After the collapse of the Romanov dynasty in February 1917, Russia was subject to an eight-month experiment in democracy. Sarah Badcock studies its failure through an exploration of the experiences and motivations of ordinary men and women, urban and rural, military and civilian. Using previously neglected documents from regional archives, she offers a new history of the revolution as experienced in the two Volga provinces of Nizhegorod and Kazan. She exposes the confusions and contradictions between political elites and ordinary people and emphasises the role of the latter as political actors. By looking beyond Petersburg and Moscow, she shows how local concerns, conditions and interests were foremost in shaping how the revolution was received and understood. She also reveals the ways in which the small group of intellectuals who dominated the high political scene of 1917 had their political alternatives circumscribed by the desires and demands of ordinary people.

Sarah Badcock is Lecturer in History at the University of Nottingham.
NEW STUDIES IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

Edited by
PETER BALDWIN, University of California, Los Angeles
CHRISTOPHER CLARK, University of Cambridge
JAMES B. COLLINS, Georgetown University
MIA RODRIGUEZ-SALGADO, London School of Economics and Political Science
LYNDAL ROPER, University of Oxford

The aim of this series in early modern and modern European history is to publish outstanding works of research, addressed to important themes across a wide geographical range, from southern and central Europe, to Scandinavia and Russia, from the time of the Renaissance to the Second World War. As it develops the series will comprise focused works of wide contextual range and intellectual ambition.

For a full list of titles published in the series, please see the end of the book.
POLITICS AND THE PEOPLE IN REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

A Provincial History

SARAH BADCOCK

University of Nottingham
This book is dedicated to my grandparents,
Ted and Freda Ellis
Contents

List of figures and table  page viii
Notes on the text         ix
Acknowledgements         x
Maps                     xii

1  Introduction          1
2  The February revolution: whose story to believe?  30
3  The Socialist Revolutionary Party and the place of party politics  56
4  Choosing local leaders  87
5  Talking to the people and shaping revolution  123
6  Soldiers and their wives  145
7  ‘Water is yours, light is yours, the land is yours, the wood is yours’  181
8  Feeding Russia  211

Conclusions  238

Bibliography  244
Index         257

© Cambridge University Press
www.cambridge.org
Figures and table

**Figures**

1.1 Great Russian population (%) in Kazan province, by uezd  
1.2 Political constitution of Town Dumas after re-elections in 1917  
3.1 Dates of membership and first arrest of PSR members  
3.2 Election results in Sormovo for July, September and November 1917  
4.1 Education levels of local leaders in 1917  
4.2 Occupations of local leaders in 1917  
7.1 Livestock (per head) held in Nizhegorod and Kazan provinces, by uezd, for 1916  
7.2 Sown areas (in desiatins) in Nizhegorod and Kazan provinces, by uezd, showing crop types, for 1916  
7.3 Land sown (in desiatins) by peasant and private owners, 1916  
7.4 Ownership of woodland in Nizhegorod province

**Table**

1.1 The Provincial Government’s five incarnations
Notes on the text

All dates before 31 January 1918 are given according to the Julian (old-style) calendar, which ran thirteen days behind the Gregorian (new-style) calendar in use in Western Europe. The Gregorian calendar was adopted in Russia on the day following 31 January 1918, which was declared to be 14 February, though many regional Soviet newspapers began to give new dates, with old dates in brackets, in their publications, after the Bolshevik seizure of power on 25 October 1917.

In transliterating Russian titles, quotations and names, I have used the Library of Congress system, except in the case of well-known persons, or names that are familiar in other spellings, such as Alexander Kerensky and Rimsky-Korsakov. Soft signs at the ends of words have been omitted.

I have tried to keep the use of Russian terms and abbreviations in the text to an absolute minimum. There are a number of terms, however, which translate clumsily, and have been given in Russian throughout.

Each province is divided into uyezdy and each uyezd subdivided into volosti.

desiatina: measurement of area, equivalent to 2.7 acres

narodnyi dom: People’s house

otrub (pl. otruba): peasant household farm with enclosed field strips

PSR: Socialist Revolutionary Party

pud: measurement of weight, equivalent to 36.113 pounds

samosud: mob law

skhod: village or communal gathering

soldatka (pl. soldatki): soldier’s wife

soslovie (noun), soslovnyi (adj.): social categories applied in tsarist period

SD: Social Democrat

SR: member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party

uyezd: district; subdivision of province

volost: rural district; subdivision of uyezd

zemstvo (pl. zemstva): local self-government organ

Archival materials are referred to by their collection fond (f.), section opis (op.), file delo (d.) and page number listok (l.). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
Acknowledgements

This study has been made possible by the financial and moral support that I have received from a wide variety of sources. Funding from scholarly bodies and from my indefatigable parents enabled me to pursue my research interests. The Arts and Humanities Research Board, the University of Durham, the British Foundation of Women Graduates and the Royal Historical Society all provided me with financial support in the course of my doctoral research, on which this work is partly based. The financial support of the Leverhulme Trust enabled me to spend an invaluable year in Russia furthering my research. The study leave afforded me by the University of Nottingham gave me the time I needed to complete this manuscript.

I could not have completed this book without the help of the staff of various archives and libraries, in Moscow, St Petersburg, Kazan, Nizhnii Novgorod, London and Nottingham. I’m only sorry I don’t remember the names of the many archivists who were so kind and helpful to me, especially the reading room staff who bore my amateurish spoken Russian and my fixation on 1917 with good humour. I spent many months in the newspaper room of the Russian National Library on the Fontanka in St Petersburg and the then head of the section, Victor Victorovich, brightened my day with his cheery hellos and chocolate treats. I am particularly grateful to the director of Nizhnii Novgorod’s State Archive, Victor Alekseevich Kharmalov, and the director of the National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan, Liudmila Vasil’evna Gorokhova, for permitting me to use their wonderful archives.

The scholars of revolutionary Russia are an exceptionally welcoming and friendly bunch. Michael Hickey has offered more support than I should really have dared to ask for. His painstaking comments and criticisms of my work over the last few years have improved this book beyond measure. Geoff Swain and Chris Read have generously and patiently read and commented on very many versions of this work. They have also offered me a lot of support right through my career. Dan Orlovsky’s insightful comments on a final version of this manuscript helped me clarify my
Acknowledgements

ideas. The detailed evaluation from the anonymous reader consulted by Cambridge University Press improved this book significantly. The Study Group on the Russian Revolution provided a knowledgeable and supportive forum for the exchange of ideas. I have bludgeoned too many people into conversation about 1917 to name them all here. I would however like to thank, in no particular order, Aaron Retish, Liudmila Novikova, Murray Frame, Jimmy White, Ian Thatcher, Cath Brennan, Paul Dukes, Bob McKean, Peter Gatrell, Boris Kolonitskii, David Saunders, John Slatter, David Moon, David Longley, Michael Melancon, Mark Baker, John Morison and Maureen Perrie. Any shortcomings and errors in this work are, of course, my own and have endured despite all these individuals’ best efforts.

Finally, I’d like to thank my friends and family, who may not have read the mountains of paper I’ve generated over the last few years, but have offered the trappings of sanity in my ivory tower world. My mam and dad Louise and Ernie, and my sister Zoe, have been unflagging in their support for me through all the ups and downs of academic study. My boon companions Louise, Lolly, Becky, Karen, Sam and of course the infamous Ben Aldridge have conspired to keep things in perspective, and life cheery over the last few years. Graham Tan has borne the brunt of my scholarly anxieties with forbearance and love.

A portion of chapter 6 appeared in the International Review of Social History 49 (2004), 47–70, and a version of chapter 5 appeared in the Russian Review 65 (October 2006), 2–21. I thank both publishers for permission to reprint this material.
Maps
Map 1. The Russian Empire, c. 1900
Map 2. European Russia, c. 1900
Map 3. Kazan province, c. 1900
Map 4. Nizhegorod province, c. 1900