example, Russian peasants of the village (*selo*) of Tanaika regularly traded with Udmurts of the region. The Russians would travel to the

³⁴ Quote from P. N. Dmitriev, M. A. Sadakov et al., Rabochii klass Udmurtii. 1861-1986. Nauchno-populiarnyi istoricheskii ocherk (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1987), 15.

³⁵ Such underlying hostility and stereotyping among neighboring peasant national and ethnic groups also existed in Transylvania. See Katherine Verdery, Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

regional center Elabuga to exchange their cucumbers for Udmurts' forest materials.³⁶

Markets and fairs were places to purchase basic necessities, such as salt, meat, and kerosene.³⁷ Russian and non-Russian peasants alike allotted significant amounts of their family budgets to purchase items in the markets, reflecting how integral the regional economy was to the peasant populations. These gathering points were also places to get news of political events and interact with other cultures.³⁸

In many places non-Russian and Russian peasants interacted on a daily basis. Russians lived in and around almost all the villages inhabited by non-Russians. The quarters grew closer in the mid-to late-nineteenth century, partly from the great Siberian migration occurring at this time, as Russians from different provinces and regions within Viatka resettled to southern and eastern Viatka as part of the great Siberian migration.³⁹ Ethnographers believed that Maris “feared and disdained Russians” and were “barely subjected to Russification.”⁴⁰ However, in practice Russians and non-Russians

³⁶ Trudy kommissii po issledovaniiu kustarnoi promyshlennosti v Rossii., vyp. XI (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia V. Karshbauma, 1884), 15.

³⁷ N. P. Ligenko, “Bazary, iarmarki, torzhki--aktivnaia sfera mezhetnicheskikh kontaktov. XIX-nachalo XX veka,” in Slavianskii i finno-ugorskii mir vchera, segodniia. Sbornik statei (Izhevsk: Izdatel'stvo udmurtskogo universiteta, 1996), 91, 97. See also G. E. Vereshchagin, Votiaki sosnovskogo kraia (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia ministerstva vnutrennikh del, 1886), 17-18.

³⁸ Ligenko, 103-104.

³⁹ Vereshchagin, 1.

⁴⁰ Zelenin, 168.

exchanged several cultural traditions. By the end of the nineteenth century, Russian and Mari peasants shared agricultural techniques, instruments, and crops. Mari-dominated villages copied the Russian village layout (with rows of houses divided by a central street) and housing architecture (with rafters crossing the roof). Russians living in Mari areas long since adopted activities that local Russians perceived as being traditional Mari, such as hunting and beekeeping, integrated architectural elements such as the two-story granary (*ambar*), and adopted Mari cuisine.⁴¹

Russians and non-Russian peasants were also members of the same commune (*obshchestvo*). In the second half of the nineteenth century, 30.3 percent of all communes in Sarapul *uezd* and 74.5 percent of all communes in Glazov *uezd* had a multi-ethnic composition.⁴² Russian and non-Russian peasants lived without open hostility. Nevertheless there were differences in the agricultural economy. For example, Russian peasants spread manure on their fields during the summer, while Udmurt peasants did so upon the first snow in the fall. The different practices stemmed from religious traditions.

⁴¹ G. A. Sepeev, "Mariisko-Russkie etnokul'turnye vzaimosviazi v XIX veke (po materialam urzhumskogo i iarskogo uezda)," in Viatskaia zemlia v proshlom i nastoiashchem (K 500-letiiu vkhozhdeniia v sostav rossiiskogo gosudarstva). Tezisy dokladov i soobshchenii k nauchnoi konferentsii kirov, 23-25 maia 1989 goda (Kirov: Kirovski gosudarstvennii pedagogicheskii institut imenii V. I. Lenina, 1989), 278-280.

⁴² G. A. Nikitina, Sel'skaia obshchina buskel v poreformennyi period (1861-1900 gg.) (Izhevsk: Udmurtskii institut istorii, iazyka i literatury ural'skoe otdelenie Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk, 1993), 25; M. M. Martynova, "Agrarnye otnosheniia v Udmurtii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka," in Agrarnye otnosheniia v Udmurtii vo vtoroi polovnie XIX-nachale XX vv.: Sbornik statei, M. M. Martynova, M. I. Gnedin, and N.

The Udmurt animist religion held that the gods did not want manure on the land during the summer. Likewise, individual Russian peasants began to sow their fields when they wanted, without permission from the commune, while Udmurts began sowing as a commune and the community would punish individuals who began early.⁴³

Although the ethnic populations lived largely in harmony, tension brewed beneath the surface. Udmurt peasant sayings hint at cultural conflicts. Expressions such as “when you talk with a Russian let your mouth and ears be on guard,” and “when you talk with a Russian have a knife in your pocket,” show Udmurt suspicion of Russians.⁴⁴ Udmurt ideas of Tatars as dishonest in commercial relations and as thieves are seen in the expressions, “a Tatar was born to cheat and to haggle” and “a Tatar upon his birth steals a horse.”⁴⁵ However, they did see the fellow Finno-Ugric Mari as their kin, saying,

P. Ligenko, eds. (Izhevsk: Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut pri sovete ministrov Udmurtstvoi ASSR, 1981), 5.

⁴³ Nikitina, 28-30.

⁴⁴ K. P. Gerd, “Poslovitsy i pogovorki votiakov,” in Votiaki. Sbornik po voprosam byta, ekonomiki, i kul'tury votiakov, Gerd and V. P. Malimova, eds. (Moscow: Tsentral'noe izdatel'stvo narodov soiuzs SSR, 1926), 59. The sayings in Udmurt are, “zuchen verasykykyd ymyd pel'yd sak med-lo,” and “Zuchen verasykykyd--kisiid purted med-lo.”

⁴⁵ “Biger--orekchasykyny no vuz karny kyldem,” and “Biger--vordskykyz-ik mumizles' valze lushkam.” Ibid., 60.

“Udmurts and Mari grow from the same root.”⁴⁶ There were also reports that Russian peasants, even when they were the minority of a commune, dominated discussion at communal meetings, shouting down Udmurt villagers. Underlying ethnic tension and stereotypes continued during war, Revolution, and civil war and shaped state politics. The tsarist government feared Tatar rebellion and altered home front projects to raise the cultural level of Udmurts and Maris. The Soviet government maintained pejorative stereotypes of non-Russians as backward and implemented a number of cultural policies to educate them and accelerate their national evolution.

Peasant Societies, Cultures, and Economies

At the turn of the century, the Viatka countryside was rapidly modernizing. The zemstvo (rural self-government administration) was especially strong in the province and implemented a number of initiatives to increase the quality of rural life, such as building and strengthening the rural school system; distributing veterinarians, doctors and medical assistants (*fel'dshers*) among the regions; and giving lectures and courses on crop rotation and selection.⁴⁷ Peasants, often through zemstvo policies, also gained safety nets through

⁴⁶ “Poren udmurten--odig vyzhiys’ potem pispu.” Ibid.

⁴⁷ Kratkii obzor deiatel’nosti Viatskago gubernskago zemstva za 35 let (1867-1902 g.g.), vyp. 1 (Viatka: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1906); V. E. Musikin, ed., Viatskomu zemstvu-130 let (Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii 8-9 oktiabria 1997 goda) (Kirov: Kirovskaia ordena Pocheta oblastnaia nauchnaia biblioteka imeni A. I. Gertsena, 1997); Carsten Pape, “The ‘Peasant Zemstva’: Popular Education in Vjatka Gubernija, 1867-1905,” Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas 27 (1979): 498-519.

insurance and communal fire stations, and began to integrate artificial fertilizer into their agricultural production.⁴⁸ Villagers strategically used zemstvo policies to help the sustainability of their community, but state projects, such as the establishment of the *volost* court, male conscription into the army, and the Stolypin agricultural reforms that allowed individual peasants to break from the commune and establish individual farms, simultaneously drew peasant communities closer to the state and increased fissures within the village.⁴⁹

Rapid industrialization and an increasingly cash-driven economy also began to transform the peasant economy. New factories in eastern Viatka manufactured iron plows and the zemstvo helped to disseminate them throughout the province.⁵⁰ Peasant

⁴⁸ Obzor Viatskoi gubernii za 1913 g. Prilozhenie k vseodanneishemu otchetu viatskago gubernatora (Viatka: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1914), 9. On programs against fire, see Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (hereafter RGIA), f. 397, op. 1, d. 291; Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kirovskoi Oblasti (hereafter GAKO), f. 940, op. 1, d. 693, ll. 3-5ob.

⁴⁹ Ben Eklof, Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861-1914 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1986); Jane Burbank, "A Question of Dignity: Peasant Legal Culture in Late Imperial Russia," Continuity and Change 10, no. 3 (1995): 391-404; Gareth Popkins, "Peasant Experiences of the Late Tsarist State: District Congresses of Land Captains, Provincial Boards and the Legal Appeals Process, 1891-1917," Slavic and East European Review 78, no. 1 (2000): 90-114; Popkins, "Code versus Custom? Norms and Tactics in Peasant Volost Court Appeals, 1889-1917," Russian Review 59 (July 2000): 408-424; Judith Pallot, Land Reform in Russia 1906-1917: Peasant Responses to Stolypin's Project of Rural Transformation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

⁵⁰ See for example, Zhurnaly viatskogo gubernskogo sobraniia (Viatka: Tipo-litografiia M. M. Shklierovoi, 1915), 104-105; Nikitina, 68-78; E. G. Kasimova, "Osnovnye zaniatii naseleniia Viatskoi gubernii," in Entsiklopediia zemli Viatskoi, t. 8, Etnografiia, fol'klor (Kirov: Oblastnaia pisatel'skaia organizatiia, 1998), 147-151; Materialy po opisaniiu promyslov Viatskoi gubernii, vyp. 1 (Viatka: Tipografiia Maisheeva, 1889).

handicraft production also increased in scope and breadth.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the Viatka countryside, like the rest of rural Russia, remained poor and on the verge of destitution. For example, when the harvest in the southern half of Sarapul *uezd* failed in 1898, many peasants were forced immediately to slaughter their horses and milk-producing cows, exacerbating their problems for the next year.⁵²

The main crops of Viatka's peasantry were rye and oats. In the beginning of the twentieth century however, peasants, especially in the Southern zone, increasingly grew flax and hemp. Despite its climate and soil, Viatka was one of the only non-Black Earth provinces to produce a slight grain surplus on the eve of the First World War. It enjoyed an 8.2 percent surplus of overall grain crops, and especially large surpluses of oats, potatoes, flax, and hemp.⁵³ This would be important during war and revolution because the state turned to Viatka with the expectation that it had excess grain to give to the rest of Russia.

⁵¹ Kustarnye promysly Viatskoi gubernii i deiatel'nost viatskikh zemstv po uluchsheniuiu kustarnoi promyshlennosti (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia Al'tshulera, 1902), 1-5.

⁵² Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Viatskoi gubernii za 1899 (Viatka: tipografiia otdielen'ie, 1900), 78-82. Working horses declined 13.4% between August 1898 and March 1899, while cows declined 36.7%.

⁵³ A. N. Chelintsev, Russkoe sel'skoe khoziaistvo pered revoliutsiei, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Novyi agronom, 1928), 37, 78, 87-88, 113-114, 116, 219, 223, 228-229. Based on calculations of average crops between 1907 and 1910. Viatka produced on average a surplus of 9,547,000 puds of grain annually for these years. By comparison, Riazan produced an annual surplus of 11,130,000 puds, Saratov 41,166,000, the Don region 108,101,000. Arkhangel had a shortfall of 3,829,000 puds, and Vladimir's shortfall was 9,570,000.

Due to the harsh climate and poor soil, over one third of Viatka's peasants relied on non-land related enterprises to supplement their income. This percentage grew dramatically by the outbreak of World War I. Both the peasant handicraft enterprise (*kustar*) and migrant labor (*otkhod*) played major roles in the region's rural economy. Peasants of central Viatka were the most likely to engage in local handicraft production, with Viatka, Slobodskoi, and Iaransk *uezds* as the largest areas of handicraft enterprises. Peasant handicrafts varied by region and even village. Iaransk *uezd* was known for lace weavings, Viatka *uezd* for furniture, harmonicas, carriages, clay dolls, and samovars, and Sarapul *uezd* for boots.⁵⁴

Migratory labor became increasingly important to the peasant economy and culture in the early twentieth century, like elsewhere in Russia. Izhevsk, Votkinsk, and Glazov had major armament and metal works factories and acted as magnets by drawing in peasant migrant laborers (*otkhodniki*).⁵⁵ Other locales also had smaller factories, making leather products, woven baskets, wood furniture, barrels, and so forth. In 1910 in Viatka *uezd*, 83 percent of peasant households engaged in peasant handicrafts or migrant

⁵⁴ V. E. Musikhin, "Krest'iansvto kak osnova Viatskoi samobytnosti," in *Entsiklopediia zemli Viatskoi*, t. 10, *Remesla* (Kirov: Oblastnaia pisatel'skaia organizatsiia administratsiia Kirovskoi oblasti, 2000), 15.

⁵⁵ Izhevsk continues to be a major producer of armaments in Russia, now producing the kalashnikov machine gun, designed by its native son Mikhail Kalashnikov.

labor.⁵⁶ Men dominated both handicraft production and migratory labor. In Viatka *uezd*, 79 percent of those doing home-based labor and 91 percent of migrant laborers were men.⁵⁷ In 1900, over thirty percent of adult males were issued passports to labor in the cities, while only approximately two percent of women were given passports. Many more peasants did temporary work during the summer in villages and cities closer than 50 *versts* to their village which did not require a passport.⁵⁸ Between 1906 and 1910, the government issued passports to 8.8 percent of Viatka's total peasant population.⁵⁹

Economic change and cultural contact with urban culture altered everyday life in the villages. Peasant families increasingly enjoyed such new products such as factory-made clothing, metal roofs, and printed literature showing, as Jeffrey Burds argues, the

⁵⁶ Materialy po issledovaniiu promyslov Viatskoi gubernii Viatskii uezd osnovnyia tablitsy (podvornoe izsledovanie 1909 goda), Statisticheskoe otdelenie Viatskoi gubernskoi zemskoi upravly (Viatka: Tipografiia i khomolitrografiia Shkoliaevoi, 1912), I.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, II. Emphasizing the extreme diversity in peasant experience, the percentage of men and women engaged in *kustar* varied greatly among *volosts*. The type of local industry molded the amount of women engaged in *kustar* production. For example, in Medianskaia *volost*, Viatka *uezd*, there was an industry in which women produced fishing tackle and in Chepetskaia *volost*, Viatka *uezd* women made matchboxes. *Ibid.*, 70, 76.

⁵⁸ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 338, ll. 1, 17ob.

⁵⁹ Jeffrey Burds, "The Social Control of Peasant Labor in Russia: The Response of Village Communities to Labor Migration in the Central Industrial Region, 1861-1905," in Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 1800-1921, Esther Kingston-Mann and Timothy Mixter, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 59.

development of a conspicuous consumer culture in the countryside.⁶⁰ Contact with urban life also provided immaterial opportunities for exchange of ideas, ways of life, and political organizing between peasant migrants and urban dwellers. Peasant migrants took these notions back to the village, which served to increase tensions between younger and older generations and threatened the power of the commune. These links to the urban culture and economy and generational tensions would continue during war and revolution. Peasant factory workers returned to the village with news and ideas and networks with political groups, serving as mediators of the larger political changes and winning especially young fellow villagers to revolutionary parties (such as the Bolsheviks). Urban dwellers also struggled with peasants over food supplies and manufactured goods.

Aim of the Project

Through a study of the significant, yet largely overlooked, peasant population of the Viatka countryside, this project paints a more complicated picture of Russia's peasantry and peasant-state relations, and a new understanding of this period. It emphasizes the heterogeneous nature of Russia's peasantry, and presents a micro-study of the countryside in the Eastern theater of the civil war. It also shows that notions of status,

⁶⁰ Jeffrey Burds, Peasant Dreams and Market Politics: Labor Migration and the Russian Village, 1861-1905 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), ch. 6.

gender, ethnicity, and civic nationalism are integral in fully understanding peasant participation in Russia's transformations. Peasant populations experienced and reacted differently to national changes and the various governments. The Soviet government's ability to understand, connect to, and incorporate the various rural populations were central to its ultimate success in establishing Soviet political and social power in the countryside.

I define status broadly as the individual's place within the peasant household, the village community, and outside world, as well the more general understanding of class standing. Status, therefore, is the individual's relationships to traditional forms of power, and power disseminated from a variety of sources in the village. Elderly male leaders of the commune, village and hamlet (*volost*) officials such as policemen, scribes, and tax collectors, economically and socially strong families, and individual personalities often dominated village politics and sought to uphold the status quo in their favor. Within the household, elders, married folk, and those able to work traditionally held more sway over family matters than the young, elderly, feeble, or widowed. Power also came from popular coercion to uphold traditions.⁶¹ Households and individual peasants therefore had a variety of relationships to power within the village and this in turn affected how

⁶¹ Stephen P. Frank, "Popular Justice, Community, and Culture among the Russian Peasantry, 1870-1900," in The World of the Russian Peasant: Post-Emancipation Culture and Society, Ben Eklof and Stephen P. Frank, eds. (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 133-153.

they experienced Russia's war and revolution. As A. V. Chayanov and Teodor Shanin have shown, economic standing of the peasant household within the village was fluid and based on a generational cycle of the household's number of laborers.⁶² In addition economic standing also shifted based on how the individual identified his or her self, and on how the state or local administration defined the individual.

Marxist and Soviet scholars have emphasized the centrality of class and the individual's relationship to the means of production in their analysis of peasant action during the war and revolution. For V. I. Lenin, the development of capitalism was an inevitable occurrence in Russia and the peasantry was a transitory, pre-capitalist social element in history.⁶³ Most prominently in The Development of Capitalism in Russia (1899), Lenin asserted that a powerful merchant class of peasants was developing in the countryside, concentrating land and capital, and thriving at the expense of a growing rural proletariat.⁶⁴ Lenin saw this poorer peasantry as a potential ally of the urban proletariat in revolution who only needed the revolutionaries to lead and instill consciousness upon

⁶² A. V. Chayanov, The Theory of Peasant Economy, Daniel Throner et al., eds. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986); Teodor Shanin, Russia as a 'Developing Society': The Roots of Otherness: Russia's Turn of Century, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁶³ See Esther Kingston-Mann, Lenin and the Problem of Marxist Peasant Revolution (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁶⁴ V. I. Lenin, The Development of Capitalism in Russia: The Process of the Formation of a Home Market for Large-Scale Industry (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956).

them. Lenin's writings and the peasantry's central role in establishing the Soviet government prompted later Marxist and Soviet scholars to focus on them in the context of the structural economic changes in the countryside in the early twentieth century. Following Lenin, Soviet scholars ascribed a three-tiered class identity onto individual peasants of rich (*kulaks*), middle (*seredniaki*), and poor (*bedniaki*) peasants.

Status in the village in general, and class in particular were also central tropes in the early-twentieth century elite description of the peasant world, creating a language for non-peasants to understand and talk about village life. How peasants and state authorities understood and individual's social and economic status in the village fundamentally affected how that peasant experienced war and revolution--whether they would support the overthrow of traditional authority in the village, anti-Soviet forces, or become an ally of the Soviet regime.

War and revolution contradictorily reshaped and reaffirmed traditional gender roles within the village. Several scholars have noted the misogyny of the peasant community. Because females were not considered as able laborers as men, peasant heads of households saw them in the long term as a weight on the economic viability of the family unit. They would try to marry them off at a young age and unmarried females were lowest on the household hierarchy. Male physical abuse against women was widespread in rural Russia. Common peasant proverbs such as "The more you beat the

old woman, the tastier the soup will be” and “Beat your wife like a fur coat, then there will be less noise” chillingly show how internalized violence was against peasant women.⁶⁵ Christine Worobec has shown, however, that, “despite their position as second-class citizens, Russian peasant women supported or, at least, accommodated themselves to the patriarchy.” Such accommodation may be explained “by the nature of the patriarchy itself, which was careful to give women some rewards, power, and safeguards.”⁶⁶

Women performed tasks crucial for sustaining a healthy commune. They maintained and insured the physical needs of the household through cooking, cleaning, caring for the children, planting and harvesting crops in the personal plots, looking after chattel, making clothing, and selling homemade products for extra income.⁶⁷ Peasant society made sure to honor and cherish women as mothers, give them autonomy in maintaining the household, and protect their reputations. Peasant women “actively utilized the power channels open to them.”⁶⁸ Women used *volost* (hamlet) courts to fight

⁶⁵ V. Dal, Poslovitsy russkogo naroda. Sbornik V. Dalia v trekh tomakh, t. 2 (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 1993), 63-68; Christine Worobec, Peasant Russia: Family and Community in the Post-Emancipation Period (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995), 188.

⁶⁶ Worobec, 177.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 177-178.

for their rights within the village and played off stereotypes of them as ignorant to defend their households against threats from police and external agents.⁶⁹ Traditional gender relations in which males dominated the public sphere of communal politics and the field and females occupied a significant space in the domestic sphere were slowly breaking down by the eve of the First World War. Education, growing literacy, and urban migratory labor gave young men and women new ideas about less misogynistic gender relations and provided them with opportunities to rise up the social ladder or escape village life entirely.⁷⁰

Ethnic identity also shaped how peasants experienced and participated in Russia's transformations. I use ethnicity as a category of analysis because ethnic bonds do not necessitate the existence of nationalist sentiments. As Geoff Eley and Ronald Suny show, ethnicity arises from interaction between groups that produces markers of

⁶⁹ Beatrice Farnsworth, "The Litigious Daughter-in-law: Family Relations in Rural Russia in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," Slavic Review 45 (spring 1986): 51. On the courtroom in rural society as a social laboratory, see Allen Wells and Gilbert M. Joseph, Summer of Discontent. Seasons of Upheaval: Elite Politics and Rural Insurgency in Yucatan, 1876-1915 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 14-17. Lynne Viola, "Bab'i Bunty and Peasant Women's Protest During Collectivization," in Russian Peasant Women, Beatrice Farnsworth and Lynne Viola, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 189-205; Barbara Alpern Engel, "Women, Men, and the Language of Resistance, 1870-1907," in Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia, Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 34-53.

⁷⁰ Barbara Alpern Engel, Between the Fields and the City: Women, Work, and Family in Russia, 1861-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

difference such as divergent histories, linguistics, objects, and relationships.⁷¹ Ethnicity, a relational term for a group of people who consider themselves and are considered by others as distinctive, best describes the self-understanding of non-Russian peasants in the beginning of the twentieth century and provides a better terminology than national identity.⁷² Although several scholars have highlighted ethnic struggles on Russia's borderlands, studies of European Russia ignore ethnic diversity by assuming all peasants were Russian, thereby failing to acknowledge the key role of ethnicity on the village level.⁷³

While social and economic status, gender, and ethnicity stood at the center of peasant identity, they were not the only contributors to the heterogeneous peasant experiences. Geographic locale, age, and occupation, to name a few, also influenced

⁷¹ Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, "Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation," in Becoming National: A Reader, Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 21-22. These markers do not have to be conscious or a coherent group.

⁷² Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives (Boulder: Pluto Press, 1993), 4, 10-12. Although there are several competing definitions of ethnicity, most scholars agree that at a minimum it is the notion of a people in contact with one another who distinguish themselves from those around them.

⁷³ Yuri Slezkine, Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North; Ronald G. Suny, The Baku Commune, 1917-1918 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); Richard Pipes, Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Daniel Evan Schafer, "Building Nations and Building States: The Tatar-Bashkir Question in Revolutionary Russia, 1917-1920" (Ph. D. diss., University of Michigan, 1995); Charles Steinwedel, "Invisible Threads of Empire: State, Religion, and Ethnicity in Tsarist Bashkiria, 1773-1917" (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1999).

peasant identities. The state also played a major role in peasants' lives. The peasant-state relationship and peasant notions of civic nationalism are at the heart of this study. The revolutionary era (1914 to 1921) was the climax of a national process. The peasantry grew to believe in and fight for their rights as citizens in the Russian nation. Rural elites (such as teachers, zemstvo officials, local bureaucrats, and clergy), for their part, thought that the peasants, especially non-Russians and women, needed to be guided and educated to be proper members of society. As Florencia Mallon argues for Mexico and Peru, nationalism is a "broad vision for organizing society, a project for collective identity based on the premise of citizenship." There is much room for disagreement and competing discourses within this vision.⁷⁴ In Russia, various projects by tsarist, Provisional Government, Soviet, and anti-Soviet leaders tried to use the state to mobilize the peasantry and create a collective identity. Peasant populations embraced, resisted, and influenced the discourses of these visions.

Structure of the Project

The second chapter describes the tsarist state's largely successful attempts during World War I to mobilize peasants and their resources. It incorporates peasant letters describing local conditions and attitudes toward the war, and uses reports of the military, requisition brigades, secret police, and village administrations to show peasant sacrifices

⁷⁴ Florencia E. Mallon, Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru (Berkeley and

to the national war effort. The third chapter examines peasant reactions to the fall of the tsar and the establishment of the Provisional Government in 1917. In a study of local newspapers, electoral commission reports, and provincial administration minutes, I show that peasants and authorities struggled over the definition of citizenship. The Provisional Government linked citizenship to education and cultured living, while the peasantry fought for direct participation in state politics. The fourth chapter argues that both ethnic Russian and non-Russian peasants involved the new Bolshevik State in their land seizures and redistributions. I examine land department and local soviet records to argue that the government's willingness to act as a mediator among the peasantry helped to establish an early hegemonic authority in the countryside and provide a solid foundation for the Soviets to build a state.

Chapters five through seven examine the civil war (1918-21). Chapter five details peasant resistance to Soviet requisition brigades, their participation in a series of massive revolts, and their eventual mobilization into the Soviet Red Army during the anti-Soviet White army invasion of Viatka. During this time, the Soviet government began to divide the peasantry based on its notions of class. Chapter six shows that the peasants accepted their relationship with the Soviet government by turning to the state for aid during a terrible famine in 1921 and drawing on customary obligations of authorities to provide

for their people in times of need. Peasant letters and petitions, secret police reports, and state and volunteer emergency organizations show that Soviet attempts at famine relief as well as the introduction of a more relaxed economic system helped to establish the soviet government in the countryside. Chapter seven studies the state's nationality policies, newspapers, and propaganda and education campaigns to show how the Soviet state understood and drew in various peasant populations into the new polity. It also analyzes records of the Revolutionary Tribunal to re-examine this organ of Bolshevik Terror by showing the interaction of Soviet and peasant notions of justice and how peasants used the tribunals to communicate their grievances with the state.



Figure 1. 2: Map of European Russia⁷⁵

⁷⁵ From Scott J. Seregny, *Russian Teachers and Peasant Revolution: The Politics of Education in 1905* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

CHAPTER 2

THE MASSES MOBILIZED.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN VIATKA PROVINCE, 1914-1917

On July 19, 1914, Russia declared war on the Austro-Hungarian and German empires.¹ Tsar Nicholas II mobilized the army and addressed his nation, asking it to unite and bring glory to the Russian empire. Russia's peasants were quick to come to the aid

¹ There is a large body of work on Russia's participation in the First World War. The classic work on military operations is Norman Stone, The Eastern Front, 1914-1917 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975); see also W. Bruce Lincoln, Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1986). Scholars have only recently begun to explore Russia's internal social and cultural dynamics during the war. See Eric Lohr, "Enemy Alien Politics Within the Russian Empire During World War I" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1999); Peter Gatrell, A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia During World War I, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies, Alexander Rabinowitch and William G. Rosenberg, gnrl. eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Joshua Sanborn, Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Hubertus Jahn, Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). Although scholars of World War I have written a number of works on the urban homefront, they have paid scant attention to the war's effects on any of the belligerents' respective countrysides. Some exceptions include Pamela Horn, Rural Life in England in The First World War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984); Robert G. Moeller, German Peasants and Agrarian Politics, 1914-1924: The Rhineland and Westphalia (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Jonathan Osmond, Rural Protest in the Weimar Republic: The Free Peasantry in the Rhineland and Bavaria (Houndmills: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 1-30; Anna Bull and Paul Corner, From Peasant to Entrepreneur: The Survival of the Family Economy in Italy (Oxford: Berg Publishers Limited, 1993), 40-96. For Russia, see A. M. Anfimov, Rossiiskaia derevnia v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914-fevral 1917 g.) (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1962); Emily E. Pyle, "Village Social Relations and the Reception of Soldiers' Family and Policies in Russia, 1912-1921" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1997).

of their nation and gave grain, money, and young men to help fight in distant Central Europe. Unlike previous wars however, the First World War would transform every village. This chapter shows how World War I was a total war, employing all segments of society in the war effort. The state saw every aspect of society--from chickens to abandoned fortresses--as a potential resource and attempted to employ it for the nation's military gain.² The population was at first eager to help Russia win the war. However, as the war transformed rural society it made it ripe for political revolution.

This chapter examines how state policies during the war affected peasant society. It shows that the state immediately tried to exploit fully the country's resources--including mobilizing its people (both in being and labor), livestock, and inventory, although it feared the revolutionary potential of the country's population. The state fretted over popular revolt and divided the rural population into inherently dangerous and safe categories. The state saw some national and religious populations such as Tatars as natural allies with the enemy and feared that zemstvo workers and other intellectuals would not support a tsarist regime whose politics they vocally opposed. The state believed that the peasantry as a social group would support the war effort with proper cultural educational cultivation and military oversight.

² The Viatka provincial government had the *volost* leaders report the number of ancient fortresses and underground caverns during the war. The government also conducted a series of censuses of livestock. See GAKO, f. 584, op. 2, d. 971.

The initial mobilizations on all fronts were quite successful and many peasants quickly answered the nation's call to arms and expressed great interest in the progress of the war. As young peasant men left the village, women began to play a larger role in the public sphere. They became a significant part of the labor force and, as they began to assume the role of head of their household, women began to participate in village and *volost* meetings as well as fight for their rights to property inheritance and state aid as family members of soldiers. The war therefore altered the generational and gender dynamics within the village.

Mobilizing the Masses

The peasantry supported the spirit of Russia's military effort. The initial mobilization of soldiers in July and August went surprisingly well.³ Military and local officials efficiently gathered necessary recruits and the population came to the country's defense. Several scholars have noted that patriotic fervor spread throughout Russia in the first months of the war.⁴ Viatka's peasants were no exception and expressed more patriotic sentiment as a social group than some urban dwellers. According to a report of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, "the Viatka peasantry displays a strong sense of patriotism and outstanding empathy, mercy, and love." Local Red Cross organizations

³ Joshua A. Sanborn, Drafting the Russian Nation, 29-30 .

⁴ Jahn, 171; Stone, 194.

and societies distributing aid to soldiers' families functioned solely on peasant donations. The peasantry supported the war through local networks and was unique as a social class in the extent of its patriotism. While rich merchants contributed little to Viatka's local aid organizations, peasants sacrificed over double the amount of money requested by aid foundations.⁵ In the first five months of the war, news from the soldiers reinforced peasant families' support of the war. The newly appointed war censor reported in December 1914 that seventy-five percent of the perused soldiers' letters expressed feelings of need to fulfill their duties.⁶ Peasants were notably interested in the war's proceedings and sought out the latest news. The Viatka government, after realizing peasant fascination with the war, fostered this interest and patriotic culture. At least at the beginning of the war, it tried to publish regular updates on the war's progress, a map of the war, and biographies of Russia's military leaders and disseminate them to all 22,500 of the province's villages.⁷

While many peasants appear to have supported the war effort, and mobilization went much more successfully than in the Russo-Japanese war, a rash of peasant petitions

⁵ RGIA, f. 1284, op. 194, d. 13, l. 3.

⁶ GAKO, f. 714, op. 1, d. 1453, ll. 282, 340.

⁷ RGIA, f. 1284, op. 194, d. 13, l. 4ob. Scott J. Seregny discusses great peasant interest in the war, "Zemstvos, Peasants, and Citizenship: The Russian Adult Education Movement and World War I," *Slavic Review* 59 (summer 2000): 294, 304.

to exempt themselves or family members from conscription does suggest some popular ambivalence. Peasants tried to excuse themselves from service by claiming illness or physical disability.⁸ Some peasant families used the state law that the mobilization could not take the sole male worker of a household and pleaded with the state to disoblige a family member from the army by claiming that he was their last working hand.⁹ For example, in October 1914, in Bobinskaia *volost*, Viatka *uezd*, Kozma Sergeev Myshkin, an elderly peasant, wrote a petition to the Viatka *uezd* military leader asking that his eldest son Iakov be returned from military service. The petitioner had two sons in the military but asked that only Iakov be returned since he had a family with a young child. Since both Kozma and his wife were old, the household was now left without an able-bodied laborer.¹⁰

Peasants were willing to sacrifice what they considered a just amount for the nation. The mobilization came when peasants desperately needed workers, in the middle of the harvest of winter rye for the southern districts and when peasants prepared for the

⁸ GAKO, f. 589, op. 1, d. 352, ll. 29-31.

⁹ A working hand in peasant society and in Russian legal code was an able bodied male worker. I discuss this term in relation to early Soviet land laws in Chapter 4.

¹⁰ GAKO, f. 589, op. 1, d. 352, l. 45.

harvest in the north.¹¹ Since there was such a slim margin between starvation and existence for most peasants, they were not willing to endanger their subsistence by letting go of too many workers so they could not gather sufficient crops.

Peasant comments against the war and government also hint at passive resistance. A number of Russian and Udmurts peasant conscripts were arrested for insulting the Tsar.¹² Another peasant told others that it was good that people ran off to war because after their death there would be more land.¹³ The state reacted against these verbal objections. It saw war as a threat to its very existence and officials were acutely aware of the violations in the power relationship between peasant and state in which peasants were supposed to publicly support the regime and its policies. The state thereby inserted its own fears of popular upheaval into peasant statements of discontent. Besides passive resistance, there were popular demonstrations against the war. Draft riots erupted throughout Russia, including Viatka.¹⁴ Alongside the draft riots, and often indistinguishable in the official records, thousands of peasants protested war's immediate

¹¹ M. Sadakov, "Udmurtiia v gody pervoi mirovoi imperialisticheskoi voiny," Zapiski Udmurtskogo NII vyp. 16 (1954), 57. The 1914 harvest of winter rye in Iaransk uezd occurred from July 14 through July 26, Tekushchaia statistika Viatskogo gubernskogo zemstva. Kratkii sel'skokhoziaistvennyi obzor Iaranskogo uезда. Viatskoi gubernii za 1914-i god, vyp. 7 (Viatka, 1914), 1.

¹² GAKO, f. 714, op. 1, d. 1497, l. 5; d. 1679; d. 1696.

¹³ GAKO, f. 589, op. 190, d. 6, l. 649.

effects on food and alcohol markets. On July 22, an uprising involving over six thousand conscripts to the army erupted in the city of Kotel'nich. They protested rising food prices and raided stores of alcohol. The police suppressed the riot after ten people died and another twelve were wounded.¹⁵

The military and political leaders saw Russia's population as a resource and realized that they had to utilize all segments of society to win the war. Traditional allies of the tsar, such as the church and local state officials came to the state's aid. For example, the church gathered medical aid and donations and local gentry and educated society organized public groups, such as sewing circles.

Due to a growing polarization between Russia's government and educated society before 1914, the state initially feared that the intelligentsia and zemstvo would not support the war. However, the third element eagerly organized and worked diligently to advance Russia's cause. Accenting the recent convergence of the social sciences and the modern state, ethnographers also helped to categorize and study the population's efficacy as a state resource. During the war, the famous ethnographers D. K. Zelenin and N. N.

¹⁴ Joshua Sanborn, "The Mobilization of 1914 and the Question of the Russian Nation: A Reexamination," *Slavic Review* 59 (summer 2000): 274-278.

¹⁵ Iu. G. Karacharov et al, eds. *Vernoii dorogoi. Khronika istorii Kirovskoi organizatsii KPSS, 1883-1983* (Kirov: Volgo-Viatksoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo Kirovskoe otделение, 1983), 53. A. B. Berkevich reports that thirteen people were wounded and another thirteen killed in uprisings in Viatka during July, "Krest'ianstvo i vseobshchaia mobilizatsiia v iiule 1914 g.," *Istoricheskie zapiski* 23 (1947), 41.

Blinov were active members of the Viatka province statistical committee and oversaw the collection of data on population fluctuations and harvest sizes.¹⁶ The army also mobilized many of the male rural intelligentsia, such as teachers, doctors, and medical assistants (*fel'dshers*), to help at the front. By the end of the war, the extent of these mobilizations had caused severe shortages of male teachers and medical personnel in the countryside.

The zemstvo was critical to the war effort. It built upon its existing organizations and programs and used its technical expertise and experience at public organization to mobilize the nation's homefront.¹⁷ During the war the zemstvo ran the food campaign, organized hospitals, helped care for refugees, established public aid foundations to collect monetary donations and make clothing, and gathered data on the population and economy.¹⁸ The Zemstvo Union was instrumental in keeping Russia's war effort afloat.¹⁹

¹⁶ GAKO, f. 574, op. 2, d. 984, ll. 13-14ob. On the ethnographers and social scientists in the service of the modern state, see James C. Scott, Seeing Like the State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed (New Haven: Yale University Press). For Russia, see Geraci, Windows; and David W. Darrow, "The Politics of Numbers: Zemstvo Land Assessment and the Conceptualization of Russia's Rural Economy," The Russian Review 59 (January 2000): 52-75.

¹⁷ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF), f. 102, op. 1915, d. 167, ll. 3-3ob; RGIA, f. 1284, op. 194, d. 13, ll. 1-2ob. A report from the Minister of Internal Affairs even reported that while the zemstvo had technical expertise and was eager to help in the war effort, local city administrators were neither talented nor energetic.

¹⁸ William Gleason, "The All-Russian Union of Zemstvos and World War I," in The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-government, 365-382; Kimitaka Matsuzato, "The Role of Zmestva in the Creation and Collapse of Tsarism's War Efforts During World War One," Jarbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas 46 (1998): 322. S. A. Kukoviakin, Zemskaia meditsina Viatskoi i drugikh severnykh gubernii

Clearly those elements of society that felt that the autocracy unduly limited their right to full participation in state governance jumped at the opportunity of mass public mobilization necessitated by the war. Zemstvo officials also saw the war as an opportunity to extend significantly peasant-oriented programs in order to bring culture to the village and foster zemstvo conceptions of the nation and civic identity among the peasantry.²⁰ The zemstvo tailored and intensified a long list of peasant-based initiatives to help in the war effort. An examination of these programs shows the close, multi-layered connections between peasants and cultural and political elites during the war. Because zemstvo officials saw themselves as part of a national war effort, they consciously drew the peasantry into the nation, while simultaneously categorizing peasant populations based on ethnicity, and attempting to cultivate a cultured peasantry, all of which were part of modern power dynamics.

The zemstvo and state used peasant handicrafts (*kustar*) as a means to supply necessary finished products while maximizing the resource of the peasant population. A

evropeiskoi Rossii (Kirov: Gosudarstvenno izdatel'stbo-poligraficheskoe predpriatie Viatka, 1998), 157-191.

¹⁹ Orlando Figes, A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution (New York: Viking, 1996), 271. In the beginning of the war, Tsar Nicholas II brought back the Zemstvo Union and the Union of Towns, created during the Russo-Japanese War, to help administer the rear.

²⁰ Scott J. Seregny, "Zemstvos, Peasants, and Citizenship: The Russian Adult Education Movement and World War I," Slavic Review 59 (summer 2000): 292-293.

significant number of peasants throughout Viatka had engaged in *kustar* to supplement their income before 1914. With the war, the peasants had a direct, guaranteed consumer of their goods that the state desired for the war, such as clothes, barrels, and grain sacks. For example, from October 1914 to June 1915, the *kustar* industry throughout Viatka produced over twenty-three thousand pairs of boots (*sapogy*). The state paid them from seven rubles, 50 kopecks to nine rubles a pair, depending on the quality of the boots.²¹

Zemstvo and state plans to improve and modernize peasant agriculture had greater urgency during the war since they needed to increase the food supply. Military mobilization took many of the agronomists and young peasants, who were more apt to heed experts' lessons than older, more traditional peasants. The zemstvo increased their pre-war focus on "disseminating agricultural knowledge among the adult population."²² The zemstvo advocated using fertilizer, new agricultural tools, and preventative measures against common village catastrophes. For example, zemstvo officials published booklets explaining to peasants about the dangers of the siberian ulcer, a parasite that lives in high grass and swamps. The siberian ulcer could kill livestock in a matter of days and possibly even be fatal to humans. Zemstvo and state officials also implemented land

²¹ "Raboty Viatskikh kustarei dlia armii," Krest'ianskaia sel'sko-khoziaistvenno-tekhnicheskaia gazeta, Viatka, July 11, 1915, p. 11.

²² Obzor Viatskoi gubernii za 1915 godu (Viatka: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1916), 6.

improvement projects in 1915, such as draining swamps and improving meadows. When the state funded the land projects, many peasant communities embraced the improvements because they increased the quantity and quality of land without threatening their sustenance.²³ Indeed, as discussed in chapter seven, peasant demand for agricultural improvement policies would continue throughout the Revolution and civil war.

Peasants were also quite receptive to zemstvo policies to safeguard against fire. Despite the disruption of everyday life, several villages in Viatka built upon the pre-war movement for local fire prevention and organized local fire brigades and purchased insurance policies, machinery, and instruments to guard against and fight fires.²⁴ In 1916, peasants and personnel from the land settlement commission and the zemstvo eagerly designed an ambitious plan to construct a number of fireproof buildings throughout the province. Fire could quickly destroy a village's surplus grain, livestock, or tools needed to farm and set back the peasant economy and, by extension, the war effort.

Unfortunately, the war took much of the technical personnel, state money, and materials

²³ RGIA, f. 426, op. 3, d. 824, ll. 1, 14, 24. On communes' acceptance of agricultural improvement, see Esther Kingston-Mann, "Peasant Communes and Economic Innovation: A Preliminary Inquiry," in Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 23-51.

²⁴ GAKO, f. 940, op.1 d. 693, ll. 3-6ob. Pravila obiazatel'nago vzaimnago zemskago strakhovaniia ot ognia stroenii v Viatksoi gubernii (Viatka, 1915). For a discussion of fire protection in Russia see, Cathy Frierson, All Russia is Burning! A Cultural History of Fire and Arson in Late Imperial Russia (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); and "Apocalyptic Visions and Rational Responses: Fire Narratives in Fin-de-Siecle Russia," Canadian Slavonic Papers 38, no. 3-4 (1996): 357-384.

that the plan demanded. Although the initial program called for 260,000 bricks, the local brick factory could only produce less than half that amount. By November 1917, the state built only twelve of the planned buildings.²⁵ Such policies show the every day peasant-state relationship during the war. Peasants welcomed state and zemstvo policies to adopt and modernize the village when it would better peasant life.

These policies also highlight different relationships for Russian and non-Russian peasant communities with the polity. The land settlement commission and zemstvo did not plan to build any fireproof buildings in Udmurt or even mixed Russian-Udmurt villages.²⁶ Peasants in these areas may not have applied for aid in building, but the zemstvo had also historically been reluctant to extend programs to non-Russians due to language barriers and limited resources. Either way, the traditionally strained relationship between non-Russian peasants and the state and zemstvo remained one of mutual suspicion.

The zemstvo relationship with non-Russians is clearly seen in its beekeeping programs. The Viatka zemstvo paid special attention to beekeeping because the state and Church needed honey and wax from the beehives for such things as sweeteners and

²⁵ RGIA, f. 397, op. 1, d. 291, ll. 2ob, 44-46.

²⁶ Ibid., ll. 14-27.

candles. The zemstvo encouraged disabled soldiers to learn beekeeping as a way to continue to be productive and benefit their country. Indeed, the state saw beekeeping as so significant during the war that it allocated scarce wood, metal, and labor to the construction of a building for *kustar* manufacturing of beehives in Malmyzh and placed an apiarist there to instruct courses.²⁷

However, underlying zemstvo wartime policies were preconceived notions of Udmurt and Mari simplicity. The zemstvo's wartime beekeeping policy extended a pre-war plan to train Udmurts and Mari in beekeeping, an occupation historically associated with the Finno-Ugric peoples of Viatka.²⁸ At the turn of the century, zemstvo programs headed by A. P. Batuev and I. E. Shavrov, the latter known as "the apostle of rational beekeeping," began to transform traditional non-Russian beekeeping into a more "rational" production.²⁹ The zemstvo established popular courses and training programs in beekeeping. It also successfully advocated for peasants throughout southern Viatka to switch from keeping beehives in customized tree stumps, to storing them in miniature,

²⁷ RGIA, f. 395, op. 2, d. 3406, ll. 10-10ob, 26-31.

²⁸ The number of peasant homes engaged in beekeeping declined between the late-nineteenth century and 1910. For example, in the late-nineteenth century, 1716 peasant homes in Glazov region, and 1827 homes in Sarapul *uezd* engaged in beekeeping. This dropped to 1552 homes in Glazov and 1500 peasant homes in Sarapul by 1910. G. A. Nikitina, "Khoziaistvo i zaniatii," in Udmurty. Istoriki-etnograficheskie ocherki (Izhevsk: Ural'skoe otdelenie udmurtskii institut istorii, iazyka i literatury RAN, 1993), 83; N. A. Badov, Sostoianie pchelovodstva v viatksoi gubernii (po dannym ankety 1910 goda) (Viatka: Tipografiia i khromolitografiia Shklierovoi, 1912), 30-31, 42-43.

orderly houses.³⁰ The success of the zemstvo programs shows that non-Russian peasants were willing to engage the Russian state and improve on traditional occupations.

Presumably influenced by their prejudicial conception of Udmurt and Mari industrial abilities, zemstvo officials thought that construction of beehives was the easiest of the *kustar* industries. Officials therefore provided short courses on beekeeping to increase production and as an instrument to teach the principles of cooperation. The zemstvo attempted to push peasants engaged in *kustar* into artel cooperatives, arguing that artels could combine resources in order to buy materials and instruments and use machines and engines to prepare honey and serve up to ten thousand beehives a year.³¹ The zemstvo saw artels as the way to collectivize and modernize beekeeping while instilling cooperative ideals among the Udmurt and Mari peasants.

Alongside beekeeping policies, state officials also allowed national cultural elites (such as teachers and priests) to publish newspapers in their own language. In 1915, the first Udmurt language newspaper, *Voinays ivor* (To Fight a War), began circulation. It

²⁹ Viatskoe pchelovodstvo, January 1914, pp. 1-2.

³⁰ "Pchelovodnye arteli v slobodskom uezde," Krest'ianskaia sel'sko-khoziaistvenno-tekhnicheskaia gazeta, July 12, 1914, pp. 5-6; "O pchelovodnykh kursakh," January 10, 1915, pp. 12-13; N. A. Badov, 76-78.

³¹ RGIA, f. 395, op. 2, d. 3406, l. 5, 8.

published news from the front as well as advice on agriculture and hygiene.³²

Beekeeping policies and national language literature show that zemstvo officials and elites attempted to raise the cultural level of non-Russians based on assumptions of inherent national backwardness. The war accelerated some elitist cultural projects and provided a foundation for national cultural projects in 1917 and the early Soviet era.

Mobilization for military needs was therefore not limited to young adult males.

Where necessary, the provincial government also conscripted remaining peasant women, children, and elders for labor. Essential armaments factories in Izhevsk and Votkinsk, in eastern Viatka, were crucial to the war effort. Before the war, Udmurt peasants were the predominant suppliers of wood for the factories of Izhevsk and Votkinsk. Beginning in 1915, Viatka's government supplemented the depleted male Udmurt population with both the Russian and non-Russian peasant populations of Sarapul, Elabuga, Malmyzh and Glazov *uezds* to gather fuel in the local forests for the factories. By 1916, the poor wages and terrible working conditions (including having to sleep in the forests during the winter) made many peasants decide simply to leave work. Other peasants refused to leave their villages.³³

³² L. S. Khristoliubova, "Prosvetitel'naia i etnokonsolidiruiushchaia rol pervykh udmurtskikh gazet i kul'turno-prosvetitel'nykh obshchestv v pervoi chetverti XX v.," in Etnicheskaia mobilizatsiia vo vnutrennei periferii: Volg-Kamskii region nachala XX v., S. Lallukka and T. Molotovaia, eds. (Izhevsk: UIIIaL URO RAN, 2000), 44.

³³ Sadakov, 59-61; Anfimov, 194; GAKO, f. 574, op. 2, d. 978, l. 44.

The war introduced modern modes of power. The state governed its population through traditional threats of force, but also began to observe, study, and categorize citizens in order to govern more efficiently.³⁴ Even before the outbreak of war, St. Petersburg ordered Viatka's governor to prepare the masses for mobilization and to implement measures to counter espionage and flight.³⁵ Provincial *ispravniks* submitted occasional reports on the mood of the population to the governor. Although often formulaic by beginning their report that all is peaceful in their region, the reporters continued to describe incidents that were potentially dangerous to the war effort. For example, a report from Viatka *uezd* in March 1916 warned that there were rumors among the population that commanders on the front beat soldiers with birch rods. The local peasants were also hostile toward the military because draftees were not observing dietary restrictions of Lent and the local police were even selling meat to draftees.³⁶ Along with the reports on population moods, the Russian military began a strict censorship of the mail almost immediately following the breakout of war. As part of its

³⁴ This is not to imply that the Russian government only began official observation of its population in the twentieth century. The state as early as the seventeenth century tracked popular moods and punished those whom other people reported as speaking slander or heresy. What I argue here, in part agreeing with Peter Holquist's work, is that the government also tried to use this surveillance to shape popular opinion and categorize its population while using methods instruments of science to carry out their programs. I thank Eve Levin for noting Russia's long history of official surveillance.

³⁵ GAKO, f. 582, op. 154, d. 55, ll. 1-1ob. Viatka received the order on July 14. Measures to combat espionage and to guard borders continued through the war. GAKO, f. 582, op. 154, d. 122, l. 2.

wartime surveillance, the provincial censor's office also detained, read, and often confiscated letters.³⁷ As Peter Holquist notes, such censorship by both shaping and describing popular thought constituted modern surveillance, "both as a technique and a mode of power."³⁸

While the peasantry was a resource, it was also a potential threat to the war effort and state security. State officials remembered the consequences of Russia's last war in 1904-05, when the power vacuum left in the countryside by mobilization of military personnel and the war's hardships led to massive and violent popular protest against the tsarist order. In 1914, Viatka's officials implemented measures to prevent disorder. As a total war, all peasant potential unrest and official actions revolved around national security.

Russia's gendarmerie paid special attention to Tatars, believing that they were inherently suspect and inclined to ally with fellow Muslims. Such official suspicion began well before the outbreak of war. Around the turn of the century, state officials became obsessed that a Pan-Islamic alliance existed among all Muslim populations of the

³⁶ GAKO, f. 582, op. 154, d. 14, l. 3.

³⁷ Iu. P. Khranilov, "'Chto im delo do chuzhikh pisem, kogda briukho syto': voennaia tsenzura Viatskoi gubernii v bor'be za pobedu nad germantsami," *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal* 2 (1997): 22-29.

³⁸ Peter Holquist, "What's so Revolutionary about the Russian Revolution? State Practices and the New-Style Politics, 1914-21," in *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, 92-94.

world.³⁹ During the Russo-Japanese war Russia's government worried about the loyalty of its "Asian" peoples.⁴⁰ Scholars identified the Volga-Kama region as the center of Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic movements in Russia and recommended that the government concentrate their efforts there on stopping the spread of these movements. The Viatka police focused on Elabuga, Glazov, and Malmyzh *uezds*, where most of the province's Tatars lived. Police followed Muslim political activists and attempted to quash pan-Islamic groups.⁴¹ Influenced by the strife in the Balkans, the police in 1913 believed that Muslim Tatars would unite with other countries with large Muslim populations, especially Turkey and China. As one police officer noted, Muslims "do not hide their sympathy with the Chinese," and in the event of war with China, they would side with the enemy.⁴² An agent of the secret police recorded a Malmyzh bourgeois Tatar stating to many Tatar peasants in Koshkinskaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd*,

³⁹ Wayne Dowler, Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1860-1917, 216. Abeer Khalid, The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 194.

⁴⁰ Robert Geraci, "Russian Orientalism at an Impasse: Tsarist Education Policy and the 1910 Conference on Islam," in Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917, Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzarini, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 141.

⁴¹ GAKO, f. 714, op. 1, d. 1364, l. 24, 26-26ob, 28.

⁴² GAKO, f. 714, op. 1, d. 1364, ll. 7-7ob. Tatar Muslims were supposedly sympathetic to the many Chinese Muslims. During the war the Viatka police also saw Chinese living in Viatka city as inherently suspicious and prone to espionage. f. 482, op. 154, d. 122, l. 9.

Thank G-d that Turks again have gathered strength and were victorious over Slavs. All Muslims of course need to unite and help Turkey. No one should be afraid of the Russian tsar, since if we will support Turkey and unite with her, as well as with Afghan and Chinese Muslims, then we will have more than enough to win freedom and regain the past khanate.⁴³

This same fear that pan-Islamic Tatars and mullahs would convert unconscious Tatar Muslim peasants to anti-Russian movements was transferred to the First World War.⁴⁴ Total warfare affecting all aspects of society and total mobilization of the population meant that state, educated elite, and military concerns regarding population groups' political allegiance became more important than they had in previous conflicts. Viatka police supposed that Tatars' natural sympathy was with Turkey and fellow Muslims. As Adeeb Khalid argues for Central Asia, a small but influential group of urban cultural elites participated in the Pan-Islamic and Jadidist phenomena at this time.⁴⁵ Although these movements existed in Viatka's countryside with support of some mullahs, mosques, and educators, state fear of popular pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic movements was greatly exaggerated.⁴⁶ Speakers and teachers exposed Tatar Muslim peasants to

⁴³ GAKO, f. 714, op. 1, d. 1364, ll. 36, 41.

⁴⁴ Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Udmurtskoi Respubliki (hereafter TsGA UR), f. 96, op. 1, d. 195, l. 102.

⁴⁵ Khalid, 216-244.

⁴⁶ A. A. Mashkovtsev, "Viatskie musul'mane i gosudarstvo v ikh vzaimootnosheniakh v 90-e gg. XIX v.-1917 g.," in *Iz istorii Viatskogo kraia kontsa XIX-pervoi poloviny XX veka: Sbornik nauchnykh statei*, V. I. Bakulin, ed. (Kirov: Viatskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet, 1998), 12-13.

these ideas, but there is no evidence that many of them accepted these elites' ideas of Islam's role in a modernizing world. As Robert Geraci has argued, Russia's concern with Tatar Muslim international conspiracy reflects a revised orientalist stereotype.⁴⁷ Such images of Tatars as savage and conspiratorial transferred to state politics during the war. Russian police "knew" that there was an anti-Russian, Pan-Turkic conspiracy in Viatka's southern cities and villages and spent enormous resources trying to confirm their beliefs.

Police reports in Viatka show that anti-government sentiment existed among Muslim leaders and possibly peasants. For example, in November 1915 the police recorded and arrested the Novaia Smail village mullah in Sardykbashskaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd* for uttering that we "need to be happy about the German victories because all law and order will collapse and we will choose a king from among ourselves."⁴⁸ The police even expanded its surveillance to non-religious Tatars. An officer reported in 1915 that in Vomkovo village, Ksekovskaia *volost*, Sarapul *uezd*, that Zaliamotoidin Fakhrutdinov had pro-Turkish propaganda in his fruit store showing women laying a wreath on the head of a Turkish officer. In fact, the "propaganda" was an advertisement from Kazan for a fruit company in Krasnovodsk.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Geraci, "Russian Orientalism," 152.

⁴⁸ GAKO, f. 714, op.1, d.1552, l. 1.

⁴⁹ GAKO, f. 582, op. 190, d. 6, ll. 511, 513-520 are copies of various "anti-government" pictures.

Russia's suspicion of Tatar international conspiracy did not pan out during the war. While police records did indicate that there was a significant Tatar Muslim political network preaching anti-tsarist rhetoric, most Tatar peasants remained either ambivalent or openly patriotic, much like other peasants. Land captain reports at the end of 1914 systematically refuted upper-level state suspicions of Tatar Muslims, stating that there was no special Tatar political sympathy to Turkey. Although Tatars and Turks shared the same religion, Tatars did not feel animosity toward Russia.⁵⁰ Tatar peasants also showed their loyalty to Russia by fighting in the army and sacrificing grain and livestock to the war effort.

Official suspicion of certain non-Russian populations in Viatka reflected Russia's long-term move to a modern nationalizing state, using surveillance and scientific analysis to study and categorize its national populations into reliable and unreliable parts.⁵¹ As with the army's isolating policies toward Jewish minorities living in the front zones and the state's practice of deportation of prisoners of war and alien enemies, the government

⁵⁰ TsGA UR, f. 96, op. 1, d. 195, ll. 103-108. Lohr mentions that central war ministers believed that "Russian subjects of German origins, Muslims, Armenians, and colonists... were prone to spying," "Enemy Alien Politics," 74.

⁵¹ Peter Holquist shows that the military's obsession with population statistics and division of the population into reliable and unreliable elements began in the mid-nineteenth century, but the First World War accelerated the process. "To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia," in A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin, Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martins, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 115-123.

fixated on Tatar Muslims as inherently dangerous.⁵² The Russian secret police worried about possible espionage and treason and continued its surveillance of religious Muslim leaders from the pre-war era.

State fear of Tatar nationalism and pan-Islam was a discussion about empire--how a state that defined itself through its Russian ethnicity and Orthodox Christian religion could rule over, and sometimes with, those of competing religions and national projects. It thereby shows official insecurity about the place of non-Orthodox Christians in a modernizing nation. While the war necessitated mobilizing the population and making state subjects into citizens, the police and military resisted full inclusion into the Russian nation and its war effort for Tatars.

Suspicion did not lead to exclusion from Russia's national war effort for Tatar Muslims. Tatars occupied a gray space between official acceptance as one of Russia's multi-ethnic subjects and exclusion as an inherently unacceptable people (such as Jews, Germans, and Austrians). Due to Tatars' distance from the front and the absence of viable evidence of treason, the Tatar population was not subject to complete official

⁵² Eric Lohr, "The Russian Army and the Jews: Mass Deportation, Hostages, and Violence during World War I," The Russian Review 60 (July 2001): 418-419; Rogers Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 55-69. I take the term nationalizing state from Lohr, who borrows it from Brubaker. I disregard Brubaker's analysis of the homeland in relation to the nexus between construction of the nation-state and national minorities, but like Brubaker I understand the nationalizing state as the project of building a nation-state in which the state constructs what defines a national minority.

ostracism. Official discourse regarding Tatars had both ethnic and religious components. Joshua Sanborn notes that by the outbreak of the war, ethnicity became more important for mobilization and composition of units within the army than religion.⁵³ The army exempted many of the non-Russians (*inorodtsy*) from military conscription.⁵⁴ While some Tatars in other parts of the Russian empire had exemption from conscription, Tatars and other non-Russians in Viatka did not. The army mobilized Tatar peasant men, accepted their grain and livestock, and housed POWs and refugees in Tatar areas. Continued state fear of Tatar Muslims shows the importance of both religion and ethnicity during the war. Military and police officials equated pan-Islam with a pan-Turkic movement and Tatar peasants with Islam.

The War Comes Home

Newspaper articles, mobilization of family members, and officials urging peasants to sell grain made villagers aware of a demanding but distant war. This feeling could last only a short time, as the far-off war quickly arrived in the village. As early as late August 1914, Viatka's larger villages began to receive their first German and Austrian prisoners of war. For peasants, most of whom had never seen a foreigner and

⁵³ Joshua A. Sanborn, "Drafting the Nation: Military Conscription and the Formation of a Modern Polity in Tsarist and Soviet Russia, 1905-1925" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1998), 222.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 209.

had heard about the dastardly evils of their wartime enemies, the sight of poorly clad soldiers who spoke only German must have been a shock. Peasants saw the POWs as carriers of filth and the cause of remarkable inflation.⁵⁵ As a newspaper account from a village in Viatka *uezd* recounted, after a party of around sixty German POWs was settled in the village, they quickly ate all the food causing the price of flour to rise. The Germans also rented rooms, driving rent up from two rubles to twenty rubles a month. The POWs' poor health and disease also strained medical personnel.⁵⁶

Viatka was one of several provinces that had a significant number of internment camps for German and Austrian captives. The main camps were located in the rural communities of Ust-Chepets village, Belo-Cholunitskii *zavod*, Viatka *uezd*, and Belo-Kholuniskii *zavod*, Slobodskoi *uezd*, although the state also spread Germans throughout the province's larger villages. By November 1915, 8,000 POWs had arrived in Viatka. Presumably, several hundred more came during the next two years.⁵⁷ Viatka city took only 400 of them; the rest were farmed out to various communities. The state quickly put the POWs to work at the Viatka railroad station, building the Viatka-Slobodskoi railroad line, repairing country roads, cleaning the streets of Viatka city, and working the land.

⁵⁵ Lohr notes similar popular images of deported alien enemies, "Enemy Alien Politics," 78.

⁵⁶ "Po gubernii," *Viatskaia rech.*, September 3, 1914, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Lohr estimates that at least 3,000,000 enemy aliens living in Russia were deported during the war, "Enemy Alien Politics," 115-116.

Fourteen hundred POWs worked for individual enterprises. Although the state had the vast majority of the country's POWs working the land in the south and southeast Black Earth region for large estates, some POWs also worked for peasant farms.⁵⁸

Living conditions were terrible. Detainees were put under guard and forbidden to gather in groups, write letters in German, engage in recreational activities (such as skiing), or leave the village.⁵⁹ Most detainees had no winter clothing and little food and money. Prisoners were paid low wages, often three to four times less than local workers.⁶⁰ POWs appealed to the American Embassy in Petrograd and other charity groups for donations. In their letters, they described their harsh standard of living. For example, forty-three German POWs sent a letter for aid stating that after Russian soldiers captured them, they took the Germans' money.

On August 27, we were taken captive and transported for thirteen days. On September 9 we arrived in the city of Viatka where we stayed until November 5. There we were imprisoned as prisoners of war and had to do various domestic chores without pay.... We were transferred to the Viatka *uezd* prison... and were

⁵⁸ Anfimov, 103-104. Anfimov figures that 88.6 percent of POWs who worked the land were located in the Black Earth region. Russia was not alone in forcing POWs and enemy aliens to work on large agricultural estates. Great Britain also made up for their labor shortage in the countryside by using prisoners of war as substitute workers. By November 1918, Great Britain employed over 30,000 POWs in agriculture. The government also tried to use alien enemies in agriculture, but the government had logistical problems, feared espionage, and could not get alien enemies to volunteer. Horn, 140-161; P. E. Dewey, British Agriculture in the First World War (New York: Routledge, 1989), 120-127, 136-138.

⁵⁹ "O poriadke sodержaniia voennobiazannykh v Viatskoi gubernii," Pamiatnaia knizhka Viatskoi gubernii i kalendar na 1915 g. (Viatka: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1915), 109-111.

⁶⁰ Anfimov, 103-104.

in the prison for ten days, until November 14. We went to the villages of Narosk and Multin, Vochenovskaia *volost*, Slobodskoi *uezd* and freed under the supervision of the police.... We have summer clothes and in the village there is absolutely no work from which we would be able to gain sustenance. The police will not allow us to go further than 100 *sazh.* from the village..... Most of us are sick due to the long journey by foot and insufficient war clothing.⁶¹

In December 1914 the Russian government also began to systematically deport German and Austrian citizens living in Russia to the provinces.⁶² By the very fact that they were German and Austrian, the state saw these alien enemies as inherently suspect. Indeed the army even investigated two brothers whose Russian mother was married to a German after their father.⁶³ The government often lumped German citizens together with prisoners of war, sending them both to ill-equipped rural “concentration camps” and villages.⁶⁴ The local government put alien enemies to work in factories making boots for the military, repairing roads, loading and unloading river cargo, and so forth. When the state needed laborers or there was not enough housing in a locale, it would transfer alien enemies throughout the province. If the prisoner committed an infraction of the rules, the

⁶¹ GAKO, f. 582, op. 154, d. 115a, ll. 476-476ob. Such poor living conditions for alien enemies and POWs existed throughout Russia. See Lohr, “Enemy Alien Politics,” 83.

⁶² Lohr, “Enemy Alien Politics,” 75-76.

⁶³ GAKO, f. 582, op. 154, d. 122, l. 10. The most compelling work on Russia’s treatment of immigrants and their descendants of those countries which Russia was at war living in the country is Lohr, “Enemy Alien Politics.” I take the term enemy alien from Lohr.

⁶⁴ The United States secretary to the ambassador of Russia used the term concentration camp, (camp de concentration) in his correspondence with the Russian government concerning POW holding areas in Viatka. GAKO, f. 582, op. 154, d. 115a, l. 571.

government could ship the detainee to more remote villages, such as Singigeriia.⁶⁵ As early as November 1914, Belo-Kholunistkii had 458 detainees, 327 men, 70 women, and 61 children.⁶⁶ Reflecting a new, modern state in which the whole population is involved in state efforts, peasants and police were instructed to keep guard and to watch the deportees.

Russia's treatment of alien enemies and the pathetic living conditions of detainees brought international condemnation.⁶⁷ The United States of America sent a representative to Viatka to inspect the conditions of prisoners and found them horrible. The American embassy wrote to the vice-governor of Viatka and requested that the Russians treat the prisoners better and allow the American embassy to provide assistance in the concentration camps.⁶⁸

Peasants saw German and Austrian detainees as physical incarnations of the enemy. Thus, peasants' personal contact with the prisoners was filled with strife. In December 1914, a German alien enemy detained in Kumenskaia *volost*, Viatka *uezd* and

⁶⁵ Reports of Delegates of the Embassy of the United States of America in St. Petersburg on the Situation of the German Prisoners of War and Civil Persons in Russia (Zurich: Art. Institut Orell Füssli, 1917), 57-61.

⁶⁶ GAKO, f. 582, op. 154, d. 115a, l. 777. Interestingly, the government did not send Turkish citizens or prisoners of war to Viatka, presumably out of continued fear that Tatars and Turks would feel a natural alliance. GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 33-335.

⁶⁷ Lohr, "Enemy Alien Politics," 96-98.

⁶⁸ GAKO, f. 582, op. 154, d. 115a, ll. 571-572.

renting a place from a local peasant woman wrote in a letter that he had to do everything himself, including making his own bed, fetching hot water, preparing kerosene, and preparing the samovar. However, when he stepped out, his landlady and her daughter “cleaned out his apartment and took the samovar.”⁶⁹

Besides theft, peasants could be violent with the detainees. In April 1915, two German prisoners of war were strolling the streets of Belokholunitskii *zavod*, when they met up with four local peasants. The peasants beat the Germans with a thick rope. Although the police later detained the leader of the peasants, one of the Germans, George Karolov Riprikh, fell into depression, complaining that it was better to end his life. Strangely symbolic, Riprikh killed himself by hanging.⁷⁰ Peasant attacks on foreign prisoners were common, especially in Belokholunitskii *zavod* and the village of Sinigoria, where there was a concentration of prisoners. According to a report of an American investigator, there were twenty attacks in one month in Sinigoria, including a peasant who kicked a woman in the stomach.⁷¹ In Spasopreobrezhisnkaia *volost*, Kotel’nich *uezd* peasants violently beat three POWs. When the police began an investigation, six local peasants attacked and beat up the policeman, yelling we “must

⁶⁹ GAKO, f. 714, op. 1, d. 1588, ll. 24-24ob.

⁷⁰ GAKO, f. 714, op. 1, d. 1569a, ll. 82b ob, 83. List 82b ob is a confiscated postcard from Belokhodunitsk to “Olga” in Kazan describing the suicide.

⁷¹ Reports of Delegates, 57.

beat up the policeman because he defends prisoners of war.”⁷² Against this backdrop, it is therefore not surprising that in 1915 there was a general fear among prisoners across the province of an outbreak of wholesale violence against them.⁷³

Such attacks went beyond traditional peasant suspicion of and inclination to cheat outsiders.⁷⁴ The extent and voracity of peasant violence against these state-defined foreign enemies shows peasant understanding that they were part of the nation’s war. Peasants understood the state’s categorization of POWs and alien enemies as representatives of the nation’s opponents and identified themselves in opposition to them.

When the war turned for the worse and the Russian army began its protracted retreat, refugees living in the war zones began to flood the country’s interior, amounting to at least 3.3 million refugees by the end of 1915 and over six million by 1917.⁷⁵ In Viatka, the provincial zemstvo organized the effort to transport and house the refugees. Beginning in the summer of 1915, those fleeing the front arrived en masse in the

⁷² GAKO, f. 582, op. 190, d. 6, ll. 332, 334. The assailants were all adult males ranging in age from seventeen to 43. Interestingly, the district police ordered one of the guilty freed because he was a soldier and “mentally ill.”

⁷³ Reports of Delegates, 57-58.

⁷⁴ I do not mean to imply that peasants were clever (*khitryi*) and had a natural inclination to trick non-peasants, as some Russian stereotypes of peasant culture imply. Instead, I base this assumption on anthropological research showing peasants more willing to trust fellow villagers and provide them with better services and prices than those living outside the village.

⁷⁵ Gatrell, 3.

province. Because Viatka was a central railroad juncture, many refugees simply passed through in route to their final stop in Siberia. Viatka still received up to 100,000 of the first million refugees from the Northwest front. As with the state's treatment of POWs, the zemstvo put some refugees to work in factories and the Viatka railroad station. In Viatka *uezd*, refugees worked in factories and engaged in *kustar*.⁷⁶ The zemstvo distributed the bulk of the newcomers to villages throughout the province. Each *uezd* received ten thousand refugees.⁷⁷ In Nolinsk *uezd*, the government divided the initial wave of refugees giving three refugees for every ten homes.⁷⁸ The government provided initial clothing and food, and donated 25 kopecks per day to every refugee (15 kopecks for youths), but asked its peasantry to care for this massive influx of largely women and children who had to flee their homes with little property and sustenance.⁷⁹ Many peasant communities welcomed refugees into their village, supplemented state aid with grain, flour, and money, gave them free housing, and some peasants even gave up their homes in order not to divide refugee families.

⁷⁶ "Pomoshch zemstva bezhentsam i ranenym," 128; "O bezhentsakh," p. 14.

⁷⁷ "Pomoshch zemstva bezhentsam i ranenym," Viatskoe gubernskoe zemskoe sobranie 56-i chrezvychainoi sessii, 15 sentiabria 1915 g. (Viatka, 1915), 96-134.

⁷⁸ "O bezhentsakh," Krest'ianskaia sel'sko-khoziaistvenno-tekhnicheskaia gazeta, October 31, 1915, p. 14.

⁷⁹ "Pomoshch bezhentsam," Krest'ianskaia sel'sko-khoziaistvenno-tekhnicheskaia gazeta, September 12, 1915, p. 5 and "Bezhentsi v s. Turske," Krest'ianskaia sel'sko-khoziaistvenno-tekhnicheskaia gazeta, September 30, 1915, pp. 16-17. In Viatka *uezd*, the church also provided aid to refugees in monasteries.

Peasants' aid does not mean that they welcomed refugees without reservations. Peasants contributed to the degree that it would not overly inconvenience them. For example, peasants of Fillipovskaia *volost* provided shelter but refused to give clothes and provisions. In Vozhgal'skaia *volost*, peasants sheltered 250 refugees, but declined any more because they did not have enough rooms in their huts.⁸⁰ Refugees lived in the villages as guests and outsiders. Communes did not include them as equal members of the village and the state prohibited their legal inclusion in local society.⁸¹ Refugees were not even reported as local inhabitants in the 1916-17 census. Nevertheless, peasants made a clear distinction among the new inhabitants, between enemy foreign prisoners and fellow refugees. Peasant acceptance of refugees shows that they understood the inherent link between different social groups within an imagined community.

The connection was not always positive. If POWs and alien enemies represented the filth of the country's adversaries, refugees were a daily reminder that Russia was losing the war. Whereas POWs signified Russia's initial victories over their enemies, evacuees and refugees showed that the tide of the war had turned. Peasants saw the refugees' poverty and heard stories of their despair from the media.⁸² By helping these

⁸⁰ Pomoshch bezhentsam," Krest'ianskaia sel'sko-khoziaistvenno-tekhnicheskaia gazeta, September 12, 1915, p. 5.

⁸¹ Gatrell, 66.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 73-83.

displaced people, peasants accepted the consequence of war as their own burden. The war became national, that is it was not just the Tsar's war, but all Russians'. Material shortages, social upheaval and refugees became a massive personal trauma. The war initiated massive population movements that would last at least until 1922. Prisoners of war, exiles, refugees, mobilized and demobilized soldiers, and families trying to find a better life in the east created a new population group of people wandering for years in the desert of war and revolution. These migratory people put further strains on the rural economy, brought outside political ideas to the village, and created greater geographic diversity and social cleavages among the peasant populations.

The War and Women

Mass mobilization robbed the Viatka countryside of able-bodied males. Women now had to assume roles in the peasant economy normally left for males. Between 1914 and 1918, fully twenty-four percent of all males and forty-nine percent of able-bodied working-age men went into the army.⁸³ This left a massive shortage of workers. By summer 1917, over forty percent of peasant households in Viatka were without a male worker. The Viatka countryside was one of the hardest hit of all European Russia, with

⁸³ Rossia v mirovoi voine. 1914-1918 goda (v tsifrakh), Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie (Moscow: tipografiia M. K. KH imeni F. Ia Lavrova, 1924), 21. Viatka was above average in the percentage of males going into the army. The average percentage of males lost to the army was 22.6, and the average of able-bodied male workers was 47.4 percent.

only Moscow and Kaluga provinces enduring a greater percentage of households left without a male worker.⁸⁴ While the decline in the male population varied among *volosts*, it hit Russian and non-Russian peasants equally, as seen in the Table 2.1. It is unclear why certain locales suffered a demographic decline more than others. It is possibly based on proximity to transportation. For example, Liumskaia and Elovskaia *volosts* suffered large population declines and were both situated on the Cheptsa river, and, most importantly, on the railroad. They were also relatively near the city of Glazov, which housed factories producing war supplies. State labor conscription or higher wages may have moved peasants from these areas and into the factories. The war began a negative demographic shift in Viatka that would not end until after the civil war. Between 1913 and 1915, births fell nine percent, deaths increased 17 percent, and marriages dropped 34 percent.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Anfimov, 189. Moscow province had 44 percent and Kaluga 44.9 percent of peasant households without a male worker.

⁸⁵ Obzor Viatskoi gubernii za 1913 god (Viatka: Gubernskaia tipografiia, 1914), 42; Obzor Viatskoi gubernii za 1915, 61.

<i>Volosts</i>	Males in 1912	Males in 1916	Percent Change	Females in 1912	Females in 1916	Percent Change	Ethnicity
Voroninskaia	2138	1889	-12%	2380	2425	2%	Russian
Elovskaia	4781	3163	-34%	4865	4084	-16%	Mixed Russian-Udmurt
Zalazninskaia	1886	1647	-13%	1958	1994	2%	Russian
Igrinskaia	6205	4947	-20%	6247	6233	-1%	Mostly Udmurt
Lypskaia	6372	5305	-17%	6592	6953	6%	Mostly Udmurt
Liumskaia	6162	3406	-45%	6213	4231	-32%	Mostly Udmurt
Liukskaia	5952	5028	-15%	5983	6367	6%	Mostly Udmurt
Omutshenskaia	2084	1948	-6%	2274	2425	7%	Russian
Polomskaia	6162	6072	-1%	6213	7859	27%	Mostly Udmurt
Poninskaia	9779	8125	-17%	9991	10262	3%	Mixed Russian-Udmurt
Tol'enskaia	6309	5366	-15%	6576	6882	5%	Mostly Udmurt
Iusovskaia	4786	4151	-13%	5222	5569	7%	Mostly Russian
Averages	5218	4254	-17%	5376	5440	1.50%	

Table 2.1: Sample Population Change by Gender in Glazov District⁸⁶

The war also created an opportunity for women to assume a greater position in the public sphere. Traditionally, peasant women played a minor role in official village institutions such as the *skhod* and public service. In the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, outside factors had begun to break down these restrictions. Growing male labor migration to cities meant that some women took the place of their husbands in the assembly in his absence.⁸⁷ A rise in educational opportunities and literacy also made women more valuable to their community. Some communities had also allowed widows

⁸⁶ Data compiled from 1912 and 1916-1917 censuses.

⁸⁷ Glickman, 56-58.

to become the head of a household and participate fully in the communal assemblies.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, only a small minority of peasant women in Viatka participated fully in the pre-war assemblies. The war intensified conditions for female participation in the public sphere.

Communal resolutions (*prigovory*) show the significant shift in women's public participation. Normally, the heads of households would meet, discuss a topic, and issue an official resolution. By 1914, the Russian state had restrictions on the convocation of a *skhod* and promulgation of resolutions; two-thirds of households with the legal right to vote needed to be present for official sanction. Even with the war's depletion of males, the state still abided by their laws on peasant meetings. In a newspaper article in February 1915, officials remarked that since there had not been any official announcements on *skhods*, peasants "must have forgotten" about the two-thirds rule, but the law was still in effect.⁸⁹ By noting that the peasants had "forgotten" the law, the state denied conscious peasant action. There was little chance that the peasantry was unaware of the law, they were simply ignoring it. The scribe at the *skhod* had to record the

⁸⁸ David Moon, The Russian Peasantry, 1600-1930: The World the Peasants Made (New York: Longman, 1999), 235.

⁸⁹ "Vnimaniiu sel'skikh skhodov," Krest'ianskaia sel'sko-khoziaistvenno-tekhnicheskaia gazeta, February 8, 1915, p. 6.

resolutions on official forms in which he had to write the number of people in attendance out of the possible amount, in order to show that they had two-thirds of the potential voters.

As male heads of households went into the armed forces, women gradually assumed their husbands' or fathers' roles and participated in public forums. A sample of communal and *volost* peasant resolutions reveals that in the spring of 1914, approximately two percent of resolution signatories were women. This number increased only slightly after the first mobilization, to 2.5 percent. The number of female signatories steadily rose, in 1915 to 8.7 percent and 1916-17 to around 13 percent of total signatures.⁹⁰ However, women's participation varied among regions and even villages. In places where women had little or no history of voting in public life, such as Arkhangel'skaia *volost*, Nolinsk *uezd*, their role changed little. In areas where women had a tradition of participation in public forums, their role greatly increased during the war. The rise in women's participation is most clearly seen in resolutions of elections of

⁹⁰ These figures come from a random sample of 53 resolutions on a variety of topics (such as family divisions, agreements to sell grain to the army, and elections of official personnel) throughout Viatka province. Nevertheless, these figures are preliminary because the sampling is so small, considering that in each *volost* peasant resolutions numbered in the thousands per year. GAKO, f. 976, op. 4, d. 209, d. 206; f. 589, op. 1, d. 319, 324, 400, 401; f. 940, op. 1, d. 679, 709, 693, 694; f. 927, op. 1, d. 22, 31; f. 593, op. 1, d. 190, op. 2, d. 2; f. 941, op. 1, d. 207; TsGA UR, f. 96, op. 1, d. 2159.

peasants to public service in three communes of Bogorodskaia *volost*, also in Nolinsk *uezd*. In the fall of 1915, women constituted 3.6 percent of participants and a year later marked 21.8 percent.⁹¹

While the war gave some peasant women the opportunity to participate in the public sphere, it was rarely on an equal level as men. Moreover, women overall do not appear to have aspired to social or political equality or even permanently to encroach on traditionally held male spaces. Individual women did not usually go against social norms to fight for public representation of her household. If a village allowed a woman to participate actively in the communal gatherings, then others would join her. A woman's name would often be repeated on resolutions, showing that she was a frequent participant at the meetings. Women also on occasion signed their name with the addendum "wife of." The woman's role in the gatherings was as the conditional replacement of the true head of the household.

Women were also forced to work in occupations traditionally reserved for men, such as plowing, mowing with a scythe, and so forth.⁹² The depletion of the rural workforce made wages for male workers rise so most peasant communes were unable to

⁹¹ GAKO, f. R-1620, op. 2, d. 3, ll. 2-3ob, 8-11; f. 927, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 21, 22, 28-30. In one commune, women went from zero to 12.3 percent of the total, in the second, they went from 8.67 to 11.2 percent, and in the third commune they jumped from 2.2 to 42 percent of the total participants.

⁹² Rose L. Glickman, "Peasant Women and their Work," in Russian Peasant Women, Beatrice Farnsworth and Lynne Viola, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 56.

supplement their depleted workforce with laborers.⁹³ Since most of Viatka did not suffer from surplus labor (unlike the overpopulated Black Earth region), there was an acute labor shortage during the war. Agricultural work was sometimes taken by POWs and refugees, but more often it was left to women.

A number of factors would suggest that there should have been a natural decline in productivity and crop output during wartime. The rural population was largely composed of those whom peasants did not consider full workers, namely the elderly, youth, and women. Women had to shoulder a double burden of their traditional roles (overseeing household chores such as clothing her family, cooking, cleaning, fetching water, mowing grass, turning hay, and seeing to livestock) and their new responsibilities in the field and public life.⁹⁴ Mobilization and requisition of horses and cows led to a decline in working livestock, making plowing and carting difficult. Russia also stopped importing agricultural equipment, converted most of its farm supply factories to weapons productions, and funneled its metal and steel supplies to the army. Any movement

⁹³ GAKO, f. 574, op. 2, d. 978, l. 45.

⁹⁴ Peasant women already carried a tremendous responsibility of domestic and agricultural chores before the war. "Zhenshchinam-krest'iankam," Krest'ianskaia sel'sko-khoziaistvenno-tekhnicheskaia gazeta, June 21, 1914, pp. 7-8.

toward modern technologically based agriculture was largely put on hold. Moreover, if a farm implement broke it was nearly impossible to repair due to lack of replacement materials.

Nevertheless, peasants produced as much if not more than before the outbreak of war. There were reports that some women did not feel bound by traditional agricultural technology and experimented with modern techniques.⁹⁵ However, the absence of a decline in agricultural production is best explained by the fact that households and communes were able to adapt to the new demographic situation by easing cultural restrictions on labor roles based on gender and age.

Since June 1912, the Russian government promised soldiers' wives (*soldatki*) and families a food stipend while their man was in the service. From the beginning of the war, rural society saw the *soldatki* as powerless victims. Villages organized public support groups that donated money and food to *soldatki*. Communes also issued resolutions pledging to help soldiers' families in all aspects of their fieldwork.⁹⁶ Soldiers on the front also came to their wives' aid, writing requests and threats to their volost

⁹⁵ Elena Gal'perin, Zhenshchina-krest'ianka v nyneshnei voine i reforma volostnogo samoupravleniia. Doklad chitannyi na soveshchanii delegatok zhenskikh organizatsii v g. Moskve 23-24 apr. 1916 g. (Moscow: Izdanie M. O. Ligi ravnopraviiia zhenshchin, 1916), 4.

⁹⁶ "Postanovlenie volostnykh skhoda," Krest'ianskaia sel'sko-khoziaistvenno-tekhnicheskaia gazeta, February 16, 1915, page unknown.

starshina and offering advice on strategy to their spouses.⁹⁷ Emily Pyle notes that communal aid to *soldatki* was not uniform; *soldatki* especially in regions with a high level of male migrant labor “were less likely to receive free communal assistance than *soldatki* in predominantly agricultural regions.”⁹⁸ In villages with a history of migratory labor, peasants believed that workers’ wives were well off from their spouses’ extra wages. Not all *soldatki* were in desperate economic straits, many became the head of their household and managed the fieldwork and household economy with success. However, other soldiers’ wives had to move into their in-laws’ or other family members’ homes, fight for a relatively meager state subsistence, and work their household’s land with a reduced labor supply. *Soldatki*, regardless of need, fought for what they perceived to be their right to state aid. Soldiers’ wives, children, and parents wrote numerous letters and petitions to all levels of government to win this aid.⁹⁹

Although the peasantry was unaware of it, debate over ethnicity and confession also guided the state’s administration of aid to soldiers’ wives. In the fall of 1914, provincial military officials debated whether or not to support Udmurt and Mari wives who had not been married in an Orthodox Church and therefore living an “illegitimate

⁹⁷ GAKO, f. 714, op. 1, d. 1453, ll. 340-340ob.

⁹⁸ Pyle, “Village Social Relations,” 183.

⁹⁹ Emily E. Pyle, “Peasant Strategies for Obtaining State Aid: A Study of Petitions during World War I,” Russian History/Histoire Russe 24 (spring-summer 1997): 41-64.

life,” and Muslims who had more than one wife. The official response was mixed. The religious affairs section of the Interior Section argued that the 1912 law only supported Orthodox Christians, Old Believers, and sectarians, therefore the state had no obligation to dispense aid to those married under non-Christian customs. However, provincial government agencies found no obstacles to dispensing aid to Muslim families.¹⁰⁰ It seems that despite the original spirit of the law, state officials gave non-Christian women state support.

The Village’s War

The war had significant effects on village life. Mobilization and growing casualties stole one and often multiple male members from households, disrupting peasant traditions and the family cycle; the opportunity of extra-village paid labor virtually vanished; manufactured goods as well as prime necessities were hard to find; and the market for selling grains and livestock became increasingly confusing. The war entered the village, disrupted everyday life, and transformed its social and economic

¹⁰⁰ RGIA, f. 1292, op. 7, d. 262, ll. 1-3, 5-6, 11-12, 15, 22, 26, 31, 33, 36. The matter was never settled. Other provinces in which non-Christians lived were just as confused as Viatka about aid to non-Christian families. Throughout the war, the governments of Samara, Orenburg, Astrakhan, Elisavet’pol, and Perm wrote to the military asking about money for Muslim families. The religious affairs letter should be seen as part of a long-term debate about the nature of Udmurt and Mari religious convictions. The Church categorized these non-Russians as Orthodox, pagan, holding a “dual-belief” (*dvoeverie*), and those who had backslided to paganism or Islam (*musul’manstvo*). For more on the complexity of the term *dvoeverie*, see Eve Levin, “*Dvoeverie* and Popular Religion,” in Seeking G-d: The Recovering of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine and Georgia, Stephen K. Batalden, ed. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 31-52.

functions. The peasant commune extended its safety net and asserted itself to help ease many of the war's consequences. Although the commune had been under attack before the war by agricultural reforms that encouraged individuals to leave the commune, and there was a general sense that the commune was in decline, in fact it transformed and molded itself to help peasant communities cope with the war's effects. The war also heightened pre-existing tensions in the countryside.

The war's dramatic casualties left scores of orphans in the village, defined by Russia's peasants as the loss of one parent. Like their aid to soldiers' wives, many peasant communities also helped orphaned children. The government had put orphans under the jurisdiction of the village commune in 1861.¹⁰¹ During the war, communes continued their tradition of caring for orphans by placing them in trust with relatives, selling their parents' possessions to help defray the costs of feeding another mouth, and helping orphaned children when they reached maturity. The high mortality and social turmoil of the war necessitated the commune to increase its service. Most cases involving orphans dealt with the logistics after the death of one or more of a child's parents, others focused on the changing demography of the village and the tenuous

¹⁰¹ Worobec, Peasant Russia, 70.

position of women.¹⁰² For example, in Elabuga *uezd*, the young Fedor Demytriev became an orphan when his father died. His mother then married a peasant from another village and moved there without her son. Fedor moved in with his aunt and, despite his mother's complaints, the village commune sold his father's house.¹⁰³ Although village *skhods* were willing to support widowed mothers, if they remarried and moved to another village then they lost any position in their former community. Nevertheless, when outside forces such as war threatened the peasant community, the commune extended its safety net to provide for what it perceived to be its most innocent members, thereby sustaining the future of the community.

Peasant households also mitigated the war's deteriorative effects on the household economy by extending the tradition of adoption. In the practice of paritable inheritance peasant households divided land and property equally among the male offspring. If a household did not have male heirs, the land would usually pass to the commune. In order to sustain a household, a typical peasant inheritance strategy that dated back to serfdom was to adopt a current or future son-in law (*ziat*). The new son would then have the right

¹⁰² GAKO, f. 584, op. 54, d. 107, 108, 110, 155; f. 941, op. 1, d. 223-242 involve village communities throughout the province selling orphans' property and putting them in trustee with relatives. There was a standard form for selling the property of orphans, in which the village scribe filled in the number and gender of the orphans, and items being sold.

¹⁰³ GAKO, f. 584, op. 54, d. 109, ll. 3-12ob. Note that this case went from 1916 until mid-1917, spanning the February Revolution.

to inherit the household's land and property but he would be obliged to provide and care for his new family and even adopt its surname.¹⁰⁴ Although approximately twenty percent of households before the war did not have an heir,¹⁰⁵ the decimation of the male peasant population from the war forced many more peasant families to consider adoption. Peasants drew on and extended traditions of adopting their son-in-law to save their household by going beyond the son-in-law to nephews and peasants from other nearby villages to become part of their family.¹⁰⁶ During wartime, communities thereby utilized traditional peasant safety nets to ease the problems from labor shortages.

The war began a transitional era of rapid turnover in village official personnel. Village and *volost* officials (such as the *starosta*, *starshina*, scribe, tax collector, and so forth) were the traditional rulers of social and political life. They were the official link between state and village and held significant power over the distribution of communal responsibilities (such as taxes and conscripts to the army) and enforcing the law. Village elites, male elders especially from wealthier peasant families, traditionally occupied these positions. Presumably, many of the officials were endowed with feelings of social

¹⁰⁴ Worobec, *Peasant Russia*, 57-62; Rodney Bohac, "Peasant Inheritance Strategies in Russia," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 26 (summer 1985): 26, 36-39. Here I am discussing *usynoziatiiia* (the adoption of a family member) rather than the more general *usynovlenie* (adoption).

¹⁰⁵ Worobec, 57. GAKO, f. 976, op. 4, d. 231, ll. 4-8ob, 17-18, 20; f. 927, op. 1, d. 26, ll. 3-3ob.

¹⁰⁶ GAKO, f. 927, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 4-4ob, 7; d. 26, ll. 3-3ob.

responsibility toward their community, however, scholars have noted that peasant officials also used their position to enhance their power in the village.¹⁰⁷ Some village officials went to the army and others asked their village to relieve them of their posts because they had become the sole male worker in their household.¹⁰⁸

Despite the mass population movement during the war and turnover in official personnel, the social composition of village leadership still stayed largely intact. In Kliuchevskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd*, local peasant officials in 1916 remained wealthy, middle-age, male peasants. They all enjoyed large households, most with more than one horse and a relatively large amount of livestock; the average age of the officials was 53 years. In mixed Russian and Udmurt villages, it appears that power was based on age and prestige over ethnicity. In Kypkinsk commune, the village policeman and tax collector were both Udmurt and in Syginsk village, Syginsk commune, the village elder was Russian and the policeman Udmurt; the head of *volost* court was Russian.¹⁰⁹ These power dynamics continued through the war but once the Bolsheviks assumed power, ethnicity became a more predominant component of village politics.

¹⁰⁷ Moon, *The Russian Peasantry*, 231; Steven L. Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control in Russia: Petrovskoe a Village in Tambov* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 128-136.

¹⁰⁸ GAKO, f. 927, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 1, 4-6, 8-8ob, 10-10ob.

¹⁰⁹ Compiled from a comparison of a list of officials in 1916 and the 1917 census. TsGA UR, f. 94, op. 1, d. 214, ll. 9-11; GAKO, f. 574, op. 4, d. 1674, 1691.

In the southern districts, peasants and landlords continued to spar. In 1915, the landowner Anastasiia Ivanovna Baronova complained to the Viatka governor that villagers from Arzamastevo, Sarapul *uezd*, were terrorizing her estate. Anastasiia Baronova and her husband bought the estate in 1885 but sold part of it to the Peasant Land Bank after the 1905-1906 revolution. Although the locals desperately wanted to buy the land, they did not have enough money, so in 1907 they began seditious “terrorist acts” of resistance to force her to lower her price. Almost every year there would be a fire on Baronova’s estate. Finally, in September 1915, her oat field was set on fire at a loss of five hundred *puds*. Peasants used arson as a means of resistance, a weapon of the weak which showed their displeasure with the political and economic power through an agentless act.¹¹⁰ Peasants of Arzamastevo needed land and were willing to pay Baronova for it, but they were trying to force what they considered to be a just and reasonable price. The state for its part took forcible action against the attacks only during the war, when peasants destroyed Baronova’s grain supply, thereby threatening state security. The regional police denied peasant agency by placing full blame on only one instigator, Vasilii Liapunov, who supposedly terrorized the villagers and led them astray.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ James C. Scott, Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹¹¹ GAKO, f. 582, op. 190a, d. 5; f. 584, op. 54, d. 181, ll. 176-177ob. A. M. Anfimov, ed., Krest’ianskoe dvizhenie v Rossii v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny i iul 1914 g.-fevral 1917 g.: Sbornik dokumentov (Moscow

The 1906-07 agrarian reforms, in which peasants could legally leave the commune and establish individual farmsteads, rapidly transformed the countryside before World War I, but lost momentum during the war.¹¹² By the outbreak of war, 50,254 peasants had submitted requests to the state to leave the commune in Viatka.¹¹³ For example, in Bobinskaia *volost*, Viatka *uezd*, between June 1910 (when the reforms came into full effect) and May 1914, 187 households submitted applications to establish private farmsteads. The number of applications declined during the war. Throughout the province between September 1914 and May 1915, 1106 peasants applied to establish individual farms, but from 1915 through January 1917, only 663 more applications were submitted. Likewise, between 1906 and 1915, 23,526 peasants established individual farms, but from 1915 until 1917 only an additional 707 farms were established.¹¹⁴ From

and Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo nauka, 1965), 166-169, letter by A. I. Baranova to the minister of interior affairs, November 28, 1915.

¹¹² Dorothy Atkinson, The End of the Russian Land Commune, 110.

¹¹³ S. M. Dubrovskii, Stolypinskaia zemel'naia reforma: Iz istorii sel'skogo khoziaistva i krest'ianstva Rossii v nachale XX veka (Moscow: Akademiia nauk, SSSR, 1963), 579.

¹¹⁴ Dubrovskii, 576-579.

May 1914 to 1917 in Bobinskaia *volost* no more applications were submitted and the land captain and *volost skhod* even rejected one of the previous applications brought before it.¹¹⁵

State funds to encourage and help establish private farms dried up and the land settlement commission changed its focus to maximizing crop yield and increasing land put under the plow. It therefore promoted colonization and land improvement over individual farms.¹¹⁶ The Viatka Land Settlement Section sold state land (*kazennaia zemlia*) throughout the province to foster peasant resettlement. Even before the war, the state encouraged peasants to leave their commune and establish individual farms and villages in these areas. The war simply spurred on the state's resettlement projects. Peasants who wanted better land or opportunities accepted state resettlement policies.

Growing peasant resistance to separators and individual farmers during the war also helped persuade the Ministry of Agriculture in February 1916 to suspend the reform movement and limit land organization to cases in process. Communes and separators clashed over resources. In Bel'skaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd* members of the village Goglevskaia were angry about the amount of land that a recent separator consolidated

¹¹⁵ GAKO, f. 589, op. 1, d. 347, ll. 2-5, d. 394, ll. 4-5, 7-9.

¹¹⁶ Judith Pallot, Land Reform in Russia 1906-1917: Peasant Responses to Stolypin's Project of Rural Transformation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 8, fn. 14.

and attempted to force him back into the commune by felling his trees and refusing to provide him winter rye seed to sow. The separator turned to the land captain for help who went door to door to convince the villagers to help the separator, but most of the villagers categorically refused.¹¹⁷ The fact that peasants would be so explicit in their insubordination to a governmental power shows many peasants' continued vehemence against separators from the commune.

Peasant-separator conflicts over land boundaries and access to resources were endemic since the implementation of the reforms seven years earlier, but the war exacerbated tensions between the two parties.¹¹⁸ Some peasants in communes felt that separators, most of whom had larger families than the norm, were not as badly hurt from male conscription into the army as they had been. Added strain on grain and livestock made peasants even more guarded of disputed arable land, meadows, forests, and so forth. Moreover, separators did not have as certain support from local government officials. As seen in the above example, the land captain tried to help the separator, but could not, and did not, attempt to force the commune to acquiesce to the separator. The

¹¹⁷ GAKO, f. 582, op. 190, d. 6, ll. 21-22. In 1915 in Malmyzh *uezd*, peasants also seized the land for an entrance road to a separator's farmstead. A. N. Anfimov, Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v Rossii v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny, 488. See also GAKO, f. 714, op. 1, d. 1543, ll. 4950b for a case in Sarapul *uezd* in which peasants felled trees owned by a separator.

¹¹⁸ For pre-war commune-separator conflict in Viatka see RGIA, f. 1291, op. 121, d. 63, ll. 40, 54, 78.

state attempted to extract the most resources out of the population, and this meant that separator interest was often sacrificed to the national good.

Court records suggest that war also strained family relations. Household structures that adapted to the war were often filled with strife. Soldiers' wives who moved into their in-laws' home had to adjust to the new power relationship. As daughter-in-law, she was in an ambiguous relationship, below the head of the household, his wife, and her husband's siblings. The relations could turn violent. In Slobodskoi *uezd*, the head of a household (*khoziain*) murdered his daughter-in-law, a *soldatka*. He had refused to help her work her fields while her husband was at war. Although she still managed to work her household's land, the *khoziain* still demanded money from her, which she refused. Upon returning home one day, they fought and he killed her.¹¹⁹ Tension could also boil over when the husband died. Several *volost* and regional court cases involved inheritance disputes. As heads of households and future inheritors perished in the war, their relatives scrambled to claim their property. In Toromovskaia *volost*, Kotel'nich *uezd* Pelagiia Osipova and her son moved in with her in-laws when her husband went to the front. When he died, Pelagiia moved to her brother's but left her

¹¹⁹ GAKO, f. 582, op. 194, d. 6, ll. 1-1ob.

son. However, she insisted on inheriting her deceased husband's movable and immovable property, including his arable land and home. The *volost* and regional courts upheld her claim.¹²⁰

The Peasant War Economy

Scholars debate whether the war helped or hurt the peasant economy. Soviet scholars argued that state mobilization of young men and requisitioning of livestock and grain caused the rural economy to deteriorate. In this view, the war also increased the chasm between rich and poor peasants. It especially hurt poor peasants who could not recover from losing their male worker or last cow, while rich peasants and separators profited from state policies because they speculated on grain, hid grain stores and livestock, and due to their large families, did not suffer as much from losing manpower. Other scholars have argued that peasants profited from the war since they had surplus labor and livestock. The loss of livestock actually helped the rural economy because peasants had to sacrifice too much grain to feed their animals.¹²¹ I argue that the war added psychological and material constraints on the peasant economy, which increased tension both between peasant and state and peasant and peasant.

¹²⁰ GAKO, f. 584, op. 54, d. 275, unlisted. See also d. 288, 290.

¹²¹ Alexis N. Antsiferov, Alexander O. Bilimovich et al., Russian Agriculture during the War (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 116-141.

One of the most crucial issues during the war was food. Peasant-state relations revolved around peasants supplying grain and livestock to the army and urban areas. At the beginning of the war, however, the central government and military did not believe that food supply would be an issue in the war. They expected the war to be over within a few months and figured that since Russia had been a net exporter of grain, the country would be able to use its food production potential to its military advantage. The government joined forces with the zemstvo and allowed it to coordinate local purchase of grain.¹²²

In the first months of the war peasants, acting out of patriotic feelings, sold and donated their grain and livestock to the war effort. In Viatka, the government established points in larger villages for peasants to bring their grain for sale. In Vodozerskaia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd* in 1915, the state offered from 85 kopecks to one ruble per *pud* of oats and an additional five kopecks per *pud* for every *verst* peasants had to travel to deliver the

¹²² Peter Fraunholtz, "State Intervention and Local Control in Russia, 1917-1921: Grain Procurement Politics in Penza Province," (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 1998), 44-49. As Fraunholtz points out, the relationship between state and zemstvo and center and local was filled with tension and disrupted the efficacy of food supply programs. Scholars have focused much attention on food supply politics. Besides Fraunholtz see Lars Lih, Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914-1921 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); K. I. Zaitsev, N. V. Dolinsky, and S. S. Demosthenov, Food Supply in Russia During the World War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930); N. D. Kondrat'ev, Rynok khlebov i ego regulirovanie vo vremia voiny i revoliutsii (Moscow: Nauka, 1991).

food in a timely manner.¹²³ Many villages agreed to the price and sold thousands of *puds* of oats from their storage. Some villages even gave up almost all of their stored oats. Newspapers ran stories of villages conducting mass collections and donating hundreds of *puds* of grain, flour, flax, linen, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, beets, and other goods for the war effort.¹²⁴

Food supply policies did not work, however, and as the war went on, they became increasingly complex and convoluted. Government policies on food supply brought massive inflation as the military took most available goods, leaving little left over for the market. Prices of grain, kerosene, salt, tobacco, soap, matches, sugar, and other basic necessities skyrocketed. By the end of 1914, the price of rye increased forty percent in Sarapul *uezd*; between 1914 and 1917, sugar prices multiplied 27 times.¹²⁵ This inflation, along with the absence of goods to purchase and prohibition of alcohol, left the countryside awash in money. But the shortages of primary goods soon meant that by 1915, peasants did not have a concrete reason to sell their grain. The zemstvo and state also did not offer prices either to match speculator and open market prices on grain and primary goods, or even inflationary pressures. In the beginning of the 1916 grain

¹²³ GAKO, f. 976, op. 4, d. 206, l. 76.

¹²⁴ See for example, Viatskaia rech, January 1, 1915, p. 4.

¹²⁵ Sadakov, 56.

campaign, zemstvo officials in Nolinsk were offering 92 kopecks per *pud* of damp summer rye; one ruble, two kopecks for lower quality rye; and one ruble, seven kopecks for quality rye.¹²⁶ Yet peasants in the province calculated that it cost two rubles and twelve kopecks just to produce a *pud* of grain. Much of Viatka also suffered from poor weather that threatened the harvest, suggesting that the above calculation was even an underestimation.¹²⁷ Peasants of Viatka *uezd* complained in 1916 that the winter grains, barley, and oats were “very bad” and not suitable for planting as seed. They were left to petition the *uezd* zemstvo to send oats and barley for the winter planting.¹²⁸

Although peasants sold their grain and dipped into their stock in the first year of the war, in 1916 the food crisis, continued uncertainty about their future, and the government’s new compulsory requisitioning policy made many peasants balk at sacrificing grain. Viatka, like the rest of Russia, began a levy system in which the central government determined the amount of grain that a province needed to deliver and the provincial and local governments allocated levies to each *volost*. In December 1916 the land captain, *volost* elder and scribe, and ten guards came to Aleksandrovskii village, Smetaninskaia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd* to requisition oats. The villagers refused to deliver

¹²⁶ GAKO, f. 940, op. 1, d. 706, l. 40.

¹²⁷ Lih, 27.

¹²⁸ GAKO, f. 593, op. 1, d. 190, l. 46.

the oats, arguing that they had to supply their livestock and horses, so they did not have any surplus to give. The land captain tried to force his way into household grain storehouses (*ambars*). In the three households the land captain entered, he only found elderly women who claimed not to know where the key to the storehouse was located. The peasants resisted the land captain, who had to retreat for lack of forces. The Viatka governor later ordered an armed detachment to the village but prohibited bloodshed.¹²⁹ The villagers defended their resistance in a petition later that month. They argued that were willing to supply oats for the army and “respond to the needs of the fatherland,” (*otkiknut’sia k nuzhdam otechestva*) but they were living in a perilous state. The government would only pay one ruble, fifty kopecks per *pud* of oats, while they could get two rubles, thirty kopecks at the bazaar.¹³⁰ Even in the last months of the tsarist regime, peasants acknowledged their duty to the nation and their willingness to come to its aid. But the state’s seemingly incompetent grain policy, which paid uncompetitive prices, failed to supply primary goods, and finally relied on the threat of force, undercut the population’s patriotic sentiment.

Peasants gave resources to Russia’s army, but that did not mean that they supported the tsar. Peasants had their own independent political values and beliefs of

¹²⁹ Anfimov, *Krest’ianskoe dvizhenie*, 295-299. Lih, 49-50.

¹³⁰ Anfimov, *Krest’ianskoe dvizhenie*, 300-301.

what constituted the nation. Peasant resistance to state grain policies should also not be construed as peasant insularity. Peasants throughout the war stayed interested in national events and the situation at the front. They demanded news and literature about the war, continued to donate goods for soldiers and their families, and evoked the nation and patriotism in their petitions and resistance. Peasants refused to give grain because they felt they did not have much to spare. Moreover, peasants expressed exasperation with state policies and felt that they had sufficiently contributed to the war effort. For example, in refusing to give up oats, a peasant community wrote, “We are carrying out forced carting of firewood for the Izhevsk factories and deliver other obligations of demanded fodder, but there are not enough oats. The crops were bad due to the exhausted land and we gathered the harvest because there were not enough able-bodied male workers. This is why livestock and the population are starving.”¹³¹

At the end of 1916 to the collapse of the tsarist regime in February 1917, clashes between peasants and government brigades like the one above occurred in a number of locales.¹³² Women, and especially *soldatki*, often took the forefront in such resistance, defending their household. As Barbara Alpern Engel has shown in her analysis of

¹³¹ Sadakov, 63.

¹³² Anfimov, *Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie*, 511-512. In December 1916, two hundred peasants in Viatka *uezd* resisted state requisitioning of grain. In January-February 1917, several *volosts* throughout Viatka province resisted state attempts at grain requisitioning.

peasant protests, women took the lead in resistance when they perceived that the private sphere, a space which peasant women traditionally controlled, was under attack.¹³³ When grain requisitioning threatened the food supply, women resisted the state.

State taxes on the peasantry rose to meet military needs and rapid inflation, although so did nonpayment. Tax collectors reported that peasants were unable to pay their taxes because so many of them were at war. Some peasants simply refused to pay certain taxes. For example, in November 1916, peasants of Petrvoskaia *volost*, Urzhum *uezd* refused to pay zemstvo collections after hearing that the Ministry of the Interior freed from payment laboring peasant families with family members in the service.

However, once the local government explained that this rumor was not true, the peasants paid almost half of the required collections.¹³⁴ Peasants living in the southern districts, such as Urzhum and Malmyzh were the most adamant in refusing to pay zemstvo taxes.

As in peasant resistance to grain requisitioning, *soldatki* took the lead in refusing payment to the government. Peasants often refused to pay certain zemstvo fees that they

¹³³ Barbara Alpern Engel, "Women, Men, and the Languages of Peasant Resistance, 1870-1907"; Lynne Viola, "*Bab'i Bunty* and Peasant Women's Protest During Collectivization," in Russian Peasant Women, 189-205.

¹³⁴ GARF, f. 102, op. 1915, d. 167, part 17, l. 10ob. See also, Anfimov, Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie, 499; Karacharov, 57-59. Peasants of Novyi Burets village, Merinovskaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd* refused to pay taxes in 1915 and villages in Kuznetsovskaiia *volost*, Urzhum *uezd* refused to pay zemstvo collections in January 1916.

deemed to be unfair or excessive.¹³⁵ This was especially true in regions with a large non-Russian population, such as Urzhum and Malmyzh. The relationship between non-Russians and the zemstvo was usually filled with tension and suspicion. Non-Russians often saw zemstvo policy as an intrusive form of Russification, while the zemstvo had historically been either reluctant to dedicate scarce resources among people who often did not speak Russian, and when they did implement policies they were formed on their presumptions of national backwardness.

Conclusion

The war seized the traditional village, already under attack by market forces, and shook it forcefully until the nature of the village was completely rearranged. If in the summer of 1914 peasant men and women lived in a symbiotic, misogynist relationship, in which men dominated over women in a slowly changing but still traditional peasant society, then two years later the countryside was overwhelmingly women, elders, and children. In many villages, foreign prisoners, alien citizens, and refugees settled and lived alongside many peasants who had never been outside their locale.

The war was a catalyst for peasant nationalism and revolution. While the Imperial government had for so long resisted bringing peasants (and other estates) into

¹³⁵ Scott Seregny, "A Wager on the Peasantry: Anti-Zemstvo Riots, Adult Education and the Russian Village during World War One: Stavropol' Province," *Slavic and East European Review* 79 (January 2001): 91, 98.

the regime's rule as equal partners, total war forced the state to integrate the population into the national cause. Military conscription, labor mobilization, and peasant participation in local war efforts (such as providing crops and manufactured goods as well as housing displaced people) made peasants feel part of the nation's war. Even though the tsarist government officially continued its old, restrictive ideology of the tsar ruling over his subjects, popular participation in the war effort provided fertile soil for upcoming public discussion of the citizens' roles in the nation in 1917.

For the peasants, such integration would not have been possible without the previous years' advancements in official institutions that brought peasant, state, and society closer together. The very nature of the war effort increased peasant-state links, as the state demanded essential resources and gave back limited aid to soldiers' families. Zemstvo officials, traditionally the center's contentious ally in the countryside, rallied to help the nation and wholeheartedly acted as the essential link, furthering the ties between the state and its population. State mobilization and total war helped to create an environment that bred mass political activism. War brought popular peasant patriotism and even national sentiment to the forefront. Initially, it helped Russia's government utilize the country's resources. However, when food supplies began to dwindle, casualties mounted, and popular perceptions of the center's corruption and alienation from the people grew, peasant nationalism refused to support the tsarist government.

CHAPTER 3

A New Hope: Peasant Citizens and Rituals of Power

In April 1917 the Orlov *uezd* government ordered the Provisional Public Committee of Smirnovskaia *volost* to organize a public meeting of the *volost* population in nearby Verkhovskoe village (*selo*). Villagers were to parade to the Verkhovskoe church square. A short service and speech would follow, everyone would sing the Marseillaise, and then go in “solemn” (*torzhestvennyi*) procession to the school where the schoolmaster would give another speech. Following the oratory, the peasants were to sing revolutionary songs and proceed to the neighboring village of Vozhgaly, hear a speech yet again, and return to the Verkhovskoe church square. At the square would be “a short memorial service (*moleben*) for the combatants and those who have fallen in the struggle for freedom,” followed by another speech, a return march to the school accompanied by revolutionary songs, and then a final speech. The *volost* committee was ordered to distribute holiday programs of revolutionary songs and a newspaper printed for the occasion, as well as collect donations for families of those killed in battle. The government requested that the committee get the word out among the villages of the

volost. The village elder (*sel'skii starost*) and other people were to announce the holiday to the peasants and “the teacher, local priest, and other people” were supposed to teach the populace revolutionary songs such as the Marseillaise, Bravely Comrades Keep Together, the *Varshavianka*, and *Pokhoronnyi Marsh*.¹

Through ceremonies such as the one above, peasants and elites created and acted out their ideas of the new Russian nation following the February Revolution.² The February Revolution not only toppled the tsarist regime, it also initiated a re-invention of the Russian nation. In this chapter I discuss how both the local political elites (government administrators and officials, and the Third Element of doctors, lawyers, teachers, veterinarians, and so forth) and the peasants worked to build a new political world through the construction of new administrative bodies, new symbolic holidays, festivals, and ceremonies, and a new discourse surrounding these activities. At the center of this world was a complex debate on citizenship. Provisional Government representatives presented citizenship to be a guaranteed right to political freedom and participation that carried with it duties and obligations for the good of the nation.

¹ GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 22, l. 18.

² On nationalism as a constructed concept, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso: New York, 1991); and E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

The actions of the Provisional Government administrators in Viatka province show that their rigid, liberal image of the peasants as the dark masses was a large factor in the destruction of the Provisional Government.³ Rather than seeing the Provisional Government as an opportunity missed, I argue that the new administration is an example of failed nationalism.⁴ Local Viatka elites during the Provisional Government saw themselves as full participants and citizens in a national project. They worried about the peasantry's role in creating a new Russia, however. The administrators were reluctant to allow Russian, and especially non-Russian, peasants equal access to the process of creating a new state. Elites tried to dictate to the peasantry the definition of citizenship and created obstacles of obligatory cultural enlightenment in order for the peasant

³ Official actions, ceremonies, and decrees uniformly reflected this liberal image of the peasantry, despite the large ideological differences among the political parties.

⁴ Most western scholars see the Provisional Government rule from February to October 1917 as a tragic event--Russia's failed attempt at liberal parliamentary democracy. They attribute the Provisional Government's failure to a limited number of factors, many of which were out of the new rulers' control: Russia's lack of parliamentary traditions, an almost nonexistent civil society, and a low "level of education and material wellbeing among the peasantry," to name but a few. Scholars do admit that the new government committed political suicide through its failure to solve Russia's main problems--an end to the disastrous war, the need for a major land reform, and an unstable supply of food and provisions to the population. Nevertheless, many western historians argue that the main problem of the Provisional Government was its self-image as a temporary government, to be in power until the convocation of a constituent assembly elected by the people. While the above factors may be true, the actions of the Provisional Government administrators in Viatka province show that their self-consciousness and rigid, liberal image of the peasants as the dark masses was as large a factor as those mentioned above in the destruction of the Provisional Government. See Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*; W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-21*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 459; and S. G. Wheatcroft, "Black Bread and Sour Grapes: Pipes and Figs, and the 'Classical' and Revisionist' Histories of the Russian Revolution," *Slavic and East European Studies* 11, no. 1/2 (1997): 211-227.

population to become valid citizens. They therefore denied any peasant transformation of the meaning of the Revolution and the nation, thereby making their own political domination short-lived and fleeting.⁵

The peasants, for their part, were eager to be full citizens and play a major role in the new reconstruction of the nation. Peasants concerned themselves with more than just the land question in 1917. As several scholars have recently shown, during the Revolution, Russia's peasantry behaved in a rational manner defending a complex peasant economy and local interests.⁶ Even more than that, I argue, peasants moved to be active political participants in the Russian nation's re-invention. As shown in the previous chapter, nascent popular Russian nationalism certainly existed before 1917. The overthrow of the Tsar made elites and peasants transform and redefine the symbols of the Russian nation. Although peasants accepted the local elites' liberal image of the nation, peasants' conception of citizenship as guaranteeing equal membership in nation was incongruous with Provisional Government officials' ideals.

⁵ For more on the peasant transformations of codes of nationalist agitation and the relationship between peasant politics and nationalism see Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and its Fragments (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), ch. 8 and especially p. 160.

⁶ See for example the seminal works of A. D. Maliavskii, Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v Rossii v 1917 g. mart-oktiabr (Moscow: Nauka, 1981); and V. V. Kabanov, Krest'ianskoe khoziaistvo v usloviakh 'voennogo komunizma'. While both monographs stay within the Marxist framework of class analysis, they show the peasantry as having a more recondite understanding of the political environment and their self interests, as well as greater assertiveness in local political issues than previous Soviet scholars had argued.

Freedom and Order

Orlando Figes writes about the February Revolution in Petrograd that, “Symbols of the old state power were destroyed. Tsarist statues were smashed or beheaded..... Police stations, court houses, and prisons were attacked. The crowd exacted a violent revenge against the officials of the old regime. Policemen were hunted down, lynched and killed brutally.”⁷ Clearly, violence reigned in the urban capital. In striking contrast, the end of the tsarist regime in Viatka Province did not constitute an immediate, violent break from the old ways. While the peasantry rejoiced at their new freedom, they immediately set out to construct a new political order in the countryside. They did so rationally, with almost no instances of disorder. Peasants by and large did not try to destroy traditional signs of authority. This was clearly not “turning things upside down.”

The new Provisional Government arranged to keep the peace in the countryside. From its inception, the new regime was obsessed with order and did everything in its power to keep the peasants in line and to make them as rapidly as possible into good citizens of the nation. On March 6, the Petrograd Provisional Government sent a telegram to the Viatka provincial administration, calling on it to “assign the most serious significance” to establishing order within the country.⁸ Like the tsarist regime at the

⁷ Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 322.

⁸ GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 1, l. 4.

beginning of World War I, the specter of peasant rebellion haunted the “consciousness of the dominant classes” at the beginning of the Provisional Government, shaping their forms of “exercise of domination.”⁹

News of the events in Petrograd traveled fast. The first rumors of the Petrograd strikes arrived almost immediately in Viatka, on February 25, and official news came to the city of Viatka via telegraph and the railroad on the night of February 27-28 and to the city of Urzhum on February 28.¹⁰ The telegram carrying the announcement of the abdication of the Tsar arrived in Viatka on the night of March 2.¹¹ The news spread quickly, albeit unevenly, across the province and to the villages. By mid-March virtually all villages had heard of the end of the Romanov dynasty. Despite the fears of both

⁹ Chatterjee, 171.

¹⁰ Iu. N. Timkin, “1917 god: Ot revoliutsii po telegrafu k revoliutsii na shtykakh,” Entsiklopediia zemli Viatskoi, t. 4, Istoriia (Kirov: Oblastnaia pístael'skaia organizatsiia administratsiia Kirovskoi Oblasti Viatskaia Torgovo-Promyshlennaia palata, 1995), 337; and Iu. N. Timkin, Smutnoe vremia na Viatke. Obshchestvenno-politicheskoe razvitie Viatskoi gubernii vesnoi 1917-osen'iu 1918 gg. Uchebnoe posobie (Kirov: Viatskii Gosudarstvennyi Pedagogicheskii Universitet, 1998), 6.

¹¹ Report of head of Viatka Gubispolkom (provincial executive committee) on the events of February 1917 in the city of Viatka (October 31, 1917), Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii. Sbornik dokumentov, 90-91.

provincial administrators loyal to the Tsar and those loyal to the new Provisional Government, the news of the Tsar's abdication and the transition to a new government proceeded peacefully.¹²

Most accounts describe general gatherings (*obshchie sobraniia*) or crowded meetings of villagers coming together at the *volost* center to discuss and become involved in the current national political situation. From the very beginning, the peasantry of Viatka overwhelmingly acted with cautious exuberance and embraced the new national republican rhetoric and ideals. One peasant described the scene in his village of Elgan, in Glazov *uezd*. “In our backwater village (*glukhoe selo*), the first sign of the events in Petrograd came from soldiers” arriving on leave. They found out about the abdication on March 5 and on March 7, the local intelligentsia organized a *volost* gathering (*sobranie*), attended by hundred people gathered, half of whom were women and soldiers. Villagers had heard rumors of the events, but now were read the manifesto of the abdication of the Tsar and Grand Duke Mikhail. After this, the priest explained how significant it was to the people (*narod*) and told them that “fate is in your hands.” An orator told the citizens

¹² There is strong evidence that tsarist officers, such as the governor of Viatka, N. A. Rudnev and the vice governor P. P. Kandirov attempted to keep the events in Petrograd a secret. News of unrest was not published until March 2. Soviet scholars have made a point to note this counter-revolutionary action. See Sadyrina, *Oktiabr v Viatksoi gubernii*, 36-37; and the memoir of the Bolshevik A. P. Kuchkin in *Za vlast soveto: Sbornik vospominanii starykh bol'shevikov--chastnikov Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii i grazhdanskoi voiny v Viatskoi gubernii*, V. D. Letiagin et al., eds. (Kirov: Kirovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1957), 9.

to keep order and be calm. The “citizens” answered with a huge cheer, “ura,” in honor of free Russia. Many people, it was reported, had tears in their eyes. The following week, the village celebrated with a holiday of “freedom and collection,” during which they erected a podium, presumably to hear speeches, while “red flags happily and proudly flew over head.” The villagers collected over 110 rubles for the families who had members killed “fighting for freedom.” On March 28, the village had another assembly, attended by over five hundred people, where they elected *volost* officers and resolved to fight the brewing of *kumyshka*, a type of moonshine.¹³

Most gatherings welcomed the Provisional Government and often called on them to improve their material well being and to convene the Constituent Assembly as soon as possible. The *volost skhod* in Stulovskaia *volost*, Slobodskoi *uezd* sent a *prigovor* on 14 March to the Provisional Government in Petrograd. The *skhod* immediately recognized the new regime and asked about peasant rights to elections to a land gathering.¹⁴ The *volost skhod* in Iangulovskaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd* called on the Provisional Government leader Prince L'vov not only to call the Constituent Assembly, but also to better their desperate situation. Reflecting traditional peasant-elite relations, the

¹³ “Velikie dni svobody v s. Elgan, Glavoskom *uezde*,” Krestianskaia gazeta Viatskago gubernskago zemstva, April 21, 1917, pp. 15-16.

¹⁴ GARF, f. 1788, op. 2, d. 91, ll. 194-195ob. See also a telegram to the Petrograd Soviet from Buiskaia *volost*, Urzhum *uezd* from 1 May 1917, Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 119.

Iangulovsk peasants emphasized their poverty. The population of the *volost* “suffer extremely without forest materials. There are no forests nearby and in light of this, the population every year is in great need of fuel.” They continued to explain that they had no money to buy wood and only got by through using straw, which only lasts half of the winter. Some of the villages only had 3/4 of a *desiatin* of land per soul, which did not provide sufficient grain to feed their families. The villagers emphasized their anxiety and fear for their livelihood and the future. As “free and law-abiding citizens,” they asked the Provisional Government to allow them access to public land.¹⁵ Indeed, as discussed below, the phrase “free and law-abiding citizens” was often repeated by peasants writing into the newspapers in the first months of the Revolution.

From its inception, the Provisional Government presented itself to the peasantry as a liberal, elite government. They showed their leitmotifs in their first symbols and rhetoric surrounding the new regime. Government representatives broadcast themes of freedom (*svoboda*), national identity, and citizenship to the peasantry, and the peasants picked them up and integrated them into their everyday life.

The rural intelligentsia acted as the mediator of the national information in the beginning days of the Provisional Government. It played a crucial role in bearing the news of the political events and explaining the significance of what had taken place in the

¹⁵ Malmyzhskaia zhizn, April 29, 1917, p. 3.

capital. Since the rural intelligentsia was literate and held a unique position among the peasants as their established link to the outside political and cultural world, the peasantry often trustingly turned to them in the first month of the Revolution for news. This trust, as discussed below, would not last. On March 10, In Pishchal'myi village, Orlov *uezd* the peasants had a “crowded *volost* meeting in which the *uezd* agronomist read the manifesto about the abdication” and the establishment of the Provisional Government. The agronomist “tried to explain to the meeting the significance of the revolution (*perevorot*). He explained the it was the duty (*dolg*) of everyone to maintain tranquility and to do all measures to help the Provisional Government in the elimination of the remaining legacy of the old order.”¹⁶

In a manner reminiscent of the emancipation from serfdom, and indeed most significant imperial decrees, many of the gatherings to hear about the Tsar's abdication were linked to religion.¹⁷ Peasants were gathered on a Sunday (March 12) in the church. While this may in part have been a logistical concern, due to the exceptional numbers of people who turned out to hear the news, the peasantry could not have missed the link between “the spiritual authority of the Church,” and their responsibilities under the new

¹⁶ Krest'ianskaia gazeta, 11 April 1917, p. 10.

¹⁷ For the tsarist government's use of the moral significance of the church in 1861, see Daniel Field, “The Year of Jubilee,” in Russia's Great Reforms, 1855-1881, Ben Eklof, John Bushnell, and Larissa Zakharova, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 40-57.

regime. For example, in Nikuliat *selo*, the peasants first heard the liturgy and then were read the manifesto of the Tsar's abdication.¹⁸ Clearly the local administration, while offering the peasantry a new notion of political freedom, used the same symbolic reference point in the Church as the old tsarist regime. The Provisional Government transferred the Church's sacralization of local tsarist authority and power to themselves.¹⁹ The state's melding of spiritual authority and citizenship would continue throughout its reign.

Peasants and regional officials acted immediately to establish new administrative bodies. Sometimes the impetus came from the *uezd* level, which had already established Committees for Public Safety.²⁰ For example, on March 6, in Orlov *uezd*, the *uezd* zemstvo administration (*zemskaia uprava*) instructed the *volosts* to establish provisional public committees (*vremennye obshchestvennye komitety*) which would mirror the newly established government in the city. Interestingly, the announcement came fully two

¹⁸ Krest'ianskaia gazeta, April 11, 1917, p. 11. The phrase "spiritual authority of the Church" comes from Jeffrey Brooks in When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). David Moon discusses Brooks in regard to peasant citizenship in "Peasants into Russian Citizens? A Comparative Perspective," Revolutionary Russia 9 (June 1996): 47.

¹⁹ For the role of religion in sacralizing the authority of the rural elite see Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 33-4.

²⁰ Viatka *uezd* established a Committee for Public Safety on 4 March, Glazov on March 6, Kotel'nich on March 9, Urzhum on March 3, Orlov on March 4, Nolinsk on March 7. L. A. Obukhov, "Vopros o vlasti na mestakh posle fevral'skoi revoliutsii (Po materialam Viatskoi gubernii)," in Istoriia i kul'tura Volgo-Viatskogo Kraia (K 90-letiu Viatskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii) (Kirov: Volgo-Viatksoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo Kirovskoe otdelenie, 1994), 224-26.

weeks before the March 20 Provisional Government instruction to the *uezd* commissars to immediately organize *volost* committees, showing that the political strength lay in the *uezd* level during the early days of the Revolution.²¹ The *volost* committees were to help deal with the new government's three largest concerns: maintenance of order, creation of peasant citizens, and continuation of the supply of food to the cities and army. The committees were to appoint police and a people's militia, implement measures toward guarding order and peace, make certain that the people continued to work, and instruct the population about all-important matters. Other *uezd* governments later announced similar instructions for their *volosts*.²² The peasants acted quickly and the transition by almost all accounts was exceptionally smooth. In May, the Viatka provincial commissar reported to the Ministry of Internal Affairs that, "Power in the localities is organizing itself with fair success and at the present time almost everywhere has a people's militia."²³ By June 1, most *volosts* had executive committees (*ispolkoms*).²⁴

²¹ The Zemstvo Section of the Ministry of the Interior empowered the provincial commissars, through the *uezd* commissars, to organize *volost* committees. Robert Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky, eds. and comps. The Russian Provisional Government 1917 Documents, vol. 1 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 244. Most historians argue that political power lay in the *volost*, rather than the *uezd*.

²² GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 6-6ob. GARF, f. 1788, op. 2, d. 64, ll. 13-14ob discusses instructions for *volispolkoms* (*volost* executive committees) in Viatka *uezd*. These instructions were even more detailed than in Orlov *uezd*.

²³ GARF, f. 1788, op. 2, d. 91, l. 36ob. For more on the people's militia in Viatka, see A. V. Sedov, "Narodnaia militsiia Viatskoi gubernii v 1917 g.," in Viatskaia zemlia v proshlom i nastoiashchem (k 125-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia P. N. Luppova). Tezisy dokladov i soobshchenii II nauchnoi konferentsii, t. I, A. G. Balyberdin et al, eds. (Kirov: Kirovskii gospedinstitut, 1992), 128-130.

Villages elected local intellectuals and especially respected peasants to be the new heads of the *volost* committees. The number of members in the committees varied among *volosts*. For example in Viatka *uezd*, Prosnitskaia *volost*, six people sat on the *volost* ispolkom (volispolkom), while in Nagorskaia *volost* 28 people were on the volispolkom.²⁵ It appears that peasants gathered in village and *volost skhods*, discussed the political situation, and elected the local heads of government.

The transfer of power often went smoothly, but occasionally the peasants took the opportunity to show their frustration with the old regime. In Nolinsk *uezd*, Semerikovskaia *volost*, peasants on their own initiative elected a new *volost starshina*. Some peasants after the elections arrested the former *starshina* and “gave him a beating.” After the volispolkom investigated the incident, they arrested a member of the zemstvo administration.²⁶ Many peasant communities also quickly disposed of those officers that they deemed to be oppressive.

The new peasant government was not without problems, however. It lacked a wide pool of competent individuals who had not been tainted by service during the tsarist administration. The villages only selected males to administrative posts and the war had

²⁴ GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 21. For example, 32 were organized in Malmyzh *uezd*, 15 in Glazov *uezd*, 25 in Nolinsk *uezd*, and in every *volost* of Slobodskoi *uezd*.

²⁵ GARF, f. 1788, op. 2, d. 64, l. 12ob.

²⁶ GAKO, f. 582, op. 194, d. 8, l. 8ob.

already depleted the pool of potential applicants.²⁷ Moreover, revolution did not always mean that new people took over. In some *volosts*, the commissars and *starostas* refused to give up their posts and in other *volosts*, the peasants would not get rid of their tsarist commissars, re-electing them to their positions. The peasants were not the only ones to have administrative difficulties. The Viatka Provisional Government's *uezd* and local militia retained tsarist administrative officials who were unruly and uneducated and had insufficient personnel to maintain order.²⁸

The dialogue between peasant and state administrators over how best to establish the new state and keep order in the village shows the fundamental divergence in ideas of citizenship and peasant political participation. For example, in Vodozerskaia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd*, representatives from the *volost* governments met with the *uezd* administration. The representatives expressed concern that the new government was not allocating sufficient personnel to maintain peace in the countryside. A peasant asked, “whether one *starosta* will be able to cope with order in all of the *volost*, since in

²⁷ See for example, GAKO, f. 976, op. 4, d. 248, l. 22.

²⁸ GARF, f. 1791, op. 7, d. 43; and f. 1791, op. 7, d. 25, ll. 74ob-75. Due to the shortage of horses and fodder, there could only be one policeman on horseback in each *volost*.

previous times the village policeman (*uriadnik*) had aides with him in the person of guards (*strazhnik*), but the *volost starostas* will not have such aides.” The administrator answered that it was enough before, it will be enough now.²⁹

Peasants were especially concerned with maintaining order in the countryside through the establishment of official bodies. The elites, in contrast, focused on obtaining order by creating ideal peasant citizens who would know the proper ways to act. In Vodozersk, the *uezd* administration proposed to mobilize the local intelligentsia to teach the peasants how to be good law abiding citizens. Teachers and students would, “explain to the semi-literate peasants the rights of citizenship.” The administration planned to have students in the local schools descend on the villages during Passion Week and engage the “dark people” (the peasantry) in general discussions about current events.³⁰ The local state hoped that education could end the ignorance of the peasantry and make them into good, law-abiding citizens.

Many scholars argue that the peasants saw the end of the tsarist regime as an opportunity to free themselves from the traditionally oppressive order. In their view, the old order disintegrated and “peasants in all villages embarked on the same broad path, that of rejecting the authority of the formal administration and of establishing an

²⁹ GAKO, f. 976, op. 4, d. 248, ll. 22-23.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 22.

authority of their own.”³¹ Historians even argue that the peasants longed to rid themselves of all outside interference in their society, to obtain the mythical dream of complete freedom, or *volia*. While the peasants of Viatka did attempt to reorder the political establishment to fit better their views of a just relationship with the state, peasants overall did little to indicate that they wanted a complete break with the outside world. Villages continued communication with the higher-level authorities and took many of their cues to establish village and especially *volost* governing bodies from the *uezd* and province-level government. Peasants showed themselves to be complex political actors driven by a peasant consciousness in which they traditionally identified themselves as subalterns in the political community, but now understood that they had the opportunity and rights to become full members in the newly reinvented political community.³²

Scholars’ belief that the peasantry sought out *volia* (complete freedom from outside interference) reveals not only preconceived notions of the peasant mentality, but also shows a restricted view of how the peasantry would understand the concept of citizenship. The term citizen, *grazhdanin*, “spread throughout the countryside” during

³¹ Graeme J. Gill, Peasants and Government in the Russian Revolution, 29. Moon gives a more nuanced version of this in “Peasants into Russian Citizens?,” 73-4.

³² Ranajit Guha provides the definition of peasant consciousness as an understanding and identification of oneself as subaltern in the political community, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency, 18-20.

1917.³³ Peasants saw the term in newspapers, on posters, in government propaganda, and presumably heard it on the streets. The word citizen was part and parcel with the Revolution. The heads of the Provisional Government agreed that all the peoples in Russia were citizens of the Russian nation. The provincial elites further reinforced the idea by freely splattering newspaper articles with the term and addressing all of their appeals to the “citizens” of Russia.

Clearly, though, educated Russian society’s own identification of the peasantry molded their views on peasant citizenship. Educated society saw Russian peasants as suffering from moral decline, dirty squalor, ignorance and no education, and a simple lack of culture.³⁴ Such negative images of the peasantry were incongruous with democratic ideas of citizenship--that is, that all citizens are equal members of the political community.³⁵

Through their newspaper articles, pronouncements, ceremonies, and speeches, the rural Provisional Government elites expressed and tried to establish different terms of

³³ Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii, Interpreting the Russian Revolution. The Language and Symbols of 1917 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 141. This is from the fifth chapter, “The Language of the Revolution in the Village,” which is a reprint of Figes’ article “The Russian Revolution and its Language in the Village,” The Russian Review 56 (July 1997): 323-345. *Grazhdanka* is the feminine form of citizen.

³⁴ For an excellent account of educated Russia’s views on peasants as regards to rural crime, see Frank, Crime, Cultural Conflict, and Justice in Rural Russia, esp. chapters one and nine. See also Frierson, Peasant Icons.

citizenship for the peasantry. Peasants were supposed to feel a unified tie to the new liberal Russian nation. Russian elites pointed out time and again, as noted by the agronomist above, that coinciding with freedom was a duty (*dolg*) to the nation. Peasants must keep order, raise their cultural level through education and public organizations, refrain from alcohol, seek spiritual fulfillment through the church, respect private property, and especially continue the war effort. These duties mirrored the elites' fears of anarchy (in part from the legacy of the 1905 Revolution) and cultural understandings of the Russian peasantry. In a seeming contradiction between the new government's liberation of all the peoples from the legally hierarchical *soslovie* system, local elites attempted to continue a paternalistic, extra-legal cultural and political hierarchy. While granting freedom to the people, educated Russia was still imposing a hegemonic, constricting discourse that was attempting to make the peasants into subaltern citizens.³⁶

Many peasants, for their part, quickly adopted the term "citizen" and used it in petitions and letters to newspapers. Use does not always constitute understanding. Did the peasantry understand the term citizen to be an equal member of the state, or did they view citizenship differently than the elites? Figes argues that the peasantry did not see

³⁵ See Joshua Sanborn's dissertation, "Drafting the Nation," for a discussion of the transition from subjects to citizens in the late-tsarist period, esp. 12.

³⁶ I have used Elizabeth Thompson's Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) as a starting off point for a discussion of a hierarchy of citizenship and its relationship to the civic order.

citizenship as equal rights for everyone, since the peasants acted against non-peasant groups in 1917. Instead, according to him, peasants viewed citizenship in a traditional-family based notion that did not go beyond the village borders.³⁷ Figes argues for a closed and limited definition of citizenship as egalitarian membership in society. The peasantry, in his view, could not understand the complex modern political terms and mutated them into peasant-talk.

The peasantry in Viatka appear to have understood how the elite discussed and defined the ideas of citizenship. The population accepted parts of it, such as the right to national political participation and the need for education, but rejected or ignored other elements of the elites' definition, such as the obligation to sacrifice unjust amounts of grain to the army and metropole. The peasantry engaged the national project and helped to create a new Russian citizen.

Rituals of Power, Rituals of Citizenship

Soon after the Tsar's abdication, local elites of the Provisional Government began to conduct rituals of power in the countryside like the one that began this chapter.³⁸

³⁷ Figes and Kolonitskii, 141-144. Gill takes it one step further in his discussion of how the peasants understood news from the capital, by arguing that the peasants possessed "only very limited capacity to think and generalise in the abstract," 31.

³⁸ On ceremonies and festivals in the urban environment under the Provisional Government, see Richard Stites, "The Origins of Soviet Ritual Style: Symbol and Festival in the Russian Revolution," in Symbols of Power. The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Claes Arvidsson and Lars erik Blomqvist, eds. (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wksell International, 1987), 23-28; and James von

These events, including holidays, festivals, and lectures, were all ceremonies in a larger mass discussion over the terms of citizenship and nationalism. The ceremonies were intertwined with the establishment of reorganized local bodies of authority, the campaign to build a tutorial system between the local intelligentsia and the peasantry, and a larger idea of shaping the peasant citizen. The organizers of the events had several goals, including solidifying their claims of political legitimacy, presenting new values and a mythological system, establishing order, and guaranteeing a supply of resources to fight the war.

The powerful used ceremonies and festivities to mediate the transition from tsarist despotism to democratic freedom and to establish their claims to be legitimate dominators over the peasantry.³⁹ While some rural communities, like Elgan village, organized their own general celebrations soon after they heard the news of the Tsar's abdication, local elites directed consequent festivals. The first ceremonies appeared already in April and centered around the Holiday of the Revolution (*prazdnik revoliutsii*) on April 30, 1917. Significant public gatherings were crucial events for controlling the public discourse

Geldern, Bolshevik Festivals, 1917-1920, Studies on the History of Society and Culture, Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), ch. 1. For an excellent examination on the precursors to revolutionary ceremonies, see the two-volume work by Richard S. Wortman, Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995 and 2000).

³⁹ James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 11.

about the Revolution and its meaning. For it was there that the elites could act as the narrators of their newly written master fiction. Only two months after it assumed power, the Provisional Government began to memorialize and control the popular understanding of its revolution. Holidays and accompanying ceremonies served to invent new understandings of the Russian nation and to customize old signs and symbols to shape a new nationalist discourse.

The peasantry had lived in a world that legitimized their subaltern role in society through rituals that sacralized the Tsar. The February Revolution had upset these traditional modes of domination. The new governing elite now had to find symbols that would resonate with the peasants and legitimize their own rule. The local intelligentsia used holidays and ceremonies to appropriate “the field of production and the field of cultural production, which tend to assure their own reproduction by their very functioning, independently of any deliberate intervention by the agents.”⁴⁰ In the ceremonies, the elites used symbols that looked both forward, to a modern liberal democratic nation, and backward, to the tsarist system, to establish their own legitimacy.

⁴⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, 184.

A ceremony, as James Scott writes, is, “the *self*-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen.”⁴¹ The Provisional Government had a different value system than the tsarist regime and needed to portray these values to the populace. When the Duma, and later the Soviet, in Petrograd took the state helm and declared victory over the tsarist regime, they based their actions on a complex value system. The Provisional Government saw itself as “the triumph of liberal, reform Russia over autocratic Russia, setting the country firmly on the road to parliamentary democracy and moderate social reform.”⁴² Some of the Provisional Government’s first orders ended the institutionalized inequality of the *sosvlovie* system and committed the government to establishing popular rule.

In Viatka, official announcements, celebrations, and holidays described these points to the peasantry. The new regime legitimized its rule through plebian ideas of citizenship, that all the peasants were citizens of Russia. With citizenship came freedom and democracy. Citizenship guaranteed that peasants could participate in government and society. A key segment of social interaction that the government made a commitment to was education and raising the cultural level of its people. Yet underlying citizenship’s benefits were major obligations. The Provisional Government’s rituals of

⁴¹ Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance, 18.

⁴² Rex A. Wade, The Russian Revolution 1917 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 53-54.

peasant citizenship combined the myth of popular participation with strict regimentation. Local elites strove to control the political symbols of the new era.

The rural festivals differed greatly from those in Petrograd. Lacking the symbolic revolutionary spaces (like in front of the Kazan Cathedral and the Tauride Palace) and the fervor of the fall of the Tsar, Viatka was left to create its own. Whereas in Petrograd, the Revolution “was theatricalized and relived in numerous city and district festivals,” and even the “burial of the victims of the February Revolution was a significant symbolic victory for the new order,”⁴³ local political and cultural elites told the Viatka population in concrete terms how to celebrate and to what obligations they now had to look forward.

The text of the holiday in Smirnovskaia *volost*, and its replication throughout the province, reveals the mentality of the Provisional Government towards its peasant citizens. It simultaneously combined mass participation that was the promise of February Revolution with regimented tutelage that the new local elite (local zemstvo officials and the Third Element) believed should be the agenda of the new regime.

Holidays by their nature are a time outside of the normal time--a period reserved for relaxation and revelry. The celebrations in 1917 were enjoyable events. Newspaper accounts of May Day 1917 write that peasants celebrated for the first time in their lives. Church bells rang and villages were decorated with striking red ribbons and flags.

⁴³ Figes and Kolonitskii, Interpreting the Russian Revolution, 45 and 47.

Accounts report that banners flew proclaiming “Welcome the democratic republic” and “land and freedom” (*zemlia i volia*).⁴⁴ Huge numbers of peasants, sometimes numbering in the thousands, came willingly and participated in these celebrations. This is especially significant in May and June, when many peasants were busy in the fields.

In each village, the celebration contained the trinity of freedom, education, and religion. Ishlyk village had a children’s holiday in the zemstvo school on April 30 to celebrate the Revolution. The classroom was decorated in green, with flags and placards reading “Glory to the sacred work” (*slava sviatomu trudu*), “Freedom--the good fortune of Russia,” and “May the memory of those killed fighting for freedom live forever.” Before a service, the local priest, O. A. Zavarin gave a sermon to the children and parents about the new sacred life in a free Russia.⁴⁵

Peasant tradition would not consider the holidays festive, however. The above schedule did not have room for games, dancing, drink, and food. Instead, the elite wanted the peasants to attend church, learn new songs, and then go to school. The holiday in Smirnovskaia *volost* capsulizes the conflicting images of citizenship and the hopes of the new regime by the peasants and local elites. The holiday rituals around Viatka province in 1917 were formulaic. Newspaper accounts of the Holiday of the

⁴⁴ Krest’ianskaia gazeta, April 18, 1917, p. 11; May 16, 1917, pp. 10-11; and May 19, 1917, p. 11.

⁴⁵ “Korrespondentsii,” Kukarskaia zhizn, May 7, 1917, p. 2.

Revolution, May Day, Easter, the Holiday of Freedom, and so forth reveal that celebrations invariably included speeches by the local priest and teacher explaining to the peasants how to act and the significance of the regime.

During the holidays, the combination of religion and education dominated the cultural signs. On the one hand, it is surprising that the church became intimately involved in celebrations of the Revolution. Scholars have traditionally cast the church as a bastion of conservatism and the handmaiden to the tsarist state. This is partly true. Some Viatka parish clergy showed themselves to be adamant monarchists. Moreover, as discussed in the previous chapter, the church was influential in the war effort, prompting peasants to sacrifice foodstuffs and money and organizing state and private resources. The rural church's relationship to the revolution, state, and populace appears to be more complicated than acting simply as the handmaiden of the state.⁴⁶ In the late tsarist period, there was a strong clerical movement for radical social reforms that paralleled the popular dreams of the Provisional Government. After the abdication of the Tsar, the rural church continued its age-old quest for cultural and spiritual order. It also maintained its role as a conduit for the war effort. The church continued to keep its peasant congregation in line, regardless of the new political leaders.

⁴⁶ See Gregory Freeze, "Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 36 (January 1985): 82-102.

Many *volosts* celebrated the Holiday of the Revolution on April 30, the day before May Day and, not coincidentally a Sunday. Weekly mass was amplified into a full holiday service and celebration. Huge numbers of peasants flocked to the liturgy (*obednia*), followed by a church service and then a memorial service for those fallen, either in the struggle for freedom in February and March or those fighting in the war. Marches resembled religious processions. In the ceremonies of revolution, local elites signified that the new power came from the people and their participation in the state. Elites at the same time looked backwards, attempting to gain legitimacy from divine sanction.⁴⁷ The elites and the church had created a trinity of religion, patriotism, and the war effort. In doing so, they established contradictory symbols of the pre-modern divine rule and the modern, nation state.

Peasants also used religious events for their own good. During the congregation on Easter, many peasants began the process of political organization. Many *volosts* formed Peasant Unions (discussed below) and used the opportunity of the sheer number of people gathered for the holiday for their own advantage. During the summer festivals, peasants gathered information about national politics, organised peasant voting coalitions for the zemstva elections, and strengthened local organisations. For example, in late July,

⁴⁷ Ronald G. Suny notes the shift in European politics from legitimizing one's rule through divine to plebian in "Nationalities in the Russian Empire," *The Russian Review* 59 (October 2000): 488.

peasants in Il'inskaia *volost* celebrated the holiday of their patron saint, Il'ia. At the gathering, the local teacher gave a lecture to both male and female peasants on the national political atmosphere and the situation at the front.⁴⁸

Peasants' education and cultural development were integral to the discourse surrounding citizenship. As seen in the opening celebration, festivals of Russia's new freedom physically centred around the school. The ceremonies reinforced the metaphor of education through the prominent role of the teacher. Village instructors often gave general speeches on the current moment and lectures on topics which they believed should concern the peasantry. They also taught the population, through revolutionary songs, how to communicate in the new revolutionary age. In Slobodskoi *uezd*, 3000 peasants celebrated the holiday of the Revolution by attending a mass at the village square. They sang revolutionary songs and heard the local doctor speak about buying bonds of freedom. The crowd proceeded to the school, where an arch had been built. On one side of the arch read, "learning is enlightenment, and ignorance is darkness," on the other side was written, "Welcome universal, free education." Amidst this backdrop, the teacher gave a speech about the need for education.⁴⁹ The local elites equated the Revolution with spiritual and intellectual enlightenment. The prominent role of

⁴⁸ "Korrespondentsii," Kukarskaia zhizn, July 30, 1917, p. 2

⁴⁹ Krest'ianskaia gazeta, June 6, 1917, p. 11.

education and religion in revolutionary citizenship show that the local Provisional Government elites attempted to shape and control the imagination of the peasantry.⁵⁰

The peasants supported the elite's emphasis on education in order to gain additional resources for their villages. Peasants attended and participated in the celebrations focusing on the schools. They also adopted and used elite rhetoric on educational enlightenment and cultural development. Peasants often tried to get the new government to repair or build a school in their village. For example, peasants in Petropavlovskaiia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd* had a meeting in which they unanimously supported the democratic republic of Russia and demanded the immediate opening of a school and reading hut in their area so their children would have "the ability to enter a new life as enlightened citizens."⁵¹

Education also served as a medium through which the population discussed the role of non-Russians in the Revolution. Intellectuals used the political transformation as an opportunity to stress their long-standing argument that non-Russian peasants needed general education. Russian cultural elites saw non-Russian peasants as a magnification of the Russian peasantry's ills. For example, as discussed in Chapter One, ethnographers

⁵⁰ Teachers had a history of revolutionary activity in the countryside. See Seregny, Russian Teachers and Peasant Revolution.

⁵¹ "Korespondentsii," Kukarskaia zhizn, May 11, 1917, p. 2.

described Udmurt peasants as savages, emphasising how Udmurts lived in filth, lacked education, remained semi-pagans, and could not even succeed in their livelihood of farming. Beginning in mid-1917, non-Russians held congresses throughout Viatka region in which representatives called for nationally autonomous schooling.

Representatives accepted elite notions of non-Russians' backwardness but used them as a means to gain resources for education. They argued that the tsarist regime's policy of Russification had culturally oppressed their nationality by only teaching their children Russian. Education of Mari, Udmurt, and Tatar youths, representatives argued, must be done by teachers of their own nationality in their mother tongue.⁵² For example, education dominated discussion at the conference of Maris in mid-1917. The congress decided to establish schools to teach Mari culture, history, ethnography, and geography in the mother tongue and to prepare teachers from the Mari population. They also decided to open libraries and reading huts with books and newspapers in Mari.⁵³

The creation, preparation, and implementation of the holiday throughout the provinces reveal the Provisional Government's obsession with order and its fear of the masses. Provisional Government administrators were interested in building a new,

⁵² O. I. Vasil'eva, Udmurtskaia intelligentsiia. Formirovanie i deiatel'nost. 1917-1941 gg. (Izhevsk: Udmurtskii institut istorii, iazyka i literatury UrO RAN, 1999), 15-16; N. P. Pavlov, Samoopredelenie, avtonomiiia: Idei, realii (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 2000), 20-29.

⁵³ Kukarskaia zhizn, July 30, 1917, p. 2; September 21, 1917, p. 2; Krest'ianskaia gazeta, July 28, 1917, pp. 12-13.

ordered republic. State discourse in the first months of the new government reveals that the elite was petrified of disorder. The Provincial Commissar gave an announcement to be published in the newspapers, ordering the “citizens” of the province to “observe order, calm, and to continue with their daily work.” He continued to ask the people to supply all the necessities to our defenders, the soldiers and to obey the new government. “Remember, citizens,” he concluded, “that in unity is strength! Organize! Support hesitators” and stop all attempts at disturbing order.⁵⁴

Foreshadowing Bolshevik holidays, Provisional Government celebrations served to mobilize the masses for a targeted state aim. The government needed a way to motivate the population to fulfill the urgent necessities of the all-encompassing war-- supplying food, materials, and human resources. For example, Liberty Bond Day (*Den zaima svobody*) served to rally the people to financially support the government. The onetime newspaper “Vo imia svobody Rossii” (In the name of the freedom of Russia) called on comrades and citizens of Russia to “do one’s bit” to bond freedom.⁵⁵ It called on citizens to defend freedom and to give to those protecting the country (*rodina*). Repeating what the intelligentsia told the peasantry during the announcement of the Tsar's abdication, the newspaper asserted that freedom was not something to be taken for

⁵⁴ GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 21, l. 30.

⁵⁵ “Tovarishchi i grazhdane!” Vo imia svobody Rossii, Viatka, June 25, 1917, p. 1.

granted, it was a duty (*dolg*) of everyone.⁵⁶ As citizens, peasants had to pay for their freedom. Newspapers also attempted to get the peasants to buy freedom bonds. For example, the top banner of the first issue of the *volost* newspaper, *Kukarskaia zhizn* announced: “citizens, the fatherland (*rodina*) demands our effort in order to defeat the enemies. It needs grain, guns (*pushki*), arms, and shells, and for this it needs money.”⁵⁷ At meetings, officials and local elites spoke to the peasants about buying bonds and contributing foodstuffs to the government. The peasants listened and often at the holidays and meetings gave considerable donations for the war effort.

It is important to see the new holidays as attempts at creating new political traditions and practices. Holidays were just one of the methods of spreading a new discourse of a new political reality that did not include the tsars. Symbols of the old regime were disposed of and replaced by new, or at least untainted images. For example, the provincial commissar announced to all the citizens that while the three-colored white, blue, and red flag would not be changed, the former national flag would be replaced with the arms of the Provisional Government.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 2. On Liberty Bond Day see also von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals*, 19-20. von Geldern discusses Liberty Bond Day in Petrograd on May 25, 1917.

⁵⁷ *Kukarskaia zhizn*, April 30, 1917, p. 1. The newspaper printed several similar messages to the people. For example, on May 14, 1917, a banner proclaimed “Today collect for freedom bonds. Male and female citizens! (*Grazhdanki i grazhdane*) Sacrifice for a speedy victory over the enemy and for securing the achievements of freedom!”

Oath taking was another symbolic ritual of power, in which the state attempted to define and control peasant citizenship and loyalty. In mid-April, the provincial-level leaders passed down to the *uezd* governments an instruction to volispolkoms to have the local inhabitants take an oath (*prisiaga*) of loyalty to the Provisional Government. Like the revolutionary holidays, the church was intimately involved in the administration of the oaths. The *uezd* government directed the volispolkom to gather all of the local inhabitants on the following Sunday or local holiday and have the parish priest or superior (*nostoiatel*) of the local church give the oath. Everyone in the *volost*, both “men and women” sixteen years and older were supposed to take the oath. The state now saw women as well as men as members of the political community.

The state provided special instructions for, “citizens who are not Orthodox Christians.” They were instructed to take the oath before the head of the *volost* committee, rather than a clergyman and did not have to make the sign of the cross when giving the oath. The fact that the state specified that non-Orthodox peasants were to take oaths before a member of the Provisional Government, rather than one of their own clergymen, shows that the new political elite viewed the church as their natural ally and viewed the loyalty of non-Orthodox clergy to the Russian state with suspicion. In this way, Provisional Government administrators continued tsarist military and state mistrust of Tatar Muslims. Pagans who would not take oaths due to religious beliefs were

supposed to begin their oath with, “By honor of a citizen I promise on my conscience to be loyal and perpetually dedicated to the Russian state as my fatherland.” (*Chest’iuu grazhdanina obeshchaius pered svoeiu sovest’iu byt vernym i neizmenno predannym Rossiiskomu Gosudarstvu, kak svoemu Otechestvu.*) Muslims were to finish their oath as, “Concluding my oath, with a kiss to the glorious Koran and sign below.” (*Zakliuchaiusia moiui kliatvu, tselovaniem preslavnago korana i nizhe podpisuius.*).⁵⁸

Like the public spectacles, the state’s imposition of oaths was the immediate attempt to impose a new discourse of power, control, and order in the countryside. Peasants were certainly familiar with oath taking. For example, swearing before a cross or an icon was a common practice in village courts.⁵⁹ State administration of oaths of loyalty in the countryside, however, often came on the heels of mass peasant criminal activity. In the superstitious peasant world, an oath was an exceptionally serious undertaking. While the reaction to the oath of non-Russian peasants is unknown, Russian peasants appear to have had a mixed reaction to the oaths. In Ishlyk village in Petropavlovskaiia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd*, the villagers swore an oath to the Provisional Government. O. A. Zavarin, the priest who would oversee the village’s holiday four days later, explained the significance of the oath and urged the population to support the

⁵⁸ GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 22, l. 25. Unfortunately I was unable to find the oath for Orthodox peasants.

⁵⁹ Frank, Crime, Cultural Conflict, and Justice in Rural Russia, 181-182.

Provisional Government. The peasants immediately followed this up by acting out their own definition of citizenship under the new regime by organizing a local branch of the Peasant Union.⁶⁰ The peasants of Ostrovnovskaia *volost*, Slobodskoi *uezd* simply refused to take the oath based on their principles of citizenship. They stated that:

1. Free people do not need an oath, and the people must not swear to the Provisional Government, but to the people.
2. All citizens of the *volost* know very well that they belong to the Russian state and thus do not need an oath to our fatherland, inasmuch as the composition of the government is provisional and may change.
3. All commands of the Provisional Government leading the people toward the strengthening of freedom (*svobody*), will be precisely fulfilled by the population without an oath.⁶¹

The peasantry of Ostrovnovskaia *volost* displayed a recondite understanding of liberal citizenship. They defended their rights as free people while acknowledging their inherent duties as equal citizens to uphold the nation's interests. Through building a new government administration and participating in national rituals, peasants and elites reinvented what constituted the Russian nation. While both sides wanted popular participation in the new Russia, they had different ideas of how the peasants should become citizens. However, the peasantry also understood their new rights and demanded freedom and equality guaranteed to them as citizens. The Provisional Government elite

⁶⁰ "Korrespondentsiia," *Kukarskaia zhizn*, April 30, 1917, 2.

⁶¹ *Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii*, 116. Resolution by the volispolkom on April 26, 1917.

failed to integrate its peasant population into the nation as equal members. Beneath the symbolic unity that the ceremonies of citizenship displayed, the peasantry and elites held inherently different ideas of the role of the peasantry as citizens in the new Russian nation.

Peasant Politics and the Nation

Some historians have focused on peasants' interest in seizing land from the landlords, arguing that the only thing peasants wanted from the Revolution was land.⁶² While land was integral to peasant views of revolution, in Viatka at least revolution meant far more than seizing the land. The Black Earth region's historically oppressive peasant-landlord relationship and peasant land hunger presumably led peasants in that region to focus their attention on land. Viatka, as mentioned in Chapter One, largely did not have a peasant-landlord relationship. Peasants therefore did not have a single person to focus long-held aggression against. Since most western studies on the peasantry in 1917 have concentrated on the Black Earth region, scholars have ignored many of the other exciting events in the Russian countryside in 1917.

One of the most overlooked topics of 1917 is the massive peasant movement to create formal political organizations. As in 1905, the peasantry formed local associations and sent representatives to provincial and national congresses. At these congresses, the

⁶² See for example Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 331.

peasantry would discuss national matters of importance to them, such as the redistribution of land. While the peasant societies did not enjoy the political weight on the national level of the urban worker soviets, peasant organizations played a major role on the local and *uezd* levels in 1917.⁶³ The historical significance of local peasant organizations lies beyond their immediate political might. Peasants actively participated in local organizations with the understanding that they were part of a national political order. They discussed, debated, and passed resolutions on a number of issues--the war, deserters, foodstuff campaigns, land reforms, and the role of capitalism in international economics. Peasant discussions and participation in political organizations show that they had a complex view of the national events and attempted to influence state policies.

In Viatka province, the peasants began to organize local chapters of the Peasant Union (*Krest'ianskii Souiz*) in late March. The Peasant Union in Viatka was part of the All-Russian Peasant Union which had originated during the 1905-06 Revolution only to be suppressed by the government at the end of the Revolution.⁶⁴ In Viatka, the Peasant

⁶³ Wade, 141. V. M. Lavrov, 'Krest'ianskii parlament' Rossii (Vserossiiskie s'ezdy sovetov krest'ianskikh deputatov v 1918-1918 godakh (Moscow: Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1996).

⁶⁴ The Peasant Union must not be confused with the Peasants' Union of the PSR, founded in 1902. The Peasant Union was nonpartisan, while the Peasants' Union of the PSR was tied to the Socialist Revolutionary Party. See Oliver Radkey, The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism: Promise and Default of the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries February to October 1917, Studies of the Russian Institute (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 60 and 244. To confuse matters further, the Peasant Union changed its name in mid-1917 to the Peasant Soviet.

Union had enjoyed wide support throughout the province with peasants forming *volost* and village organizations. The Union held a provincial congress and sent representatives to the second All-Russian Peasant Union Congress in Moscow. As such, the Peasant Union during the 1905-06 Revolution in Viatka represented “the first attempt at the organization of the peasantry.”⁶⁵

In March 1917, popular socialist intellectuals revived the Union and established a central committee in Moscow. While the leaders of the central levels of the Union argued about how radical should the organization be and whether or not it should be called a union or a soviet, the Viatka local and regional organizations enjoyed almost unparalleled popular support and political power.⁶⁶ In Nolinsk *uezd* alone, up to twenty-seven thousand people joined the Peasant Union.⁶⁷ In 1917, the memory of the Peasant Union as a powerful political actor a decade earlier presumably resonated in the minds of the older villagers. The Peasant Union quickly spread throughout the villages and entrenched itself much deeper than it had in 1905-06.

⁶⁵ A. A. Papyrina, Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Viatskoi gubernii v 1905-1907 gg. (Kirov: Volgo-Viatskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo Korvskoe otdelenie, 1975), 90. For more on the Peasant Union in Viatka, see pp. 85-95.

⁶⁶ John Keep, The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1976), 230-32.

⁶⁷ E. D. Popova, Krest'ianskie komitety Viatskoi gubernii v 1917 godu (Kirov: Kirovskoe otdelenie Volgo-Viatskogo knizhnoe izdatel'stva, 1966), 5.

Peasants appear to have organized Peasant Unions in two manners. They would either use the opportunity of a *volost* gathering (such as a holiday or *volost skhod*) to form a local chapter or form a chapter after a Peasant Union organizer came to a village meeting and discussed the national situation and how the Peasant Union would solve peasant problems.⁶⁸ In both cases, the villagers would pass a resolution supporting the Peasant Union, establish a local chapter, and collect dues of one ruble, twenty kopecks per year.

Organizers with ties to the village often aided in forming local Peasant Union cells. These mediators between peasant society and the nation helped to bring villages into the national political scene. They brought news of events in the greater society, interpreted it, and offered their own means for the peasants to affect the national system.⁶⁹ In Orlov *uezd*, zemstvo workers helped to organize local chapters in mid-April, focusing first on the *uezd* and then moving to the *volost* and village level. The zemstvo workers decided to enlist all cooperatives into the Union and to encourage celebrations and

⁶⁸ The *volost skhod* was the official way to organize a local chapter. "Kak ustroit' krest'ianskii soiuz" (Viatka: Izdatel'stvo Viatskoi gubernskoi organizatsii komitet krest'ianskago soiuz, 1917), 3.

⁶⁹ The mediator, or hinge group, is an established part of anthropology's analysis of complex peasant-nation relationships. See Sydel F. Silverman, "The Community-Nation Mediator in Traditional Central Italy," in *Peasant Society: A Reader*, Jack M. Potter, May N. Diaz, and George M. Foster, eds. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 279-93.

singing, as well as membership dues and even which newspapers and brochures the peasantry should receive. They also tried to win financial support for their actions from the zemstvo administration.⁷⁰

Non-zemstvo agitators with ties to the village also helped to organize local chapters. For example, in Malmyzh *uezd*, a peasant migrant worker (*otkhodnik*) who was a master worker in the Izhevsk factory returned to his *volost* to form chapters of the Peasant Union.⁷¹ Other organizers went through the villages in a *volost* and systematically organized the population. The probability of a village organizing a local chapter appears to have depended on geography and personality more than anything else. Villages near provincial cities, major roadways, or the railroad organized quicker than those located away from the economic intersections. For example, the *selo* Saveli, in Saveliskaia *volost*, located just north of the city of Malmyzh where two major roads diverge organized a chapter on April 3.⁷² Most of the other villages in Malmyzh *uezd* did not form cells until the end of April and the beginning of May. Ethnicity did not play a

⁷⁰ GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 32-33. The newspapers were Krest'ianskii soiuz and Zemlia i volia. They also ordered 180 and 350 copies of several Peasant Union brochures on national topics to sell to the peasantry.

⁷¹ GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 48, ll. 53-54.

⁷² GAKO, f. 1353, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 1-2ob. The same pattern occurred in Urzhum *uezd*, where for example, Buiskaia *volost*, located just north of Urzhum city and containing a factory, organized a local chapter on April 4. "Po gubernii," Krest'ianskaia gazeta, May 2, 1917, p. 13.

strong role in political participation in the Peasant Union. For example, the predominantly Udmurt *selo* of Tyloval-Pel'ga, Velipel'ginskaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd* and the mixed Udmurt-Russian village of Izopel'ge of the same *volost* both organized local chapters at the end of April. The largely Tatar *volost* of Starotrykinskaia also organized a *volost* organization.⁷³

Peasant proclamations of support for the Peasant Union were systematic. In Malmyzh *uezd*, Union representatives gave villagers copies of proclamations. In some villages around May 11, the statement changed from hand-written to a purple ditto sheet that villages just filled in. On other statements, scribes clearly just copied by hand the ditto sheet. The statement read that the undersigned citizens, at a general meeting were of the opinion that in order to improve the deteriorating situation for the working peasantry and to establish "freedom, equality, and brotherhood," they have organized a Peasant Union cell. The statements listed the Peasant Union stance on various national political issues: to continue to fight the war until its victorious finish, to wait for the Constituent Assembly to redistribute land, to form a democratic republic, to have local

⁷³ Ibid, ll. 2, 4, 6-7. Other *volosts* with significant non-Russian populations also formed Peasant Unions, such as Viatskaia-Poliansk *volost* and Serdykbazhskaia *volost*. A significant number of Maris lived in the latter *volost*.

autonomous rule through wide democratic methods, to guarantee land for all working people, and to establish full state funding for all education.⁷⁴

The Peasant Union explained itself in the pamphlet “How to Form a Peasant Union.” It stated that the Peasant Union gives the peasantry the ability, “to clarify their relationship toward various matters, political and social, and nominate sufficient people for the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the zemstvo, and to other social services.” The Peasant Union acted as a medium for the peasants to use their mass numbers to achieve their aims through public participation. The Union declared that, “all (men and women) who acknowledge the necessity of constituents in the Russian Democratic Republic and the redistribution of land to the people through the Constituent Assembly” could become members of the Peasant Union.⁷⁵

Peasant women did participate in the organization and become members of the Union, but were by no means equal participants. While in many of Viatka’s villages, no women were represented in the Peasant Union, in others up to twenty percent of the participants were women. Out of a random sample of ten villages, the average percentage of women as the total number of participants was 6.98 percent.⁷⁶ Moreover,

⁷⁴ Ibid, ll. 1, 9-68.

⁷⁵ “Kak ustroit’ krest’ianskii soiuz,” 2.

⁷⁶ GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 48, ll. 6ob-7, f. 1353, op. 1, d. 3, l. 24, f. 1353, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 1, 2-2ob, 6, 24-25, 26ob-27, 28ob-29, 40ob-41ob, 58ob-59.

women were almost never elected to Union councils or as representatives to higher organs. This limited participation mirrors gender roles in other peasant activities in the public sphere in 1917. As Figes and others have pointed out, peasant meetings became more democratic in the early months of the Revolution. Women, like others traditionally excluded from power, began to participate in public meetings.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, their participation was limited due to traditional biases against women asserting a role outside domestic issues.

The Peasant Union was a bottom-up organization and the *volost* contained its main cells. Local members elected a committee, who were in charge of obtaining new members, reporting on their activities, and distributing literature. *Volost* cells elected delegates to *uezd* and provincial congresses, as well as selected “candidates for elections to the zemstvo and other social services.”⁷⁸

The Peasant Union’s official platform was consistent with the Provisional Government’s general policies and therefore noticeably more conservative than the leftist parties. It demanded that the members not seize land and forests without authorization. They “must wait peacefully until the Constituent Assembly decides these matters.” It also called for the peasants to contribute to the foodstuffs committees and participate in

⁷⁷ Figes, Peasant Russia, Civil War, 33.

⁷⁸ “Kak ustroit krest’ianskii soiuz,” 3.

the cultural-educational activities of the zemstvo and other organizations.⁷⁹ Countering such conservatism, the Union stressed that peasants were equal citizens who had the right to participate in politics and had the might to achieve their aims. The brochure concluded:

Citizen peasants! Remember, that you are millions, remember that now when the tsarist government has been overthrown, you yourselves through the Constituent Assembly can build a just order ownership of land, you can build yourself a life so that all can live easily and peacefully, so that we will not have crooked laws, but one just law. So your voice in the elections will not be divided, freedom (*volia*) comes through unity.⁸⁰

The Peasant Union meant solidarity, political power, and legal equality, this was how the peasants viewed *volia* (freedom) in 1917.

The Peasant Union gathered mass support and held *uezd* congresses in May and their first provincial congress in the beginning of June. The protocols of the congresses show that peasant political attitudes were on the one hand more radical than the official Peasant Union platform, but on the other hand less uniform. For example, the Peasant Union Congress in Urzhum *uezd*, held on May 7, issued a radical eleven point program demanding a federative democratic republic and that all land must go to a general fund of

⁷⁹ Ibid, 6.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 6-7.

the federation. It also proclaimed that the war was a capitalist tool and called for peace without annexations and reparations.⁸¹ A *volost* gathering, probably in Viatka *uezd*, in mid-June added a demand for the land to go to those who worked it and that land must not be bought and sold. The gathering also called for the introduction of a progressive tax.

The *uezd* congress in Viatka, held May 28-29, however, was more conservative. It was well attended, with seventeen of the 22 *volosts* sending representatives. The congress resolved to support the Provisional Government and demanded that the land question be decided by the Constituent Assembly, the war finished without annexation or reparations, and all must fight desertion.⁸² The Malmyzh *uezd* congress, held from May 25-30, was also well represented with all 32 *volosts* sending pairs of representatives and more conservative than the above gatherings.

The war was one of the central themes in peasant congresses and politics and reveals peasant acceptance of the government's definition and duty of the nation. The government wanted to continue the war, and in the summer engaged in a major, disastrous offensive. The Provisional Government combined the justification for the war

⁸¹ "Po gubernii," *Krest'ianskaia gazeta*, May 19, 1917, p. 8. The Slobodskoi *uezd* congress of peasant deputies proclaimed similar proclamations--that workers and peasants must be united in the struggle for truth and freedom, and that the government must initiate an eight-hour work day, defend female and child laborers, and implement insurance for workers. See Sadyrina, 56-57.

⁸² *Ibid.*, "Krest'ianskii s'ezd v g. Viatke," June 9, 1917, pp. 11-12.

effort with the basis of its existence--the Russian nation's new freedom and political equality. Government rhetoric pandered to feelings of freedom and liberty as well as to peasant nationalism. Peasants as a whole adopted the government's new rhetoric on the war for it empowered them as much as it did the state. Peasant representatives in Malmyzh therefore called for the government to "mercilessly carry on the war with increased energy" and to turn the war into "a people's war for law, justice, independence, and freedom" (*za pravo, spravedlivost samostoitel'nost i svobodu*).

As the pre-revolutionary peasant patriotic sentiment for Russia's struggle against outsiders transformed into a more inclusive national sentiment in which they were active members in the polity and by extension the war, the soldiers blossomed as a metaphor of the new nation's struggles. The peasants called the army the child of the people (*narod*) who should not want for anything. The delegates therefore called on the peasants to supply the army with grain. It demanded that Russia not make a separate peace with Germany, but rather fight the war to its victorious end. The congress did not give unified support for the government's war aims, however, showing the multiplicity of peasant ideas of the nation's goals and the growing political radicalism of the peasantry and polarization between peasants and elites. Delegates debated the war in relation to world capitalism. Some praised Kaiser Wilhelm as a smart man who looks after his population

and keeps order in his country. The aim of the war, in these delegates' opinion, should be to destroy capitalist power in Germany. Other delegates argued that the aim of the war should be to overthrow the Kaiser.⁸³

The Viatka peasantry was probably aware of the national ramifications of their political organizations. The Viatka newspapers widely reported on the decisive All-Russian Congress of Peasant Deputies in Petrograd, held from May 4-28. The newspaper "Elabuzhskaia malen'kaia narodnaia gazeta" devoted considerable space to the Congress's debates on land, highlighting S. L. Maslov's call to do provisional measures for land reform before the Constituent Assembly's final decision.⁸⁴

The first Provincial Peasant Congress was held in the city of Viatka from June 6 to 10. Almost half of the province's *volosts*, 153 out of a total 324, sent representatives. Many, but not all, participants were peasants. They elected the famous populist revolutionary and publisher Nikolai Apollonovich Charushin as chairman and listened to a number of speakers, including zemstvo officials, on national issues of interest. Two of the dominant figures at the congress, Charushin and Pavel Stepanovich Basov, were

⁸³ GAKO, f. 1353, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 1-3.

⁸⁴ "Vo vserossiiskom sovete krest'ianskikh deputatov," Elabuzhskaia malen'kaia narodnaia gazeta, June 3, 1917, pp. 2-3. S. L. Maslov, a member of the PSR, would succeed Viktor Chernov as the head of the Main Land Committee in the fall of 1917. On Maslov's land policy see Radkey, The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism, 445-50.

members of the National Socialist Party.⁸⁵ The congress passed resolutions resembling Socialist Revolutionary (SR) policies that reflected the assembly's strong non-peasant leadership. The peasant congress in Viatka was a far cry from concurrent assemblies held in the Black Earth region. There, the radical, land obsessed peasantry apparently limited their political outlook to the more immediate problems of peasant-landlord relations and controlling the supply of foodstuffs to and from the village. Viatka's peasant representatives embraced political elites and used the provincial congress to look beyond their locale to issues that affected all of Russia.

The Peasant Union continued to be influential in the countryside. In some areas of Viatka, the local Peasant Union executive committee was the ruling governmental body. The Union controlled the Malmyzh *uezd* ispolkom. Other *uezd* governments devoted a number of seats on committees, such as the foodstuffs committee, to the Peasant Union.

A Second Provincial Peasant Congress was held in mid-August, although only 58 representatives attended. The large number of absences could be due to timing. The harvest was in full swing and peasants could not lose precious days to travel across the province. The power of the Congress may also have been mitigated by the larger

⁸⁵ See Timkin, *Smutnoe vremia na Viatke*, 22. Basov also participated in the 59th provincial zemstvo meeting in October 1917.

political currents. The country and Viatka province were becoming more radical by the fall. The Congress's platform supporting the Provisional Government did not have the wide support that it enjoyed four months earlier. Nevertheless, The Peasant Union, an organization that the peasantry dominated, helped to rule Viatka province in the summer of 1917.

Popular Participation, National Corruption, and Local Nationalism

In preparation for the *volost* zemstvo and Constituent Assembly elections, the provincial government, as part of a national project, conducted a census during the summer. The government had the overt goal of determining who exactly could vote in each village and what would be the total number of potential voters but also used the census for the more self-serving purpose of ferreting out deserters and making an inventory of grain. The census calculated the quantity of livestock and farming equipment, as well as occupation, education, literacy, gender, and nationality of its human population.

The census did not go well because the state lacked the personnel to complete such a labor-intensive task in a short amount of time. The peasantry in much of Viatka did not resist the state's counting of heads, but in its areas inhabited by non-Russians, peasants refused to allow the government to categorize them. The Urzhum *uezd* administration completed the census in Russian areas, but encountered resistance in

almost all of the non-Russian *volosts*. In Turekskaia *volost*, the census was only partially completed. The state blamed the “Tatar part of the population, who under the influence of *kosolapovtsy* (people from Kosolapovskaia *volost*) are hostile toward the census.”⁸⁶ Non-Russian peasants refused to give information about their population and possessions to the state. The government complained in July that they were unable to carry out the census in Kosolapovskaia *volost*, a predominately Mari region, and villages in other *volosts* as well. It requested a battalion of two hundred soldiers and officers to force the population to comply.⁸⁷ In the Tatar village of Paran’ga, a military regiment had to be called to fulfill the census. A crowd of peasants gathered to meet the detachment, demanded that the soldiers leave the village, and fired some shots. The soldiers returned fire, killing a Tatar peasant.⁸⁸

As discussed in Chapter One, the Orthodox Church, supported by the state, had subjected the non-Russian peasants of Viatka to an aggressive missionary campaign. The census reveals the continuing tension between the state and the non-Russian peasantry. Tatars, Maris, Udmurts, and other nationalities did not have the sense of belonging that

⁸⁶ “Zemskaia perepis,” *Krest’ianskaia gazeta*, July 25, 1917, pp. 12-13; “Vybory v novoe zemstvo,” August 8, 1917, p. 11. The state also encountered resistance in Cheremiskaia, Turekskaia and Sernurskaia *volosts*.

⁸⁷ GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 85, l. 4.

⁸⁸ GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 78, l. 85; and GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 460, l. 92.

the state attempted to convey. As the arm of the state reached into the non-Russian villages, the peasantry resisted its attempts at gaining knowledge in order to categorize and separate them from the Russian population.

Election laws guaranteed a wide enfranchisement. The state granted,

the right to participate to all Russian citizens (*rossiiskie grazhdane*) of both sexes, i.e. men and women, regardless of belief and nationality. They need only to be twenty years old by the time of the compilation of the [electoral] lists and live in the stated *volost* or have an established domicile or some kind of determined occupation, or belong there on service. [So] almost all citizens [have the right to vote].⁸⁹

By making a special point to note gender, religion, and nationality, the Provisional Government showed itself to be aware of the tensions of citizenship. The state did exclude from voting monks; those declared by law to be insane or deaf and unable to speak (*bezumnyi, sumashedshyi, i glukhomenyi*); as well as those who had been convicted by a court for a major criminal offense in the preceding three years.⁹⁰

There were in fact five electoral campaigns in Viatka during the Provisional Government era: the city dumas, the *volost, uezd* and provincial *zemstva*, and the Constituent Assembly. The *volost zemstvo* and the Constituent Assembly were the most

⁸⁹ GAKO, f. 589, op. 2, .d. 19, l. 7ob.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Some of the major offenses included theft, fraudulence, destruction of property, and concealment of a crime.

widely known and enjoyed the widest participation.⁹¹ Local elites saw the zemstva elections as administrative preparation as well as practice for the peasants for the Constituent Assembly elections. Moreover, peasant organizations and political activity that shaped the Constituent Assembly voting came into their own during the elections for the *volost* zemstva.

The election process highlights one of the fundamental shortcomings and contradictions of the Provisional Government that ultimately led to its downfall. The theoretical basis for liberal democratic popular participation posits that the electorate is a group of rational actors--that they consciously think through their electoral choices, and base their decision on a mixture of national good and self interest. Viatka's local elite, for the most part, saw the peasantry as irrational actors that had to be told how to vote. This liberal ideology precluded a synthesis between peasant and state under the Provisional Government. Popular participation in the government was also supposed to be a means to legitimize the new state. Indeed, the Bolsheviks accentuated this connection between participation and legitimacy by boycotting the duma in order not to be tainted by the "bourgeois regime." In the provinces, the state hoped that rule by election would solidify mass support.

⁹¹ See Timkin, *Smutnoe vremia na Viatke*, 14.

The zemstva and Constituent Assembly elections, like elections in other democratic countries, were also symbolic rituals. Like the mass festivals and oaths, elections were a means to emphasize the nation's sovereignty.⁹² The population was supposed to renew its support for the governmental system through voting in the elections. They would thereby legitimize the myth of popular participation. It therefore tied to ideas of citizenship rights and responsibilities. The elections in the Viatka countryside, like the elections in revolutionary France are important because they,

were one of the most important of the symbolic practices of the Revolution. They offered immediate participation in the new Nation through the performance of a civic duty, and they opened up previously restricted access to positions of political responsibility. Because they had such direct impact on the political structure, they attracted the attention of officials, and, as a result, they are one of the best documented revolutionary practices.⁹³

Moreover, unlike festivals that relied on mass consensus and the appearance of the absence of resistance, electoral results reveal differences among the population.⁹⁴ These differences were as varied as geography, gender, ethnicity, and status in society. The events surrounding the elections show that peasants and elites had inconsistent ideas of popular participation, the voting process, and the peasant-intelligentsia relationship.

⁹² Lynn Hunt, Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 125.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 126-27.

On March 20, the Provisional Government issued a national *ukaz* that called for the extension of the zemstvo from the *uezd* level, to the *volost* level. The Provisional Government put its faith in the zemstvo to build a new local administration. Reflecting the government's determination to extend popular participation, in May it called for the people to elect the new zemstvo. In June, Viatka *uezd* directed the *volosts* to form election commissions of nine people--five to be chosen by the *uezd* zemstvo administration and four to be selected by the given *volost* zemstvo or executive committee (*ispolkom*). The commission oversaw the election's organization and procedure. The *volost* zemstvo elections were held in Viatka Province from August 13-27. These were followed by elections for the *uezd* zemstvo, held August 29 through September 10.

The *volost* zemstvo elections did not go smoothly. The elections show the great disconnect between peasant cultures and the mentality of the liberal elites who ran the elections. The peasants disappointed the liberal elites in both the process and the outcomes of the elections. The people did not look to the elites for aid and guidance in selecting their representatives, but rather those candidates from their own developed organizations.

Almost every report described problems in the implementation of the zemstvo elections. Many of the troubles stemmed from an insufficient state administrative

apparatus in the countryside. In a number of areas, the population did not get timely notification of the date of the elections. Some villages were simply never told when the election would occur. In other regions, the government did not distribute the lists of candidates, as required by law, so the population did not know for whom to vote. The state divided *volosts* into smaller regional voting areas. This created confusion in some areas when the zemstvo administration did not inform the peasants to which region they belonged. Some electoral commissions were simply incompetent. For example, many commissions did not count the ballots after the elections. Another commission only received ballots for only one of the two days of voting, resulting in only 28 of a potential 786 voters being counted.⁹⁵

Other troubles were linked to corruption. In Viatka *uezd*, the zemstvo found the *uezd* administration guilty of managing the number of voters and the electoral regions alone, without consulting the zemstvo.⁹⁶ Also in Viatka *uezd*, people with “especially bad reputations” forced the illiterate to vote for a person whom they had hired. It seems that this person was not even a candidate and was actually unable to run since he had been convicted for a major criminal offense in the last three years. Moreover, the

⁹⁵ “Sostav izbrannykh glasnykh poka nedostatochno vyiasnen,” *Krest’ianskaia gazeta*, September 19, 1917, p. 5.

⁹⁶ GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 105, l. 23.

population had a bad opinion of him. It was reported that all of this was done with the knowledge of the electoral commission.⁹⁷ Other instances may have been linked to ethnic relations. In the largely Udmurt *volost* of Nizhne-Ukanskaia, Glazov *uezd*, 111 peasants wrote a complaint that in the *uezd* zemstvo elections the secretary of the electoral commission wrote down a different list for illiterate peasants than the one the illiterate voters wanted. In another instance in the same *volost*, a member of the commission conducted an open vote and then filled out the ballots himself.⁹⁸

Finally, the zemstva elections were troubled by peasant protests, often within areas inhabited by non-Russians. In Urzhum *uezd*, *volosts* dominated by Mari would not participate in preparations for the elections, refusing to give information for zemstvo electoral lists.⁹⁹ In the mixed Russian-Mari *volost* of Ernurskaia, Iaransk *uezd*, two peasants rallied the Mari peasants against the elections. A group of them stood outside making noise. One of the instigators, Egor Fedotov Kipdulkin, told the head of the regional electoral commission to trash the elections and then hit him in the face. The head of the *volost* electoral commission claimed that the Mari peasants were “against all state power.” The stormy *volost* zemstvo elections were postponed and the commissioner

⁹⁷ “Vybory moshennika,” Krest’ianskaia gazeta, August 29, 1917, p. 9.

⁹⁸ GAKO, f. 1345, op. 1, d. 91, ll. 38-41.

⁹⁹ “Vybory v novoe zemstvo,” Krest’ianskaia gazeta, August 8, 1917, p. 11.

asked the *uezd* government to send a representative or the militia to restore order.¹⁰⁰

Resistance to zemstvo elections appears common in areas throughout Russia with large non-Russian nationalities. Often resistance was tied to fears of greater government encroachment on ethnic independence or influence.¹⁰¹

In other areas, peasant resistance to the elections was tied to rumors about the government's hidden intentions. In Troitskaia and Pasegovskaia *volosts*, the peasantry protested the elections, saying that not only do they not need the new *volost* zemstvo, but the *uezd* zemstvo should be abolished altogether. Returning soldiers, the peasants claimed, had told them that life would be worse under the *volost* zemstvo for the new administration would make it easier for the state to take their grain. The peasants refused to give information to compile voter lists and only seven percent of the potential voters participated in Troitskaia *volost*, while eleven percent voted in Pasegovskaia.¹⁰² The growing peasant distrust of the Provisional Government's foodstuffs policy carried over to electoral participation.

¹⁰⁰ GAKO, f. 1351, op. 1, d. 17, l. 2.

¹⁰¹ For example, in the Don region, Cossacks resisted the zemstvo elections for fear that it would weaken Cossack influence in the area. See William G. Rosenberg, "The zemstvo in 1917 and under Bolshevik Rule," in The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government, Terence Emmons and Wayne S. Vucinich, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 397.

¹⁰² "Vybory v volostnyia zemstva po Viatskomu uezdu (otchet Viatskogo uezdnoho komissara P. S. Basov)," Krest'ianskaia gazeta, September 15, 1917, pp. 10-12.

A close analysis of the elections in Kukarskaia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd*, shows the problems of the voting process and the tensions between peasants and local elites. The elections to the *volost zemstvo* were held on August 20 throughout the *volost*. Voters could choose from five lists of candidates: List One, The Group of Social Activists, was comprised of the Third Element (local intellectuals): doctors, jurists, a tax inspector, a mullah-teacher, and the editors of the local newspaper, *Kukarskaia zhizn* (Kukarsk life). List Two, The Peasant Union, was made up of male peasants. List Three, The Women's Circle, had three women and nine men and was also connected to the local intellectuals. List Four, The Clergy, contained twenty men, including the mullah on List One. List Five, The Local Village Activists, had twenty-five men. The election therefore represents an ideal situation to analyze peasant relationships with the local intelligentsia, religious leaders, and women.

Like the province as a whole, Kukarskaia *volost* experienced a number of problems during the elections. According to a peasant complaint (*zhaloba*), the *volost zemstvo* elections was marred with fraud from the side of the intelligentsia. Both the Third-Element list (List One) and the Women's Circle list (List Three) were accused of disseminating illegal ballots. They handed out ballots that already had their number on it, which went against the local electoral commission's decision to only distribute blank ballots. List One also unlawfully printed the names of their candidates on their ballots.

They had members of the local executive committee (*ispolkom*) on their list that could give the list unfair name recognition and pose as an unspoken threat to the voters. The complaint noted that most of List Three's ballots were drawn in the same handwriting and distributed from the porch of the local women's high school (*gimnasium*). Local young men and some female intellectuals and high school girls also handed out ballots that had List One written on them. The complainant contended that the backers of lists One and Three (the *intelligentsia*), "officially disseminated numbered lists among the population of our villages," seeking to appropriate "the more illiterate and ignorant people."¹⁰³

Despite the campaigning of the editors of *Kukarskaia zhizn* to vote for List One, the result of the election was lopsided. The Peasant Union, List Two, crushed its opponents, it received 61 percent of the total vote. List One, the party of the intelligentsia, only received 14.6 percent.¹⁰⁴ The anomalous region, Kukarsk, was the regional center, populated by many non-peasants. The results show the solidarity of the peasants of *Kukarskaia volost*. The peasantry had discussed and planned their voting

¹⁰³ GAKO, f. 1351, op. 1, d. 24, ll. 14-15. Lists 16-18 are the ballots with Lists One and Three on them, showing evidence of the fraud.

¹⁰⁴ Since the election determined 25 representatives for the *volost zemstvo* and almost 2500 people voted, for every hundred votes, a list was able to send one candidate. For example, the Peasant Union sent fifteen representatives, The Group of Social Activists sent four, while the Women's Circle sent none. As is the standard practice in election lists, the party sent the top candidate on the list first and worked down the list as the party received a greater percentage of votes.

strategy. On August 15, the regional assembly of Peasant Union formed a bloc for the *uezd* zemstvo election. They also participated in great numbers, as seen in Table 3.2.

Voting Regions	Potential Voters	Participating Voters	Percentage of those Voting	Electoral Lists					Total
				1	2	3	4	5	
Kukarsk	2198	964	43.9	339	19	95	26	463	942
Namdinsk	503	394	78.3	2	379	7	0	0	388
Grekh.-Smolents	747	577	77.2	17	556	1	0	0	574
Shalakhovsk	634	563	88.8	1	558	0	0	0	559
Total	4082	2498	61.2 (ave.)	359	1512	103	26	463	2463
Percentage of Vote				14.6	61.4	4.2	1	18.8	

Table 3.1 Kukarskaia *volost* zemstvo election results

Electoral Region	Potential Voters	Participating Voters	% of those voting	Illegal Votes	Electoral Lists			
					1	2	3	4
Kukarsk	4247	1362	32	15	823	4	2	518
Il'insk	4400	2476	56	971	1397	0	100	8
Zherevodersk	1411	855	60	55	0	440	360	0
Vodozersk	3478	570	16	56	511	3	0	0
Izhevsk	3038	896	29	243	653	0	0	0
Petropavlov	1968	624	36	6	618	0	0	0
Troitsk	3478	314	9	0	314	0	0	0
Total	22020	7097	32 (ave.)	1346	4316	447	462	526

Table 3.2 Iaransk *uezd* zemstvo election results¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Table adapted from Kukarskaia zhizn, September 3, 1917, p. 2.

The high percentage of participating voters in the regions outside of Kukarsk could be due to some peasants voting in a village assembly. This would also explain the degree of the Peasant Union's victory. Peasants in village assemblies usually decided matters unanimously to give the impression that the whole community stood behind the assembly.

Peasant voter participation in Kukarsk was relatively high, compared to Viatka *uezd*, in which only 35 percent of the voters participated. Gender appeared to have made little difference, with 38 percent of the men and 32.4 percent of the women voting. Such relatively large participation by women is in stark contrast to other parts of Russia, such as Petrograd province, where peasant women resisted voting because it threatened traditional social practices.¹⁰⁶ Some of Viatka's women built on their new expanded public role in the community and village economy and parlayed it into voting for public office. Overall in the province, voter participation appears based on local conditions. Rumor, local feelings toward and interaction with the government, and ethnicity appear to be the main variables in the *zemstva* elections.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Rosenberg, 398.

¹⁰⁷ On Viatka *uezd* see *Krest'ianskaia gazeta*, September 15, 1917, p. 12. The author of the report on the Viatka *volost* *zemstvo* elections posited that voting participation was related to where the *volost* administrators personally appeared to support the local electoral commissions.

The peasantry did not vote the way the local elites wanted and by selecting the peasant party over List One, rejected the confines of the tutorial relationship with the local intelligentsia. Before the election the editors had filled the newspaper with pleas to vote for the intelligentsia. As with the ceremonies described above, elites portrayed the election as a ritual of citizenship, both granting the peasantry an opportunity at freedom and participation in the state while still being tightly regimented. For example, the editors recounted an educational vignette in which an old peasant complained about the situation in the village because there was no tobacco. The newspaper editorialized that, while conditions were tough in the village, “freedom is not guilty, the people are guilty.” Old peasants and “their fellow villagers are absolutely not interested in the fate of the nation (*rodina*) or social matters, such as the *zemstvo*.” The newspaper warned that the elections are complicated and difficult to understand and cautioned the peasants not to vote for those who have given them tobacco. This was presumably a dig at the Peasant Union, who often distributed goods at local meetings.

When the intelligentsia did not get their desired results, they blamed it on the ignorance of the peasantry and lashed out at the people. The newspaper printed the electoral results and right below them wrote that it was clear from the numbers that “the population of Kukarsk considers itself to be more developed and conscious (*soznatel’nyi*) than other places, but its activity in the elections showed the exact opposite. The village

did not understand the significance of the elections to the zemstvo, and the conscious (*soznatel'no*) implementation of their duty of citizenship.”¹⁰⁸ According to the editors, by not voting for the intelligentsia, the peasants held a false consciousness and were bad citizens. The elites were the victims of the incongruities of their national viewpoint. They could not reconcile their image of the peasantry as a homogenous uneducated mass who needed the intelligentsia to mediate between village and nation, with the fact that the peasantry had a complex understanding of the democratic process and used it for their own good. The elite was in the process of losing control over the rituals of citizenship and the practices of nationalism.

The above complaint of fraud by the intelligentsia shows peasant views on the voting process and traces of class antagonism. The peasant complainant merged the two intelligentsia parties together, arguing that both were working against the peasantry. The complaint also showed peasant discomfort with women taking prominent roles in public affairs. The author singled out young women and the women's high school, and hinted that female teachers inside the school were behind the fraud carried out by The Women's Circle (List Three). Moreover, the complainant adopted elite images of the peasantry to make its case. The elite argued that the lack of education and low cultural level kept the peasantry from being quality citizens. Yet the intelligentsia, according to the

¹⁰⁸ Kukarskaia zhizn, August 24, 1917, 2.

complainant, attempted to take advantage of illiterate and ignorant peasants. By using elite rhetoric and images, the peasant complaint used traditional peasant discursive strategies to make its point.

The region experienced similar results in the *uezd* zemstvo election, as seen in Table 3.2. The Peasant Union, this time List One, won 75 percent of the vote.

Zherevogersk region was the only area where the Peasant Union did not dominate. Lists Two and Three, local parties from that region, gained respectable showings there. List Four, the local intelligentsia, only received nine percent of the total vote.¹⁰⁹

The peasants elected seven representatives to the *uezd* zemstvo. These peasant candidates held positions of respect in the village communities, including an elder (*starshina*), a head of committees, a worker, and a scribe. The Peasant Union candidates campaigned on their personal qualities. Union descriptions noted that one peasant was “well known,” another was “quiet,” and another a “good peasant” (*muzhik*). The representatives were not young, with the average age of 44.7 years old.¹¹⁰ This selection

¹⁰⁹ List Four overlapped with List One in the Kukarskaia *volost* election. The list included one of the editors of the newspaper Kukarskaia zhizn, the wife of a doctor (who was a part of the Women’s Circle List in the Kukarskaia *volost* zemstvo election), a forest road technician, a businessman, and so forth.

¹¹⁰ Kukarskaia zhizn, September 3, 1917, p. 2.

shows that the peasants chose people of whom they thought highly. This conflicts with new peasant leaders in the Black Earth region, who were young and often held marginal positions in the village.

In the province as a whole, peasants almost uniformly elected respected peasants. One newspaper complained that nine-tenths of those elected to the *uezd zemstvo* in Kotel'nich and Viatka *uezds* were peasants. Only five of the elected representatives were from the rural intelligentsia.¹¹¹ In Kadamskaia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd*, out of twenty-eight people elected, twenty-seven were peasants. The one non-peasant was a teacher. Notably, all of the representatives were literate. Similar trends of peasants electing educated peasants can be seen in both the *volost* and *uezd zemstvo* elections. Peasants understood the importance of literacy and education when representing their causes to the outside world. By the fall, many peasant communities had gained confidence and political experience. They could free themselves from the necessity of relying on the rural intelligentsia, a mediator to the nation, by electing those who possessed the needed skills in fighting for peasant causes.

The zemstvo and its elections had inherent shortcomings in 1917. As William Rosenberg notes, the zemstvo represented, "the essence of Russia's estate system with its

¹¹¹ GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 78, l. 46. From the newspaper *Zemlia*, "Nashe zemstvo," September 30, 1917. Similar trends in which peasants beat intelligentsia candidates can be seen throughout Iaransk *uezd*. In most cases, the intelligentsia made respectable showings. See *Kukarskaia zhizn*, September 10, 1917, p. 2.

special prerogatives for those with wealth and education.” For peasants who rejected liberal, elitist premises, “there was no obvious justification to building a new system of local government based on the zemstvo, as opposed, say, to allowing peasants themselves to organize new *volost* councils”.¹¹² It should then come as no surprise that the peasantry both resisted and appropriated the zemstva elections by turning the zemstvo into a peasant institution.

The Constituent Assembly Elections

The Constituent Assembly election is a further example of the struggle over national politics in 1917. Conducted amidst the polarizing politics of the fall, the electoral campaign was the climax of the Provisional Government’s push to create peasant citizens in their own image. If elections are symbolic, ritualistic events that reaffirm citizens’ acceptance of the current order, the Constituent Assembly election was an inherently contradictory symbol. The peasantry engaged and participated in the elections, but did not blindly show their support for the tumultuous national political order. The election also reveals the increasingly complex political field in the village as the peasantry became more experienced politically and the rural population reacted to the influx of new inhabitants (such as soldiers, workers, and agitators).

¹¹² Rosenberg, 388.

A number of western historians have analyzed why the Constituent Assembly, and in turn the Provisional Government's agenda, ultimately failed. But only Oliver Radkey has systematically studied the Constituent Assembly election. Radkey uses the electoral results to show how socially and politically fragmented Russia had become. Radkey, like many other historians, argues that the results show the limits of popular sentiment for the new Bolshevik rulers. He forcefully argues, though, that one can not place the blame for the Provisional Government's failure on the Bolsheviks. The Provisional Government procrastinated, failed to make the necessary technical preparations, and simply bumbled its way toward the Constituent Assembly elections. Radkey notes, "The responsibility for setting the Constituent Assembly on the road to ruin rests squarely on the shoulders of the Provisional Government..... Too much has been made of its dedication to establishing a regime of political and personal liberty. Its real purpose was to hold Russia in the war."¹¹³ However, no western historians have examined peasant-state interaction during the Constituent Assembly elections. Peasant participation in the electoral process and their reactions to campaign propaganda reveals that the rural population was eager to engage the new order.

¹¹³ Oliver Radkey, Russia Goes to the Polls: The Election to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, 1917, forward by Sheila Fitzpatrick. Studies in Soviet History and Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 91-92.

The Provisional Government included the peasant population into the Russian nation through the electoral ritual, yet at the same time excluded the peasantry when it was too exuberant in its participation. Like the zemstva elections, voting for the Constituent Assembly was based on a list-system. Groups of citizens could get their list of candidates on the ballot by petitioning the provincial electoral commission. The commission was composed of Provisional Government administrators who were members of the Third Element. The popular compilation of lists and the commission's procedure in accepting the lists shows the disconnect between people and state.

The peasant population as a whole appears to have been initially hopeful in participating in the Constituent Assembly. A large cross-section of the peasant community supported most of the potential lists. For example, 115 peasant signatures accompanied the application for a regional affiliate of the Peasant Union. Thirty-eight of the names, or 33 percent, were women. The average male signatory was fifty years old, while the average female was 38 years old.¹¹⁴ The twenty-one candidates of the General Provincial Congress of Peasant Deputies and Party of the Social Revolutionaries also shows the wide and diverse peasant support. Of the twenty-one names, fourteen were

¹¹⁴ GAKO, f. 1349, op. 1, d. 29, ll. 3-4ob, 8.

peasants, two of them Udmurt, among the remaining seven were agronomists, a cooperative worker, and the minister of land. The candidates also came from around Viatka province.¹¹⁵

While the above applicants succeeded on getting their candidates on the ballot, many peasant political groups failed. The commission rejected applications by a peasant community from Elovskaiia *volost* in Glazov *uezd*, the Pachinsk Soviet of Peasant Deputies from Iaransk *uezd*, and a group of Mari peasants from Iaransk *uezd* attempting to make their teacher a candidate in the election, all for applying past the October 13 deadline, twenty-four days before the election. Interestingly, all three rejected applications were dated before the deadline.¹¹⁶

The commission favored their candidates, the People's Socialist Party and rigged the system to work in their favor, showing the intelligentsia's lack of faith in true democracy. The People's Socialist Party application was supported by 116 signatories, almost all men and all but two members of the Third Element--zemstvo officials, agronomists, accountants, a son of a bureaucrat, a teacher, a forest worker, and so forth. The list contained two of the most famous figures of liberal Viatka--Nikolai Apollonovich Charushin and Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii. The People's Socialist

¹¹⁵ Ibid., d. 21.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., d. 41, 50, and 59.

Party clearly violated electoral regulations. Four of the candidates did not include their statements announcing their intent to stand as candidates and the commission could not read other statements since they were in Mari, transcribed but not translated into Russian. The commission initially rejected the four candidates, but the following day mysteriously reversed its decision and allowed all the candidates to be on the ballot.¹¹⁷ In a move to increase their odds of winning enough votes to send their representatives to the Constituent Assembly, the People's Socialist Party formed a union with the National Union of Maris of Viatka Province. The Third Element party included a few Mari among their nineteen candidates. One of which was the Mari teacher, Leonid Iakovlevich Mendiarov, who the peasants three days earlier failed to get on their own ballot.¹¹⁸ The Provisional Government and their Third Element supporters attempted to preclude the peasantry from having too much influence in the elections, the ritual of popular sovereignty.

The voting was originally scheduled for November 12-14, but due to technical difficulties the commission postponed the election in much of the province. Like the rest of the Russian Empire, the Viatka provincial government lacked reliable resources and sufficient manpower. On the day of the deadline for turning in applications for electoral

¹¹⁷ Ibid., d. 25 and 26.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., d. 25, l. 33.

lists, the commission realized that not only did Petrograd did not send enough paper for printing the twelve final lists of candidates, but the Viatka printing presses lacked even the technical ability to print a significantly smaller amount than needed.¹¹⁹

The commission also struggled with other basic matters. They could not agree on the voting districts. Using their experience from the zemstva elections, the *uezd* and provincial electoral commissions tried to establish smaller voting districts. In the previous election, most districts corresponded to a major village within a *volost*. Many *volosts* were divided into three or more districts. Since Viatka province was so large and contained many small, remote villages, some peasants during the zemstva elections had to travel more than ten *versts* (6.6 miles or 10.7 kilometers) to vote. Peasants therefore in Elabuga *uezd* demanded that the government increase the number of voting districts.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, some local election officials fought the provincial commission on this issue, arguing that while smaller districts “would be more convenient for the population,” the local administration simply did not have the personnel or money to man more districts. For example, in Nolinsk *uezd*, officials demanded that the number of voting districts be reduced from 177 to twenty-five, so that every *volost* count as only one voting

¹¹⁹ Ibid., d. 75, l. 38. Glazov *uezd* also had similar problems. The city of Glazov could not print voting lists since they neither had a printing house, nor enough paper on which to print. GAKO, f. 1349, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 20-21.

¹²⁰ GAKO, f. 1349, op. 1, d. 14, l. 50.

district.¹²¹ They did not get their wish. Since the census went so poorly and the government lacked competent officials, the electoral commission struggled to even compile voter lists. In September it sent out urgent messages to the regions to finish their lists as soon as possible. Most localities did not compile definite numbers of voters until October or November, and even then the numbers were often rough estimates. The provincial electoral commission finally finished most of the voter lists in mid-November, the same time that the election was supposed to take place. To make matters worse, the commission published the electoral lists only eighteen days before the elections, not giving voters enough time to know the candidates.¹²²

With all of the technical problems, it should come as no surprise that the election was delayed in most *uezds*. Only Elabuga *uezd* held their elections on time. Other regions conducted their elections in early December, either December 2, 4, and 5, or December 3-5. Considering all of the technical problems and delays, an enormous number of peasants came out to vote. In all, approximately 1,080,000 people voted, over ninety percent of them peasant.

The peasantry had twelve lists from which to choose. The main lists were: List Three, the Provincial Congress of Peasant Deputies and the Party of Socialist

¹²¹ Ibid., 1. 78.

Revolutionaries, a combination of forces of the Peasant Union (recently renamed the Soviet of Peasant Deputies) and the SR's. At the Third Provincial Congress of the Soviet of Peasant Deputies in late September, the deputies agreed to enter into an agreement with the SR's to compile a list for the Constituent Assembly. List Five, was the Working People's Socialist Party in union with the Nation Union of Mari of Viatka Province. List Six was the Mensheviks, List Nine, People's Freedom, and List Eleven, the Bolshevik Party.

The campaign for peasant votes and the electoral results reveal the social divisions in the fall and winter of 1917. The Soviet of Peasant Deputies, with its entrenched local organizations and experienced agitators enjoyed the most success. It appealed to peasant solidarity, the peasantry's consciousness of themselves as a distinct group in society. The Party played off the peasants' growing antipathy toward the educated elite's definition of the peasantry, as "dark and unconscious" (*temny i nesoznatel'ny*) and willingness to remain exploited, with the men in their fieldwork and the women in domestic chores. The Party urged the peasantry to disprove this notion by voting for List Three. They told the peasantry that Lists Two and Nine represented rich merchants, industrialists, land owners, and lawyers, while the party of the Orthodox

¹²² S. P. Zubarev, Za respubliku sovetov. Kommunisty Prikam'ia v bor'be protiv burzhuaznoi parlamentskoi respubliki (mart 1917-noiabr' 1918 gg.) (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1970), 68-69.

church “hopes that the unconscious peasants will vote for them.”¹²³ In frequent local meetings, Soviet of Peasant Deputies encouraged its members to vote for their list because they would defend the working peasant. For example, in Urzhum *uezd*, the Soviet of Peasant Deputies held meetings in every *volost* and explained the political parties and the electoral process. They also distributed copies of the Party of the Socialist Revolutionary program in both Russian and Mari.

Parties targeted specific groups among the peasantry. List Five sent out Mari agitators to win the Mari vote by playing off nationalist sentiment. The agitators told the Mari peasants that there would be one of their own on the List.

Women were especially important in the 1917 elections. Since most of the men were still at the front, women were in the vast majority in the village and their support was essential for a party’s success. List Three especially urged peasant women to vote. Its pleas show Russia’s limited vision of women’s emancipation and participation in revolutionary society. The political system accepted women’s legal status as citizens of the nation, but saw their lack of consciousness as potentially damaging to the welfare of the state. In a newspaper article pressing peasant women to vote, the Soviet of Peasant Deputies took for granted that the peasant woman was ignorant (*temna*). She had no knowledge of public matters, since up to the Revolution she did not participate in social

¹²³ “K vyboram v uchreditel’nye sobranie,” Narodnoe delo, Viatka, November 8, 1917, p. 1.

matters or the state. All of these issues were decided by men at the village assembly. According to the article, this ignorance led to the failure of the zemstvo elections. The women supposedly said, “the *baba* doesn’t do a thing in the zemstvo, and so does not need to participate in the elections.” Since the women did not vote, then people who “were not for the working peasant” dominated the elections. The author warned that the women’s ignorance would also destroy the peasantry’s fate in the Constituent Assembly elections, in which “candidates of the rich” will outvote the peasantry unless the women go to the polls. Women’s participation in this public ritual was a necessary evil for the greater good. The Soviet of Peasant Deputies framed the ritual of the election, and the women’s duty as citizens in terms of sacrifice for the greater good of the peasantry and for the good of their husbands.

If their husbands remain at the front for the nation,
and the victory of the revolution and freedom,
then their wives in the village are obliged to fight for land,
by casting their votes for the candidates of the working people.¹²⁴

It was therefore essential for all the peasantry to agitate and clarify to the women their duty to help the “conscious inhabitants of the villages” and the Soviet of Peasant Deputies.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ “Kraine vazhny golosa zhenshchin,” Narodnoe delo, October 29, 1917, p. 3. This call to the vote rhymes in Russian.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

The technical problems that plagued the election's preparation continued on election day. Some peasants were not informed of the new election's date. At least one village was never told that the election was actually taking place. The government's fear that they would not have enough personnel was justified. No election officials were present in Raevsk district, Verkhoramenskaia *volost*, Orlov *uezd* during the voting. Soldiers on leave took it upon themselves to guarantee that the peasants could vote by going to the *volost* center and demanded that the *volost* administration combine Raevsk district with the neighboring district. The administration complied.¹²⁶ Despite the problems, however, the elections were carried out in most regions without event.

Historians have had difficulty determining the degree of popular participation in the elections. Radkey most recently estimated it at fifty-five to sixty percent. The returns from Viatka province as a whole reveal a higher turnout, at approximately sixty-six percent. But this figure belies the reliability of the data. Historians have based their approximations on percentages from the total registered voters. Due to the incomplete census and many villages, especially non-Russian villages, refusing to register to vote, the total amount of registered voters was far below the potential voters in many villages.

Agitators in 1917 were right to target women, for they made up a solid majority of the voters, something that historians have overlooked. Although it is impossible to

¹²⁶ GAKO, f. 1349, op. 1, d. 14, l. 251.

determine the exact percentage of voters by gender for the province as a whole, data for a wide sample of regions show that women went to the polls much more often than men.

In this way, the Constituent Assembly elections were determined by the women's vote.

Non-Russian peasants did not participate in the elections to the same degree as Russians. Many non-Russians were at a disadvantage due to language barriers. For example, the Tatar village (*selo*) of Karino, Slobodskoi *uezd* knew little about the Provisional Government, even though it had been established six months earlier. The ispolkom of the soviet of peasant deputies sent a Muslim representative to the village to enlighten them. The representative went to the mullah, who announced to the people that “this is one of ours who will speak in our way and explain everything in our language.” The Tatar peasants said that they did not understand how all could vote for the zemstvo. When the representative asked them if they knew about the parties for the Constituent Assembly, the peasants answered, “we don't know anything. There were Russians here, but they talked something incomprehensible. We heard only that there is democracy, but what this is--we don't know.”¹²⁷ The Tatars in this village were not a part of the political discourse in the fall of 1917. Nevertheless, they were actively engaged with the larger politics of the Provisional Government. During the meeting they complained about the state's grain monopoly and inquired about the feasibility of establishing Tatar schools.

Non-Russians' resistance to the census also hindered their involvement in the elections. Since they were not counted, many non-Russian peasants did not get registered and placed on the voter lists, so they were never even potential voters. Election data shows the disproportional chasm between the total population of a region and those registered to vote. The voting district of Irnusk in Urzhum *uezd*, a heavily Tatar district, had only 17.5 percent of the total population registered to vote (10 percent of women and 31.2 percent of men). The average percentage of potential voters was about 50? Percent of the total population. Yet out of Irnusk's small percentage of potential voters, sixty-one percent of the men and only twenty-five percent of the women voted.

The *uezd* electoral commissions were in charge of tallying their regions' votes and it was up to the commission to determine voter intent. Once the votes were cast in a district, the head of the district's electoral commission counted the votes and sealed them in an envelope. A courier then brought them to the *uezd* commission, who recounted the votes and determined their validity. Their rejection of ballots shows the difference in peasant and non-peasant electoral behavior and was another impediment to the peasant's unfettered participation in the national ritual. In Elabuga *uezd*, the commission rejected twenty-five votes because they were decided openly, rather than in secret.¹²⁸ The administration threw out other votes because they were not signed, the ballots were not

¹²⁷ "Sredy musul'man," Krest'ianskaia gazeta, August 25, 1917, pp. 11-12.

filled out, they had extra marks or were erased, and if there were more ballots in the sealed envelope than what was declared. While the invalidation of ballots varied by *volost* (for example, Sarapul *uezd* declared over four percent of the votes invalid, while Elabuga *uezd* counted virtually all of the votes), some general conclusions can still be reached. Commissions rejected ballots most often for having not been signed by the voter. While this is most likely due to the large numbers of illiterate peasants, voting did not necessitate literacy. Peasants could put an 'x' or another mark if they could not sign their name. Ballots cast for the Bolsheviks were the most likely to be rejected.

Like the zemstvo elections, the Peasant Soviet party won a resounding victory, with 67 percent of the vote. They received more votes than any other party in every *uezd*, indeed the population were more likely to vote for the Party of Soviet Deputies than the Bolsheviks by a ratio of 3:1. The Bolsheviks won a respectable second place, garnering 22 percent. The Muslim Party was a distant third, with five percent of the vote.

Viatka province could send eleven representatives to the Constituent Assembly. The Party of Soviet Deputies sent six and the Bolsheviks sent four people. The representation was not proportional. The Party of Soviet Deputies should have sent seven representatives. The Working People's Socialist Party/National Union of Mari of Viatka Province, who had won a mere 3.5 percent of the vote, combined their votes with the

¹²⁸ GAKO, f. 1349, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 604-608ob.

Mensheviks allowing enough votes to send N. Chaikovskii as a representative. The Peasant Deputies sent four peasants and two members of the intelligentsia (a technical engineer and a doctor).¹²⁹

Some scholars have argued that the peasants acted like sheep, voting in a mindless herd for the Socialist Revolutionaries.¹³⁰ This was not the case. The peasantry thought through their voting, and significant numbers of them voted parties other than the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Moreover, when the Constituent Assembly elections are taken together with the developing Peasant Union organization and the zemstvo elections, it is clear that the peasantry voted as part of a local chapter of a national organization. This engagement with national projects reveals a peasantry attempting to engage the state on crucial issues--land, food, the war, popular political participation, civic rights, and so forth. In response, the elites in power rejected the peasants' attempts since the population's actions did not resemble the elite ideal of how the masses should act.

¹²⁹ GAKO, f. 1349, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 764-765, 779-780.

¹³⁰ See Radkey, Russia Goes to the Polls.

	Lists											
<i>uezd</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Viatka city	10	962	1682	100	1635	2000	4	11	4082	675	2474	53
Viatka <i>uezd</i>	102	571	32837	20	3670	655	87	287	2810	1014	11116	179
Glazov	159	443	58792	3517	2375	729	75	328	2145	558	30993	9033
Elabuga	147	552	66425	19015	2566	4901	545	51	3900	293	3823	104
Kotel'nich	31369	622	39210	52	822	250	112	199	3568	650	38406	170
Malmyzh	158	353	75590	19609	1664	140	116	176	2114	798	11004	148
Nolininsk	47	239	36950	13	2944	322	56	234	4510	313	11404	64
Orlov	139	456	42197	27	1819	346	41	218	3101	468	33884	160
Sarapul	167	393	57753	8705	1224	7857	1665	230	11988	1978	34115	178
Slobodskoi	108	911	50499	1585	1460	713	100	266	1825	1154	16476	185
Urzhum	53	291	87661	2892	14767	1088	88	282	4577	569	15693	73
Iaransk	81	535	62929	50	2675	166	51	334	3486	926	27564	112
Total	33140	6328	612525	55585	37621	19167	2940	2616	48106	9396	236952	10459
Rank	6	9	1	3	5	7	12	11	4	8	2	10

Table 3.3 Election results for the Constituent Assembly, Viatka Province

Totals by <i>uezd</i>	Valid	Invalid	Percentage Invalid	Potential Voters
City of Viatka	13,688	75	0.6	30,883
Viatka <i>uezd</i>	53,348	107	0.2	105,173
Glazov	109,147	412	0.3	190,956
Elabuga	102,322	77	0.08	151,546
Kotel'nich	116,030	544	0.5	168,526
Malmyzh	111,870	286	0.3	167,252
Nolinsk	57,096	137	0.2	87,068
Orlov	82,856	1,260	1.5	111,177
Sarapul	12,653	568	4.3	140,647
Slobodskoi	75,282	419	0.6	133,488
Urzhum	128,034	915	0.7	165,164
Iaransk	98,909	314	0.3	186,361
Total	1,074,835	5,414	0.5 (ave.)	1,638,241

Table 3.4 Voters of the Constituent Assembly

After the prolonged national ritual, the Constituent Assembly simply faded away.

After the Bolsheviks closed the Constituent Assembly in Petrograd, Nikolai Chaikovskii sent a frantic telegram to the Viatka provincial elections committee. Rather than protesting the forced termination, the committee quietly noted that no more money was coming in, so they ceased to meet.

Land Politics

In stark contrast to the Black Earth region, Viatka did not experience a wave of unauthorized peasant land seizures. This is due to the different peasant economies.

Viatka did not have an entrenched landlord tenure system or experience land hunger to the extent of the Black Earth. The peasantry owned 98.7 percent of all land, the largest

percentage of all the Russian European provinces.¹³¹ Villages in Viatka were also often surrounded by state (*kazennaia*) land. The peasantry of Viatka therefore had no one individual on which to focus their attention. Indeed, Viatka province was notable for being one of the calmest provinces in the spring and summer of 1917. This relative tranquility was even noted during a national congress of provincial commissars in Petrograd.¹³² The peasantry engaged in a dual process to obtain access to natural resources during 1917. On the one hand, they increasingly engaged in unauthorized actions, such as felling of trees and mowing and grazing of cattle in meadows. Yet on the other hand, the peasantry pursued a legal, interactive campaign with the state to win access to needed natural resources. The Viatka peasantry built upon existing discourses of justice and moral responsibility to justify both actions.

Land reform was not one of the Provisional Government's highest priorities. The state's main concern was to maintain an adequate food supply to the army and cities in order to continue the war effort and keep the people who had overthrown the tsarist regime, in part for not being able to feed them, satisfied. The government was intent therefore to maintain or increase land productivity. The Provisional Government delayed a major land reform until the calling of the Constituent Assembly. This promise of a

¹³¹ Gill, 192. Compiled from the 1917 census.

¹³² "Ob ispolnitel'nykh komitetikh," Kukarskaia zhizn, May 18, 1917, p. 2.

future state approved land redistribution became intertwined with peasant notions of the Constituent Assembly and the Peasant Union and provincial newspapers alike chanted that all land issues must be resolved by the Constituent Assembly. In the meantime, the state adopted minor land policies, such as allowing peasants to use the tsar's land, and establishing a system of multi-level Land Committees to prepare for a land reform, devise temporary solutions, resolve land disputes, and ensure reliable agricultural productivity.¹³³

In March, the Provisional Government established a Main Land Committee in Petrograd, and on April 21, called on the provinces to establish provincial and *uezd* level land committees. The law left the establishment of *volost* land committees up to the decision of the local populations. The provincial and *uezd* land committees did not have the power to make major land allotment decisions and were only supposed to prepare for the future land reform by making an inventory of land. In Viatka, the provincial land committee was dominated by *zemstvo* officials who were required to be Orthodox Christians,¹³⁴ while the *uezd* land committees had a mix of *zemstvo* workers and representatives from the *volosts*, regardless of religion. Despite their numerous problems

¹³³ "O zemel'nykh komitetakh," Elabuzhskaia malen'kaia narodnaia gazeta, May 28, 1917, p. 3. Atkinson, The End of the Russian Land Commune, 123.

¹³⁴ Tsentral'naia Dokumentatsiia Noeveishei istorii Kirovskoi Oblasti (hereafter TsDNIKO), f. 45, op. 1, d. 143, l. 48.

and limitations, the land committees played a significant role in land issues. Increasingly through the summer and fall, the *uezd* and *volost* land committees acted as independent mediators in conflicts between peasants and non-peasants as well as among the village population.

The *uezd* land committees began work in June and July.¹³⁵ While activity varied among *uezd* committees, some land committees were notably committed to pursuing land reform. The Iaransk land committee immediately sent out an order to all of its *volost* administrations to organize a *volost* land committee to aid in the gathering of data necessary to redistribute the land in the near future.¹³⁶ In Viatka *uezd*, peasants used the *uezd* land committee as an outside mediator when their struggles for land were denied by their *volost* administrative mechanisms.¹³⁷ The committees did not have a major impact on land relations however until the fall, when they had become more radical and began to push toward land reform. Before then, the committees lacked a sufficient local apparatus and, since they were composed largely of non-peasants, credibility with the peasantry. In late August the Elabuga *uezd* land committee decreed that all unpopulated land should be

¹³⁵ The Viatka *uezd* land committee began to meet from June 5, the Iaransk *uezd* land committee from June 17. Ten of the eleven *uezd* land committees were formed in June and July, by September all *uezds* had land committees, E. D. Popova, Krest'ianskie komitety Viatskoi gubernii v 1917 godu (Kirov: Kirovskoe otdelenie Volgo-Viatskogo knizhnogo izdatel'stva, 1966), 20.

¹³⁶ GAKO, f. 1368, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 6-7ob.

¹³⁷ TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 143, l. 53.

distributed, settled, and put under the plow by winter. It also attempting to limit the exploitation of tenant peasants by tackling stifling rent payments. Plots of rented land must be categorized by its quality and annual rent must be assessed accordingly, good land can not be charged over eight rubles, average land not over five, and bad not over three rubles per *desiatin*. Rent for glades was limited to five rubles and if the existing rent was higher, the leaser had to return the extra money.¹³⁸

Viatka was slower in establishing *volost* land committees than elsewhere in European Russia, once again showing that administrative power in the province resided on the *uezd* level, rather than the more independent and traditionally peasant-led *volost* level government. Besides Iaransk, most *volosts* did not establish land committees until the late fall; in Urzhum *uezd*, *volost* land committees began to be formed as late as October and November. Officials in the *volost* zemstvo often served on the *volost* land committee, with the leader of the *volost* zemstvo also head of the *volost* land committee.¹³⁹ The peasantry guaranteed that they had respected, literate, and experienced personnel to run their administrative affairs.

Peasants often used legal means to acquire access to land and resources in 1917, showing a willingness to engage the state and continue legal traditions established under

¹³⁸ GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 78, l. 12.

¹³⁹ See GAKO, f. 1362, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 1-44.

the tsarist regime. The people sent numerous petitions to *uezd* governments, evoking the state's moral responsibility to its people and grounding claims on a peasant sense of justice. Some peasants even used the nation's political and economic transition to buy land from merchants, fellow peasants, and the state.

Soviet historians have argued that there were two social wars in the countryside in 1917. The first was the peasantry acting as a collective body to depose the long-hated landlords and Church, and redistribute the land among themselves. The second social war was among the peasantry, in which the working peasantry attacked the bourgeois peasants, the *kulaks* and those who had separated from the commune. The peasantry as an exploited group tried to overcome their exploitation as a class, while the poor peasants acted out of primitive proletarian feelings. In Viatka, the dual conflict emerged as struggles with impersonal and personal moral relationships, rather than a relationship to the means of production. There were some instances of peasants acting against a perceived exploitative group or person. Peasants illegally seized church and monastery land, and in the southern part of the province where a few landlords still had estates, peasants took the landlord's belongings, but these were rare and local in nature. The main focus of peasant aggression was over public land. The peasantry as a whole wanted

to use public land, long held from use by the tsarist government. Peasants began to hoard wood as winter neared. The incidents of illegal felling grew in September and unauthorized use of forests became epidemic by December.

Most of the recorded land disputes involved only peasants. Almost immediately after the March Revolution, villagers began to act against separators from the commune. Consolidated private farms (*khutora*) and semi-consolidated private farms (*otruba*) had skyrocketed since the 1906 Stolypin Reforms.¹⁴⁰ By 1916, almost 24,000 peasant homes had established private farms with over 300,000 *des.* (810,000 acres) of land, out of a little over 14 million *des.* (37.8 million acres) changing the landscape of the Viatka countryside.¹⁴¹ This separation process was highly contentious in the village, but the communes had been powerless to stop the government-supported movement.

Tension and sparring between separators and their former communes had begun before the Revolution, but peasants were emboldened by the new order and acted against the separators. Villagers plowed separators' land, trampled grass and crops (*potrava*), dismantled boundary markers, and denied them access to forests. For example, when news of the revolution reached Petropavlovskaiia *volost*, Sarapul *uezd* peasants began to

¹⁴⁰ Peasants who had established *khutora* lived outside the village in homes built on their land, while *otruba* peasants farmed on private plots of land but still lived in the village. There were 14,243,656 *des.* (or 38,457,871.2 acres) of land in Viatka.

¹⁴¹ Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 78. From report to the Viatka governor about the progress of private farms.

forcefully return separators' land to the commune. The commune had a history of disputes with the up to three hundred individual farmers (who had established *otruba*). The commune believed that the separators had the better land and had cut off access to the meadows needed for grazing livestock. Peasants in the commune had been subject to fines and had even had their cattle confiscated as punishment for trespassing over the separators' land. Under duress, most of the separators agreed to return to the commune.¹⁴² Following the general trend of the peasant movement, attacks on separators followed the agricultural cycle, increasing in the spring, declining in late-summer and resuming their climb in August and September. In August the Kotel'nich *uezd* militia was called to stop peasant interference with separators' gathering of the harvest and protect separators from harm. The peasants fought off the militia and beat the separator to death.¹⁴³

Peasant action against the separators reflected social norms of justice. The separators had violated communal norms of land use and responsibility. Separating from the commune, "was a statement of disengagement from a nexus of mutual obligations and

¹⁴² Ibid., 105-7. Report of commission on clarification of relations between separators and peasants in communes. In April, peasants in Orlov *uezd* illegally plowed separators' land, 114. In May, in Glazov *uezd*, separators complained that peasants, influenced by soldiers returning from the front, seized their land, 132. In June, in Orlov *uezd* a separator complained that his fellow villagers were not allowing him to fell trees even though they had agreed to this in 1915. Peasants also not allow a separator to erect a structure on his farm. Other villages in Orlov tried to tempt separators back through a promise of more land than the separators once had in the commune, 139. In June, in Cherepana village in Petropavlovskaiia *volost*, Sarapul *uezd*, villagers plowed separators lands and destroyed their signs marking their private plots, 154.

¹⁴³ GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 78, l. 84; f. 1791, op. 6, d. 237, ll. 6-7.

expectations upon which the Russian peasant community's survival had been historically founded."¹⁴⁴ Villagers therefore attempted to right the wrongs through symbolic and concrete actions. They destroyed boundary markers demarcating separator land from the commune and prevented plowing and sowing of the land, thereby erasing the physical injustice and bringing all land back into the fold. Villagers prevented separators from reaping the benefits of their ill claims by disrupting their harvest. Finally, when separators would not comply, villagers relied on force, using violence and moral sanction to exact justice. It is important to note that peasant action in 1917 against separators was the crescendo of a decade-long struggle among the peasant community over the separation process. Villagers used the same methods, on a larger and more overt level, to fight separators in 1917 that they had been using in the past ten years.

The food supply was also a major concern for both peasant and state in 1917.

Three years of war had depleted the nation's grain reserves and the Provisional Government had to implement far-reaching policies to maintain the supply of food to the army and cities. On March 25, the state established a monopoly on grain and created a network of food committees (including provincial, *uezd*, and *volost* level committees) to oversee the collection of crops from the peasantry. The law instructed the *volost*

¹⁴⁴ Pallot, Land Reform in Russia, 171. Pallot provides a nuanced description of the various forms of peasant resistance to the Stolypin reforms in chapter six.

committees to determine the amount of grain that each peasant household needed, allow the household to keep an additional ten per cent in case of unforeseen events, and to take the remaining grain for state needs.¹⁴⁵ While the state fixed grain prices, they did not determine or monopolize most basic goods, such as salt, fuel, matches, and so forth. The state's grain policies created a means to obtain grain from the peasantry, but gave little material incentive for the population to sacrifice their crops.

State officials often resorted to playing on peasants' feelings of national pride and civic duty to give up grain. Collections of grain and money were held during celebrations of the Revolution, linking the new freedom to sacrifices of grain. Newspaper banners played on national unity, reading "Comrade peasants! Harvest grain for your starving brothers!"¹⁴⁶ In the fall in Urzhum *uezd*, the government displayed a poster urging peasants to sell their grain to the state. The poster framed the food crisis in nationalist terms. It equated the attempted counter-revolution of General Kornilov with the danger of famine, both threatening the existence of the Provisional Government. But, the poster declared, "if you, citizens, are conscious of the danger facing the country (*rodina*), you will aid it. Immediately bring grain to collection points...." The poster rebutted "lies,

¹⁴⁵ Gill, 49-51. There has recently been a number of quality works on the food-stuffs question during the Revolution. See Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914-1921*; Fraunholtz, "State Intervention and Local Control in Russia"; and Arthur DuGarm, "Grain and Revolution: Food Supply and Local Government in Tambov, Russia, 1917-1921" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1998).

¹⁴⁶ *Elabuzhskaia malen'kaia narodnaia gazeta*, May 27, 1917, pp. 2-3.

and dangerous and dark rumors” denying the existence of a grain monopoly. The poster created a dialectic between the positive image of “citizens” and the negative image of “people” (*liudi*). As in other state and elite discourse in 1917, the poster argued that a peasant became a citizen through good behavior that benefited the state. The poster began by addressing the “citizens of Urzhum *uezd*.” It warned the citizens that there are people who spread lies and engage in speculation. They are the “enemies of freedom who line their pockets from your grain.” These people have “their own interests” and not the state’s in mind. A citizen, the poster posited, does not believe these rumors, reports them to the authorities, and sacrifices grain.¹⁴⁷

As discussed in the previous chapter, while most peasants were willing to sacrifice grain in the first years of war, by 1917 the peasantry as a whole refused to surrender any more crops. In contrast to the relatively engaging peasant-state relationship regarding land and forests, the Viatka peasantry would not negotiate their grain supply. After giving up consecutive years of grain, the peasant cache was depleted. The population refused to threaten their own lives, when the state could not provide for them. The Provisional Government had not established a moral relationship with the population, in which the peasantry would agree to an amount of exploitation in exchange for the guarantee of certain rights, such as aid during times of famine.

¹⁴⁷ GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 237, l. 14.

The Provisional Government was unwilling to provide material incentives for the peasantry to give up their grain. The state bought grain well below the price that the population could get from speculators and inflation on manufactured goods outstripped the price of grain. Even though the state raised the price of grain, they were never able to offer a price equitable to manufactured goods. More importantly, the state failed to control the price and distribution of basic manufactured materials needed by the peasantry. The peasantry understood this bias and protested the state's establishment of fixed prices on agricultural products, demanding the introduction of fixed prices on manufactured goods needed in village life.¹⁴⁸

“On May 18 in the village of Gol’ian [Sarapul *uezd*], an unknown person appeared on horseback, yelling mother-curses at the Provisional Government. He shouted that, the Provisional Government keeps all of you famished since there is already no sugar, tobacco, merchandise, and wheat flour (*krupchatka*). They are already beginning to take grain..., and for all of this the Provisional Government is guilty.” The unknown rider yelled that the requisitioned grain supports the government's militia. The police attempted to arrest this “harmful person” on charges of causing alarm, but could not detain him. The unknown man put his horse at a gallop, aiming directly toward the

¹⁴⁸ See for example GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 463a, l. 112. The Uninskaia *volost* assembly in Glazov *uezd* issued a protest in September 1917 against the state's urban bias.

head of the police, while shouting even more mother curses. The police shot at the man but he got away. The police later enlisted the aid of three armed soldiers, but they could still not detain the unknown rebel.¹⁴⁹

The incident of the unknown rider is in a way a metaphor for the peasant-state relationship on foodstuffs. The horseman's actions represent the state's image of the peasantry as a rebellious, uncouth and unidentifiable mass, while the person of the horseman shows the elite's denial of the peasants of their political consciousness and agency--that someone else has to incite and speak for them. The incident also reveals the peasants' fears of the Provisional Government's grain policies.

Peasants worried that the state was attempting to take all of the food in the countryside. Upon the announcement of the grain monopoly, a rumor spread throughout Urzhum *uezd* that the Provisional Government was demanding all edible crops, and so was taking every potato and even sugar. Other rumors spread that the army did not even need food and that in Siberia there the grain monopoly did not even exist.

The peasants also complained that they simply did not have grain to give up. The harvest in much of Viatka was below normal in 1917, putting further strain on the population. In Elabuga and Iaransk *uezds*, for example, the harvest was bad and the

¹⁴⁹ GAKO, f. 582, op. 194, d. 5, ll. 39-39ob.

peasants lost almost all of the spring wheat from cold and wind.¹⁵⁰ In Iaransk *uezd*, many peasants lost significant portions of their bees during the 1916-17 winter from hunger and cold. Peasants had used the wax and honey from the hives as a cash crop and safeguard from starvation during lean times.¹⁵¹

Since state appeals to popular civic duty and the establishment of a monopoly on the grain market failed, it often resorted to force to get the peasants to give up their crops. Most of the organized peasant protests in the Viatka countryside concerned grain. In the late summer and fall, the peasantry resisted the state's attempts to inventory grain. Peasants often resisted passively, such as refusing to register or reporting incorrect quantities of grain.¹⁵² Upon hearing that the administration planned to seize the grain in *volost* grain stores, the peasants of four communes in Medianskaia *volost*, Viatka *uezd*, decided to act. Each commune gathered in a *skhod* and resolved to

¹⁵⁰ "Shag vpered da dva nazab s ogliadkoi po storonom," Elabuzhskaia malen'kaia narodnaia gazeta, May 3, 1917, pp. 1-2. Kukarskaia zhizn, July 30, 1917, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ "Ugroza pchelovodstvu," Kukarskaia zhizn, May 21, 1917, p. 2. Some peasants lost huge numbers of hives. One beekeeper had only forty out of 160 families remaining by Spring 1917.

¹⁵² GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 79, l. 3.

take all of the grain from their communal grain storage and redistribute it among all the villagers. One commune actually went as one to the store and took the keys from soldiers guarding the building.¹⁵³

Peasant resistance could also take more violent forms. The merchants often violently protested the administration's closure of local markets. In a village in Elabuga *uezd*, peasants beat up a member of the foodstuffs committee.¹⁵⁴ In Staro-Ven'inskaia *volost*, Sarapul *uezd*, peasants refused to thresh their grain. An army regiment came, but the peasants armed themselves and fought back. Two people died, and three were injured.¹⁵⁵ Some Tatar villages were notable for their resistance to the grain monopoly and grain requisitioning. Tatar villages in southern Viatka had a history of actively selling grain and other agricultural goods to the surrounding provinces. The grain monopoly especially hurt their economy and the Tatars fought back. For example, in Malmyzh *uezd*, 35 soldiers went into the predominantly Tatar *volosts* of Sarykbazhskaia, Kashkinskaia, and Iangulovskaia to inventory their grain. The Tatars fought back and the state arrested many peasants.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ GAKO, f. R-1322, op. 1a, d. 31. This is a case heard by the Revolutionary Tribunal in 1918. For more on the Tribunal, see Chapter 7.

¹⁵⁴ GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 462, l. 43.

¹⁵⁵ GARF, f. 1791, op. 6, d. 462, l. 32 and d. 79, l. 53.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, d. 463a, l. 88.

Conclusion

What is most striking about the end of the tsarist regime in Viatka countryside is how peaceful was the transition to a new government and how focused were the peasants on establishing a new political system. The peasantry did not focus on destroying an old order, but rather on establishing a new political system. They engaged the state through political participation and economic interaction over land. While peasants were at first content to follow cultural elites' rituals of power and instructions for political tutelage, by late summer, peasants had gained sufficient experience and their political ideals increasingly differed with their elite "leaders." As seen in the Peasant Union and election results, peasants demanded an equal voice in the political world, not just as followers of an "enlightened" intelligentsia. Most peasants wanted their own representatives who championed such peasant causes as the implementation of democratic government, land reform, and a just grain policy.

Elites in power, for their part, attempted to create peasant citizens based on long-held elitist notions of how peasants were supposed to act. The elites' restricted views, along with their liberal ideology, created a disconnect between peasant and state. While both sides wanted popular participation in the new Russia, they had different ideas of how the peasants should become citizens. The state's failure to accept popular peasant participation in the Russian nation's re-invention must be placed alongside its other major

shortcomings --the war, land reform, and food--in an assessment of why the Provisional Government could never achieve the stable popular support it needed for its survival.

CHAPTER 4

PEASANT RULE OR BOLSHEVIK HEGEMONY? THE LAND REDISTRIBUTION PROCESS, PEASANT-STATE RELATIONS, AND SOVIET STATE BUILDING

Upon seizing power, the Bolsheviks issued “The Decree on Land,” (October 26, 1917).¹ This law, legally guaranteeing peasant appropriation of the land, was one of the first proclamations of the new rulers, showing the significance of the land question and the Bolsheviks’ desperate need to gain peasant support. While scholars acknowledge the historical significance of the Decree as a revolutionary state supported land reform, many historians see it as a *post facto* legal acceptance of the peasant land takeovers of 1917.² Western scholars argue that in the first six months of the Soviet era, peasants ruled the

¹ Second Decree of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Worker, Soldier, and Peasant Deputies. Sbornik dokumentov po zemel’nomu zakonodatel’stvu SSSR i RSFSR. 1917-1954 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1954), 11-12. Hereafter Sbornik.

² There is a wealth of studies that examine the intricacies of The Decree on Land. See, for example I. I. Mints, ed. Leninskii dekret o zemle v deistvii: sbornik statei (Moscow: Nauka, 1979); D. S. Rozenblium, Zemel’noe pravo RSFSR (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1925), 33-47. The Bolsheviks adopted the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party land policy for the Decree since the new rulers saw the transfer of land to the peasantry as propaganda and an immediate method of gaining peasant support. See Atkinson, The End of the Russian Land Commune 1905-1930, ch. 10; John Channon, “The Bolsheviks and the Peasantry: the Land Question During the First Eight Months of Soviet Rule,” The Slavonic and East European Review 66 (October 1988): 594-600.

countryside and divided the land as they saw fit. Soviet scholars believed that the Soviet administration quickly achieved wide support among the peasants, although the peasants still redistributed land by themselves. The resolutions reviewed in this chapter show that both Soviet and Western approaches need to be modified.

Throughout 1918, the peasantry en masse turned to the administrative bodies to help solve intra-village land disputes. The 1917 Decree was therefore a *de jure* law and only the beginning of a complex relationship between the new Soviet state and its peasant population. This chapter examines the transition from Provisional Government to Soviet administration in the countryside, and the process of land redistribution among the peasantry. It shows the complex divisions and internal struggles permeating the peasant community and highlights the willingness of many peasants to use the Bolshevik laws and state administration for their own good.³

Peasants built on a long tradition of using the state to legitimize their actions and to help resolve intra-village disputes. As early as the seventeenth century, peasants had used official court and petition processes when communal organs and customs could not

³ The redistribution of land and resources in the countryside in 1917-18 has had a prominent position in both Soviet and Western historiography. Most Soviet historians viewed the redistribution in largely class terms--as a struggle by the poor and middle peasant against the *kulak*, landlord, and former state power. Recent Western scholarship has argued that the process of the reallocation of land was carried out by an autonomous peasantry with little influence from the new Soviet state. See Figes, Peasant Russia, Civil War; and Michael C. Hickey, "Peasant Autonomy, Soviet Power and Land Redistribution in Smolensk Province, November 1917-May 1918," Revolutionary Russia 9 (June 1996): 19-32.

solve their problems.⁴ This legal interaction between peasant and local state administration grew in the late tsarist era with the establishment of the *volost* courts.⁵ In the early Soviet era then, rather than autonomously distribute the land, Viatka's peasants in unprecedented numbers used the government administration to help them through this momentous process, shaping the primitive local government just as it shaped them.

The Transition Period: Winter 1917

By 1917, the Viatka peasantry controlled much of the arable land. Landlord estates, the target of peasant land takeovers in the Black Earth Region, were virtually nonexistent in Viatka. While there were a few estates in the southern districts, squires accounted for .02 percent of the total population and owned only 2.4 percent of the land.⁶ In 1905, there were only 115 noble estates, half of which had 100 *des.* of land or less. By comparison, there were over two thousand nobles with land in Tambov province, of

⁴ Jennifer Anderson, "Gender Role Construction, Morality, and Social Norms in Early Modern Russia" (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 2001).

⁵ See for example Popkins, "Peasant Experiences of the Late Tsarist State," and "Code Versus Custom?"

⁶ Sadyrina, *Oktiabr v Viatskoi gubernii*, 13.

whom approximately 1,300 owned over 100 *des.* of land.⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter, much of the Viatka peasants' extra-legal activity in 1917 centered on use of state land and forests.

There was not a complete redistribution of the land (a "Black Repartition") in Viatka during 1917.⁸ This lack of autonomous action was in stark contrast to the Black Earth region, where peasants took over estates and divided the land and resources among themselves. In the Black Earth region, the peasant communes may have acted as "autonomous agents" in the agrarian revolution, rejecting early Soviet state attempts to organize the population and guide land reform.⁹ In Viatka, the opposite occurred. The peasant communes, as well as individual peasants, sought out the state first to give their actions legitimacy and later to resolve intra-village disputes.

During the winter and early spring of 1917-18, many of Viatka's villages reapportioned land and resources to fit better the new social situation. They began to incorporate and redistribute public (*kazennaia*) land only in the winter and spring of

⁷ *Statistika zemlevladieniia 1905 g. Svod dannykh po 50-ti guberniiam Evropeiskoi Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Tsentral'nyi statisticheskii komitet M. V. D., 1907), 50-51 and 74-75.

⁸ The idea of a Black Repartition, in which villagers take all available land, especially the coveted landlord's land, and divide into household allotments based on number of laborers, has mythical qualities attached to it. The Black Repartition was supposed to be the peasantry's utmost dream--to have all the land and to be free from the hated landlord and state authorities. While some type of large redistribution of the land occurred in the Black Earth region, it did not happen in Viatka.

⁹ Hickey, 19; Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*, 67.

1918, well after the Decree on Land. These actions were done in cooperation with the new Soviet state apparatus, revealing a strong peasant-state relationship. They also affected the peasant-state relationship in the first six months of Soviet power.

There were some instances in Viatka of extra-legal peasant seizures of land resources. However, continuing the trend from earlier in 1917, peasants simultaneously engaged in extra-legal and legal acts to obtain their aims. Peasant appropriation of land, forests, and agricultural resources reached its climax in the winter of 1917-18. Peasants finished the harvest and had less to do during this time. Winter was also a time of scarcity, when peasants had a greater need for many historically restricted resources, such as public forests.

Many Soviet scholars have emphasized the peasantry's violence and spontaneity in seizing resources in order to show long-standing primitive class tensions between peasants and nobles in the Russian countryside.¹⁰ Indeed, there were some instances when peasants violently destroyed grain and property. For example, in November 1917,

¹⁰ See P. N. Pershin, Agrarnaia revoliutsiia v Rossii: Agrarnye preobrazovaniia velikoi oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii (1917-1918 gg.) (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), two volumes.

in Morozovskaia *volost*, Kotel'nich *uezd*, peasants burned buildings, grain, livestock, and agricultural implements of a local estate. Most of the seizures occurred in southern Viatka, where most of the squires' estates were located.¹¹

Mills were also frequent targets of peasant action because they stored much-needed food and wood and were long-coveted expensive instruments in agricultural production. In Malmyzh, there were four separate instances in which peasant communities seized mills, drove away the owner or manager, and redistributed the goods stored inside. The mills had a variety of owners--a private landowner, a miller, a fortress, and the state.¹² Unlike the estate, in which general class tension with nobles and landlords presumably influenced peasant actions, the mill was a symbol unto itself of agricultural potential.

Such violent behavior was not the norm for Viatka's peasants, contrary to what Soviet scholars argued. Most of the peasantry's extra-legal actions involved mass non-violent, but unauthorized felling of trees, accenting the significance of forest agriculture

¹¹ Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetской vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 224. Telegram of aide to the head of the Kotel'nich region militia, 29 November 1917. This is the only case that I found where peasants destroyed such valuable items as grain and livestock. There were at least seven similar instances of peasants seizing estate property in Elabuga and Malmyzh *uezds*, 225-226.

¹² I. P. Emel'ianov, ed., Oktiabr'skaia sotsialisticheskaja revoliutsiia v Udmurtii: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov (1917-1918 gg.) (Izhevsk: Udmurtskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1957), report of the militia chief of Malmyzh *uezd*, 205-206.

in Viatka.¹³ This behavior increased in the winter, when peasants needed wood to heat their homes. The Viatka land college complained in February 1918 that there was “massive, rapacious felling of state, former appanage, monastery, church, privately-held and even communal forests.” This was causing “huge damage to the forest economy and the interests of the whole state.”¹⁴ The state administration’s couching of forest pillaging in terms of national security demonstrates the significance of forestry to the national economy. The state relied on wood for basic necessities such as railroad supplies, fuel, paper, and building materials. It also needed wood to help heat the cities. Viatka province was one of largest exporters of wood to the other provinces in European Russia. In all of the state’s various incarnations (the tsarist, Provisional Government, and Soviet), the defense of forests was therefore one of its highest priorities. State administrators made decrees against illicit use of forest materials, placed guards around forests, and

¹³ There are several cases of unauthorized peasant use of forests. Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetsskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, report of the head of Malmyzh district militia, December 1, 1917, 225-226; report of Ankushinsk *volost* land committee, December 8, 1917, 231. The report cites between 13 and 15 instances of mass felling of trees; GAKO, f. R-1287, op. 1, d. 3, l. 14.

¹⁴ GAKO, f. R-1287, op. 1, d. 8, l. 9. The Glazov *uezd* land section also complained of massive illegal felling in February 1918. It announced that peasants were felling trees, especially in state forests, and denying forest materials to supply the city of Glazov. The land section called on the “citizens” of the city to demand the *volost* land committee’s certification every time they buy wood from a seller. It also demanded that the *volost* land committees stop felling by sending armed brigades to confiscate illegally felled trees. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekinomikoi (hereafter RGAE), f. 478, op. 6, d. 763, ll. 4-5, 22-22ob.

even sent armed forces to stop peasant felling of trees. The significance that the state put on peasant felling shows that it saw the population as a potential threat to its well being.

The unending central-and provincial-level proclamations against felling show that the central authorities were unable to stop peasants who needed forest materials and simply ignored the decrees. As K. P. Metelev, the first Commissar of the Viatka Land Section (*zemotdel*), stated, “our published instructions on guarding forests are not having the desired results. It is very unfortunate, but it is a consistent fact that our directives vanish into thin air (*visnut v vozdukh*).”¹⁵ Many village and *volost* authorities often did not attempt to enforce the anti-felling laws.¹⁶

The peasant and state’s continued struggle over the forests shows their ambivalent relationship. Here was one area where peasants refused to abide by Soviet decrees and, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the peasantry did not support many of the new Soviet state’s policies. Soviet taxation, mobilization into the Red Army, and food requisitioning drew cool and often violent reactions from the peasantry. But it would be

¹⁵ Vtoroi Viatskii gubernskii s’ezd sovetov krest’ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov (Viatka: Tipografiia pechatnik, 1918), 28.

¹⁶ GAKO, f. R-3238, op. 1, d. 2, l. 22. The Glazov *uezd* ispolkom in March 1918 complained that every day there was massive felling of trees, but *volost* officials and village elders did not take any measures to stop it. The ispolkom ordered the *volost* land *otdels*, village elders, and village leaders (*desiatniks*) to “the most decisive measures” to stop felling and to request guards or other aid if needed. See also, GAKO, f. R-3238, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 1-1ob.

wrong to conclude that the peasants were completely opposed to Soviet rule because concurrently, peasants adopted Soviet land laws and used the state to help solve village problems.

Peasants often used both extra-legal and legal methods simultaneously to obtain their desired results. For example, in the fall of 1917, in Urzhum *uezd*, a commune in Terebilovskaia and Petrovskaia *volosts* and the city of Urzhum fought over the division of the estate of V.S. Depreis. The peasants seized the forest and used its firewood, while simultaneously appealing to the regional land committee for aid. The peasants stated that the commune had documents that the estate was owned in trust. After the regional land committee granted rights to both Urzhum city and the villages to collect firewood, the villages put up a guard to keep city dwellers away.¹⁷

Some villages even employed the Decree on Land to help their cause. For example, in January 1918, peasants of Bylrechensk commune, in Vodozerskaia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd* wrote to the *volost* land committee, and cited the Decree that the forest belongs to all the people of the Russian Republic, not the state. They requested the *volost* land committee to stop individuals who aimed to seize and fell the forest.¹⁸

¹⁷ GAKO, f. 1362, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 22ob, 31, 37-37ob.

¹⁸ GAKO, f. R-1287, op. 1, d. 3, l. 11.

In most cases, peasants cooperated with the changing local administration. The Provisional Government rural apparatus transformed into Soviet organs in the winter of 1917-18. The transition was gradual; many soviets replaced the *uezd*-level zemstvo administration in February and March, but the majority of *volost* zemstvo personnel remained in their administrative posts up to the spring of 1918. In Malmyzh *uezd*, ispolkoms were established in all the *volosts* in January, but the zemstvo was still being eliminated in April. In Orlov *uezd*, *volost* zemstva were liquidated in the beginning of January, but *volost* soviets were still being organized in April. So, in some areas, dual power only emerged during the winter.¹⁹ Soviets were established, but the zemstvo administration temporarily remained in power.²⁰

Peasants did not attempt to establish autonomous bodies to administer the land redistribution. Most *volost* land committees in Urzhum *uezd*, for example, were

¹⁹ Timkin makes a similar argument, *Smutnoe vremia na Viatke*.

²⁰ Iu. N. Timkin, "Bolshevik i viatskoe zemstvo v oktjabre 1917-marte 1918 gg.," in *Viatskomu zemstvu--130 let: Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii 8-9 Oktabria 1997goda*, N. P. Gur'ianova and V. E. Musikhin, eds. (Kirov: Kirovskaia ordena pocheta oblastnaia nauchnaia biblioteka imeni A. I. Gertsena, 1997), 113; *Smutnoe vremia na Viatke*, 43; *Vtoroi Viatskii gubernskii s'ezd sovetov krest'ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, in *Glazov uezd*, the *uezd* zemstvo was abolished only in March or April 1918 because the soviet did not have the finances to liquidate the previous administration. 37, 57, 67, 74; GAKO, f. R-879, op. 1, d. 75, ll. 566-572 contains two petitions from zemstvo personnel who subsequently worked for the *uezd* executive committee (ispolkom) asking for higher wages. Clearly the relationship between zemstvo and soviet administrators was tolerable but not always harmonious. On the tensions within the zemstvo between professional obligations and political allegiance and the demise of the zemstvo in early 1918, see Rosenberg, "The Zemstvo in 1917 and its fate Under Bolshevik Rule," 403-416. I discuss the transition in the countryside from zemstvo to Soviet rule, including the personnel changes more fully in the following chapter.

composed of zemstvo employees and Provisional Government administrators. Many of the heads of the *volost* land committees also served as the heads of the *volost* zemstvo administration.²¹

Alongside the dissolution of the local Provisional Government, *uezd* and *volost* land committees also quietly disbanded and allowed an easy transfer to the new land sections.²² The transfer occurred in some places even before the land section of the provincial soviet on March 8 instructed land organs to transform into land sections of their soviets.²³ For example, in Novo-Multanskaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd*, the *volost* land committee on February 3, 1918 heard a resolution from the provincial congress of soviets of peasant deputies to reorganize land committees. The committee heard applications from peasants but decided to postpone any decision on them until the formation of a new land committee. A month later, a new land section met, composed of fifteen representatives from local villages. The all-new personnel immediately began to hear

²¹ GAKO, f. 1362, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 9-26. In a survey of the Urzhum *volost* land committees, I found that only the Toktai-Beliaksii *volost* land committee was composed solely of peasants.

²² GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 79, ll. 135-136, 144. In Verkhodvorskaia *volost*, Orlov *uezd*, on December 16 a *volost* soviet was formed and governed alongside the zemstvo administration until January 14, 1918, when the zemstvo was abolished and the *volost* elected a new ispolkom. On March 11 the peasants of Buranovskaia *volost* met at a general meeting of 69 representatives from the communes and “freed the elders (*stariki*)” from service on the land committee, TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 15, d. 1, l. 2ob.

²³ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 41, l. 16. For example, Chepetskaia *volost*, Viatka *uezd* reorganized their land section on January 21, 1918, GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 4 ots, l. 10.

petitions from peasants on the redistribution of land.²⁴ Similar trends happened in other *volosts* of Viatka. In March and April 1918, the peasants gathered a communal *skhod* in which they elected a representative to the *volost* land section. Interestingly, these *skhods* would almost always be solely male, in contrast to meetings in which the commune initially divided land. Even though women still dominated in sheer numbers in the countryside, peasants saw politics as a male occupation.²⁵

Reading the Laws: Initiating Land Redistribution

The documents show that the land redistribution process was highly contested, revealing deep cleavages within the village in 1918. Russia's industrialization, growth of capitalist economic relations, evolution of agricultural technology, and transformation of the land tenure system put stress on the already contentious traditional peasant relations. On top of this, the war and revolution took away young males, grain, and livestock, which increased the daily strain on the peasant household. Peasant discourse surrounding land in the early Soviet period was therefore not only political, but it also represented a

²⁴ TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 18, d. 1, ll. 2-9. In Kliuchevskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd*, the *volost* zemstvo and the soviet temporarily existed together in February 1918, but the soviet took over power by March, TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 6, d. 7, ll. 9, 13-14.

²⁵ TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 59, d. 2, ll. 1-2, 5-6ob, 7-8, 16-17. These were general *skhods*, averaging almost 90 people. I determined the *skhods*' gender makeup from signatures following the resolution. Viatka *uezd* also had an exclusively male composition of *volost* land sections, GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 4ots, ll. 10-18, 21, 60-61ob.

mode through which peasants were able to discuss village tensions.²⁶ The new Soviet state, through the land sections, became the mediator and beneficiary of village divisions, as peasants engaged the state to help solve their problems.

The redistribution of land and resources was complicated and protracted. Beginning in the first months of 1918, villages began to divide up the land among themselves. Villages resolved to redistribute the land in the winter months but they were often unable to physically divide it into allotments until late spring and early summer. Spring came late to Viatka (May 1918 is still the coldest on record) delaying the thaw and spring sowing.²⁷ In many villages, peasants began to use newly acquired land and resources on a provisional basis in the summer of 1918. Approximately two-thirds of the villages redistributed the land in some manner.²⁸ Some fully leveled all the land (arable, farmstead, meadow, and so forth), while others had a more limited or partial redistribution of a portion of the land. The duration of the division was not uniform;

²⁶ Figes presents a nuanced version of the social tensions in the countryside during the Revolution in “Peasant Farmers and the Minority Groups of Rural Society: Peasant Egalitarianism and Village Social Relations During the Russian Revolution (1917-1921),” in Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 378-401.

²⁷ The average temperature for May 1918 was 3.8 degrees (c.), while the average temperature is 10 degrees (c). M. O. Frenkel, “Klimat,” in Entsiklopediia zemli Viatskoi, t. 7, Priroda (Kirov: Oblastnaia pisatel’skaia organizatsiia, 1997), 144, 155.

²⁸ Kabanov, Krest’ianskoe khoziaistvo v usloviakh ‘voennogo kommunizma’, 60-61. According to a 1922 survey, almost every village in the Black Earth region (94 percent) redistributed the land. In the Urals (Viatka and Perm provinces), 69 percent of villages surveyed had redistributed land, while in the northern region, 63 percent redistributed land.

some villages divided land for one year, while others extended it for multiple years.²⁹

Villages often conducted a series of repartitions, and the redistribution process continued throughout the remaining years of this study. It is therefore important to see the villages' redistribution of land and resources as more than a single event transpiring in a raucous *skhod*.³⁰ Instead, peasants meditated on the divisions, waited for administrative guidelines and approval, quarreled and fought over the spoils, and often re-divided assets a number of times. The Soviet state played a crucial role in all of this. The state established new laws and administrative organs that guided the redistribution process and acted as a mediator among the peasantry, helping to solve village quarrels.

After the villages and communes actually had the land in their possession, new conflicts erupted among the peasantry. The redistribution of land and resources brought to the surface long-standing and complex conflicts based on social standing within the village, kinship ties, and inter-village relations. In order to resolve these conflicts, many peasants actively sought out government help.

²⁹ Materialy po zemel'noi reforme 1918 goda. Raspredelenie zemli v 1918 godu (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo narodnogo komissariata zemledeliia, 1919), 1-2; Vtoroi Viatskii gubernskii s''ezd sovetov krest'ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov, 43, 79.

³⁰ Figes makes a similar argument to view the redistribution of land as an ongoing process. He, however, sees redistribution as implemented solely by peasants without reference to the state. Peasant Russia, Civil War, 102-103.

The October Decree on Land and subsequent laws in December 1917 establishing land committees provided a general framework for implementing land and resource redistributions.³¹ However, it was not until the publication of the Fundamental Law on the Socialization of Land (*Osnovnoi zakon o sotsializatsii zemli*) on February 19, 1918 (new style) that the peasantry and the land committees were given specific laws on who had the right to use the land and forests and how the controversial redistributions should be carried out. Published on the anniversary of the 1861 peasant emancipation from serfdom, the Fundamental Law was supposed to symbolize peasants' true emancipation.³² Whereas the state in the 1861 emancipation bound the newly freed serfs to a life of redemption payments for their land, the 1918 Fundamental Law spelled out the Soviet state's guarantee to redistribute land and agricultural goods to all working people for free (art. 2-7).

The Fundamental Law contained 52 clauses clarifying how the local soviet was to oversee the distribution of land. The Law became the framework for redistribution as

³¹ The November 3, 1917 regulation approved the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets' June 23, 1917 resolution on the activities of the *volost* land committees that supported the committees' oversight of peasant seizure and annexation of estate property. The more detailed December 4, 1917 decree on land committees provided a specific framework of *volost*, *uezd*, provincial, and central land committees, as well as the committees' tasks, responsibilities, and finances. *Sbornik*, 13-14, 16-23.

³² The Bolshevik government changed the calendar on February 1, 1918 and moved thirteen days ahead, so February 1 became February 14. Therefore, the Fundamental Law was not really published on the anniversary of the emancipation, but still coincided with the calendar date of the emancipation. Atkinson, 172.

well as future struggles over the land. According to article 12, land was to be redistributed to the working people in an equal manner and based on the historical land-tenure system of the region. The Law gave preferable treatment to population groups within the category of “working people,” however. Priority went to “landless and small land owners of the local tillers of the land as well as local agricultural workers (*rabochie*.)” The second-tier group was “those who arrived at the given locale after the publication of the law on the socialization of land who are part of the land tilling population.” After the above two groups, the non-land tilling population (*nezemledel’cheskoe naselenie*) who registered with the local land section could receive land (art. 22). The Fundamental Law also described the order of land redistribution for gardening, fisheries, forestry, beekeeping and so forth.

The peasants were not supposed simply to divide up the land. Land that peasants did not own before 1917 (state, bank, church, appanage, and landlord land) went into a reserve land fund (*zapasnyi zemel’nyi fond*). This fund would be given to landless and small land holders only after there was a land survey and census of the population. The census would also determine the number of eaters (mouths to feed) and workers.

Although the Fundamental Law guaranteed the right to use land regardless of gender, it gave favorable treatment to adult males. The new Soviet system thereby continued the

peasant practice and tsarist state law of treating males as more valuable than females.³³

The Law counted males suffering from physical or mental debilitating sickness between the ages of eighteen and sixty as the loss of a whole worker, while women lost in the same age group were counted as eighty percent of a worker. Likewise, young men between sixteen and eighteen were counted as seventy-five percent of a whole worker, while young women were only sixty percent. Since land was to be divided by the number of workers and eaters in a household, this unequal division could greatly affect the amount of land a family received.³⁴

Even more important for the resolution of the new conflicts, the Second Viatka Province Congress of Peasant, Worker, and Soldier Deputy Soviets in April 1918 agreed on “Provisional Instructions” (*vremennye instruktsii*) for land sections to review the implementation of land redistribution.³⁵ The Instructions restated and expanded upon the central provisions of the Fundamental Law. It also went beyond the Fundamental Law by organizing the redistribution process. While allowing divisions of any form, the

³³ Tsarist tax law and peasant practice used the variables of age and gender to create a formula for land and tax obligation. See Francis M. Watters, “The Peasant and the Village Commune,” in The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia, Wayne S. Vucinich, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968) 144.

³⁴ Sbornik, 23-31. The Law also contained clauses guaranteeing insurance from such catastrophes as fire, livestock moraine, death, illness, drought, and crop failure (art. 14-16); established a state monopoly of grain (art. 19); described the legal process of migration (art. 27-34); enumerated forbidden uses of land (art. 50-53), and so forth.

Instructions specified that the commune had to allot the amount of land by eater, regardless of gender (art. 35) and a majority of votes of citizens eighteen years and older, also regardless of gender (art. 36). These laws departed from tsarist law, that called for two-thirds of the households to agree to a redistribution of the land, and distributed power and legal authority to those in the village who traditionally had less of a say, namely younger peasants and women. The *volost*, *uezd*, and provincial land section committees all used the Provisional Instructions as the basis of their decisions during 1918. Finally, some regions also held congresses of *volost* land sections in March and April 1918 that passed resolutions reinforcing and supplementing the provincial and national land laws. They also worked to mend local land disputes. For example, at the second regional meeting of *volost* land sections of Malmyzh *uezd*, delegates resolved a conflict between Rozhkov and Viatskaia-Gora villages over the repartition of rented land.³⁶

The peasantry was quite willing to use the new Bolshevik state apparatus for their own good both to gain approval in the redistribution process and to resolve internal disputes. The land section was an arena in which peasants could challenge the village's power dynamics by using established laws. The first half of 1918 witnessed a steady

³⁵ Vtoroi Viatskii gubernskii s'ezd sovetov krest'ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov, 95-103. The Provisional Instructions can also be found in GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 63-66ob.

³⁶ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 760, l. 27; d. 761, l. 65; d. 101, ll. 2-7ob. Elabuga had a congress in February, Malmyzh in January, Iaransk in March, Vtoroi Viatskii gubernskii s'ezd sovetov krest'ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov, 52, 57, 85.

stream of villages and communes reallocating land and resources. Villages sent their redistribution decrees to the *volost* land section for approval, as the Provisional Instructions demanded (art. 42). While the *volost* land section routinely approved the redistributions, there were instances in which the administrative organ ordered the village to reconsider their actions.

Mediating Conflict: Village Disputes and the Soviet State

Tens of thousands of peasants addressed *volost* and *uezd*-land sections and at least several hundred peasants and communes appealed to the provincial land section committee to resolve disputes over redistributions of land and resources and to better their situation during this critical time. The Kotel'nich *uezd* land section stated in August 1918 that, "during the period of land redistribution, fifty to a hundred citizens, if not more, appeared every week" to appeal to the state for help.³⁷ Indeed, between February (when the *uezd* land section was established) and August 1918 in Kotel'nich *uezd* alone, the *uezd* land section received 12,389 petitions regarding land from citizens.³⁸ This wave of peasant petitions to the state constituted a mass political movement of unprecedented proportions in the Russian countryside.³⁹

³⁷ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 92, l. 372ob.

³⁸ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1 d. 74; GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 92, l. 372ob; and RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 765, 766. The examples in this chapter come from my analysis of 172 land section cases and resolutions, 113 in 1918 and 59 in 1919. Many of these cases are found in RGAE f. 478, op. 6, d. 761. They are appeals by peasants and communes in the spring and summer of 1918 from across Viatka province to the highest local

In agreement with the Fundamental Law (art. 9) and Provisional Instructions (art. 31, 33, 48), peasant appeals were first directed to the village (*sel'skii zemotdel*) or *volost* land section (*volzemotdel*).⁴⁰ If the party was not satisfied with the result, they could appeal to the *uezd* land section (*uzemotdel*), and finally the provincial land section (*gubzemotdel*). There were also a few cases of peasants going to the national level and having their case heard by a central committee in Moscow. In any regard, the whole process took many months with uncertain results. Peasants turned to the Soviet administrative body without hesitation, often circumventing their local land section. In April 1918, the Glazov ispolkom (the executive governing committee) complained to the *volost* land sections that “lately citizens are appearing at the *uezd* land section with various applications about allotment land, allowing land redistributions, and other land matters, without [the necessary] applications from their *volost* land section.” The

administrative resolution body. The cases are special because they had already passed through *volost* and *uezd* land otdels. Nevertheless, the body of documents gives an intimate portrait of the conflicts among the peasantry after they had seized landlord, church, state, and *khutor* land.

³⁹ It is difficult to find a comparable movement or government agency to compare to the peasant petitions to the land sections. The number of peasant petitions in 1918 eclipses the petitions movement in 1905-1906 (for example, O. G. Bukhovets documents only 200 petitions from Samara and Voronezh *uezds*), but most of these petitions were directed to the central government in St. Petersburg. A better comparison is cases submitted to the *volost* courts, but the courts had a wider scope of cases and were established as an agency of intra-village social conflict mediation. The courts therefore lacked the overt political connotations of the land sections. See O. G. Bukhovets, Sotsial'nye konflikty i krest'ianskaia mental'nost v Rossiiskoi imperii nachala XX veka: Novye materialy, metody, rezul'taty, *Desiat novykh uchebnikov po istoricheskim ditsiplinam* (Moscow: Mosgararkhiv, 1996), part two.

⁴⁰ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 41, l. 16.

peasant petitions drive did not cease, for the following month, the ispolkom ordered the *volost* land sections to announce that peasants must submit complaints to the *volost* land sections, rather than to the *uezd* level administration.⁴¹

While most of the *volost* land sections were probably composed entirely of peasants, the *uezd* land section was usually a mix of agronomists, peasant officials, and city politicians, showing that the peasants willingly engaged non-peasants in the land distribution proceedings. In 1918, the provincial-level land section was composed almost entirely of non-peasants—out of 22 people on the committee, there was one statistician, eight agronomists, one forester, an official from the forestry soviet, a land surveyor, the head of the land division, and four “knowledgeable people” (*sveduiushchiia litsa*). The professions of the remaining five members is unknown.⁴²

⁴¹ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 763, ll. 18, 28. Narkomzen (the People’s Commissariat on Land) made the same complaint in May 1919, that petitions and complaints on land matters must go to the *volost* land section first, GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 76-76ob.

⁴² RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 761, l. 9. According to the December 4, 1917 decree on land committees, the *volost* land committee was supposed to be composed of representatives from the public, elected by direct and secret ballot on a ratio of one representative for every 500 people. The *uezd* land committee was to be composed of one representative from each *volost* land committee, one representative from the *uezd* zemstvo, one member of the *uezd* city дума, six representatives from the *uezd* soviet of peasant deputies, two representatives from the soviets of worker and soldier deputies. Sbornik, 16. The composition of the committees changed in 1918 due to the new political arena. For example, zemstvo and дума representatives were rarely seen on the *uezd* land committees after the winter of 1917-18. In 1918, the Commissar of the Viatka zemotdel was K. P. Metelev who in January 1918 was a Left SR or SR Maximalist. When the soviet government formed the provincial-level zemotdel, it was made up of three Bolsheviks and three SR’s. The Viatka zemotdel had difficulty initially, because many of the tsarist-era personnel refused to work for the Bolsheviks. Vtoroi Viatskii gubernskii s’ezd sovetov krest’ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov, 27; GARF, f. 393, op. 3, d. 104, l. 1.

Furthermore, the peasantry understood that their conflicts would not be judged by peasant customary law, but rather by a strict reading of the Fundamental Law and Provisional Instructions. For example, a lone peasant in Iaransk *uezd* complained to the gubzemotdel that, “under the leveling of land in the villages almost no one supports the Provisional Instructions from 18 April 1918, such that Iaransk *uezd* zemotdel publishes its own instructions.” The gubzemotdel reviewed the matter, finding that in fact the Iaransk Uezd Land Section followed the Provisional Instructions and that leveling of land in almost all the villages complied with the Provisional Instructions.⁴³ The Soviet state distributed the land laws throughout the countryside (in part as mass propaganda) and peasants appear to have read and understood their significance.⁴⁴

⁴³ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 761, ll. 74-74ob.

⁴⁴ The Soviet state had distributed 1000 copies of the Fundamental Law throughout the province by April 1918. The state wanted the population to know about the redivision of the land as well as the restrictions of migration, which I will discuss later. In July 1918, the provincial agitation section of the Commissariat of Military Affairs asked the provincial land section for a hundred brochures of the Fundamental Law on the socialization of land. The Fundamental Law was also published in many of the major newspapers, such as Novaia zhizn, GAKO, f.R-1062, op.1, d.5, l. 157; Vtoroi Viatskii gubernskii s'ezd sovetov krest'ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov, 28-29. Atkinson, 169.

Kinship disputes	16
Division procedure disputes	27 ⁴⁵
Soldier complaints	4
Clergy complaints	2
Reserve land fond disputes	6
Class conflict	3
Peasant separator disputes	14
City-village disputes	3
Inter-village disputes	9
Temporary or new dweller disputes	19
Other ⁴⁶	10
Total	113

Table 4.1: Zemotdel cases in 1918

Conflicts over land centered on three issues—the method in which the commune decided to redistribute the land, the quality of land given to an individual, and attempts by individuals to exploit the redistribution process. There were numerous cases of peasants who felt that the commune’s formula for redistribution of the land was unjust. Many scholars argue that the commune reemerged as the hegemonic power in the village in 1917-18 to fill in for the absence of a viable local government and to fulfill its traditional obligation in the redistribution of land allotments. The commune did indeed play a central role in the redistribution of land and resources. It determined who would

⁴⁵ One of the cases involved 53 petitions and resolutions for additional land allotments.

⁴⁶ Other disputes included: struggles over *artel*, experimental station, and post office land; peasant attempts to sell land to his fellow villagers; peasants trying to obtain land closer to their village; and a group of anarchist city dwellers petitioning to form a commune.

receive land allotments and resources, the amount, and quality. The Fundamental Law called for apportioning based on both the number of workers and eaters in a household. Most peasant communities included both of these variables in their division of the land, although the number of eaters was paramount. A 1922 survey found that 88 percent of communes throughout Russia that had conducted a redistribution of the land had done so based on the number of eaters.⁴⁷ Viatka province coincided with the norm, with 80 percent of villages that stated their basis of distribution citing number of eaters.⁴⁸

By acting as largely impartial organs that relied on the Soviet law codes, the land sections served as a means to counteract the commune's power. Individual or groups of peasants complained to the land sections about the amount of land awarded to them. For example, in Permiak village, Posadskaia *volost*, Orlov *uezd*, eleven of the twenty heads of the households argued that they did not get sufficient land allotments because the redistribution of land was done only by the number of eaters and only a minority of the

⁴⁷ Cited in Atkinson, 177.

⁴⁸ Twelve of the 15 cases in 1918 that overtly stated their form of distribution cited the basis as number of eaters. In district reports at the Second Congress in April, several delegates stated that villages in their region had resolved to divide their land by the number of eaters, Vtoroi Viatskii gubernskii s'ezd sovetov krest'ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov, 41 (Nolinsk--by worker and eater), 51 (Viatka), 54 (Slobodskoi), 79 (Kotel'nich).

village supported the allotment of land. While the *zemotdel* agreed with the petitioners, after the other eleven households submitted a statement that the division had been by both eater and laborer, the *gubzemotdel* ruled against the petitioners.⁴⁹

The land repartitions exacerbated class conflict within the village. When communities redistributed allotments, they gave new land to poorer peasants, and took land from wealthy households and those that had allotments that did not correspond to the number of eaters. If the majority of peasants was needed to support a land redistribution that leveled land allotments among the villagers, then the opposing minority should have been the wealthy peasants. It would also be in the losing side's interest to file a protest with the land section.⁵⁰ Economic disparity was commonplace among Russian peasant communities in 1918. There was widely felt resentment against the presumed wealth and power of richer households. Some communities attempted to get revenge on more wealthy peasants by giving them poorer quality land than the rest of the village during the reallocation. In Kotel'nich *uezd*, a commune gave a peasant who had more land than the rest of the village less land. This redistribution was not approved by the *volzemotdel*, but the commune implemented a second redistribution, approved by the *volzemotdel*, which

⁴⁹ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 761, l. 98. See also, ll. 36, 39, 41, 58, 65-66; GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 74, ll. 337-338; GAKO, f. R-1287, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 3, 8.

⁵⁰ Figes makes this same argument, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*, 108.

gave the wealthy peasant poor quality land. The wealthy peasant fought his commune by appealing its decree on the redistribution of land. Interestingly, the Soviet gubzemotdel ruled in favor of the wealthy peasant, overturning the resolution.⁵¹ Rich peasants were able to employ Soviet law, whose government's goal was to destroy the wealthy peasant class (*kulaks*), for their own good.

The documents also reveal conflicts between the commune and those peasants who lived in an uncertain status within the village. Tenant farmers, refugees, clergy, soldiers, *otkhodniki* (migrant workers), and widows were often excluded by their communities during the redistribution process. In order to better their social and economic situation, these peasants went against their commune and appealed to the Soviet state for aid. In Kotel'nich *uezd*, a landless peasant who worked on his brother's allotment used the new Soviet law to acquire land. The commune, based on peasant common law, had refused to grant the peasant any land, since he did not own a plot in the village. The peasant appealed to the land section. The gubzemotdel granted him land, in agreement with the Provisional Instructions (art. 36) which stated that those who live in the locality and work the land have the right to the land.⁵² In Viatka *uezd*, a peasant who

⁵¹ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 761, ll. 41-41 ob.

⁵² Ibid., ll. 84-84 ob.

lived in Viatka city attempted to gain land by claiming that he lived in the village and worked the land. The gubzemotdel rejected his claim after they found out that he lived in the village for only a short period during the summer.⁵³

While the clergy, as part of the rural intelligentsia, had an esteemed role as a key link between village and nation in 1917, their position became more precarious by 1918. The Bolsheviks nationalized all land belonging to the church and monasteries to be put in reserve land funds. In February 1918, the Soviet government also enacted “the Decree on the Separation of Church and State” which, among other things, forbade religious teaching in schools, made civil marriages the sole acknowledged ceremony, and put the survival of the village church largely in the hands of the local soviet.⁵⁴ The new restrictions on the clergys’ daily functions threatened the viability of the already traditionally poor rural priests. As peasants redistributed land, priests had to depend on their parish’s good will to allot them land.

Even though most communes did give allotments to their priests, there were cases in which priests complained to the zemotdel to better their situation. The priests played on phrases and discursive strategies of socialism and citizenship to win their cause. Pavel

⁵³ Ibid., ll. 68-68 ob.

⁵⁴ Glennys Young, Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 56-60.

Miliutin, a clergyman in Buiserii *zavod*, Urzhum *uezd*, argued his case all the way to the provincial zemotdel level. Miliutin packaged his argument through the foundation of all the major decrees on land. He presented himself as a land toiler who had worked 12 *des.* of church land with “his own labor” up to the present year. Miliutin thereby tried to meet the Fundamental Law’s two major requirements of guaranteed land: to work the land with one’s own labor up to 1917. Local peasants had given him 2 *des.* of land already sown with oats, but it was eight *versts* away and he could not survive with such inaccessible land. The zemotdel rejected his petition, since the Provisional Instructions stated that even though a clergyman works the land with his own labor, as a current employee of the church he was not entitled to land unless local citizens allotted a parcel to him.⁵⁵

Another clergyman, Mikhail Maslov, however, fought to retain his land. As per the Fundamental Law, church land was inserted in the reserve land fund which the Kliuchevsk *volost* ispolkom began to distribute in May 1918. Already in April, Maslov appealed to the *volost* ispolkom.

I ask the Kliuchevsk ispolkom to provisionally rent me church land and hay fields for one year, as a citizen without land and needing the use of land to support myself. Moreover, I will use the land... for rational vegetable gardening,

⁵⁵ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 74, ll. 344-346, 350ob.

horticulture, and beekeeping with the aim of showing the people of the village.....
I promise to work the rented land with my own labor.⁵⁶

The clergyman evoked the rights of citizenship under the Soviet regime for all landless tillers to receive a land allotment as long as he works it with his own labor. He also pandered to rural intellectuals' and the Soviet state's vocal goal of raising the standard of peasant agriculture through scientific example. In a subsequent petition in May, Maslov again pleaded with the ispolkom to let him keep his land, emphasizing the collective good that, with the aim of instructing the population, he will distribute his goods among the people. "This spring I gave out gratis to the people of Kliuchevskaia *volost* maple from the tree nursery and strawberries from the garden." The ispolkom did not let him rent the land, something that the Fundamental Law forbade. It did, however, go against the Provisional Instructions and allotted him a very small parcel of land amounting to one-half *des*.⁵⁷

In fact, Maslov's plea for land was tied up in a larger local struggle to receive church land as part of the reserve land fund. In the spring, the Kliuchevsk *volzemotdel* decided to redistribute the reserve land fund's living and non-living inventory. Peasants petitioned the *zemotdel* to give them land. Like the priest Maslov, villagers constructed

⁵⁶ TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 6, d. 3, l. 48.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, l. 45.

themselves as good, landless citizens. The peasant Varmiia Merypova stated, “I ask the Kliuchevsk ispolkom to give me land from the church of Parzei village amounting to 1 1/2 *des.* for me to work with my own hands as a landless female citizen who has no work.” Peasants fit themselves into the state’s primary category to receive land from the reserve land fund. In May, the Kliuchevsk government distributed church land to several households. The receiving party had to sign a note in which they promised to abide by certain restrictions.

... I the below signed citizen of Kliuchevskaia *volost*, village, given the current note by the Kliuchevsk *volost* zemotdel to all those receiving land from the reserve land fund for rental use for one year will work and harvest it during this time.... I will guard and not fell trees growing on the allotments provided to me for temporary use. I sign.....⁵⁸

Soldiers had been steadily streaming back to their villages since spring 1917.

Tsarist, then Red Army, soldiers would enter a revolving door in and out of the village until 1921. Soldiers who returned home in 1917 played a prominent role in politicizing the village. Many historians have noted that soldiers quickly assumed status positions upon their return.⁵⁹ This point will be explored further in Chapter Five. However,

⁵⁸ Ibid., II. 52-71, 85-103. There were 37 signed notes of this kind. In mid-June, the Glazov uzemotdel instructed all volzemotdels to distribute arable land and hayfields from the reserve land fund, including all church land “regardless of whether or not clergymen work it with their own labor.” TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 6, d. 3, l. 26. The uzemotdel excluded plots of special cultural importance, church squares, cemeteries, land on which buildings are located, fences, gardens, and areas with beehives.

⁵⁹ Wade, 128.

soldiers did not always benefit from their position. Due to their absence, soldiers frequently found themselves excluded from the land redistribution process, even though the Provisional Instructions explicitly stated that communities must allot a soldier land if the government had not informed the family of his death (art. 36). For example, a wounded Muslim soldier at war since 1914 complained to the provincial land section that he did not receive his land allotment because he was in the hospital when the village issued their redistribution resolution. His fellow villagers had confessed to him that they did not allot him land because he did not work it himself, because he was away in the army.⁶⁰

The number of soldier petitions to the *zemotdel* grew in 1919, showing that even after soldiers re-established themselves at home, their fellow villagers interfered with their quest for land. Gregory Konozhev, a soldier returning home in Orlov *uezd* was typical. Konozhev had served in the tsarist army for five years and the Red Army for nine months. In a statement to the *volost zemotdel*, he pleaded that his household held

⁶⁰ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 74, ll. 94-95. See also GAKO, f. R-1287, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 17-18ob, where a village did a land redistribution in May 1918 by eater but did not include soldiers who had not yet returned home from the war; GAKO, f. R-1287, op. 1, d. 7, l. 32 in which peasants complained that the current division of a 1915 land plan in which three villages (*pochinks*) shared some common land was not acceptable because the majority of them were away in 1915 on active service and did not approve it then. The land was located in one of the villages, so it can be assumed that the other two villages felt that they would not receive equitable land allotments. RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 654, ll. 12-13, in Kotel'nich *uezd*, three brothers who were all soldiers complained to Moscow that in their local soviet's declaration of land redistribution by eater, they received poor land and had their land allotments combined. The soviet also

the smallest allotment of land (13 *sazh.*, approximately 91 feet) in his village. In June 1919, he gathered the village to request a new redistribution of the land in equal parts. While some of his fellow villagers agreed, such as a member of the local *zemotdel*, Konozhev cited two wealthy peasants, who did not even use all of their land, who stymied his efforts. The *volost* *zemotdel* ordered the village to uphold the interests of Konozhev.⁶¹ Konozhev used his status as a soldier and general class arguments to help win his case. He showed himself as a poor peasant who was being exploited by local *kulaks*. Soldiers like Konozhev may also have been more inclined to turn to the Soviet state after fighting for its survival. As seen in the above example, from 1918 onward, the state repeatedly defended the rights of the soldiers by summoning investigations and ordering the village government to ensure that the soldiers received land.

Otkhodniks (migrant factory workers) held a unique position in Viatka. Those who had returned home from the factory by 1918 often received land. Some peasants still working in other provinces attempted to retain their land allotments via mailed requests. For example, a Viatka peasant living in Perm urged the *volost* *ispolkom* to allow him to keep his land allotment, rented out for the past twelve years while he was

forced them to pay 200 rubles each, showing that the brothers came from a relatively wealthy family. Moscow informed the brothers that the soviet had acted within its rights.

⁶¹ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 19-20, 23. For other examples of Red Army soldiers being marginalized in 1919, see also, ll. 9, 39, 40, 47, 75.

away.⁶² Peasants working in the high-paying armaments factories in eastern Viatka, however, actually labored to exclude themselves from the land redistributions. For example, peasants in Bogorodskaiia *volost*, Nolinsk *uezd* engaged in *otkhodnichestvo* to factories in Votkinsk and Izhevsk. In winter and spring 1918, several peasants sent letters to the volzemotdel requesting certification that they did not have land in the village. The workers needed to present this certificate in order to retain their jobs.⁶³ Political and social upheaval caused mass food and material shortages in the cities. As thousands of workers throughout Russia engaged in a mass exodus from the cities to the countryside, Russia's proletariat began to virtually disappear.⁶⁴ In Viatka, workers and urban refugees did return to the village in the beginning of 1918, but workers distanced themselves from their villages.

Peasants also used the 1918 reallocation of land to settle long-standing kinship disputes. The Viatka peasantry had a history of relying on the state to solve family disputes. For example, the *volost* court records from the tsarist period contain countless cases of family members suing other kin over property and bad family relations.⁶⁵ Most

⁶² GAKO, f. R-1620, op. 2, d. 2, l. 51-51ob.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, ll. 5, 7, 9-9ob, 11-14, 17.

⁶⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 17-19.

⁶⁵ GAKO, f. 114, op. 1, d. 14, 15.

cases between kin revolved around disputes over divisions (*razdels*) of family households and property. For example, in Riazanskaia *volost*, Kotel'nich *uezd*, four brothers fought over the distribution of their farmstead. Three of the brothers attempted to exclude the remaining brother from the redistribution, since he spent most of his time working on the railroad. In the end, the commune intervened and attempted to take the whole farmstead away from the family.⁶⁶

The number of divisions exploded by 1919, revealing the tumultuous social situation and the grounding of the Soviet state in rural life. The commune's revolutionary incorporation and reallocation of land and resources provided a relatively safe opportunity for younger peasants to break from their family and establish their own household. In some villages, divisions were quite common in the late-fall of 1919. For example, in Balakhninskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd* the volzemotdel handled six divisions between September and November.⁶⁷

Other disputes were clearly linked to generational strife among family members. For example, in Podemskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd*, a peasant, Afansii Sidorov Kurpikov, petitioned the volzemotdel to use his deceased son's land. The daughter of the deceased

⁶⁶ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 761, ll. 36-37.

⁶⁷ GAKO, f. R-3238, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 1-1ob, 3-3ob, 8, 10-10ob, 12, 14. For other divisions, see GAKO f. R-2506, op. 1, d. 28, ll. 13-14ob; d. 37, l. 7, 18-18ob, 31-33, 47.

brought her own complaint to the zemotdel, arguing that her father had broken away (*otdelilsia*) from Afansii Sidorov twenty years ago, so she was entitled to his land.

Afansii Sidorov brought another complaint to the gubzemotdel, arguing that his son died twenty years ago and his grand-daughter had married and moved away. The Land Section ruled in his favor.

The strain of more than three years of war and revolution exacerbated family tensions. By 1918, many families had little space between survival and starvation. Women whose husbands were at war, dead, or had abandoned their family often had to move in with their in-laws, causing tension that could boil over. In 1919, Kseniia Kallistratovna Kazakova petitioned the *volost* zemotdel to break from her father-in-law's (Andrei Fedorovich Kazakov) home because he "attacks her with slanderous words and even beats her, for which he was jailed for three days by the people's court." While Kseniia had been the matriarch of a large household, the war had destroyed her family. Kseniia's husband had been mobilized in the army in 1914 and had not been heard from since, her oldest son was in the military and his wife had moved to a different village to live with her parents. Kseniia's middle son left for work in spring 1917 and had not contacted his family since then. Kseniia and her six-year-old son had to move in with her father-in-law, his wife, and their two children. Although Kseniia lived in Andrei's old house (*izba*) for most of the year, during the winter she had to move in with her father-in-

law. At the hearing, Andrei promised that if Kseniia would stay in the home, they would work together, but if she does not want to then he would not grant her a division (*razdel*) of property. The zemotdel ruled against Andrei because he “has not carried out correct relations with his daughter-in-law and will be brought to trial to bear responsibility for his actions.” It ordered him to carry out a division of property with Kseniia.⁶⁸

By 1919, the zemotdel thereby began to go beyond a strict reading of Soviet laws and act as a social arbitrator. It could protect women and victimized family members and help them advance in the rural economy. The Soviet body took root as a mediator and alternative to traditional peasant social institutions, much quicker than historians have stated.⁶⁹

Widows had always held a tenuous position in the village. Their land allotment was tied to their union with their husband. After his death, the villages would often allot the widow a partial land allotment in order to survive. But a widow would often move in with her children or late-husband’s family in which she held a subordinate spot within the

⁶⁸ GAKO, f. R-2506, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 34-36.

⁶⁹ Wendy Goldman notes a similar trend for women in the rural courts using the Land Code and Family Code of the 1920s. Women, The State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 144-184. I argue that the Soviet administration began to aid women much earlier than the 1920s.

family.⁷⁰ Widows would use creative methods to keep themselves out of this deprecating position. In Orlov *uezd*, a widow who was also a *soldatka* (a female family member of a soldier), living in her son's household attempted to gain more land by claiming that the village had not apportioned land for her son serving in the army. Because he had not yet returned, the village gave her the worst land. The *uezd zemotdel* discovered that her son had died in June 1917 and the state's confirmation of his death arrived in October 1917, so the widow was not guaranteed his land.⁷¹

Land section decisions reveal complex conflicts among peasants in communes and those who separated from the village under the Stolypin reforms. Historians have noted that during the agricultural revolution, the peasantry attempted either to force separators back into the village, or to take their land. This trend was repeated in Viatka, especially in the southern part of the province where there was the greatest number of Stolypin separators.⁷² It is important to note that the upper levels of the Soviet state aggressively defended the separator's right to exist. The legal codes (both the

⁷⁰ Worobec, Peasant Russia, 22-23, 65-70; on women in the peasant household, see Moon, The Russian Peasantry, 184-198.

⁷¹ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6. d. 761, ll. 70-70 ob.

⁷² Villagers took separators' land away during redistribution, RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 1044, ll. 5-8ob; Peasants who farmed private plots but still lived in the village (*otruba*) also often had their land taken from them, GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 74, l. 54.

Fundamental Law and the Provisional Instructions) overtly stated that separators had an inherent right to their land. Separators could therefore confidently turn to the zemotdels as their protectors.

The state's legal consciousness overrode its aim of class warfare in the countryside (a point that is also seen in the Revolutionary Tribunal cases, discussed in Chapter 7). For example, the provincial zemotdel, after a peasant in a separate farm (*khutor*) complained to that landless peasants had illegally divided his farm, ordered the *uezd* zemotdel to put the guilty peasants before the revolutionary tribunal.⁷³ In the summer of 1918, the provincial zemotdel even demanded that the Elabuga *uezd* government strictly enforce the Provisional Instructions to defend separators against attacks and restore broken up farms (*khutors*).⁷⁴

Separators were not passive victims of the land redistribution. Many turned to the zemotdel and the Soviet legal codes to take advantage of the situation. In one case, Ivan Koshcheev, a peasant in Nolinsk *uezd*, broke from his village in 1914 to establish a private farm (*khutor*), but never moved due to the labor and building material shortage caused by war and revolution. The commune now insisted that he move to the private farm because, according to the petitioner, they wanted all of the goods that he does not

⁷³ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 64, l. 457.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, d. 74, ll. 85, 281.

take with him. Koshcheev understood that the Law on the Socialization of the Land promised him the rights to his farm, but he asked the zemotdel whether the commune had the right to force his transfer to the private farm. Koshcheev asked for either a delay until he had to move to his farm, or to allow his nephew and him to have two independent households.⁷⁵

More often, separators fought to keep their land. For example, in 1914, 43 households broke from Kypkinsk village, Kliuchevskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd*, a predominantly Udmurt village. They enclosed common land and farmed it privately for the next four years. However, in June 1918, the villagers demanded that the borders between the village and private farmers be abolished. Presumably, the villagers wanted to incorporate separator land into the commune's redistribution. The separators turned to the volzemotdel for help, appealing all the way to the provincial-level zemotdel. The zemotdel cited section 32 of the Provisional Instructions, that the commune or village must preserve private farm land (*khutorskie i otrubnye uchastki*) during a redistribution of land.⁷⁶ This exchange is even more compelling because in the fall of 1918, a massive

⁷⁵ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 654, l. 25.

⁷⁶ RGAE, op. 6, d. 761, ll. 113-114; GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 74, l. 100. Vtoroi Viatskii gubernskii s'ezd sovetov krest'ianskikh, rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov, 100.

anti-Soviet strike in Izhevsk and Votkinsk overran Kliuchevskaia *volost*. Peasants followed up on their complaints from the summer, even though their territory was now officially run by a non-Bolshevik government.

The land redistribution process does not appear to have brought out intra-village ethnic hostility. In multi-ethnic villages, kinship and economic status overrode any ethnic divisions. Moreover, Russian and non-Russian peasants behaved similarly in turning to the state to solve intra-village disputes.

Sparring over land was not limited to individual peasants, however. Villages fought each other over the agrarian revolution's spoils. They acted as cohesive units when sparring with other peasant communities. Villages now tried to claim ownership over long-disputed or coveted meadows and hay fields that used to be owned by the state or church, or whose ownership had never been determined. As in collective peasant action toward forests and other non-village property, the peasantry often seized the disputed land, leaving the victims to turn to the state for aid. For example, villagers in Il'inskaia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd* pleaded with the provincial administration to help them as peasants from Vasil'kovskaia *volost*, Kotel'nich *uezd* were illegally mowing their hayfields. The *zemotdel* came to the Il'insk villagers' aid.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 74, l. 393. For other inter-village disputes, see GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 74, l. 205, ll. 375-376; GAKO, f. R-1287, op. 1, d. 5, l. 108; RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 761, l. 39.

While the conflicts revolved around disputed land, in some instances, these fights had ethnic dimensions. In May, 1918, the Udmurt village Votskii Taimbosh, in Elabuga *uezd* had 420 *des.* used armed force to seize land from a neighboring village. They reasoned that they were small land owners and the other village did not need this arable land.⁷⁸ In a long-standing dispute, Russians and Bashkirs fought over land on the Kama river separating Viatka and Ufa provinces. The Viatka Russian peasants had “since olden times” used the 1,500 *des.* of land on the other side of the Kama river, the border between Viatka and Menzelinsk *uezd*, Ufa province. But the two sides fought six times in the courts since 1904 over who owned the land, without a resolution. In March 1918, the Menzelinsk zemotdel resolved to let the Viatka peasants keep the land until the land was redistributed, but in July, the Menzelinsk Peasant Congress resolved to seize the land from the Russian peasants. In December, the Russian peasants turned to the Central Commissariat of Land for help, emphasizing that the socialization of land had not taken place and that without the meadow they “have not one *pud* of hay to feed our livestock.” Even though the Elabuga zemotdel recognized that the meadow belonged to the Viatka peasants, the issue was never officially resolved.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 74, l. 88.

⁷⁹ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 1043, ll. 14-14ob, 18; d. 654, ll. 27-28.

The socialization of land affected all agricultural land, regardless of its location. Urbanites found themselves fighting with villages over meadows and land allotments that they had traditionally farmed. Some city dwellers farmed land either in the city or in nearby villages. As the food crisis grew during the tumultuous times, these lands became more essential for survival. In Viatka, cities owned meadows and hayfields for their own exploitation. In 1918, villages near urban areas looked to incorporate and distribute these lands for themselves. For example, the city of Sarapul and two surrounding villages fought over the city's use of meadows. The city soviet refused to give the meadows to the peasants. The peasants took their case to the provincial-level zemotdel, which demanded a new review of the matter by the Sarapul zemotdel.⁸⁰

Conclusion

In all, the redistribution of land and resources revealed deep social conflicts in the Viatka countryside. Soviet land law also helped to foment peasant disputes by favoring certain population groups and giving minorities within the village an official outlet to oppose their community. Soviet policy makers in Moscow during the spring and summer of 1918 had hoped for, and tried to urge on, class warfare among the peasantry, a topic

⁸⁰ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 761, ll. 42-43. The city of Urzhum also fought over a meadow, *Ibid.*, ll. 60-60ob.

that I will discuss further in the next chapter. While in some land cases the poor revolted against the wealthier peasants, in fact Soviet law did not effectively perpetuate class strife.

In order to help resolve problems with their communes, neighbors, and families, and to better their situation, peasants invited the Bolshevik state into their homes. So, while the peasantry's initial decision to divide their land was often autonomous from state intervention, this step was a far cry from peasant rule. As in the tsarist era, peasants did not hesitate to turn to state authorities. Like courtrooms, petition movements, rural schools, and so forth the new Soviet land sections offered peasants an alternative to the commune's hegemony. The new administration and legal code guided the land redistribution process and allowed the Soviet state to creep into village life. In effect, the "Black Repartition" that was approved by the Bolsheviks in October 1917, brought the peasants closer to participation in the state.

CHAPTER 5

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN THE VIATKA COUNTRYSIDE

Although the Bolsheviks had seized power in the cities during the winter of 1917-18, remnants of Provisional Government rule remained until spring 1918. As the peasants returned to their fields the new Soviet regime tried to extend its presence into the village. Through a series of major policies, the central Bolshevik government attempted to divide further the village and win over the poor peasantry, believing that a war between the social classes was raging in the village. The Bolsheviks had a tenuous hold on political power, however, and had been unable to achieve any semblance of political hegemony. In the spring of 1918, revolts and uprisings against the regime arose throughout Russia, the most famous being the Czech soldiers revolt in Siberia. The twelve months between the summers of 1918 and 1919 were therefore crucial to the survival of the Soviet regime. The Bolshevik government had to defeat organized White (or anti-Soviet) forces in the south and east, stem the tide of peasant and worker uprisings, and build popular support for itself.

Peasant-state relations during the civil war revolved around two axes of power. One was the administrative process, such as the land settlement issues discussed in the previous chapter. Peasants reached out to and helped build the local Soviet government in order to solve village disputes. The second, more contentious, axis consisted of essential immediate state needs, such as food supplies and military recruitment. The Soviet government inherited a crumbling economy, desperate food supply situation, and a polarized political world. While ideology grounded both axes, the state was only willing to use force to ensure peasant participation in the latter. This chapter discusses the relationship among the Bolshevik government's attempts to establish political hegemony, the breakdown of central political power in Viatka province, the growth of anti-Soviet regimes, the diffusion of power in the Viatka countryside, and how all of this affected peasant politics.

This chapter also shows that the Soviet state understood and categorized the peasantry based on class and economic status within the village. By doing so, Bolshevik and Soviet state agents imposed class identities on all peasants. Based on Lenin's notions of capitalist development in the Russian countryside, Bolsheviks divided peasants into poor (*bedniaki*), middle (*seredniaki*), and rich (*kulaki*). Grain policies, taxation, the committees of the poor peasant (*kombedy*) project, and the establishment of local soviets all implemented this Bolshevik categorization of the rural population into concrete terms.

Peasants had certainly already based part of their identity on a general sense of relative economic status. But Bolshevik reliance on strict categories of class in their policies and discourse in turn shaped and transformed individual peasant identity. Class overrode other fundamental categories of self-identity (such as ethnicity) in rural politics of 1918-19.

Food Brigades and Peasant Revolts

The specter of hunger haunted the Soviet regime. The new rulers, like the Provisional and tsarist governments, had to find a means to extract food from the countryside in order to feed the center, where they had their political base, and almost all Soviet policies in 1918-19 were influenced by the need to provision the army and urban areas. Peasants had already sacrificed grain to the national cause for four years without adequate compensation and were now reluctant to release more. In winter 1917-18 the Bolsheviks intensified the Provisional Government's grain monopoly and fixed grain price scheme, which deterred peasants from releasing grain to the government. Official grain prices did not match inflation and frequent material shortages of manufactured goods made money superfluous. The food supply situation became so bad during the winter months of 1917-18 that people were starving in the urban centers. As the food situation became more desperate throughout 1918, the Bolsheviks turned to a policy of armed force and a centralized food administration to extract and control grain supply.

In the winter of 1917-18, Viatka's provincial and local officials tried to establish a system of requisitioning and reasonable fixed prices on grain in order to coax the peasantry to give up their grain. In March 1918 the Viatka provincial provisions committee (gubprodkom) called on the *uezds* and locales to establish their own fixed prices or exchange material goods for grain. If the peasants refused to sell their grain then all surplus grain would be confiscated.¹ The following month gubprodkom announced a province-wide system of fixed prices on agricultural goods based on village class structure. Poor peasants who had less than thirty puds of surplus grain would be supplied a minimum grain ration and 15 rubles a pud for rye and barley and 12 rubles a pud for oats. However, peasants of the "ownership class" (or rich peasants) would only be paid five rubles a pud for all grains if they had less than 30 surplus puds of grain, eight rubles for rye and barley and six for oats if they had between thirty and eighty excess puds of grain, and five rubles a pud for rye and barley and four for oats if they owned

¹ Circular of the Viatka gubprodkom, March 27, 1918. Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 479-480. There was a clear distinction in state policy between "requisitioning" (*rekvizitsiia*) and confiscation (*konfiskatsiia*). When the state requisitioned agricultural goods from a peasant, it guaranteed payment in kind. When state agents confiscated goods, they did not provide any recompense and at least threatened force. Soviet officials delineated this difference in a response to a peasant petitioner who wanted more compensation for requisitioned ropes and anchors. GAKO, f. R-876, op. 2, d. 27, ll. 302, 309-310.

over eighty puds of surplus grain. For peasants who would not give up their grain, the state again declared that it would rely on confiscation and fines.²

In the winter and spring of 1918, many peasants volunteered grain in exchange for basic necessities such as iron, shoes, agricultural machinery, and other manufactured goods. The First Viatka *Uezd* Congress of Soviets of Peasant Deputies in March 1918 resolved that fixed prices should be established on all goods, both agricultural and manufactured, and allowed the government to confiscate grain if peasants were unwilling to voluntarily sell their surplus at the fixed price.³ The exchange of goods had the potential to work well for both parties. At the Malmyzh city collection point peasants of the surrounding villages exchanged 2100 puds of rye, 5500 puds of oats, and 1600 puds of rye flour for manufactured goods and oil in just over two months.⁴

Many peasant communities wanted to establish a moral economic relationship with the state; that is, they would give grain for a loss if the state would make material goods available at a reasonable price. Peasant communities based their drive for a moral economy with the state on tsarist-era relations with their landlords and the state in which

² Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, resolution of the Second Viatka provincial congress of soviets, April 20, 1918, 483-485.

³ Resolutions of the First Viatka *Uezd* Congress of Soviets of Peasant Deputies, Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 310-311. In January in Debesskaia *volost*, Sarapul *uezd* a *volost* gathering made a similar resolution, 380-381.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Report of Malmyzh *uezd* soviet of supply, June 1, 1918, 504.

the peasants gave their grain and labor and accepted the unequal power relationship in exchange for guaranteed subsistence from the political elite.⁵ In February peasants of Medianskaia *volost*, Viatka *uezd* expanded their terms of the moral economy to have the state also guarantee a minimal subsistence. They stated that they would give rye, flour, and oats at the fixed prices but the government should give every eater sixty funts of flour or seventy funts of rye a month until the new harvest as well as provide a ration of oats for horses and livestock. Moreover, those who had land taken away and given to another peasant should supply grain to the latter.⁶ Such a relationship could not work, however, at the beginning of the Soviet era. Manufactured goods were in too short supply to please the peasants and they did not give enough grain to please the Soviet government.

To acquire grain from the peasantry Moscow initiated the food supply dictatorship in May 1918, a centralized system that used a combination of material incentives that were already in place, political agitation, help from the urban and rural poor, and the use of force through food brigade detachments (*prodotriady*) composed of

⁵ James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). For discussions of the moral economic relationship in the Russian countryside, see the chapters by Rodney Bohac, David Christian, and Scott Seregny in *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia*.

⁶ *Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii*, Resolution of *volost* soviet of peasant deputies, 471.

soldiers and workers and led by military officers.⁷ The food brigade detachments' eagerness to use violence, requisition without reason, and infringe on Soviet regulations violated peasants' sense of justice. As a result, peasants entered into active resistance against the new regime. This peasant resistance and conflict with the state occurred simultaneously with peasant attempts to reach out to the state to solve land disputes, as discussed in the previous chapter. It is therefore important to note the stark contrast in peasant-state relations and different modes of power in the first years of the Soviet regime.

By the summer of 1918, the Bolshevik government had lost its main grain regions (Ukraine to Germany and the northern Caucasus and Siberia to civil war). Moscow now had to turn to historically grain surplus provinces in European Russia such as Viatka. Food brigades concentrated their activities in southern Viatka, the only region of the province that produced a net surplus of grain. By the end of June, 2,500 workers had arrived in Viatka as part of the groups extracting grain.⁸ A number of brigades roamed Viatka's villages; one from Petrograd, one from Kharkov, two from Moscow, and several from Viatka.⁹ The brigades enjoyed initial success and gathered 495,716 puds of grain;

⁷ Lih, 126-137. The food supply dictatorship and the committees of the poor peasant (discussed below) were the cornerstones of the Bolshevik policy "war communism" in the countryside.

⁸ Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 17.

⁹ RGAE, f. 1943, op. 3, d. 160, ll. 62, 83, 98.

63,000 puds of grain in Sarapul *uezd*, 200,000 puds in Malmyzh, 10,000 in Urzhum, 15,000 in Elabuga, and 207,716 puds in the remaining *uezds* in their first six weeks.¹⁰

Such initial success belies the fact that in practice the food supply administration impeded the long-term viability of the Soviet's food policy. The Viatka province executive committee foodstuffs section, however, had figured in March that the peasantry could give up 1,650,000 puds without damage to the population.¹¹

The food brigades did not comply with the numerous decrees from the *uezd*, provincial, and central government. Brigades negotiated higher grain prices with individual regions, rich peasants, and even speculators. In a July report, a Moscow official stated that Narkomprod was filled with incompetent and corrupt personnel who knew nothing of food policy. Their willingness to raise grain prices and allow free trade destroyed the efficacy of the grain monopoly. Brigade members were notorious for their use of violence, hooliganism, alcoholism, and other notorious acts.¹² Grain requisitioning

¹⁰ Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 17.

¹¹ RGAE, f. 1943, op. 3, d. 160, ll. 2-3ob. The total projected surplus was 5,500,000 puds of grain. Thirty percent of the figured 1918 grain surplus was 1,650,000 puds. The foodstuffs section argued that the province needed seventy percent of the surplus to complete new sowing of fields in *uezds* with grain shortfalls.

¹² For example in June in Saval'skaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd*, a brigade stole goods from village poor. In late June in Konstantinovka village, Malmyzh *uezd*, a brigade demanded eight horses from the peasants, even though they were only supposed to take three. Peasants did not resist the brigade, but the brigade leader still arrested three people. GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 53, ll. 14-14ob, 31.

brigades were largely ineffective and, as a central governmental observer in Viatka noted, “the food stuffs sections [were] one of the largest hindrances to the stockpiling of grain.”¹³

Through both passive and active resistance the peasantry coped with and intensified their resistance to grain policies begun during World War I. They were also able to use the inefficiency of the new regime and the tension between the central and provincial administrations to their advantage. Peasants resisted Soviet grain procurement in a number of passive manners: they petitioned the administration, reduced the amount of land they put under the plow, hid grain, refused to bring it to collection points, complained about food brigades, and so forth.¹⁴ Passive resistance or “weapons of the weak” allowed peasants to disobey Soviet grain policy while not explicitly refusing to follow orders.¹⁵

Peasants complained to the administration about the brigades’ illegal activities. For example, in October 1918 a female peasant in Pilinskaia *volost*, Urzhum *uezd* petitioned the village soviet and the *uezd* ispolkom about the illegal confiscation of her

¹³ RGAE, f. 1943, op. 3, d. 160, l. 107.

¹⁴ Udmurtiia v period inostrannoï voennoi interventsii i grazhdanskoi voiny, 45. Peasants in Uninskaia *volost* and Sviatitskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd* used such resistance in late June 1918. Report of the organization-information subsection of the Glazov *uezd* ispolkom, July 2, 1918.

¹⁵ Scott, Weapons of the Weak.

horse. Two soldiers had searched her house and then offered to buy her horse. She refused, but they took the horse anyway, telling her that they would return it the following day. However, the soldiers later brought her a notice that the horse had been requisitioned. The woman pleaded that this was her only horse and she needed it for fieldwork. In early 1919, her village issued a statement supporting her claim and demanded that the government return her horse.¹⁶

There is evidence that peasants reduced the amount of land they put under the plow. In July the Glazov *uezd* ispolkom published a plea in the local newspaper to *volost* and village governments to force their constituency not decrease the field size.

Despite repeated orders about the impermissibility of reduction of field under the plow, despite many people explaining the disastrous consequences of reduction of crop land, despite the intensification of day to day starvation, a significant part of the *uezd*'s population is decreasing its land put under the plow.

The *uezd* government complained that the *volost* and village administrations did little to curtail such practices. "The *uezd* ispolkom, foodstuffs committee, and land section once again clarifies to the population of the *uezd* that any reduction of crop land will have disastrous effects on the well being of the country (*strany*), *uezd*, and all citizens...."

¹⁶ GAKO, f. R-3454, op. 1, d. 66, ll. 32, 34-35.

Those who refuse to use all their land were enemies of the poor, allies of the bourgeois, and against Soviet power. The *uezd* government threatened to take away by force the land of those who were not using it.¹⁷

When peasants did sell grain they preferred to do it through sackmen (*meshochniki*, intermediaries who bought grain from the peasants and sold it in the cities for a profit) and the black market where grain prices were higher than state prices. In Urzhum, sackmen reportedly paid peasants forty to fifty rubles for a pud of flour, 35 rubles more than the fixed price in the region.¹⁸ Sackmen were most numerous around places of easy transportation, such as rivers, railroad stations, and the border with Kazan province. In the Tatar village (*selo*) Paran'ga in Cheremissko-Turekskaia *volost*, Urzhum *uezd*, peasants maintained a brisk trade with Kazan by exchanging grain for manufactured goods, sugar, and other products. Tatars would collect grain, transport it over the Viatka river, and sell it to locals in neighboring villages in Kazan. Five thousand puds of grain a day passed through the village en route to Kazan; on bazaar days the amount would be as high as 30,000 puds.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 48-49. Announcement of the decree by the Glazov *uezd* ispolkom about the implementation of measures against the reduction of crop land, July 4, 1918.

¹⁸ RGAE, f. 1943, op. 3, d. 160, l. 92ob.

¹⁹ RGAE, f. 1943, op. 3, d. 160, l. 96. Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetsskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 530.

These villagers and other sackmen from Viatka enjoyed the sanction and protection of the Kazan soviet. When Viatka posted guards on the border with Kazan, the Kazan province foodstuffs section protested, demanded that the borders reopen to free trade, threatened Viatka's guards, and even sent foodstuffs brigades into Viatka to help hide goods and aid sackmen.²⁰ Kazan's willingness to allow a free market in grain thereby shows the center's lack of control over the economy. It also highlights that during the civil war, bureaucratic conflict was more than a classic struggle between the center and periphery. Provinces fought with each other to best survive the economic shortages.

The trade between Viatka and Kazan peasants also shows the resilience of traditional economic and social networks. As shown in the first two chapters, during the late tsarist era Tatars of southern Viatka had close economic and cultural ties with Tatars in Kazan. They traded agricultural goods and horses and crossed the borders to attend

²⁰ Ibid., l. 107a. A Viatka brigade accompanied by Red Army soldiers was also unable to requisition grain from the nearby predominantly Tatar village of Ilet in the same *volost*. Ilet was even on the road to Kazan from Paran'ga and would have been part of the grain network. D. S. Saisanov and B. Sh. Shingareev, "Krest'ianskie vosstaniia v iuzhnykh uezdakh Viatskoi gubernii v 1918 godu," Mariiskii arkhеologicheskii vestnik no. 8 (1998): 120.

schools. The Red Army was unwilling to confront the Tatars because they were better armed than the army, with rifles and even machine guns at their disposal. In June even a brigade of 200 men could not defeat the villagers.²¹

Food brigades and the Soviet requisition policy provoked peasants throughout southern Viatka to begin active resistance. From March to August in Glazov *uezd* alone there were reports of over eighty instances of peasant unrest.²² In June peasants in Malmyzh *uezd* dispersed a food brigade and killed an agent of the commission, and

²¹ The port village of Viatskie Poliany, Malmyzh *uezd* was also famous for its black market and sackmanship. Sackmen transported up to 10,000 puds of grain a day through the village. In April the *uezd* government sent a Red Army detachment to stop the sackmen but were ineffective, probably because they and the village ispolkom were getting kickbacks from the sackmen. Another brigade was sent from Viatka city at the end of April and they were able to confiscate up to 5000 puds of grain by June 1 and restrict the amount of sackmanship in the village. Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, Report of the Malmyzh *uezd* soviet of supply, June 1, 1918. 504-506. The Kukarsk raion (Iaransk *uezd*) ispolkom complained to the gubispolkom that “thousands of sackmen are arriving by ship to Kukarsk region,” 514. Urzhum *uezd* also suffered from a number of sackmen coming from both Kazan and down the Viatka River. Sackmen in Urzhum reportedly paid up to sixty rubles a pud for grain, 519.

²² T. S. Tomshich, “O nekotorykh osobennostiakh agrarnoi revoliutsii v Udmurtii v 1918-1919 godakh,” in Iz istorii partiinykh organizatsii Urala. Sbornik statei. Uchenye zapiski, no. 69, vyp. 7 (Sverdlovsk: Ural’skii gosudarstvennyi universitet imeni A. M. Gor’kgogo, 1966), 24. In early June peasants of Kirino village resisted state attempts to inventory grain. In Tsipynskaia *volost*, peasants resisted grain requisitions and two people were killed. In June in Gyinskaia *volost*, a group of peasants attacked the head of the *volost* land section during an inventory of the local mills’ grain. In Iukamenskaia *volost*, a crowd of peasants beat up a member of the *volost* ispolkom for “incorrectly” distributing grain. In early July there was another uprising in Elabuga *uezd*. Also in July, the whole village of Khodyrevaia, Ukhtymskaia *volost*, appeared at the *volost* soviet and threatened to arrest its personnel after attempts to requisition grain. The *uzed* ispolkom fined the villagers ten thousand rubles. In Ezhovskaia *volost*, villagers, angry about the requisition of grain, disrupted a *volost* gathering and beat up the head of the *volost* committee. In the beginning of August, citizens of Afanas’evskaia *volost* murdered the commissar and six Red Army soldiers who were attempting to requisition grain. Udmurtiia v period inostrannoii voennoi interventsii i grazhdanskoi voiny, 63, 87, 95; Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 511, 520.

forced the head of the provincial soviet of supply to flee.²³ In Shakhaika village, Serdezhskaia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd* a brigade of Red Army soldiers and workers came to thresh the local population's surplus grain. The local soviet billeted the soldiers in peasant houses. That night the villagers spread the word about the brigade's arrival to twenty-one surrounding villages, including villages in neighboring Urzhum *uezd*. The following morning the brigade awoke to a huge crowd of peasants armed with stakes, iron canes, and guns who attacked the regiment in the homes where they were staying. Those who escaped their dwellings were attacked by the crowd who beat them senseless and stole all their possessions down to their clothes. Eight people died in all (including the brigade leader) and 58 were wounded. Other soldiers simply disappeared and were presumed dead. The peasants also stole 20,000 rubles. The *uezd* soviet immediately sent an armed detachment, which suppressed the uprising and put "the leaders" in jail. The government later sent three hundred workers to the *volost* and in two weeks they threshed 15,000 puds of rye and brought it to the local collection point. The Iaransk ispolkom also imposed a 500,000 ruble tax on all participating villages in retribution for the murders.²⁴

²³ Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 513.

²⁴ Report of Iaransk *uezd* ispolkom to the Viatka province gubispolkom, July 2, 1918, Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 523-524; GARF f. R-393, op. 1, d. 83, ll. 5-6/Hoover Archive, Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 41.

The fact that the brigade went to the *volost* to thresh grain shows the degree that peasants excused themselves from the grain monopoly. The local population had even refused to prepare food to sell at the state collection points. The swift growth and size of the armed resistance also reflects peasant solidarity against outside forces. The brigade became a personal symbol to the villagers of the ill-favored requisition policy, which helps explain the voracity of peasant violence. Peasants beat and robbed the brigade of its basic materials, like the requisition policies had done to the peasants.

Peasants resisted state horse and livestock requisitions as much as grain requisitions. For example, in Bykovskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd*, when the army tried to mobilize the locals' horses, a large crowd appeared, surrounded the ispolkom building, some peasants burst in, "inflicted flagrant violence" upon them and arrested the committee. The crowd brutally attacked the head of supplies and, when he was almost dead, broke his neck. The peasants killed two other committee members and threatened to kill the others. The next day a regiment arrived and killed and wounded some of the peasants as an example to the others.²⁵ Other peasants questioned the state's reason for confiscation. In June the Pasegovsk *volost* ispolkom in Viatka *uezd* informed the peasants that they needed to present six horses for war needs. On the day of the

²⁵ Udmurtiia v period inostrannoï voennoi interventsii i grazhdanskoi voiny, 45-46. Report of the organization-information subsection of the Glazov *uezd* ispolkom, July 2, 1918.

mobilization a group of peasants appeared at the gathering point without the requisite horses. When Soviet officials asked why they did not comply, the peasants stated “there is no war so horses are not needed [by the State.]”²⁶

Soviet officials’ discourse on peasant resistance in 1918 reflects how the state understood the peasantry and the peasant-state relationship. Officials argued that the wealthy kulaks, priests, and even the urban-based anti-Semitic black hundreds (which did not even have a presence in the Viatka countryside) instigated the riots and even forced the other peasants to participate. Soviet historians have reiterated this argument. Officials termed the unrest “counter revolutionary” and “anti-Soviet.” In the midst of a civil war, local soviet leaders saw all resistance to their policies as a threat to the state’s existence. However, by attributing the uprisings solely to a small segment of the peasant population, state officials and historians denied peasant consciousness and agency. Economic divisions surely existed within the village and wealthier peasants with more livestock and surplus grain and had more to lose than poor peasants during grain requisitions. Moreover, there was a “class” struggle among the peasant population during the summer of 1918, as discussed below. However, the documents show that most peasant resistance to the food brigades was a collective occurrence in which the village united against the outside threat.

²⁶ GAKO, f. R-879, op. 1, d. 75, l. 374.

In late June Moscow sent Aleksandr Shlikhter, a leading Bolshevik foodstuffs official, to Viatka to oversee the ineffective grain program. Under his leadership Viatka changed its grain policy in the late summer from an overarching extraction of grain to a system of quotas of grain that each *uezd* was required to produce in exchange for material goods. This policy foreshadowed Moscow's levy-based (*razverstka*) grain program introduced in the fall and winter of 1918-19.²⁷

However, state grain policy was always hampered by the inefficiency of the system. Prices still did not match inflation and market pressures; the state could not supply material items that the peasants demanded; and there was insufficient infrastructure to maintain a centralized foodstuffs monopoly. Even the foodstuffs military committee acknowledged the inherent problems in the system when it stated, "the fixed prices either need to be changed or cancelled altogether, but nothing else can be done without orders from the center so nothing will be done."²⁸

The Stepanov Revolt

In June and July, 1918 Lenin sent daily telegrams to the provinces pleading that Moscow's workers and soldiers had only a three day supply of grain left and demanding

²⁷ There is evidence that a peasant official from Sarapul *uezd* was the first to suggest this policy change. Lih makes this point in Bread and Authority in Russia, 168-171.

²⁸ "Iz deiatel'nosti gubernskogo prodovol'stvennago komiteta," Viatskoe narodnoe khoziaistvo (August 1918), 17-18.

that they take decisive action to extract grain from the peasantry.²⁹ Under such pressure from the center, the Urzhum *uezd* military commissar reported to Moscow that the only way to obtain sufficient grain was “through the use of armed force.” However the *uezd* executive committee had only fifteen to twenty soldiers in its garrison and so did not have adequate military forces to collect the amount of grain wanted by the center.³⁰ In mid-June the central government sent two food brigades to Viatka, one under the leadership of the political officer Khomak and the other, the First Moscow Food Brigade Regiment, led by the former tsarist officer A. A. Stepanov to reinforce *uezd* troops and to increase grain requisitions.³¹ Stepanov and Khomak’s forces were the most well-armed state agents in the province but it would turn out that neither leader supported the Soviet regime. As they faced fierce peasant resistance, who were also heavily armed, and inefficient district administrations, the Moscow food brigades turned to acting for strictly personal gain.

²⁹ TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 158, l. 2. Account by M. O. Gonnarov, the former secretary of the presidium of Urzhum *uezd*, about the Stepanov revolt. Gonnarov’s reminiscence was part of the massive Soviet history of the Communist Party project (Istpart) to document the history of the Revolution and the Bolshevik Party. On the Istpart project see Frederick Corney, “Writing October: History, Memory, Identity and the Construction of the Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1927” (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1997).

³⁰ Quote from RGAE, f. 1943, op. 3, d. 160, l. 43; TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 158, l. 3.

³¹ Saisanov, 124-125. The first name and patronymic of Khomak is unknown.

On July 13, a division of Khomak's food brigade entered the Mari village of Toktai-Beliak to requisition grain. It managed to collect the grain and set off to the collection point at Cheremiskii-Turek but the Toktai-Beliak villagers, armed with rifles, revolvers, and machine guns, caught up to the brigade, attacked them, and killed their commissar Aleinikov. Another brigade sent later confiscated the villagers' grain and property.³² At a meeting of the Urzhum ispolkom following the incident, Khomak criticized the regional government's inaction, cited growing peasant armed resistance, declared a military dictatorship of the city and *uezd*, and disarmed the local Red Army.

Simultaneously, Stepanov also began making public statements against Soviet power. Stepanov and his forces moved to the city of Malmyzh, overwhelming a small Red Army detachment on the way. On August 7 news about the Whites' capture of Kazan and rumors of anti-Soviet uprisings throughout the region spread across southern Viatka. The following day Stepanov took advantage of the panic and popular perception of imminent Soviet decline, and his forces robbed the Malmyzh city ispolkom and the state treasury of at least 200,000 rubles.³³ Stepanov also took advantage of popular

³² GAKO, f. R-3454, op. 1, d., 74, l. 1; TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 147, ll. 13-14; d. 142, ll. 19-25. Saisanov, 125-126. Peasants of Toktai-Beliak had openly opposed the Soviet's grain policy since May. At a meeting about the new food dictatorship, villagers began yelling that they did not need fixed prices or the Red Army. The *uezd* military commissar called in military forces who fired upon the crowd, killing some peasants.

³³ GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 112, ll. 306- 307/ Hoover Institution Archives. Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 42. One report stated that Stepanov stole 700,000 rubles another

sentiment that ran against the Soviets. Without trouble Stepanov seized Malmyzh, reportedly receiving support from old tsarist officers. The following day Stepanov's brigade of approximately 700 well-armed men took a steamboat to Turek, robbed the state coffers and left some forces there, and continued on to Urzhum which bordered Kazan province where the Czech forces had just occupied. Members of the executive committee still loyal to the Soviets took the city's treasury and fled to the forest. Stepanov's forces later found them and confiscated 1,444,101 rubles.³⁴

On August 11, the Iaransk city ispolkom met to discuss the anti-Soviet advances and resolved to take the city's treasury and evacuate. A select group of citizens of the town led by former officers assumed governmental roles, but they did not enjoy popular support. On August 13, a small division of thirty Red Army soldiers took the city and restored Soviet power.³⁵ Like the Stepanov revolt itself, the Iaransk uprising shows the tenuous nature of Bolshevik rule in the provinces and the how alliances among populations shifted rapidly. In an atmosphere of diffuse power, groups of citizens (be it

500,00 rubles. GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 53, ll. 56-7; GARF f. R-393, op. 3, d. 119/ Hoover Institution Archives. Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 46.

³⁴ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 9, l. 470-471; Saisanov, 129.

³⁵ Solonitsin, 51; Iu. N. Timkin, "Iaranskoe vosstanie v Viatskoi gubernii 11-13 avgusta 1918 g.," in Istoriia i kul'tura Volgo-Viatskogo kraia (k 90-letiiu Viatskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii), 226-229; M. I. Kutiukov, Iaransk: k 400-letiiu goroda (Kirov: Volgo-Viatsko knizhnoe izdatel'stvo Kirovskoe otделение, 1984), 47-48; Golos trudovogo naroda (Iaransk), November 7, 1918, p. 1. The article notes that the city of Tsarevosangursk also experienced an anti-Soviet uprising on August 13-14.

wealthy, Tatars, food brigade soldiers, or the Red Army) were able to come together to gain economic and military control over a region, but failed to build a broad-based political order.

On August 13, Stepanov organized the Provisional Government of the Southern District of Viatka Province (Vremennoe upravlenie iuzhnym okrugom Viatskoi gubernii).³⁶ Stepanov made appeals to the population, calling for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly and the end of fixed grain prices. Stepanov's men and allied villagers (it is unclear exactly which villagers) disbanded soviets across Urzhum and reinstated the zemstvo administration. Stepanov gained some new recruits from villages and the defection of the thirty-man division of the Petrograd food brigade to his side. Having established power in Urzhum, Stepanov marched north to the city of Nolinsk where he quickly surrounded the minute army of communists in a school and set the building on fire. Both the Viatka and Central governments feared that Stepanov would seize Kotel'nich and its railroad and either encircle the city of Viatka or move toward Moscow and sent decisive force against him. Viatka ordered the newly formed Second Battalion of the Ninth Ural Regiment to defend Kotel'nich while the Red Army moved the Volga flotilla, the Poltava shooter brigade, and troops and armored cars from Perm

³⁶ RGAE, f. 1943, op. 3, d. 160, ll. 488ob-489; GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 469-472. P. N. Dmitriev and K. I. Kulikov, Miatezh v Izhevsko-Votkinskom raione (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1992), 82.

and Moscow against Stepanov. On August 16 the Reds made a surprise attack at Lebiazh'e village, easily defeating many of Stepanov's forces and causing them to flee without their weapons. Nolinsk was liberated two days later.³⁷ As the Soviet forces marched to Stepanov's headquarters in Urzhum, he divided his forces and fled to Kazan, which was still occupied by the Whites. The Reds defeated and captured most of Stepanov's forces but Stepanov and his officers turned toward the city of Cheboksary, southwest of Viatka province, and disappeared.³⁸

In the matter of a week, a lone food brigade officer led forces that seized three districts of Viatka, two of which had most of the province's strategically-important surplus grain. However, Stepanov had only a tenuous hold on political power, as seen by his precipitous decline. Stepanov led an urban-based revolt and never gained popular support from the peasantry. His forces were notorious for using violence and peasants linked Stepanov with the unpopular grain requisitioning policies. Stepanov's troops as

³⁷ I. Solonitsin, "Iz istorii grazhdanskoi voiny v gubernii," in Oktiabr i grazhdanskaia voina v Viatskoi gubernii: Sbornik statei i materialov pod redaktsiei I. Danchik, A. Novoselova, i E. Fleid (Viatka: Istpart Viatskogo gubkoma Bk, 1927), 45-52. The Red Army had only ninety men when they first engaged Stepanov's forces at Lebiazh'e. They surrounded the village and took it at night. TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 158, l. 5; telegrams between V. N. Blokhin and I. T. Smilga, commanders of the 2nd and 3rd armies, N. N. Azovtsev et al., eds., 2 armii v boiakh za osvobozhdenie Prikam'ia i Priural'ia. 1918-1919. Dokumenty (Ustinov: Udmurtiia, 1987), 41-43.

³⁸ GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 53, ll. 92-93, 97; TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 147, ll. 53, 69. Saisanov, 130-133. The fate of Khomak is also unknown.

early as July had searched peasant homes without their consent, stole horses, and reportedly arrested villagers even though they offered no resistance.

Stepanov can be seen as the opposite of the peasant social brigand or primitive rebel as discussed by E. J. Hobsbawm; the poor local hero and enemy of the foreign exploiting class who resorts to “outlawry” to right the system’s wrongs.³⁹ As the leader of an armed food brigade, Stepanov began as a personification of the Soviet system’s wrongs. Upon seizing power he sought alliances with people whom the peasantry saw as exploiters--merchants, wealthy urbanites, and better-off peasants. Stepanov was a foreigner in Viatka and attempted to make himself wealthy through robbing both the peasants and the Soviet coffers.

The Stepanov revolt also shows the fundamental weakness of Soviet power in the summer of 1918. The central government did not yet have enough political power to rule from Moscow. It could not rely on the provinces or regions to exert enough military might to make the peasants give up grain, so it had to use tsarist officials to help. The Stepanov revolt thereby shows that the Bolshevik government could not control its own agents in the countryside and thereby its relationship with the peasantry.

³⁹ E. J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1959), 3-4. This is not to say that Hobsbawm’s notion of the unconscious primitive rebel is true for popular protest. As Ranajit Guha notes, the peasant rebel has a complex political consciousness. Guha, Elementary Aspects, 5-6.

The Izhevsk Revolt and the Prikomuch Regime

In the summer of 1918, soviet officials in Viatka felt so threatened by peasant resistance to grain requisitions and the threat of the Whites' advance that they imposed martial law first in Malmyzh and Iaransk in June, and on August 2 throughout all of Viatka.⁴⁰ *Volost* military commissariats even announced that peasants had to register all hunting firearms or have them confiscated.⁴¹ Indeed August 1918 was the most critical period for Soviet rule in Viatka. As Stepanov's forces were overrunning Soviet positions with ease, a colossal anti-Soviet revolt erupted in Izhevsk. By mid-August, only four *uezds* (Slobodskoi, Orlov, Kotel'nich, and Viatka) remained under Soviet control.⁴²

Both the Stepanov and the Izhevsk revolts should be seen as the climax of social, political, and economic conditions in the first year of Bolshevik rule. In the cities the scarcity of agricultural and manufactured goods and the Bolsheviks' consolidation of their political rule through censorship and exclusion of other parties from their government, exacerbated negative popular sentiment toward the new regime. Resulting urban uprisings dictated the future political landscape and political discourse in the

⁴⁰ Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii, 17.

⁴¹ TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 59, d. 5, ll. 106-107.

⁴² TsDNKO, f. 11, op. 1, d. 2, l. 9. This fact was mentioned at an extraordinary session of Communist Party members on August 21. The speaker also mentioned that the population of Slobodskoi already began to show sympathy for the rebels.

countryside by pushing the Bolshevik government to accelerate their efforts to win peasant support and integrate villagers into the Soviet polity.

The Izhevsk workers' strike was the largest and most significant revolt against the Soviet regime in Viatka. The epicenter of the strike was in the Izhevsk armaments factories but the strike became a massive revolt and reverberated throughout the neighboring city and factories of Votkinsk and at its height enveloped almost all of eastern Viatka. The revolt was significant for three reasons. First, it was the largest labor strike to date under the Soviet regime. Although other laborers struck in 1918 in Iaroslavl and Ashkabad, their numbers and the duration of unrest did not match Izhevsk and Votkinsk. Second, the strike interrupted key armaments production that the besieged Bolshevik government desperately needed. The factories of Izhevsk and Votkinsk had manufactured essential military supplies during the war. Izhevsk issued almost a quarter of Russia's infantry rifles and was the sole producer of rifle and revolver barrels. Votkinsk produced the armor for naval ships. Izhevsk's military significance grew during the civil war. The major armaments factories in Sestroretsk and Tula had closed, while Izhevsk continued to produce significant amounts of barrels and rifles.⁴³ Third, the revolt radically altered the life and experience of not only the surrounding peasant

⁴³ P. N. Dmitriev and K. I. Kulikov, Miatezh v Izhevsko-Votkinskom raione (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1992), 7-8.

communities, but also the rest of the Viatka peasantry. The Soviet army called on peasant recruits to help stop the uprising, while the provincial government shaped policies to avoid another massive uprising and gain support among peasant populations (such as the poor and veterans) whom it saw as inherently supportive of the new government.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Izhevsk and Votkinsk's mostly skilled workers of sensitive military production were some of the highest paid laborers in Russia. They earned almost as much as workers in Moscow, without the large city's high costs of living. Many also owned houses, land, and livestock within the city.⁴⁴ All of these factors made the labor force much more stable than in other cities of Russia. Although many of the Izhevsk and Votkinsk workers originally migrated to the city from the province's villages, there appears not to have been a large seasonal migration to and from the village. Records also indicate that the skilled workers were almost all Russian.

Izhevsk and Votkinsk workers' economic situation deteriorated during World War I. They were required to labor nine and a half-hour days in addition to a mandatory

⁴⁴ S. L. Bekhterev, *Esero-Maksimalistskoe dvizhenie v Udmurtii* (Izhevsk: Udmurtskii institut istorii, iazyka i literatury UrO RAN, 1997), 23-24; Stephen M. Berk, "The 'Class-Tragedy' of Izhevsk: Working-Class Opposition to Bolshevism in 1918," *Russian History* 2 (1975): 176. Soviet historians argued that the workers' high standard of living gave them a petty-bourgeois sensibility and a natural inclination toward supporting the SR's. See for example L. M. Spirin, *Klassy i partii v grazhdanskoi voine v Rossii* (Moscow: Mysl, 1968), 262.

four hours of overtime. Labor injuries increased and their real wages declined.⁴⁵ The composition of the labor force also changed. Many of the non-skilled workers were drafted into the army and factories began to hire more peasants from surrounding villages.

According to Bolshevik ideology, Izhevsk's thirty thousand workers should still have been firm supporters of the Soviet government. There was a strong contingent of skilled proletarians whom both Marx and Lenin believed would guide the rest of the workers in revolution. The Bolsheviks in fact saw Izhevsk as a citadel of socialism in the end of 1917. During 1917, the Bolshevik Party experienced a significant growth in membership in Izhevsk. Simultaneously, however, the Socialist Revolutionary Maximalists also gained popular support.⁴⁶

Although the SR Maximalists and Bolsheviks shared power in the Izhevsk soviet and *ispolkom* from the fall of 1917, tensions grew during the winter as the city became politically polarized between the two main forces. In February the Bolsheviks tried to incorporate Izhevsk's Maximalist-dominated Red Guard into the Red Army but the Red

⁴⁵ Bekhterev, 25-6.

⁴⁶ The full name of the Maximalists was Union of Socialist Revolutionary Maximalists (*Soiuz sotsiastov-revoliutsionerov maksimalistov*). The Maximalists were founded during the 1905-06 Revolution. They believed in the immediate transition to a "maximum" level of socialism, that is the nationalization of land and factories along with the dictatorship of the working class. As such, they were most akin to the left bloc of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Bekhterev, 4.

Guard responded by attacking their political enemies and confiscating goods.⁴⁷ The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and Bolshevik policies toward the declining material life and rising unemployment in the city angered the Maximalists and they went into open opposition to the Soviet government. In April the Bolsheviks formed their own military brigade to counter the Red Guard and asked for help from the Kazan soviet to deal with the Maximalists. On April 20, the Bolsheviks disbanded the Izhevsk soviet and arrested up to 200 Maximalist Red Guards. The Maximalists quit the soviet and in May new elections were held. Although not more than twenty percent of the workers voted, they elected a majority non-party soviet that favored the SR's and Mensheviks.⁴⁸ The new soviet passed a resolution condemning Bolshevik rule and called for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Further elections in June shunned the Bolsheviks by voting in a SR and Menshevik majority. The Bolsheviks again asked Kazan for military aid and together they disbanded the Izhevsk soviet and began to rule alone.

Outside political forces altered the polarized world in Izhevsk. In the summer of 1918, Soviet Russia began to feel itself encircled by enemy forces. Anti-Bolshevik troops began to concentrate in southern Russia; the Czechoslovak regiment easily defeated disorganized Soviet divisions in Siberia; and the remnants of the Constituent

⁴⁷ Ibid., 56, 60-61; Berk: 180.

⁴⁸ RGAE, f. 1943, op. 3, d. 160, l. 50.

Assembly and Socialist Revolutionary Party overthrew Soviet power in Samara province and formed Komuch (Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly).

In August, Viatka province was a microcosm of the country. Czech forces threatened from the east and on August 7 took Kazan in the south. In the north, British forces landed in Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk and on August 2 supported the overthrow of the Arkhangel soviet and the establishment of the anti-Bolshevik Supreme Administration of the Northern Region, with N. V. Chaikovskii (the most active of Viatka's Constituent Assembly members) as its leader.⁴⁹ This encirclement created panic among Viatka's Soviet officials. On August 8, upon hearing that the Whites had seized Kazan, the Bolsheviks attempted to mobilize World War I veterans in Izhevsk. A large anti-Bolshevik group of veterans and officers called the *frontoviki* led rallies and organized workers against the mobilization, standard of living, and Bolshevik power; a popular uprising had begun. The Bolsheviks of Izhevsk had already sent most of their

⁴⁹ See Yanni Kotsonis, "Arkhangel'sk, 1918: Regionalism and Populism in the Russian Civil War," The Russian Review 51 (October 1992): 526-544. Chaikovskii and the other socialist leaders of the Supreme Administration of the Northern Region resigned in late September. Chaikovskii would leave Russia and live in exile in France.

soldiers and supporters to fight the Whites and so could not withstand the popular uprising as the *frontoviki* and workers hunted down and arrested Bolsheviks and helped form a new government.⁵⁰

The leaders of the revolt established a government parallel to the Samara-based anti-Soviet government, Komuch. Part of Izhevsk's "Prikomuch" (The Kama Region Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly) platform advocated power to the Constituent Assembly, however most of its policy focused on anti-Bolshevism and simply staying in power. Helped by the current political and military weakness of the Soviet government, Prikomuch initially enjoyed great military success. The Red Army was already engaged in Kazan and fighting Stepanov's forces and did not have reserves, organization, or resources to offer significant resistance to Prikomuch's forces.⁵¹

⁵⁰ TsDNKIO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 158, l. 56. A. G. Efimov, Izhevtsy i votkintsy: Bor'ba s bol'shevikami 1918-20 gg. (San Francisco: self published, 1975), 7-11; D. I. Fedchikov's recollection in M. S. Bernshtam, ed., Ural i Prikam'e noiabr 1917-ianvar 1919: Dokumenty i materialy, Issledovaniia noveishei Russkoi istorii, A. I. Solzhenitsyn, ed. (Paris: YMCA Press, 1982), 337-338; A. Kuchkin, "K istorii Izhevskogo vosstaniia," Proletarskaia revoliutsiia no. 6 (1929): 153-154; S. P. Zubarev, Prikam'e v ogne (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1967), 64-65; Spirin, 264.

⁵¹ 2 armiiia v boiakh za osvobozhdenie Prikam'ia i Priural'ia. 1918-1919. Dokumenty, 40-43.

Prikomuch quickly captured Votkinsk on August 17 and moved westward into Malmyzh *uezd* where the Stepanov revolt was raging, and on August 31 went south and took Sarapul.⁵²

Although the Soviet regime had begun to establish an administrative and legal presence in the Viatka countryside (as seen in the previous chapter), it did not have a large rank of diehard cadres. There were few red guards and Communist Party members, those who would fight for the Bolsheviks. It was therefore easy for the Izhevsk strikers to roll through eastern Viatka. In the beginning of September Prikomuch was at its height of power. It ruled 13-14 thousand square kilometers, close to a million people, and was the most successful anti-Soviet regime in eastern Russia at the time.⁵³

Prikomuch immediately established a “People’s Army” (*narodnaia armiia*) which was to be filled solely by volunteers. A volunteer army created only a small army of former tsarist officers and some workers. As the Red Army began to organize against the rebels, Prikomuch on August 18 turned to mobilization of its urban and rural male population and swelled its ranks to 35,000 troops. Prikomuch agitators went to the countryside, called *volost* gatherings, rallied the peasants against Soviet food brigades,

⁵² See GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 112, l. 307/ Hoover Institution Archive, Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet State reel 41.

⁵³ Dmitriev, 90; Berk, 187. The Komuch government was already collapsing by this time.

and began mobilizations.⁵⁴ Many local peasants were displeased with Soviet grain policies, bound to Izhevsk and Votkinsk by family members working in their factories, and at first gave some recruits without resistance. As Prikomuch's fortunes dimmed, the government expanded those subject to mobilization until November 3, when "all able-bodied male inhabitants" were liable to be called up. Prikomuch turned to strict discipline, including capital punishment, to get and maintain recruits. When the Red Army advanced, peasants refused to serve, quickly switching alliances.⁵⁵

Upon seizing power in Izhevsk, the Prikomuch leaders distributed a leaflet among peasants in the local bazaar. The leaflet evoked unity among workers and peasants and played on the peasants' hatred of Soviet grain policies. "Citizen peasants, in this trying moment for workers give grain... so that they can make short work out of with the oppressors.... Support your brothers, don't delay with supplies." The leaflet also announced higher fixed prices on grain (twenty rubles for a pud of rye and twenty-five rubles for a pud of flour) than the Bolsheviks had set.⁵⁶ This price was still lower than peasants could get through sackmen or the black market and peasants did not feel such

⁵⁴ Report on the socio-political life in Malmyzh uezd from August 28 through September 8, Udmurtiia v period inostrannoï voennoi interventsii i grazhdanskoi voiny, 103.

⁵⁵ Dmitriev, 100-101.

⁵⁶ V. Maksimov, "Kulatskaia kontrrevoliutsiia i Izhevskoe vosstanie (1918 g.)." Istorik marksist, no. 4-5 (1932): 148; TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 142, ll. 112a-113ob.

binding ties with the new regime or its workers to sacrifice precious grain. Market prices of grain rose beyond the reach of workers. For example on October 1, rye flour cost forty to forty-five rubles a pud while most workers were paid between forty and sixty rubles.⁵⁷ Prikomuch's central government became so desperate in mid-October that it reverted to confiscation of all surplus grain, a Soviet policy it had firmly been against.⁵⁸

Like the Bolsheviks, the Prikomuch government tried to win over the peasantry as a group as well as divide the village for its own political means. Its discursive strategies and varying success among its population reveal the peasantry's complex political ideals at the time. Upon seizing power, the Izhevsk rebels sent detachments and emissaries throughout the Viatka countryside to drum up support, foment unrest, and garner volunteers.

Prikomuch officials emphasized that it was the natural heir to Russia's true government, the Constituent Assembly. However, for the peasantry the Constituent Assembly for whom they voted in December 1917 had quickly become irrelevant. Most of the Constituent Assembly's political significance rested in the election, when peasants participated as equal citizens in the political process. Viatka's peasants did not put much

⁵⁷ Maksimov, 153. I believe this was for one week's salary.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 154.

weight on the resulting short-lived Constituent Assembly meeting. Moreover, the political discourse shifted away from issues popular in 1917, as peasants were now dividing land and focused on maintaining their grain and livelihood.

The rebels spent most of their propaganda efforts showing that the Bolsheviks were robbers who stole grain and other goods from the peasantry to line their own pockets.⁵⁹ In the late summer this message resonated because the Bolsheviks were already unpopular among peasants in southern Viatka, many of whom were victims of the food brigades. Fed up with Soviet inefficiency a number of villages in Sarapul *uezd* threw their support behind Prikomuch. Peasants in Debeeskaia *volost* proclaimed,

we are ruled by former convicts who depend on bayonets..... Comrades they promised us peace, bread, and freedom (*mir, khleb, i svoboda*). Did we get this? No! Not freedom, grain, or peace. So let the sackmen perish! Down with Soviet power! Death to them! Welcome the Constituent Assembly! All power to the Constituent Assembly! Down with the Bolsheviks!⁶⁰

In 1918 Russia's political actors used class as their lingua franca. Both the Bolsheviks and anti-Soviet powers imagined the countryside through class divisions of poor, middle, and rich peasantry. Soviet and anti-Soviet officials assumed that there was tension between poor and rich and that the classes would support the appropriate side.

⁵⁹ "Grazhdan'e krest'iane!," *Izhevskii zashchitnik*, August 23, 1918, p. 4; "Brat'ia krest'iane," September 10, 1918, p. 1.

⁶⁰ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 92, l. 100. A village in Nylgi-Zhik'inskaia *volost* also proclaimed loyalty to the Izhevsk rebels.

Politics and political imagination created reality. As villagers allied and identified themselves with a political force they became either a poor peasant or a kulak.

Prikomuch also began a terror against those in the village who supported the Bolshevik regime. Violent incidents within many villages under Prikomuch show the cleavages in peasant society. Intra-village peasant uprisings that took political “class” structures were often graphically violent. For example, in Sviatogorskoe village (*selo*), Glazov *uezd*, “kulaks” and priests led attacks against Communist supporters and even killed one of the supporter’s daughters. In another village, in neighboring Perm province, peasants and Prikomuch soldiers whipped and dismembered Soviet sympathizers.⁶¹

Prikomuch forces often abetted locals to exact violence against their fellow villagers. In Grakhovskaia *volost*, Elabuga *uezd* part of the village gathered and decided to root out Red Army soldiers and their families from the village. They began to arm themselves and called on the Prikomuch army to help them. A detachment of sixty soldiers arrived and together with these peasants searched each home, arrested eight people, and killed five others (four soldiers and one father of a soldier). The detachment planned to take one of the captured back to the city, but locals requested that they execute him there and the Prikomuch forces complied.⁶²

⁶¹ Dmitriev, 88-89.

⁶² TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 158, ll. 14-15.

The Red Army initially sent a small division against Prikomuch and was quickly repelled. Lenin had noted that the Revolution hinged on the Red Army's success on the Eastern Front. The Reds gained their first victory on the Eastern Front in recapturing Kazan on September 10. The Izhevsk strike now became the center of the Eastern Front and the Soviet's Second Army concentrated its forces in an all-out effort to take Izhevsk. By mid-September the Prikomuch forces began to wear down. Their region ran short on weapons (even though the factories produced firearms, their supply of metal was cut off) and food. The Prikomuch government now had to rely on forced grain requisitions from the peasantry, which destroyed any popular support. Its army also suffered from poor morale and mass desertion, a problem that became an epidemic when the Whites began mobilization. The Red Army began to advance toward Izhevsk. On October 5, it took Sarapul and on October 20 began to encircle the region. The Reds battled Prikomuch forces in surrounding villages, hurling artillery against their entrenched opponents. In the first week of November Red Army forces killed up to 1500 people.⁶³ It was not until November 7 that the Red Army captured Izhevsk and on the night of November 13

⁶³ Report on 2nd Army advance on Izhevsk, 2 armiiia v boiakh za osvobozhdenie Prikam'ia i Priural'ia, 99-101.

defeated Prikomuch forces that had fled to Votkinsk.⁶⁴ Remaining Prikomuch soldiers either returned to their villages or fled to Siberia where they continued their fight against the Bolsheviks.

The Prikomuch government was not able to sustain the active support of the whole peasantry. The anti-Soviet forces were able to drive a wedge in many villages but did not implement policies to garner widespread peasant support. The Prikomuch regime was able to play on peasants' discontent with Bolshevik requisitioning, but was unable to establish a viable polity. Like its parallel Komuch government in Samara, Prikomuch did not offer land reform or other pro-peasant policies. Prikomuch remained an urban-based revolt that enjoyed support from workers and those in the Third Element who had supported the Provisional Government. The government therefore defended private property and demanded that land reform wait to be decided by a future Constituent Assembly.⁶⁵ However, unlike the peasantry under Komuch who supported the Soviet government because it supported their seizures of former-landlord property, most of the peasantry under Prikomuch never lived under landlords.

⁶⁴ The Second Army invaded the Prikomuch region using left and right flanks. The army's right flank, under the leadership of V. M. Azin had the greatest success while the left flank became bogged down. It was Azin's army that finally took Izhevsk. Ibid, 5-9.

⁶⁵ Dmitriev, 120-121.

The complex reasons behind the Viatka peasants' rejection of Prikomuch hints that it was more than fear of the return of landlords and a manorial economy that decided the peasants' political support. As with the Provisional Government, the Prikomuch regime envisioned the peasantry as followers; lesser citizens who could not rule themselves. In order to win popular peasant support it was necessary to treat the peasants as equal participants in the larger polity and establish administrative links and an accompanying loyal bureaucracy.

Many of the peasants under Prikomuch's rule were non-Russians. Udmurts living around Izhevsk had played a peripheral role in the factory economy. They sold their produce in the city markets and transported wood and other forest materials for the factories. Initially, it appears, Udmurts and Tatars gave their tacit approval to the strikers. However, Udmurt peasants were more apathetic than active in their support for the new Prikomuch rulers. The Prikomuch government only addressed the issue of its non-Russian population in the waning days of their rule.⁶⁶ It never issued declarations aimed at non-Russians and in desperation to gain some support from Udmurts put an

⁶⁶ Dmitriev, 121, 144-145. A Soviet official noted that Muslims welcomed the Red Army and had "defied" all the White propaganda. GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 92, ll. 16-16ob.

Udmurt on their ruling board. This weak attempt did not succeed. When the Reds advanced toward Izhevsk, non-Russian peasants switched sides and volunteered for the Red Army.⁶⁷

As the Red Army put down the revolts, the Soviet government began to reconstruct Soviet power in the region's countryside. The regime combined force and terror with appeasement to achieve its aims. The Bolsheviks had already implemented a policy of systematic terror to help win the revolution. In December 1917, the state established the Cheka (*chrezvychainaia kommissiia*, or Extraordinary Commission) which, propelled by the civil war and the assassination attempt on Lenin on August 31, led the Red Terror by investigating, arresting, and executing counter-revolutionaries across Soviet Russia. In September, 1918 the central government, the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) stated, "The Soviet Republic must be safeguarded from its class enemies by isolating them in concentration camps, by shooting all persons associated with White Guard organizations, plots, and conspiracies, and by publishing the names of all those shot and the reasons for the shooting."⁶⁸ The Soviet state initiated a policy of isolation and extermination of dangerous, infectious elements, terror, and popular fear of denunciation and public humiliation.

⁶⁷ See Maksimov, 158.

The Viatka Cheka suppressed popular anti-Soviet sentiment using all the above methods. In September 1918 the Cheka in Orlov *uezd* arrested seventy counter-revolutionary army officers and Right SR's and shot twenty-three of them.⁶⁹ On October 3, the Kotel'nich Cheka executed sixty-one people.⁷⁰ During a two-week period in early 1919, the Iaransk Cheka shot forty people.⁷¹ In Malmyzh *uezd* the *uezd* Cheka arrested several people for actions against the revolution, and brought others before the Revolutionary Tribunal.⁷² Although the Cheka shot a number of rebels, many more were put in prison or amnestied. State officials even went throughout Khristorozhdeetvennaia *volost* and compiled a list of 946 peasants who were soldiers in the Izhevsk strike. The documents do not indicate how the state decided to punish them. However, many

⁶⁸ James Bunyan, Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials, The Walter Hines Page School of International Relations, The Johns Hopkins University (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 239.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 242-243.

⁷⁰ William Henry Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution 1918-1921: From the Civil War to the Consolidation of Power, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 70-71. Chamberlin also describes a letter in Bulletin of the Cheka from the Nolinsk Cheka complaining about the Moscow Cheka's softness. It complained of "petty-bourgeois ideology" among the Moscow Cheka and offered its own solution. "A dangerous scoundrel has been caught. Get out of him what you can and send him to the other world."

⁷¹ V. I. Bakulin, "Nasilie kak komponent gosudarstvennoi politiki: Bol'shevizm v prikam'e (konets 1917-seredeina 1919 g.)," in Revoliutsiia i chelovek: byt, pravyy, povedenie, moral (Moscow: Institut rosiiskoi istorii RAN, 1997), 176.

⁷² GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1. d, 92, l. 144. Between October 15 and November 1, the Cheka investigated 64 people: 13 for disobedience to Soviet power, 22 for counter-revolutionary agitation, eight for speculation, two for counter-revolutionary unrest, and the rest for minor offenses.

peasants formerly in the Prikomuch army immediately transferred to the Red Army. This did not always mean that they switched political allegiances, however. The head of the Sarapul Bolshevik Party even complained in November that these transfers were agitating the peasantry against Soviet power.⁷³ As during the Stepanov revolt, rural populations' loyalties for various political centers shifted rapidly in an environment of diffuse power.

While the Viatka province Soviet government used force to regain power, it more often relied on appeasement and building the peasants' trust in the new political world. The Soviets intensified their efforts to win over and enlighten the peasantry by implementing a propaganda and organizational campaign to establish such organs as committees of the poor peasantry, soviets, and party cells in order to plant themselves within the village.⁷⁴ The government began by sending agitators through the region to organize *skhods* in villages and explain that Soviet power was being re-established.⁷⁵

Provincial and *uezd* Party leaders made special efforts to establish party cells in the villages, with limited success. Often *volost* leaders established a party cell and attempted to draw in sympathizers to expand the organization. For example on November 30, 1918 in Multanskaia *volost*, at a meeting of the *volost* government, the

⁷³ GAKO, f. R-3271, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 2, 16, 18-32ob. Six peasants from the list had already gone into the Red Army. Udmurtiia v period inostranoi voennoi interventsii i grazhdanskoi voiny, 185.

⁷⁴ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 92, ll. 17-18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 19.

leader organized a *volost* cell. Eight people joined, five of whom were party members. Those who joined were uniformly male and averaged 32 years old. While all but one of the founding members were listed in the membership rolls as poor peasants, middle peasants soon became the majority of the members. The cell grew, albeit slowly. By April 1919, it had at least eleven members with twelve more petitioning to join.⁷⁶

The Soviet revolutionary committees tried to appease the peasant population and resume coaxing grain out of them, although provisionally not in the former Prikomuch area in an effort to win over peasant support. Upon freeing the city of Sarapul, the newly established Soviet provisional revolutionary committee urged local peasants to give grain to the starving city. The Reds avoided language of explicit class warfare in favor of friendship between the village and city. It called on all “comrade peasants” (regardless of class) to “bring needed food to the city and support the population of Sarapul.” Knowing that the population adamantly resisted past Soviet forced requisitioning, the government tried to appease the peasantry and assuage their fears. “Bring, comrades, and don’t be afraid that someone will take [the food] away. No, this Soviet power does not allow that

⁷⁶ TsDNIKO, f. 8, op. 1, d. 43, ll. 2-8, 25-26. This cell would soon fall on hard times. The Whites invaded Viatka and arrested or mobilized many cell members. Other members were evacuated before the Whites arrived.

but for everything will be paid a fair price. Now all of you should feel that we must be committed to supporting each other...’’⁷⁷ Nevertheless, most peasants did not actively support the Bolsheviks in the fall of 1918.

The Committees of the Poor Peasantry, State Building, Class Warfare, and Class Identity

As part of the grain dictatorship and the Bolshevik’s attempted cooption of the poor peasantry, the central Soviet government on June 11 ordered the establishment of committees of the poor peasantry (*kombedy*) in all *volosts* and villages. The *kombedy* were designed to empower the poor peasantry with state backing to wage war on village kulaks, confiscate their surplus grain and livestock, and help redistribute them to poor peasants, urban areas, and the army.⁷⁸ The implementation of the *kombedy* was the first Soviet mass mobilization project in the countryside and was quite successful in the sheer number of committees established and its ability to foment intra-village class conflict.

The Soviets were at first unable to bring the committees to the Viatka countryside. Viatka’s provincial ispolkom sent out the first order to the *uezds* to establish *kombedy*

⁷⁷ Udmurtiia v period inostrannoi voennoi interventsii i grazhdanskoi voiny, 120-121. Appeal by the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of Sarapul to the peasantry about providing food aid to the city.

⁷⁸ “Chto takoe komitet bednoty?” Izvestiia Glazovskogo soveta krest’ianskikh, rabochikh i krasnoarmiiskikh deputatov, October 16, 1918, pp. 1-2.

only on July 30 when many of the villages in the southern districts were in open revolt against the regime.⁷⁹ Other peasant communities rejected the committees as another mechanism to take their grain.

However by December 1918, 15,988 committees had been established in Viatka province, almost double that of any other Russian province (see Table 5.1). Viatka's physical landscape partially explains this difference. Like other provinces in northern Russia, Viatka had more villages than Central Russia. Anti-Bolshevik and foreign forces occupied most of northern Russia outside of Viatka in 1918-19, so the Soviets were unable to establish many committees there.

The key to the eventual success of the kombedy project in Viatka was that it transcended its original purpose of helping the state extract grain from the village and building a coalition with the poor peasants. Especially in the southern and eastern districts of the province, the centers of anti-Soviet rebellion, the kombedy movement acted as a mechanism for the Soviets to establish their presence in the countryside.

⁷⁹ GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 47, l. 17.

Province	Number of Kombedy	Province	Number of Kombedy
Viatka	15,573	Perm	3,115
Iaroslavl	8,676	Nizhegorod	3,000
Tver	8,612	Tambov	2,831
Kostroma	6,918	Kursk	2,774
Orlov	6,814	Penza	2,710
Severo-Dvinsk	5,335	Riazan	2,658
Vitebsk	5,031	Petrograd	2,471
Vologda	5,000	Saratov	2,267
Vladimir	4,875	Simbirsk	2,000
Kaluga	4,842	Cherepovets	1,893
Novgorod	4,653	Voronezh	1,690
Tula	4,604	Mogilev	1,571
Moscow	4,533	Samara	1,305
Smolensk	4,103	Olonets	1,097
Kazan	3,630	Arkhangel'sk	190
Ivano-Vozensesnk	3,428	Astrakhan	138
Pskov	3,300	Total	131,637

Table 5.1: Number of kombedy in Soviet Russia⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Data from V. R. Gerasimiuk, "Nekotorye novye statisticheskie dannye o kombedakh RSFSR," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6 (1963): 209-210.

District	Number of kombedy
Orlov	3092
Kotel'nich	2398
Iaransk	1871
Glazov	1867
Elabuga	1280
Viatka	1300
Nolinsk	1154
Urzhum	920
Malmyzh	638
Slobodskoi	600
Sovetsk	514
Sarapul	354
Total	15988

Table 5.2: Number of kombedy in Viatka province ⁸¹

While peasants in 1917 set up local governmental organizations, Soviet agitators in 1918 were instrumental in establishing kombedy. This was especially the case in areas that been overrun by anti-Soviet forces and *volosts* with close urban ties, such as northern and central *volosts* of Viatka *uezd*. In these regions of the *uezd* village kombedy were organized in blocks between September and October. In Viatka *uezd* all the kombedy in Medianskaia *volost* were established during a two-day period between September 13 and

⁸¹ A. S. Bystrova, *Komitety bednoty v Viatskoi gubernii* (Kirov: Kirovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1956), 38. Note that Bystrova's totals for Viatka province differ from Gerasimiuk's by 2.6 percent. The difference could be attributed to the exact date that the authors calculated the number of kombedy and to fragmentary archival records. Both historians still come to the same conclusion that Viatka had an overwhelmingly greater number of kombedy than the other provinces.

15; in Bobinskaia *volost* the kombedy were formed on September 29.⁸² In late September agitators from the political division of the Second Army distributed thousands of copies of the decree on the organization of the kombedy and went throughout villages on the border of Soviet and Prikomuch territory in Malmyzh and Glazov *uezds* and established kombedy.⁸³ As the Red Army advanced into anti-Soviet territory, so did political agitators to establish kombedy. By January 1919 in the former heart of the Prikomuch revolt, the Izhevsk region of Sarapul *uezd*, 266 kombedy were established.⁸⁴ Village assemblies were supposed to elect kombedy members. While this happened in several areas in the north, when Soviet agitators organized the local committee, the assembly election, when it occurred, was a formality.

While many of the Soviet organizers came from the political division of the Red Army, others were volunteers and had tenuous connections to the Soviet state. Georgii Prakhov, a soldier and “a communist, but not on paper” received permission from the Glazov *uezd* ispolkom to organize kombedy but suffered a series of mishaps. In

⁸² GAKO, f. 880, op. 1., d. 172, ll. 6-60. Agitators would also speak at *volost* gatherings and persuade representatives to organize village kombedy. This was the case in Kolianurskaia *volost*, Sovetsk *uezd*. TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 40, l. 2.

⁸³ Report about publishing activity of the political section of the Second Army from September 20 through October 17, 1918 and reports from the newspaper “Izvestiia vtoroi armii” about organizational and agitational work, 2 armiiia v boiakh za osvobozhdenie Prikam’ia i Priural’ia. 1918-1919. Dokumenty, 238-240. GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 110, ll. 165-168/ Hoover Archive. Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 42.

Lynskaia *volost* village leaders would not even let him call an organizational meeting. Prakhov continued on to Sardykskaia *volost* where he found a “counter-revolutionary uprising,” and ended up in the predominantly Udmurt Balezinskaia *volost*, where he finally was able to organize two kombedy. Prakhov noted widespread corruption among village officials who broke laws and openly sympathized with the Whites. The chair of the Balezinskaia *volost* military committee even kept Romanov flags to welcome a future White regime. Prakhov’s actions infuriated village leaders who complained about him to Glazov city. Prakhov was summoned back to Glazov where he and the Balezinskaia *volost* kombedy members were arrested and thrown in jail for owning kumyshka (a type of moonshine).

Prakhov described the situation in the village in a way that he believed the Bolshevik government would understand--as a clear struggle between economically and politically powerful kulaks against the poor masses. Kulaks’ corruption and their natural inclination toward counter-revolution caused his failure.⁸⁵ Prakhov’s debacle does show that there was still widespread suspicion and disregard for the Soviet system. Yet his

⁸⁴ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 110, ll. 146-149.

⁸⁵ GARF, f. R-393, op. 11, d. 61, ll. 104-105 ob/ Hoover Institution Archive. Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 15; GAKO f. R-876, op. 1, d. 110, ll. 197-198ob, 201. Prakhov later petitioned the Central ispolkom for monetary aid as the head of a starving family and for past services to the Soviet state. He also asked for them for a revolver and to allow him to change his name to Iurii Pobednyi (*pobednyi* translates as victorious) since he “has been in danger as a defender of Soviet power,” and “my surname is known in many areas.”

initial failures also reveal peasant solidarity, especially against someone with whom they did not share a power relationship. Peasant leaders understood that Prakhov was not part of the Soviet government and had no reason to follow his demands. But village leaders were willing to use the system to get rid of him.

As the above example shows, Soviet officials organized in both Russian and non-Russian villages, putting class considerations above ethnicity. In October, Red Army agitators in Elabuga *uezd* visited seven Tatar villages, called a meeting, gave a speech about the current situation, and established village *kombedy*. The following month instructors went throughout the predominantly Udmurt *volost* of Tsipiskaia, Malmzyh *uezd*, organized *kombedy*, and gave lectures in Udmurt on “what soviet power gives the peasantry,” “who goes against soviet power,” and “the rights and responsibilities of committees of the village poor.”⁸⁶ The army also distributed agitational publications in Tatar.⁸⁷ Udmurt regions had as many *kombedy* as predominantly Russian areas, showing that Udmurts were willing to participate in Soviet state building and the construction of class identity.

⁸⁶ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 92, l. 3; f. R-885, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 77-77ob.

⁸⁷ 2 armiiia v boiakh za osvobozhdenie Prikam'ia i Priural'ia, 238-239. The army listed the language as “Tatar” as well as “Muslim.”

Viatka province's kombedy project offers a stark contrast to the Black Earth region's. Recently a historian, based on evidence from Tambov province in the Black Earth region, argued that because outside agitators established local kombedy, most members were peasants who had traditionally been excluded from the community such as landless laborers, migrant workers, and craftsmen. Many members had not worked the land before the war. Their status as outsiders both drew them to the opportunity of power provided by the Soviet state and their disconnect from the community guaranteed the demise of the kombedy.⁸⁸ In contrast, a study of Viatka *uezd*'s kombedy membership lists shows that an overwhelming majority, approximately ninety percent, of those who joined the kombedy was local peasants, most of whom worked the land.⁸⁹ A survey of Nolinsk *uezd* confirms this finding.

The members of Viatka's kombedy were active members of their community but had not previously been part of its administration. The kombedy thereby drew new personnel into the government. A significant number of members recently returned from military service. In Ekaterininskaia *volost*, Nolinsk *uezd* 62 percent were veterans and in Il'inskaia *volost*, also in Nolinsk, 46 percent of members had served in the military.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Figes, Peasant Russia, Civil War, 193-195.

⁸⁹ GAKO, f. R-880, op. 1, d. 172, ll. 6-60.

⁹⁰ Bystrova, Komitety bednoty v Viatskoi gubernii, 36.

Almost no members had served on a soviet or worked for local government before joining the kombed. The vast majority was also not affiliated with the Communist Party; members were listed as non-Party, although a minority of those was “sympathetic” to the Party.⁹¹ The kombedy therefore opened up governance to a younger generation than the traditional village elders. The politically charged veterans had seen the wider world outside of old village authority structures and probably been exposed to Bolshevik propaganda at the front. Villagers revered soldiers as links to the greater political community and heroes of the war, while village elders also feared them as not respectful of traditional ways. The kombedy’s youthful local membership probably helped them become established so quickly. Their success in turn aided the foundation of the Soviet state in the countryside.

In the summer and early fall, the kombedy functioned poorly, when they even existed.⁹² In August only around 330 kombedy had been organized. The kombedy project began to function only after the Soviets heightened their attention on the countryside with the end of anti-Soviet revolts, the arrival of agitators, and the end of the

⁹¹ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 197, ll. 346-388, 425-427, 432-461. The kombedy were formed between September 1918 and January 1919. Every list noted that the members were peasants.

⁹² TsDNIKO, f. 11, op. 1, d. 2, l. 24.

harvest.⁹³ In October around 4,300 kombedy had been set up but the majority of Viatka's kombedy were organized after early November, when Soviet leaders at the Sixth Party Congress decreed their termination, decried them as failures, and changed its grain policy to a levy-based quota system. In the winter, after the Red Army quelled the anti-Soviet rebellions, the number of kombedy blossomed, from 9,800 in November to almost 16,000 in December.⁹⁴

From the late fall kombedy members actively engaged their duties.⁹⁵ Bolshevik leaders had established the committees of the poor peasant to help fuel class conflict within the village and members in Viatka implemented policies that favored the poor against the rich. They took stock of grain supplies, requisitioned and confiscated "kulak" grain, and helped food brigades collect goods. In northern, grain deficient *uezds*, the kombedy focused on redistributing grain from those they perceived to be rich to the poorer villagers. They redistributed manufactured goods among the poor. The kombedy

⁹³ This was the opinion of the Communist Party recruiters and local government leaders. TsDNIKO, f. 11, op. 1, d. 2, l. 23; GAKO, f. R-880, op. 1, d. 171, l. 160.

⁹⁴ A. S. Bystrova, Komitety bednoty v Viatskoi gubernii, 38.

⁹⁵ According to a circular on *volost* kombedy duties, the most important tasks of the kombedy were controlling provisions and organizing the poor. It was also to organize gatherings of the poor, distribute literature, organize readings, and explain literature and decrees about the organization of the poor. GAKO, f. R-3238, op. 2, d. 1, l. 31.

also attempted to redistribute land and heard petitions on local property disputes.⁹⁶

Finally, the *kombedy* collected the extraordinary tax, discussed below.

Their policies provoked conflict within the village. For example in Rodiginska village in Kukarskaia *volost*, Sovetsk *uezd* a few peasants who felt singled out by the village *kombedy* agitated against it in the *skhod*. Because these peasants traditionally had influence, some *kombedy* members stopped participating and the *kombedy* chair feared that the other villagers would follow the kulak.⁹⁷ While the conflict overtly centered on class (rich against poor peasants), it also had generational undertones. Wealthier peasant households usually were large with a prominent patriarchal figure as its head. *Kombedy* members, many of whom were younger peasants, took goods from these elderly figures and redistributed them to poorer households who themselves were often younger, small families.

Many *kombedy* members engaged in excesses and hooliganism, abusing their powers for self-satisfaction and revenge. *Kombedy* members were known to conduct illegal searches, take excess grain for themselves, and not always have the poor peasants' interests in mind.⁹⁸ A villager in Nizhne-Ukanskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd* complained to

⁹⁶ Bystrova, Komitety bednoty v Viatskoi gubernii, 41-59; TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 6-7.

⁹⁷ TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 6-7.

⁹⁸ See for example RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 17, l. 39ob. It was usually individuals and not the whole *kombedy* that engaged in excesses. For example an argument among members erupted at a meeting of the

the *uezd* military information section that the head of the village kombed, Dem'ian Gavrilov Vladykin tried to show that he was the boss. Vladykin would try to run the *skhod*, and said that "no one has the right to go against me." When levying the extraordinary tax, he would go to the person's home and swear at them.⁹⁹ The new personnel did not want only money and grain from their new positions, but also to gain new social status. Many villages were quite small and families knew each other and had long-held animosities and alliances. The kombed gave members a new power to right these personal wrongs.

While some kombedy members used the organization for personal gain, many of them went out of their way to fulfill their duties, supporting their perceived tasks as poor peasants in the soviet state. Many kombedy members felt a social obligation to their community, a need to uphold the law, and a bond with the Soviet state. For example, in Malmyzh *uezd*, Lidiia Efrelovskaiia complained to the *volost* kombedy that the government expropriated a number of her goods to pay for her father's extraordinary tax. The kombedy agreed and ordered the return and reimbursement of her property.¹⁰⁰ Many

Smolensk *volost* kombed in Sovetsk *uezd* over searches and the allocation of taxes with representatives demanding that the kombed needed instructions before acting. TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 40, l. 10.

⁹⁹ TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 59, d. 2, l. 63. The military information section sent a copy of the complaint to the Glazov *uezd* Cheka.

¹⁰⁰ GAKO, f. R-3271, op., 1, d. 17, l. 12. The state had expropriated a number of items including tea, sugar, tobacco, silver, butter, honey, money, and high quality galoshes.

members strove to improve the social and cultural life within their village. In Chekanskaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd*, kombedy members tried to construct a public building and organized a *volost* soviet of education.¹⁰¹ Showing that they had a vested interest in improving the well being of their population, peasant representatives at the Malmyzh *uezd* congress of kombedy members peppered *uezd* government officials with demands to improve the local schools, economy, and public health system.¹⁰²

Kombedy members also saw themselves as the true representatives of the people's government, the idea that the Bolsheviks continuously broadcast to the countryside. But kombedy members refused any official compromise to this idea of class rule. Although the Bolshevik intent behind the kombedy was to foment class warfare, it also allowed middle peasants to be members of the kombedy. Representatives at the first Glazov *uezd* congress of the kombedy in November argued that the kombedy should be formed exclusively from the poor and passed a resolution stating that "at the present time

¹⁰¹ GAKO, f. R-3271, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 2-2ob; f. 3454, op. 1, d. 79, l. 3.

¹⁰² GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 54, ll. 6-25. Protocols of the Smolensk *volost* (formerly Kukarsk *volost*) kombedy meeting reveal the divisions over the scope of responsibility, legality, and just actions among kombedy members. Two representatives fought over whether searches were proper tasks of the committees. One representative demanded that members needed instructions before carrying out searches, while the other representative downplayed them. TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 40, l. 10.

all power must exclusively belong to the poor. Kulaks and *miroedy* (wealthy peasants) must not have a place in soviets, committees [of the poor] and the *uezd* congress of kombedy.”¹⁰³

The kombedy did not fulfill any of their requirements to the degree that the central government wanted. Kulaks remained strong in village communes and soviets. Viatka’s kombedy also did not meet the central government’s goals for grain. Between August 1918 and April 1919, the province delivered only 7.9 million puds of its 15 million pud levy.¹⁰⁴ They did build soviet organizations in over eighty percent of the province’s villages. Thus, the kombedy became a link between rural and national politics by establishing an active official Soviet administrative presence within the village. This created an opening for the Communist Party. At *volost* and *uezd* congresses, Bolshevik officials persuaded representatives in several locales to begin to form Communist Party cells in their village.¹⁰⁵

The kombedy movement was only part of the sovietization of the southern Viatka village immediately following Stepanov and Prikomuch’s demise. As in the Imperial era,

¹⁰³ GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 109, l. 18ob/ Hoover Institution Archive. Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 41. For other examples of kombedy members demanding an exclusively poor membership, see Bystrova, Komitety bednoty v Viatskoi gubernii, 39.

¹⁰⁴ G. G. Zagvozdkin, “Grazhdanskaia voina,” in Entsiklopediia zemli Viatskoi, t. 4, Istoriia, 354.

¹⁰⁵ TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 3, 30. Kolianurskaia *volost*, Smolenskaia *volost*, Sovetsk *uezd*.

villagers who had engaged in unlawful acts admitted their guilt and went out of their way to express their loyalty to the regime. Facing physical punishment peasants acknowledged that their actions were not acceptable and proclaimed their loyalty to the power relationship and the legitimacy of the state. The Bolshevik state, for its part, put great significance on this discursive process. Bolshevik organizers were certain to get peasants to state their allegiance to the Soviet regime and include formulaic Soviet popular slogans into their village resolutions going out of their way to get the peasants to “speak Bolshevik,” even if such statements did not reflect popular sentiment.

In late October and November peasants throughout Uvatuklinskaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd* passed formulaic decrees supporting Soviet power. After listening to Bolshevik agitators, peasants now “wanted” all measures done to put down enemies of Soviet power. They called for death to all who oppose the people's power and welcomed peasant workers, socialism, and the Red Army as defenders of the working people.¹⁰⁶ As the Prikomuch regime went into decline in late October, peasants began to repent and show their support for the Soviet government. *Volost* meetings in Sardykskaia, Elganskaia, Zurinskaia, Gordinskaia, and others passed resolutions supporting the Soviet regime during this time of crisis, and welcoming proletarian uprisings in western

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., ll. 315-316ob, 318-325ob.

Europe.¹⁰⁷ The day after the Reds beat back Izhevsk anti-Soviet forces from Vikhorova village residents proclaimed that they did not support the whites and agreed to a general mobilization into the army.¹⁰⁸

The Bolsheviks also tried to foment class struggle in the village, and bring in much-needed finance, through the extraordinary tax (*chrezvychnnyi nalog*). From the beginning of Soviet rule, the provincial and *uezd* governments attempted to get the *volost* soviets to collect class-based taxes, in which the kulaks and propertied class would pay the bulk of the dues. Although most of the *volost* soviets of Viatka province taxed wealthier inhabitants or issued progressive taxes, they often did not have the military means to force kulaks to pay.¹⁰⁹ On the night of June 9, peasants in a village in Malmyzh *uezd* refused to provide the tax commissioner with a list of names for a one-time extraordinary tax, threatening the life of him and the *volost* ispolkom members.¹¹⁰

In the fall of 1918, Moscow issued the one-time tax aimed at those whom they saw as rich (that is earning a salary over 1,500 rubles a month) and village kulaks and

¹⁰⁷ Udmurtiia v period inostrannoï voennoï interentsii i grazhdanskoi voiny, 137.

¹⁰⁸ GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 112, ll. 309-309ob/ Hoover Archive. Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 42.

¹⁰⁹ E. P. Titkov, "Finansovyi vopros v deiatel'nosti volostnykh sovetov dokomebskogo perioda (na materialakh Nizhegorodskoi i viatskoi gubernii)," in Sovety i drugie obshchestvennye organizatsii: Mezhvuzovskii sbornik nauchnykh trudov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Prometei, 1989), 106-121.

speculators. Moscow set a ten billion ruble national target and apportioned 300 million rubles to Viatka; the district governments in turn distributed levies to each of their *volosts* based on population.¹¹¹ Moreover, Moscow gave the *volost* and village *kombedy* the right to issue extra taxes on the “propertied class” and redistribute this wealth among poor peasants. If kulaks did not pay the tax, then the *kombedy* were to arrest them or sell their property. However, the Soviet government guaranteed a minimum standard of living for the kulaks and ordered the *kombedy* to leave a horse, a cow, two sheep, the home, and so forth.¹¹² Kulaks refused to pay and the Soviet government could only collect a small percentage of the tax. In *Prosnitskaia volost*, *Viatka uezd*, the *ispolkom* only took 181,955 rubles from kulaks out of the *volosts* 800,000 ruble apportionment and had to collect another 2,000 to 4,000 rubles from local middle and poor peasants.¹¹³ In some areas peasants resisted the tax because it was apportioned incorrectly, allocated equally to every person rather than based on class standing.¹¹⁴ In 1919, even though the

¹¹⁰ Report of *Kopkinsk volost ispolkom* to the *Malmyzh uezd ispolkom*, *Ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Viatskoi gubernii*, 511-512.

¹¹¹ The finance commission of *Sararpul uezd* published the distribution of the tax. “*Razverstka chrezvychnogo naloga*,” *Kranaia mysl*, January 1, 1919, pp. 3-4.

¹¹² GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 48-54, 84, 126.

¹¹³ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 17, l. 45. The same situation occurred in *Filippovskaia volost* where the *ispolkom* collected 169,925 rubles out of 600,000 and had the middle peasants pay 4,000 rubles. *Ibid.*, l. 48.

government tried to win over the middle peasantry in politics it increased the group's tax burden. Because the kulaks would not yield any more money, various *volost* ispolkoms assigned middle peasants extraordinary taxes from 500 to 10,000 rubles.¹¹⁵

The committees of the poor peasantry in Viatka outlived their termination by three months. In January 1919, Viatka's government, like governments throughout Soviet Russia, argued that the kombedy had not been successful because the kulak elements overran them. Beginning in January 1919 in Viatka, Bolshevik leaders began attempts to dismantle the kombedy and transform them into village and *volost* soviets. In the mixed Russian-Udmurt *volost* of Vasil'evskaia, Elabuga *uezd*, a representative from Elabuga city reported to the *volost* kombedy congress that the kombedy "are not conducting enough successful work in the villages and *volosts*" and their membership is corrupted by criminals and demanded the re-election of the membership.¹¹⁶ Newspaper articles concurred, telling their readers that the poor have been passive and let the kulaks control the soviets and the kombedy.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ "O chrezvychainom naloge," *Izvestiia viatskogo gubernskogo ispolnitel'nogo komiteta*, January 17, 1919, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 20, ll. 3-40; GARF f. R-393, op. 13, d. 94, l. 138/ Hoover Archive, Archive of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 53. In Kotel'nich *uezd* NKVD reports noted that the middle peasants paid all their taxes, while the rich kulaks paid very little. In January 1919, out of Kotel'nich's tax levy of 23,000,000 rubles, they collected only 5,684,909.

¹¹⁶ GARF, f. R-393, op. 13, d. 93, l. 20/ Hoover Archive, Archive of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 53.

The Soviet Elections of 1919

As the Soviet state turned away from the *kombedy* project, it sought to strengthen local soviets and install peasant officials who were more sympathetic to both Bolsheviks and the populace. The state held elections to village and *volost* soviets throughout the province in late January to mid-February 1919. These elections were significant because they marked the first time the Russian countryside voted en masse since the Constituent Assembly election and marked a significant step for the Soviet regime in establishing and spreading its official presence in the countryside. Soviet election law followed the Provisional Government's parameters in which representatives were to be elected by citizens of both sexes, eighteen years and over. The 1918 Soviet constitution, however, disenfranchised "exploiters of labor": those living on unearned income, private traders, monks, the insane, criminals, former police, and gendarmes.¹¹⁷ Despite these laws some communities did not deny the right to vote to any of its members since, as the Toropovsk *volost* soviet in *Kotel'nich uezd*, stated they did not have any those types of people.

In most *volosts*, the local government identified, categorized, and disenfranchised scores of those who had traditionally wielded economic and political power. These

¹¹⁷ "K perevyboram sovetov," *Golos trudovogo naroda*, January 25, 1919, p. 2; "Reorganizatsiia komitetov bednoty," *Krasnaia mysl*, Votkinsk, January 5, 1919, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Chapter 13, specifically article 65. Constitution of the RSFSR, July 1918. A. I. Lepeshkin, ed. *Sbornik ofitsial'nykh dokumentov (Primenitel'no k kursu sovetskogo gosudarstvennogo prava)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo iuridicheskaiia literatura, 1964), 48-49.

dangerous elements were now ostracized from political life. Most regions however disenfranchised significant numbers of people that they identified as kulaks, speculators, merchants, former police, clergy, and “non-working elements.”¹¹⁹ The number of disenfranchised varied widely, from Iaransk *uezd*, where 72,499 people, or 46 percent of the potential electorate, was denied the right to vote, to other areas where closer to one to five percent could not vote.¹²⁰ Disenfranchisement affected both men and women.

Elections took place at village gatherings. Participation in the voting varied among communities. In some communities the elections paralleled village selection of peasant officials in the tsarist era. The male elders of the village gathered and voted unanimously for the representatives. For example, in a village in Arkhangel'skaia *volost*, Nolinsk *uezd*, eighteen male peasants participated in the elections, out of 113 people with the right to vote (40 men and 73 women). The average participant's age was 45 years old and they elected five men averaging 44 years old, three of whom voted and two did not, suggesting that only heads of households had the right to vote.¹²¹ Elections in most villages had more universal participation. In a neighboring village in Arkhangel'skaia

¹¹⁹ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 199, l. 46.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 1-12, 33-38, 55.

¹²¹ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 197, ll. 268-270ob. Several other villages in Arkhangel'skaia *volost* followed such restricted voting and in one village 35 men and five women participated. *Ibid.*, ll. 266, 271-271ob, 305-205ob; This pattern can also be seen in Sulaevskaia *volost*, Viatka *uezd*, *Ibid.*, d. 199, ll. 28-31.

volost equal numbers of men and women of all ages participated in the vote at the village gathering. Six male candidates, all “middle peasants,” stood for election, averaging 36 years old.¹²² The records show that both heads of the household and their subordinate members participated and they elected the sons of the heads of households. The election appears to have been highly contested. It lasted three hours and only one candidate received unanimous support.

The elections resulted in a hybrid of traditional peasant organization and new Soviet state administration. Generational differences in the village provided the link between the two. On the one hand, the electorate did not resemble the state’s vision of a proletarian election since women and men who had not been active in traditional village political life did not fully participate in voting. New representatives were also uniformly non-party (although some were listed as sympathetic to the Communist party) and were often middle peasants. For example, in October 1919 the village soviets in Rybno-Vatazhskaia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd* were comprised of sixteen middle and 34 poor peasants. However seven of the “poor” peasants also had to pay the extraordinary tax,

¹²² GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 197, l. 274. In Bobinskaia *volost* a more participatory voter population of seventy percent men and thirty percent women elected 310 representatives, all but one of whom was non-party. GAKO, f. R-879, op. 1, d. 120, l. 3. Those elected by a larger electorate appear to have been in their mid-to-late-thirties. See also the Malovoguishkoe commune in Balezinskaia *volost*, a mixed Udmurt, Russian, and Tatar *volost* in Glazov *uezd* in which the average age was 39. GAKO, f. R-3238, op. 2, d. 8, ll. 35-36.

suggesting that they had property and a degree of wealth.¹²³ On the other hand, women voted in greater numbers than in the past, finally being partially allowed to participate in the public sphere.

Voters also brought younger people to the soviets than traditional peasant institutions because they re-elected many kombedy members to the soviets (Table 5.4).

These young males had the advantage of incumbency and the elections gave their political rule a new legitimacy. Other villages did not hold elections and simply renamed their kombes.

<i>volost</i>	men voting	women voting	men abstaining	women abstaining
Arkhangel'skaia	673	457	545	1106
Cherno-Kolunishchkaia	371	366	83	47
Nikolaevskaia	750	811	614	522
Kaigorodskaia	696	606	912	1595
Red'kinskaia	940	626	692	1038
Voginskaia	1214	404	1441	2361
Totals	4644	3270	4287	6669
Percentage of total vote/abstention	59%	41%	39%	61%
Percentage of total population by gender voting/abstaining	52%	33%	48%	67%

Table 5.3: Gender breakdown of voting in 1919 soviet elections, Slobodskoi *uezd*.¹²⁴

¹²³ GAKO, f. R-3288, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 86-104.

¹²⁴ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 199, ll. 35-41.

<i>volost</i>	members in soviet	members of soviet formerly in kombed	% of members formerly in kombed	soviets	soviet chairmen formerly in kombed	% of soviet chairmen formerly in kombed
Pizhanskaia	9	3	33.3%	3	3	100%
Ikhtinskaia	16	6	37.5%	6	3	50%
Zykovskaia	18	7	38.8%	9	3	33.3%
Pishtanskaia	40	24	60%	14	9	64.2%
Orshanskaia	29	12	41.3%	13	9	69.3%
Solominskaia	5	1	20%	3	3	33.3%
Maloshcheg- lovskaia	32	18	56.2%	12	8	66.6%
Total	149	71	47.6%	60	36	60%

Table 5.4: Former kombed members in village soviets in 1919, Iaransk *uezd*¹²⁵

A comparison of the 1919 elections to the soviets and 1917 elections to the zemstvo and Constituent Assembly reveals the development of peasant-state relations, variables of popular participation in the political world, and intra-village cleavages. In both 1917 and 1919, peasant participation in the elections manifested acceptance of the state's legitimacy, a sense of inclusion in the new Soviet political tradition, and participation in revolutionary state building. However, if in 1917 peasants voted for political parties to express their conception of the Russian nation, in 1919 they voted fellow villagers into positions of power in their locality. Themes of class and social status replaced democracy and national liberation. More concretely, peasants overall participated to a greater degree in 1917 than in 1919. While participation in zemstvo

elections varied widely among *uezds* (from 35 to 65 percent), approximately 65 percent of peasants voted for the Constituent Assembly. Based on general evidence, around 42 percent of enfranchised peasants voted in 1919. The difference lies in shifts in participation by gender.

If in the Constituent Assembly elections women dominated the electorate, in 1919 they played a much more minor role even though they remained the vast majority of the village population. In many villages, no women voted and in communities that had more universal voting, women's participation still did not reflect the countryside's demographics. This is seen in Slobodskoi *uezd* where over half of able males and only a third of able women voted (see Table 5.3). The Bolshevik's acceptance of open voting at communal gatherings, a traditionally elderly male arena, guaranteed male domination in Soviet rural politics. The public sphere in the village was still controlled by males. When veterans from the First World War returned home in 1918, they pushed women out of village politics and back into the home. Because women viewed themselves in local politics as surrogates of their menfolk, they largely did not resist relinquishing their role

¹²⁵ Adopted from charts in Bystrova, *Komitety bednoty v Viatskoi gubernii*, 111-112. For another example of the kombed chairman becoming the soviet chairman see TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 18, d. 8, ll. 40-41.

in village assemblies. By attempting to bring the rural poor to power and quickly build a reliable state apparatus in the countryside, the Bolsheviks reinforced traditional gender divisions, placing class considerations above gender.

The Civil War Returns: The Kolchak Offensive

In 1919 Russia's civil war again transformed the Viatka countryside. In December 1918, the White Siberian Army under General Rudolph Gajda advanced westward with the goal of linking Siberia with the British-controlled north. Viatka lay in between the two anti-Bolshevik powers. The White's brief link between Siberian and southern forces had been broken and the leader of the Siberian Army, Admiral Kolchak, knew that in order to receive British material assistance, cut the Bolshevik railroad, and revive the White campaign, he had to take Viatka. Even the British government acknowledged the military significance of a White seizure of Viatka. British-led Allied forces wanted to pull out of Russia after the anti-Bolshevik forces established a dependable network in northern Russia. In order to do this the British planned to advance to the major northern railroad outpost of Kotlas, directly north of Viatka, and the Siberian Army was to seize Viatka, linking the two armies.¹²⁶ On December 24, 1918, White

¹²⁶ Viatka was the topic of many top-ranking Western powers' strategic conversations. In April 1919, the British told President Woodrow Wilson that they were sending more troops to advance on Kotlas and Viatka. Winston Churchill in private conversation also stated that the British would make "a good punch towards Viatka to join with Kolchak before we cleared out." Quoted in Michael Kettle, Churchill and the Archangel Fiasco: November 1918-July 1919, Russia and the Allies 1917-1920, vol. 3 (New York: Routledge, 1992), 315.

forces overran Perm, forcing the evacuation of its soviet administration to Viatka. The Whites crossed the Kama river and the Ural Mountains and entered Viatka province.

The White advance in Viatka the winter and spring of 1918-19 was a crucial event in the civil war. The Bolsheviks put state-building measures, such as establishing local soviets, on hold in eastern Viatka and focused on driving back the Whites. The combination of the White's capture of Perm and movement into Viatka provoked a crisis for the Central Committee over Trotsky's policies of reliance on military specialists and the general disorganization of the Red Army. The Committee ordered Joseph Stalin and Felix Dzerzhinsky to Viatka to rally the troops and investigate the causes of Perm's fall to the Whites.¹²⁷ In spring 1919, White forces advanced through eastern Viatka and captured Votkinsk, Sarapul, Elabuga, and Izhevsk, which five months earlier was the heart of the Prikomuch regime. The Whites therefore enjoyed sympathetic support from the urban populations. The Whites continued through Malmyzh *uezd* and into Urzhum in the south and Kaigorod in Slobodskoi *uezd* and the northern part of Glazov in the north. In May and June the Red Army's Second and Third Armies met the Whites in a series of

¹²⁷ Mark von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 56-57.

battles in which over 22,000 people were killed or injured and pushed back the White forces. By June 20 the Red Army forced the Whites out of the province.¹²⁸

The Soviet government was able to rally the necessary support from the peasantry to achieve this decisive military victory. From 1918 the Soviet state mobilized the whole population in order to defeat the anti-Soviet forces. Peasants adamantly opposed mobilization into the Red Army because they suffered major labor shortages and were unwilling to let go of their scarce supply of males. In 1918 the Soviet state gradually transformed the Red Army from a small, largely volunteer corps into a massive conscription-based military force. Peasants made up the vast majority of the soldiers. State mobilization of peasants into the Red Army increased tensions between the state and its population.

In 1918, peasants, regardless of ethnicity, offered volunteers only when anti-Soviet forces threatened their region. For example, in October 1918 as Prikomuch forces advanced toward their villages, peasants in the predominantly Udmurt *volost* of Il'inskaia and the mixed Russian-Udmurt *volost* of Mozhginskaia, Elabuga *uezd* requested that the revolutionary war committee allow them to be mobilized into the army.¹²⁹ Tatar peasants

¹²⁸ Zagvozdkin, 355-356.

¹²⁹ Order of D. F. Zorin, head of the provisional revolutionary military committee of Sarapul city, 2 armiiia v boiakh za osvobozhdenie Prikam'ia i Priural'ia. 1918-1919. Dokumenty, 76.

in Kitiakskaiia *volost*, Malmyzh *uezd* initially resisted soviet registration for mobilization. As in 1917, Tatars were against any type of registration, be it for grain, census, or mobilization. However by the end of 1918, when anti-Soviet forces threatened their region, the *volost* did volunteer recruits.¹³⁰ While *volosts* in Malmyzh, Elabuga, and the areas of Glazov around Prikomuch volunteered from fifty up to 100 people, volunteer movements in *volosts* of other regions were rare and yielded few soldiers.¹³¹

In 1919, the military did a series of mobilization campaigns of peasant youths throughout the province in *volosts* that showed themselves to be at least indifferent to the regime. Soviets mobilized petty officers aged 29 to 37 years and were able to conscript 754 men. They also mobilized 25 to 28 year-old male peasants. In order to avoid mass rebellion and maintain an army with a core from classes that the Bolsheviks presumed to be friendly to their regime, the state mobilized peasants from populations that already showed support for its rule. Veterans, communists and communist sympathizers were the first to be mobilized into the army, draining the Bolsheviks' natural allies in the countryside. These peasants were also often part of the local government, retarding the development of the Soviet administration in the countryside. For example, in April 1919

¹³⁰ Report on the socio-political life in Malmyzh *uezd* from September 19-25, 1918, Udmurtiia v period inostranoi voennoi intervetsii i grazhdanskoi voiny, 114; TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 178, l. 4.

¹³¹ TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 178.

in Glazov *uezd*, fifty percent of communists from *uezd* and *volost* cells were mobilized into the army.¹³² Peasants did not want to proclaim themselves supporters of the communists for fear of being drafted into the army.

Overall the Soviet government had a difficult time obtaining recruits, as seen in the May and June 1919 mobilization of nineteen to forty year olds. At a meeting of the Bobinsk *volost* ispolkom in Viatka *uezd* on May 29, 1919 peasant delegates fought with a representative from the *uezd* ispolkom over mobilization of its population. The *uezd* government ordered the mobilization of twenty of the “most conscious sympathizers” of the village soviets. An agitator tried to sway the peasants by speaking on the situation at the front and asked if there “wasn’t just one person who wants to be mobilized.” The *uezd* government representative again stated that there must be fighters who would “stand in defense of the government of workers and peasants,” but no one volunteered. The representative ordered that every soviet nominate two people from whom twenty nominees would be picked by casting lots, but the peasants refused, suggesting that the government take citizens who worked in the factory.¹³³ This scene was repeated in various *volosts* during the mobilization; peasants refused to give up the required number of volunteers to fight in the army, some peasant gatherings unanimously rejected

¹³² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 21, l. 6. See also GAKO, f. R-3238, op. 2, d. 4, ll. 14, 19.

¹³³ GAKO, f. R-879, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 5-6.

mobilization, and others only grudgingly mobilized a few peasants who were often members of the ispolkom (and therefore officially obliged to state service).¹³⁴ Peasants resisted mobilization in other ways as well. Individuals filed petitions requesting exemption, while others simply did not show up to the mobilization point. In Viatka *uezd*, over forty percent of conscripted individuals failed to appear. Fifteen percent of the individuals communities sent were elderly or ill and unfit to serve.¹³⁵ Despite peasant resistance to forced conscription, the Bolshevik government successfully persuaded villages to supply a steady stream of young men to the Red Army, especially in late 1918-1919, when anti-Soviet forces threatened Viatka province.

In order to police, categorize, and control its population the government's military and NKVD built on the modes of power used by the tsarist state during the First World War and molded them as an exigency of civil war.¹³⁶ The two divisions' information sections maintained detailed reports (*svodki*) on the population's mood (*nastroenie*) and socio-economic situation as a means of surveillance. *Volost* officials reported to *uezd*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 7-7ob, 9, 31-33.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 60-60ob, 63, 66, 68-68ob; d. 114, l. 2.

¹³⁶ This is not to say that informational reports began during the World War I. As mentioned in Chapter 2, reports on the public mood can be traced back to Nicholas I and even Peter the Great. The difference lies in the extent of the information and the government's intention in collecting it. As Peter Holquist notes, in the late tsarist era, reports on populations transformed from policing of the population into surveillance. See "'Information Is the Alpha and Omega of our Work': Bolshevik Surveillance in its Pan-European Context."

administrators who then categorized the data and transferred it to provincial leaders. The accounts detailed the popularity of Soviet policies (such as taxes and grain requisitions), the extent of soviet institutions, and the health of the local population. The Bolsheviks in part used this information for self-assessment and to find which areas (both geographically and politically) they needed to improve. They also conducted this surveillance of the population, as Peter Holquist states, “to transform both society and individual citizens for the better.”¹³⁷ Thus, Bolshevik surveillance should be seen as part of government attempts to understand, manage, and shape the peasant population in the same line as the kombedy project and establishment of local soviets.¹³⁸

The Soviets expanded the frequency and detail of their reports when anti-Soviet forces threatened the region. In 1919, when the Whites invaded Viatka, officials provided weekly reports, paying special attention to *volosts* that had been within Prikomuch territory, and thus naturally suspect.¹³⁹ The military even converted the reports into a series of cartograms that categorized monthly aggregate data of whole *volosts* by political allegiance: revolutionary, apathetic indifference, wavering, and

¹³⁷ Ibid., 421. Holquist however minimizes data gathering’s goal of measuring popular support.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 419.

¹³⁹ GARF, f. R-393, op. 12, d. 41, ll. 19-30; op. 13, d. 94, ll. 49ob-131/ Hoover Institution Archives. Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reels 10 and 53.

counter-revolutionary.¹⁴⁰ Informants showed a highly volatile shift in allegiances in several *volosts*. After the summer of 1919 the Whites no longer seriously threatened Viatka but the now entrenched Soviet state continued detailed reports from the locales.

Bolshevik political conceptions, in which class analysis was paramount, shaped the reports' language and categories. Informants blamed kulaks and unconscious peasants for failures of policy and incidents of unrest. Accounts even divided the population to fit Bolshevik ideals. For example, in January 1919, the information division of the Sovetsk *uezd* military commissariat submitted bi-weekly reports to the central administration on the numbers of peasants by village in each economic category, dividing the village population into poor, middle peasants, kulaks, members of the intelligentsia, and workers without providing a basis for the categories.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

The civil war politicized the peasant community and shaped individual peasant's experiences and identities. Soviet and White political fortunes depended on peasant support. At the same time, each side imagined peasant society through their own

¹⁴⁰ TsDNIKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 178.

¹⁴¹ GAKO, f. R-1287, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 12-12ob, 15, 18-21ob.

worldview. As Red and White power ascended and descended, individual peasants had to take a side and shape their discourse and political identity to be understood by their respective political ally.

The peasants' violent resistance to the Soviet state over grain policy on the surface does not correspond with the picture in the previous chapter of the peasantry engaging and seeking out the state. However, it is important to realize that both episodes occurred simultaneously. Peasants did not simply oppose or welcome Soviet power. Instead, peasants separated state policy and laws into those that helped and hurt their society. As a Soviet official described the mood of the peasantry in Porezskaiia *volost*, Glazov *uezd*, in September 1918, "the mood of the population is currently tranquil, but during grain requisition an uprising is possible."¹⁴² Peasants resisted state military force and embraced less violent state encroachment into their village. This helps to explain the success of the kombedy project and local soviets. While anti-Soviet forces were able to gain temporary support from villagers unhappy with Soviet grain requisitioning, Stepanov and the Prikomuch regime were unsuccessful at popular state building. They never attempted to bring the peasantry into the polity. In a period in which power disseminated throughout the province, only the Soviet state was able to harness political energy of peasant populations into building a new government.

¹⁴² GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 92, l. 217ob.

The Viatka Soviet government succeeded in drawing support from key segments of the village population, who agreed to be the administrative links between peasants and power. The Soviets thereby gained a foothold in the village. Although most peasants still objected to aspects of Soviet power the administrative process, the process of hegemonic control, eventually won the bulk of the peasantry's support for the Soviet regime.

CHAPTER 6

THE CITIZEN'S HUNGER: FAMINE, FAMINE RELIEF EFFORTS, AND THE RURAL ECONOMY

As the Reds beat back Kolchak's army, Viatka's peasants should have felt secure. They would no longer endure armies marching through their villages to mobilize their men, take their grain, and enact reprisals on those who did not support them. Although the Soviet military victories in the summer of 1919 eased the external threat, in the winter of that year crop failure, disease, famine, and mass population displacement began to crush the Viatka peasant community. The ecological disasters highlight the fragility of the peasant economy and traditional village structure. Famine and civil war engendered transformative social changes in the rural community by destroying the subsistence of peasant households, moving tens of thousands of peasants out of their village, and helping the young males rise to power in the countryside.

The end of the immediate threat of invasion by anti-Soviet forces also enabled Viatka's provincial and local administrations to turn their attention to building on mobilization programs initiated in 1918. But famine and accompanying social disasters also shaped government policies and, in turn, the peasant-state relationship. Mass

hunger, disease, and upheaval were daily reminders of the still nascent Soviet regime's limitations. Hunger and war also drew peasants and the Soviet state closer together by strengthening a reciprocal relationship: peasants turned to the government with an expectation that it would provide for them in times of need, while government officials began to build what would become the Soviet welfare state in which the government embraced its duty to try to care for the population, while simultaneously mobilizing them to build a socialist society.

This chapter serves as a background to the final chapter, which discusses how Bolshevik officials and peasants engaged in constant dialogue through state projects. The programs discussed in the following chapter cannot be fully understood outside the context of famine and the destruction of the rural economy.

The Backdrop of Famine

Between 1919 and 1921, a series of meteorological disasters befell the Russian countryside resulting in wholesale crop failure and mass famine. In 1919-20, a drought hit European Russia, destroying most winter and spring crops. In 1920 frost also destroyed the harvest and seed. Given the precarious nature of the peasant subsistence farming at the time--without surplus labor, stored grain, and non-agricultural income to fall back on--the rural economy collapsed. Years of war, government requisitions, and other external strains on the rural demography and economy weakened the peasant

economy, but weather conditions were the greatest reasons for the extent of the famine.¹

In all of Russia, famine affected up to twenty-five million people and killed approximately five million. Although crop failure and starvation was worst in the lower Volga region, other areas such as Siberia, Ukraine, the Urals, the Don, and the Volga-Kama region (including Viatka province) also suffered.

Crop failure hit Viatka's southern districts, the province's traditional breadbasket, the hardest because the area was heavily reliant on agriculture. For example, Sarapul *uezd* produced 8,627,334 puds of grain in 1916, but only 625,145 puds in 1921.²

Peasants were forced to eat their seed grain and slaughter livestock. The situation was so bad that many starving villagers even had to rely on eating a type of dirt and traveled over a hundred versts to collect it. Locals blocked the travelers from the soil, and fights between the two populations broke out.³ Peasants also relied on surrogates for grain such as potato peels, cabbage leaves, acorns, pig weed, flax, blood, sawdust, straw, and tree

¹ Even American Relief Association officials acknowledged that weather conditions were to blame for the famine. Hoover Archives, American Relief Administration, Russian operations, box 414, folder 414.3, general questionnaire. Bolshevik literature at the time acknowledged the weather's effect, but pointed to the imperialist war as the main culprit. Interestingly, some ARA officials agreed with the Bolsheviks that economic conditions beginning in 1914 provoked the famine. Otchet o deiatel'nosti Viatskoi gubernskoi komissii pomoshchi golodaiushchim za period s 5-go avgusta 1921 goda po 15-e oktiabrai 1922 goda (Viatka: 1-ia tip-lit. Bumazhno-poligraficheskogo tresta, 1922), 3.

² Hoover Archives, American Relief Administration, New York office, box 30, folder 30-2, Report of inspection trip in the Kazan' region, October 12, 1922.

³ Hoover Archives, American Relief Administration, Russian operations, box 29, folder 29-2, Report of the central committee of relief, November 16, 1921. GAKO, f. R-783, op. 1, d. 79, l. 72ob; d. 5, l. 26, 120ob.

bark, causing nausea and malnutrition. Hundreds of thousands of peasants in Viatka were malnourished or starving. In the winter of 1921-22 a census showed that 170,595 people were starving in Malmyzh *uezd* and up to 50,000 starved in Nolinsk *uezd*.⁴

It was only in the fall of 1921 that the Soviet central government organized a coherent famine relief operation. The Provincial Committee to Aid the Hungry (Gubkompomgol), the regional sector of the famine relief organization established by Maxim Gorky and other leading cultural figures, began to implement relief efforts, but it was international aid, especially from the American Relief Administration (ARA) that saved the Viatka countryside from ruin. Herbert Hoover and the Central Committee agreed to the ARA operations on July 31, 1921 and the ARA famine relief began distributing relief that fall.⁵ Because Viatka occupied a liminal space in Russia, neither part of the ARA's Volga, nor its Kazan region, the organizations initially ignored Viatka. It was only at the end of 1921 that the ARA began to feed southern Viatka. The ARA and kompomgol organized food and grain distribution points and turned many schools into feeding stations. By July 1922, there were over 8,500 stations feeding over 113,000

⁴ GAKO, f. R-783, op. 1, d. 74, l. 4ob; d. 5, l. 136.

⁵ H. H. Fisher, The Famine in Soviet Russia 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), 49-111. Herbert Hoover, An American Epic: Famine in Forty-Five Nations. The Battle on the Front Line, 1914-1923, vol. III, The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961), 427-517. The French Red Cross and other foreign relief groups also aided the Viatka countryside.

people in Viatka. Besides meals and grain, the ARA also distributed winter clothing.⁶

Peasants did not fully understand the nature of the ARA's aid and that it came from the United States, but they accepted the relief without many questions.⁷

Like at the beginning of the war in 1914, the state called on its population to provide additional resources to combat the nation's enemy. Although the Soviet state lacked the resources and know-how to distribute relief like the ARA, it mobilized several population groups, including young and female peasants, workers, specialists, Party members, and so forth and drew them into the collective effort to defeat the country's latest enemy. Throughout the province in autumn 1921, *uezd*- and *volost*-level famine relief (*kompomgol*) organizations were established to mobilize the population and gather local resources to fight famine. The provincial *kompomgol* immediately organized a province-wide "week of aid to the hungry child" during which factory workers contributed their labor, workers went door to door to collect donations, and volunteers staged shows and concerts to raise money.⁸ The state targeted taxes at the struggle to fight the famine. It used part of the New Economic Policy's (NEP) natural tax, which

⁶ Hoover Archives, Russia. Tsentral'naia komissiiia pomoshchi golodaiushim. Box 1, "Totals of the Struggle against Famine in 1921-22," 215-217.

⁷ Hoover Archives, American Relief Administration, New York office, box 30, folder 30-2, Report of an inspection of Ossa, Sarapool (Perm Government) (*sic.*) and of Votskaia Oblast' (July 19-28, 1922?).

⁸ GAKO, f. R-783, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 10-11.

replaced the grain levy in the spring of 1921, to fund grain and clothing shipments, something that the propaganda section emphasized in their popular literature.⁹ The People's Commissariat of Finance (Narkomfin) also imposed a tax on all citizens (*obshchegrazhdanskii nalog*) and deducted one to ten percent of monthly salaries for famine relief.

Famine relief accented the resilient prominence of duty in the relationship between peasant citizen and the welfare state. In both kompomgol activities and Narkomfin's taxation, the state proclaimed that it was the duty of all citizens to help in the struggle against famine. The brochure "All to the struggle against famine" stated that "each citizen must do everything to assist in the collection of the tax and not oppose it in any way."¹⁰ Regional declarations on land use also demanded all citizens to support the needy. The Sarapul *uezd* congress stated that it was "the patriotic duty (*partrioticheskii dolg*) of every citizen to aid needy comrade peasants who will not have the ability to work and sow their land."¹¹ Like the tsarist regime, and especially the Provisional

⁹ Ibid., ll. 21-21ob.

¹⁰ TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 2, d. 179, l. 5.

¹¹ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 760, l. 27ob.

Government during the First World War, Soviet officials drew on language and images of citizenship and its accompanying civic duties to mobilize peasant resources to help defeat a national threat.

Peasants did not dispute their responsibility to pay a just, minimal amount to the state, but they assumed that the state must in turn provide for them in time of famine and harvest failure, the central component of a moral economy. However the Soviet state now altered the moral economic relationship to include popular responsibility. It was now not only the state, but also all citizens that had a moral responsibility for public sustainability.

The moral economic relationship between peasants and the Soviet state stemmed from the tsarist era (as mentioned in Chapter Five) when peasants had turned to their landlords and the state during times of need with the expectation that their social superiors would take care of them as good paternalists. During the first Soviet famine, the peasants once again petitioned the local state for aid. In Elabuga *uezd* the government and Cheka reported since peasants “do not have any emergency stores” the “starving masses by the hundreds are going to the volispolkoms (executive committees)” and requesting grain.¹² Peasants of Nolinsk *uezd* even sent numerous petitions to the province center threatening to withhold their famine tax payments, not because they saw them as

¹² GAKO, f. R-3271, op. 1, d. 43, l. 19; TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 2, d. 215, l. 10.

unjustly taxing an already impoverished population, but because they felt that the province was not giving them enough attention.¹³ Seven villages in Urzhum *uezd* complained to the Land Section that the previous year the villagers were already starving and the army had seized grain on top of the levy. Now over half of the inhabitants were starving and, lacking seed, villagers reduced their sown area from 245 des. to 96 des. They were forced to exchange their milk and eggs with speculators for salt and demanded that the state reduce the levy on butter and eggs by 75 percent and free them from additional natural taxes.¹⁴

Workers and peasants accepted their public duty and actively contributed to the cause. While peasants fought against extraordinary taxes and requisitions, they sacrificed almost three million rubles to the all-citizen tax and donated money to medical relief efforts. In contrast, in peasants' attempts to get the state to provide them with famine relief they resorted to traditional peasant-elite moral language and responsibilities.

The famine was also gendered and generational in nature. Most portrayals of famines in the world center on the suffering of women and children as innocent victims.¹⁵ During the Soviet famine, the young and elderly of both sexes were quicker to succumb

¹³ See GAKO, f. R-1620, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 27-48; f. R-890, op. 1, d. 2, l. 27.

¹⁴ RGAE, f. 478, op. 3, d. 1296, l. 222.

¹⁵ Margaret Kelleher, The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible? (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 2.

to hunger and disease than adults, but males overall died at greater rates than females.

Males in the village were disproportionately elderly or wounded veterans and they may not have been able to withstand famine.¹⁶ It is also significant that Russia's relief efforts focused on youths. Since societies in general traditionally perceive youths, or children, as innocent victims, social relief efforts allot a disproportionate percentage of their resources to this group. Statistics showing where to allot famine relief suggest that more adults than youths were starving in Viatka. In Malmyzh *uezd*, only 21 percent of those listed as starving were younger than seven years old.¹⁷

In Soviet Russia, famine relief to the young also became a metaphor for saving the future of the new society. Women also had a significant role in famine relief as caregivers for the children. Since peasant women were responsible for the private sphere and family matters such as preparing food, it was often the senior female of the household who gathered aid. A relief worker described a typical recipient.

The committee is busy at the scales, and the yellow corn, an unfamiliar sight to most of those assembled, is heaped into a bin before the fascinated eyes of this hungry crowd.... A name is called and an old woman slowly pushes her way

¹⁶ Serguei Adamets, "Famine in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Russia: Mortality by Age, Cause, and Gender," in *Famine Demography: Perspectives from the Past and Present*, Tim Dyson and Cormac Ó Gráda, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 172-177. David Arnold discusses women's hunger avoidance strategies, such as food sharing, demonstrations, prostitution, and migration, in a global context, *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change*, New Perspectives on the Past, R. I. Moore, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1988), 88-91.

¹⁷ GAKO, f. R-1, op. 2, d. 229, ll. 5-5ob.

through the crowd. Her costume and her swarthy wrinkled face plainly show she is a Tartar. Around her neck still hang twenty or more silver fifty-kopeck pieces, evidence of a former prosperity. The two silver roubles hanging from the two braids down her back indicate that she has been married. The American field man through his interpreter learns that her name is Fatme Habeullin; that her husband died from hunger last December; that she has had six children, the oldest of whom, a son in the Red Army, has not been heard from for two years; that the second, a daughter, died of typhus in 1920; that of the four small children remaining, two are being fed in the A.R.A. kitchens of the village; and that she is not old, only forty-six.¹⁸

The famine is significant not only due to the sheer force of its calamity. It also represented the conclusion of seven years of turmoil and fundamentally shaped peasants' experience of this time. While the famine caused great discontent among the population, it also brought peasants and state organizations together. Crop failure and the resulting famine and destruction of the peasant economy influenced almost every aspect of peasant-state relations and village society at the end of the civil war. The remaining sections of the chapter describe mass mobilization projects and arenas where the population and various state apparatuses interacted, as well as the transformation of intra-village society needs to be seen with the ever-present specter of famine in the background.

¹⁸ Quoted in Hertha Kraus, International Relief in Action, 1914-1943: Selected Records, with Notes (Scottsdale, PA: The Herald Press, 1944), 54-55.

The Population Upturned

The civil war exacerbated the massive displacement of the population brought on World War I. Newspapers included a “searches” (*rozyski*) section for people hoping to find relatives and friends lost in evacuations, service to the Red Army, and war-time captivity in foreign lands.¹⁹ In June 1918, there were still 1419 German and Austrian soldiers in captivity in Viatka *uezd*. Another 1597 prisoners arrived that July. Furthermore, there were still 990 German, Austrian, Turkish, and Bulgarian alien enemies who were prisoners in the *uezd*, of whom 271 were women and 261 were children. Through the summer and fall of 1918, the Viatka College of Prisoners and Refugees oversaw a mass evacuation project, shepherding most of the prisoners and former enemy aliens back to their country of origin.²⁰

While foreign citizens and prisoners left Russia, urban refugees and peasant soldiers returned to the countryside. The number of refugees from the war swelled as urbanites went to the country to look for food and escape social turmoil, and the state

¹⁹ See for example, *Krasnyi Nabat*, Glazov: July 19, 1919, p. 4.

²⁰ See for example GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1. d. 9, ll. 89-89ob. The college administered an enormous number of travelers passing through Viatka. By August 20, the medical staff at the Viatka evacuation point saw over 3,000 Russians, 300 Germans, and 28,500 Austrians. GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 107, l. 151/ Hoover Archive, Russian Archives of Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 41. In May and June the Glazov *uezd* ispolkom sent 758 German and Austrian citizens back to their native countries. GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 109, l. 208/ Hoover Archive, Russian Archives of Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 42.

evacuated people from the cities. Villages and local governments at first tried to accommodate them but the refugees soon outgrew the locales' limited capabilities. In Ludoshorskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd* refugees who had arrived during the war and were living in the zemstvo schools spilled over to local dwellings and in 1918 the *volost* soviet requested that no more refugees be placed in the region.²¹ There were 1640 refugees in Viatka *uezd* alone in the beginning of September, which grew to 2052 by mid-October and 2143 in the middle of November. The central People's Commissariat of Supply evacuated thousands of Muscovite children to Elabuga *uezd* and in 1918 there were over 12,000 refugees in Viatka. Given the desperate food situation, violent material destruction from the civil war, and shifting political control, neither villagers nor Soviet governmental administrations could handle the influx of refugees and some transplants died from starvation.²²

Peasant men also slowly returned to their households. Although soldiers from the war began to return home following the February Revolution, soldiers formerly imprisoned in countries of the Central Powers trickled back only in late-summer 1918 and flooded the province that winter. In August, the Viatka *uezd* government reported

²¹ GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 107, l. 115ob/ Hoover Archive, Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 41.

²² TsDNKO, f. 45, op. 1, d. 158, ll. 36, 54. A note from Moscow indicates that 100,000 children were evacuated to Elabuga, but no other document supports this number.

that up to 4800 soldiers had returned home.²³ The Soviet government saw the formerly imprisoned veterans, like other soldiers, as potential allies and actively agitated among them. At the disembarkment station in Viatka city, the state provided them with tea, a cafeteria, a library, and speeches.²⁴ District ispolkoms (executive committees) even paid those delivering the mail to transport these men back to their *volosts*.²⁵ Records indicate that within five months of their return, however, almost half of the formerly imprisoned soldiers left again for the Red Army creating a revolving door effect in which men returned only to leave a short time later.²⁶

While thousands traveled back to Viatka or made the province their temporary home, thousands more wandered around the region or tried to resettle to other parts of the country. Peasant migration or flight from unlivable circumstances was a compensatory survival technique in Russia whose origins can be found well before enserfment. As in the tsarist era, peasants migrated due to poor land, epidemics, failed harvests, and rumors

²³ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 79, l. 95. Several soldiers also returned home in December to Malmyzh *uezd*. GAKO, f. R-3300, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 1-17.

²⁴ GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 107, ll. 149-150, 299/ Hoover Archive, Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 41.

²⁵ GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 117, l. 1/ Hoover Archive, Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 46.

²⁶ In Bogorodskaiia *volost*, 47 of the 97 soldiers went into the Red Army by May 1919. GAKO, f. R-1620, op. 2, d. 13, ll. 1ob-9.

about opportunities in distant lands.²⁷ During the civil war, political turmoil, government requisitions, and most of all unfavorable weather conditions spurred peasants to seek new opportunities elsewhere.²⁸ From 1914 to 1922, the vast majority of peasant migrants in Viatka attempted to travel eastward following similar paths that their relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances took in previous years. However, the cataclysmic changes during the civil war also disrupted local migration.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Viatka's peasants maintained stable, balanced settlement patterns, both within and without the province. About equal numbers of people migrated to other districts within the province as to other provinces. Migration patterns varied by *uezd*; for example, out of 2,211 migrants from Viatka *uezd*, 1,579, or 71 percent moved to other districts within the province, while out of 1,997 migrants from Sarapul *uezd*, 1,634 or 92 percent migrated to another province.²⁹ Peasants from northern

²⁷ Jerome Blum, Lord and Peasant in Russia: From the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 106-113, 247-249; Willard Sunderland, "Peasants on the Move: State Peasant Resettlement in Imperial Russia, 1805-1830s," The Russian Review 52 (October 1993): 477-478; "Peasant Pioneering: Russian Peasant Settlers Describe Colonization and the Eastern Frontier, 1880s-1910s," Journal of Social History 34 (summer 2001): 898-901. There is no evidence that peasant migration during the civil war constituted avoidance protest against the Soviet regime, a protest found during collectivization. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5-6; Michael Adas, "From Avoidance to Confrontation: Peasant Protest in Precolonial and Colonial Southeast Asia," Comparative Studies in Society and History 23 (April 1981): 217-247.

²⁸ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 282, l. 151; d. 513, l. 5.

²⁹ N. Romanov, Pereseleniia krest'ian Viatskoi gubernii. Issledovanie Viatskago gubernskago zemskago statistika (Viatka: Tipografiia Kuklina, 1880), 119-120. Data is from 1859-79.

and central *uezds* tended to resettle to neighboring warmer, more fertile southern districts, especially Iaransk and Malmyzh, and southern peasants moved to other provinces entirely. Intra-provincial migration was safe and less dramatic due to the proximity to the settler's home. Villagers hoping for new opportunities and greater lifestyle change resettled to the Siberian and Far Eastern provinces of Perm, Tomsk, Tobolsk, Eniseisk, and Irkutsk. In a manner resembling peasant labor migration to urban factories, peasants in the same district or village tended to resettle in the same area, using the people from their native land (*zemliaki*) to ease the transition. Migration eastward continued to grow in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. If during the whole twenty-year period from 1859 to 1879, around 19,800 people left Viatka, between 1895 and 1908 over 100,000 people migrated to Siberia and the Far East.³⁰

The number of migrants vacillated greatly during the seven years under review. At the time of the war, migration dropped significantly, from 17,817 in 1913, to 6,079 in 1915.³¹ The numbers began to grow in the first years of the Revolution and by January

³⁰ Ibid; *Obzor Viatskoi gubernii za 1913 god*, 43; Donald W. Treadgold, *The Great Siberian Migration: Government and Peasant in Resettlement from Emancipation to the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 147-148; *Pereselenie i zemleustroistvo za Uralom v 1913 g. (Otchet o rabotakh pereselenicheskago upravleniia za 1913 g.)*. Prilozhenie k smete dokhodov, raskhodov i spetsial'nykh sredstve Pereselenicheskago Upravleniia G. U. Z. i Z. na 1915 g. (Petrograd: Tipografiia A. E. Kollins, 1914), 4.

³¹ *Obzor Viatskoi gubernii za 1915 god*, 61-62; *Pereselenie i zemleustroiva*, 4. For comparison, in 1913, 10,835 families migrated from Viatka, 10,492 came from Tambov province, 12,790 from Poltava, and 8,047 from Saratov.

1919, over 9,000 applicants registered to resettle. Of those, approximately 28 percent had relatives and acquaintances in Siberia and nine percent had been there before.³²

Indeed already in the spring of 1918, the Viatka Land Section telegraphed all *uezd* Land Sections that the central points of resettlement suffered from “massive congestion.” The Omsk, Turgan, and Tomsk governments wrote the Viatka government pleading with it to stop peasant migration to their land. The Tomsk government complained that most settlers had the appropriate certification to migrate and were taking all the unused land, driving local landless peasants to the brink of ruin.³³

The Soviet government prohibited free migration to Siberia and Asian Russia in the February 1918 Decree on Land until the completion of the socialization of land and maintained this policy through the civil war. The People’s Commissariat of Land in February 1921 stated that the Soviet government was unable to maintain data on land ownership in Siberia while Kolchak was in power there, and the transportation system on migratory paths needed to be improved before resettlement could continue. The state needed “normal conditions” before it could allow migration.³⁴ Settlers needed either a

³² GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 282, ll. 146ob-147, 150-151ob. This number excludes Slobodskoi, Iaransk, Urzhum, Elabuga, and Malmyzh *uezds*.

³³ *Ibid.*, d. 42, ll. 29-30, 32, 34, 36, 39.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, d. 38, l. 137, 140. Temporary prohibition on migration due to inadequate data was not new. In 1812, the tsarist government banned resettlement (except to New Russia) for the same reasons. Sunderland, “Peasants on the Move,” 481.

written resolution from the commune or certification from the resettlement organization that the migrant is resettling on state (*kazennaia*) land.³⁵ Peasants therefore either migrated illegally or petitioned the state to allow them to resettle. Others misunderstood the law. For example, a series of petitioners in Malmyzh *uezd* stated that since the law forbade them to travel to Siberia by rail, they asked for permission to travel by foot. The *uezd* land section passed the applications to the provincial land section that clarified that all migration, by foot or rail, was forbidden.³⁶

Once crop failures and famine hit Viatka, however, the number of those wishing to migrate jumped dramatically and reached epidemic proportions by 1921. In 1920, up to 50,000 people wished to resettle in the east.³⁷ Reacting to the catastrophic situation in the countryside, the central government in July 1921 allowed 20,000 people from Viatka to resettle in Siberia.³⁸ Incomplete records show that between September and December 1921 over 22,000 people applied to migrate beyond Viatka's borders and around 10,200 actually resettled to Siberia, both legally and illegally. The largest number of applicants came from the southern districts, where the famine hit hardest; 5,569 people in Iaransk

³⁵ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 42, l. 16. "Zapreshchenye v'ezda," Golos trudovogo naroda, November 1, 1918, p. 1.

³⁶ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 514, l. 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, d. 38, l. 164.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 181.

uezd alone applied to resettle eastward and 12,002 actually migrated.³⁹ This reversed the migratory trend of pre-Revolutionary Russia when peasants across Viatka moved into Iaransk.⁴⁰ Officials recounted enormous numbers of peasants fleeing their homes without a concrete destination. In Slobodskoi *uezd*, a region not considered famished, up to 1637 households fled their homes in the spring of 1922. Refugees overran railroad and steamship stations even though most did not have permits or tickets. Between March and June 1922, almost 22,000 people arrived at the Viatka city train station. Over a hundred peasants died en route to the station while other peasants, having arrived there, were too weak from hunger, and fell on the street and lay there to die.⁴¹

Official discourse surrounding peasant migration during the famine reflects the traditional dominator-dominated power dichotomy. State records described peasant flight as “aimless,” “disorganized,” and cited a primal survival instinct, denying the rationale behind leaving one’s house. In fact, migrating to potential sources of food was a rational survival strategy in which peasants used personal and legal contacts to aid their cause.⁴²

³⁹ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 888, ll. 8-35; RGAE, f. 478, op. 7, d. 188, l. 14.

⁴⁰ Romanov, 70-77.

⁴¹ Otchet o deiatel'nosti Viatskoi gubernskoi komissii pomoshchi golodaiushchim, 11, 13.

⁴² British officials in nineteenth-century India provided the same descriptions for peasants fleeing famine. Mass migration, however, is a regular companion to famine and is one of the transformative qualities of this phenomenon. Famine in Brazil in 1878 spurred on the settlement movement and subsequent famines

The social turmoil of war and civil war changed the composition of migrants. Before the First World War, migrants were either families or single men looking for new opportunities.⁴³ From the beginning of the war until the crop failure in 1919, the typical applicant wishing to migrate was a female head of a household who wanted to resettle to Siberia or Asian Russia with her family. A review of petitions from Bogorodskaja *volost*, Nolinsk *uezd* in 1918 shows that migrants on the whole were relatively well off. The applicants averaged a little over 13 des. of land per household, around the median amount of land before the war, and a sizeable number of livestock. All wanted to go to either Tomsk or Eneseisk.⁴⁴

During the civil war, many applicants to resettle to Siberia were refugees and former prisoners involuntarily living in Viatka. Several families from western provinces travelling through Viatka in 1918 and 1919 were stopped by the approaching civil war. Trapped in Viatka's towns and villages, these refugees had no means of survival and pleaded with the Soviet government to allow them to continue on to Siberia. In their petitions, refugees defined themselves as the true allies of Soviet power and logical

in the twentieth century pushed peasants into urban factories. Of course the great Irish famine provoked mass resettlement to the United States. Arnold, 91-95.

⁴³ See for example, GAKO, f. 940, op. 1, d. 677, ll. 1-2.

⁴⁴ GAKO, f. R-1620, op. 2, d. 2, ll. 19-39. For applicants during the First World War, see RGIA, f. 391, op. 6, d. 391, ll. 1-11; d. 710, ll. 1-8.

recipients of their aid; poor peasants with young children who fled their village because they could not sustain their family. One group of refugees even formed an agricultural artel during their stay “to work the land and help soviet power.”⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the Soviet government did not let these people continue to Siberia. Only in the face of famine in the countryside and mass peasant flight, did the gubkompomgol begin an evacuation of the starving to Siberia in August 1921. Between August 1921 and June 1922, the government evacuated over ten thousand people.⁴⁶

While most peasants migrated to the east, a sizable minority attempted to move to the north and south. In April 1919, the Soviet government, as part of its decossackization policy, issued a plan to colonize the Don with true believers and sympathizers of Soviet power.⁴⁷ It extended invitations directly to families of Red Army soldiers, hoping to bring 2,000 citizens from Viatka in the first group of settlers. If that number would be insufficient, it requested the local governments “form groups from the village poor, members of agricultural communes, associations... and other collective organizations as

⁴⁵ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 514, ll. 9-10, 31-32ob. Quote from l. 31.

⁴⁶ The Hoover Archive, Russia. Tsentral’naia komissiia pomoshchi golodaiushim, box 1, “Totals of the Struggle against Famine in 1921-22,” page 218.

⁴⁷ Peter Holquist, Making War. Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 166-205.

well as others who would want to engage in collective agriculture” in the Don.⁴⁸ In May, the Bolsheviks advertised their plan and the Viatka Land Section even ordered forty train cars to transport settlers to the gathering point in Moscow. By mid-June, the Viatka Land Section began to receive a steady stream of petitions of those wishing to resettle. Significantly, more refugees than peasants wanted to begin a soviet life in the Don. For example, a refugee family from Vilnius living in Viatka city argued that they had land at home and wanted to resettle to Siberia but the Whites controlled both territories. They desired to work on a commune and supported Soviet power. Although Moscow forbade refugees and other unorganized groups from settling in the Don program, several families from as far away as Perm and Kotstroma came to the Viatka city train station to be a part of the program. In 1919, refugees did not have opportunities for survival that local peasants enjoyed and therefore jumped at the chance to move to the Don.

Social circumstances reshaped this Soviet population policy from resettling a peasant vanguard to transporting desperate refugees. Due to the changing military fortunes in the Don, the Soviet government was forced to cancel the resettlement project

⁴⁸ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 278, l. 3; d. 64, ll. 38-38ob.

in mid-June and prohibit all migration to the Don Oblast. Nevertheless, petitions still came to the Land Section and those wishing to resettle continued to appear at the Viatka train station.⁴⁹

Other peasants resettled in the northwestern province of Severo Dvinsk. Upon the outbreak of war, the tsarist government actively pursued internal colonization of peasants to under-populated areas to increase the country's agricultural output. The Provisional and Soviet governments continued this policy. As early as 1918, the central, Viatka, Vologda, and Severo Dvinsk Land Sections communicated about resettling peasants from Viatka to the north.⁵⁰ In a unique situation shaped by Russia's turmoil, Estonian private farmsteaders in the northwestern province of Severo Dvinsk invited peasants from Orlov and Kotel'nich *uezds* to take over their estates since they were returning to their motherland. Many Estonian peasants wrote letters to the Viatka land Section asking them to allow specific families to resettle on their farm.⁵¹ Seeing the desperate plight of the

⁴⁹ Ibid., ll. 1-88.

⁵⁰ RGAE, f. 478, op. 6, d. 1342, ll. 1, 9-9ob, 132-132ob.

⁵¹ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 513, ll. 5-7, 10, 28, 32-33, 36, 39, 43, 47, 49-56. It is unclear how the Estonians made contact with the peasants. It should also be noted that these peasants residing in Viatka were ethnically Russian.

Viatka peasantry in 1920-21, both the Viatka and Severo Dvinsk land sections facilitated the resettlement to around 450 *khutora* with up to 1,000 des. of arable land.⁵²

To add to the confusion, many migrants gave up on their journey and returned home. In June 1921, about a thousand refugees returning from Siberia were unable to make the journey all the way home and resorted to living at the Viatka city railroad station. They petitioned the famine relief organization to finance their transportation home so they could help in the harvest.⁵³

The Disease Stricken Rural Economy

As famine grew, so did disease. Due to unsanitary conditions and general ignorance of disease, the Viatka countryside had long been prone to epidemics. In 1892, cholera devastated Viatka, as it did the rest of European Russia. Disease grew during World War I and the Revolution. In October 1918, the Spanish flu (*ispanskaia bolezn*) caused “colossal damage” in Kotel’nich *uezd*, killing 170 peasants, while a typhoid epidemic hit Nolinsk in spring 1919.⁵⁴ The governments mobilized most doctors and *fel’dshers* (doctor’s assistants) for the war and civil war. In 1919 in Glazov *uezd* there

⁵² Ibid., d. 38, l. 119.

⁵³ Hoover Archives, Russia. Tsentral’naia komissiiia pomoshchi golodaiushim, box 1, “Totals of the Struggle against Famine in 1921-22,” p. 218.

⁵⁴ GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 117, l. 7 / Hoover Archive, Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 46. GAKO, f. R-1620, op. 2, d. 13, l. 37.

remained only four doctors, two for the city hospital and two for the countryside.

Villagers, assuming they wanted to, could not turn to modern medicine for help.⁵⁵

Unsanitary living conditions, malnutrition, and the lack of medical resources finally provoked massive epidemics. From 1920-22, Tuberculosis, scurvy, dysentery, relapsing fever, and especially typhus ravaged the rural population.⁵⁶

Disease, pestilence, famine, and requisitions also decimated peasant livestock. Cases of glanders jumped and mange went from less than 400 cases in 1913 to almost 7,000 cases in 1920. Siberian ulcer, a swamp-loving parasite that the zemstvo fought against during the war, hit the hardest. In 1913, 262 heads of livestock were struck with the pest, 514 in 1914 and almost 4,000 in 1921.⁵⁷ The various state powers had mobilized veterinarian specialists, leaving a void in the countryside. Without medicine and training, peasants could not contain these parasites. The environment also spread pests. For example, siberian ulcers most often attacked cattle and horses when they grazed in swampy areas. During the drought, peasants were forced to feed their cattle in these

⁵⁵ RGASPI, f. 17, 5. d. 21, l. 4. On peasant reluctance to use modern medicine, see Samuel C. Ramer, "Traditional Healers and Peasant Culture in Russia, 1861-1917," in Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 207-232.

⁵⁶ Otchet o deiatel'nosti Viatskoi gubernskoi komissii pomoshchi golodaiushchim, 13-14. The state recorded thousands of cases for each disease and over 11,000 cases of typhus in the first half of 1922. Hoover Archives, folder 29-3.

dangerous lands even though veterinarians before the war had instructed them as to the associated dangers. In the area that formed the Votyak Autonomous Oblast, the number of cows dropped 46 percent, working horses 47 percent, and bulls an amazing 95 percent (see Table 6.1). Sheep and pigs, fast growing farm commodities before World War I, were hardest hit since peasants raised them largely for the now non-existent cash economy. In 1912 there were 1,914,324 sheep, in 1921 the number fell to 702,806; only one-third the number of sheep in 1912 remained in 1921.⁵⁸

	1916	1921	1922
Cows	164,425	107,527	89,707
Bulls	11,725	1,037	503
Working horses	160,523	104,322	85,369
Colts	39,907	29,985	22,018
Grain harvested	28,000,000 puds	4,000,000 puds	8,213,000 puds

Table 6.1: Decline of livestock and harvest in Votyak Autonomous Region in heads and puds.⁵⁹

Famine, disease, and requisitions also dragged down the number of horses per household and created more horseless peasants, one of the tsarist ethnographers' and Lenin's main barometers for peasant wealth. In 1916 in Sarapul *uezd* there were 1.37

⁵⁷ P. Trapeznikov, "Veterinarnoe delo," *Viatskaia guberniia na Vsesoiuznoi sel'sko-khoziaistvennoi i kustarno-promyshlennoi vystavke v 1923 godu: Sbornik statei* (Viatka: Pervaia tipo-litografiia GSNKh, 1923), 84-85.

⁵⁸ GAKO, f. R-890, op. 1, d. 2, l. 64.

⁵⁹ RGAE, f. 478, op. 2, d. 384, ll. 17, 19-21.

horses per household, and in 1920, 0.80. The ratio declined in 1921 to 0.70 and in 1922 reached 0.55.⁶⁰ In 1922, around 35 percent of peasant households did not own a horse.⁶¹

Material shortages continued through 1922. Due to poor supply lines the state could not import salt, kerosene, and iron to Viatka and even the abundant firewood from the northern part of the province could not reach central and southern districts.⁶²

Shortages strangled the peasant economy. Peasants could not fix agricultural equipment, prepare meals, or even properly heat their homes. Shortages in both the countryside and the national economy also destroyed the non-agricultural sector. The handicrafts (*kustar*) market was the hit the hardest. A December 1918 report on the *kustar* industry in Viatka *uezd* summarized the problems.

[O]ften the market lacks necessary raw and factory materials, such as paint, lacquers, extracts, hardware, instruments, oils, spirits, and so forth; high prices for materials and working hands; disruptions of transportation, insufficient horses in the countryside, and so forth.⁶³

The report went on to mention the outflow from villages of the best workers to the army.

Even if the peasants could produce handicrafts, the economy was so ruined that urban

⁶⁰ Hoover Archives, American Relief Administration, New York office, box 30, folder 30-2, Report of inspection trip in the Kazan' region, October 12, 1922.

⁶¹ Otchet o deiatel'nosti Viatskoi gubernskoi komissii pomoshchi golodaiushchim, 11-12.

⁶² GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 46, l. 7.

⁶³ GAKO, f. R-879, op. 1, d. 75, l. 539. See also "K organizatsii artelei po seteviazaniiu," Viatskoe narodnoe khoziaistvo no. 6 (March 15, 1919), 26; "Iaranskii kustarnyi s'ezd," 27.

dwellers would have been unable to buy them. Before World War I in Viatka, approximately one-third of able-bodied peasants engaged in *kustar* and between one-third and one-quarter of peasant households came from the handicrafts economy. The percentage was much higher in the northern portion of the province and villages surrounding towns. The disappearance of the *kustar* economy therefore deprived most peasant households of their main safety net.

In order to help the economy, centralize control, and build the foundations of a socialist economy, state and Party officials attempted to organize collective farming such as communes, artels and associations, and state farms in the villages. Their efforts met with limited success. In 1919 throughout all of Viatka province, there were 83 communes with 3,562 members, 94 artels and eight associations with 6,430 members. This amount was a bit larger than the national average.⁶⁴ State farms remained primitive and the famine only served to weaken them further. Gubkompomgol provided seed to the strongest farms first, so peasant farms received 97.3 percent of the total seeds and the remaining went to state projects of which collective farms were only one part.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 3, l. 70. By comparison, Samara province had 59 communes with 4,558 members, 49 artels and no associations with 4,925 members. See also "Rost kommun," Viatskoe narodnoe khoziaistvo, no. 17-18 (September 15, 1919), 24.

⁶⁵ Hoover Archives, American Relief Administration, Russia, box 1, p. 97.

As the number of working hands and livestock and amount of seed grain declined, peasants limited their sown land. The amount of land that peasants put under the till actually began its decline during World War I, falling 5.6 percent from 1915 to 1916. The civil war, grain requisitions, adverse weather conditions, and famine furthered the downward movement. For example, peasants of Kotel'nich *uezd* sowed only slightly more than half of the land that they did in 1916. In neighboring Nolinsk *uezd*, villagers only sowed forty percent of the land in 1922. As a whole, peasants in the southern and central districts restricted the land that they put under the plow more than those in the northern district (a 55 percent decline versus 41 percent). Weather conditions hit the southern districts' more intensive agriculture harder than the hardier yet less productive crops of the northern region.⁶⁶ Furthermore, relief organizations imported grains that were not native to Viatka and were of inferior quality to the seed that peasants used before the war thereby limiting crop harvests.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ B. Perfil'ev, "Posevnaia ploshchad," Viatskaia guberniia na Vsesoiuznoi sel'sko-khoziaistvennoi i kustarno-promyshlennoi vystavke v 1923 godu: Sbornik statei, 30-34. Viatka's shifting boundaries beginning in 1920 prevents a complete province-wide survey. The above data does not include the districts that became the Votjak Autonomous Oblast.

⁶⁷ N. Rudnitskii, "Posevnoi material," Viatskaia guberniia na Vsesoiuznoi sel'sko-khoziaistvennoi i kustarno-promyshlennoi vystavke v 1923 godu: Sbornik statei, 38.

The Civil War Changes the Village

Civil war altered the peasant family structure. High mortality rates, mobilization, and displacement put severe pressure on a peasant household economy in which a large number of working members was a foundation to the family's wealth.⁶⁸ Large families with many workers usually survived, although usually left with only one or two working members, but many other smaller households often had no workers by the latter years of the civil war and struggled to exist at all.⁶⁹ This meant that peasants toiled longer and harder in the fields, in a process of "self exploitation," without necessarily reaping more goods. Since larger families were often wealthier than smaller ones, the wealthy households suffered less from the demographic disasters than poorer peasants.

Although Soviet taxes and politics, as well as the land redistribution often mitigated richer peasants' advantages, Communist government policy could also hit the poor households more than the rich. *Uezd* Party members were aware that local officials, unable to squeeze enough revenue from the kulaks, often allocated taxes on the whole

⁶⁸ Here I am thinking of A. V. Chayanov's theory of a natural peasant economy in which there is a greater degree of consumer satisfaction, less self-exploitation, and a thriving household when it enjoys a higher ratio of working members to non-working members. See A. V. Chayanov, The Theory of Peasant Economy, especially Daniel Thorner, "Chayanov's Concept of Peasant Economy," in The Theory of Peasant Economy, xvii, Daniel Thorner et al., eds. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

⁶⁹ GARF, f. R-1240, op. 1, d. 122, l. 73.

village population. State grain and livestock requisitions, (as seen in the previous chapter) were often haphazard and corrupt and also took from the whole village regardless of individual households' class status.⁷⁰

Soldiers' wives and families continued to petition the Soviet state for aid, using a variety of strategies. Injured veterans from the wars also petitioned the government for aid based on their inability to work.⁷¹ The government distributed aid to them based on a multi-tiered system on the degree of ability to work.

The Soviet welfare program of aid to soldiers' wives and families shows that state officials felt an obligation to maintain minimal living abilities to those who could not care for themselves. Based on enlightenment notions of the duty of a rational state toward its citizens, the Bolshevik government was obliged to care for the soldiers' wives and families. Already during the civil war, the Soviet government expanded late-tsarist era social policies to lay a foundation of the Soviet welfare state.

Bolsheviks also saw soldiers' wives and their families as potential allies in the village. The Slobodskoi *uezd* government ordered its *volost* committees to not be careless in their relations with officials who didn't take care of the needs of soldiers'

⁷⁰ GARF, f. R-1240, op. 1, d. 122, l. 95.

⁷¹ TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 59, d. 22, ll. 36-36ob; GAKO, f. R-2506, op. 1, d. 8, 11-12, f. R-3271, op. 1, d. 17, l 17.

families. The state saw the aid as a means to win these peasants over to the revolution, while failure to improve their admittedly dire conditions would lead them to not support the Soviet government and even to engage in counter-revolutionary acts, such as sabotage.⁷² Local governments even distributed aid tied to Soviet symbols. For example, the Petropavlov *volost* ispolkom, Sovetsk *uezd*, distributed 4,000 rubles to twenty local soldiers' wives in honor of the second anniversary of the Revolution.⁷³ However, state monetary aid was a pittance and lost any value as inflation skyrocketed and manufactured items disappeared.

By 1921 and the end of military conflict and return of Red Army soldiers, the peasantry focused on rebuilding their household economy. For example, communities elected returning soldiers to the local government, but increasingly these men turned down the opportunity because they had to rebuild their homes. One soldier stated that his family had divided three times since he left and he had to put his household in order. Another selected soldier wrote that there was enough farm work for five souls and there were no workers left in his household, only women and children. Records show that the state freed these petitioners from service.⁷⁴

⁷² GAKO, f. R-935, op. 2, d. 1, ll. 24-24ob.

⁷³ GAKO, f. R-2506, op. 1, d. 87, ll. 29-30ob.

⁷⁴ TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 59, d. 22, ll. 78-84.

A final wave of redistributions and leveling of land beginning in the winter of 1920-21 also suggest that villages made a concerted effort to restore order. The redistribution process was formulaic. A statement by one of the villagers initiated the process and a communal or village general gathering usually authorized it. The village government passed on the resolution to the *volost* Land Section, which almost always approved it.

As in earlier land disputes, women played prominent roles as both initiators of cases and as judges while exploiting traditional peasant gender stereotypes for their own good. For example, in Petropovlovskaiia *volost*, Sovetsk *uezd*, the female head of a household, Anna Vasil'evna Kuznetsova and her son Arkadii Ivanovich petitioned to take their home and its land away from her husband Ivan and put them in her name with Arkadii as the head of the household. According to Anna and Arkadii, Ivan was a “wild character who is often not normal,” and had abandoned his family. Anna and her five young children went to live with Arkadii who continued to work his father's land. In their attempt to overthrow the male head of household, the petitioners accepted traditional peasant gender relations by calling for the woman to restore the domestic order and the male to work his land. The commune agreed to give the home to the wife.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ GAKO, f. R-2506, op. 1, d. 46, ll. 2-5.

As the above examples show, younger peasants and especially former soldiers, played an increasingly greater role in the village community. If local soviets were hybrid peasant and soviet organizations in 1919 and 1920 in which young and old peasants ruled together, by the early 1920s, younger peasants began to play a central role in village politics. Even though communities marginalized returning soldiers in land redistributions (as seen in Chapter Four), they saw soldiers as a link to the larger polity and understood that they were the favorite rural sons of the Soviet regime. Villages recruited and elected soldiers to governing bodies because soldiers were knowledgeable about the outside world, knew how to speak Bolshevik, and had a vested interest in the new regime. Even though veterans often declined executive positions, several of them did join village politics. Young male peasants also played a greater role within the peasant household than in the pre-World War I era. Returning soldiers were crucial able-bodied working hands and could dramatically increase a household's productivity. This was especially important during the famine when peasants needed every possible means of survival.

A significant rise in household divisions (*razdely*) that accompanied the wave of land leveling also shows the growing status of male youths. Every *volost* recorded a rise in the number of households between 1916 and 1920 that was disproportionate to the rise in population. Viatka *uezd* had a ten percent increase, Nolinsk a nine percent, and

Kotel'nich an eight percent.⁷⁶ There was no fixed pattern to village-wide household divisions. Young males might divide from the household when they established a family, fought with the older members of the household, returned home from the front, or when the head of the household died. Both Russian and non-Russian peasants divided households at the same rate. Many *volosts* near cities and those with strong traditions of *kustar* and other economic ties to urban areas appear to have had slightly higher increases in numbers of households. Such economic links to the city greased the connections between village and state. As seen during the First World War mobilizations and 1917 political party activity, rural communities with traditions of close interaction with the urban environment were more significantly affected by national political changes, and state mass mobilizations. The political changes both within and without the village certainly exacerbated inter-generational tensions. Many male youths had more experience with, and were now favored by, the greater political order. The young males' rise in political prominence would have contrasted greatly with the everyday subaltern status within their household and division was a logical step to solve their dilemma.

Conclusion

Political turmoil and demographic disaster altered the peasant world. Crop failure, disease, and hunger decimated the countryside's population, in some villages

⁷⁶ Statisticheskii spravochnik po Viatskoi gubernii, 1917; Predvaritel'nye isgoi perepisi naseleniia 1920

taking up to fifty percent of its inhabitants, and further shook up the composition of the rural community. The village population was also transitory. Urban refugees and returning brothers and fathers temporarily replaced foreign soldiers and enemy aliens from World War I, and many refugees and veterans quickly left again to fight in the civil war. Settled peasant families also did not hesitate to leave their home for better lands. Peasants did not close the door and isolate themselves in reaction to the civil war. Instead, peasants and visitors constantly moved in and out of the village.

Famine affected the peasant and state mentalities. The economic destruction left the peasantry tired and worn out. In distinct contrast to energetic popular efforts at the beginning of the war and in 1917, most peasants in 1921 had a famine mentality in their engagement with the state. Peasants, especially females, adopted a self-subalternizing position in their relationship with the Soviet state and took advantage of the officials' moral responsibility that came with this position. The economic destruction and famine therefore brought peasant and state closer together by building a personal relationship as the populace reached out to the official elite for aid. The Soviet government used the opportunity for popular mobilization. At the same time, the weakness of the peasant economy hampered state projects.

CHAPTER 7

CREATION AMIDST TURMOIL: PEASANT-STATE RELATIONS, RULE BY CONSENT, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SOVIET POLITY

This chapter examines peasant-state relations through popular state and nation building programs amidst the backdrop of the destruction of the civil war and the end of seven years of political and social changes in the rural communities. Recent scholars have noted that the civil war was a formative experience in Soviet rule.¹ The civil war both shaped the types of state projects and limited their efficacy. Alongside policies of coercion and violence, the Soviet state also succeeded in constructing power through persuasion, or without using overt force. The Bolshevik government's mass-participatory and consensus-building projects during the civil war helped to integrate a significant portion of the peasant population into the new regime. Soviet hegemony building

¹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Civil War as a Formative Experience," in *Bolshevik Culture*, Abbott Gleason et al., eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 57-76. Fitzpatrick places her argument in the context of the debate over the role of Marxist ideology in shaping the regime's future excesses and style of rule. Fitzpatrick does note that most Bolsheviks found what they wanted to in the civil war. Peter Holquist, among others, critiques the degree that the civil war actually influenced future Soviet excessive policies. "Conduct Merciless Mass Terror," 127, 154.

projects derived from three sources: Bolshevik imagination of the peasantry as a social category that needed cultural and political enlightenment, the rulers' self-identification of themselves as mechanics of social change, and the Soviet socialist state's modern participatory governance.

This chapter studies the hegemonic process--or how the Bolshevik state attempted to persuade peasants to consent to Soviet rule--through an examination of the implementation of national autonomous regions, propaganda campaigns, and the Revolutionary Tribunal. Many peasant populations (and especially the youth) agreed to work within Soviet rule, joining forces with the state to build the foundations of Soviet society. However, practical considerations, such as shortages in personnel and materials, limited the success of Bolshevik hegemony. Peasants also adapted these policies to suit their own needs, accepting Bolshevik domination but drawing on the closer relationship between officials and peasants to gain resources and better their social situation. Each of the projects took place in the latter stages of an era defined by violence and destruction during which the threat of state force and coercion was often implied in official policies.

Imagined Communities: The Establishment of Autonomous National Regions

In December 1919 in the Udmurt village Ludoshur, a drama troupe and political agitators from the regional teachers' institute put on a series of shows for the peasant population. They sang traditional Udmurt songs and gave courses on Soviet politics and

the current political situation, all in the Udmurt language. During intermissions the performers explained the songs and tried to enroll the youth. According to newspaper reports, despite poor performances, all the peasants thoroughly enjoyed the shows. Similar cultural events were held in villages throughout the land inhabited by Udmurts in the later days of the civil war.² Organized by Narkomnats (The People's Commissariat of Nationalities) to popularize the socialist system, mobilize the masses, and bring culture and national awareness to non-Russian peasants, they represented a crescendo in a years-long process by national elites to disseminate national culture among the populace. Central figures in the nationalist cause, specifically educators and the Revolutionary Bolshevik state maintained consistent ideas that non-Russians were uneducated, unenlightened, and culturally backwards. As early as 1918, Bolsheviks and national elites voluntarily joined together to impose a modern consciousness upon Udmurts and Maris. While state agents and national elites dominated the discourse, they engaged in a dialogue with peasants over what constituted acceptable national culture. Ruling groups used the ideology of nationalism in their struggle for hegemony and their attempts to

² A. I. Bobrova and A. S. Korobeinikova, eds., Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo v Udmurtii: Sbornik dokumentov (1917-1940 gg.) (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1970), 67-68.

establish a state that protected their interests.³ Nationalism was also a means of official mass mobilization, categorization, and integration of segments of the population into the national polity.

Most non-Russian peasants experienced Revolution and civil war much like Russians--they struggled to become part of the larger polity, used the state in land disputes, and were victims of requisitions. While Udmurts and Mari clearly saw themselves as distinct ethnicities, the Soviets ascribed a national identity upon them; an identity that was melded to class. Like almost all other non-Russian peasants, Udmurt and Mari villagers did not have a strong national consciousness during the Revolution and civil war.⁴ However, in order to gain resources from the state, Udmurt and Mari peasants played up their respective ethnic identities. The Bolsheviks, for their part, helped to instill national consciousness upon this strong ethnic but weak national identity.

The tsarist government during World War I certainly divided and mobilized Viatka's population at least partially along ethnic lines. While the Imperial state during World War I allowed publication of national language newspapers on the war effort, it continued to repress Tatar, Udmurt, and Mari national movements, which were composed

³ Rodríguez, 11.

⁴ The arguable exception here could be Ukrainian, Finnish, and Georgian peasants and Jews. Suny, The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union, 30-76; John Klier, Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855-1881 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

largely of national elites (such as teachers, priests, and publicists). Local Provisional Government elites maintained tsarist-era anthropological notions of inherent backwardness of non-Russians and believed that non-Russians had additional cultural obligations to become full citizens, but the state never produced a coherent nationalities program.

The Soviets, unlike the Provisional Government, backed national minority causes. The Soviet government needed allies during the civil war and was willing to concede a degree of political autonomy to nationalities. Bolshevik policy toward nationalities was also based on ideology. Central Communist Party leaders believed that all nations had equal rights and thus attempted to give them opportunity. In a policy that paralleled tsarist ethnographic interpretation, the Soviet regime also saw many of its eastern nations as backward, although the socialist regime based this assessment on industrialization, urbanization, literacy, and so forth.⁵ For example, Soviet officials described Udmurts as “hardly cultured” (*malokul’turnyi*) and “very backward in the realm of cultural and political development.”⁶ The Soviets therefore adopted a bifurcated nationalities policy--

⁵ Terry Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 6, 126; Slezkine, ch. 5.

⁶ GARF, f. 1318, op. 5, d. 3, ll. 26, 96, 299, 424, 528. Sometimes, officials would specify that Udmurts were hardly cultured in the realm of education.

promoting popular national culture for “backwards” nations through mass spectacles, advancement of education and language; and training of indigenous elites.⁷

Nationality politics also marked a space where horizontal (class) based identity and vertical (national) identity intersected. The Bolsheviks implemented the same policies to build class consciousness and divide the village for Russian and non-Russian peasants while adding an extra layer of nationality programs which built support for the regime and spread “culture” among the “backward” peoples.

While the Soviet policy of indigenization (*korenizatsiia*), the advancement of national culture through promoting national language and elites, officially emerged after the civil war in 1923, regional sections of Narkomnats were implementing the essence of this policy already in 1918. Moreover, the official Soviet practice of promoting national culture repeated the demands of nationality congresses from 1917 for national education, literature, and the training of indigenous elites.⁸ The Bolsheviks and the small group of Udmurt and Mari national elites “encouraged national consciousness and a sense of

⁷ Despite growing scholarly interest in Soviet nationalities policy, most accounts limit themselves to the western nationalities (such as Ukrainians and Poles), focus on how central policies were made, or begin in the 1920s when the Soviets built a more concrete policy of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization).

⁸ This conclusion parallels work by Francine Hirsch who also demonstrates continuity in the national modernizing state project and willing participation from tsarist experts. However, I focus on an earlier period and more ground-level developments. See Francine Hirsch, “Empire of Nations: Colonial Technologies and the Making of the Soviet Union, 1917-1929,” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1998).

inherent primordial ethnicity” among the peasants.⁹ The years between 1917 and 1921 thereby saw a massive acceleration and broadening of the national process and mass mobilization.¹⁰ However, in 1921, Udmurt and Mari peasants did not yet fully embrace their nationality as the Soviets and national elites hoped.

As in 1917, nationalities during the civil war held congresses to promote popular national consciousness and demand resources for education and culture from the state. As early as spring 1918, the Viatka Soviet governments gave non-Russians some degree of autonomy to establish their own newspapers and schools. In 1918 the Malmyzh ispolkom reserved one place for a Muslim. The predominantly Muslim Tatar population comprised twenty percent of the *uezd*'s population, and such a move was an obvious way to win their support. Yet Udmurts also amounted to 19 percent of the *uezd* and the state gave them no special political gifts.¹¹ Tatars were more organized, had a larger urban population, were traditionally wealthier than Udmurts, and Soviet officials considered them more civilized than Viatka's other non-Russian populations.

⁹ Suny and Martin, eds., A State of Nations, 7.

¹⁰ In these five years, the national movement moved from what Miloslav Hroch has termed Phase A (in which small groups of intellectuals conceive of the idea of the nation), to Phase B (in which the number and activity of patriots expands to social clubs, those subscribing to newspapers and periodicals), and even into Phase C (when popular mobilization begins). See Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds. Becoming National: A Reader (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15-18, 60-77.

¹¹ RGAE, f. 1943, op. 3, d. 160, ll. 168-169ob.

Narkomnats was the central organ of cultural affairs among non-Russians.

Historians have noted that Narkomnats was an instrument for “coopting radical national elites” in order to gain mass support from nationalities,¹² and “the direct representative of the national minorities to the central government.”¹³ It is important to note that it was also the main instrument in disseminating national culture. Following requests from national elites, the Udmurt and Mari sections of Narkomnats were established in mid-1918. National elite public organizations disbanded and many of their members moved into the Udmurt section of Narkomnats. Former teachers, such as I. V. Iakovlev, M. P. Prokop’ev, and K. Gerd, dominated the Udmurt section. Even some of the Orthodox clergy continued to fight for Udmurt culture and national development, even though it meant supporting the Soviet regime. Narkomnats was therefore not simply a top-down institution that coopted national elites. National elites themselves used the Soviet state and Narkomnats to further their nationalist causes and implement their notions of cultural progress. The Soviet nationalities policy played into and extended national elite’s imagination of Udmurt national culture.

¹² Stephen Blank, The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities, 1917-1924 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 13.

¹³ Jeremy Smith, The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23, *Studies in Russia and Eastern Europe* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1999), 31.

Early Bolshevik policy continued the philosophy behind the Il'minskii teaching method from the tsarist era. The Il'minskii method, named after the Orthodox priest and professor of Turkic languages Nikolai Ivanovich Il'minskii, was originally designed to missionize non-Russians and convert them to Orthodox Christianity. The Bolsheviks used the idea that only education in the nationality's tongue can convert non-believers.¹⁴ The new state also ordered the construction of new village national schools. In one instance they even freed an Udmurt village from all other duties while inhabitants built a school.¹⁵ Four pedagogical technical institutes were established to train Udmurts in 1918-1919 and courses in medicine, agriculture, and cultural education followed. The commissariat of Udmurt affairs attempted to attract both male and female Udmurt peasants to train to be teachers.¹⁶

The state went to great lengths to recruit those able to teach and agitate in the national language. The Viatka provincial executive committee as early as 1919 put such significance on the national question that they demanded an immediate survey of all state

¹⁴ Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53 (summer 1994): 418; Isabelle Kreindler, "A Neglected Source of Lenin's Nationality Policy," *Slavic Review* 36 (March 1977): 86-100. Of course, the belief that the teaching method inculcated changed between the tsarist and Soviet eras.

¹⁵ GARF, f. 1318, op. 5, d. 3, l. 91.

¹⁶ "Ob'javlenie. Vsem volostnym ispolkomam, sel'skim komitetam i uchashchim," *Izvestiia glazovskogo soveta krest'ianskikh, rabochikh i krasnoarmeiskikh deputatov*, Glazov, November 15, 1918, p. 1.

and Party workers in order to transfer all Mari, Udmurt, Tatar, to Narkomnats.¹⁷ Officials recalled qualified soldiers and even freed men jailed for desertion and sabotage in order to do cultural work among the “dark masses.”¹⁸ As in education, the Bolsheviks tried to distribute literature in the nationality’s language, including books of poetry, political brochures, and newspapers.¹⁹ Besides primary level schools, Soviets organized a variety of cultural activities among non-Russian peasants to help them become more aware of their national heritage and to raise their cultural level. Bolsheviks organized reading huts, libraries, people’s huts (buildings where locals could gather and hold meetings), national drama circles, orchestras, choruses, concerts, lectures in both Russian and the national language, and entertainment programs every Sunday.²⁰

The state tied enlightenment activities to political agitation. Non-Russians learned about their history through the language of class warfare and the Soviets began to inculcate communist revolutionary politics. Local soviets made calendars in Udmurt

¹⁷ GARF, f. 1318, op. 5, d. 3, l. 4. Only workers serving in the education sections were excluded from the transfer order.

¹⁸ Ibid., ll. 424, 604, 748.

¹⁹ Ibid., ll. 22, 25; Kul’turnoe stroitel’stvo v Udmurtii, 42-45, 62.

²⁰ GARF, f. 1318, op. 5, d. 8, l. 2ob; Kul’turnoe stroitel’stvo v Udmurtii, 36, 38-39, 42-45, 60-63, 68, 71-73. For more on the Udmurt theater, see K. Gerd, “O votiatskom teatre, Zhizn natsional’nostei 2 (1923): 98-102.

with portraits of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and Anatolii Lunacharskii on them.²¹ Communist Party agitators went throughout the countryside to explain Bolshevik politics and ideology among the peasants in the national tongue. As in 1917, all acts were political and the state believed that politics could transform society. As a Soviet editorialist wrote in 1921:

Finally, after many centuries the star of enlightenment begins to shine and burns brighter and brighter every day in the [Udmurt] family. The morality and soul of the forgotten [Udmurt] people (*narod*) under Soviet power is waking from a long nightmare.²²

Despite their zeal, Bolsheviks (and their national elite allies) were hampered by practical limitations. They had little administrative infrastructure and few ardent supporters among the non-Russians. Years of civil war had taken away able personnel and destroyed schools. The regional nationalities division complained to Moscow that for two hundred fifty thousand Udmurts, they had only one agitator.²³ As the above desperate attempts at recruiting agitators shows, the state tried to implement wide-ranging cultural enlightenment projects, but they did not have the available workers or resources even to make significant progress. Even in 1921, after the Bolsheviks had defeated the anti-Soviet forces, local officials reported that almost all the schools were destroyed and

²¹ GARF, f. 1318, op. 5, d. 3, l. 374.

²² "O votiakakh," *Zhizn krest'ianina*, Glazov, January 11, 1921, p. 1.

they had neither building materials, nor working hands for repairs. The majority of schools' instructors were inexperienced and there was no money to pay their salary. In Udmurt villages that had opened libraries, many had no literature in the national language.²⁴

Non-Russian peasants continued their quest from the tsarist era to seek out opportunities for education and embraced schooling and literature in their mother tongue. There is also evidence that non-Russians used elite notions of them as backward for their own good. For example, at an Udmurt conference in 1920, representatives “confessed” that Udmurts “have an insufficient understanding of their duties as citizens” and that is why so many of their “tribesmen” deserted the Red Army. They blamed their poor public spirit on the fact that historically Udmurts had tried to shirk their military duties and they had not yet gained sufficient understanding of the difference between the tsarist and Red armies.²⁵ Like the peasants in 1917 who used the popular discourse of enlightenment and citizenship to gain educational opportunities and participation in national politics, these

²³ GARF, f. 1318, op. 5, d. 27, l. 186.

²⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 60, d. 106, ll. 5, 7; GARF, f. 1318, op. 5, d. 27, ll. 19ob, 20ob.

²⁵ TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 211, l. 29.

representatives used Soviet tropes of duty, consciousness, and cultural backwardness tied to historical exploitation to support the regime while explaining why they didn't want to fight for it.

Non-Russian peasants overtly supported the nationalist cause only to a limited degree. While peasants certainly embraced opportunities for formal education, literature in their villages, and colorful free performances, many resisted having to make additional sacrifices to a nationalist movement developed by outsiders. Peasants already suffered through state requisitions, taxation, and famine. Many Udmurt villagers refused to pay or even send representatives to national conferences.²⁶ Local officials even threatened a delegate returning home from a congress with arrest after he tried to call a *volost* gathering to discuss nationalist issues.²⁷

The establishment of the Mari Autonomous Oblast and Votyak Autonomous Oblast (the official name for Udmurts at this time was Votiaks) in 1920 only complicated matters. The Soviet central government in Moscow had difficulty defining and establishing borders around the population based on ethnicity. Because the government established the regions without much preparation, the Viatka provincial executive

²⁶ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 85, l. 47ob.

²⁷ L. S. Khristoliubova, "Prosvetitel'naia i etnokonsolidiruiushchaia rol pervykh udmurtskikh gazet i kul'turno-prosvetitel'nykh obshchestv v pervoi chetverti XX v.," in Etnicheskaia mobilizatsiia vo vnutrennei periferii: Volg-Kamskii region nachala XX v., S. Lallukka and T. Molotovaia, eds. (Izhevsk: UIIIaL URO RAN, 2000), 47.

committee and nationalities section did not have enough time or data to gather concrete information about the ethnicity of locales. The creation of national autonomous oblasts created a logistical nightmare for local governments as Moscow divided (and sometimes redivided) *uezds*, assigned regions to different provincial jurisdictions, and moved boundaries among provinces and the newly established oblasts.²⁸ Peasants also showed that their economic considerations and geographic identity took precedence over their sense of national unity with their ethnicity. Several predominantly Udmurt villages and even whole *volosts* successfully petitioned the Viatka government to allow them to be reassigned to Viatka province because of their closer geographic and economic ties to Viatka's regions than the new oblast's.²⁹ There were also several practical problems involved in establishing the Votyak Autonomous Oblast. For example, in January 1920, Sarapul *uezd* state and party leaders frustrated the early attempts of Narkomnats officials to create a Votyak republic with Sarapul as the capital by refusing to participate. They wrote that they were,

²⁸ For example, the state changed the jurisdiction of Elabuga *uezd* to Kazan province, divided it and reassigned most of it to the newly formed Tatar Autonomous Oblast in May 1920, only to reassign the region back to Viatka. The borders of Viatka province and the Mari, Komi, and Votyak Autonomous Oblasts continually shifted during 1921 as jurisdiction of *volosts* and villages changed among the territories based on ethnicity. Administrativnoe rainirovanie RSFSR. Sbornik postanovlenie, kasaiushchikhsia administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii, za peiod 1917-1922 g. po dannym administrativnoi komissii VtsIK k 10 noiabria 1922 goda (Moscow: Izdanie VTsIK, 1923), 30-47.

²⁹ GAKO, f. R-876, op. 1, d. 234, ll. 5, 90-91, 117, 118-123, 125, 132-134ob.

not only against the annexation of the *uezd* to a Votyak republic, but also the very establishment of an independent Votyak unit in general since the Votyak population is too scattered and most of them are mixed with Russian peasants. Moreover, they are not interested in their nation.³⁰

The acknowledgement of popular indifference to their national identity by officials who did not have a stake in ethno-territorial delimitations shows the extent to which Soviet nationality administrators and national elites tried to construct and impose new identities upon non-Russian peasants.³¹ Udmurt and Mari peasants used Soviet and national elite identification of them as backward nationalities to gain educational and cultural opportunities, but Narkomnats and peasant concepts of what constituted a nationality differed.

Material deprivations and continued non-Russian peasant suspicion of Bolshevik politics kept non-Russians out of the Communist Party. In 1920, for example, only seven Tatars out of almost sixteen thousand belonged to the Party in the Viatka countryside.³² At the beginning of 1922, Udmurts accounted for only 14.8 percent of Party members in the Votyak Autonomous Oblast.³³

³⁰ Quoted in K. I. Kulikov, Natsional'no-gosudarstvennoe stroitel'stvo vostochno-finskikh narodov v 1917-1937 gg. (Izhevsk: UIIIaL URO RAN, 1993), 66.

³¹ Hirsch describes identical statements by local officials opposing the formation of a Belorussian republic. The term ethno-territorial delimitation comes from Hirsch, 117-121.

³² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 61, d. 131, l. 3.

The regional and central Communist Party leaders were keenly aware of their failure to recruit non-Russians and around 1920 began to devote considerable resources to rectify the problem. For example, in the Votyak Autonomous Oblast, the Soviets recruited a number of Udmurts to study at the urban party school. When some of the students did not show up, the Party went to the extreme measure of seeking them out in their village. In another instance, the Party devoted resources to teach an illiterate potential political Udmurt agitator to read.³⁴

Nevertheless, Soviet education and enlightenment policies gradually succeeded. By 1920, there were 450 Udmurt and 188 Mari schools, of which a hundred were built by the Soviets.³⁵ Through affirmative action policies of the 1920s, more non-Russians entered the Party. In 1926, Udmurt literacy had risen to 25.6 percent.³⁶ By the end of 1923 the Udmurt newspaper *Gudyri* (Thunder) enjoyed mass distribution to every

³³ V. I. Katkov et al., eds., Udmurtskaia oblastnaia organizatsiia KPSS v tsifrah, 1921-1985 (Ustinov: Udmurtiia, 1986), 86.

³⁴ GARF, f. 1318, op. 5, d. 3, ll. 442, 593.

³⁵ "Tri goda bor'by s temnotoi," Gody bor'by, Viatka: October 1920, pp. 5-6.

³⁶ Martin, 127.

Udmurt village. As the sole newspaper in the Udmurt language, it acted as the main conduit between Udmurt villagers and the nation and was able to control the discourse on nationality issues and cultural education in the village.³⁷

Under the tsarist, Provisional Government, and Soviet regimes, non-Russians had special cultural obligations based solely on their nationality. Academics saw Udmurts and Maris as backward and the best way for them to progress, according to many Russian scholars, was through the adoption of the metropole's culture. Provisional Government political elites, while not surviving long enough to implement their policies, showed through festivals and public discourse that they believed that non-Russians needed education and cultural enlightenment before enjoying full freedom and participation in national politics as citizens.

National elites also imagined their peasants as backward, but believed that by unfettered education in "correct" national culture, the nationality could break free from their backwardness. The beginning of participatory politics under the Provisional Government furthered the cause for national liberation. In national congresses and newspaper articles by non-Russians, leaders called for education and cultural projects to

³⁷ L. Khristoliubova, "Prosvetitel'naia," 49-50.

develop their consciousness and help to free them from the centuries-old yoke of tsarist oppression. Cultural figures in the national cause before the October Revolution embraced and were embraced by the Soviet state.

Whereas the tsarist state stood in opposition to these cultural figures (many of them were arrested after forming national circles), the Soviet state and national leaders created a symbiotic relationship. National elites enjoyed state resources, but most importantly their concept that Udmurt and Mari peasants' cultural backwardness had to be overcome through specific cultural education coincided with Bolshevik policy and images of nationalities. In this way, educated society and the state had parallel concepts on how to create non-Russian enlightened citizens. Full participation in the polity could only be achieved through national "consciousness" building measures. The Soviets thereby maintained the discourse of cultural development and promoted national culture in order to bring the nationalities up to the level of the Russians and build a rational, socialist utopia.

Non-Russian peasants of Viatka welcomed the shift in nationalities policy from the tsarist regime's policy of repression to the Soviet's policy of indigenization. Udmurt, Mari, and Tatar peasants used the new educational, economic, and local administrative resources from the Soviet regime. Even though these peasants continued to not feel part of the larger national project and suspicious of Bolshevik Party organizations, they

supported cultural enlightenment policies. Non-Russians consented to Soviet rule in large part due to Bolshevik nationalities policy, and the nationalities policy in turn reaffirmed and strengthened non-Russian national identity. The state and populace thereby shaped one another.

Propaganda and Power

The October Revolution was a crucial event in the transformation of the Russian government to a modern state. Part of a modern state is the government's willingness and ability to mobilize all of its resources (as seen in the late tsarist war effort). Another key aspect of a modern state (that the tsarist regime largely lacked) is popular sovereignty. Although the Bolsheviks willingly resorted to terror and coercion, they also defined their rule through popular consent and plebian participation in the polity. In order to justify and legitimize their rule, the Bolsheviks had to win peasant support and therefore shape peasants' identity (their hearts and minds); to have at least those whom the state saw as the poor and middle peasantry accept and act in the Bolshevik world view. Propaganda and mobilization programs became central to the new Soviet political world in the countryside. As Peter Kenez notes, in its struggle for the peasantry, "(b)uilding administrative institutions, that is, authority, and carrying out propaganda

always went hand in hand.”³⁸ The central Soviet government therefore initiated a number of multifaceted consensus building programs. Especially in the latter stages of the civil war, the state implemented policies to raise the material and cultural level of the Viatka peasantry in order to win over the peasants’ hearts and souls, establish hegemonic power, and help the Bolsheviks solve resource problems.

The Soviet state made dramatic efforts to show peasant communities ravaged by the physical destruction from the civil war that the socialist state care for the material wellbeing of villagers. After the Bolsheviks beat back the White advance in the summer of 1919, local governments in Glazov *uezd* tallied and paid for the damage. In the mixed Russian and Udmurt *volost* of Kliuchevskaia the Soviet state asserted responsibility for repayment and aid to those hurt from the Whites burning their villages. The local government detailed property, livestock, and even clothing that was lost in the fire and placed a monetary value of villagers’ losses.

Interestingly, the state adapted its assertion of class to best build unity. Although the state listed many households as middle and poor, no peasants were listed as kulaks. Indeed, the class categorization appears rather arbitrary; for example some families owned two horses, two homes and a cow and were listed as poor while others had one

³⁸ Peter Kenez, The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 51.

horse and were listed as middle peasants.³⁹ This contrasts to Bolshevik description of peasants in this region just a year earlier. As anti-Soviet forces took over eastern Viatka and peasants did not actively support the Soviet regime, Bolsheviks ascribed a “kulak” class status on all villagers in their policy reports. Once the Red Army drove out and suppressed anti-Soviet organized opposition, the Bolsheviks had to build popular support, justify devoting resources from the proletariat state to this population, and come to terms with those they wanted to win over. They thus transformed “kulaks” into “poor peasants” and natural recipients of the state’s positive attention.

Bolshevik efforts to rebuild villages and help the peasantry were not solely propaganda. In the Enlightenment tradition of a rational state that legitimizes its rule by caring for the needs of its people, the Soviet government established a number of such welfare programs (as seen in famine relief efforts and help to soldiers’ families).⁴⁰ Alongside state welfare policies, the Bolsheviks engaged in more traditional propaganda techniques to win the peasantry. Bolshevik agitators visited villages, organized, and gave lectures. Peasants, especially men, eager to learn about the civil war and major political programs, attended these events in droves.

³⁹ TsGA UR, f. R-204, op. 6, d. 19.

⁴⁰ For more on the Soviet state as the result of the Enlightenment tradition, see Stephen Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

Traveling agitation brigades were the most famous propaganda tools. The Bolsheviks used agitation trains (the most famous was Oktiabr) that stopped at each station. Lecturers spoke to surrounding towns and villages, while agitators displayed brightly-colored posters and distributed newspapers and literature. In the summer of 1919, the agitational ship, “Krasnaia zvezda” (Red Star) traveled along the Volga and Kama. The ship, decorated with flags, pictures, and slogans, brought famous Bolsheviks, including V. M. Molotov and Lenin’s wife Nadezhda Krupskaja, to Viatka’s eastern border. Agitators utilized the ship’s huge hall to show films, distributed books from its stores, printed newspapers on its press, collected both oral and written petitions from peasants and processed them in its complaints section, and instructed the peasants through an agricultural exhibit.⁴¹ Since there were only seventeen movie theaters in the whole province, almost exclusively in the towns, this was many peasants’ first exposure to film.⁴² The ship was a symbol for the new regime--modern, mobile, and embracing its

⁴¹ Ts. Gofman, “K istorii pervogo agitparokhoda VTsIK ‘krasnaia vvezda (Iul-oktiabr 1919 g.),” Voprosy istorii no. 9 (1948): 65.

⁴² Kul’turnoe stroitel’stvo v Kirovskoi oblasti 1917-1987. Dokumenty i materialy, S. A. Fediukii et al., eds. (Kirov: Volgo-Viatskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo Kirovskoe otdelenie, 1987), 33-34. Viatka’s Bolsheviks understood the power of film and after nationalizing all of Viatka’s movie theaters showed propaganda films in them. In Viatka city they spent around 6,000 rubles to refurbish the main movie theater.

people. Like the kombedy project discussed in Chapter Five and state restitution for civil war destruction, the Krasnaia zvezda came to win popular support immediately after the Reds had pushed their political opponents out of the area.

In language that conveyed both military operations and the going to the people movement of 1873, the Bolsheviks began to descend on the villages to enlighten the population and make them revolutionary. The Party organized “brigades” of artists and agitators to attack the darkness of the village.

The Week of the Peasant

Faced with a devastated rural economy, massive famine, and a peasantry unwilling to sacrifice its grain, the Bolsheviks were left in a precarious position. They had to feed their urban population but also had to win over the peasant constituency whom they purported to champion and rebuild the rural infrastructure. In 1920, the village economy suffered from six years of neglect and the beginning of a devastating drought. A large proportion of agricultural implements, from combines down to wheels, were broken and the peasants were unable to replace them because they could not find spare parts or even basic materials. As discussed in the previous chapter, many peasants had begun to limit their sown land because they did not have the manpower or opportunities to profit from selling surplus grain on the market.

In August to September 1920, the Central Committee in Moscow declared a “Week of the Peasant,” (*nedelia krest’ianina*) a period of mass mobilization (which usually lasted a month rather than a single week) to aid the rural economy and gain peasant support.⁴³ The Week of the Peasant was held throughout Russia, but archival records indicate that it was most prominent in Viatka.⁴⁴ Like holidays such as Week of the Red Front, Week of the Mothers and Children, Week of the Infants, and Week of the Famished, the Week of the Peasant focused state resources and popular attention on a specific population to solve targeted problems and win support.

The Bolsheviks mobilized popular party organizations such as the professional unions (*profsoiuzy*) and urban women’s section (*zhentodel*), as well as workers, and agricultural specialists to literally rebuild the peasant economy. Instructions called for “regiments” (*otriady*) of workers from *uezd* towns to divide up a *volost* and descend on it, in essence extending the civil war battles by attacking economic ruin as an enemy of the socialist state.⁴⁵ Red Army regiments joined urban workers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and other skilled professionals to shoe horses, rebuild barns, fix bridges and roads, help bring

⁴³ In some areas the Week of the Peasant was called the Week of Aid to the Peasant or the more accurate Month of the Peasant. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 48, l. 1a.

⁴⁴ For example, the state did the same campaign during the 1921 sowing in the Tatar Republic. Posevoi biulletin, Elabuga, April 19, 1921, p. 1. This conclusion is based on a cursory scan of materials in RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5.

⁴⁵ TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 400, l. 2.

in the harvest, fix harrows and wagons, and so forth. The holiday succeeded in providing few, but still crucial implements. Workers supplied scores of wheels and horseshoes throughout the countryside, while specialists built a number of the same tools in single *volosts*. In Khlebnikovskaia *volost*, Urzhum *uezd*, specialists produced only axes, in Petrovskaiia, peasants received over 450 ploughshares.⁴⁶

State popular mobilization of workers and peasants was a continuation of measures done under the tsarist regime during the war. Soviet instructions, however, ordered workers first to help village allies and needed supporters of the Bolshevik regime such as families of the Red Army and landless peasants, followed by those lacking working hands, and then communes and state farms.⁴⁷

The holiday went beyond practical economic reconstruction and state care for its population. The Bolsheviks also created the week to educate the masses, raise their cultural level, inculcate scientific methods of agriculture, show that the socialist state honored its peasantry, and to infiltrate the village further. Newspaper articles announcing the holiday to the general public proclaimed, “remember that brother peasants are step in

⁴⁶ TsDNIKO, f. 12, op. 2, d. 104, ll. 31-33. The week produced similar results throughout Sarapul *uezd*. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 103, ll. 16-17.

⁴⁷ TsDNIKO, f. 12, op. 2, d. 103, ll. 1-2. “Nedelia, krest’ianina,” *Krasnyi pakhar*, Kotel’nich, August 5, 1920, p. 1; “Nedelia krest’ianina,” *Zhizn krest’ianina*, August 12, 1920, p. 1.

step and hand in hand with you and the civil war completely destroyed them.”⁴⁸ Like other Bolshevik cultural projects discussed above, the state used images in the newspaper that were reminiscent of the going to the people movement in the nineteenth century to enlighten and revolutionize the peasantry. Drama troupes, musicians, and lecturers accompanied professionals and helped stage shows that taught peasants the “right,” or scientific way, to engage in agriculture. After three years in which the state took grain from the village to help the urban sector, the Week of the Peasant was meant to unify the “urban toilers” with the working peasantry by having city workers aid their comrades in the village. Instructions informed the workers that they were to be “the technological advisers” to the peasantry.⁴⁹ The Week of the Peasant was a cultural precursor to the economic relief of NEP--the termination of grain requisitions and the implementation of aid to the peasant economy.

The Week of the Peasant enjoyed only limited success. Professional unions were not strong, could only mobilize the required minimum five percent of members, and few active members willingly volunteered their time. In Urzhum *uezd*, the site of one of the largest Week of the Peasant campaigns, only 42 workers and 24 agronomists helped.

⁴⁸ “V derevniu!” *Krasnyi pakhar*, August 5, 1920, p. 2.

⁴⁹ TsDNIKO, f. 12, op. 2, d. 103, ll. 1-2.

The movement was only fully implemented when Viatka city sent another 23 people.⁵⁰ Indeed peasants supplied the majority of the labor, an irony of the supposed union between workers and peasantry.⁵¹ The village economy was devastated and one month's effort could not resolve fundamental problems such as an absence of fuel, iron, salt, and other basic necessities, as well as the continued drought. Peasants also complained that breakdowns in communication and administrative confusion restricted the efficacy of the movement. In Afanas'evskaia *volost*, Glazov *uezd*, a peasant went to use one of the new reapers, but officials turned him away telling him that it would hurt the ground. Other villagers had their new implements taken away and did not know where to find tool distribution centers.⁵²

Alongside distributing seed and grain to the starving population, the Bolsheviks tried to fight famine through education. The Bolsheviks believed that the famine was due in large part to peasants' agricultural ignorance and in order to bring Russia's countryside out of the current agricultural disaster and transform the primitive peasant economy and mentality, the masses needed formal education, cultural enlightenment, and modern agriculture. Although central Bolshevik leaders described modernization of the peasant

⁵⁰ Ibid., ll. 434-437.

⁵¹ In Sarapul *uezd*, peasants worked 54,400 hours, while profsoiuz members put in 26,000 hours. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 103, l. 16.

⁵² "Kto vinovat," *Zhizn krest'ianina*, September 9, 1920, p. 2.

economy in terms of class structure, state agricultural projects led by the Commissariat of Agriculture (Narkomzem) extended tsarist-era zemstvo programs and included a number of ex-zemstvo specialists.⁵³ Practically speaking, the state needed to improve agricultural output in order to restore the food supply and create a solid foundation on which to build the new economy.

Specialists instructed peasants on how to increase production. The Land Section published articles in local newspapers recommending that the population grow the highly-productive and quick-growing rape, to line their fields with nitrogen and phosphorus or potassium.⁵⁴ During the winter months specialists conducted courses, exhibitions, lectures, and readings.⁵⁵ Narkomzem also established agricultural schools and gave lectures on long-range agricultural changes such as transferring from the three-field to a multi-field system, establishing artels and understanding weather. As in the tsarist era, several peasants adopted modern agricultural technology when it would not threaten their subsistence. For example, in 1922, Narkomzem established two-to-three-

⁵³ For more on Narkomzem and the continuity of personnel across the Revolution, see James Warren Heinzen, "Politics, Administration and Specialization in the Russian People's Commissariat of Agriculture, 1917-1927," (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania University, 1993). Heinzen argues that the Third Element dominated Narkomzem and brought their tradition of opposition to the state with them into the Soviet era.

⁵⁴ GAKO, f. R-1062, op. 1, d. 697, l. 24; K likvidatsii selsko-khoziaistvennoi bezgramotnosti na bor'bu s zasukhoi, March 22, 1922, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁵ RGAE, f. 478, op. 7, d. 344, ll. 143-144ob.

month agricultural technical courses throughout the regions. There were 135 spots for students, of which ninety were reserved for *volost* Land Section officials. Peasants flooded the agency with requests. For 42 spots for peasant volunteers, 214 applied. The composition of students in the Iaransk *uezd* course shows that young male peasants dominated the student population. Out of 32 students, 31 worked the land, and 28 were younger than twenty years old. Twenty-one had some schooling in the village while ten had no education. Only one student was a member of the Communist Party.⁵⁶ This continued the practice of peasant societies in late tsarist Russia to send young males to technical schooling. In the early Soviet era, many young males who had experienced the outside world from migratory labor and fighting in the wars were more receptive to non-traditional ideas, such as modern agriculture. Specialists also implemented major modernization projects in the countryside, such as draining swamps, restoring and building canals, and other hydrotechnical work, as well as planning natural resource projects such as developing peat for fuel.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., d. 271, ll. 19-19ob, 23.

⁵⁷ Ibid., d. 369, ll. 3-3ob, 39-39ob; "Torf v Orlovskom uезде," Viatskoe narodnoe khoziaistvo (March 15, 1919), 27.

The Week of the Peasant and accompanying scientific agricultural projects were examples of attempted mass mobilization through propaganda. The Bolshevik government continued to divide the peasants and direct more resources to their allies within the village, but it aimed to build greater peasant support. Several peasants appreciated the technical aid and entertainment, and officials reported that peasant-state relations warmed after the holiday.

Enlightening the Masses

The state also mobilized its officials, supporters, and the peasantry and attempted to build a socialist cultural and political polity through cultural enlightenment projects and a strong party system in the countryside. Since the late Imperial era, peasants sought out educational opportunities for their children to gain functional literacy and a link with the greater society. Peasants continued to place value on education during the 1917 revolutions, petitioning the Provisional Government for teachers and putting educational figures on the ballots. Especially in World War I, the state used schooling, reading huts (small public buildings housing books, pamphlets, and newspapers for local peasants to come to read), lectures, and public conversations (*besedy*) for mass mobilization and building civic consciousness. Nevertheless, the war began a period of decline in education. State funds and personnel evaporated, schools became dilapidated, and by the

civil war most had closed down. The Bolshevik vision to create a new man necessitated that the vanguard bring the proletariat and peasantry out of darkness and into enlightenment.⁵⁸

Despite Bolshevik intentions, they did not have enough resources to build new schools and adequately maintain existing ones. Peasants, already hurt by famine and civil war, were also unable to fund schools. After the Reds secured Viatka province from the Whites in the summer of 1919, they increased their focus on schools. Schools in some regions, such as Riazanskaia *volost*, Kotel'nich *uezd*, began to use new socialist-inspired methods such as having students engage in simple hands-on work, and implementing class committees and student courts. For the most part, though, Viatka's rural system could barely maintain minimal education efforts. Most regions did not have kindergartens and began education at age nine. There was a shortage of teachers, and for lack of funds and resources, schools could not provide hot breakfasts or clothing, and lacked paper and pencils. Because of this, peasants stopped sending their children to school. In Iaroslavskaia *volost*, Slobodskoi *uezd*, less than half the students came to school. Peasants blamed the local ispolkom for not allocating enough resources to

⁵⁸ I take this idea from Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh: the University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000). However, Halfin largely disregards the role of the peasantry in Bolshevik eschatology.

schools.⁵⁹ During the “Week of Aid to the Illiterate” in 1920, the Party pleaded with the population for donations to the school and villagers sacrificed huge amounts of paper, pencils, and pens.⁶⁰ Peasants willingly gave to the state to support education. However in November 1921, after the cessation of conflict, the state still did not have building materials to refurbish destroyed schools.⁶¹

By June 1921, the Bolsheviks organized 3,080 reading huts throughout the villages of Viatka province (Table 7.1). Peasants could read about politics in national newspapers, such as *Izvestiia*, *Moskovskaia pravda*, and *Petrogradskaia pravda*, provincial newspapers such as *Viatskaia pravda*, *Derevenskii kommunist* and a variety of regional newspapers. Party members also held literature evenings in *Sedezhskaia volost*, *Urzhum uezd* where they read Maxim Gorky and Anton Chekhov to the villagers.⁶² The quantity of reading huts belies the pitiful nature of cultural resources in the countryside. Huts were usually sections of the village tearoom or a corner in a public building.

District Party officials and even Lenin himself admitted that most huts did not receive

⁵⁹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 21, ll. 13, 16, 26. On pedagogical methodology in the new Soviet school see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934*, Soviet and East European Studies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 6-8.

⁶⁰ *Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo v Kirovskoi oblasti*, 36-37. On material and personnel shortages see GAKO, f. R-885, op. 1, d. 54, l. 13.

⁶¹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 60, d. 106, l. 5.

⁶² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 48, ll. 6, 10.

newspapers on a regular basis while others existed “only on paper.”⁶³ Viatka, however, enjoyed a significantly greater number of reading establishments than other provinces in Soviet Russia. According to Lenin’s estimates, there were more than three times as many reading huts or other type of library in Viatka than in any other province. Voronezh was a distant second with 525, Petrograd province had 378, and Vladimir only 37.⁶⁴ Such a difference between Viatka and other provinces probably stems the province’s tradition of education and conditions brought on from the civil war. Before the First World War, the Viatka zemstvo established a solid educational foundation (as discussed in Chapter One), creating both spaces and popular expectations for literature. During the civil war, Viatka was on the front line of conflict, which increased Bolshevik attention to state building projects and propaganda in order to win popular support, while the northern half of the province escaped widespread destruction from military conflict.

Peasants saw the huts as spaces to gain both news and education. In a telling proclamation, villagers in Kurzenevskaiia, Iukshumskaia *volost*, Iaransk *uezd*, evoked the significance of revolutionary events “not only surrounding us, but in all the land” of

⁶³ See for example, RGSAPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 20, l. 40; d. 18, l. 70ob; d. 48, l. 1a. The Party mobilized against illiteracy in southern Orlov *uezd* in 1919 and formed a number of reading huts, but did not have enough literature and workers. GARF, f. R-1240, op. 1, d. 120, l. 101. V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 32 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 128. Lenin gave the figure of 1,703 reading huts in February 1921.

⁶⁴ Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 32, 128.

Russia and the world in their decision to open a reading hut.⁶⁵ Other peasants adopted the Bolshevik's cultural definitions and pleaded to the *uezd* ispolkom for "enlightenment of the dark masses of the village" through money for a people's hut.⁶⁶

The Party also established clubs and organizations that focused on segments of the population whom the Bolsheviks believed would be their natural allies, such as youth clubs, proletarian clubs, and women's clubs. Although weak at first, youth groups quickly gained popularity. Party officials noted that the majority of 17 to 22 year olds sympathized with communism and the youths had a "revolutionary spirit." Youth unions had a "lively spirit and members should be sent to the front because the youth appear to have the greatest reliability for reinforcing cadres of party workers."⁶⁷ Party and state activities also provided an opportunity for youths to come together, as an official in Mushakovskaia *volost*, Elabuga *uezd* found out. He was pleased to have around 100 people, mostly youths, turn out for his lecture on primitive man and his life. Thinking the event would have been something else, the youths left the speech and went to "a second

⁶⁵ Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo v Kirovskoi oblasti, 38-39.

⁶⁶ GAKO, f. R-879, op. 1, d. 129, l. 20.

⁶⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 19, l. 117. GARF, f. R-393, op. 3, d. 117, l. 3/ Hoover Archive, Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State, reel 46. See also, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 18, l. 7.

lecture,” a village party.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, young peasants who had grown up during war and revolution joined unions of youth and other official participatory organizations. The Soviet system appealed to young veterans, former migrants to cities, and youths in general who searched for a means to upend the elderly-biased peasant community.⁶⁹

Region	Libraries	People’s huts	Reading huts	Clubs	Cultural education circles
Nolinsk	39	19	538	20	44
Iaransk	51	17	300	3	37
Slobodskoi	36	16	310	21	no information
Urzhum	53	22	336	27	82
Orlov	105	10	220	4	no information
Glazov	76	40	362	unknown	70
Malmyzh	42	42	220	9	92
Sovetsk	18	3	113	unknown	6
Kotel'nich	52	19	270	unknown	52
Viatka	29	19	300	unknown	no information
Sarapul	73	32	141	15	no information
total	574	239	3080	at least 108	at least 384

Table 7.1 Establishments of Cultural Education in Viatka Province, June 1921⁷⁰

Party agitators organized non-party conferences, meetings and discussions on topics of concern to the peasantry--current events, agriculture, cooperatives, the

⁶⁸ “Rabote molodozhi. Lektsiia v derevne i neorganizovannost molodozhi,” *Krasnyi put*, Elabuga, February 9, 1921, p. 2.

⁶⁹ David L. Hoffmann, “Land, Freedom, and Discontent: Russian Peasants of the Central Industrial Region prior to Collectivisation,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 4 (1994): 637-648.

⁷⁰ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 48, l. 5. Note that Elabuga *uezd* was reassigned to the Tatar autonomous region by 1921.

redistribution of land, ways to prevent epidemics, typhus, and so forth. Although often formulaic, these meetings could become theaters of direct communication between peasant and state. In Pilinskaia *volost*, Urzhum *uezd*, peasants expressed their displeasure toward food organs. In Buiskaia, Petrovskaia, and Terebilovskaia *volosts*, peasants complained about labor conscription to gather wood. While Party members lectured about the need to pay taxes and give grain, and read Marx, Engels, and Party brochures, peasants demanded material items such as salt and iron and complained about officials' behavior.⁷¹

The meetings created public spaces within the village in which the Bolshevik state could build hegemonic authority. The Party and government officials who called the meetings controlled the agenda, topics for discussion, and the language in which both state agents and peasants discussed them. At the same time, the meetings established a means for direct communication between peasants and outside elite. As long as the peasants stayed in their subaltern position, listening to the orators and submitting to Soviet authority, they could resist official policies and protest their dire situation without fear of reprisal.

⁷¹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 48, l. 13; TsDNIKO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 410, ll. 9-14, 16-18; GARF, f. R-1240, op. 1, d. 126, l. 29.

Peasants also communicated with the state and Party through petitions. As in the tsarist era, peasants inundated officials with complaints and wishes. For example between May and June 1919, *volost* and *uezd* VTsIK received 2,127 petitions. Peasants complained about a number of matters. The greatest number of petitions came from soldiers' families who complained that the aid committees had not distributed their relief.⁷² Other common peasant complaints centered on families members who had been arrested, the extraordinary tax, and requisitions and confiscations.⁷³

Finally, the Communist Party in Moscow and Viatka city made a conscious effort to establish Party cells in the villages and recruit new members from the poor peasantry. Most *volosts* only organized Party cells in late 1918 and even then had few members and a weak infrastructure.⁷⁴ In Nolinsk *uezd* in September 1919, *volost* cell participants (including both members and sympathizers) ranged from only two to seventeen.⁷⁵ Cells were also usually located in the largest village, distant from most peasants. The strongest rural cells appear to have been located in villages with strong ties to the city or industry

⁷² See Pyle, "Village Social Relations," ch. 6.

⁷³ GARF, f. R-1240, op. 1, d. 120, l. 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, l. 1.

⁷⁵ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 5, d. 6, l. 31.

based economies, such as those rural communities with factories in them. The Communist Party had its greatest success attracting soldiers and workers.⁷⁶

Hampering the growth of cells, Party leaders often subjected members to mobilization to the front and purges. Some members, for their part, often quit the ranks. The Party did make some headway with Russian peasants, however. In April 1920, there were reportedly 4,446 members and candidates for membership to the party in throughout Viatka's countryside. This number did drop considerably by 1921, to 2,831, following Party purges and shakeups.⁷⁷ As mentioned above, in spite of concentrated Bolshevik efforts to recruit non-Russian peasants into the Party, almost no non-Russians joined the Party. Around 1922, the Party in Viatka could count only seven Tatars and Bashkirs as members.⁷⁸

Young peasant men slowly entered Party organizations, but peasant women were even slower to participate actively in official organs. After 1917 and the gradual return of peasant men from the front, women left the public sphere and most did not fight to enter the Soviet polity. In 1920 women comprised only 5.1 percent of the total Party

⁷⁶ GARF, f. R-1240, op. 1, d. 120, l. 1.

⁷⁷ V. V. Legotin, ed., Kirovskaja oblastnaia organizatsiia KPSS v tsifrah, 1917-1985 (Kirov: Volgo-Viatskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1986), 19.

⁷⁸ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 61, d. 131, l. 3.

membership of Viatka.⁷⁹ Party efforts at organizing rural women were also limited in scope and nature. The Women's Section (*zhenotdel*) was the main Communist Party agency directed at women. The Party had limited success organizing working women in Viatka's and the Votyak Autonomous Oblast's cities, especially Izhevsk and Glazov, but failed to establish local *zhenotdel* organizations. Peasant women occasionally attended regional *zhenotdel* conferences in the cities. There Party organizers lectured them on the need to popularize the *zhenotdel* with the peasant masses. While the *zhenotdel* aimed to mobilize and build class consciousness among women, its tasks remained traditional female occupations. *Zhenotdel* organs oversaw "motherly" roles by establishing children's cafeterias and helping in schools.⁸⁰ Most peasant women had no interest in joining the Party because it did not serve them any purpose. Men dominated organized politics in the public sphere and women used other official agencies (such as land courts and petitions to government departments) to fight for issues.

Power, Control, and Criminal Activity: The Peasantry and the Revolutionary Tribunal

In the early years of the Soviet regime, the Revolutionary Tribunal was a crucial nexus between state control over social and political norms and peasant resistance and

⁷⁹ Kirovskaia oblastnaia organizatsiia KPSS v tsifrah, 109.

⁸⁰ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 10, d. 244, ll. 18; d. 322, ll. 1-2, 10.

accommodation to the new elite. Representatives of the government strove to exhibit their power over the population by defining proper conduct. However, the peasantry could use the courts to achieve, sometimes, their own victories over the dominant elite.⁸¹

An examination of cases from the Viatka province Revolutionary Tribunal shows the relationship between peasant political criminals and the state, as well as what extra-legal activities peasants engaged in and how the provincial Bolshevik government understood and categorized these actions. The peasantry's challenges to the legal and social order reveal the diverging views on social norms and justice between state and peasant. At the same time, Revolutionary Tribunal cases also show one of the few methods of direct communication between state and society (like the meetings discussed above), since the state was willing to listen to the testimony of the peasantry. Peasants testified that they supported the Soviet regime but acted against it to uphold peasant social norms. Such contradictory rhetoric is significant because it blurs the line between criminal resistance and submission.

⁸¹ Those struggling for civil rights in the United States also successfully used the courtroom as a space to empower the otherwise powerless segments of the population (namely African-Americans). See Harold Berman, Law and Revolution (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983). On the courtroom in rural society as a social laboratory, see Allen Wells and Gilbert M. Joseph, Summer of Discontent, Seasons of Upheaval: Elite Politics and Rural Insurgency in Yucatan, 1876-1915 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 14-17. On the role of the court in Russian peasant society see Peter Czap, Jr. "Peasant-Class Courts and Peasant Customary Justice in Russia, 1861-1912," Journal of Social History 1 (winter 1967): 149-178; Worobec, Peasant Russia.

Law was the “state’s emissary,” in the Viatka countryside.⁸² It helped extend the Soviet state and its worldview into the village and build a hegemonic society through peasant participation and acceptance of its decrees. The legal process took historical experiences, such as peasant rebellion, and transformed them “into a matrix of abstract legality, so that the will of the state could be made to penetrate, reorganize part by part and eventually control the will of a subject population.”⁸³ It is important to emphasize that it is the state that creates criminals by defining the terms of lawful behavior, and controlling the medium in which the narrative of social norms and legal codes are discussed.

The Bolsheviks established the Revolutionary Tribunal in November 1917.⁸⁴ The Tribunal’s initial purpose was to have Russia’s working people try bourgeois enemies according to proletarian justice. According to Lenin, this proletarian law was to be

⁸² I borrow the metaphor of law as an emissary from post colonial studies, especially Ranajit Guha, who in turn borrowed it from post-modern thinkers, especially Michel Foucault. See Guha, “Chandra’s Death,” Subaltern Studies V. Writings on South Asian History and Society, Ranajit Guha, ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 135-165. I have been influenced by the cogent analysis of law in colonial rule of Upendra Baxi, “‘The State’s Emissary’: The Place of Law in Subaltern Studies,” Subaltern Studies VII. Writings on South Asian History and Society, Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, eds. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 245-264.

⁸³ Guha, “Chandra’s Death,” 141.

⁸⁴ Decree on the Revolutionary Tribunals, The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918: Documents and Materials, compiled by James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, Hoover War Library Publications, no. 3 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 293-295.

flexible and able to evolve.⁸⁵ Through the legal process, the proletariat was supposed to gain legal consciousness while exacting justice upon their former masters.

The Revolutionary Tribunal, styled upon the tribunals of the French Revolution, was to serve as one of the central judiciary organs to the Soviet legal system. A judge, aided by a group of literate commoners, directed political justice. The Bolsheviks also established an accompanying people's court which was to administer civil and non-political criminal cases.⁸⁶ The Revolutionary Tribunal was not a court for arbitration among peasants. Unlike the *volost* court from the late-Imperial and Provisional Government eras, the Tribunal was largely a top-down prosecutorial court that judged cases that the state brought upon its population. The Bolsheviks established the Tribunal in order to suppress the bourgeois enemies of the people. In 1918, after the beginning of the civil war, the Revolutionary Tribunal became an instrument to punish anti-Soviet activity, regardless of the defendant's class origins.

⁸⁵ There has been much written on Lenin's conflicting and ambiguous views on law. For a summary of the scholarly debate, see Jane Burbank, "Lenin and the Law in Revolutionary Russia," *Slavic Review* 54 (spring 1995): 23-44.

⁸⁶ The structure of early Soviet courts was complex. The Revolutionary Tribunals and people's courts each had hierarchical systems, from local up to a supreme court. There were also several branches within each arm of the court system. See John N. Hazard, *Settling Disputes in Soviet Society: The Formative Years of Legal Institutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960). The most insightful work on the Revolutionary Tribunals is Christy Jean Story, "In a Court of Law: The Revolutionary Tribunals in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1921" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 1998).

The Revolutionary Tribunal heard most of its cases during the civil war. Every act was political during the civil war and the Revolutionary-Tribunal cases were products of such politicization. Therefore, every peasant act was either in support of the Soviet regime and its ideology, or against it. The Soviets denied peasant consciousness and peasant norms, instead inscribing their own worldview based on class and loosely defined Soviet norms.

The Revolutionary Tribunal was unique. Unlike liberal and colonial state adjudication, the Tribunal was not a “formally rational” court that applied a systematic routine of administrative justice regardless of the crime.⁸⁷ Instead, the Tribunal interpreted peasant action as distinctly political acts. But the Tribunals categorized peasant violence as anti-Soviet or counter-revolutionary, rather than collective action by conscious individuals. In doing so, it deprived peasants of their legitimacy as historical actors.

Conservative scholars and critics of the Soviet regime have long associated the Revolutionary Tribunal with the mass terror of the early Bolshevik regime. With the Bolsheviks’ show trials, pre-determined verdicts, and summary executions, some

⁸⁷ Issac D. Balbus, The Dialectics of Legal Repression: Black Rebels before the American Criminal Courts (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1973), 12. Balbus notes that the United States criminal court and courts in other liberal states use formal rationality “to repress collective violence” and depoliticize political solidarity and acts of violence. Burbank argues that Lenin saw law “as a manipulable instrument of politics,” which deprived law of its “aura of ‘justice’” enjoyed in English law, 43-44.

historians have even argued that the Soviet reliance on terror created an atmosphere of “legalized lawlessness” in which the people had no rights.⁸⁸ The Revolutionary Tribunal was the legal arm of the Bolshevik political repression. The Tribunal was part and parcel of the Bolshevik repression, and acted as the policeman and enforcer of Soviet norms and power relations. It played a central role in controlling the population. The Tribunal categorized, defined, and punished subjects deemed to have participated in illegal behavior. But it is important to see the Revolutionary Tribunal as more than a policing unit of a “lawless” state. The Tribunals transcended their stated purpose of dictating punishment upon those state agents deemed criminal.

The Revolutionary Tribunal was quite active in Viatka from 1918 to 1921. Judging from the archival files, tribunals in the province heard over 5,000 cases.⁸⁹ The court system as a whole in Viatka was quickly overwhelmed by its caseload. The province’s first commissar of justice, A. A. Vepiakov, complained that the Bolsheviks had inherited over a thousand unheard cases. More were added to this every day from complaints from prisoners hoping to be released.⁹⁰ Many of these cases were passed

⁸⁸ Richard Pipes, A Concise History of the Russian Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 217. See also Pipes, Legalised Lawlessness: Soviet Revolutionary Justice (London: The Institute for European Defence, 1986).

⁸⁹ These cases can be found in GAKO, f. R-1322, op. 1, 1a, 2, and 3. My conclusions are based on a sampling of the *fond*.

⁹⁰ K. Palkin, “Komissary iustitsii,” Sovetskaia iustitsiia 21 (November 1967): 18.

along to the Revolutionary Tribunal. So, rather than trying enemies of the people, the original aim of the Tribunals, the Tribunals' first focus was those who had violated laws of the "bourgeois" Provisional Government.⁹¹ The early Soviet state showed its obsession with order, regardless of class status, in these early cases.

In April 1918, The Revolutionary Tribunal heard a case from 1916 in which a village policeman (*uriadnik*) was accused of striking a peasant and failing to do his job. Peasants had already decided many such cases themselves in 1917 by ousting corrupt and domineering administrators. Yet the Revolutionary Tribunal failed to convict the policeman on the grounds that the victimized peasant could not prove that the policeman had hit him.⁹²

A more telling case concerned a peasant uprising during a local market in March 1917, in the early days of Provisional Government rule. According to the regional inspector's report, a group of soldiers provoked peasants at the market to demand that the merchants sell their goods at non-fixed prices. This demand was in reaction to the government's policy of fixed prices on food and basic goods. The soldiers ran through the market yelling "Hooray! Sale!" while scattering merchants' goods. Local peasants

⁹¹ This does not include the amnesty of opposition party members in 1918 and those earlier convicted of "agitation, counter-revolution, crime of office, sabotage, and anti-Soviet activity." See Story, 124.

⁹² GAKO, f. R-1322, op. 1a, d. 1. The court sided with the policeman even though the peasant had made a statement in 1916 that he had been struck by the defendant. The court also found the policeman's actions justified since the victimized peasant was drunk.

joined the uprising. The merchants called the hamlet elder (*volost starshina*), but when he arrived, the crowd grabbed his revolver and began to beat him. The crowd turned on the hamlet administration building, knocking down its doors. Peasants acted against the merchants, *starshina*, and government structure as symbols of unjust state policy.⁹³

The Provisional Government inspector interviewed the merchants about the uprising, and the Soviet Revolutionary Tribunal used their testimony to bring seventeen peasants to trial. The Tribunal's acceptance of merchant testimony as the master narrative, the account of the story held by the court to be true, is significant. The proletarian court found the bourgeois merchants' memory more credible than memory of peasants soldiers, who were supposedly the Bolsheviks' natural allies. The Soviet courts thereby denied both class solidarity and peasants' consciousness of their own exploitation. The master narrative accepts the soldiers as the instigators of the rebellion, even though it was the peasantry who was hurt most by the Provisional Government's policy on fixed prices for agricultural goods.

All of the accused were found guilty of disorder, but specifically not "organized disorder," and had to pay fines ranging from 100 to 300 rubles. Peasants were tried even though they had not acted against the Soviet state. They had rebelled against a larger philosophical foundation; they had created disorder, threatened the nation's food supply,

and in doing so acted against state power. These transitional cases during the early months of Soviet rule show how the new rulers categorized crimes and criminals , defining crime as actions against state interests, regardless of the which “state” was involved.

Crime and Punishment

The Soviet Tribunal categorized criminal activities based both on ideology and on realities of the day. Eleven types of crime are denoted in statistical reports for cases brought to the Tribunal in 1919: counter-revolutionary activity, sabotage, speculation, pogrom, bribery, illegal use of soviet documents, spying, crime of office, violations of decrees, hooliganism, and other. Peasant activity, regardless of the agent’s motive, was defined by the Soviet state and placed within these boundaries.

In August 1918, the Revolutionary Tribunal brought two peasants before the court on charges of actions against Soviet power. Igant’ie Antonov Akulov and his son Fedor had resisted requisitioning of their grain in July. The village provisions committee had searched for excess grain and had focused on the Akulov household because they were known in the village to be wealthy. According to the court report, the Akulovs heard about the committee’s intent and locked their gate. When the committee arrived to take the grain, a gunfight ensued. The court report defines the Akulovs as kulaks. It notes

⁹³ GAKO, f. R-1322, op. 1a, d. 30.

that the Akulovs owned more land and sold items to poor peasants. The kulak family was against the redistribution of land and had denounced Soviet power. The court sentenced Ignat'ie to ten years in prison and deprivation of all rights as a citizen. It sentenced his son to execution, an unusually harsh punishment.⁹⁴

The Revolutionary Tribunal tried the Akulovs as kulaks and the court record described them through commonly-held images of the kulak--the village strong-man, "the agent of manipulation and exploitation within the peasant community," "the embodiment of evil," and "an expression of the features of a money economy."⁹⁵ The Akulovs supposedly owned a lot of land and "made a fortune from buying and selling to all the unfortunate poor peasants." They were also ignorant (*temnyi*) and closed off from society.⁹⁶ There was indeed an element of intra-village class difference, since the Akulov household was clearly wealthier than its neighbors. The Akulovs, like many other villagers in Viatka, presumably resisted state attempts at grain requisitioning because they feared starvation and refused to sacrifice an unjust amount of grain to the state. But

⁹⁴ It should be mentioned that the Revolutionary Tribunals very rarely punished criminals with the death penalty. Even Richard Pipes admits that in statistics on the Revolutionary Tribunal sentences only 14 out of 4483 resulted in the death penalty. Pipes, Legalised Lawlessness, 10.

⁹⁵ Frierson, Peasant Icons, 139. For more on the image of the kulak, see ch. 7.

⁹⁶ GAKO, f. R-1322, op. 1a, d. 41.

the Tribunal defined the concealment of grain as a counter-revolutionary act, an ignorant kulak reaction to the proletariat state's needs, thereby denying the accused their ability to act as anything but "kulaks."

Peasants understood the emphasis Soviets put on class and used this to their own advantage. In several cases, accused peasants emphasized their poverty. One peasant accused of siding with the Whites during their invasion of the province in the spring of 1919, stressed that he was a poor peasant (*bedniak*) and only paid 1,300 rubles in extraordinary taxes. He therefore could not be an enemy of the working people. The Tribunal agreed and gave him a light sentence.⁹⁷ Another peasant brought before the Tribunal for inactivity as the head of the local kombat asked to be freed since there were only two workers in his family of eleven.⁹⁸ By confessing to deviating from social norms while adopting Soviet definitions of self-identity based on class, the accused became natural allies to the state. The guilty party had merely been temporarily tempted by bourgeois enemies and could be rehabilitated with ease.

Mediating Criminality

The Tribunal was more than an agent of terror and punishment. The court's interrogation of suspects shows a fascinating creation of the anti-Soviet criminal and the

⁹⁷ Ibid., d. 652, ll. 63, 69.

⁹⁸ Ibid., d. 1113, l. 8.

mediation between the state and its people. In May and June 1919, the Bolsheviks were barely in control in Viatka province. White troops were advancing from the east and were threatening the city of Viatka. Amidst this turmoil, the Revolutionary Tribunal heard a case of nineteen peasants accused of being members of an anti-Soviet band which engaged in speculation.

In this instance, the narrative of events surrounding the band of outlaw peasants came from a regional Cheka official. According to his report, “a mass of armed deserters and various counter-revolutionary elements” were hiding in the forest of Verkhotul’skaia and Arbazhskaia *volosts*, Kotel’nich *uezd*. The surrounding peasants helped the band, supplying them with all necessary supplies and money. According to the report, the band had connections to white guards in Kazan, Sarapul, Simbirsk, and other cities. It took an armed detachment of sixty people to drive “the deserters” from the forest and arrest them.⁹⁹ This was the master narrative, the thesis, of the case against counter-revolutionary crime.

The Cheka conducted a number of detailed interrogations of witnesses and the accused. Reflecting the seriousness of the crime, the state transcribed many of the interrogations verbatim. The testimonies of the accused constructed a narrative of peasant insurgency, representing an antithesis to the state’s master narrative of the

⁹⁹ Ibid., d. 1579, l. 29.

criminal behavior. The peasants' responses reflected peasant consciousness and their own social norms. Moreover, the interrogation transcripts present peasants' voices describing village life.¹⁰⁰ However, the Cheka interrogators created and shaped the discourse of the accused. Without the interrogation, the peasant insurgents would have been silent and remained simply criminals. The Cheka also directed and guided the insurgent testimony through its questions. The interrogation process provided the peasantry with an arena, albeit restricted, to present their own worldviews.

*Model Interrogation:*¹⁰¹

Question: State your personal information.

Question: Do you recognize and support soviet power?

Answer: Yes, I recognize soviet power and believe it to be legitimate, but I find local soviet officials to act in an unjust manner.

Question: Why did you not defend Soviet power? Why did you not answer the state's call to arms?

Answer: My household needs me in the village.

Question: Why did you not use the soviet administration to help solve your problems?

Answer: Local administrative services do not work.

The interrogators began by defining and classifying the suspects by age, residency, gender, level of education, family situation, party membership, occupation, and class. All of the categories except class and party overlap with police reports and

¹⁰⁰ William B. Taylor describes the advantages and disadvantages of court transcripts in Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), espec. ch. 3.

census categories from the tsarist and Provisional Government era, showing state administrations' continued focus on categorizing the population (as discussed in Chapters Two and Three). The Soviet regime could not rationalize the peasants' counter-revolutionary activity through class status, traditionalism from old age, or adherence to the Party of the Socialist Revolutionaries and other bourgeois political allegiance. Out of fourteen peasants who the Cheka interrogated, the average age was 24. Most of the accused were lower-middle peasants, and none of them belonged to a political organization.

The dual rhetoric of Soviet inquisitor and peasant respondent show that the state tried to understand, and thus control, why the population wanted to act against Soviet society. The Cheka's line of questioning centered on the accused's relationship to Soviet state interests, while the peasantry's answers revealed how they believed the state had violated peasant law. The inquisitors' first question was always, "do you recognize soviet power and find its actions legitimate?" Every peasant answered that they recognized the legitimacy of soviet power. Most of the accused, however, added that, while they supported soviet rule, they believed that local officials were corrupt. As one peasant said, "I believe that central power is legitimate, but I find the actions of many soviet workers in the localities who levy extraordinary taxes and carry out confiscations

¹⁰¹ Compiled from GAKO, f. R-1322, op. 1a, d. 1579.

illegitimate.”¹⁰² In this way, the peasantry continued the popular Russian tradition of criticizing the regime by defending the ruler against the local bureaucrats. Daniel Field has described this scenario in the post-emancipation Russian countryside, in which the peasantry used their supposed naive monarchism to justify resistance to local officials. Field argues that peasant petitions to the tsar and officials in St. Petersburg claiming that “the tsar is good, but the nobles (*boyars*) are bad,” were discursive tools to criticize state policies while showing their loyalty.¹⁰³ Orlando Figes has shown that peasants in the lower Volga region used similar strategies in petitions during the civil war. Peasants wrote to Moscow, stating that they supported the Soviets but were against the Bolsheviks.¹⁰⁴ In Viatka, peasants testified that they supported the Soviet regime but acted against it to uphold peasant social norms. Such contradictory rhetoric is significant because it blurs the line between resistance and submission and shows that peasants used state programs that were supposed to build Bolshevik hegemonic control for their own good.

Indeed the very nature of the testimony blurred the lines among resistance, submission, and state hegemonic control. Under the presumed threat of physical

¹⁰² GAKO, f. R-1322, op. 1a, d. 1579, l. 86ob.

¹⁰³ Daniel Field, Rebels in the Name of the Tsar (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976).

¹⁰⁴ Figes, Peasant Russia, Civil War, 330.

punishment and the promise of a reduced sentence, all of the accused peasants voluntarily confessed to the activity that the court deemed to be a crime. Through such an admission, the accused “took part in producing penal truth.”¹⁰⁵ The defendant admitted that he was a criminal and submitted himself to the mercy of the court. But the peasant testimony shows that the insurgents only partially confessed. They admitted to the specific action and acknowledged the legitimacy of the state, but denied that their act constituted a crime. Instead, the rebels argued that it was the state that had failed them; the Bolshevik government had itself deviated from its moral responsibility as the elite to its population.

The Cheka asked questions not only to build a case against the criminals. Their questions also suggest an intentional conversation between inquisitor and peasant about the reality of the soviet state in the countryside. When asked why they acted against soviet power, the peasantry answered that the state had failed them. One peasant complained that local officials conducted several searches of his home that took almost all of his and his fellow villagers’ goods and money, but he did not even know where the money was going.¹⁰⁶ The peasant believed that there was an acceptable amount that he

¹⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 38. On the court’s creation of legal truth through testimony see Shahid Amin, “Approver’s Testimony, Judicial Discourse: The Case of Chauri Chaura,” Subaltern Studies V, 166-202.

¹⁰⁶ GAKO, f. R-1322, op. 1a, d. 1579, l. 47ob.

could sacrifice to the state, but the government exceeded the norm. Moreover, the peasant did not see benefits from his sacrifice. Similar conflicts over the peasant-state relationship can be seen from the Cheka's queries on state services. The new Soviet state was supposed to be participatory, emancipatory, and supply social services to the masses. When the Cheka asked the peasants why they did not use formal services to act on or complain about the local officials' illegal activities, the defendant answered, "I did not know where to turn" and re-elections and gatherings didn't do a thing anyway.¹⁰⁷ The Cheka also asked peasants whether they knew about Soviet aid to families of Red Army soldiers. While peasants knew of and pointed out that they supported the program, they argued that they didn't see any money from it.¹⁰⁸

State Criminality

The most frequent offense brought to trial was crime of office, followed by counter-revolutionary activity.¹⁰⁹ The frequency of officials brought to trial is presumably due to the sheer number of new, untrained personnel who had used the Bolshevik Revolution as an opportunity for personal power, as well as the Soviet government's shift in late 1918, away from supporting the Committees of the Poor

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., l. 86ob.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., ll. 47ob, 54ob.

¹⁰⁹ GARF, f. 1240, op. 1, d. 125, ll. 22-33.

Peasant (*kombedy*) to encouraging peasants to denounce them as being filled with counter-revolutionary opportunists. The Bolsheviks tried to rein in officials who did not comply with Soviet political norms. The Revolutionary Tribunal convicted many rogue officials for engaging in anti-Soviet behavior such as drinking, brewing and selling moonshine (*kumyshka*), and incest. However, officials who were tried for excess violence in their duties are especially interesting in the larger discussion of norms and criminal behavior. These representatives of state power enforced state control, but in such an egregious manner that the court found them criminal.

In November 1919, the case of Mikhail Ivanovich Mochalov and Georgii Stepanovich Moriakhin came before the Tribunal. In October 1918, Mochalov was the secretary of the Kadamskaia *volost* government and Moriakhin the leader of a Red Army detachment. Both were well educated and willingly fulfilled their duties in office. When the local peasants refused to pay a revolutionary tax, the Kadamskaia *volost* commission resolved to take harsh measures, including punishing persistent non-payers with execution. A Red Army regiment came to the *volost* and joined forces with local kombed members. Mochalov illegally seized command of the detachment and along with Moriakhin disregarded the regional instructions on conducting tax collection. According to the report, “in every village they beat up non-payers, including women and the elderly.” They instructed the detachment to kill every non-payer and the troops

complied. The leaders themselves also killed several people, including some women.

When some members of the kombat refused to kill detained non-payers, Mochalov and Morakhin executed them along with the prisoner. Moreover, the leaders confiscated goods, such as honey, and kept them for their own use. In the course of ten days, “several tens of people were killed, making the *volost* uneasy. As a result of such barbaric and illegal activity on the part of Mochalov and Moriakhin, the peasants were furious and against Soviet power.” The leaders were arrested and kept under guard.¹¹⁰

It is significant that the Revolutionary Tribunal brought the leaders of the brigade to task, rather than the whole regiment. Both leaders and soldiers committed violent offenses, the latter against fellow villagers. The court apologized for the soldiers’ actions by arguing that they were simply following orders, “Since the orders came from learned (*soznatel’nye*) people, for example Mochalov is a teacher, [the soldiers]... submitted blindly.”¹¹¹ In this case, the court forgave the ordinary men because they did not have the intellectual ability to question the orders. Mochalov and Moriakhin, however, were politically “conscious” and had the duty to act according to soviet norms of behavior. Like the soldiers under their command, Mochalov and Moriakhin clearly were trying to

¹¹⁰ GAKO, f. R-1322, op. 1a, d. 1574, ll.1-2, 345.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, l. 1ob.

fulfill orders from above to meet tax quotas. The leaders became responsible for the criminal acts committed by both themselves and their troops since they fit into the state's category of conscious, intellectual elite.

The Soviet government abolished the Revolutionary Tribunal in 1921. The end of the civil war and the establishment of the conciliatory New Economic Policy (NEP) as well as the implementation of a new legal code made the Tribunal obsolete. In the end, the Revolutionary Tribunals marked a failed hegemonic process. Russia's historically weak administrative structure in the countryside and the desperate political and economic situation stemming from eight years of war created a situation in which the judicial process was incomplete. While the Bolsheviks tried many people, several more were never brought to court. Moreover, political necessity often led the Soviet government to reduce and even nullify punishment. The Revolutionary Tribunal did not have the power to drive class warfare and commit unfettered terror during the civil war.¹¹² Instead, the Tribunal was significant as a medium between state and populace.

¹¹² In October 1991, The Soviet government issued Decree number 1337 to rehabilitate victims of political terror. See "O khode realizatsii Zakona RSFSR 'o reabilitatsii repressirovannykh narodov,'" Vedomosti s'ezda narodnykh deputatov RSFSR i Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR 42 (October 17, 1991): 1595. In this landmark reappraisal of what was socially acceptable and criminal behavior, cases of the Revolutionary Tribunal were re-examined, re-judged, and re-sentenced. A new master narrative was imposed upon the cases as new faceless judge reconstructed past events and laid judgement upon them through new social norms and political aims. The rehabilitator focused on counter-revolutionary peasants who sided with the Whites, the embodiment of anti-Soviet values. It is striking that new judgements subverted both the master narrative's focus on class and the unspoken subaltern narrative of the defendant as the treasonous criminal who sided with outsiders over his fellow villagers. The new narrative reshaped the criminal, who before

Conclusion

Through projects to strengthen and enlighten nationalities, to spread the word of socialism, and to disseminate the law and class warfare, the Bolshevik government built a system of persuasion and consensus. Bolsheviks and the peasant populations approached the rationale behind the projects differently. The Bolsheviks believed that various populations, such as Udmurts, Maris, Tatars, poor peasants, women, youths non-Russian nationalities and the peasantry as a socio-economic category needed and would accept their tutelage. Peasants accepted and became a part of the Soviet state building project. At the same time, peasant populations used Bolshevik imagination and state programs to further their own good. Nationality projects and propaganda campaigns gave peasants educational opportunities and additional state resources, and programs such as the Week of the Peasant gave the rural population desperately needed seed and technology. The Revolutionary Tribunal which was on the surface a coercive tool of the state, in fact helped build popular consensus by providing an arena for speaking against state goals without repercussions and as a mechanism for communication with the state.

had committed a political act, into a victim, overwhelmed by the political forces. Yet the modern day judge allowed the more everyday peasant political acts, such as refusing to sacrifice grain and brewing moonshine, to remain as criminal behavior since they did not actively side with elite groups which composed the anti-Soviet political forces.

Bolshevik policies to create hegemony, and the modes and ideas behind the policies, shaped peasant identities. As individual peasants learned to live with and accommodate state needs, they also retooled their language and presentation of themselves to fit better in the new socialist polity. Peasants who were Udmurt fashioned themselves as Udmurt peasants and villagers redefined themselves as poor peasants to be able to work within the Soviet system. Soviet ideas also appealed to many young peasants trying to break free from elderly peasant rule and the more traditional ways of life in the village. Youths now had official sanction to assert themselves as a distinct group against the older generation. New peasant identities incorporated state ideas of the socialist peasant, thereby bringing Soviet society even further into the village.

Peasants also used state projects for their own good and recentered state apparatuses to suit their own interests. They found language and arenas to communicate with state officials and resist state policies without fear of reprisal. Peasants accepted and shaped Soviet rule, creating a consensus that was not what Soviet leaders had originally envisioned.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Seven years of war, revolution, and civil war devastated the Viatka countryside, as it did the whole of Russia. Almost no part of peasant life was unchanged by 1922. Most noticeable was Viatka's demographic disaster. In 1913, there were 3.65 million inhabitants of the countryside. By 1920, there were only 1.97 million, a loss of almost fifty percent.¹ Mobilization, famine, disease, flight, and state terror ruptured family relations and destroyed whole households. Added to the population decline, the loss of livestock and agricultural instruments made the peasant economy a hollow shell of what it once was. The political troubles also influenced daily personal life. There were reports of a surge in suicides and divorce.² Census reports show a large number of adult peasants were now partially or fully incapacitated.³

¹ Entsiklopediia viatskoi zemli, t. 7, Priroda, 55.

² Viktor Berdinskikh, Rossia i russkie (krest'ianskaia tsivilizatsiia v vospominaniakh ochevidtsev) (Kirov: Izdatel'stvo GIPP Viatka, 1994).

³ GAKO, f. R-1053, op. 1, d. 188.

Alongside the social and economic catastrophes of this period, the national and rural political world metamorphasised into a modern, participatory government. This transformation was only possible by, and can be fully understood as, a continuous dialogue among the state, elites, and peasant populations.

The First World War under the late Imperial Russian government provided solid foundation for the transformation from subjects to modern citizenship. State politics of total war, including mobilization of men, livestock, and other social resources, surveillance, requisitioning, spectacles, and so forth provided the techniques and experience (both for the state and the population) on which the Bolsheviks would build. The war also helped to transform peasant consciousness, from nascent peasant nationalism into widely held belief that Russian peasants were equal members of the larger civic national polity. The Soviets maintained legal structures and benefited both from the late tsarist-era's strong peasant-state relationship and the failures to provide for the peasantry during the war.

Thus, a central part of Russia's political changes revolved around popular participation in state and nation building events--war efforts, holidays, elections, and the establishment of local governments. The First World War provided fertile soil for peasants' patriotism to blossom into an active sense of inclusion in a civic and political

national effort and made them feel part of an imagined community.⁴ The tsarist and Provisional governments integrated the peasantry into state projects, with accompanying rights and responsibilities. The peasantry, in turn, understood their responsibilities and actively pursued their new legal rights. The era of the Provisional Government strengthened peasants' participation in political developments as the state, elites, and peasants reinvented the Russian nation through holidays, oaths, elections, and local governmental structures. The government legally guaranteed equality for all citizens based on liberal democratic ideals, but local political and cultural elites were fearful of the ramifications of full peasant participation in political events because elites saw villagers as uncultured and not yet ready for unsupervised membership in the polity. The peasantry fought to have the elite and state agents uphold their promises of equality. Both sides thereby debated what rights and duties constituted political citizenship in Russia's polity. The Provisional Government failed to come to terms with peasants' demands for equal, unbridled, participation in Russia's popular reinvention of the nation. Peasants did not have a political reason to support such a government.

After the Bolsheviks assumed power, the dominant discourse shifted from the nation to class solidarity and warfare. The Soviet government simultaneously moved the parameters of citizenship from one focused on political citizenship (the right to

⁴ I take this term from Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities.

participate in political power) into social citizenship (the right to economic and social services and security).⁵ At the same time, the government excluded those they perceived as dangerous portions of the population, such as exploiters of labor and the clergy. This change in emphasis coincided with peasant struggles to engage and build a relationship with the state. The peasants, for their part, helped the weak Soviet administration by using its laws and infrastructure to solve their own disputes.

While such overarching conclusions can be drawn about the peasant-state relationship in general, it is important to understand that the experiences of war and revolution differed for the various peasant populations. Military conscription and casualties changed gender relations within the village. As men left for the front, their wives and mothers entered the public sphere to both act as surrogates of their husbands and sons and fight to maintain the sustainability of their household's economy. They continued this political activity by participating in local and national elections in 1917 and using the administrative system in land dispute cases. In this way, women expanded their traditional roles as defenders of the household and continued the pre-Revolutionary willingness to use state organs to help solve household or village disputes. When the men returned in 1918, they pushed women back to the private sphere and reserved

⁵ See Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "Civil Citizenship Against Social Citizenship? On the Ideology of Contract-Versus-Charity," in The Condition of Citizenship, Bart van Steenberg, ed. (London: SAGE

political activity for themselves. Some women, especially younger women, still engaged the national events surrounding them, however, through participation in Soviet mass mobilization campaigns such as youth brigades.

Non-Russian peasants were excluded, excused themselves, and were finally partially integrated into the civic national project. Imperial ethnographers categorized non-Russians in a hierarchy of civilization and saw non-Russians, especially the Finno-Ugric Udmurt and Mari peoples, as backward and uncultured. The tsarist state shaped wartime rural policies based on this hierarchical premise and tried to raise the cultural level of Maris and Udmurts while mobilizing their labor. Simultaneously, the military and police feared that Tatars were part of a competitive national project that wanted to overthrow Russian Orthodox rule. Provisional Government cultural and political elites continued to assume that non-Russians were uncultured and created a series of additional obstacles in non-Russian participation in revolutionary events. The Soviet government, although maintaining tsarist-era beliefs that non-Russians were backward, successfully integrated national elites, developed national culture building events, and granted a degree of autonomy to non-Russians.

Many non-Russians viewed participatory politics with some suspicion. Late Imperial Russification policies led Maris and Udmurts to fear state encroachment and

Publications, Ltd., 1994), 90-105. They discuss T. H. Marshall's famous conceptualization of the three

link Provisional Government era projects such as voter registration and elections as continuations of Russification. Non-Russian elites, however, adopted ethnographic description of their nationality as backward, and used it to gain resources for education and cultural projects. Soviet government nationality projects integrated non-Russian peasants into the federation of soviets and provided an arena for non-Russians to develop their own national consciousness.

The victory of the Bolsheviks should have been the most beneficial for the “poor peasantry,” whom the Communist government perceived to be its natural ally. However, the issue is more complex than a simple gain in land or social status. The political changes affected peasants’ identities, as the state and the individual defined and redefined who indeed was a poor peasant (and for that matter who was a kulak). The state shifted its categories as it tried to win over wavering villagers, bestowing the title of poor upon those who previously they saw as rich. Several peasants also tried to define themselves as poor in order to gain state aid or enter soviet politics as an ally of the system. Nevertheless, Soviet economic policies did not always benefit the poor, as the state took grain and taxes from every peasant that it could.

The Trials of the New Economic Policy

Most historians acknowledge that the civil war, and Russia's seven years of turmoil, ended in 1921 with the Red military defeat of organized White forces and the state's easing of economic control with the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP). The transition to NEP in the spring of 1921 soothed tensions between state and peasant by exchanging forced requisitions for a fixed tax in kind and limited private trade. Although by the spring of 1921, Viatka's requisition brigades finally began nearly to reach their quotas, for example they received 98 percent of grain and 95 percent of flax and 61 percent of potatoes, the military deactivated the requisitions brigades.⁶ Officials in Moscow worried about growing peasant revolts in Tambov and elsewhere, a devastated economy, and unrest within the Party. In Viatka, newspapers portrayed the transition as part of state famine and agricultural relief efforts after years of hardship.⁷

Even though NEP was supposed to ease the burden on the countryside and win over the peasantry, the transition was still tumultuous. Crop failure meant that most peasants could not pay even the much-reduced natural tax of one *pud*, twenty *funts* of grain per *desiatin* of land. The province ispolkom complained that regional food

⁶ GAKO, f. R-3271, op. 1, d. 43, l. 12.

⁷ "K krest'ianstvu RSFSR, zachem nuzhna byla razvertka," *Krasnyi put*, April 2, 1921, p. 2; "Ni shagu nazad," April 16, 1921, p. 1.

inspectors in charge of collecting the tax were illiterate and dimwitted (*malomyshnost*).⁸

The government established barter points of one *pud* of salt for a *pud* of rye flour, a *pud* of kerosene for 81 *puds* of butter, a *pud* of sugar for 115 *puds* of mushrooms.⁹ Peasants also attacked barter points exchanging butter and eggs for grain. In Elabuga *uezd*, peasants staged multiple raids to destroy the stations and take the grain.¹⁰ Official labels of the peasants as thieves (*pokhishchenie*) with the aim to abduct (*uvoz*) grain and create chaos (*razgrom*) shows the continued disconnect between state images of the peasantry and peasants' social identity. NEP and the distribution points were to benefit the masses and give them what the Bolsheviks supposed they wanted as primitive, semi-capitalists. Soviet official discourse could only describe peasant extra-legal and violent activity against NEP fixtures as unconscious behavior. However, peasant actions show that they believed that the state should have provided them with grain since they were starving. In a report, the Viatka provincial economic conference stated that NEP had caught the Soviet government unprepared to run an economy of self-supply and provoked inter-

⁸ GAKO, f. R-890, op. 1, d. 21, l. 1.

⁹ GAKO, f. R-890, op. 1, d. 26, ll. 581-581ob, 584.

¹⁰ GAKO, f. R-3271, op. 1, d. 43, l. 20.

departmental friction and popular discontent. Mass numbers of citizens petitioned the government complaining of the tax commission's improper conduct.¹¹

The Soviet state and the peasant population communicated and adapted to each other's needs, although the state controlled the political and discursive arena. Nevertheless, even after the end of military conflict, peasants and state still battled over a few issues. Bolsheviks relentlessly engaged in diatribes against religion and the Orthodox Church in local newspapers and brochures during the civil war but rarely went out of their way to harm local clergy.¹² When the Bolsheviks attempted to confiscate church valuables to help pay for famine relief, peasants defended their religious materials. In early 1922, local Soviet officials in Urzhum *uezd* went to Petrovskaia *volost* to seize church goods. Peasants from across the *volost* learned of their intent and up to six hundred of them came and surrounded the building. Although they let the officials into the church the peasants shouted, "beat and hang the communists and ispolkom," and attacked them, "beating some of them senseless and only one representative of the *uezd* ispolkom was rescued from the crowd." The militia soon arrived at the scene, dispersed the crowd, and searched homes for missing church valuables. Although they confiscated

¹¹ GAKO, f. R-890, op. 1, d. 26, l. 586.

¹² See for example, "Obyvatel i popy," *Krasnaia mysl*, Votkinsk: January 29, 1919, p. 4; "Popy--vo raskladochnykh komissiiakh," *Proletarskaia gazeta*, Glazov: February 19, 1919, p. 2.

church belongings, the official report called on the Soviet government to liquidate the Cheka for the time being in order to win over the locals. The official report blamed peasant action both on local kulaks who agitated at congresses and *skhods* against the government and the whole *volost* peasant population, “ninety percent of which is prosperous” and had supported the Stepanov anti-Soviet band.¹³ Several other village communities also reacted violently to Bolshevik attempts to seize church valuables.¹⁴ Peasants accepted Bolshevik visions of society, but many Orthodox Christian villagers would not let the Soviet state invade their religious world. The church, as a sanctified space was a physical representation of this struggle, and shows one of the limitations in the Soviet struggle for political hegemony.

Peasant Citizens in a Modern State

The Soviet military victory enabled the regime to make further inroads into the village and integrate the peasants into the socialist project. In the 1920s, the famous ethnographer P. N. Luppov and his students conducted scores of interviews with the peasants of Viatka concerning the impact of the Revolution on their daily lives. Their responses show that the Revolution did not significantly change the size of personal land

¹³ GAKO f. R-1, op. 2, d. 229, ll. 67-68.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 112, 126. For more on the push and pull between peasant and Bolshevik state over Party anti-religious campaigns, see Young, esp. ch. 2-3.

allotments or significantly affect the role of women in the household, but did incorporate Soviet ideas and institutions into village life. Many villages had reading huts, party cells, communes, artels, and had begun to receive literature on agriculture and the Soviet government implemented measures against pests. Several villagers commented that revolutionary changes widened the generation gap. Young men, especially former soldiers, argued more often with their fathers, which corresponded to an increase in the number of household divisions. While the elderly were still observant, the youth rarely went to church and non-religious were increasingly married in non-religious Red wedding ceremonies.¹⁵ Although the social changes during the New Economic Period presumably shaped the memory and answers of the interviewees, the answers show that the peasants, especially younger peasants, and the Soviet government continued to interact and develop a reciprocal relationship after 1921.

Non-ethnographic sources concur that the Soviet state's policies aimed at diverse peasant populations, especially youths, non-Russians, and women, gradually succeeded in the 1920s. Young male and female peasant Party membership accelerated. In most *uezds*, the number of members in 1927 tripled even quadrupled the number at the low

¹⁵ NOA UIIIaL URO RAN, d. 11; P. Luppov, "O vliianii revoliutsii na byt natsmen," Trudy viatskogo pedagogicheskogo instituta im. V. I. Lenina, t. II, vyp. II (Viatka: Viatskii pedagogicheskii institut imeni V. I. Lenina, 1927), 59-64. See also G. A. Nikitina, Udmurtskaia obshchina v sovetskii period (1917-nachalo 30-kh godov) (Izhevsk: Udmurtskii institut istorii, iazyka i literatury URO RAN, 1998).

point in 1922.¹⁶ Through affirmative action policies of the 1920s, more non-Russians also entered the Party.¹⁷ Literacy campaigns increased peasant literacy, notably among non-Russians. Udmurt literacy rose from its pre-Revolutionary point of 5.3 to 25.6 percent in 1926.¹⁸ By the end of 1923 the Udmurt newspaper *Gudyri* (Thunder) enjoyed mass distribution to every Udmurt village. As the sole newspaper in the Udmurt language, it acted as the main conduit between Udmurt villagers and the nation and was able to control the discourse on nationality issues and cultural education in the village.¹⁹

The dramatic changes in Viatka's villages from 1914 to 1921 did not happen in a vacuum. They were part of a national dialogue between peasant and state about power, popular participation, and the nation. Viatka's peasants, like rural inhabitants of northern Russia and the Black Earth Region, engaged the state and the polity as conscious peasants and citizens in Russia's nation. Peasants in Viatka had their own ideas of how the nation should be constructed and how the state should support its people.

¹⁶ Kirovskaia oblastnaia organizatsiia KPSS v tsifrakh, 18-19, 109-110.

¹⁷ Udmurtskaia oblastnaia organizatsiia KPSS v tsifrakh, 87-88. On the growth of the Communist Party in the Votyak Autonomous Oblast during the 1920s, see E. P. Nikitin et al., Ocherki istorii Udmurstkoi organizatsii KPSS (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1968), 175-252.

¹⁸ Martin, 127.

¹⁹ Khristolubova, "Prosvetitel'naia," 49-50.

Peasant-state relations in Viatka during Russia's transformation also reflected global trends. Like peasants in Western and Eastern Europe and Latin America, Viatka's peasants developed their own, complex understanding of social organization and what constituted the nation. In consultation, and often in competition, with cultural and political elites, peasants profoundly influenced civic and political national invention and the state building process.²⁰

At the same time, the Soviet government was characterized by modern political concepts and practices. The Soviets followed trends that began during the late tsarist regime, including state control, categorization and mobilization of the population, and the emergence of mass politics to help gain sufficient power over the peasantry.²¹ At the same, peasants took advantage of the fact that the state was now beholden to mass politics and popular participation and that the state did not enjoy hegemonic control over them. Peasants and Soviets thereby reached a temporary synthesis which incorporated

²⁰ Keely Stauter-Halsted, The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); James Lehning, Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France during the Nineteenth Century (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Mallon, Peasant and Nation.

²¹ David Hoffmann provides this definition of modernity and discusses Soviet modernity in its European context in "European Modernity and Soviet Socialism," in Russian Modernity, 245-260. See also, Peter Holquist, Making War, Forging Revolution, 1-11 and 282-288.

most of the peasant populations into society, and the peasantry utilized official mechanisms to further the peasant-state dialogue. All of this created a wide base of support to build a stable political system.

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