

1917 in the Countryside:
Iakov Iakovlev and the Writing of the History of the Peasantry in Early Soviet Russia

by

Collin James Mastrian

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

Department of History and Classics
University of Alberta

© Collin James Mastrian, 2018

Abstract

1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian [1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs] is a censored volume of a vast collection of peasant memoirs and writings on the Revolution of 1917. These writings were sent by peasants in response to “an appeal to the countryside” published by future Commissar of Agriculture, Iakov Iakovlev, in the pages of the major Soviet newspaper *Krest'ianskaia gazeta* [Peasant Gazette] in 1925. However, this collection was also part of a broader project, led by famed Soviet-Marxist historian Mikhail Pokrovskii, and the Commission on the History of the October Revolution of the Communist Party or *Istpart*. *Istpart* was one of the most significant organizations driving the direction of early Soviet historiography. As its name implies, *Istpart* was tasked with writing a history that positioned the Bolshevik party at the vanguard of the Revolution, thereby legitimizing Bolshevik hegemony in the Soviet Union. The project behind *1917 in the Countryside* is ultimately the product of these two forces —*Peasant Gazette* (edited by Iakov Iakovlev), and *Istpart* (under the creative purview of Mikhail Pokrovskii). Both *Peasant Gazette* and *Istpart* are unique in that they stressed direct relations with the peasantry. The original project (which undoubtedly deserves further research), was initiated by both Pokrovskii and Iakovlev and was intended to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. However, as Stalin took over the jubilee of 1927 and *Istpart* became increasingly neutralized by its rival, the V.I. Lenin Institute, Pokrovskii’s and Iakovlev’s joint *Istpart* project never reached a wider Soviet audience. Pokrovskii was hand-picked by Lenin to lead developments in Soviet historiography in the early 1920s. However, by

the late 1920s, Pokrovskii's internationalist attitude and strict adherence to classical Marxism became increasingly unpopular in the face of Stalin's concept of Socialism in One Country. By 1929, Iakovlev had distanced himself from his former colleague and printed his own version of the project using the press of *Peasant Gazette*. However, because the entire project remained heavily influenced by Pokrovskii's concept of "collective reminiscence," as well as the rural correspondence movement, the works themselves are not mere propaganda and remain complex and valuable primary source material for understanding peasant perspectives of the Russian Revolution. My work explores the complex processes behind the production of *1917 in the Countryside*. It elucidates the relationships of both Pokrovskii and Iakovlev with Lenin and the evolution of their ideological convictions in a tumultuous political climate. It investigates Istpart's role in guiding the peasant writers of *1917 in the Countryside* to create a narrative that cemented Bolshevik legitimacy. Works by Frederick Corney and Michael Hickey explore the role of Istpart in manufacturing narratives in Soviet urban areas, using histories written from the perspective of Soviet workers. My work builds on their research to explore the role of Istpart in manufacturing narratives in the Soviet countryside by using *1917 in the Countryside*, a history written from the perspective of Soviet peasants. Finally, my work compares *1917 in the Countryside* with Stalin's history of the party, *The Short Course* in order to understand what remained of peasant interpretations of the revolution after collectivization.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Making History in the 1920s.....	12
Chapter Two: Building a Narrative.....	39
Chapter Three: Soviet Historiography and <i>The Short Course</i>	72
Conclusion.....	104
Bibliography.....	108
Primary Sources.....	108
Secondary Sources	109

Introduction

In 1967 the Soviet Union celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution. In honour of these celebrations, the Soviet publishing house *Politizdat* reissued a book that contained selected results of a watershed 1927 project on the peasantry.¹ This book, originally printed in 1929 and titled *1917 in the Countryside*, was an important resource for students, party members, and historians² until the publication of Stalin's major textbook, the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, in 1938—the most important book in Soviet history until 1956.³ The publication of Stalin's textbook marked the end of an era and reflected the tenuous position of professional historians at the height of the purges. *1917 in the Countryside* would be the last major work on the October Revolution—focusing on the peasantry specifically and based directly on collected peasant writings—available to a wider Soviet audience⁴ and compiled before collectivization and what many Soviet scholars view as a war against the peasantry under Stalin.⁵

The broader 1927 project out of which the volume emerged—*The Peasant Movement in 1917*—was led by famed Soviet historian Mikhail Pokrovskii and the man who would later serve as Commissar of Agriculture during collectivization (1929–1934), Iakov Iakovlev. It was

¹ “Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v 1917 godu” [*The Peasant Movement in 1917*], edited by M.N. Pokrovskii and Ia. A. Iakovlev (Tsentroarkhiv GIZ, 1927); “1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian” [*1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs*], edited by Ia. A. Iakovlev (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Krest'ianskaia gazeta,” 1929); “1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian” [*1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs*], edited by Ia. A. Iakovlev and I.V. Igritskii (Moscow: Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1967).

² Igritskii, “1917 god v derevne [1967],” 8. All further citations of this title refer to the 1967 version.

³ David Brandenberger and M.V. Zelenov, “The Short Course on Party History,” from the Stalin Digital Archive: <https://www.stalindigitalarchive.com/frontend/the-short-course-on-party-history-bradenberger-zelenov> (Accessed 4 April 2018).

⁴ Igritskii, “1917 god v derevne [1967],” 8.

⁵ See *The War Against the Peasantry: The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside*, edited by Lynne Viola, V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivinskii, and Denis Kozlov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

originally commissioned to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution in 1927. This project was vast in scope and contained thousands of pages of peasant writings submitted to Iakovlev's newspaper *Krest'ianskaia gazeta* [*Peasant Gazette*] and guided by Pokrovskii's professional "scientific" principles of source collection. However, most of these submissions never made it to a wider audience and even now are accessible only in the archives.⁶ As the political situation in the Soviet Union turned slowly against scientific approaches to history and against Pokrovskii, Iakovlev alone published his abridged results of the project in his edited collection, *1917 in the Countryside* (1929). This work was given as a gift to fellow party members at the Sixteenth Party Congress in 1930—a time at which Iakovlev's career was taking off—and where he gave a major speech on the state of agriculture in the Soviet Union. Throughout the early 1930s, Iakovlev would play a major role in the development of historical texts, including what would eventually become the *Short Course*. Iakovlev was a clear ally of Stalin and yet he still appeared to be influenced by Pokrovskii because he, along with other early Stalinist historians, maintained significant emphasis on the importance of historical research and first-hand accounts throughout the early and mid 1930s, to the extent that Stalin became frustrated with their lack of ideology and rewrote the final version of the *Short Course* himself.

Pokrovskii and Iakovlev's careers did not happen in a professional and political void and therefore this study will explore the institution that shaped their ideas and propelled (and condemned) their careers—the Commission on the History of the October Revolution of the Communist Party, or Istpart. The word "commission" belies the fact that this was a massive

⁶ For further research on the entire sources collected, Istpart's central archival files are located at the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) fond 70; *Peasant Gazette's* letter archive is located in the Russian State Archive of Economics (RGAE) fond 396.

political institute, created by Lenin, which oversaw the creation of public history in the Soviet Union throughout the 1920s. Istpart only ceased to exist due to the rise of a competing political institute that emerged in the aftermath of Lenin's death in 1924—filled with party cadres sympathetic to Stalin. This institute—the V.I. Lenin Institute—would slowly demand all material located in Istpart's holdings that pertained to Lenin—effectively controlling the narrative surrounding Lenin. This also paved the way for the very act of interpreting Lenin to serve as a means to discredit or prove one's party loyalty—something endemic in the 1930s and which resurfaced in the field of history after Pokrovskii's rehabilitation in the 1960s.⁷ This study will explore how Pokrovskii—who was Lenin's first choice to direct Istpart⁸—and his belief in empirical and scientific approaches to history were vital to the creation of *1917 in the Countryside*. It suggests that although Iakovlev felt that Bolshevik ideology was more important than an orthodox Marxist theory of history, this insistence on using first-hand accounts and primary research influenced Iakovlev and the creation of this text. Pokrovskii and the historical methods employed by Istpart left their mark on many historians who were trained in the 1920s, even after Pokrovskii was denounced by the Party and greater emphasis on Bolshevik ideology became paramount. This is in marked contrast to later Stalinist-era approaches to official history, such as those used in the *Short Course* and the strict controls mandated in the Zhdanov era.

Iakovlev represents a complex figure in Soviet history: loyal to Stalin and yet a critical member of Istpart, he clearly sought to fit historical evidence into a Bolshevik framework, not

⁷ Daniel Dorotich, "The Disgrace and Rehabilitation of M. N. Pokrovsky," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8 (1966): 176.

⁸ Pokrovskii was very influential and therefore also very busy during this period and eventually the day to day administration of Istpart was given to Ol'minskii. That said, the immense influence of Pokrovskii on Istpart, throughout its existence, cannot be understated. For more on this, see William Francis Burgess, "The Istpart Commission: The Historical Department of the Russian Communist Party Central Committee, 1920–1928," Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University (University Microfilms International, 1981).

Pokrovskii's more classically Marxist one. Pokrovskii was rehabilitated in the mid 1960s and this set in motion a crisis among Soviet historians as to who participated in denouncing Pokrovskii.⁹ Interestingly enough, Iakovlev's name was never included in this anti-Stalinist purge and much of the forward of the 1967 reprint of *1917 in the Countryside* serves to rehabilitate Iakovlev and highlight his devotion to primary sources.¹⁰ Perhaps this was to protect Ivan Igritskii, the researcher who worked under Iakovlev during the original project, and who wrote the forward and commentary for the 1967 reprint. It is perhaps best not to speculate, but regardless, Iakovlev remains a very complex figure in Soviet history. His speech given at the Sixteenth Party Congress shows a preoccupation with always providing sources—for example, citing data from the United States Department of Agriculture and other American sources to make his arguments about the superiority of Soviet agriculture. Ultimately, Iakovlev became a victim of the purges before it became clear whether he would have fully discarded historical methods in the Zhdanov era.

This study will explore the peasant writings selected and presented in their entirety in *1917 in the Countryside*. It will elucidate both the Bolshevik political narrative that Iakovlev sought to create as well as peasant accounts that provide much more insight into how events unfolded than what was actually useful to the party. It will also use Iakovlev's speech delivered to the Sixteenth Party Congress to understand his official attitudes and beliefs when it was published and at the height of his career. Finally, this study will assess the differences between Iakovlev's *1917 in the Countryside*, which was the foremost account of the peasantry during the

⁹ See Dorotich, "The Disgrace and Rehabilitation of M. N. Pokrovsky."

¹⁰ Igritskii, "1917 god v derevne [1967]," 1–22.

October Revolution in the later 1920s and early 1930s, and Stalin's later textbook, the *Short Course*, which replaced it in 1938, the year that Iakovlev was executed by the NKVD.

Very few works discuss the importance of Istpart's influence on Soviet history in the 1920s. The most exhaustive work on Istpart's organizational structure and function remains the 1981 dissertation of William Burgess.¹¹ Burgess bases his work on the journal *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* (Istpart's publication from its central office in Moscow), in addition to the publications *Krasnaia letopis* and *Istoriik-Marksist*. Two major works have so far used Burgess's dissertation to investigate Istpart's narrative of the 1917 revolution as it pertains to workers. Michael Hickey narrows his study to Smolensk and focuses exclusively on workers' memoirs of 1917 to understand what he calls the "master narrative" generated by Istpart. In addition to Burgess, he also uses the archives of Istpart's local bureaus in Smolensk.¹² Frederick Corney's work is much more sweeping in nature, providing a broad overview of symbolism and memory during the revolution, which draws from film and culture in addition to Istpart sources to discuss the "foundation narrative" of 1917—again from the perspective of the worker.¹³ This study will use the concept of "narrative" as employed by Hickey and Corney to explore narratives of the revolution as it pertains to the *peasant* and will do so using the peasant memoirs, articles, and stories contained in the pages of *1917 in the Countryside*.

While a study of Pokrovskii and Iakovlev's broader 1927 project would also be of great importance and certainly give a more comprehensive view of the peasantry, this specific study is

¹¹ Burgess, "The Istpart Commission," 89.

¹² Michael Hickey, "Paper, Memory, and a Good Story: How Smolensk Got its 'October'," *Revolutionary Russia* 13, no. 2 (2000).

¹³ Frederick Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 100.

constricted by limitations to archival access and the immense size of that project. Therefore, this study uses Iakovlev's *1917 in the Countryside*, which is not only more manageable in size but was also distributed for a wider Soviet audience. Iakovlev's collected volume is meant to inform Soviet citizens, and rank-and-file party members in particular, about how events in the countryside unfolded during the October Revolution. Therefore, it is useful to compare this tool of instruction with how the peasantry is presented in Stalin's *Short Course*, as that work first and foremost was also meant as a crash course in the historical importance of the Bolshevik party for rank-and-file members. Comparing *1917 in the Countryside* to the *Short Course* also helps understand the evolution of the official role of the peasantry in Soviet narratives from the 1920s to the 1930s—a critical juncture in Soviet history. In fact, David Brandenberger and M.V. Zelenov trace the genesis of the *Short Course* back to 1931, in the pages of Istpart's main publication, *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*:

Although first published in 1938, the *Short Course* is best dated back to 1931, when I. V. Stalin issued his famous letter to the journal *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, scolding party historians for their excessive scholasticism and failure to properly frame the service of people like V. I. Lenin to the cause. In the wake of this intervention, Stalin called upon party historians and the party's ideological establishment to transform their approach to party education and indoctrination and embrace a more accessible, mobilizational approach to the Bolsheviks' historical experience.¹⁴

While it may seem that the *Short Course* is a radically different genre from *1917 in the Countryside*, Brandenberger and Zelenov argue that the *Short Course* is representative of Stalin's increased emphasis on simplicity and accessibility and that this is the direction that all historical works were taking at this time. That said, this study will also use the first commission organized to draft a *Short Course* to demonstrate that historians continued to place importance on

¹⁴ Brandenberger and Zelenov, "The Short Course on Party History."

“scientific”¹⁵ approaches to history even in the 1930s, up until Stalin finally just intervened and tailored historians’ drafts to produce the propaganda approach of the *Short Course*. This study will examine how Iakovlev failed to abandon “scientific” approaches to history introduced by Pokrovskii, even when it would have been more expedient in his pursuit to please Stalin, up until the purges. As Daniel Dorotich notes, “rewriting Russian history, as Stalin demanded, was difficult in the face of resistance from many historians trained by Pokrovsky.”¹⁶ Dorotich also emphasizes that it was not Pokrovskii’s ideology that mattered but his emphasis on empirical methods. Discussing his rehabilitation in the 1960s, he notes that, “while the debunking of Pokrovsky by his colleagues should be largely attributed to fear, his rehabilitation is certainly not forced from above. In the final analysis it is historical truth that is being rehabilitated, together with M. N. Pokrovsky.”¹⁷

Most discussion of Iakovlev’s ideas in scholarly works is in relation to his polemical attacks, first on Lenin’s enemies and then on Stalin’s (both Soviet leaders were close to Iakovlev). James White discusses Iakovlev’s 1922 attack on V.F. Pletnev, asserting that, “its function was to set out the approved interpretation for other historians to follow.”¹⁸ David Longley positions Iakovlev’s 1927 polemic against Aleksandr Shliapnikov as a key work in understanding the pursuit of history in the Soviet Union.¹⁹ Most recently (2017), Semion Lyandres and Andrei Nikolaev use this polemic to dub Iakovlev both a “powerful ally” and a

¹⁵ Igritskii uses this word at length when discussing why *1917 in the Countryside* still had value and when discussing Iakovlev’s methods.

¹⁶ Dorotich, “The Disgrace and Rehabilitation of M. N. Pokrovsky,” 176.

¹⁷ Dorotich, “The Disgrace and Rehabilitation of M. N. Pokrovsky,” 181.

¹⁸ James White, “Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution 1918–24,” *Soviet Studies* 37, no. 3 (1985), 348.

¹⁹ David Longley, “Iakovlev’s Question, Or the Historiography of the Problem of Spontaneity and Leadership in the Russian Revolution of 1917,” in *Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917*, edited by Edith Rogovin Frankel, Jonathan Frankel, and Baruch Knei-Paz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

“Stalinist hack” and yet Iakovlev was much more complex a figure than either of those depictions. That being said, in their recent work on the state of Russian scholarship on the February Revolution (written for the 1917 centenary), they concede that Iakovlev’s ideas continue to influence historical debates in the field to this day.²⁰ They also make a direct connection between “Iakovlev’s Question”²¹ about the nature of the revolution and the contents of the Short Course:

If Shliapnikov’s defeat was permanent, Iakovlev’s victory proved temporary at best (he would outlive his nemesis by less than a year, being swallowed up, just like Shliapnikov, by the Stalin terror machine). In five years, a completely revised, ‘corrected’ party doctrine regarding the Bolshevik leadership in the February Revolution was put forward by Stalin loyalists. Accordingly, the February uprising was organized and directed by the Bolshevik leaders, but whose ranks no longer included the ‘party renegade’ Shliapnikov. Fast forward to 1938 and this claim became the new dogma and was duly codified in Stalin’s *Short Course*.²²

This study expands on such glib connections by assessing *what* from Iakovlev’s narrative remains in the *Short Course*. It also elucidates the much more complex relationship between Iakovlev and the pursuit of history: why denounce only Shliapnikov? Drawing on A.N. Artizov’s work on Iakovlev’s role in the initial commission that led to the *Short Course*,²³ this study will demonstrate how Iakovlev had ample opportunity to attack Pokrovskii, whose ideas were often just as problematic for Bolshevik narratives. Using Iakovlev’s *1917 in the Countryside*—a

²⁰ Semion Lyandres and Andrei Borisovich Nikolaev, “Contemporary Russian Scholarship on the February Revolution in Petrograd: Some Centenary Observations,” *Revolutionary Russia* 30, no. 2 (2017): 160.

²¹ Term coined by Longley, who explains that Iakovlev essentially asked, “if the Bolshevik leadership did direct the course of events, how did it happen that the revolution did not lead to the establishment of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, or to the Bolsheviks being at the head of the Petrograd Soviet?” See Longley, “Iakovlev’s Question, 373.”

²² Semion and Nikolaev, “Contemporary Russian Scholarship on the February Revolution in Petrograd,” 160.

²³ A.N. Artizov, “To Suit the Views of the Leader: The 1936 Competition for the [Best] Textbook on the History of the USSR,” *Russian Studies in History* 31, no. 4 (1993).

project of great importance to Iakovlev and to Soviet understanding of the peasantry²⁴—this study will also investigate what remains of peasant voices in the *Short Course*.

This study will explore how this project began in 1925 under the direction of Pokrovskii and ended in 1929 as a much more selective presentation of works under Iakovlev. While the Bolshevik narrative and the process behind its elaboration is important, Igritskii explains in his commentary that the texts chosen and presented in *1917 in the Countryside* are there in their entirety. The selection of these texts was of course political, and those that completely failed to adhere to Iakovlev's preferred narrative were excluded. However, because of Istpart's original emphasis on scientific methods to reinforce (initially Marxist) ideology, these are still writings directly from the peasantry themselves, used by Iakovlev to reinforce Bolshevik ideology. Because of this, the writings of the peasants themselves will be explored to understand their perspective outside of the narrative but also their own interpretation of that narrative and their own understanding of their role in the revolution. This study will assess the attitudes and perspectives of the writings contained within *1917 in the Countryside* to understand peasant agency not just in the revolution directly but also in the creation of the official story of that foundational event.

There are many works devoted to Mikhail Pokrovskii. Iakov Iakovlev, on the other hand, continues to remain a tertiary figure in most Soviet scholarship. He is a background presence in works concerning the peasantry and in several studies on polemics against Stalin's enemies. However, Iakovlev's ideas—and his role as both foil and disciple of Pokrovskii—remain

²⁴ Igritskii goes on at length to discuss the magnitude of the project and its first hand accounts directly from peasants.

understudied as a subject. Overall, this work will seek to address that problem as well as bring the peasant perspectives of *1917 in the Countryside* to a broader scholarly audience.

This study comprises three chapters. The first chapter gives the reader important context and background on Istpart as an institution and the enduring influence of Pokrovskii's ideas about scientifically approaching history using Marxist theory. It also examines how Iakovlev adapted this approach in order to still pursue historical methods but to do so with greater emphasis on Bolshevik ideology. It explores how Istpart fell victim to emerging Stalinist rhetoric in the late 1920s and how this foreshadowed the political atmosphere of the 1930s. It concludes by introducing the investigative concepts of narrative employed by Hickey and Corney in their works on Istpart and the proletariat during the October Revolution.

The second chapter uses social history and works influenced by E.P. Thompson's ideas on "moral economy,"²⁵ to examine the writings contained in *1917 in the Countryside*. This chapter attempts to flesh out the collective narrative of the book and also discusses what guided the process of gathering the documents that were in the collection. This chapter is about the peasants themselves, their stories and their agency, and engages with important works by Tracy McDonald²⁶ and others to better understand what was important to peasants and what is contained in these works that lies beyond the limited needs of the official narrative.

The third and final chapter begins with the demise of Istpart, the end of Pokrovskii's career with his denunciation by the party and the effect that these events had on peasant voices in

²⁵ Though a concept dating back to the 1700s, popular use of "moral economy" as an analytical framework dates back to E.P. Thompson's work, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 76–136. For a thorough overview of E.P. Thompson's influence see Norbert Goetz, "Moral Economy': Its Conceptual History and Analytical Prospects," *Journal of Global Ethics* 11, no. 2 (2015): 147–162.

²⁶ Tracy McDonald, *Face to the Village: The Riazan Countryside Under Soviet Rule, 1921–1930* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011).

official Soviet discourse. Using Iakovlev's writings, it then discusses how Iakovlev adapted to changing professional and ideological pressures and how even his relationship with Stalin ultimately did not save him during the purges. It goes on to compare and evaluate the new Stalinist narrative of the peasantry contained in the final version of the *Short Course* with that of *1917 in the Countryside*. It also uses the work of Lynne Viola²⁷ to situate these events in the context of the ongoing war against peasant culture during collectivization.

²⁷ Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Chapter One: Making History in the 1920s

1917 god v derevne [1917 in the Countryside] is a condensed version of a vast collection of peasant memoirs and writings on the Revolution of 1917.¹ These writings were sent in response to a call for submissions (“an appeal to the countryside”) published by Iakov Iakovlev in the pages of the major Soviet newspaper *Krest'ianskia gazeta* [Peasant Gazette] in 1925.² This collection was also part of a broader project led by famed Soviet-Marxist historian Mikhail Pokrovskii and the Commission on the History of the October Revolution of the Communist Party (*Istpart*).³ *Istpart* was one of the most significant organizations driving the direction of early Soviet historiography. As its name implies, *Istpart* was tasked with “writing a coherent history of the revolution and the party as a means of providing the sense of cohesion and history that the party members seemed to lack so desperately.”⁴ The project behind *1917 in the Countryside* is ultimately the product of these two forces—*Peasant Gazette* (edited by Iakov Iakovlev), and *Istpart* (under the creative purview of Mikhail Pokrovskii). Both *Peasant Gazette* and *Istpart* are unique in that they stressed direct relations with the peasantry. The original

¹ “1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian” [1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs], edited by Ia. A. Iakovlev (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Krest'ianskaia gazeta,” 1929). For further research on the entire sources collected, *Istpart*'s central archival files are located at the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) fond 70; *Peasant Gazette*'s letter archive is located in the Russian State Archive of Economics (RGAE) fond 396.

² “Tekst obrascheniia k sel'koram, razoslannogo tovarischem Ia. A. Iakovlevym” [“Text of the Appeal to the Sel'kory, sent by Ia. A. Iakovlev”], originally printed in *Krest'ianskia gazeta* [Peasant Gazette] July 1925, reprinted in “1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian” [1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs], edited by Ia. A. Iakovlev and I.V. Igritskii (Moscow: Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1967): 24–26.

³ “Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v 1917 godu” [The Peasant Movement in 1917], edited by M.N. Pokrovskii and Ia. A. Iakovlev (Tsentrarkhiv GIZ, 1927).

⁴ Frederick Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 100.

project (which undoubtedly deserves further research), was initiated by both Pokrovskii and Iakovlev and was intended to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. However, as Stalin took over the jubilee of 1927 and Istpart became increasingly neutralized by its rival, the V.I. Lenin Institute, Pokrovskii's and Iakovlev's joint Istpart project never reached a wider Soviet audience. Pokrovskii was hand-picked by Lenin to lead developments in Soviet historiography in the early 1920s. However, by the late 1920s, Pokrovskii's internationalist attitude and strict adherence to classical Marxism became increasingly unpopular in the face of Stalin's concept of Socialism in One Country. By 1929, Iakovlev had distanced himself from his former colleague and printed his own version of the project using the press of Peasant Gazette. This version is considerably shorter than the vast collection it derives from. However, because the entire project remained heavily influenced by Pokrovskii's concept of "collective reminiscence," as well as the rural correspondence movement, the works themselves are not mere propaganda and remain complex and valuable primary source material for understanding peasant perspectives of the October Revolution. This chapter explores the complex processes behind the production of *1917 in the Countryside*. It elucidates the relationships of both Pokrovskii and Iakovlev with Lenin and the evolution of their ideological convictions in a tumultuous political climate. It investigates Istpart's role in guiding the peasant writers of *1917 in the Countryside* to create a narrative that cemented Bolshevik legitimacy. Works by Frederick Corney and Michael Hickey explore the role of Istpart in manufacturing narratives in Soviet urban areas, using histories written from the perspective of Soviet workers. This study builds on their research to explore the role of Istpart in manufacturing narratives about the Soviet

countryside by using *1917 in the Countryside*, a history written from the perspective of Soviet peasants.

Newspapers were a significant tool for the state during the 1920s. At the outset of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the Bolshevik state sought to establish a relationship with its subjects in the countryside in order to cement its power. This was especially important given the fact that the countryside accounted for the majority of the new state's population. The state, however, had relatively weak influence among the peasantry at the time.⁵ In order to, "encourage support for the party (and thus promote its authority)," the regime, "initiated an experimental, quasi-civic phenomenon eventually called the 'rural correspondents movement' (*sel'kovorskoe dvizhenie*)." ⁶ Though the movement to organize worker correspondents came first, the number of peasant correspondents grew far greater in size in the early 1920s.⁷ Naturally, there were problems which the new regime faced in attempting to implement this new movement. Chief among these was the issue of language. After 1917, "the language of revolution burst into the public sphere, flooding newspapers, journals, rallies, speeches and contemporary fiction."⁸ It was evident however that to some extent, this new language, with its revolutionary rhetoric, though common among members of the party, seemed terribly foreign to the proletariat. Thus, "the creation of an entirely new breed of writer," was necessary, "one unspoiled by the bourgeois models of language and authorship—who could communicate the language of the state to the

⁵ Steve Coe, "Struggles for Authority in the NEP Village: The Early Rural Correspondents Movement, 1923–1927," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 7 (1996): 1151.

⁶ Coe, "Struggles for Authority in the NEP Village," 1151.

⁷ Coe, "Struggles for Authority in the NEP Village," 1151.

⁸ Michael Gorham, "Tongue-Tied Writers: The Rabsel'kor Movement and the Voice of the 'New Intelligentsia' in Early Soviet Russia," *The Russian Review* 55, no. 3 (1996): 413.

‘masses’ in a comprehensible and authoritative manner.”⁹ It was within this context that the *Peasant Gazette* was first established in 1923. The paper was, in a sense, a reaction to the failings of an earlier newspaper aimed at the peasantry, *Bednota* [*Poverty*], and its propaganda efforts in the countryside. Like *Bednota*, this newspaper was also intended as a tool of inculcation, both for sympathetic peasants and the rural populace as a whole. However, by this point *Bednota* was considered too complex for the average rural reader, and its “articles treating the problems of the rural economy were too long and too specific.”¹⁰ In order to appeal to its targeted readership, Agitprop, admitting failure in their previous efforts to create dialogue with the peasantry, felt that particular attention should be given to the language and culture of the peasantry.¹¹

Considering these issues facing the state in the countryside, Iakovlev played an integral part in helping to develop the correspondence movement. As Mathew Lenoe explains, “Lenin advocated [...] soliciting letters from ordinary manual labourers in order to collect information about revolutionary activity all around the country.”¹² Letter writing had an educational aspect as well. Its purpose was to raise the political, cultural, and revolutionary understanding of its readership.¹³ This too proved problematic when contributors expressed their distaste for the state, which often resulted in punishment by state authorities. Naturally, this influenced the way in

⁹ Gorham, “Tongue-Tied Writers,” 414.

¹⁰ Hugh Hudson, “Bridging the Russian Cultural Gap: Language and Culture Wars in the Creation of a Soviet Peasant Press,” *American Journalism* 21, no. 1 (2004): 17.

¹¹ Hugh Hudson, “Shaping Peasant Political Discourse During the New Economic Policy: The Newspaper *Krest'ianskaia Gazeta* and the Case of ‘Vladimir Ia.’,” *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 2 (2002): 303.

¹² Matthew Lenoe, “Letter-Writing and the State: Reader Correspondence with Newspapers as a Source for Early Soviet History,” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 40, no. 1/2 (1999): 141.

¹³ Lenoe, “Letter-Writing and the State,” 141.

which writers would interact with the state.¹⁴ In reporting to Viacheslav Molotov about correspondence with the *Peasant Gazette* in 1926, Iakovlev suggested that this issue might be resolved by allowing writers to hide their identity, arguing that, “anonymous letter-writers were more frank than those who signed.”¹⁵ The suggestion seems a reasonable one, though it is likely that Iakovlev’s reasoning was rooted in events taking place some months prior.

Certainly it is possible that Iakovlev’s suggestion may have been influenced by events unfolding on the pages of his own newspaper. In particular, “a series of angry exchanges between a *sel’kor*, ‘Vladimir Ia.’, and no less a personage than Mikhail I. Kalinin,” who was, “often viewed as a ‘peasant’ spokesman within the leadership.”¹⁶ Indeed Iakovlev’s newspaper published a letter from Vladimir Ia., a peasant from Ukraine, in which he criticized the state. Prefacing his correspondence by positively affirming Bolshevism’s history, he also discussed his own involvement in the military and political activities in the past. At the same time, he complained that the regime had done little to benefit either his or other peasants’ lives. For Vladimir Ia. this was not just a matter of the state, but the results of revolution. It seemed to him that Kalinin and others had obtained all the benefits of toppling the Russian Empire, while the lives of peasants had changed very little since.¹⁷ Kalinin, in his response to Vladimir Ia., expressed the notion that even those who “considered themselves to be completely loyal Soviet citizens,” at times “slipped into counterrevolutionary points of view.”¹⁸ Given Kalinin’s status, it is certainly significant that he responded to a rural correspondent. The example also illustrates

¹⁴ Lenoe, “Letter-Writing and the State,” 156.

¹⁵ Lenoe, “Letter-Writing and the State,” 156–157.

¹⁶ Hudson, “Shaping Peasant Political Discourse During the New Economic Policy,” 304.

¹⁷ Hudson, “Shaping Peasant Political Discourse During the New Economic Policy,” 308.

¹⁸ Hudson, “Shaping Peasant Political Discourse During the New Economic Policy,” 308.

the role Iakovlev played as the editor of *Peasant Gazette*. Some months after the exchange between Kalinin and Vladimir Ia., Iakovlev came to the statesman's aid. Citing multiple letters which were sent in to the newspaper, Iakovlev stated that most of the correspondents felt Vladimir Ia. was in the wrong. This worked to dismantle his public image. According to Iakovlev, correspondents emphasized that in order to thrive in current conditions one needed to work hard.¹⁹ According to Hugh Hudson, Iakovlev, among others, "set off a controlled process of social evolution," which in the end, "could not be controlled by the government, for the sel'kory challenged more than the kulaks and old village hierarchy."²⁰

The primary function of Istpart was to write official history with the Party and Revolution at its centre. For the Bolsheviks and for Lenin, it became increasingly evident towards the end of the Civil War that they needed a concrete history that would enshrine their role as the vanguard of the revolution and cement the political legitimacy of their leadership in the new Soviet state. Efforts towards this began in earnest in 1921, though Istpart was founded in late 1920. From the outset of Istpart's creation, its members grasped the broad social and fiscal problems engulfing the city at the heart of the history of the October Revolution—St. Petersburg.²¹ However, comprised of historians and urban intellectuals, Istpart acknowledged it was out of touch with not only the working class but also those living in the vast countryside of the former Russian Empire—the majority of Soviet constituents.

As Frederick Corney explains, "the task of writing October," was overseen by "quite a small band of men and women who shared life experiences and a worldview for many years."²²

¹⁹ Hudson, "Shaping Peasant Political Discourse During the New Economic Policy," 309.

²⁰ Hudson, "Shaping Peasant Political Discourse During the New Economic Policy," 313.

²¹ Corney, *Telling October*, 100.

²² Corney, *Telling October*, 100.

The most important figure in Istpart, aside from Lenin, was undoubtedly Mikhail Pokrovskii. Lenin had immense respect for Pokrovskii as a historian, even though he wished that Pokrovskii would forgo classical Marxist approaches that downplayed the role of the Bolshevik party in bringing about revolution. Lenin chose Pokrovskii to head Istpart and although the classical Marxist historian eventually gave the administrative duties of running the organization to Mikhail Ol'minskii, he remained at the forefront of its creative direction throughout the 1920s. Many of the founding members of Istpart, with minor exceptions, were revolutionaries of the old guard who had joined the party in its early days.²³ In this sense, they were connected to each other within, “a worldview bounded by a party framework.”²⁴ Using this framework, Istpart’s writers set out to write history. Yet, because Pokrovskii remained somewhat of an ideological renegade—often adhering to classical Marxist theory at the expense of the Party’s more flexible approach to theory in practice—and because he trained Istpart’s researchers and guided their founding principles, Istpart’s work was much more complex than simplistic propaganda.

Considering Istpart’s focus, its most fundamental task was to show how revolution and Bolshevism were historically linked. With very little notion of a clear answer to this problem, Istpart writers set out to organize themselves. Historical subjects were delegated to each member chronologically, each of them having been given a certain number of years to cover.²⁵ For example, Pokrovskii was in charge of the history of the revolution from October 1917.²⁶ The second major issue initially facing Istpart was the matter of source materials. This was important because what was used might affect the overall picture of the revolution. Though Ol'minskii

²³ Corney, *Telling October*, 101. The exception, according to Corney, being the relatively young S. A. Piontkovskii.

²⁴ Corney, *Telling October*, 101.

²⁵ Corney, *Telling October*, 108.

²⁶ Corney, *Telling October*, 108.

outlined what he felt could be useful sources—particularly the archives of the tsarist police and pre-revolutionary party materials (such as party literature; decrees; and transcripts of congresses and conferences) both he and others expressed the view that the nature of these sources made them difficult to use. In their minds many of the sources found in police archives were not entirely truthful (and did not portray the Bolsheviks in a positive light). At the same time sources produced by past revolutionaries tended to lack certain information about actors or events. It was assumed that this was due to the underground nature of Bolshevik existence prior to the Revolution.²⁷ According to Corney, in relation to the issue of sources, Istpart was eventually led in a new direction. In conjunction with their thoughts on where the revolution would be most visible, it seemed evident to them, “that the history of the revolution and party came together most tangibly and vitally at the local level.”²⁸ Given this fact it seems only natural that the question of the peasantry’s role in revolution would become a significant point of discussion. Indeed, as Corney shows, history, “could *only* [author’s emphasis] be written from the ground up.”²⁹ Although Istpart now turned their focus to local sources, Istpart still needed to figure out how to select and gather local source material.

Focusing on Istpart’s local bureaus, Corney goes into considerable detail about how Istpart gathered source material from workers in various regions throughout the Soviet Union. His study illustrates the problems these local bureaus faced in terms of their performance on a national scale. In its early years the total number of Istpart’s local organs grew significantly.³⁰ However, one could hardly claim all of them as completely functional early on in the

²⁷ Corney, *Telling October*, 109–110.

²⁸ Corney, *Telling October*, 110.

²⁹ Corney, *Telling October*, 110.

³⁰ Corney, *Telling October*, 112. Corney notes that there were seventy-two such bureaus in existence by 1922.

organization's history. In fact, Corney notes that the heads of local bureaus complained of the little direction provided to them. In conjunction with this, their employees simply lacked the skills necessary for the historical profession.³¹ Istpart "had no other choice than to rely on individual initiative at the central and local level."³² Overall, Istpart's leadership was unsatisfied with the initial sources collected by local bureaus. For example, Corney examines workers' memoirs of the October Revolution in Rostov province produced in 1921. He notes that the overall picture that the writers illustrated contained several negative qualities, including that of a fractured Bolshevik Party.³³ In other examples, he cites workers' memoirs from other regions on the question of the revolution. He notes that such writings portrayed workers as active in parties other than the Bolsheviks in 1917, along with descriptions of their eventual involvement with Bolshevism.³⁴ The result was that, "reminiscers marked their journey toward consciousness by acknowledging their failure to comprehend the significance of the party or the magnitude of the developing revolution *at the time* [author's emphasis]."³⁵ Corney points out that although this sort of story might be considered positive in many ways to Soviet citizens at large,³⁶ those at the head of Istpart were ultimately disappointed in these local works.³⁷ To them, local bureaus did not produce work that made a clear enough connection between the revolution and the

³¹ Corney, *Telling October*, 112. Corney specifically cites examples of complaints from bureaus in Kazan and Orenburg in 1922, early 1923, and 1925.

³² Corney, *Telling October*, 128.

³³ Corney, *Telling October*, 137.

³⁴ Corney, *Telling October*, 137–138. In particular he takes examples from both Kazan and Don regions.

³⁵ Corney, *Telling October*, 138.

³⁶ Corney, *Telling October*, 139.

³⁷ Corney, *Telling October*, 141. In particular, Corney cites complaints voiced by various individuals at a conference held in 1923.

Bolsheviks.³⁸ This study will assess the sources gathered in *1917 in the Countryside* to see if similar problems existed in individual peasant reminiscences.

Already by 1923 there was debate over Istpart's ability to maintain its financial and administrative autonomy.³⁹ This was due to political factors completely out of the organization's hands, which would change the direction of Soviet historiography. Shortly after Lenin's departure from the political spotlight due to his failing health, the question of his replacement became paramount. Iosif Stalin and his associates, in an attempt to undermine Lev Trotskii's position, began emphasizing their close relationships with Lenin.⁴⁰ During this time Stalin, Grigorii Zinov'ev, and Lev Kamenev, "began to speak of 'Leninism' as their common cause, even while they professed their hopes for Lenin's full recovery, as if he had already bequeathed to them an ideological legacy."⁴¹ Indeed, early in the spring of that year, Lenin himself became a subject of historical inquiry. Not only was an institute in his name established, but historical works on Lenin as a subject were commissioned. Party officials loyal to Stalin were placed in charge of this new organization, and with his support, as well as the Central Committee, the new institute would effectively take charge of all major historical sources relating to Lenin.⁴²

Ultimately, the V.I. Lenin Institute's purview would reach far beyond Lenin as a mere subject and would eventually become "the most serious challenge to the continued existence of

³⁸ Corney, *Telling October*, 142.

³⁹ William Francis Burgess, "The Istpart Commission: The Historical Department of the Russian Communist Party Central Committee, 1920–1928," Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University (University Microfilms International, 1981), 89. In particular, Nevskii warned his colleagues that Istpart could very well be subsumed by Agitprop.

⁴⁰ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, Ph.D. Dissertation, 96.

⁴¹ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 96.

⁴² Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 96–97. Istpart was forced to hand over all materials concerning Lenin to this new institute.

Istpart.”⁴³ In 1923, Ol'minskii emphasized the importance of a history of the party in relation to Lenin as a historical subject.⁴⁴ At the time he was preparing for the twentieth anniversary of the 1905 revolution,⁴⁵ unaware of the political infighting over Lenin's legacy, and unaware that Lenin's actual historical organization (Istpart) would be fundamentally changed by the Central Committee just a year later.⁴⁶ Eventually, members from Agitprop and the V.I. Lenin Institute became involved in its formal editorial process in order, “to make Istpart conform to party standards.”⁴⁷ Perhaps even more significant was the fact that Stalin gave his associates the authority to direct Istpart, and others in a, “campaign to promote Leninism.”⁴⁸ In the short span of just a few years, the entire atmosphere surrounding Istpart's pursuit of history changed dramatically and by 1928 Istpart was completely absorbed by the V.I. Lenin Institute. The comparative intellectual freedom of the 1920s, which encouraged the pursuit of scientific approaches to history, would slowly give way to a rigid propaganda that relegated historical sources to a minor role in Soviet historiography. The V.I. Lenin Institute would help create the cult of personality surrounding Lenin and would contribute to the demise of Istpart. Ol'minskii eventually acknowledged that, “we have an extremely powerful competitor in the V.I. Lenin Institute. For it, you might say, there is the whole state budget; for Istpart there are cuts and more cuts.”⁴⁹

⁴³ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 113.

⁴⁴ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 100. Burgess cites this in Ol'minskii's criticism of Kamenev's work on Lenin at the time.

⁴⁵ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 101. Burgess points out that these preparations also illustrate new efforts to give greater direction towards Istpart's various regional offices.

⁴⁶ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 109.

⁴⁷ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 110.

⁴⁸ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 106.

⁴⁹ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 113.

With regards to *1917 in the Countryside*, this changing atmosphere would ultimately shape the project's final outcome. Perhaps some of the most significant influences were events taking place in relation to the twentieth anniversary of 1905 and the tenth anniversary of 1917. As Istpart's work became threatened by outside political interference, it was decided to assign several topics related to 1905 to the care of Pokrovskii, and this included the subject of the peasantry.⁵⁰ Pokrovskii served on a new committee: "The Commission of the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of the U.S.S.R. for the Organization of the Celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary of 1905," which was ostensibly independent of Istpart but worked in close collaboration with veteran members of the organization.⁵¹ According to Corney, this commission shared the same concerns as Istpart when it came to history, but Ol'minskii had hoped that, under Pokrovskii's independent tutelage, the project might be spared the political scrutiny levied by the V.I. Lenin Institute against Istpart. Commission members, trained by Pokrovskii, emphasized the importance of reminiscences of the proletariat to convey the lived experiences of the revolution and to solve the general problem of Bolshevik legitimacy. In so doing, it would be possible to portray the history of 1905 to the newest generation of Soviet citizens.⁵² Pokrovskii went still further than his students to emphasize the need for discretion in the use of reminiscences and first-hand accounts and outlined his own professional guidelines in gathering source material. He stressed that materials such as memoirs were in themselves incomplete. Consequently, a great deal of attention needed to be paid to elements such as the effects of time and the effects that current events had on memory and understanding.⁵³ Pokrovskii concluded:

⁵⁰ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 112.

⁵¹ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 126.

⁵² Corney, *Telling October*, 167–168.

⁵³ Corney, *Telling October*, 168

In order to produce a complete picture and take out the “poetry”—inevitable in all memoirs—it is necessary to collect reminiscences on a mass scale from many people. Only then will we obtain a balanced picture, close to the historical truth, so that [...] we get not “poetry” but “truth.”⁵⁴

According to Corney’s interpretation of this statement, the burden of historical truth was not on those who wrote memoirs, but on the researchers themselves.⁵⁵ In 1925, Pokrovskii had solidified his ideas on collective reminiscences and was openly advocating for the mass collection of memoirs to counteract their individual shortcomings.⁵⁶ However, these ideas would begin to fall on deaf ears. Stalin’s newly established “Commission on the Organization and Execution of the Celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution,” would prevent Pokrovskii and Ol'minskii (who was replaced as director of Istpart by Semen Kanatchikov) from having another entirely independent commission to celebrate 1917 and set a new precedent for Soviet historiography. While this commission still (begrudgingly) relied on Istpart’s broad network to accomplish its goals, it also reflected growing dissatisfaction with what one party official described as, “long boring collections [...] that almost no one reads and no one buys.”⁵⁷

Pokrovskii’s commission for the 1905 jubilee is thus critical to understanding the source material in *1917 in the Countryside* because it would be the last time Pokrovskii would maintain such a level of independence directing a historical project. As Pokrovskii had already laid the foundation for a vast project on the peasantry in anticipation of the 1927 jubilee and Iakovlev’s

⁵⁴ As quoted from Corney, *Telling October*, 168.

⁵⁵ Corney, *Telling October*, 168–169.

⁵⁶ Corney, *Telling October*, 169.

⁵⁷ Quoted by Corney, *Telling October*, 170.

appeal had already been sent out well before Stalin's commission was established, *1917 in the Countryside* took place in a complex transitional period, one increasingly geared toward propaganda, but one still heavily reliant on historical methods and source collection. In the forward to *1917 in the Countryside*, Igritskii mentioned that the sources in the collection were still useful, even if at times incorrect, because they served as a realistic testament to what the peasants thought.⁵⁸ "Collective reminiscences," therefore, were critical to preserving primary sources that did not strictly adhere to Party rhetoric, because problematic source materials survived under the ideological justification that, in spite of individual shortcomings, collectively the sources demonstrated what was needed by the Bolsheviks. Collected works managed to survive at least momentarily, at a time where Istpart was increasingly forced to highlight the relationship between workers and peasants and to develop work "to be used as propaganda against Trotsky and the leftist critics."⁵⁹ Pokrovskii's influence on *1917 in the Countryside*—itself a "collective reminiscence"—cannot be understated. The Marxist historian gave historical projects in the 1920s their "mass character, both in the cities and in the countryside."⁶⁰ As Corney summarizes, "*collective* reminiscence was deemed the most reliable memoir."⁶¹

The individual writings of those who experienced revolution were still very important to Pokrovskii and a critical aspect of Istpart's work. According to Corney, the use of individual writings by Istpart was rooted in the fear that "their efforts would inevitably fall short of conveying the inherent vividness and drama of the *lived* [author's emphasis] revolutionary

⁵⁸ Igritskii, "1917 god v derevne," 5–7.

⁵⁹ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 139.

⁶⁰ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 137.

⁶¹ Corney, *Telling October*, 119.

experience.”⁶² However, while individual workers’ memoirs were considered somewhat reliable, Istpart still felt it necessary to limit the breadth of what they wrote about. Peasant memoirs were even more problematic and unreliable and therefore, guided “evenings of reminiscences” and structured interviews were used to re-focus worker and peasant writings in a manner friendly to the Bolshevik Party.⁶³ These guided methods also solved other problems facing Istpart’s researchers, including individual writing ability (even literacy at a basic level could be an issue).⁶⁴ At a regional level, the work of writers went through a sort of editing process in which their results were examined. Subsequently, writers were interviewed as well as encouraged to consult, “documents, newspaper articles, or books.”⁶⁵ The following chapter will examine the influence of this process on the writings in *1917 in the Countryside*.

Mikhail Pokrovskii is certainly one of the most influential figures of the 1920s. As a historian, Pokrovskii shaped the outlook of Soviet historiography during the decade. As a Marxist theoretician, he made it his mission to create, “a hierarchical organization of scholars authorized to work out in full detail the Marxist understanding of the past and to show the falsity of rival theories.”⁶⁶ He became the Deputy Commissar of Education in 1918,⁶⁷ and was influential in both the Institute of Red Professors (IKP) and the Society of Marxist Historians.⁶⁸ His experiences helped shape the way in which he developed and later applied his understanding of Marxism to the subjects he studied. Outside factors relating to the formation of the Soviet

⁶² Corney, *Telling October*, 119.

⁶³ Corney, *Telling October*, 119.

⁶⁴ Corney, *Telling October*, 120.

⁶⁵ Corney, *Telling October*, 120.

⁶⁶ George Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat: M. N. Pokrovskii and the Society of Marxist Historians* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), 3.

⁶⁷ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 27.

⁶⁸ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 3–4.

state and the politics that surrounded the writing of its history would eventually influence Pokrovskii and further shape his theoretical approach to the study of history.

Born in Moscow in 1868, Pokrovskii had a checkered class background due to his family's ties to both the nobility and the Orthodox Church. Naturally this would have been an issue for someone such as himself with a high profile within the Bolshevik party during the 1920s, though it would seem that Pokrovskii would address this issue by discussing his own past, particularly referring to his father.⁶⁹ Trained as a historian at the Imperial Moscow University, Pokrovskii was fortunate enough in, "studying under V. O. Kliuchevskii, perhaps Russia's greatest historian, and P. G. Vinogradov, the eminent medievalist."⁷⁰ He also studied alongside a number of students who would later join various radical political parties. Pokrovskii, however, would never receive his degree due to some unclear circumstances. According to George Enteen, this may have been due to a falling out between Pokrovskii and Kliuchevskii.⁷¹ In spite of this setback, "he lived by his wits—teaching in pedagogical institutes and secondary schools, giving private instruction, and participating in what roughly corresponds to university extension courses for the underprivileged."⁷² Indeed, in spite of setbacks, Pokrovskii was determined to pursue an academic career, though current events would ultimately interrupt this pursuit.

By 1905 Pokrovskii went abroad where he began associating with a number of other Marxist professionals. Looking back on this time, Pokrovskii retroactively attributed a greater understanding of revolution to himself. Also during this time he met Lenin in Geneva, though

⁶⁹ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 11–12.

⁷⁰ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 12.

⁷¹ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 12.

⁷² Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 12.

initially it seems that neither had favourable opinions of each other.⁷³ Overall, this stemmed from a disagreement on a revolutionary approach. Pokrovskii was critical of Lenin's notion of an "armed uprising."⁷⁴ The historian, as Lenin saw it, had little "experience in politics."⁷⁵ All the same, Pokrovskii returned to Moscow, playing a part in the revolutionary events of 1905, using his skills as a historian, working with a group of Bolsheviks and as an agitator.⁷⁶ According to George Enteen, the events of the 1905 revolution in Moscow were important to Pokrovskii. Recalling the events of 1905 some years later, Pokrovskii contended that the events provided him with a greater understanding of revolution through his interactions with the proletariat.⁷⁷ During 1905, even his apartment, "became something of a field hospital and communications center."⁷⁸ Revolutionary experience such as this was an important badge of honour for party members during the 1920s and 1930s.

Though the historian's revolutionary pedigree is significant in the formation of his ideals, Pokrovskii's relationship with Lenin after the Revolution of 1905 better illustrates the direction of Soviet historiography.⁷⁹ In 1907, Pokrovskii once more went abroad, and while in Finland he remained in, "close contact with Lenin."⁸⁰ It was during this time that Lenin had first asked Pokrovskii to compose a history of 1905.⁸¹ Given the importance of establishing Istpart some years later—an organization devoted to the historical subject of the revolution—Lenin's request

⁷³ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 16.

⁷⁴ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 16.

⁷⁵ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 16.

⁷⁶ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 16.

⁷⁷ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 16.

⁷⁸ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 16.

⁷⁹ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 23–24.

⁸⁰ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 17.

⁸¹ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 18.

is significant. It shows that he desired a history of 1905 even shortly after it had taken place. He went as far as writing out the specifics of this history, which “presupposed a protracted political action by the Bolshevik party.”⁸² Evidently Pokrovskii disagreed with Lenin’s overall conception of the coming revolution. Overall, the historian afforded far more potential agency to the proletariat’s control of its own future. As a result of their disagreement, this pre-Soviet history of 1905 was never written by Pokrovskii.⁸³ Lenin would attempt to convince his colleague of his own theoretical correctness once again in 1909, during which time Pokrovskii had a, “stormy meeting with Lenin, wherein the two thrashed out their differences.”⁸⁴ Given Pokrovskii’s importance as one of the most eminent historians of the 1920s, his disagreements with Lenin are significant. A short time after the 1905 Revolution, Lenin was attempting to cement a historical image of the events which aligned with his revolutionary convictions. At the same time, Pokrovskii’s own views conflicted with that of his colleague’s understanding of how the revolution would come about. Ultimately, when Lenin would later ask Pokrovskii to head an organization dedicated to the history of the Soviet Union, he did so fully aware of the fact that Pokrovskii would not simply parrot party rhetoric and that Pokrovskii was zealously devoted to classical interpretations of Marxism that gave credit to outside forces that diminished the Bolsheviks’ role in bringing about revolution—something unacceptable under Stalin.

Though Pokrovskii would repair his personal relationship with Lenin some time later,⁸⁵ it is noteworthy that “scientific” approaches to history and classical Marxist theoretical conceptions of revolution remained vitally important to Pokrovskii. Of particular importance was

⁸² Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 18.

⁸³ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 18.

⁸⁴ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 18.

⁸⁵ Enteen, *Scholar Bureaucrat*, 19.

also the concept of “prerequisites (*preposylki*) of the revolution.”⁸⁶ This “was the concern of historians at the time to discover what the objective conditions were which had made this revolution [1917] possible.”⁸⁷ In this sense, Pokrovskii’s ideas about revolution were a reaction to previous theoretical notions about the state’s role as a driving force in Russian history.⁸⁸ Furthermore, though his conceptions would frequently change during the 1920s,⁸⁹ “the very root of Pokrovsky’s method is the implicit belief that everything which happened in Russian history can be traced back to economic causes.”⁹⁰

In an article published in 1923,⁹¹ Pokrovskii discusses the revolutionary nature of Russia’s past. He begins by discussing the notion of whether or not Russia was ripe for revolution. Indeed some contended that the country had only experienced revolution due to outside influences. According to Pokrovskii, the imperial state propagated this idea out of the desire to prevent insurrection, both by banning the term revolution itself and by using historians to propagate this notion. “In reality,” he notes “Russia, starting from the sixteenth century was in all likelihood the most disturbed, the most revolutionary country in Europe.”⁹² In many ways the article seeks to address the revolutionary character of what seemed to be a “backward Russia.”⁹³ There was a definite answer to this question in Pokrovskii’s mind. By comparing European

⁸⁶ James White, “Historiography of the Russian Revolution in the Twenties,” *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 1 (1973): 42.

⁸⁷ White, “Historiography of the Russian Revolution in the Twenties,” 42.

⁸⁸ White, “Historiography of the Russian Revolution in the Twenties,” 43.

⁸⁹ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 30.

⁹⁰ White, “Historiography of the Russian Revolution in the Twenties,” 44.

⁹¹ Mikhail Pokrovskii, “The Revolutionary Movements of the Past,” in *Russia in World History: Selected Essays by M. N. Pokrovskii*, translated by Roman Szporluk and Mary Ann Szporluk (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970), 89.

⁹² Pokrovskii, “The Revolutionary Movements of the Past,” 89.

⁹³ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 53. Enteen points out that this question was of particular political significance at the time.

countries with his own, he points out that after the introduction of capitalism a peasant revolution always followed. He then cites peasant uprisings, which occurred in countries such as England and France. In comparison, Russia experienced four, which took place in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁹⁴

In order to explain why Russia was so unique in comparison to other European countries, Pokrovskii turns to a study of economic factors. Unlike the much slower economic, militaristic, and bureaucratic developments occurring in other parts of Europe, Russia at this time consisted of a feudal system in which regions were administered by landlords.⁹⁵ “From his ‘subjects,’” Pokrovskii notes of the landlord, “this sovereign collected taxes in sheep, cheese, and eggs.”⁹⁶ Capitalism would not remain an isolated European phenomenon however. In fact, Pokrovskii sees capitalism developing in Russia as something of an import from Italy and England, quickly spreading its influence as it began undermining its primitive structures.⁹⁷ He writes:

What had resulted in the West from a slow, prolonged, and persistent struggle in individual localities, rose up suddenly and throughout all territories in a Russia which was united rapidly by the native merchant capitalism being formed. The countryside did not have time to adapt itself in any way to the new economic conditions. The landlord, who was in Russia, more than anywhere else, a tool of primary accumulation and was intoxicated by a greed for profits which had been completely unknown to his grandfather, was robbing the peasants sometimes in the most literal sense of the word. Moscow was rolling in luxury; the countryside began to starve.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Pokrovskii, “The Revolutionary Movements of the Past,” 90.

⁹⁵ Pokrovskii, “The Revolutionary Movements of the Past,” 91.

⁹⁶ Pokrovskii, “The Revolutionary Movements of the Past,” 91.

⁹⁷ Pokrovskii, “The Revolutionary Movements of the Past,” 91.

⁹⁸ Pokrovskii, “The Revolutionary Movements of the Past,” 91–92.

According to Pokrovskii, many peasants at this time continued on in this fashion, living at a subsistence level under the landlord's authority. At the same time however, a small segment of the peasant population formed free entities with Cossacks in the east. This was the origin of peasant revolt.⁹⁹ Pokrovskii's understanding of the peasantry in relation to revolution would become an important theoretical basis for his early work on the revolution. This was particularly true of 1917. His understanding, however, would not go unchallenged.

Pokrovskii received a good deal of criticism aimed at his views of the peasantry and its role in history. 1923 turned out to be a particularly important year for Pokrovskii. "Only in 1923," notes Enteen, "did Pokrovskii formulate a consistent interpretation of the Revolution."¹⁰⁰ Central to Pokrovskii's understanding of revolution is not simply the peasantry, but the kulak. In his mind the Stolypin reform, though intended to encourage economic growth within Russia, actually caused an explosion in the population of kulaks through the accumulation of private land. The impetus of such reform was rooted in the events of 1905. Interestingly enough, in his conception, the kulak and the peasant were allied with each other in opposition to the landlord. Simultaneously, revolutionary sentiment spread throughout Russia at this time. Although there was economic growth due to reform, a host of issues both within and outside of Russia in the 1910s prevented export.¹⁰¹ "World War I," in Pokrovskii's mind, "was a scheme by Russian merchant capital to escape the domestic impasse."¹⁰² Thus he made connections between 1905,

⁹⁹ Pokrovskii, "The Revolutionary Movements of the Past," 92.

¹⁰⁰ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 53. In particular, Pokrovskii published *Outlines of the History of the Revolutionary Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, a work which Enteen identifies as particularly important in his formulation of a history of revolution in Russia.

¹⁰¹ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 53.

¹⁰² Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 53–54.

the Stolypin reform, and World War I. This understanding of the Russian Revolution is, of course, not without its problems. As might have been expected, Pokrovskii would irritate other high-ranking Marxists due to his conclusions about kulaks, the wider peasantry, and his ideas surrounding capitalism in relation to the war.¹⁰³

Of particular importance regarding this was the role of Bolshevism in 1917. Pokrovskii emphasized the significance of the proletariat in the revolution. The difficulty with this was that he failed to explain the party's role in a satisfactory manner. According to Pokrovskii, the fact that the proletariat was opposed to the Russian state in times of desperation was natural, and therefore a simple expression of class sentiment, regardless of outside influences such as Bolshevism. As Enteen summarizes, "Leadership in the Revolution" accordingly, "was a transient ingredient that did not predestine its outcome. Lenin merely helped to divest his countrymen of their illusions and thereby hasten the inevitable."¹⁰⁴ Certainly this would not sit well with certain comrades.

Naturally, the role of leadership in 1917 was a critical subject. Equally important in conjunction with this issue was the role of the peasantry during the revolution. Pokrovskii was criticized by several high profile individuals for his history,¹⁰⁵ including A. N. Slepkov, who was "a graduate of the IKP [Institute of Red Professors]," as well as, "an editor of *Bol'shevik*, the Central Committee's theoretical journal, and of *Pravda*."¹⁰⁶ Slepkov felt that Pokrovskii's depiction of the peasantry was far too simple. First, he noted that Pokrovskii failed to discuss any

¹⁰³ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 54.

¹⁰⁴ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 56.

¹⁰⁵ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 56. Enteen notes that he was also subject to criticism by the historian S. G. Tomsinskii as well as G. Maretskii.

¹⁰⁶ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 56.

relationship between landlords and the interests of domestic capital. Secondly, he ignored the evolving motivations of the peasantry over a vast period of Russian history, along with neglecting the development of economic differences between them and the kulaks. In fact, according to Slepko, the peasant was pitted against the kulak between 1905 and 1917. Slepko emphasized a greater distinction concerning class interests and capitalism between the three groups. At the same time, he outlined why these interests linked the peasantry to the socialist movement. Overall, according to Slepko, Pokrovskii's history was something of an affront to the peasantry.¹⁰⁷ Slepko's understanding of the revolution played into the debate at the time on Socialism in One Country in that, "the majority of the peasants were ripe for socialism, and, consequently, Russia could achieve socialism without world revolution and within the framework of the NEP."¹⁰⁸

Pokrovskii's history of the revolution and this criticism offers a glimpse into the debate surrounding the peasantry's role in 1917. Pokrovskii aggressively defended himself against Slepko, not simply because of political implications, but in an attempt to save his own theoretical underpinnings. He claimed that Slepko's understanding of revolution was generally detrimental to the pursuit of socialist history because it downplayed international elements.¹⁰⁹ At the same time however, "Pokrovskii discreetly abandoned his own contention that rural stratification prepared the way for revolution by strengthening the *kulaks*. He thus considerably modified his stand, but no clear hypothesis replaced this view."¹¹⁰ During the 1920s, the history of the revolution was an important matter, being studied from several angles. The peasantry

¹⁰⁷ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 57.

¹⁰⁸ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 57.

¹⁰⁹ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 57–58.

¹¹⁰ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 58.

however posed a difficult challenge for Marxist historians attempting to explain the peasant's significance for the study of 1917. By discussing the career of Iakovlev, the other main force behind the writings of *1917 in the Countryside*, the importance of the peasantry within Soviet historiography becomes clearer.

Like many other high-ranking Soviet officials, Iakovlev had a colourful and multifaceted career. Iakovlev was born in Belarus just before the turn of the century. As a young man, he attended the Petrograd Polytechnic University, though he never finished his education there. He was involved in radical politics as a young man; however he would only gain influence during the Russian Civil War. During this time he headed a number of regional party organizations in Ukraine. This included the Orgburo, as well as the Politburo in Ukraine.¹¹¹ Having never become an engineer as he had hoped, by “1921 Iakovlev worked mainly on village issues.”¹¹² Indeed he, “considered himself an expert in this field.”¹¹³ In part, this made Iakovlev an ideal figure for writing a history of the peasantry during 1917. After he ascended to a more influential position within the party, his accumulated experience as an editor in the 1920s also likely contributed to this fact. More specifically, he was the editor of the major newspaper *Peasant Gazette*.¹¹⁴ It is worth briefly discussing his career as the editor of *Peasant Gazette* as it gives insight into how Iakovlev developed his own ideas about the history of the peasantry during 1917.

¹¹¹ E.I. Kolchinskii, “T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva” [“T.D. Lysenko as a Project of People's Commissar for Agriculture Ia. A. Iakovlev”], *Studies in the History of Biology* 7, no.1 (2015): 1–2.

¹¹² Kolchinskii, “T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva,” 84.

¹¹³ Kolchinskii, “T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva,” 84.

¹¹⁴ Kolchinskii, “T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva,” 84–85. Along with being the editor of *Krest'ianskii Gazeta* between 1923 to 1929, Iakovlev was also briefly the editor of *Krasnaia Nov'* as well as *Bednota*.

Considering his position as editor of *Peasant Gazette* and his self-proclaimed peasant expertise, Iakovlev had an ideal set of skills for writing a history of the peasantry during 1917. Indeed, Istpart's researchers believed that, "the provincial press [...] was the only place to find the necessary historical documentation."¹¹⁵ This is likely why *Peasant Gazette*, as the most accessible rural newspaper geared toward the peasantry, was chosen as the venue to solicit material for what would become *1917 in the Countryside*. Iakovlev was in fact something of an ad-hoc historian, writing about history when the time arose and when it fit the needs of his comrades. Indeed in, "all intra-party discussions, Iakovlev supported the line of V. I. Lenin, and then I. V. Stalin, writing a series of articles and brochures with sharp condemnation of the policy of Trotskyists and right-wing opposition in the countryside."¹¹⁶ Much like Pokrovskii, analyzing Iakovlev's relationship with Lenin illuminates the significance of writing history during the 1920s. In 1922, Lenin faced a challenge involving the narrative of February 1917—specifically, the historical concept of a purposeful and united proletarian movement. This notion, promulgated by the Proletkult, was linked to Bolshevik authority and the intelligentsia's stature in revolution. According to this argument, the intelligentsia, in comparison to the proletariat, was far from a cutting edge, united vanguard that some believed it was.¹¹⁷ In other words, "the working class was an autonomous entity and had no need of guidance or discipline from the Bolshevik party," an idea, "which was repeated by several adherents of the Proletkult movement from 1918 onwards."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Corney, *Telling October*, 110.

¹¹⁶ Kolchinskii, "T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva," 85.

¹¹⁷ James White, "Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution 1918–1924," *Soviet Studies* 37, no. 3 (1985): 346.

¹¹⁸ White, "Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution," 346.

Thus with the need for a new account of the Revolution that would demonstrate the Party's leading role, Lenin sought out Iakovlev for his assistance. Subsequently, Iakovlev published an article in *Pravda* aimed at attacking both the Proletkult and its leader at the time, V. F. Pletnev. In the article he argued with Pletnev about whether or not the development of the proletariat was independent or subject to outside influences. Simultaneously, Iakovlev published a work on the history of the revolution. Edited by Trotskii, this history was intended to address this question.¹¹⁹ In particular, Iakovlev discussed the, "causes of 1917," emphasizing, "popular demands for land, peace and an end to national oppression."¹²⁰ In Iakovlev's mind, these factors were important in making a distinction between February and October. Furthermore, he claimed that both revolutions had bourgeois characteristics, though October was more progressive. The key difference was that the state which followed the fall of the Tsar was unable to address these issues. The Bolsheviks, however, were successful in eliminating bourgeois elements after their establishment during the October Revolution. This feature of this history begs the question as to whether or not popular demands might have been met in February, along with the establishment of proletarian sovereignty.¹²¹ The answer to this question was that the oppressed class, "lacked the disciplined organization the Bolshevik party provided."¹²²

This element of Iakovlev's history of the Russian Revolution would become a key part in the developing interpretation of the role of the peasantry. He thus addresses a problem faced by Pokrovskii within his own work; that of the role of the Bolsheviks. Iakovlev's publication in, "1922 gave no more than an outline history of 1917," though its significance lies in the fact that,

¹¹⁹ White, "Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution," 347.

¹²⁰ White, "Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution," 347.

¹²¹ White, "Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution," 347.

¹²² White, "Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution," 347.

“its function was to set out the approved interpretation for other historians to follow.”¹²³ Still, the question of the peasantry’s role in 1917 remained unanswered. There needed to be a specific work which not only established that a revolution had taken place in the countryside, but what role the Bolsheviks played in bringing that revolution about.

¹²³ White, “Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution,” 348.

Chapter Two: Building a Narrative

The early historical works of both Iakovlev and Pokrovskii are significant in explaining the importance of *1917 in the Countryside*. In examining these historical works however, it is also important to address how current scholars have studied Soviet historiography in the 1920s. The concept of narrative, as used in the works of Michael Hickey and Frederick Corney, provides the main theoretical approach for this study of *1917 in the Countryside*. Hickey focuses specifically on the history of the October Revolution in the city of Smolensk. He underscores that works on the subject contained several inconsistencies. He points out that historians writing about 1917 emphasized the Party's importance out of political interests, that it was almost as if they were mimicking the events of the capital within their own work. In examining the sources used to form the history of Smolensk, Hickey notes that a small body of personal reminiscences dominated as references.¹ He thus concludes that, in the city of Smolensk at least, writing history was closely linked to the desires of the party. What was produced, was a "master narrative—Smolensk's mythology of October."² Although this was in part an attempt to validate the young socialist state, "it was also about affirming whose memoirs counted, which participants mattered, and who had the right to say when the story had been told correctly."³ Hickey's observations are certainly interesting in light of his emphasis on a "master narrative."

¹ Michael Hickey, "Paper, Memory, and a Good Story: How Smolensk Got its 'October'," *Revolutionary Russia* 13, no. 2 (2000): 2–3.

² Hickey, "Paper, Memory, and a Good Story," 3.

³ Hickey, "Paper, Memory, and a Good Story," 3.

Corney also has a similar conception of narrative as an investigative device. In Corney's case, he discusses what he calls "foundation narratives."⁴ "Foundation myths," notes Corney in relation to discussing narrative, "derive their most enduring power from the processes of their telling."⁵ According to Corney, the act of portraying the Revolution was not meant to be something expressive. Rather it was a rationalization of the past. Any given story had its set boundaries for a number of reasons. Storytellers were ultimately influenced by the state even as they expressed themselves. These storytellers, armed with an arsenal of significant phrases, represented people in a socialist context.⁶ "It was in the telling," notes Corney, that the revolution, "would acquire the coherence, dramatic flow, and explanatory power of a good story."⁷ Corney uses such themes as "cohesion" and "narrative" to investigate a myriad of topics, including Soviet film and the Jubilee of 1927.⁸ In particular, he discusses how, "celebrations in Moscow and Leningrad were intended to convey the internal harmony of the revolutionary tale and its actors."⁹

Using Hickey and Corney's themes illuminates the significance and meaning of *1917 in the Countryside*. Neither Hickey nor Corney, however, use *1917 in the Countryside* in their studies. Given the importance that many Soviet historians attached to the peasantry while writing about the Revolution, *1917 in the Countryside* should be studied. With a particular focus on

⁴ Frederick Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 2–3.

⁵ Corney, *Telling October*, 3.

⁶ Corney, *Telling October*, 8–9.

⁷ Corney, *Telling October*, 9.

⁸ Corney, *Telling October*, 175.

⁹ Corney, *Telling October*, 176.

Hickey and Corney's concepts of narrative and cohesiveness, it is possible to show the role of the peasantry in the creation of early Soviet history.

The central purpose of Iakov A. Iakovlev's work *1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian* [*1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs*], is to show the history of the Russian Revolution in the countryside. The book is a history of 1917 formed specifically from the writings of peasants. *1917 in the Countryside* consists of forty-four memoirs, stories, and articles.¹⁰ The overall project that led to this work was vast in geographic scope, consisting of almost 2,500 pages of gathered source material.¹¹ What is perhaps most striking about these documents is the consistency of their content, despite representing such a large geographic area and multiple genres. The consistency of the content in these peasant accounts appears not only in tone or regarding specific factual information, but in the narrative each one creates. This narrative is formulaic in nature, following a relatively consistent chronology of the events of 1917. An examination of the formulaic nature of these writings reveals clearly that the message of the revolution in the countryside was that it represented the historical triumph of Bolshevism over class enemies. According to this narrative, the true revolution did not occur until the Bolsheviks endowed the peasantry with an actual class consciousness and helped them to understand the realities of their historical class struggle. Ultimately, such enlightenment did not

¹⁰ "1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian" [*1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs*], edited by Ia. A. Iakovlev (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Krest'ianskaia gazeta," 1929); "1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian" [*1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs*], edited by Ia. A. Iakovlev and I.V. Igritskii (Moscow: Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1967). Igritskii points out that there were distinctions made by the directors of the project pertaining to the classification of sources. Memoirs were defined as sources in which the subjects of the text are the author themselves. An article was distinct from a memoir because it used historical materials and may have included a general argument about past events. Finally, a story was a source which used a creative style of writing.

¹¹ Igritskii, "1917 god v derevne," 18.

take place until comrades of the peasantry set out for the countryside to bring them the revolution in the form of political truths that only Bolshevism could provide.

During the 1920s, the new Soviet state wanted to create an official history that cemented the Bolshevik party as the vanguard of the revolution. As Frederick Corney argues, the revolution was first and foremost, “a *remembered* event, an event constituted as cultural and historical memory intended to legitimize the young Soviet regime.”¹² From its outset, the legitimacy of the regime was a troubling issue as the party faced a number of problems threatening to undermine its revolutionary pedigree. The Kronstadt rebellion of 1921 cast significant doubt on whether the party had ever represented the will of the people—and whether the Bolshevik revolution was ever backed by popular support.¹³ It also became clear after the Civil War that not only was the country suffering from widespread destruction and economic decay, but that party discipline had become increasingly vulnerable due to the expanding needs of state administrative bodies and the constant search for new rank-and-file party members.¹⁴ As Corney notes, “keenly sensitive to perennial criticism from within their own party that they were isolated from their supporters, the Bolshevik leaders did not want to confirm this sense of dislocation with fragmented histories of the revolution and of their party.”¹⁵ Thus with these issues in mind, the state set out to write a history of the revolution.

The task of setting down the history of the Russian Revolution was given to the Commission on the History of the October Revolution and the Russian Communist Party

¹² Frederick Corney, “Rethinking a Great Event: The October Revolution as Memory Project,” *Social Science History* 22, no. 4 (1998): 397.

¹³ Corney, *Telling October*, 99.

¹⁴ Corney, *Telling October*, 99.

¹⁵ Corney, *Telling October*, 100.

(*Istpart*).¹⁶ *Istpart* was headed by literary critic Mikhail Ol'minskii¹⁷ and included other intellectuals—particularly historian Mikhail Pokrovskii, who served as the original director of *1917 in the Countryside* alongside Iakovlev—as well as party activists.¹⁸ The goal of *Istpart* was to create a narrative of the revolution that centred around the Bolshevik party, thereby addressing the issue of that party's legitimacy. *Istpart*, however, faced significant problems—not only establishing a narrative which complemented the history of the party, but also finding evidence to help support this narrative.¹⁹ To further complicate matters, it seemed that there was relatively little source material for historians to work with, as much of it was destroyed during the Civil War or completely unpreserved prior to the revolution. This meant that the memories of individuals who had lived through the revolution played an important role in providing source material.²⁰ Furthermore, as Corney points out, the manner in which memories were collected and shaped played an important role in producing this history. Important members of *Istpart* such as Ol'minskii and Prokovskii believed that creating a narrative of the revolution would in many ways be an ideological struggle against groups who opposed the Bolsheviks. It was readily evident to them that these groups were already forming narratives about the past. Therefore it was necessary that authors of memoirs be provided some form of guidance through official questioning.²¹ As Corney argues, Ol'minskii felt that guiding the creative direction of these

¹⁶ Corney, *Telling October*, 100.

¹⁷ Corney, "Rethinking a Great Event," 402.

¹⁸ Corney, *Telling October*, 100–101.

¹⁹ Corney, *Telling October*, 135.

²⁰ Corney, "Rethinking a Great Event," 396–397.

²¹ Corney, "Rethinking a Great Event," 401–402.

memoirs would be possible, “if the right questions could only be asked of the right people in the right places, the revolutionary movement would give up its story.”²²

The documents contained in *1917 in the Countryside* directly address the issue of competing memories of the October revolution and Bolshevik legitimacy. Examining these memoirs and stories within the context of the 1920s and the creation of Istpart helps illustrate how the texts fit into broader efforts to create an official historical narrative. It is not entirely clear, however, what direction contributors were given, and the question naturally arises concerning how authors were influenced. Corney lends some insight into this process of narrative creation in his discussion of “evenings of reminiscences (*vechera vospominanii*),” an important social forum by which the story of the revolution was formed in “an act of collective memory.”²³ Igal Halfin also points to the importance of these events in his own work.²⁴ Due to research constraints, it is not possible to determine whether or not any given author in *1917 in the Countryside* attended such events, but it is certainly a possibility that these meetings were influential. During these evenings, specific subjects were chosen as topics of discussion, while authors were asked to bring prewritten information about themselves, among other materials relevant to help guide their writing.²⁵ There is little discussion regarding this topic in *1917 in the Countryside*, though Ivan Igritskii, one of the original members who worked on the project, notes that village correspondents were, “warned that the questions posed to them were not intended to be answered in order, but rather to facilitate memories and stories about the events taking place

²² Corney, “Rethinking a Great Event,” 403.

²³ Corney, *Telling October*, 209–210.

²⁴ Igal Halfin, *Stalinist Confessions: Messianism and Terror at Leningrad Communist University* (Pittsburg: Pittsburg University Press, 2009): 44.

²⁵ Corney, *Telling October*, 210.

in the village in 1917.”²⁶ What can be addressed is the attention given to the specific questions provided by Iakovlev in his original call for submissions, which was published in the newspaper *Krest'ianskaia Gazeta* [*Peasant Gazette*]. These questions make it clear what specific kinds of information those directing the project—Iakovlev, and to some extent, Pokrovskii—wanted to see.

In order to solicit contributions for what would eventually become *1917 in the Countryside*, Iakovlev sent out a call for submissions in July 1925. This request was originally published in *Peasant Gazette* during Iakovlev’s tenure as editor and instructed potential authors, in significant detail, what subjects Iakovlev wanted them to write about.²⁷ However, all of these subjects were to fit under an overall theme of, “how the peasants in 1917 took the land and destroyed the landowners.”²⁸ In addition to this sustained focus on peasant-landowner relationships, Iakovlev further shaped the content of the submissions by often asking highly detailed questions, such as, “what landowners were in your area; how much land did they have; did they lease out the land or did they till the land using agricultural labourers?”²⁹ However, Iakovlev did allow contributors to write about topics more broadly, including how and why the peasant movement began, as well as the Provisional Government’s reactions to the peasant movement.³⁰

²⁶ Igritskii, “1917 god v derevne,” 17.

²⁷ Matthew Lenoë, “Letter-Writing and the State: Reader Correspondence with Newspapers as a Source for Early Soviet History,” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 40, no. 1/2 (1999): 156.

²⁸ “Tekst obrascheniia k sel'koram, razoslannogo tovarischem Ia. A. Iakovlevym” [“Text of the Appeal to the Sel'kory, sent by Ia. A. Iakovlev”], originally printed in *Krest'ianskaia gazeta* [*Peasant Gazette*] July 1925, reprinted in “1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian” [*1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs*], edited by Ia. A. Iakovlev and I.V. Igritskii (Moscow: Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1967): 24.

²⁹ “Tekst obrashcheniia k sel'koram,” 24.

³⁰ “Tekst obrashcheniia k sel'koram,” 24–25.

Overall, these questions acted as a primer meant to organize the way in which correspondents wrote and thought about 1917—similar to “evenings of reminiscences.” Correspondents were not required to answer every question in the appeal and each response was intended to be relatively short.³¹ Still all respondents maintained a great deal of consistency, further indicating the likely collective manner in which they were written. By examining the similarities of these submissions, it becomes clear that there is significant historical value in these texts aside from just the stated objectives of *1917 in the Countryside*. Far more than a history of the peasant’s struggle with the landowner, each story provided in the collection is a microcosm of the interests and direction of the Soviet state and the organs it created in order to direct the narrative of the revolution.

Roughly, each document in *1917 in the Countryside* follows a timeline starting just prior to the February Revolution and ending right after the events of October (with some minor variations). The documents touch on a number of subjects, which usually follow in the same order: land, class enemies, the fall of the Tsar, the Provisional Government, the arrival of soldiers or workers to the countryside, and finally ending with the October Revolution. By far the most critical moment that each document discusses is the point at which workers or soldiers came to the countryside and began a dialogue with the peasantry. At this point, the subjects of the memoirs discover the revolution’s true significance as time marches forward towards October. In other words, the Bolshevik party becomes critical to the subject of revolution because it is the catalyst by which the peasantry comes to understand and accept it. At the same time, however, this consistency also begs the question as to how submissions were selected for the volume.

³¹ “Tekst obrashcheniia k sel’koram,” 26.

Igritskii provides some insight into this question, although he is vague on any concrete guidelines. First, the directors of *1917 in the Countryside* wanted to represent every province within the state.³² Secondly, they were concerned with writing style and “form”, although in particular, “preference was given to correspondence of a simple descriptive nature [...]”³³ Thus the directors were concerned about the scope of their project, as well as the overall manner in which sources were structured. In order to better comprehend the theoretical basis of this structure, its separate parts must be broken down and discussed individually.

The central issue, as noted in Iakovlev’s appeal to the countryside, was the land question. During the revolution and into the Civil War this was one of the most important points of contention driving peasant political discourse. This issue is frequently discussed by the authors and is often cited as an aspect of party policy. The Socialist Revolutionaries (or SRs), for example, are often mentioned in the documents as arguing against unsanctioned land seizure by a quickly radicalizing peasantry. Such was the case in Tambov province in the village of Korobovka according to the memoir of I.T. Talitskikh. After failed negotiations between peasants and landowners within the region over the transfer of land, the peasants retaliated and, “began damaging the landowners’ fields.”³⁴ When local SRs heard of this they started, “to preach to the peasants about their untimely attack on the landowners, asking the peasants to wait patiently for the time when the government would transfer all the land to the peasants.”³⁵ In comparison to this, the Bolshevik stance on land redistribution is repeatedly noted as the most appealing aspect of the party. Indeed, another peasant author asserts that “the most important seed, sown by the

³² Igritskii, “Ot Sostavitelia,” 20.

³³ Igritskii, “Ot Sostavitelia,” 20.

³⁴ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina I.T. Talitskikh,” 57.

³⁵ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina I.T. Talitskikh,” 57.

Bolsheviks, was the question of land.”³⁶ From the outset therefore, each of the respective parties’ policies regarding this issue was crucial to their relationship with the peasantry.

What becomes abundantly clear about the discussion of land is each author’s familiarity with the former belongings of class enemies. This is more often than not framed in terms of the amount of land held by landowners or kulaks. A.M. Postoik, for example, points out that one landowner’s estate near his home of Strazhgorod in Podol’sk contained, “1,217 desiatina of arable land; there were 14 buildings, including the main house of the landowner, 140 horses and about 250 cattle.”³⁷ Many other submissions give specific numbers regarding the amount of desiatina owned by bourgeois elements in their community.³⁸ There is of course the question of where these authors were able to find this information. Though they may have been familiar with the size of landowner estates prior to the revolution, it is more than likely that this information was retrieved from supplementary material, given its specificity. Perhaps more importantly, the careful itemization of property lent credence to the author’s discussions of the land question, setting this question up as the crux of 1917. With this in mind, class enemies become an important part of the narrative spun by the authors.

Given the importance placed on ownership and the detailed descriptions of private property provided by the authors, it is only natural that much of their discussion revolves around landowners and kulaks. In a broader sense these groups can be thought of as class enemies. In fact, landowners, often described as “overwhelmingly bourgeois”,³⁹ are typically one of the first subjects mentioned in the documents. The memoir of A. M. Postoik, for example, begins by

³⁶ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina K.S. Gulisa,” 95.

³⁷ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina A.M Postoika,” 113.

³⁸ For example, “Vospominaniia P.Ia. Tadeusha,” 99; “Vospominaniia I.A. Lavrishchev,” 38.

³⁹ “Stat’ia G.F. Krivgina,” 278.

stating that the “estates of Count Pototskii were scattered almost all over Ukraine.”⁴⁰ The landowner is also frequently described as the exploiter of the peasant’s labor. In the case of Postoik, he notes that laborers were paid no more than fifty kopeks for a day’s work.⁴¹ The exploitation of labor, however, was not the only factor which distinguished landowners as class enemies.

Landowners were not only class enemies in the sense that they benefited from the labour of the peasantry, but also because they did so in a manner the peasantry felt was immoral. In other words, the notion of class was centred around what is termed a “moral economy.” S. A. Smith defines this concept as, “the idea that pre-capitalist societies’ social relations are grounded in a publicly recognized right to subsistence that entails reciprocal rights and obligations between elites and the lower classes.”⁴² Using the moral economy as a lens illustrates how class enemies were defined by the individual author and consequently the relevance of these enemies to each individual narrative. Take, for example, the definition of a kulak. By examining letters sent from peasants to the newspaper *Bednota* [*Poverty*] on what exactly constitutes a kulak, Lynne Viola came to the conclusion that contributors felt that socio-economic factors alone were not the sole elements that determined whether someone deserved the designation of kulak. In fact, she found that contributors to the newspaper felt that ambition towards economic and agricultural prosperity were far from negative personality traits.⁴³ Rather, it was more important, “that the

⁴⁰ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina A.M Postoika,” 112.

⁴¹ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina A.M Postoika,” 113.

⁴² Stephen Smith, “Moral Economy and Peasant Revolution in Russia: 1861–1918,” *Revolutionary Russia* 24, no. 2 (2011): 143. See also E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 76–136.

⁴³ Lynne Viola, “The Peasants’ Kulak: Social Identities and Moral Economy in the Soviet Countryside in the 1920s,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 42, no. 4 (2000): 438–439.

prosperous farmer had to have made his money honestly—this word figures prominently in peasant writings—and without the aid of exploited hired labor.”⁴⁴ With this condition in mind it is readily clear why the landowner was so hated and distrusted.

The concepts of honesty and exploitation are certainly present in *1917 in the Countryside*. The authors often describe the landowner or kulak in plain and unflattering terms that emphasize their dishonest and usurious nature. G. F. Krivgin of Tomsk, for example, discussed property owned by the royal family near his community which he condemned for their lack of “honest labor.”⁴⁵ In other cases, authors use stronger language to describe class enemies. I.Ia. Bugreev of Kostroma, for example, vividly describes the freedom brought to the peasantry by the revolution, comparing it to a “spring seagull,”—a Russian symbol of freedom—while describing the landowners as “parasites.”⁴⁶ In this sense, what made the landowner a class enemy was not simply that he was wealthier than the peasantry. Rather, it was because he conducted himself dishonestly and through exploitation in attaining wealth. According to the authors, this was the foundation upon which the relationship between the peasantry and the landowner was based leading up to the revolution. It serves as the beginning of the revolutionary narrative of the countryside. Though there was some form of exploitation, this does not, however, mean that the rural population of the Russian Empire in 1917 was ready, or even willing, to take part in revolution.

Overall, when the authors recall the first news of the February Revolution coming to the countryside, the reactions of local populations were mixed. Due to distance and poor

⁴⁴ Viola, “The Peasants’ Kulak,” 439.

⁴⁵ “Stat’ia G.F. Krivigina,” 279.

⁴⁶ “Rasskaz krest’ianina I.Ia. Bugreeva,” 176.

communications, news travelled slowly to the villages as power changed hands in the capital. Many of the documents describe the first news of the Tsar's abdication. In one case in particular, the facts surrounding the events in the capital were purposefully withheld from the local population.⁴⁷ The peasantry reacted in various ways to the fall of the monarchy. A.P. Legkii of the Kuban region noted that when news of February finally arrived, "most did not want to believe that the tsar was overthrown."⁴⁸ In the case of F. F. Arbekov, news of February came to his village as, "a weak echo, and at first they [the peasantry] did not believe it."⁴⁹ By most accounts, the Tsar retained the respect of soldiers,⁵⁰ as well as the people.⁵¹ Regardless of the positive or negative nature of reactions to this news, the message that the authors give is one of the very uncertain and tentative nature of the revolution in the countryside at this point. The authors paint a picture showing significant tension between the classes once the government had changed hands. At the same time, however, this did not mean that the revolution would occur through the peasant's own initiative.

On the whole, the authors convey the sense that the revolution was not moving forward in the countryside because the peasantry was, for the most part, "unconscious." During the 1920s, the notion of peasant backwardness was still very much an issue of state concern. As Tracy McDonald explains, the relationship between the state and its rural inhabitants was rather tenuous during the 1920s. Party leaders, such as Grigorii Zinoviev, desired that the state have more influence in the countryside, as they worried not only about agricultural issues, but also the

⁴⁷ "Korrespondentsiia krest'ianina A.A. Avdeev."

⁴⁸ "Korrespondentsiia krest'ianina A.P. Legkii," 243.

⁴⁹ "Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova," 72.

⁵⁰ "Vospominaniia P.Ia. Tadeusha," 96.

⁵¹ "Korrespondentsiia krest'ianina K.S. Gulisa," 94.

ways in which peasants could influence the state outside the party.⁵² “Not only did Bolshevism have deep roots in modernist thought,” McDonald notes, “the Bolsheviks were also the creators of a revolution whose very success depended on the forging of a new man with a new consciousness.”⁵³ Consequently, it is further evident that the state was deeply concerned with how revolution and consciousness were intertwined.

Certainly contributors to *1917 in the Countryside* touch on this issue. During the revolution, however, the authors discuss a number of challenges which hindered the revolution from moving forward in the countryside and therefore the rural populations’ understanding of it. These included the disorganization of the peasant movement; the counterrevolutionary activity of class enemies; and the battle fought between the Bolsheviks and other parties for influence in the countryside. All of these elements hindered the peasantry’s understanding of the revolution and therefore affected their level of consciousness.

Generally speaking, the “disorganization” of the peasant movement was something the authors pointed to in a situational manner. There are many cases in which either a few or even large groups of peasants participated in what might be considered “revolutionary” activity; however, these ventures were often either unsuccessful or were simply vengeful attacks upon their perceived enemies. Probably the most striking example of disorganization of the peasant movement comes from the memoir of A.M. Postoik of Podol’sk. Postoik describes the manner in which the private property of one landowner’s estate was distributed amongst the peasantry. At issue on the estate was the cattle, which the landowner had been left to take care of after his

⁵² Tracy McDonald, *Face to the Village: The Riazan Countryside Under Soviet Rule, 1921–1930* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011), 3–4.

⁵³ McDonald, *Face to the Village*, 207.

laborers went on strike, leaving the livestock to roam freely. The local committee turned to the government at the uezd level to ask what to do about this problem, with the reply being that the cattle should be re-appropriated by the peasantry.⁵⁴ What followed, however, was chaos, as “not all of the peasants understood the word ‘to re-appropriate’.”⁵⁵ As the property was distributed, some peasants took live cattle to sell at the market, while others carried off even dead animals, often ignoring the village committee.⁵⁶ To make matters worse, the property was rarely distributed equally:

[...] there was pandemonium in the courtyard; the middle peasants came with wagons and loaded up everything they came across. Poorer peasants were mostly just their audience. Some, however, broke off a board or a door and, throwing it on their back, carried it home, not knowing themselves why they were doing it [...]⁵⁷

This passage is highly illustrative in a number of ways. First, it illustrates the ignorance attributed to the peasantry regarding their actions. Secondly, it describes the seemingly chaotic manner in which the landowner’s property was redistributed. Finally, it showcases how the peasantry was divided by class through chastising the middle peasant for his actions while mostly painting the poor peasant as a bystander or simply ignorant.

Competing political factions complicated matters still further. More often than not the SRs were the main group which vied for influence amongst the rural population. This was the case for authors in areas as far apart as Smolensk,⁵⁸ and Samara.⁵⁹ A central aspect of the authors’ discussions of the SRs is their tendency to discredit this party’s relationship with the local

⁵⁴ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina A.M Postoika,” 115–116.

⁵⁵ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina A.M Postoika,” 116.

⁵⁶ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina A.M Postoika,” 116.

⁵⁷ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina A.M Postoika,” 116.

⁵⁸ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina A.T. Kotova,” 103.

⁵⁹ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina V.G. Lysova,” 221.

population. V.G. Lysov of Samara, for example, notes that even though peasants still formally identified as SRs in the winter of 1917, in reality they, “completely empathized with the program of the Bolshevik Party.”⁶⁰ In the case of Smolensk, after the outbreak of a number of peasant insurrections, A.T. Kotov describes how the, “Socialist-Revolutionaries deceived the peasants and soon it became clear that the large, organized force of the peasantry would have nothing to hope for, only the slogan: ‘Leave the landowner’s land alone!’”⁶¹ Though there was a working relationship between the local population and the SRs, these authors emphasize that there was significant hidden tension building in this relationship. Indeed, the SR party was not really for the peasants, and was often their political opponent due to their alleged policies on land.⁶² It is interesting however, particularly in the case of Smolensk, that relations deteriorated so quickly.

Another theme in these works is how the Socialist-Revolutionaries hindered the revolution in the countryside through their continued relationships with class enemies of the peasantry. In a number of cases, the authors point out that local SR organs were either courted by class enemies or already infiltrated by class enemies as fellow members of their party. A. Vorob’ev of Tver noted that as soon as the SRs turned against the Bolsheviks, landowners and others belonging to that class allied with the SRs. He pointed out that one could clearly see this by attending SR gatherings.⁶³ In these gatherings, “there was both an unbeliever and a priest, and this was the death of the party, and through it the death of the revolution.”⁶⁴ Indeed, it is at this

⁶⁰ “Vospominaniia krest’ianina V.G. Lysova,” 224.

⁶¹ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina A.T. Kotova,” 104.

⁶² Sarah Badock, “‘We’re for the Muzhiks’ Party!’: Peasant Support for the Socialist Revolutionary Party During 1917,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 1 (2001): 133; 139. Badcock notes that the SR party was in reality widely popular and held a majority in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. They also utilized the slogan “land and freedom.”

⁶³ “Stat’ia A. Vorob’eva,” 168.

⁶⁴ “Stat’ia A. Vorob’eva,” 168.

point that the authors address a very important question to the state and those interested in creating a historical narrative. They directly address a major competing socialist party with its own competing narrative, turning it into just as much of an enemy as those of the higher classes. As the narrative moves forward to address the events in later months, the authors discuss how this relationship with the SRs played out in local politics. More specifically, the matter of elections becomes an important topic.

Exact statistical information on the number of votes received by each party during the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November of 1917 is difficult to ascertain. As William Dando points out, due to the, “internal chaos which plagued Russia at this time, no returns were reported for certain districts in European Russia and from much of Asiatic Russia. Nonetheless, a distinct picture could be obtained.”⁶⁵ In a rough estimate, Dando shows the Socialist Revolutionaries beating out the Bolshevik party with 38% to 24%.⁶⁶ Dando also provides a map that is highly illustrative of each party’s popularity depending on locality. From this map, it is clear that the SRs held a majority in the countryside, including parts of the former Tsarist empire’s eastern and southern territories. The Bolsheviks found their biggest support in more industrialized areas, where they received 51–72 percent of the total votes. However, the percentage of total votes for the Bolsheviks falls sharply in the countryside when compared to the SRs.⁶⁷ Considering the success of the Socialist Revolutionaries in the countryside during the elections to the Constituent Assembly, it was likely readily apparent to both the authors and the

⁶⁵ William Dando, “A Map of the Election to the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917,” *Slavic Review* 25, no. 2 (1966): 315. For more on this topic see Oliver Radkey, *Russia Goes to the Polls: The Election to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, 1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁶⁶ Dando, “A Map of the Election,” 315.

⁶⁷ Dando, “A Map of the Election,” 317.

editors of *1917 in the Countryside* that they needed to address this problem. Since such a crucial aspect of creating their narrative centred around undermining the SRs as enemies of the common peasant, the authors needed to either contest the election results or show the Bolsheviks winning elections.

Despite the authors' tendency to discredit the SRs, there are many cases in which they readily admit to their victory at the polls. The obvious problem that the authors faced by doing this was the contradictory notion of the Bolsheviks' proclaimed popularity as compared to election results. In the case of one author from Tver, the SRs attained 80% of the vote in uezd zemstvo elections.⁶⁸ Whether they were elections to the Constituent Assembly or simply elections to local committees, the SRs often dominated the results. The validity of these victories however, is often discredited through a number of reasons given by the correspondents. According to the authors of *1917 in the Countryside*, perhaps the biggest contributor to SR election victories was the support (and votes) of class enemies, such as landowners and kulaks. In the Kuban, A. P. Legkii wrote how the SRs had a considerable amount of success in committee elections due to the landowners, because they were, "opposed to the idea of taking [their] land away."⁶⁹ In a similar case, an author from Kostroma narrated how a priest watched over the elections for the Constituent Assembly, describing him as a "rotten egg."⁷⁰ Furthermore, SR victory in elections was often portrayed as a recurring problem of peasant disorganization and ignorance.

⁶⁸ "Stat'ia A. Vorob'eva," 170.

⁶⁹ "Korrespondentsiia krest'ianina A.P. Legkii," 244.

⁷⁰ "Rasskaz krest'ianina I.Ia. Bugreeva," 175.

Blaming failed election results on peasant ignorance and disorganization was a simple yet effective way to undermine SR credibility and reinforce a pro-Bolshevik narrative. By doing so, the authors did not contradict the image of the SRs as the true political enemy of the peasantry, but did show that peasants themselves did not yet understand this; the authors also often emphasized that this was because proper class elements had not yet enlightened the peasantry. Many authors, such as Kotov, also described zemstvo elections in a way that conveyed the ignorance of the peasantry:

Most of the peasants, especially the poorest, did not know the differences between them [the parties], did not know what they both stood for, and almost always sought explanations from the former village leaders, who always depicted the Socialist Revolutionaries in a better light.⁷¹

As Kotov shows, peasants were not only ignorant in terms of their understanding of the respective parties they were voting for, they were also blind to the influence of class enemies who were working with the SRs. In this way he painted the SRs in a light which made them into class enemies by association. Kotov also noted that the kulaks, “brilliantly prepared the ground for elections,” compared to the “poor who were unorganized” and thus, “powerless to do anything to help the [Bolshevik] cause.”⁷² The next logical step, therefore, was to illustrate how the peasantry eventually became aware of the SR problem. To a large extent, elections served as events in which people gathered within public forums to discuss the politics of revolution.

Within the memoirs, there is also a great deal of discussion regarding the *sel'skii skhod* (village assembly). In many cases, these public forums provided the opportunity for Bolshevik agitators to discuss policy and revolution with rural populations. P. S. Babichev, writing from

⁷¹ “Korrespondentsiia krest'ianina A.T. Kotova,” 106.

⁷² “Korrespondentsiia krest'ianina A.T. Kotova,” 106.

Kursk, discussed how in his village they first heard of the Bolshevik party. The author describes how, at the age of fourteen, he distributed, “voting cards” amongst his fellow villagers in preparation for the election of the Constituent Assembly. He notes the naive enthusiasm with which the rural peasants reacted to the opportunity to vote. “We will choose the tsar!,” he noted one peasant exclaiming.⁷³ Another asked him, “Petr, you are literate, what is written here? How do you vote?”⁷⁴ Much of what the author described also touched on the issue of peasant ignorance when it came to election day. Peasants had no idea who Lenin was and the SR party had substantial influence over the population’s understanding of the Bolsheviks. The author also made sexist comments about the ability of women to understand the elections’ significance.⁷⁵ Overall, the author paints a bleak outlook for the average peasant’s ability as a political actor and critical thinker. The situation is only changed when a detachment of sailors arrive in the village to join the peasantry at their meeting. What follows is a reverent description of how the sailors spoke with the peasantry. Babichev described the chaos which was typically found at a village gathering on the night of an election.⁷⁶ There was something very atypical about this meeting, however:

As soon as the orator—a sailor, a peasant or someone else—would utter the word ‘comrades,’—everything stopped. This evening would never be forgotten. At this gathering, on this night, the peasant saw for the first time what he had been up to this point, and what he could become. During that night everyone talked with respect: while re-electing the village elder; while appointing a commission [...].⁷⁷

⁷³ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina P.S. Babicheva,” 35.

⁷⁴ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina P.S. Babicheva,” 35.

⁷⁵ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina P.S. Babicheva,” 35.

⁷⁶ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina P.S. Babicheva,” 36.

⁷⁷ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina P.S. Babicheva,” 36.

The arrival of Bolshevik elements to the countryside provided several insights to the peasantry. Not only did they become organized but as this case clearly illustrates, Bolshevik activists also tempered the almost chaotic nature of their backwards country folk. Most importantly, the Bolsheviks made the peasants conscious of themselves as a class.

Consciousness is an important theme within revolutionary literature. As McDonald illustrates, the state found that culture was an important aspect in ruling their rural subjects. In many ways the peasantry was still viewed as backwards by the state at this time, clinging to old forms of social interactions which contradicted socialist objectives.⁷⁸ In this sense, the theme of the conscious peasant within the revolutionary narratives in *1917 in the Countryside* fulfilled a number of functions. First, it created a link between the Bolshevik party and the popular nature of the revolution in the countryside, thus solidifying the party's importance. Second, it set a benchmark or revolutionary standard that informed the reader that the attainment of this class consciousness is in fact a major milestone in all revolutions. Finally, through giving examples of the activities of individuals during the revolution, the authors provided the reader with the ideas espoused by these individuals.

Generally speaking, there is more to the class conscious peasant than the simple matter of his interactions with sailors and class comrades. In Babichev's case, the peasantry are discussed specifically within the context of their relationship with sailors. But what sort of relationship did the rural populace have with Bolshevism itself in a broader, conceptual sense? What was the driving force behind pro-Bolshevik actors which convinced the rural population to join them, if not their policy stance on land requisition? In a very similar situation to Babichev, the story

⁷⁸ McDonald, *Face to the Village*, 33.

provided by V. O. Ovchinnikov titled, “How the Peasant Elected Soviet Power,” discusses similar themes of peasant class consciousness. Much like Babichev, Ovchinnikov shares his memories of a gathering in which sailors and peasants alike debate party politics. What is different about this story, especially compared to a number of the other peasant writings, is that he addresses the question of Bolshevism as a driving force.

The story of Ovchinnikov is about himself and his father living in a village in Tula. Ovchinnikov was thirteen years old during the revolution and he tells of the night both he and his father, Vosip, went to a village gathering to discuss electing parties to the Constituent Assembly. He begins by telling of how both he and his father were tasked with distributing voting cards at the town meeting. After asking about them, Ovchinnikov’s father explains that there are nine numbers on each card indicating each party on the ballot. The author describes Vosip as an illiterate man of 57 years, though Ovchinnikov himself was literate, as he notes he is able to read the voting card. His father, however, seems distressed over whom to vote for, stating that he hoped at the meeting the following day that the soldiers would be able to explain things clearly.⁷⁹ It is at this point that Ovchinnikov reminds his father that their, “brother Andrei sent us a letter from the Baltic Sea, which said which number to vote for.”⁸⁰ At this point Vosip replies that Ovchinnikov should bring this letter to the meeting the next day where they could have it read aloud. Having retrieved this letter, Ovchinnikov goes to the meeting where he heard the men of the village talk about politics, each of them espousing different opinions of what they thought each party stood for; meanwhile “[people started] gathering around the soldiers who had come

⁷⁹ “Rasskaz krest’ianina V.O. Ovchinnikova,” 42–43.

⁸⁰ “Rasskaz krest’ianina V.O. Ovchinnikova,” 43.

from the front.”⁸¹ It is at this point that the importance of the letter from their relative becomes clear. Ovchinnikov’s father gives the letter to a soldier to read aloud. We learn that Vosip’s nephew is part of the Baltic Fleet and he tells Vosip that they should vote for the Bolsheviks. Despite the soldier and a few others telling Vosip that he should vote for the Mensheviks, the father states plainly that he will vote for the Bolsheviks.⁸² Although one might understand this as a form of family loyalty, which it very well may partially be, Vosip shows a practical reasoning in his response:

Yes, write down party no. 5. This party is useful for workers and peasants. This party will be called the Soviet power [*Sovetskaia vlast'*]. And this Soviet government will put all the factories in the hands of the workers and peasants. I want to vote for number 5.⁸³

This story illustrates the power of the Bolsheviks’ influence when they arrived in the countryside. In his exchange with the soldier, Vosip provides an example through his vote, which draws the attention of everyone present to the letter. After the letter is passed around, the value of voting for the Bolsheviks is reaffirmed by others as the people, “rustled loudly and began to choose No. 5.”⁸⁴ Though Vosip was highly respected as an elder of the community and certainly influential in his actions, the letter is the true subject of this story. Having read or heard the letter, the villagers realize why they should elect the Bolsheviks over other parties. In this sense, it is not the Bolshevik as an actor that is the harbinger of peasant consciousness. Rather, it is the political virtue of Bolshevism and its battle to raise consciousness.

⁸¹ “Rasskaz krest’ianina V.O. Ovchinnikova,” 43.

⁸² “Rasskaz krest’ianina V.O. Ovchinnikova,” 43–44.

⁸³ “Rasskaz krest’ianina V.O. Ovchinnikova,” 44.

⁸⁴ “Rasskaz krest’ianina V.O. Ovchinnikova,” 44.

The authors in *1917 in the Countryside* provide many more examples of peasants attaining class consciousness. The political virtue of Bolshevism, as illustrated by the story of Ovchinnikov and many others, is the catalyst of the peasantry gaining this consciousness. The majority of entries, however, also show that this would not be possible without individual agitators spreading the Bolsheviks' revolutionary message or acting in a revolutionary manner. It was these individuals who came to the countryside, and brought with them the true meaning of the revolution. The time frame during which Bolshevik activists came to the countryside varies depending on the document. Naturally, however, a great deal of significance is given to the October Revolution as part of the overall narrative. This was the highest point of the revolution, the ultimate crescendo of Bolshevik victory. To complete the narrative many of the authors discuss the final battle between the peasantry and their class-enemies. It is worth emphasizing once more that Iakovlev asked correspondents to write about how the peasants, "destroyed the landowners."⁸⁵ With newly conscious peasants fighting alongside soldiers and workers, the rural population took the reins of their local destinies.

Reactions to the events of the Bolshevik takeover in Petrograd were dependent on class positions. As A.V. Zumorin of Simbirsk writes, class identification was closely related to political vocabulary and political opinion. Zumorin states that in his village the poorest peasants, including a few middle peasants, viewed Lenin positively, while the, "kulaks say that Lenin was none other than a spy, sent by Germany to take power in Russia."⁸⁶ In other words, a kulak was identifiable by how he viewed Lenin. But kulaks were not only a threat because they were

⁸⁵ "Tekst obrashcheniia k sel'koram," 24.

⁸⁶ "Vospominaniia krest'ianina A.V. Zumorin," 88.

critical of a far away and distant revolutionary figure. Zumorin also notes that the kulaks were “organized and waiting for the moment to break the necks of the paupers who hated them.”⁸⁷ Class enemies such as kulaks were not merely opposed to Bolshevism in a social and political sense. The picture which the authors give is rather one of a local struggle, necessitating some form of inevitable, and often violent conflict.

While this conflict took on several different forms, one of the most common involved the landowner and his estate. In many cases these encounters were very violent. P. S. Obodzinskii of Volyn' describes how in one town a group of peasants and soldiers went to the estate of a prince (*kniiaz'*). After the prince escaped through the back door of his manor house, the group of peasants and soldiers caught up with him on the road where they proceeded to stab him, “four times with a bayonet through the heart.”⁸⁸ In other cases the peasantry showed a great deal of restraint, refraining from killing the landowners.⁸⁹ Of equal importance to the theme of a final battle between peasants and landowners is the location where these battles took place.

As Michael Hickey confirms in his work on Smolensk, there was a significant amount of direction provided to authors who contributed to writing a history of the revolution. Istpart faced considerable struggles in this region in order to consolidate the general synopsis of 1917 using memoirs as sources.⁹⁰ The narrative of the revolution in Smolensk portrays a battle between the local Soviet, which defended its administrative buildings, and its political adversaries. This battle, which raged on in the last days of October, resulted in the victory of the Soviet.⁹¹ “Local

⁸⁷ “Vospominaniia krest'ianina A.V. Zumorin,” 88.

⁸⁸ “Iz korrespondentsii krest'ianina P.S. Obodzinskogo,” 120.

⁸⁹ See, “Vospominaniia krest'ianina Ia.D. Naumchenkova.”

⁹⁰ Hickey, “Paper, Memory and a Good Story: How Smolensk got its ‘October’,” 3.

⁹¹ Hickey, “Paper, Memory and a Good Story: How Smolensk got its ‘October’,” 1.

historians,” notes Hickey “eager to toe the party line told a tale that highlighted the Bolsheviks’ heroic leadership of the worker-soldier masses and echoed the myth of the storming of the Winter Palace.”⁹² Indeed, similar themes exist throughout *1917 in the Countryside* and much like the case of Smolensk, peasant authors wrote about their own final takeovers in their own townships. The only difference is that these stories tended to align more with peasants’ unique political and economic desires. In other words, instead of a political struggle for the soviet, the topic that peasants most often discuss concerns the landowner’s estate. Like the myth of the Winter Palace, the estate represents a battleground for their own “storming”. One such example of this is provided by the correspondence of A. A. Shmarova. This source is particularly interesting for a number of reasons. First, Shmarova is the only female author in *1917 in the Countryside*.⁹³ Secondly, this source is interesting because of its description of violence carried out by peasants and their attack on an estate. The author begins with a description of Makarovskaia and Arkhangelsk volosts, where several landowners held large amounts of land. As the political winds changed in these areas in 1917, the author describes the “barbaric” manner in which peasants began taking the landowner’s property in the period just prior to October.⁹⁴ She then describes how several peasants decided to besiege an estate in the village of Novo-Makarov. The author notes that this group began destroying the resident landowner’s property and then proceeded to his manor house in order to confront him directly. However, they were quickly met with gunfire. At some point during the gunfight, the group managed to enter the

⁹² Hickey, “Paper, Memory and a Good Story: How Smolensk got its ‘October’,” 2.

⁹³ “Korrespondentsiia Krest’ianki A. A. Shmarovoi,” 66. It is difficult to determine the reason for a significant dearth of female authorship, though in this case Shmarova closely follows the dominant narrative found in other documents in the volume.

⁹⁴ “Korrespondentsiia Krest’ianki A. A. Shmarovoi,” 66–67

landowner's household, but he was not present. As it turned out, it was a young girl who had been shooting at the peasants.⁹⁵ Although the young girl initially managed to escape from the group, she was eventually caught and subsequently, "hacked to death with axes."⁹⁶ At this point, the Provisional Government sent troops to the region in response to these events, but none of the perpetrators were caught. Shmarova states that this same group of peasants set out to siege other estates once the soldiers departed, however, they were unsuccessful in their ventures.⁹⁷ Although she does not provide a specific date for the arrival of Bolshevik forces to the region, Shmarova's correspondence builds up to a crescendo of Bolshevik victory. It was only after the October Revolution that the peasantry understood the importance of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party.⁹⁸ Shmarova concludes the correspondence by stating that, at the present time, the local populace actively remembers those who suffered under the landowner's yoke.⁹⁹ They do so while cultivating their former oppressor's property, recalling, "that this land is stained with their [the peasant's] blood, that they have managed to drive away the spiders with calloused hands."¹⁰⁰

Certainly Shmarova illustrates the importance of the landowner's estate within the narrative. The estate was both a symbol of the landowner's power as well as the socio-economic differences between them and the peasantry. However, it is important to make a distinction concerning peasant attacks on the landowner and peasant attacks on his property. Because of changing social relations during the revolution, the peasantry turned towards the estate to vent their frustrations over past grievances in the form of *samosud*. As McDonald notes, *samosud* was

⁹⁵ "Korrespondentsiia Krest'ianki A. A. Shmarovoi," 67.

⁹⁶ "Korrespondentsiia Krest'ianki A. A. Shmarovoi," 67.

⁹⁷ "Korrespondentsiia Krest'ianki A. A. Shmarovoi," 67.

⁹⁸ "Korrespondentsiia Krest'ianki A. A. Shmarovoi," 68.

⁹⁹ "Korrespondentsiia Krest'ianki A. A. Shmarovoi," 68.

¹⁰⁰ "Korrespondentsiia Krest'ianki A. A. Shmarovoi," 68.

a violent means by which peasants enacted retribution as, “a traditional way of punishing those who were threatening the delicate equilibrium of a community that still existed on the borders of subsistence.”¹⁰¹ In this sense, one might view the examples provided by Obodzinskii and Shmarova as forms of *samosud*. As Stephen P. Frank notes, the peasants’ treatment of an individual in their pursuit of justice depended on who that individual was.¹⁰² In most cases, “violent forms [of *samosud*] were reserved almost exclusively for outsiders whose crimes posed some threat to the community.”¹⁰³ In this sense, the landowner can be considered an “outsider”. According to the narrative, even though he lived alongside the peasant population, he was alienated from the peasantry in a meaningful way.¹⁰⁴ Yet another form of punishment used by peasants was arson. It was “a way of administering justice against members of the community who violated village norms.”¹⁰⁵ Indeed A. O. Kerdoda of Akmolinsk gives instances of peasants setting fire to the landowner’s estate,¹⁰⁶ and according to K. T. Molchanov of Ekaterinoslav, fire was part of the peasant’s arsenal.¹⁰⁷ As is evident in the narratives of peasant authors however, the destruction of property went far beyond what they viewed as righteous retribution. Much like the case illustrated by Hickey in Smolensk, the narrative paints a picture that informs the reader of the revolutionary nature intertwined in these vengeful attacks.

On the whole, the organization of peasant attacks on the estate is an important distinction

¹⁰¹ McDonald, *Face to the Village*, 234.

¹⁰² Stephen Frank, “Popular Justice, Community and Culture Among the Russian Peasantry, 1870–1900,” *The Russian Review* 46, no. 3 (1987): 241.

¹⁰³ Frank, “Popular Justice, Community and Culture Among the Russian Peasantry,” 241.

¹⁰⁴ Frank, “Popular Justice, Community and Culture Among the Russian Peasantry,” 256. The author notes that in some cases outsiders were killed outright for their malicious actions.

¹⁰⁵ McDonald, *Face to the Village*, 257.

¹⁰⁶ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina A.O. Kerdoda, 284.

¹⁰⁷ “Korrespondentsiia krest’ianina K. T. Molchanov, 195.

which makes them revolutionary actors rather than those of local vigilantes. The story of F. F. Arbekov of Nizhnii Novgorod provides one of the best examples. The story, titled “Crow’s Nest,”¹⁰⁸ gives a detailed description of how an estate became the centre of the revolution in his village. The story begins, like many others, with a description of how terribly the landowner treated the peasants, often responding violently to what seemed to be minor infractions. Indeed Arbekov goes even further, stating that the landowner would have young women come with him to bed, later mocking their honor or even sending them far away to separate himself from the evils he had committed against them.¹⁰⁹ Justice, however, would never be enacted on the landowner, as he died before the peasants could get their hands on him. As the author notes, the landowner wanted to be right with the church, so he willed the estate to a women’s monastery, in order to, “get a good spot in heaven.”¹¹⁰ One might think that the death of the landowner would end this revolutionary tale of the estate; however, the author points out that the abbess who replaced the landowner was no less strict and was in fact from a “noble family.”¹¹¹ The story continues as one class enemy is replaced with another. A week after hearing the news, the local population was convinced the February Revolution had taken place. The next question became, “What about the devil’s monastic nest?”¹¹² It is at this point that the estate becomes the centre of the revolution in Arbekov’s village.

What follows next is an exchange between a group of peasants and the abbess on the grounds of the estate. As the abbess appears, the crowd berates the nuns until an older member of

¹⁰⁸ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 72.

¹⁰⁹ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 72–73.

¹¹⁰ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 73.

¹¹¹ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 74.

¹¹² “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 74.

the community, Ermilov, calms the crowd and speaks with the abbess. The elderly man informed the abbess that the estate now belonged to the peasants. Naturally there was a disagreement.¹¹³ “Revolution,” declared Ermilov, “means the power of the people. And the estate is ours, and we will own it.”¹¹⁴ They argued over the land until evening. The abbess, troubled over these events, sent for the district police chief, Kobylanskii, who was an SR. After speaking with the women of the monastery, Kobylanskii sided with them, explaining that the, “revolution has not been made so that peasants can plunder with impunity.”¹¹⁵ While it might seem that Ermilov is setting a good revolutionary example and that his actions are more “advanced” than those of his comrades, Ermilov is unable to organize the peasants. Meanwhile, Kobylanskii orders another village gathering, arguing loudly with shouting peasants, and threatening to send a detachment to fight the villagers. Ignoring the police chief, the villagers continue to work the land of the estate, keeping the nuns besieged and threatening violence should they decide to leave the manor house.¹¹⁶ “[And] so the matter dragged on,” notes Arbekov, that is, “until the arrival of the soldiers and veterans.”¹¹⁷

The arrival of soldiers from the front signalled a turning point.¹¹⁸ After the soldiers speak with the peasants, both criticizing their lack of action but also understanding their inability to fight the forces of Kobylanskii, they organize a vote on whether they want to displace the nuns by force.¹¹⁹ Arbekov states that all present voted in favor of this resolution, the, “whole gathering

¹¹³ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 74–75.

¹¹⁴ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 75.

¹¹⁵ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 75.

¹¹⁶ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 75–76.

¹¹⁷ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 76.

¹¹⁸ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 77. Arbekov provides very little chronological information about events which took place, making it difficult to determine when exactly the soldiers arrived in the area.

¹¹⁹ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 77.

[acting] as one person.”¹²⁰ The presence of the soldiers changed the nature of the peasants’ actions. Now there was a revolutionary aspect to the actions of the peasantry; even Ermilov’s demeanour changes with the soldiers’ arrival. What the soldiers give the peasantry is leadership and guidance—the ability to organize—as well as the ability to understand that there is more at stake than just the estate, just *samosud*—and that Kobylanskii is also an enemy and part of the problem.

Following this, the author describes how the newly invigorated peasantry fought for what they felt was theirs. The following day, peasants and soldiers took up arms and marched to the estate. Kobylanskii met the crowd to address them, but this time the peasants refused to respect his authority. The peasants and soldiers assault Kobylanskii, condemning him as an SR and for siding with the, “parasites.”¹²¹ “We have only one party!,” shouted one soldier standing in the crowd, “the Bolsheviks! Long live the Bolshevik Party!”¹²² The situation between Kobylanskii and the crowd grows more and more tense as they close in on him. After firing the first shot, Kobylanskii flees, the crowd exchanging bullets with him as he is pursued until he is shot dead by a soldier.¹²³ Finally, the “crowd, seeing that he was killed, began to disperse.”¹²⁴ The death of Kobylanskii is not merely the death of a class enemy. Rather his death is symbolic of ending the SR hindrance to the revolution, the true revolution among the peasantry, led by the Bolsheviks.

Finally, with this issue out of the way, the author returns to the subject of the estate. He informs the reader that the nuns vacated the property by the next morning.¹²⁵ To end his story,

¹²⁰ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 77.

¹²¹ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 77.

¹²² “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 78.

¹²³ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 78.

¹²⁴ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 78.

¹²⁵ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 78.

Arbekov discusses the response of the SR-led executive committee to the events: “Send out the punitive squad detachment,” cried the committee, “Raze the village with artillery!” Arbekov contrasts the SRs with the Bolsheviks, showing how the SRs react with violence almost immediately in order to crush the legitimate seizure of the estate by the peasants. Unlike the organized soldiers and peasants, however, the SRs ultimately fail to act: “The controversy over whether to send a detachment or use artillery dragged on, and neither were ever sent.”¹²⁶ In this manner, the defeat of the anti-revolutionary was complete.

Overall, the master narrative formed by the memoirs, articles, and stories of *1917 in the Countryside* performs several functions that address the issue of Bolshevik legitimacy. First, it acknowledges the importance of the land question and how this was the central part of political and economic issues in the countryside during the revolution. All authors acknowledge that land served as both the social and political stage of the revolution and that land requisition was the primary objective of the peasantry. The authors help legitimize the young Soviet regime by positioning Bolshevism as the catalyst of peasant class consciousness. Without the party, the rural population would have been unable to complete the revolution or battle counter-revolutionary elements. Without the Bolsheviks, the peasant was aimless. Furthermore, the authors confirm the popular origins of the revolution, showing the reader that it was not a coup of a single party, but rather an undertaking of the masses. The narrative also undermines previous narratives established by other parties, particularly the Socialist-Revolutionaries. The authors do this by associating SR functionaries with class-enemies of the peasantry. The legacy of the SRs—their political victories in the Constituent Assembly, and the very real popularity they enjoyed

¹²⁶ “Rasskaz F.F. Arbekova,” 78.

in the countryside—are fully addressed by the authors, all using the master narrative of *Istpart*. In the end, the SRs were far from true revolutionaries and only served to hinder the peasant from attaining class consciousness.

Chapter Three: Soviet Historiography and the Short Course

By the end of the 1930s, the official narrative of the peasantry's place in the history of 1917 changed dramatically. Heated discussions about Soviet historiography took place amidst a broader social and political context that greatly affected the individuals involved. The state's goal of collectivization was highly influential in how the peasantry was viewed by those in urban areas on a fundamental level. And, as Daniel Dorotich explains, "the concept of 'socialism in one country' and the rapid industrialization introduced by deliberate and forceful action brought into prominence [...] the role of the individual, particularly Stalin."¹ Those involved with *1917 in the Countryside* were not immune to these outside influences. Both Pokrovskii and Iakovlev had to contend with a new political reality and in the Soviet Union, "historiography had to make way for the return of the hero."²

Perhaps the most important historical work published at this time was *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, also known as the *Short Course*. This textbook, first published in 1938, was intended to be widely accessible³ and remained the most significant work of history until the 1950s.⁴ In contrast to *1917 in the Countryside*, the peasantry is not a vital actor driving the revolution within the pages of the *Short Course*. This change in emphasis on the peasantry as a historical actor occurred for several reasons. The 1927 jubilee

¹ Daniel Dorotich, "The Disgrace and Rehabilitation of M. N. Pokrovsky," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8 (1966): 175.

² Dorotich, "Denunciation and Rehabilitation of Pokrovsky," 176.

³ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," *The Russian Review* 76 (2017): 682.

⁴ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 688.

celebrating the revolution of 1917 marked a gradual shift away from mass collections documenting the revolution from the perspective of everyday participants and Party officials began to demand “one general book that tells the tale of the greatest battles and victories” and outlines the “fallen heroes” of the revolution.⁵ However, while guided by Stalin, the 1927 jubilee was still implemented by Istpart’s local bureaus, in an era where open discussion and dissent could still exist in the Soviet Union. Secret memorandums from Party officials complained that a significant amount of material generated by Istpart for the 1927 jubilee did not fit “our understanding of historical reality.”⁶ As Corney explains, the local bureaus of Istpart were “sharply criticized for [their] intention to invite nonparty groups to help study the local revolutionary movement.”⁷ This is in stark contrast to the 1930s, when Stalin would consolidate power and introduce his wishes for Soviet historiography in a 1931 letter to Istpart’s former organ *Proletarskaia revolutsiia*. In the letter, Stalin demanded that Soviet history writing be stripped of its anti-Bolshevik elements. This letter served as a guideline for how to indoctrinate the next generation of Soviet citizens, a new Bolshevik-centric history for those who did not have direct memories of the revolution. May 1934 marked yet another critical juncture for Soviet historiography, when Stalin issued a new decree on history. As Daniel Dorotich explains,

The formerly-rejected and anathemized history of czars, generals, and other great historical figures, extolling the role of the individual in history, was reinforced in the Soviet school, in literature, in visual arts, and in historical writings. Brought about largely by the necessity to generate national-patriotism in the face of the rising German threat, this change was so radical that even had Pokrovsky been alive, it is doubtful that he could have reconciled it with [his conception of] Marxism [...].⁸

⁵ Quoted by Frederick Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 170.

⁶ Quoted by Corney, *Telling October*, 172.

⁷ Quoted by Corney, *Telling October*, 172.

⁸ Dorotich, “Disgrace and Rehabilitation of M.N. Pokrovsky,” 175–176.

The late 1920s and early 1930s saw revolutionary-era intellectuals—the so-called “old guard”—increasingly under attack. As the leading Soviet historian, Pokrovskii was unassailable in public until his death in 1932; in fact Stalin carried Pokrovskii’s coffin at his funeral. Therefore, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, personal attacks against Pokrovskii were veiled “in academic genuflexions and demands for ideological criticism and self-criticism.”⁹ Pokrovskii, well aware of the growing hostility towards him and his ideas, shifted his historical understanding of the peasantry away from concepts of internationalism in the years leading to his death. After his death in 1932 however,¹⁰ his works and reputation were broadly denounced and Pokrovskii’s ideas were effectively purged from Soviet historiography.¹¹ Meanwhile, Iakov Iakovlev would continue his work both in history and politics until he fell victim to the purges.¹² Of particular importance was not only Iakovlev’s work on collectivization, but his role in new efforts to change the historical discipline to conform to Stalin’s wishes. Much like Pokrovskii, his understanding of the peasantry would change in order to adapt to the political crisis plaguing Soviet historiography. The question then remains of what became of the narrative of the peasantry developed in *1917 in the Countryside* after collectivization.

There is no single answer to this question. Throughout the pages of the *Short Course*, it is clear that the peasant has at least some revolutionary function, though less so when compared to other historical works. Stalin himself had rewritten much of the textbook in 1938 after it was

⁹ Dorotich, “Disgrace and Rehabilitation of M.N. Pokrovsky,” 175.

¹⁰ David Brandenberger, “Who Killed Pokrovskii? (the Second Time): The Prelude to the Denunciation of the Father of Soviet Marxist Historiography, January 1936,” *Revolutionary Russia* 11, no. 1 (1998): 67.

¹¹ Brandenberger, “Who Killed Pokrovskii? (the Second Time),” 68.

¹² D.A. Longley, “Iakovlev’s Question, or the Historiography of the Problem of Spontaneity and Leadership in the Russian Revolution of February 1917,” in *Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917*, edited by Edith Rogovin Frankel, Jonathan Frankel, and Baruch Knei-Paz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 382.

initially submitted to him for his review. The Soviet leader made a number of changes to it, especially regarding interpretations of 1917. In the *Short Course*, Stalin sought to place the Party even more at the center of history.¹³ According to David Brandenberger, this was also at considerable cost to the “historical agency” of groups like the peasantry.¹⁴ “Activism,” notes Brandenberger, “whether on the part of workers, soldiers, peasants, women, youth, or the non-Russian minorities, had been downgraded or deleted.”¹⁵ Although there are many similarities between the *Short Course* and the narrative of *1917 in the Countryside*, the lack of the peasant’s influence is clearly felt in the former. It is clear that the depiction of the peasantry within the *Short Course* is dominated by two factors. First, peasants are portrayed mainly within the context of their alliance with workers (*smychka*). Second, the peasantry is described as an overtly negative element in history as defined along class lines. It is also clear, after careful reading of the *Short Course*, that only three historical topics in the textbook contain any serious discussion of the revolutionary agency of the peasantry. These topics are the Revolution of 1905; the terrorist organization *Narodnaia Volia*; and the Kornilov affair.

Istpart was continually remodelled by Party interests during the 1920s. By 1925—shortly after Iakovlev solicited material for *1917 in the Countryside*—Semen Ivanovich Kanatchikov replaced Ol'minskii as director of Istpart. This personnel change reflected Party officials’ frustration with the 1905 jubilee, which they felt failed to produce work that was accessible to average Soviet citizens and failed to convey the revolutionary primacy of the Bolsheviks. In many ways, Kanatchikov was meant to remedy Istpart’s ideological shortcomings before the

¹³ Brandenberger, “Stalin’s Rewriting of 1917,” 684.

¹⁴ Brandenberger, “Stalin’s Rewriting of 1917,” 685.

¹⁵ Brandenberger, “Stalin’s Rewriting of 1917,” 689.

1927 jubilee. He had been a member of the Party well before 1917 and had peasant origins. Due to this and his class-oriented worldview, Kanatchikov was generally unsympathetic towards intellectuals.¹⁶ However, in spite of his hostility toward intellectuals, Kanatchikov was still interested in the objective approaches to history and empirical methods practiced by Istpart. With this in mind, Kanatchikov sought to change Istpart under his administration during the 1927 jubilee. As the new director, he tied the organization's mission to the ongoing crusade against Trotsky. He also wanted to clarify the role of the Party within history,¹⁷ while at the same time pushing an agenda of exactitude within historical studies. In particular, Kanatchikov felt that, "the Party needed to know what Lenin had really represented while he lived."¹⁸ Overall, Kanatchikov still sought to be objective as an historian, allowing Istpart's local bureaus to continue collecting source material en masse for the 1927 jubilee while trying to fit facts to conform to Party ideology—and this was emblematic of the contradictory nature of Istpart as a whole.¹⁹

The 1905 jubilee generated a frenzy among Soviet polemicists and critics. The role of the peasantry caused considerable tension and debate even within Istpart and Stalin's influence was already beginning to make significant inroads. An Istpart historian sympathetic to Stalin, Evgenii Morokhovets, wrote about peasants during the Revolution of 1905 by using class concepts to explain why they ultimately did not succeed in their goals.²⁰ Morokhovets concluded that the,

¹⁶ William Francis Burgess, "The Istpart Commission: The Historical Department of the Russian Communist Party Central Committee, 1920–1928," Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University (University Microfilms International, 1981), 148–149.

¹⁷ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 153. Burgess is here referring to an article Kanatchikov published in 1925 in which he discussed his concerns about the organization.

¹⁸ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 155.

¹⁹ Corney, *Telling October*, 170.

²⁰ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 155.

“peasants were unorganized and unmindful of the need to secure their seizure of noble lands [...]”²¹ Indeed, this conclusion echoes similar notions attributed to the peasantry in *1917 in the Countryside*. However, Morokhovets also made Lenin’s own beliefs on the peasantry a focal point of his work—something *1917 in the Countryside*, with its emphasis on the experiences of peasants on the ground, does not do. It is evident that Morokhovets’ selective use of Lenin’s writings²² was specifically tied to the Party line, and in particular, to the new theory of Stalin of Socialism in One Country.²³ Around this time, Istpart also published several more articles concerning Lenin.²⁴ It is at this point that Lenin’s beliefs about the peasantry became a major point of contention among Soviet historians—however, these debates remained comparatively open compared to the late 1930s and the era of the purges.

In order to address the criticism levied against Istpart’s work for the 1905 jubilee,²⁵ Kanatchikov produced his own critique of the 1905 Revolution.²⁶ Writing on the subject of Lenin, Kanatchikov also discussed the Soviet leader’s ideas about the peasantry. In particular, Kanatchikov characterized Lenin as both satisfied with the radical potential of the peasantry, as well as cautious of the class conflict he saw amongst them.²⁷ Perhaps more importantly, however, Kanatchikov included source material on Lenin that Morokhovets specifically excluded. In particular, he discussed Lenin’s caution towards the peasantry. The inclusion of such material is important because it made the subject of the peasantry a grey area within contemporary Soviet

²¹ Quoted in Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 156.

²² Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 156.

²³ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 157.

²⁴ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 160. Burgess notes that V. A. Bystrianskii, another Istpart contributor, also argued with Morokhovets over his use of sources.

²⁵ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 160.

²⁶ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 166.

²⁷ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 168.

rhetoric. Furthermore, Kanatchikov illustrated how the alliance of the working class and its rural counterparts—the *smychka*—had limits. Kanatchikov’s article was intended as an unmitigated look at Lenin as a historical subject. At the same time however, he contradicted the party line.²⁸ Although Burgess points out that Kanatchikov was not rebuked straight away, just a short time after his work was published, “the Central Committee ordered a reform of the Commission’s [Istpart’s] organization which was plainly intended to limit the director’s freedom of action [...]”²⁹ Kanatchikov was subsequently placed in a new position outside of the organization.³⁰

Kanatchikov’s experience illustrate the importance of the peasantry in Soviet history. His example also helps elucidate the complex political influences that confronted Istpart. As the materials for *1917 in the Countryside* were being compiled, the debate over the peasantry continued. Finally, by 1928—one year after *1917 in the Countryside* was first published—Istpart was consolidated into the pro-Stalin V. I. Lenin Institute. Formally, this was done in order to help facilitate the V.I. Lenin Institute’s publishing operations.³¹ However, as Burgess notes, the “Commission [Istpart] had lost its old battle with the Institute at last [...]”³² To say that Istpart became part of the V. I. Lenin Institute directly because of disagreements over peasant history would be too simple an explanation. Rather, the example of its director illustrates the significance of this subject. When discussing the peasantry, historians and political activists had to be mindful of the political winds and, above all, cautious.

²⁸ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 169–170.

²⁹ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 170.

³⁰ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 175.

³¹ Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 174.

³² Burgess, *The Istpart Commission*, 175.

Much like Kanatchikov, historians such as M. N. Pokrovskii were not divorced from the political and social contexts in which they wrote. Of particular importance were Pokrovskii's views on both internationalism and the peasantry. As one of the most significant historians of the 1920s, Pokrovskii played a key role in establishing theoretical approaches to the study of these subjects. However, up until his death in 1932, his official views changed constantly depending on the political criticism levied against him at the time.³³ In many ways, this evolution related to broader party debates on internationalism, the peasantry and, eventually, the political viability of Socialism in One Country.

In Pokrovskii's original Marxist treatment of the revolution, he viewed Russia as significantly less developed than western Europe, arguing that in 1917 the ordinary peasants sided with the kulak because their interests aligned against the landowner. In embracing a new understanding of the peasantry, Pokrovskii had to reconsider his previous argument concerning the underdeveloped nature of the state before 1917. By the late 1920s, the historian was influenced by several factors which made him reconsider the subject. First, in some way or another, the new conception of the peasantry undermined his previous argument about Russia and its development. Secondly, he was influenced by the ongoing efforts towards modernization in the Soviet Union, along with the criticism of his work.³⁴ Indeed, Pokrovskii wanted to avoid, "implying that Russia was underdeveloped, too backward to build socialism unaided."³⁵ Thus, in

³³ George Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat: M.N. Pokrovskii and the Society of Marxist Historians* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), 176.

³⁴ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 176.

³⁵ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 177.

the early 1930s, he turned to a discussion of Lenin to address this issue and to align himself favourably with the Party line.³⁶

Enteen points out that it is difficult to outline a concrete view of Pokrovskii's understanding of capitalism in Russia. What is evident is that he used Lenin's writings to illustrate different forms of capitalism existing throughout the empire.³⁷ What is significant about his use of Lenin is that Pokrovskii partially tried to defend his previous historical work.³⁸ However, in the end, Pokrovskii would, "draw out the national roots of the Russian Revolution [...]".³⁹ Ultimately, Pokrovskii's conception of history and the subject of revolution changed dramatically from his earlier understanding and while much of this change occurred during the compiling of *1917 in the Countryside*, it shifted yet again closer to his death; in the years leading up to the purges. Of significant importance is Pokrovskii's changing emphasis on the peasantry's relationship with the kulak, and his abandonment of internationalist revolution. However, there is still one other historical debate that Pokrovskii engaged in that formed the main basis of peasant interpretations in the *Short Course*. This debate concerns *the People's Will* and went on throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.

Aside from the revolution of 1905, several other subjects relating to peasant history were fiercely debated by Soviet scholars in the late 1920s and many of these debates were directed against Pokrovskii. One such subject was *Narodnaia volia (the People's Will)*, a violent populist organization that arose in the nineteenth century. In 1929, I. A. Teodorovich (the first Soviet

³⁶ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 176.

³⁷ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 177–178.

³⁸ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 178.

³⁹ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 179.

Commissar of Agriculture) wrote an article on the *People's Will*⁴⁰ that quickly provoked the ire of Pokrovskii.⁴¹ Teodorovich contended that many concepts espoused by *the People's Will* mirrored those of the Bolsheviks. Unlike the Bolsheviks, however, this group expressed these ideas with considerably less decisiveness. Thus, Teodorovich concluded that *the People's Will* would not have managed to establish socialism in Russia at the time.⁴² Teodorovich, in contradiction of Pokrovskii's understanding, nonetheless concluded that "*Narodnaia volia subjectively were socialists* [Author's emphasis]."⁴³ The argument between Teodorovich and Pokrovskii grew into a public debate as early as 1930,⁴⁴ with Emelian Iaroslavskii, the director of the V.I. Lenin Institute, taking Teodorovich's side.⁴⁵ The subject of *the People's Will* is significant in that it drastically affected the narrative surrounding the peasantry within the *Short Course*. It is also important as Teodorovich's emphasis on Bolshevik decisiveness echoes the themes of Bolshevik organization contained in *1917 in the Countryside*.

Within the narrative of *1917 in the Countryside*, the peasantry is depicted as a group fundamentally at odds with the landowner. Collectively, the peasant narratives included in the volume argued that this class conflict was the key factor motivating peasant rebellion. The *Short Course* describes the same issue in its discussion of *the People's Will*. The text places emphasis on the oppression of the peasantry under the landlords' authority. It was for this reason that

⁴⁰ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 120. Pokrovskii had written on this subject in a previous work.

⁴¹ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 122.

⁴² Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 123.

⁴³ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 123.

⁴⁴ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 124.

⁴⁵ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 126.

peasant farms were so inefficient prior to the revolution.⁴⁶ At this point however, the *Short Course* deviates from *1917 in the Countryside*. In particular, the text goes on to describe Marxism's arrival in Russia during the 19th century.⁴⁷ Prior to the existence of Marxist organizations, "revolutionary work in Russia was carried on by the Narodniks (Populists) [...]."⁴⁸ The chief concept driving Populism was the belief in the peasantry as the impetus of the coming revolution. According to the text, Populism stood in the way of any further ideological development. The chief concept driving Populism was the belief in the peasantry as the impetus of the coming revolution. Narodniks tried and failed to venture into the countryside in order to rouse their rural countrymen. Amid the government's reaction to the movement, the Narodniks decided to grapple with the state without popular backing. Thus the *People's Will* came into being,⁴⁹ and by 1881, "succeeded in killing Tsar Alexander II with a bomb."⁵⁰ The narrative then turns to explain their motives.

Concerning this issue, the *Short Course* treats Populism as nearly synonymous with the *People's Will*. The terrorists believed that killing the tsar would set a radical example through the actions of independent dissidents, thus igniting the spirit of a complacent populace. The issue was that the Narodniks were only eliminating rank-and-file members of the bourgeoisie as opposed to the whole of it. This prevented worker consciousness and organization among workers, or even the very possibility of action amongst the peasantry.⁵¹ Furthermore, the very

⁴⁶ TSK KPSS, *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, edited by the Commission of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. (B.) [no translator listed] (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 4.

⁴⁷ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 8.

⁴⁸ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 8.

⁴⁹ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 10.

⁵⁰ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 10.

⁵¹ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 10–11.

notion that the revolution would erupt from the peasantry was simply incorrect. The *Short Course* argues that the proletariat, rather than its rural counterparts, stood at the center of the revolution. This was because of their greater cooperative capabilities and their connection to modern industrial manufactures.⁵² Even if there were far fewer workers than peasants, the proletariat was not only “growing” but was all the while “developing politically [...]”⁵³ In contrast, the peasantry,

[...] despite its numerical strength, was a labouring class that was connected with the *most backward* [original emphasis] form of economy, small-scale production, owing to which it had not and could not have any great future before it. Far from growing as a class, the peasantry was splitting up more and more into bourgeois (kulaks) and poor peasants (proletarians and semi-proletarians).⁵⁴

There is already significant contrast between the narratives of the two works. Much like *1917 in the Countryside*, the *Short Course* discusses the issue of organizing the peasantry. The text similarly describes the oppressive nature of the landowner. At the same time, however, it significantly reduces the revolutionary potential of the peasant. It goes even further by describing a peasantry increasingly fragmented by class divisions. According to the Narodniks, the commune was the, “embryo and basis of Socialism.”⁵⁵ In reality however, this could not be the case because, “the commune was dominated by the kulaks [...]”⁵⁶ The peasantry described here in the *Short Course* was far from ready to undertake revolution.

The People’s Will was one of many historical topics subject to intense debate during the 1920s and 1930s. It is important to keep in mind that these arguments occurred during the state’s

⁵² TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 13.

⁵³ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 13.

⁵⁴ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 13.

⁵⁵ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 13.

⁵⁶ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 13.

push towards collectivization. As it happens, Iakov A. Iakovlev was a salient figure within the drive towards agricultural modernization. Rising through the Party ranks, he became the People's Commissar of Agriculture in 1929.⁵⁷ The Commissariat of Agriculture (or Narkomzem) was in fact one of the most influential of the Soviet Union's bureaucratic organizations at the time. Iakovlev made his own views clear when he presented a report on collectivization at the Sixteenth Party Congress in 1930. It is evident that through the 1920s and 1930s, there was a shift in the way the rural populace was conceived by individuals such as Iakovlev. The push for collectivization prompted a renewed focus on the peasantry. Ultimately, the basic conception of the peasants' capacity as actors would also determine their role in a developing historical narrative.

Just after 1917 the new Bolshevik state was immediately faced with a staffing problem. Considering its goal of establishing positive relations with the peasantry, the question of class and loyalty of the Soviet workforce was paramount.⁵⁸ Narkomzem was of particular importance in this regard given its, "mission of modernizing traditional, peasant agricultural production and implementing Soviet land policy [...]."⁵⁹ It was in fact the largest Soviet bureaucracy prior to collectivization.⁶⁰ However, most of its employees at the time were members of higher classes rather than proletarians, also known as "holdovers."⁶¹ Indeed, there were very few people of

⁵⁷ E.I. Kolchinskii, "T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva" ["T.D. Lysenko as a Project of People's Commissar for Agriculture Ia. A. Iakovlev"], *Studies in the History of Biology* 7, no.1 (2015): 85. (Article is in Russian but the journal is an English language publication).

⁵⁸ James Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State: The People's Commissariat of Agriculture Under Proletarian Dictatorship, 1918–1929," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 1 (1997): 73.

⁵⁹ Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State," 74.

⁶⁰ Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State," 78. Heinzen points out that Narkomzem had approximately 80,000 employees.

⁶¹ Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State," 82.

peasant origin who had the requisite knowledge in agronomy and economics.⁶² By the late 1920s this problem led to a reaction against such “holdovers” taking part in governing organizations—part of the broader Soviet campaign against “bourgeois specialists.”⁶³ The peasantry also played a significant part within the organization.

Although Lenin envisioned a state run by members of the lower classes, the competence of this staff was still at issue. Thus the involvement of individuals from the higher classes was necessitated by the difficulties of managing the country.⁶⁴ It was important that the state address the issues of famine and agricultural devastation after the Civil War.⁶⁵ To address the problems, it was considered necessary throughout the decade to place peasants into important professions within state bodies.⁶⁶ As James Heinzen argues, this was, “a crucial element in the grand narrative of the successful participation of the masses [...].”⁶⁷ Lenin, with respect to the peasantry, had a cliché image of an ideal agrarian worker in mind for Narkomzem. He wanted to hire individuals with noticeable qualities typical of rural peasant leaders, such as elderly men with beards. Further still, by 1921 the Central Committee decided to at least place a peasant at the head of Narkomzem.⁶⁸ Vasilii Grigorevich Iakovenko was the villager eventually decided upon. Iakovenko had a glowing revolutionary pedigree going back to 1917. It was believed that he could create a positive relationship with the peasantry and the state.⁶⁹ In other words,

⁶² Heinzen, “‘Alien’ Personnel in the Soviet State,” 80.

⁶³ James Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow’: The Culture of the Soviet People’s Commissariat of Agriculture, 1921–29,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 25, no. 2 (1998): 149.

⁶⁴ Heinzen, “‘Alien’ Personnel in the Soviet State,” 80.

⁶⁵ Heinzen, “‘Alien’ Personnel in the Soviet State,” 77.

⁶⁶ Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow,’” 133.

⁶⁷ Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow,’” 133.

⁶⁸ Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow,’” 137.

⁶⁹ Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow,’” 138.

Iakovenko's appointment was meant as a means of "social control" in order, "to keep the countryside calm [...]."70 Even so, Iakovenko faced a number of problems within his newfound position.

Shortly after becoming Commissar, Iakovenko was ostracized by his fellow high-level members of Narkomzem. This was due to the way he was perceived by them and how his persona conflicted with the professionalist culture of Narkomzem.⁷¹ Still further, the Commissar may not have had good working relations with other members in the organization.⁷² As a consequence, Iakovenko was removed in 1923, having only been a Commissar for a short time.⁷³ In spite of this, another peasant, Alexander Petrovich Smirnov, replaced Iakovenko in that year.⁷⁴

Smirnov and Iakovenko were different in one very crucial matter. According to Heinzen, unlike Iakovenko, Smirnov represented the Soviet conception of, "a 'conscious' (*soznatel'nyi*) peasant—aware of political subtleties, thoughtful and immersed in urban culture."⁷⁵ However, even if Smirnov seemed far more "conscious," than his predecessor, this did not mean that he fulfilled expectations. During the 1920s there were very few actual communists within Narkomzem, and this number fell even lower during Smirnov's tenure.⁷⁶ Further still, in spite of

⁷⁰ Heinzen, "'Peasants from the Plow' to 'Professors from the Plow,'" 140.

⁷¹ Heinzen, "'Peasants from the Plow' to 'Professors from the Plow,'" 141.

⁷² Heinzen, "'Peasants from the Plow' to 'Professors from the Plow,'" 141–142. Heinzen points out that Iakovenko wrote very simply which may not have sat well with the professionals of Narkomzem. He also points to a conference held in 1922 by Iakovenko, providing further example of how he did not necessarily relate well with his fellow comrades.

⁷³ Heinzen, "'Peasants from the Plow' to 'Professors from the Plow,'" 143.

⁷⁴ Heinzen, "'Peasants from the Plow' to 'Professors from the Plow,'" 143.

⁷⁵ Heinzen, "'Peasants from the Plow' to 'Professors from the Plow,'" 145.

⁷⁶ Heinzen, "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State," 80. Heinzen points out that this was because Smirnov saw a lack of requisite knowledge and abilities among most communists.

his class origins, Smirnov was reluctant to hire peasants into his organization.⁷⁷ In the end, Smirnov was removed as collectivization heated up in 1929.⁷⁸

The examples of Iakovenko, Smirnov, and the general challenge of staffing Narkomzem illustrate several notions in relation to the peasantry during the 1920s. On a very basic level the appointment of peasant Commissars represented a very distinct understanding of class and the peasantry. In placing a peasant at the head of the Commissariat of Agriculture, the state sought to influence the rural populace. Much like Iakovenko, however, other peasants hired at Narkomzem faced problems of exclusion and poor treatment within the workplace itself.⁷⁹ In spite of state efforts to involve peasants within government organs like Narkomzem, only “nine continued to work in the commissariat as of 1929.”⁸⁰ The fact that Narkomzem’s goal was to, “modernize” agriculture is in itself pregnant with meaning. Narkomzem would work in order to, “enlighten the ‘dark’ and ‘backward’ village.”⁸¹ Such a fundamental understanding of the peasantry during the 1920s was crucial in the outcomes of political and social policies, including the writing of peasants into broader Soviet history.

In the winter of 1929, Iakov A. Iakovlev became the new head of agriculture in the Soviet Union. Early into his new position, collectivization began in earnest, causing mass disturbance among the rural population.⁸² Collectivization quickly resulted in the, “destabilization of the entire socio-political and economic situation,” of the peasantry.⁸³ Despite the public blame Stalin

⁷⁷ Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow’,” 150. Similarly to communists, Smirnov felt that peasants generally lacked in the knowledge and abilities needed to work in Narkomzem.

⁷⁸ Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow’,” 150.

⁷⁹ Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow’,” 147.

⁸⁰ Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow’,” 151.

⁸¹ Heinzen, “‘Peasants from the Plow’ to ‘Professors from the Plow’,” 78.

⁸² Kolchinskii, “T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva,” 85.

⁸³ Kolchinskii, “T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva,” 85.

placed on rural officials for this in 1930, Iakovlev remained unscathed. In fact he attained an even higher position by 1931, working hard in his role to push for collectivization.⁸⁴ Indeed, Iakovlev was steadfastly committed to Stalin, “ready to accuse, to exclude, to exile, and then to shoot all others.”⁸⁵ Certainly collectivization, as well as the peasant’s reaction to it, had a formative effect on the political atmosphere of the 1930s. At the center of the new agricultural movement was also a basic understanding of the peasantry that helped shape Soviet policy.

Collectivization, and other policies related to it, developed amidst a complex socio-political situation surrounding the peasantry. According to Lynne Viola, collectivization implied an attempt to change peasant society in fundamental ways. The state wanted to uproot peasant values and societal foundations and replace them with that which was proletarian.⁸⁶ In other words, the state sought to, “destroy the peasantry as a culture.”⁸⁷ Prior to the revolution, the peasantry represented everything that was uncultured and backward about Russia. This notion continued under the new Soviet state. In particular, members of urban communities still considered peasants in much the same way, only with a socialist worldview. In their eyes the peasant was holding back the development of socialism.⁸⁸ Therefore, their backward rural counterparts were, “in need of the civilizing guidance and leadership of the town.”⁸⁹ The peasantry however did not necessarily welcome such guidance.

⁸⁴ Kolchinskii, “T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva,” 85.

⁸⁵ Kolchinskii, “T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva,” 85.

⁸⁶ Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 29.

⁸⁷ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 29.

⁸⁸ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 32.

⁸⁹ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 32.

Much like the depiction of violence in the narrative of the revolution of 1917, peasants reacted violently towards collectivization. They used multiple forms of resistance in order to combat the regime.⁹⁰ These included similar methods found in *1917 in the Countryside*, such as arson,⁹¹ as well as the use of *samosud* [self-justice].⁹² Although the state portrayed events in the countryside through the image of class warfare, the role of women in the village was also very important. Much like in the narrative of 1917, gender played a significant role in peasant reaction towards collectivization.⁹³ Resistance reached an all-time-high in the fall of 1930.⁹⁴ In contrast to the state's understanding of peasant insurgency, Viola notes that the peasantry was distinctly unified. She states that, "most collective acts of rebellion drew upon the strength and cohesion of the community, requiring its collective will and public participation."⁹⁵ This is certainly significant given the large scale of conflict.⁹⁶ There is a lack of consensus, however, regarding the nature of peasant reaction to collectivization.⁹⁷

Though the issue of peasant agency during collectivization is important, it is nonetheless also illustrative to show how basic state ideological attitudes toward the peasantry changed leading up to the 1930s. Directly after the Civil War, Lenin's ideas centred on the issue of class differentiation among the peasantry. Indeed, within Lenin's constructions, a peasant's class could

⁹⁰ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 100.

⁹¹ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 121. This form of resistance was particularly useful because it could be claimed that fires were started unintentionally.

⁹² Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 127.

⁹³ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 181. Viola notes in her study that "*bab'i bunty*" were instances in which peasant women played the most prominent role and were also the most routine forms of reaction to agricultural policy implementation.

⁹⁴ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 132.

⁹⁵ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 133.

⁹⁶ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 140. Viola provides specific statistical information in relation to this.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Mark Tauger, "Soviet Peasants and Collectivization, 1930–39: Resistance and Adaptation," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 31, no. 3–4 (2004) 430. See Tauger's discussion of what he calls the "resistance interpretation."

be loosely identified simply based on his or her activity.⁹⁸ He defined the middle peasant as particularly significant. In fact he believed he or she accounted for most of the rural population during the early 1920s. In his mind, the middle peasant represented a class that fell somewhere in between proletarian and a farmer of modest means. Thus the loyalties of the middle peasant were uncertain. Depending on various conditions, the middle peasant was either a class enemy or friend of the socialist cause.⁹⁹ In other words, the middle peasant “wavered.”¹⁰⁰ Stalin, however, would eventually put forth a somewhat different interpretation of the middle peasant.

After coming to power, Stalin emphasized the primacy of the worker within the *smychka* and that the peasant played a secondary, if not inferior, role.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, it was impossible, to Stalin’s mind, for socialism to come into existence in the countryside without outside influence.¹⁰² Perhaps most importantly, “Stalin expanded Lenin’s theory of the wavering middle peasant to encompass the entire peasantry, defining and treating the latter more simply as petty producers.”¹⁰³ This changing emphasis on the peasantry is certainly significant when considering collectivization. Indeed it has further implications in considering *1917 in the Countryside*. The notion that socialism could not grow in the countryside independently, for instance, illustrates the significance of Bolshevism within the narrative. The Revolution had to be brought to the countryside by pro-Bolshevik elements such as soldiers and workers. Furthermore, this change also meant that any peasant could be defined as a friend or enemy.¹⁰⁴ In the end, “Lenin’s last

⁹⁸ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 16.

⁹⁹ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 16–17.

¹⁰⁰ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 34.

¹⁰¹ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 22.

¹⁰² Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 23.

¹⁰³ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 24.

writings urged the party to approach the peasantry with caution;” however, his “legacy was fraught with contradictions [...]”¹⁰⁵

Iakovlev’s beliefs about the peasantry were transformed in a similar manner. Iakovlev played an important part as one of the driving figures behind the collectivization campaign.¹⁰⁶ In their work preparing collectivization policy, Iakovlev and his comrades determined that the artel [cooperative] would act as an, “intermediate form of the collective farm [...]”¹⁰⁷ It was believed that this would appeal to the middle peasant in particular, given the forms of privatized production available within the artel.¹⁰⁸ During the Sixteenth Party Congress of the All-Union Communist Party held in June and July of 1930, Iakovlev gave a speech in which he outlined the state of the countryside at the time.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps the most interesting section of Iakovlev’s speech on agriculture is the way in which he sought to organize collective farming. Much like Stalin, Iakovlev described the peasantry within a class framework. He illustrated differences between various groups of peasants and their role in collectivization. What is abundantly clear is that Iakovlev emphasized the importance of the middle peasant in the collective farm.¹¹⁰ He made a further distinction between middle and poor peasants. In particular he discussed the economic disparities between them within the collective farm.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 19.

¹⁰⁶ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 26. In particular he was the head of a commission in preparation for collectivization.

¹⁰⁷ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 26.

¹⁰⁸ Iakov A. Iakovlev, *Report to the XVI Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture* [no translator listed] (Moscow: State Publisher, “The Moscow Workers,” 1931), 60.

¹⁰⁹ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 70; 74. Viola chiefly uses Iakovlev’s report to discuss land use and issues such as cattle and famine during collectivization; she does not focus on Iakovlev or his writings as a subject per se.

¹¹⁰ Iakovlev, *Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture*, 48. In particular he emphasized the importance of placing middle peasants in managerial positions.

¹¹¹ Iakovlev, *Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture*, 51.

According to Iakovlev, the major problem of collectivized farming was the private plots of land that peasants owned within collectives. Although there were no official rules for owning such land, they were vital for the basic survival of farmers during collectivization.¹¹² Within his discussion of private land, Iakovlev asserted certain traits rooted in a peasant's class and related them to his or her attitude to private holdings. In particular, he contended, poorer peasants were far more inclined towards aspects of socialism in comparison to the middle peasant. He makes similar distinctions about the degree to which kulaks could sway either class.¹¹³ One had to be careful, however, in distinguishing the differences between them. To suggest that a class dynamic existed between the poor and middle peasant similar to that between these groups and the kulak, for example, would be "pure Trotskyism."¹¹⁴ Ultimately, in order for peasants to rid the collective of inequality they would have to work hard. This would increase the overall productivity of the collective and therefore decrease any gaps created by private yields.¹¹⁵

The notion that socialism could not develop in the countryside on its own went hand in hand with negative views of the peasant. The rural populace was subjected to what Viola terms "infantilization." Although not unique to the Soviet context, Party officials emphasized the hapless and unenlightened nature of the peasantry, and thus the need for state intervention.¹¹⁶ Such an example of "infantilization," is clear in Iakovlev's speech. While discussing the issue of peasants leaving the collective farm, the Commissar read a letter from the countryside to the congress. Having previously left a collective farm, the peasant author addresses his letter directly

¹¹² Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 208.

¹¹³ Iakovlev, *Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture*, 51.

¹¹⁴ Iakovlev, *Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture*, 52.

¹¹⁵ Iakovlev, *Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture*, 52–53.

¹¹⁶ Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin*, 32.

to Stalin, asking that he and his family be allowed back into the collective. The letter discusses the family's circumstances and what they intend to bring with them as their contribution. The letter uses colorful, yet respectful language in addressing Stalin, which, according to the transcript, produced laughter from many of Iakovlev's comrades. The congress learns that the collective instead wanted to punish the family for ever leaving the collective farm. This produces even more laughter from Iakovlev's audience.¹¹⁷ In this case, the Commissar uses the letter as an example of peasant ignorance. "So" he states in conclusion, "the collectivized farmers, who behaved so 'radically,' in actual fact were forming their neighbours into individual peasants."¹¹⁸ He finishes this section of his speech by using this example to make recommendations on how to run collectives.¹¹⁹

Certainly, the evolving concept of the peasantry underlay state policy. It also informed portrayals of peasants in Soviet works of history. In *1917 in the Countryside*, there are numerous stories of peasant actions that are framed in such a way as to underscore their ignorance. The role of a peasant's class is also highly visible within the peasant narratives of *1917 in the Countryside*, especially concerning the middle peasant. The *Short Course* is similar in this regard. In its discussion of the Revolution of 1905, for example, the textbook outlines how the rural populace reacted to the events of that year. The root cause of peasant unrest was a direct result of worker action. Only after workers rose against the state in urban areas did the peasantry stir. To the landlords' dismay, the peasantry began seizing their property. The state then moved to put down peasant insurrection, treating instigators with harsh retribution. Operating

¹¹⁷ Iakovlev, *Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture*, 57.

¹¹⁸ Iakovlev, *Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture*, 57.

¹¹⁹ Iakovlev, *Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture*, 57.

simultaneously, the Bolsheviks addressed the countryside as they began assembling revolutionary organizations. This eventually led to even more peasant protest.¹²⁰ Even though the Revolution of 1905 would fail, the “bulwark of tsardom began to totter.”¹²¹ Overall, there was very little written about the peasantry during the Revolution of 1905 in the *Short Course*. Still, there are two basic elements the text makes clear. First, the role of the Party and organization was critical to the peasant movement. Secondly, the textbook almost exclusively discusses the peasant in partnership with the workers, foreshadowing the *smychka*.¹²² Even before the Revolution of 1905, however, there was a growing social differentiation within the peasantry, according to the *Short Course*.¹²³

The *Short Course* points out that there were a number of reasons why 1917 was successful in comparison to 1905. This was in part due to the allegedly highly visible relationship between the ruling classes and parties in opposition to Bolshevism. This destroyed the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks’ respective relationships with the masses.¹²⁴ Perhaps more importantly, the largest section of the peasantry, the rural destitute, emerged as a friend of the proletarian class. The poorer of the class arrived at this relationship after having experienced themselves the actions of SRs and Mensheviks in the countryside.¹²⁵ However, it was their conversion to the *smychka* which, “determined the conduct of the middle peasants, who had long been vacillating and only on the eve of the October uprising wholeheartedly swung

¹²⁰ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 60.

¹²¹ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 60.

¹²² TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 60. In particular the text states that the alliance had significant impact on the armed forces.

¹²³ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 6.

¹²⁴ Brandenberger, “Stalin’s Rewriting of 1917,” 686.

¹²⁵ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 213.

over towards the revolution [...].”¹²⁶ Indeed, the middle peasant played a particularly important role, especially having eventually overtaken the poor peasant in number after 1917.¹²⁷

There are thus a number of similarities between *1917 in the Countryside* and the *Short Course*. Both illustrate a peasant movement dependent on the actions of the Bolsheviks. They also make distinctions between the actions of the peasantry based on class. The middle peasant grew in significance throughout the 1920s and into the age of collectivization. Thus their significance becomes paramount within the overall Soviet narrative. There are several deviations between these narratives, however. Such deviations find themselves rooted in several political factors. The field of history itself was changing dramatically between the 1920s and the 1930s. This was related to the efforts of the state to create textbooks. Members of the Party along with Stalin saw numerous problems with history that they sought to correct.

Long before the competition for a new textbook in the Soviet Union, Stalin sent a famous letter to the journal *Proletarskaia revolutsiia*, in 1931. The general secretary singled out one historian’s contribution to the prominent historical journal. In particular, he noted that the historian’s portrayal of Lenin was harmful. He even advised that it should not have been printed. Stalin then demanded that historians practice their trade with stricter attention so that inappropriate material would not go unnoticed. Ultimately, history needed to be stripped of Trotskyism and other anti-Bolshevik elements.¹²⁸ Chaos ensued as, “the search for politically harmful elements in historical literature became the principal activity of Marxist historians.”¹²⁹

At the same time, Pokrovskii was being challenged by a number of his fellow comrades within

¹²⁶ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 213.

¹²⁷ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 233.

¹²⁸ John Barber, “Stalin’s Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya,” *Soviet Studies* 28, no. 1 (1976): 21.

¹²⁹ Barber, “Stalin’s Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya,” 22.

his field.¹³⁰ The ongoing debate between Pokrovskii and Teodorovich was in full swing.¹³¹ The historical community was distinctly disjointed. Such a divided atmosphere was counter to state goals.¹³² Thus, according to John Barber, Stalin wrote his letter, “with an immediately political purpose, to assist the creation of an ideology suitable for new entrants into the party lacking theoretical knowledge or political experience.”¹³³ It is evident however, that Stalin’s actions were not prompted by any secretive designs for change, had he any such plans, Stalin would have acted with help from allied comrades acutely aware of such goals within academia. Counterintuitively, his letter was actually detrimental to the reputation of Iaroslavskii,¹³⁴ who, by this point, was the, “scourge of oppositionists and one of the regime’s foremost polemicists [...]”¹³⁵ As Iaroslavskii would later be recruited to develop what would become the *Short Course* of 1938, it seems that Stalin, at least at this point, did not have conspiratorial intent per se and was mostly preoccupied with creating an accessible textbook for rank-and-file members.¹³⁶

After his death in 1932, Pokrovskii and his works were severely criticized. The “anti-Pokrovskii campaign,”¹³⁷ as it has come to be known, reached its peak in 1936.¹³⁸ In contrast to previous scholarly understanding, the campaign was not entirely of Stalin’s design.¹³⁹ In fact, it was interrelated with two major efforts undertaken by the state. First, there were considerable

¹³⁰ Barber, “Stalin’s Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya,” 37.

¹³¹ Barber, “Stalin’s Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya,” 38.

¹³² Barber, “Stalin’s Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya,” 39.

¹³³ Barber, “Stalin’s Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya,” 39.

¹³⁴ Barber, “Stalin’s Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya,” 39.

¹³⁵ Barber, “Stalin’s Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya,” 39.

¹³⁶ Brandenberger, “Stalin’s Rewriting of 1917,” 682.

¹³⁷ Brandenberger, “Who Killed Pokrovskii? (the Second Time),” 68.

¹³⁸ Brandenberger, “Who Killed Pokrovskii? (the Second Time),” 67.

¹³⁹ Brandenberger, “Who Killed Pokrovskii? (the Second Time),” 67. This was the particular view of M. V. Nechkina.

alterations made to the educational system in the Soviet Union. Secondly, there was an attempt by Stalin and others to further regulate works of history. Earlier, in 1934, Stalin lamented the situation regarding textbooks in the Soviet Union, notably pointing the finger at Pokrovskii.¹⁴⁰ The ensuing crusade against him came in the form of a commission responsible for addressing problems with historical works used for educational purposes. Interestingly enough, Iakovlev was a member of this group.¹⁴¹ As the commission considered the problems it faced during its first meeting, Pokrovskii was once more, “blamed for the weak state of Soviet historiography [...]”¹⁴² The criticisms made by the commission were eventually transformed into a political attack on Pokrovskii, which was likely initiated by Nikolai Bukharin.¹⁴³ In fact, the entire focus of history in the Soviet Union shifted as well. As Pokrovskii’s theoretical underpinnings were being undone, state needs in Soviet historiography led to, “the revival of the national school.”¹⁴⁴ It is interesting that Iakovlev played such an important role in the state’s efforts to change textbooks. This is especially important given his previous association with Pokrovskii in writing a history of 1917. However, it is difficult to determine the closeness of their relationship. Nor is it certain what role Iakovlev may have played in demolishing his former colleague’s reputation. It is apparent, however, that Iakovlev had at least some influence in determining the direction of history during the 1930s.

¹⁴⁰ David Brandenberger, “Politics Projected into the Past: What Precipitated the 1936 Campaign Against M. N. Pokrovskii?,” in *Reinterpreting Revolutionary Russia: Essays in Honour of James D. White*, edited by Ian D. Thatcher (London: Macmillan, 2006) 204.

¹⁴¹ Brandenberger, “Who Killed Pokrovskii? (the Second Time),” 68.

¹⁴² Brandenberger, “Who Killed Pokrovskii? (the Second Time),” 68.

¹⁴³ Brandenberger, “Politics Projected into the Past,” 205.

¹⁴⁴ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, 194.

Two years prior to the campaign against Pokrovskii, in 1934, Iakovlev (among several others) launched a competition. Seeing the unimpressive state of how history was taught in schools, scholars were solicited and instructed to create new texts for educational purposes. Following this, the Party announced its position on teaching history in public education.¹⁴⁵ The state's goal was to, "replace the chaos prevailing in the use of numerous textbooks," especially given that at the time, "around sixty different textbooks and handbooks were in use in primary schools [...]."¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, party officials asserted that the teaching of history was directly linked to socialism's development.¹⁴⁷ However, few entries were submitted on time and many would prove questionable to Stalin. By this point, Soviet academics were well aware of Stalin's general expectations for Soviet history. In fact, Stalin had already made his ideas clear by overseeing the production of a well-known historical work some time before the competition. However, the interpretations of *specific* historical subjects had yet to be clarified by the general secretary. Therefore, Stalin was considerably displeased after reading what historians originally produced.¹⁴⁸ The competition would not see clear results, nor yield a clear winner, until some years after it was initiated.

Iakovlev, and his fellow members of the commission, gathered once again in the early months of 1937. At their first meeting they began arguing over the outcome of the competition. On the whole, the committee mainly discussed problems they found within the texts under

¹⁴⁵ A.N. Artizov, "To Suit the Views of the Leader: The 1936 Competition for the [Best] Textbook on the History of the USSR," *Russian Studies in History* 31, no. 4 (1993): 9–10.

¹⁴⁶ Artizov, "To Suit the Views of the Leader," 11.

¹⁴⁷ Daniel Dorotich, "A Turning Point in the Soviet School: The Seventeenth Party Congress and the Teaching of History," *History of Education Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1967): 297.

¹⁴⁸ Artizov, "To Suit the Views of the Leader," 12–13. In particular Artizov points out his criticism of a work emended by N. N. Vanag.

review.¹⁴⁹ Andrei Bubnov opened by, “accusing historians of hesitating to renounce the old errors and of being devoted to Pokrovskii’s scheme.”¹⁵⁰ Bubnov’s conclusions on the competition’s outcome initiated the argument. Eventually, the committee reached a conclusion on the competition. After some alterations by Bubnov, the results were submitted to Andrei Zhdanov, who served as a reviewer for the commission. They went rejected, however, due to Stalin’s disapproval.¹⁵¹ Some months later, Iakovlev went over Bubnov’s head by providing Zhdanov with his own proposal on the competitions results. Unlike Bubnov’s proposal, Iakovlev’s won out, but only briefly as Iakovlev and Bubnov were both arrested in October 1937.¹⁵² It is worth noting that in creating his own results, Iakovlev, “consulted directly with Stalin.”¹⁵³ While the outcome Iakovlev had arrived at left no clear winner, overall, this competition was significant in laying the foundation for the final version of what would become the *Short Course* of 1938.¹⁵⁴ Meanwhile, this all occurred while Pokrovskii’s legacy was being attacked on all sides.¹⁵⁵ According to A. N. Artizov, history became, “an obedient tool for shaping the kind of political consciousness of the masses that suited the Leader.”¹⁵⁶ What is perhaps more difficult to explain is Iakovlev’s role in the campaign against Pokrovskii. As far as his relationship with Stalin is concerned, the general secretary clearly saw value in Iakovlev and Iakovlev in turn was clearly sympathetic to Stalin. This is especially apparent in Iakovlev’s work on history.

¹⁴⁹ Artizov, “To Suit the Views of the Leader,” 20.

¹⁵⁰ Artizov, “To Suit the Views of the Leader,” 20.

¹⁵¹ Artizov, “To Suit the Views of the Leader,” 22.

¹⁵² Artizov, “To Suit the Views of the Leader,” 23.

¹⁵³ Artizov, “To Suit the Views of the Leader,” 23.

¹⁵⁴ Brandenberger, “Stalin’s Rewriting of 1917,” 680.

¹⁵⁵ Artizov, “To Suit the Views of the Leader,” 27.

¹⁵⁶ Artizov, “To Suit the Views of the Leader,” 27.

Indeed, some years prior to the competition, Iakovlev had publicly criticized one of Stalin's enemies, Alexander Shliapnikov, over interpretations of 1917.¹⁵⁷ The nature of Iakovlev's criticism was that Shliapnikov failed to show that the Bolsheviks had led the workers during the February Revolution of 1917. D. A. Longley notes that Iakovlev's attack on Stalin's rival was an important one and that the questions that Iakovlev raised about 1917 during this time were legitimate historical inquiries that have been relatively unstudied.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps this is due to the apparent emphasis historians place on Stalin and the silencing of his enemies. Such emphasis, according to Longley, has placed those attacked by Stalin in the historical spotlight in comparison to other actors.¹⁵⁹ While both "Shliapnikov and Iakovlev died in the Gulag," only the former was an outspoken critic of Stalin and perhaps that is why Iakovlev remains an understudied figure.¹⁶⁰ Iakovlev was executed in 1938. Not only did he admit to being the leader of a Trotskyite organization, he also confessed that he had worked to undermine agriculture from his position as Commissar.¹⁶¹ Longley's points about the potential importance of Iakovlev's relationship with Stalin beg the question as to what role the general secretary played in shaping the historical field.

The *Short Course* of 1938 would maintain its status as the most important history of the Soviet Union until the Khrushchev era.¹⁶² The book was in many ways a product of efforts to establish a work of history that was widely accessible to its readership.¹⁶³ Beginning in 1937,

¹⁵⁷ Longley, "Iakovlev's Question," 371.

¹⁵⁸ Longley, "Iakovlev's Question," 382.

¹⁵⁹ Longley, "Iakovlev's Question," 382.

¹⁶⁰ Longley, "Iakovlev's Question," 382.

¹⁶¹ "Protokol doprosa Ia. A. Iakovleva," 15 October 1937. Document 226 from the fond of Aleksandr N. Iakovlev: <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/61208>.

¹⁶² Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 688.

¹⁶³ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 682.

Iaroslavskii and his comrade Piotr Pospelov set out to mold this new history from one of Iaroslavskii's older works. After a significant number of revisions it was completed by the following year.¹⁶⁴ Iaroslavskii's and Pospelov's work however, was met again with Stalin's disapproval. Ultimately, the general secretary, "decided to rewrite it himself that summer rather than return it to its authors."¹⁶⁵ Brandenberger points out that Stalin made several important changes to what was given to him. In particular, there were important alterations made to the part on 1917.¹⁶⁶ For example, in comparison to the original text, the importance of international factors affecting the Revolution was significantly reduced.¹⁶⁷ Stalin went on to stress the ever greater role of the Party,¹⁶⁸ which came at the expense of other groups such as the peasantry.¹⁶⁹ What then became of the peasantry in revolution?

Brandenberger notes that the *Short Course* discusses the Provisional Government and its failure to meet the needs of the people. Stalin had, "cut details on popular resentment in this regard, reducing the historical agency that Yaroslavsky and Pospelov had granted to the grassroots."¹⁷⁰ This question of agency is a significant one. Perhaps the most important section dealing with the Revolution of 1917 and the peasantry within the *Short Course* is that on the Kornilov affair (called the "Kornilov revolt" in the textbook itself). Stalin had initially advised the authors on this subject.¹⁷¹ However, even after the historians heeded his word the general

¹⁶⁴ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 682.

¹⁶⁵ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 684.

¹⁶⁶ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 684.

¹⁶⁷ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 686.

¹⁶⁸ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 686.

¹⁶⁹ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 689.

¹⁷⁰ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 686.

¹⁷¹ Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 683.

secretary still made changes to this material. Within the text, the Kornilov revolt was primarily used to discuss the nature of parties in competition with the Bolsheviks.¹⁷²

As concerns the peasantry, the *Short Course* discusses the Kornilov revolt in relation to the question of the landowner as a class enemy. It shows how the peasantry reacted to developing political events and how the revolt was formative in their relationship with Bolshevism. However, in regards to this the text makes a distinction between different substrata of peasants. In particular, it claimed that it was the poor peasant who was first converted to Bolshevism:¹⁷³

As to the middle peasants, whose vacillations had retarded the development of the revolution in the period from April to August 1917, after the rout of Kornilov they definitely began to swing towards the Bolshevik Party, joining forces with the poor peasants. The broad masses of the peasantry were coming to realize that only the Bolshevik Party could deliver them from the war, and that only this Party was capable of crushing the landlords and was prepared to turn over the land to the peasants.¹⁷⁴

Though relatively short, this section is still significant for two reasons. First, the class background of the peasant determined their actions. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it portrays the peasantry, or at least part of it, in a negative way. Aside from sections on the Kornilov Affair (or revolt); the Revolution of 1905; and *the People's Will*, little else in the *Short Course* gives agency to the peasantry. Apart from a short section discussing the Second Congress of Soviets and the issue of land,¹⁷⁵ the peasant is not really in the revolutionary narrative of 1917 anywhere else in the *Short Course*.

¹⁷² Brandenberger, "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," 686.

¹⁷³ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 202.

¹⁷⁴ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 202.

¹⁷⁵ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 209.

Overall there are several broad similarities between *1917 in the Countryside* and the *Short Course*. In both texts, the landowner is the focus of peasant strife. Land was also central to the peasant question in both texts. Ultimately, the outcome of 1917 was dependent on Bolshevism in both works. There is, however, considerable deviation in the focus of each text. This is most clearly visible in the lack of the peasant as a subject in the *Short Course*. It is as if they almost disappear from the narrative of the revolution. When peasants are discussed they are either mentioned as part of an alliance with workers or even negatively portrayed. One must ask if there is any peasant agency to be found in the pages of the *Short Course*? There is at least one instance worth considering.

In its discussion of the period prior to the First World War, the *Short Course* elaborates on the importance of *Pravda*. The text goes on to cite a letter published in *Pravda* from Pskov province. It describes a peasant uprising in which the rural populace clashed with officials over the issue of land.¹⁷⁶ Can this be considered agency or even some form of peasant voice? Perhaps in some form; however, it is drastically different from anything that might be found in *1917 in the Countryside*. The author of the letter to *Pravda* remains unnamed, with no indication of his or her class. Furthermore, the majority of the discussion is devoted to Lenin and land politics.¹⁷⁷ It seems that, for the most part, the peasantry is deprived of its voice within the narrative. As a character, it is treated far more superficially than in Iakovlev's and Pokrovskii's work. The peasant in the narrative acts as a single body, only occasionally broken up into smaller substrata.

¹⁷⁶ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 152.

¹⁷⁷ TSK KPSS, *Short Course*, 152.

Conclusion

As the new Bolshevik state grew in power and influence it faced the serious issue of its own legitimacy. Lenin created Istpart in order to establish a believable “foundation narrative” that would cement the Bolsheviks’ role in bringing revolution to the masses. However, the Bolsheviks did not have a monopoly on early Soviet history. Many narratives already existed in the 1920s, which were written by opposition parties such as the Socialist Revolutionaries. These were challenges to the mythological story the Bolsheviks wanted to tell. Overall, the peasantry proved problematic in completing Istparts’ mission, especially in creating the story of 1917. Historians like Mikhail Pokrovskii grappled with this issue, only to face criticism when their ideas contradicted state initiatives such as collectivization and the policy of Socialism in One Country. *1917 in the Countryside* exists as a result of these problems. As the Bolsheviks sought to memorialize the past in the jubilees of 1925 and 1927, Istpart set out to the countryside to gather source material for their narrative.

Early Soviet scholars inherited old stereotypes about the nature of their rural brethren. Peasants were “backward” and represented everything that was contradictory of a Marxist worldview. How then could a socialist government exist when the majority of its population was not proletarian? What was perhaps even more alarming was the lack of influence the Bolsheviks had in the countryside. During the 1920s they sought to address this issue in the creation of newspapers such as *Peasant Gazette* in which peasants could publicly contribute their thoughts and ideas. In turn the Bolsheviks could communicate their own ideology. Lenin likewise

attempted to involve the peasant in state management, placing peasants at the head of Narkomzem with an aim to further control the peasantry. But such efforts eventually failed towards the end of the decade. People of peasant origin employed in the organization were met with mistreatment brought on by the implication of their “ignorance.” As the Bolsheviks implemented new policies to modernize agriculture in the 1930s, the basic concepts of their non-proletarian citizens evolved. Stalin’s influence during this period cannot be understated. Indeed, Iakovlev’s own understanding of the peasantry lined up with the dominance of Stalin’s ideas which informed his policy choices as the Commissar of Agriculture. This and a host of other issues necessitated further consideration of history and a new narrative for 1917.

With their changing attitudes toward the peasantry, state officials sought to consolidate the way history was produced in the Soviet Union. They tried to accomplish this by changing the educational system and holding a competition for an educational textbook. In the end, Stalin took control of a project that would result in the development of the *Short Course*. The textbook maintained its dominance as a historical work in the Soviet Union until the 1950s. Within the new narrative of the *Short Course*, the role of the peasant in history retained certain features of the narrative elaborated in *1917 in the Countryside*. The new story of 1917 centered around the importance of Bolshevism. Far from disappearing entirely, the peasant was significant in explaining the revolution’s success. They were the friends of the proletariat, working together to tear down the oppressive classes. Where the *Short Course* deviates from its counterpart is in the narrativization of their importance. Peasants had little revolutionary potential in both works; however, it is in the *Short Course* that the peasants become negative actors. Middle peasants, the textbook argued, due to their uncertain political standing, actually held the revolution back.

Further still, the rural populace is more often than not portrayed only in relation to the worker, or as a divided group, unable to organize without outside influences. The greatest difference between the two works concerns the existence of the peasant voice.

1917 in the Countryside was unique because it featured the stories told by peasants of their revolutionary experience. Though their stories were clearly written under state directives, they were able to express themselves and give life to 1917. Immersed in a socialist context, the peasant utilized the same language as their urban, proletarian counterparts. They completed the mission Istpart had originally set out to accomplish. The peasant legitimized the state through history by showing Bolshevism's place within it. But with the advent of political change came a change in how history was written. The peasant narrative within the *Short Course* is far simpler, lacking any notion of rural representatives. The textbook accomplishes the same mission as *1917 in the Countryside*, but at the expense of the masses and any understanding of them. Much like the two directors of the project, the peasant voice found in *1917 in the Countryside* experienced its own death. Only during 1960s when both Iakovlev and Pokrovskii were rehabilitated did the work resurface giving it renewed life. Much in the same way the peasant's memoirs memorialized the revolution, in 1967 Igritskii memorialized his comrade Iakovlev as, "an outstanding figure of our Party, a prominent historian," and *1917 in the Countryside* as an important work in the annals of Soviet history:

It was read with great interest by direct participants of the Great October Socialist Revolution, as well as young workers, students, and peasants in our country. The interest shown in the book was also evidenced by the numerous letters that came to the editorial board of *Peasant Gazette*.¹

¹ Igritskii, "1917 god v derevne," 2.

Igritskii explained in his commentary that the reissue of *1917 in the Countryside* to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Soviet Union was a wonderful idea because of the first hand accounts written by peasants contained within its pages. Igritskii reminisces about his training as a “scientific” researcher during the project and underscores that Iakovlev was critical to interpreting the complex and difficult questions posed by the source material. Overall, Iakovlev remains an understudied figure in Soviet history and *1917 in the Countryside* remains an invaluable resource for understanding the Soviet peasantry.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

“1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian” [*1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs*], edited by Ia. A. Iakovlev. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Krest'ianskaia gazeta,” 1929.

“1917 god v derevne: vospominaniia krest'ian” [*1917 in the Countryside: Peasant Memoirs*], edited by Ia. A. Iakovlev and I.V. Igritskii. Moscow: Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1967.

Iakovlev, Iakov A. *Report to the XVI Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Collective Farming and the Development of Agriculture* [no translator listed]. Moscow: State Publisher, “The Moscow Workers,” 1931.

“Protokol doprosa Ia. A. Iakovleva” [Interrogation Report of Ia. A. Iakovlev] 15 October 1937. Document 226 from the fond of Aleksandr N. Iakovlev: <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/61208>.

Pokrovskii, Mikhail N. *Russia in World History: Selected Essays by M. N. Pokrovskii*. Translated by Roman Szporluk and Mary Ann Szporluk. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970.

TSK KPSS. *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, edited by the Commission of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. (B.) [no translator listed]. New York: International Publishers, 1939.

Secondary Sources

Artizov, A.N. "To Suit the Views of the Leader: The 1936 Competition for the [Best] Textbook on the History of the USSR," *Russian Studies in History* 31, no. 4 (1993): 9–29.

Badcock, Sarah. "'We're for the Muzhiks' Party!': Peasant Support for the Socialist Revolutionary Party During 1917'," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 1 (2001): 133–149.

Barber, John. "Stalin's Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya," *Soviet Studies* 28, no. 1 (1976): 21–41.

Brandenberger, David. "Politics Projected into the Past: What Precipitated the 1936 Campaign Against M. N. Pokrovskii?," in *Reinterpreting Revolutionary Russia: Essays in Honour of James D. White*, edited by Ian D. Thatcher. London: Macmillan, 2006.

Brandenberger, David. "Stalin's Rewriting of 1917," *The Russian Review* 76 (2017): 667–689.

Brandenberger, David. "Who Killed Pokrovskii? (the Second Time): The Prelude to the Denunciation of the Father of Soviet Marxist Historiography, January 1936," *Revolutionary Russia* 11, no. 1 (1998): 67–73.

Brandenberger, David and Zelenov, M.V. "The Short Course on Party History," from the Stalin Digital Archive: <https://www.stalindigitalarchive.com/frontend/the-short-course-on-party-history-bradenberger-zelenov>

Burgess, William Francis. "The Istpart Commission: The Historical Department of the Russian Communist Party Central Committee, 1920–1928," Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University. University Microfilms International, 1981.

Coe, Steve. "Struggles for Authority in the NEP Village: The Early Rural Correspondents Movement, 1923–1927," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 7 (1996): 1151–1171.

Corney, Frederick. "Rethinking a Great Event: The October Revolution as Memory Project," *Social Science History* 22, no. 4 (1998): 389–414.

Corney, Frederick. *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.

Dando, William. "A Map of the Election to the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917," *Slavic Review* 25, no. 2 (1966): 314–319.

Dorotich, Daniel. "The Disgrace and Rehabilitation of M. N. Pokrovsky," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8 (1966): 169–181.

Dorotich, Daniel. "A Turning Point in the Soviet School: The Seventeenth Party Congress and the Teaching of History," *History of Education Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1967): 295–311.

Enteen, George. *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat: M.N. Pokrovskii and the Society of Marxist Historians*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978.

Frank, Stephen. "Popular Justice, Community and Culture among the Russian Peasantry, 1870–1900," *The Russian Review* 46, no. 3 (1987): 239–265.

Gorham, Michael. "Tongue-Tied Writers: The Rabsel'kor Movement and the Voice of the 'New Intelligentsia' in Early Soviet Russia," *The Russian Review* 55, no. 3 (1996): 412–429.

Halfin, Igal. *Stalinist Confessions: Messianism and Terror at Leningrad Communist University*. Pittsburg: Pittsburg University Press, 2009.

Heinzen, James. "'Alien' Personnel in the Soviet State: The People's Commissariat of Agriculture Under Proletarian Dictatorship, 1918–1929," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 1 (1997): 73–100.

Heinzen, James. "'Peasants from the Plow' to 'Professors from the Plow': The Culture of the Soviet People's Commissariat of Agriculture, 1921–29," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 25, no. 2 (1998): 131–158.

Hickey, Michael. "Paper, Memory, and a Good Story: How Smolensk Got its 'October'," *Revolutionary Russia* 13, no. 2 (2000): 1–19.

Hudson, Hugh. "Bridging the Russian Cultural Gap: Language and Culture Wars in the Creation of a Soviet Peasant Press," *American Journalism* 21, no. 1 (2004): 13–36.

Hudson, Hugh, "Shaping Peasant Political Discourse During the New Economic Policy: The Newspaper *Krest'ianskaia Gazeta* and the Case of 'Vladimir Ia.'," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 2 (2002): 303–317.

Kolchinskii, E.I. "T. D. Lysenko kak Proekt Narkomzema Ia. A. Iakovleva" ["T.D. Lysenko as a Project of People's Commissar for Agriculture Ia. A. Iakovlev"], *Studies in the History of Biology* 7, no. 2 (2015): 1–2.

Lenoe, Matthew. "Letter-Writing and the State: Reader Correspondence with Newspapers as a Source for Early Soviet History," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 40, no. 1/2 (1999): 139–169.

Longley, David. "Iakovlev's Question, Or the Historiography of the Problem of Spontaneity and Leadership in the Russian Revolution of 1917," in *Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917*, edited by Edith Rogovin Frankel, Jonathan Frankel, and Baruch Knei-Paz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Lyandres, Semion and Nikolaev, Andrei Borisovich. "Contemporary Russian Scholarship on the February Revolution in Petrograd: Some Centenary Observations," *Revolutionary Russia* 30, no. 2 (2017): 158–181.

McDonald, Tracy. *Face to the Village: The Riazan Countryside Under Soviet Rule, 1921–1930*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011.

Smith, Stephen. "Moral Economy and Peasant Revolution in Russia: 1861–1918." *Revolutionary Russia* 24, no. 2 (2011): 143–171.

Viola, Lynne. "The Peasants' Kulak: Social Identities and Moral Economy in the Soviet Countryside in the 1920s," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 42, no. 4 (2000): 431–460.

Viola, Lynne. *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

White, James. "Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution 1918–24," *Soviet Studies* 37, no. 3 (1985): 330–352.

White, James. "Historiography of the Russian Revolution in the Twenties," *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 1, no. 1 (1973): 42–54.