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978-0-521-89689-4 - Russia's Peasants in Revolution and Civil War: Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914-1922

Aaron B. Retish

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Russia's Peasants in Revolution and Civil War

How did peasants experience and help guide Russia's war, revolution, and civil war? Why in the end did most agree to live as part of the Bolshevik regime? Taking the First World War to the end of the Civil War as a unified era of revolution, this book shows how peasant society and peasants' conceptions of themselves as citizens in the nation evolved in a period of total war, mass revolutionary politics, and civil breakdown. Aaron Retish reveals that the fateful decision by individuals to join the Revolution or to accommodate their lifestyle within it gave the Bolsheviks the resources and philosophical foundation on which to build the Soviet experiment and reshape international politics. He argues that peasants wanted more than land from the Revolution; they wanted to be active citizens. This is an important contribution to our understanding of the nature of the Russian Revolution and peasant-state relations.

AARON B. RETISH is Assistant Professor in the Department of History, Wayne State University.

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*Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the
Soviet State, 1914–1922*

Aaron B. Retish

Wayne State University, Detroit



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Note on terms and usage

Dates through January 1918 are given in Russia's Julian calendar, which ran thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar. Russia adopted the Gregorian calendar in February 1918 and dates from that point forward reflect the change. I use the Library of Congress system of transliteration for Russian, Udmurt, and Mari except for names commonly known in English (for example, Trotsky instead of Trotskii). I have eliminated the soft sign at the end of place names (Kazan instead of Kazan') to make the text flow better. For style and readability, I have tried to keep foreign terms to a minimum and anglicise most plurals. This is a provincial history and I often refer to the province (*guberniia*), the districts (*uezdy*) of the province, and the rural administrative townships (*volosti*) within the districts. As *volosts* appear so often and an accurate English translation is clunky, I use the Russian term throughout the text without the soft sign (*volost*, instead of *volost'*). In the revolutionary era, Russia's peasants travelled in versts (approximately 1.07 kilometres), measured grain in puds (approximately 36 pounds or 16.4 kilograms) and funts (approximately .90 pounds or 0.41 kilograms) and marked off land in *desiatinas* (approximately 2.7 acres).

I use the following abbreviations when I refer to Russian archival materials: f. for collection (*fond*), op. for inventory (*opis'*), d. for file (*delo*), l. and ll. for folio and folios (*list* and *listy*), and ob. for verso (*oborot*).

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Glossary

artel	cooperative organization of peasants
Cheka	Extraordinary Commission for the Struggle against Counter-Revolution and Sabotage
<i>derevnia</i>	village
<i>fel'dsher</i>	paramedic
gubispolkom	provincial executive committee
ispolkom	executive committee of soviet or committee
kolkhoz	collective farm
<i>kombed(y)</i>	committee(s) of the poor peasantry
Komuch	Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly. Anti-Bolshevik regime in the Lower Volga in 1918
<i>kustar'</i>	peasant handicraft
<i>kumyshka</i>	alcoholic home-brewed ritual drink associated with Udmurts and Maris
Narkomnats	People's Commissariat of Nationalities
Narkomprod	People's Commissariat of Food Supply
Narkompros	People's Commissariat of Enlightenment
Narkomzem	People's Commissariat of Agriculture
NKVD	People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs
<i>obshchina</i>	land commune
<i>otkhodnichestvo</i>	network of peasant out-migration to the factories or urban areas
<i>otkhodnik</i>	peasant migrant worker
<i>prigovor(y)</i>	resolution(s) passed by village, communal or <i>volost</i> assembly
Prikomuch	The Urals Region Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly. Anti-Bolshevik regime centred in Viatka in 1918
<i>razverstka</i>	compulsory levy of grain and goods

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x	Glossary
<i>selo</i>	village, usually a larger village that houses the main <i>volost</i> religious building
<i>skhod</i>	village, commune, or <i>volost</i> assembly
<i>soldatka</i>	soldier's wife
SR	member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party
<i>starosta</i>	village elder
<i>starshina</i>	<i>volost</i> elder
<i>zavod</i>	factory or factory town
zemstvo	semi-autonomous local governmental body

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Map of Viatka province in 1914

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