Proletarian Peasants

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A Strike Movement—Demands and Tactics

The First Russian Revolution throughout Rural Russia

The Revolution of 1905 did not fall like a bolt of lightning from a cloudless sky. These events were the culmination of tensions that had been building for half a century, if not longer. The peasant emancipation of 1861 changed many personal and economic relationships on the land, but it did not usher in an era of progress and prosperity in rural Russia. In return for their personal freedom and control of their allotments, peasants had to give up a part of their land and compensate the nobility above and beyond the market value of what were already inadequate holdings. Peasants also lost the free use of the landlords’ woods and pastures. The forest had been a vital source of fuel and food, and the meadows had been grazed by peasant livestock. The loss of these customary rights (servitutnye prava) represented a severe blow to peasants who reacted to the disappointing emancipation settlement with violence and rage. Disturbances and disorders were numerous throughout the early 1860s. The emancipation decree had been intended to quell peasant discontent. Instead, it sparked even more instability.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, rural Russia experienced a profoundly disorienting transition that dimmed hopes of
progress not only for the peasantry but for the nobility as well. Much of rural Russia proved ill-equipped to transform agricultural practices in ways that would allow the production of massive surpluses. Yet, the empire now required these changes in order to develop the kind of industrial base that could support a modern army. To finance industrial growth and encourage exports, the state severely taxed the entire agricultural sector in a variety of ways. The autocracy took these steps at a particularly difficult moment. Worldwide economic depression began in the mid-1870s and lasted for twenty years. The massive influx of American grain into Europe lowered prices precipitously. Long-standing anti-entrepreneurial attitudes and lack of capital did not make Russian nobles especially good candidates for the new role of gentleman farmer. Low prices for grain made the rewards minimal and, accordingly, the chances of success slight. As a result, nobles relinquished massive amounts of land in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By 1905, they had sold some 40 percent of their holdings; most of these lands went to peasants.

But the acquisition of so much land did not improve peasant lives. Although peasants now controlled more land, there were now many more peasants. Between 1858 and 1897, the peasant estate grew by nearly 60 percent. The reasons for this massive population growth are uncertain, but its results were clear enough. The gains achieved by the peasantry as a whole were nullified by demographic pressures. Land hunger (*malozeml'e*) became the

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dominant fact of life for most peasants. If most nobles could not make the switch to modern methods, peasants, with their supposed devotion to custom and their primitive practices, were thought to be even less likely to achieve success although peasant innovation was not unknown. By the end of the nineteenth century the traditional peasant goal of subsistence was no longer simply an implicit cultural norm of the village. While overall productivity rose during this period and yields increased, the gains were not evenly distributed among lords and peasants.²

By the 1890s, the problems caused by the transformation of rural Russia were evident to most outside observers. Even so, overt peasant responses to these difficulties were episodic and isolated. Although still sporadic, disputes over the use of forests and meadows became ever more common, and the level of illegal wood cutting, livestock grazing, and crop stealing increased with each passing year. In the spring of 1902, however, the left-bank Ukrainian provinces of Kharkov and Poltava witnessed thousands of peasants involved in massive destruction of property and widespread arson. What had been a series of random and separated incidents now showed signs of becoming a movement. These disorders were met with severe government repression, and peasants had a new series of grievances against the authorities, who now joined the landlords as their hated enemies. In the next two years, the number of disorders continued to grow.

Instability in the countryside was matched by disaffection in the cities. Strikes by workers and students became more numerous and militant, and members of Russia’s rapidly growing free professions also came to join a national chorus demanding a wide variety of reforms. In order to take the nation’s mind off its many problems, the autocracy, in 1904, offered Russia a “short, victorious war” with what it thought would be a weak Japanese adversary. The result was quick, ignominious defeat.

On January 9, 1905, soldiers fired, without provocation, on a mass demonstration of workers who had come to the Palace Square in St. Petersburg to petition the tsar for a redress of their

grievances. The subsequent massacre became known as "Bloody Sunday." This event touched off a wave of strikes and protests that did not escape the attention of those in the countryside. With a large part of the army at the front, peasants realized that the moment had come to settle old scores. The army, itself composed of peasants, was rife with mutiny.\(^3\) Peasant frustration became all the more intense with a series of crop failures that made both the winter and summer harvests among the poorest of the last decade. The immediate difficulty of surviving on their allotments intensified the peasants' long-standing belief that their central problem was severe land hunger.

According to the research conducted in central archives in the 1950s by the Soviet specialist S. M. Dubrovskii, there were 7,165 manifestations of what was called the "peasant movement" in Russia during 1905, 1906, and 1907.\(^4\) Nearly 30 percent of these incidents occurred in the six provinces of the Central Black Earth region (Kursk, Orel, Riazan, Tula, Tambov, and Voronezh). Of all the other regions of the empire, the three provinces that made up the southwest ranked second with 985 disturbances. These numbers cannot be seen as scientifically accurate. In the decades since Dubrovskii and his assistants combed the repositories of Moscow and Leningrad, scores of other Soviet historians have worked in local archives. It is now claimed that more than 18,000 disorders of various kinds occurred in this period.\(^5\) Despite this new research, the contours of the movement described by Dubrovskii remain the same, and the Central Black Earth region and the right-bank Ukraine are still seen, along with the Mid-Volga, as the leading centers of peasant activity.

Disorders in the countryside during these years assumed a wide variety of forms, and the ways in which rural cultivators chose to express their discontent tell us much about peasant society and peasant politics. Disturbances could entail isolated crop stealing by a single peasant or massive strikes involving hundreds of wage workers. The most common forms of the movement involved vio-


\(^4\)Dubrovskii, 1956, p. 60.

\(^5\)Simonova, p. 1.
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Arson accounted for 18.1 percent of the disorders uncovered by Dubrovskii. Another 15.7 percent of the disturbances involved destruction of estates; illegal woodcutting occurred 15 percent of the time. Most of the manifestations of the movement were spontaneous, primitively organized, and directed almost entirely against landlords. When peasants articulated demands, during 1905, they expressed vague hopes for the long-awaited “total repartition” that would rid them of the gentry and give them all of Russia’s land. If their goals were specific, they usually harked back to some mythical golden age when the land was theirs and the nobility was absent. Millenarian but backward-looking goals of this sort were typical of traditional peasant disorders in a wide variety of precapitalist societies and were in no way limited to Russia.

Confrontations with police and soldiers were common and most often bloody. More than ever before, the state became an object of peasant hatred along with the landlords. At such moments, villages acted cohesively. According to Soviet and Western scholars, class tensions within the commune, during 1905, were less important than common hatred for the aristocracy, state, and merchants. If any specific group within the peasantry could be said to have played a leading role, it was the so-called middle peasantry, which was in truth the traditional peasantry. Younger men, many of them literate, everywhere demonstrated considerable militance. As was common in most peasant societies, women and old people throughout the empire played small roles and some even sought to retard the movement out of fear.

It was also common for villages to act apart from neighboring settlements, directing their wrath only against their own landlords. When peasants articulated their grievances, they invariably cited malozeml’e, land hunger. When they specified demands at all, it was clear their ultimate goal was the confiscation of all gentry, state, and church lands to be divided by the peasantry, acting on their own. All these forms of behavior were far more reminiscent of the rural disorders that had taken place not only in Russia but in

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7 Dubrovskii, 1955, p. 65.
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premodern Europe as well. They bore little resemblance to the more organized strikes and politically conscious demonstrations then sweeping Russia’s cities. Rather, they repeated patterns that had been seen throughout the premodern world for centuries.

The peasant movement first became visible in February 1905, but it was not until June that the number of disorders became massive. By fall a general strike gripped the cities. To quell the discontent tsar Nicholas II issued a manifesto on October 17, proclaiming civil liberties, but failing to address the land question in the same way. In response, peasants engaged in even more numerous and destructive disorders. By February 1906, the countryside had quieted down in the face of heavy repression by police and soldiers. That summer, however, the disturbances resumed at much the same level as the previous fall. The movement then continued at a diminished pace, flaring up again the next summer and dying down by the end of 1907. Most historians, Soviet and Western, ascribe the eventual return of peace in the countryside to peasant exhaustion and government repression.

Agitators from a variety of political groups were active in the countryside before and after 1905. Yet no single group led or controlled peasant actions. Proclamations and pamphlets were found throughout rural Russia. Activists from the Socialist Revolutionary party, as well as many Social Democrats, had been organizing among the peasantry for years, but when the moment came, the peasants mobilized themselves. Their actions were spontaneous, and their militance was largely self-generated. Peasants articulated but did not emphasize such political goals as constituent assemblies, universal suffrage, and freedom to organize politically. Their first concern was the land question, and when the Duma finally began operating as part of Russia’s new semi-parliamentary system, they saw it primarily as one more institution to which they could address their demands on what was for them the central issue.

The movement throughout the empire spread through its own momentum. Rumor played a more powerful role than any single

9Manning, p. 141.
10Owen, p. 12.
11Peter Maslov, Krestianskoe dvizhenie v Rossii v epokhu pervoi russkoi revoliutsii (Moscow, 1924), p. 3. Shestakov, 1926, p. 4.
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agitator. Bazaars and fairs were crucial points for transmitting what was often garbled information. Newspapers, carrying dispatches from the front, circulated widely in the countryside, and peasants then read other news of widespread disorder and discontent. Peasant illiteracy was no impediment to the influence of the press—literate peasants simply read aloud to their neighbors. The village was hardly isolated from the outside world. In fact, it was well aware of the turmoil throughout Russia. Workers from the cities and veterans returning from the front brought news of larger struggles, which fortified peasant militance. Railwaymen, who played a decisive role in the October general strike of 1905, also were instrumental in spreading the movement in the countryside through which they journeyed. The example of fellow peasants was the main force contributing to the growth of unrest, however. One peasant action usually convinced neighboring villages to move against their landlords as well. Accordingly, it was common for the movement to appear in pockets of intense unrest rather than to be spread evenly throughout all of Russia.

Ultimately, it became clear to most observers of events in central Russia that the cohesion and the solidarity of the peasantry were fortified by the continuing vitality of the commune. The traditional assembly of heads of households provided a ready-made forum for the discussion of tactics and demands. It reinforced the tension between insiders and outsiders and mitigated class tensions within the village. Because they were not members of communes in the places they worked, strictly defined rural proletarians also played the role of outsiders. They did little to influence peasant decisions, and they were often the victims of peasant violence. Yet this tension between traditional peasants and landless laborers paled before the hatred all rural cultivators felt for their common enemy, the landlords. So profound were peasant grievances in 1905 that these anatgonisms lost much meaning once the fires were lit and the manor houses burning.

The Southwest before 1905

While peasant unrest was extensive throughout rural Russia in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the level of discontent
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was especially high in the right bank. Peasants in Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia had received larger allotments than their central Russian counterparts at the time of the emancipation. It had been the government’s intention to aid what it chose to call Russian peasants at the expense of the Polish landlords who dominated agriculture in the southwest. But the autocracy’s comparative largesse did little to assuage peasant disappointment. M. N. Leshchenko, with lavish statistical generosity, claimed that 2,185 disorders occurred in the right bank during the 1860s. This was roughly two thirds of all the incidents in the entire Ukraine.12

By the second half of the decade, peasant activity, as elsewhere, dropped off sharply. Thereafter, it increased steadily, accelerating during the 1890s, as the agrarian crisis intensified. D. P. Poida’s research on the right bank revealed a more modest level of discontent than that found by Leshchenko, although Poida did show a continuous rise in the number of disturbances of all sorts. In 1866–70, there were 48 disturbances; in 1871–75, 96; in 1876–80, 98; in 1881–85, 142; 1886–90, 159; 1891–95, 191; and in 1896–1900, 212. In the last two decades of the century, unrest in the Ukraine was even more concentrated in the right bank than earlier. Of the 1,192 disorders counted by the indefatigable Leshchenko, 912 took place in the southwest.13 O. M. Kolomiets, who, like Poida, is more circumspect than Leshchenko about calling any incident a full-fledged disturbance, studied the period 1900–1904 and found evidence of 425 serious disorders in the right bank.14

The differences in these numbers reflect deeper arguments among Soviet scholars concerning the nature of the peasant movement, the comparability of different forms of struggle, and the seriousness of what can truly be called a disturbance. Nevertheless, there is broad agreement concerning both the special volatility of the right bank and the character of the movement there before 1905. Only in 1902, when massive arson and destruction swept Kharkov and Poltava, did the southwest assume a secondary position as a center of discontent.

12Leshchenko, 1959, p. 20.
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The forms assumed by the movement in the right bank before 1905 differed little from those found elsewhere in Russia. Over half the incidents in the region between 1861 and 1905 involved crop stealing and forest offenses.\(^{15}\) In the wake of the events of 1902 in the left bank, arson (podzhog) flared up in the right bank.\(^{16}\) Peasants were also constantly in dispute with nobles over the use of forests and pastures. As landlords sought to convert their estates to more profitable crops and to increase arable land, peasants were forced to protest to a wide variety of authorities and courts. They sought to prevent innovations by the landlord, and, in so doing, they fell back, given the absence of any other alternative, on the defense of traditional practices.

In 1901, on the huge Volynia estate of F. I. Tereshchenko, peasants resisted the conversion of the landlord’s crop rotation from the traditional three-field system to a multifield approach.\(^{17}\) During 1903, peasants on the immense Kiev sugar plantation of Count Alexander Bobrinskii contested in court the landlord’s attempt to move them off a section of the estate on which they had always been allowed to graze their livestock. Local justices upheld their claim to part of the pasture, but the peasants wanted the entire plot and soon began grazing their livestock there. Soldiers then intervened and drove the peasants off.\(^{18}\) In 1904, when another member of the Tereshchenko family sought to build a fence around 400 desiatiny on his Kiev estate, he was met by a crowd of 400 women who prevented any construction from beginning. On the next day police came to protect those building the fence. They were met by a similar-sized crowd of men, armed with pitchforks, axes, sticks, and rocks. When one peasant cried, “The authorities came to defend the lords, not us. Come on, let’s smash them,” the battle was joined. A bloody confrontation ensued with injuries on both sides.\(^{19}\)

Given the prevalence of wage work, one might think that strikes


\(^{16}\)Leshchenko, 1970, p. 63.


\(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 488.

\(^{19}\)TsGIAL, f. 1405, o. 107, d. 9621, l. 1.
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on the large estates would be common. Such was not the case. Several villages in Balt district of Podol’e experienced strikes for higher wages as early as 1881. Sugar factories also experienced periodic work stoppages, but there was no full-fledged strike on a sugar plantation until 1897.20 Even in the years immediately preceding the revolution (1900–1904), strike activity comprised a minute percentage (2 percent) of the recorded disturbances.21 Nevertheless, some peasants did withhold their labor, and patterns were set that would be followed in the ensuing years. On July 17, 1902, in the Kiev village of Shandry, 400 peasants asked the renter of a large estate for a higher portion (one tenth) of the winter grain harvest. He refused and invited peasants from a neighboring settlement to work on the estate. The local peasants attacked the strikebreakers and drove them off. The peasants then elected what was called a committee of elders to present their demands to the renter, but they could not put the demands in written form because the village scribe felt the strike was illegal and refused to assist. Again their request for one tenth of the harvest was rejected. This time the peasants of Shandry went around to the neighboring villages and warned them not to accept work at the estate. Again the renter sought to bring in strikebreakers who were again met with violence. Police then intervened and arrested eighteen peasants, called “leaders” by the authorities. Fearing further disorder and needing peasant labor at the crucial point in the harvest, the renter eventually gave in to peasant demands.22

At this point, however, strike activity was exceptional. Even though landlord agriculture had evolved swiftly in a capitalist direction, peasants still responded to this trend with what could be called traditional tactics. They showed clear signs that they felt the innovations of the southwest’s landlords had upset the moral economy of the region. In this sense their actions differed little from those of their counterparts in central Russia. The forms assumed by the movement in the right bank were much the same as those seen elsewhere in Russia. In 1905, that situation would change drastically.

20Istoria selianstva, 1:418–23.
22UD, 1:186.
In the midst of the Revolution of 1905, the peasant movement in the right-bank Ukraine expanded dramatically in its extent and changed sharply in its character. As already noted, Dubrovskii, writing in 1956 and using the archives of Moscow and Leningrad, counted 985 manifestations of the peasant movement in the southwest between 1905 and 1907. Leshchenko, in 1955, combed the repositories of the Ukraine and claimed to have found 2,635 incidents in the right bank. By 1977, Leshchenko had unearthed evidence for what he said were 3,924 disturbances of all sorts in Kiev, Podol' e, and Volynia.

Leshchenko also found that these events touched 2,371 populated points in the southwest and that these settlements had a combined population of 3,725,817, comprising 43.1 percent of the total population of the right bank. This level of participation was higher than either of the other two regions of the Ukraine and was considerably higher than the average for the empire. In 1926, A. Shestakov used the cruder device of the number of districts in a region affected by the movement. He too found the southwest to be a highly volatile place. Seventy-eight percent of Russia's districts had been touched by disorders during the revolution. All but one of the right-bank's thirty-six districts (97.2 percent) witnessed disturbances. Compared with the rest of Russia, the Ukraine in general and the right bank in particular were clearly at the forefront of the peasant movement.

These figures cannot in any way be seen as precise. The differences in the numbers reflect the methodological disagreements among Soviet students of the peasantry. In particular, Leshchenko has been criticized by his colleagues for his willingness to count modest signs of peasant unhappiness as full-fledged disturbances. Many Soviet historians also feel his emphasis on the various forms assumed by the struggle is similarly misplaced. Other criteria have

26Ibid., p. 208.
27Shestakov, 1926, p. 52.
28Istoria selianstva, 1:471.
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been suggested, and new categories have been advanced. At this, point, however, it would be hard to argue that the dispute has been resolved.

Regardless of the specific approach taken and regardless of the precise numbers, broad consensus exists on the general contours of the peasant movement. When the same methods are used to study different regions or periods, the relationships generally remain the same. Given the fact that Western scholars have neither the time nor manpower to examine the archival evidence thoroughly and systematically, there is little reason to expect a more precise picture to emerge. Nor is there any special reason to believe that more refined Western statistical practices would seriously revise our picture of the movement.

Industrial strike activity expanded immediately in the wake of the events of Bloody Sunday. Yet disorders did not become widespread in the right bank until May. The movement reached its peak during June and July. Things quieted down in the fall. The outburst of peasant indignation that came in the wake of the October Manifesto was not repeated in the southwest. The next spring, the agitation reached a level almost as high as that of 1905. The fall witnessed a similar slowing of peasant turmoil. By 1907, the movement had spent much of its force. A slight revival occurred that summer, but by the end of the year, quiet had returned to the countryside.

Poida has suggested comparing the total population of points touched by the movement with the total population in a district or province to gain an idea of the intensity of the movement. He has dismissed Leshchenko’s concern with forms. B. G. Litvak, while defending Leshchenko, has noted the possible confusion when one disturbance might combine several forms of struggle. Significantly, this has been an open, scholarly debate fought on the pages of Soviet scholarly journals. It shows the broad range of disagreement among Soviet historians. It also demonstrates their willingness, with little fear, to challenge each other’s views. See D. P. Poida, “Po metodiku vivchennia selians’kogo rukhu periodu domonopolistichnogo kapitalizmu,” Ukrainskii istorichni zhurnal 5 (1966), 25–31. M. N. Leshchenko, “Udoskonalivati metodiku doslidzhennia selians’kikh rukhiv,” Ukrainskii istorichni zhurnal 5 (1966), 32–38. B. G. Litvak, “Koordinatsiia metodiki vivchennia selians’kogo rukhu zavdannia printsi povoi vazhlivosti,” Ukrainskii istorichni zhurnal 1 (1967), 100–114. B. G. Litvak, Opit statisticheskogo izuchenia krestianskogo dvizhenia v Rossii XIX veka (Moscow, 1967), pp. 23–54.

Maslov, 1924, p. 162.
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Table 8. Disturbances in the Southwest, 1905–1907

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Kiev</th>
<th>Podol’e</th>
<th>Volynia</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>1,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>1,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1,169</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>2,635</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Russian sugar industry was concentrated in Kiev and Podol’e, and these two provinces were the centers of peasant activity. Volynia was considerably less volatile; conditions there more closely resembled those found in central Russia.31 Leshchenko’s earlier figures (1955) give a good picture of the geographical and chronological distribution of the movement in the right bank in 1905–7; see Table 8. In all three years, well over half the disorders occurred in May, June, and July, suggesting that the cycles of agrarian life played the decisive role in the timing of the movement. Political crises in the cities caused a ripple effect at certain moments, but events in the right bank had their own rhythm. The incidence of the disturbances, in terms of both time and place, showed a close relationship to the character of agriculture in the southwest. In particular, it is important to determine both the forms of the movement and the times of the year the disorders occurred. Once these facts are established, it is possible to pinpoint the causes of unrest in the right bank.

The Forms of the Movement

Before 1905, the actions of right-bank peasants fit traditional patterns. They were, to use Henry Landsberger’s typology, “expressive” of elemental rage rather than “instrumental,” that is,

31E. Vinogradov and P. Denisovets, Revoliutsiina borot’ba trudiashchikh volini v pershoi rosiis’kii revoliutsii (Lvov, 1955), p. 34.
planned and organized with realizable aims and appropriate tactics. This latter approach was commonly imputed to urban labor movements. Once the revolution began, this old pattern changed sharply. The forms assumed by the movement in the southwest differed fundamentally from those encountered elsewhere in rural Russia both before and during 1905. Throughout the empire no single form predominated. Arson, forest offenses, and destruction of estates were the most common ways peasants chose to express their dissatisfaction and to convince landlords to leave the estates in the hands of those who worked with their own labor. During the years of the revolutionary upsurge, the peasants of Kiev, Podol‘e, and Volynia made different choices.

In the first few months of 1905, peasant activity was limited to crop stealing and forest offenses, but in the spring that situation changed dramatically. Beginning in May, and continuing through the spring, the southwest was swept by a wave of organized and highly conscious agrarian strikes that affected most of the major estates of the region. Once this pattern was established, it became the norm for the peasant movement in the right bank. Depending on the compiler, between 55 and 60 percent of the disturbances recorded in the right bank between 1905 and 1907 were strikes against large landowners and renters. The victims were the wealthy of all nationalities, social origins, and political persuasions. It therefore should be stressed that the central focus of any study of peasant activity in the southwest must be this movement of planned, organized, and conscious strikes.

Leshchenko’s most recent figures (1977) seem high (see Table 9). Nevertheless, the patterns he revealed have been corroborated by all other observers, both contemporary and scholarly. Leshchenko also advanced a distinction between what he called “active” and “passive” strikes. In a passive strike, peasants merely stated their demands and refused to work. Some form of negotiation ensued, and the peasants would return to work. “Active” strikes involved confrontations, usually violent, between peasants and either strikebreakers, police, or soldiers. Nearly 80 percent of the strikes fell into the so-called active category.32 Peasants in the southwest were

32Leshchenko, 1955, p. 128.
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Table 9. Forms of the Peasant Movement in the Right Bank, 1905–1907

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Podol’e</th>
<th>Kiev</th>
<th>Volynia</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strikes</td>
<td>1,109</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>2,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggles over disputed land</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of estates</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontations with authorities</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal meetings</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1,757</td>
<td>1,464</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>3,924</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


hardly shrinking violets, and they did not hesitate to use force when necessary. Yet, actions that involved violence were comparatively limited. In comparison to other regions, very few estates were destroyed. Arson was quite limited initially, but as frustration grew and repression became more severe, right-bank peasants found little choice but to resort to the methods employed by their counterparts elsewhere. Only 19 fires were set in 1905, but in the next two years, there were 319 cases of arson (Leshchenko’s 1955 figures).33 When peasants in the southwest did not strike, they were most commonly involved in struggles over disputed land. Sporadic outbursts of discontent, such as crop stealing, illegal pasturing, and forest offenses, were far more common in central Russia and in the other parts of the Ukraine.

This last fact is especially important. The peasant movement in the right-bank Ukraine differed significantly from that in the left bank and in Novorossia. In the other regions of the Ukraine, there were far fewer disturbances, and the incidence of violence was considerably higher than in the right bank.34 In all three areas, the hereditary commune predominated, and in all three places, peasant language, culture, custom, and nationality were, despite variations,

33Ibid., p. 127.
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Table 10. Forms of the Peasant Movement in the Ukraine, 1905–1907

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Right Bank</th>
<th>Left Bank</th>
<th>Novorossiia</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strikes</td>
<td>2,329</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>2,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggles over disputed land</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of estates</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontations with authorities</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal meetings</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3,924</td>
<td>1,688</td>
<td>1,190</td>
<td>6,802</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Ukrainian. (Table 10 compares the forms of the peasant movement in the Ukraine.) Accordingly, an explanation of the specific character of the peasant movement in the right bank cannot be found solely in terms of the region’s cultural peculiarities. If the culture and traditional institutions of the peasantry were roughly similar throughout the Ukraine and the peasant movement differed sharply from region to region, then the reasons for these differences must be sought elsewhere.

This is not to belittle the significance of these concerns for a wide range of other aspects of peasant life. But it must be stressed that the patterns of noble and peasant landholding in the right bank were not repeated in the other regions of the Ukraine. Although commercial agriculture was extensive throughout the Ukraine, a high level of specialization in cash crops was found primarily in the southwest with its emphasis on sugar beets. It is therefore significant that peasant activity in Volynia, where sugar production was not well developed, followed patterns found most often in central Russia and the left-bank Ukraine.

The Timing of the Disorders

Strikes comprised the vast majority of disorders in the southwest. They occurred in the spring, most often in late May and early
Proletarian Peasants

June. Of the 3,924 disturbances counted by Leshchenko, 1,895 occurred in these months. He did not specify which forms fell in which months, but all other accounts make clear that the late spring was the strike season. Elsewhere, most disorders occurred in June and July (2,572 of the 7,165 counted by Dubrovskii nationwide (including the right bank). A great surge of discontent swept central Russia in November and December of 1905 once peasants came to realize that the October Manifesto would not deal with the land question, but peasants in the southwest did not repeat this pattern. The disturbances carried on by all Russian peasants were influenced by the rhythms of rural life, but this tendency appears to have been even more marked in the right bank.

Late May and early June was the decisive period in the early gestation of the sugar beet. This crop was usually sown in late March or early April, but the crucial moment in its life cycle came in May as workers on the estates were required to pay minute attention to the progress of the beets, weeding, fertilizing, watering, aerating, and looking for pests. Without this care, the crop would be ruined. May, therefore, was clearly the moment of the peasants' greatest bargaining power. Landlords desperately needed their labor and were not prepared to withstand lengthy strikes. Less attention was required later in the summer, and, accordingly, strikes were fewer. Few disorders of any kind took place at harvest time, as all peasants comprehended the overarching importance of this moment on the agricultural calendar. If strikes took place at this time, they were generally peaceful and weakly supported.

Because of the agricultural calendar, strikes by wage-earning field hands were rarely coordinated with stoppages by sugar refineries.

35 Leshchenko, 1977, pp. 206 and 224.
36 Dubrovskii, 1955, p. 42.
37 Recently John Bushnell has suggested a fairly close correspondence between urban and rural disorders throughout the empire. See Bushnell, p. 46. Shanin's most recent work, however, uses much the same sources and reaches the opposite conclusion. See Shanin, 1985, pp. 174–83.
38 TsGAOR f. 102, 4-oe dp., 1907, d. 108 ch. 38, ll. 1–32.
39 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 856, d. 526, l. 11.
A Strike Movement—Demands and Tactics

ey workers. The refineries began their seasonal operations in September, once the harvest was in. They continued to work until January. In rare cases, a peasant might find work in the fields during spring and summer and in a refinery in fall and winter. Strikes in the sugar factories were far less frequent given the simple fact that far fewer people (less than 70,000) worked in them.

As elsewhere, forest offenses in the southwest occurred during winter, as peasants searched for fuel. Crop stealing usually took place at harvest time. By 1907, strikes had become less successful. Landlord resistance stiffened as the police and army regained their cohesion and confidence. The withholding of labor had been a successful tactic in 1905 and 1906. By 1907, this approach was no longer producing results, and peasants in the right bank turned to the weapon used so often by their counterparts in central Russia. Arson, which had been little in evidence in 1905 and 1906, became common in the southwest as peasant frustration mounted.40

Causes of the Peasant Movement in the Southwest

Land hunger was the universal long-term cause of the peasant movement of 1905. In this, the right bank was no exception. If anything, the situation of malozem'l'e in the southwest, Kiev and Podol'e in particular, was more acute than elsewhere. In no part of the empire were peasants satisfied with the size of their allotments, but in the right bank, peasant poverty was so severe that the movement took on special characteristics.41 Strangely enough, the smallness of peasant holdings forced peasants to emphasize a variety of other concerns during the revolution. Low wages and dreadful working conditions were mentioned frequently by peasants as the reason for their actions, but those problems too had their roots in the acute land hunger felt by the region's cultivators.

Observers of all sorts shared the peasants' conviction that lack of land was the most fundamental peasant grievance. Both the governor of Kiev and the Kiev prosecutor stressed this fact in reporting to

40Shestakov, 1926, p. 51.
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superiors on the disorders in the spring of 1905. Duma deputies received numerous petitions from peasants who mentioned a wide variety of other reasons for their discontent. Nevertheless, peasants in the right bank never failed to place land hunger at the center of their concerns. The peasants of Malaia Bobrika (Podol’e) wrote to their representatives that the achievement of political freedom was not enough, especially in the light of their swiftly deteriorating position vis-à-vis the modernizing landlords: “It has gotten harder for us to live these last years. We need land as well as freedom, as we are completely dependent on the [large] landowners.” Peter Maslov, the leading Menshevik spokesman on agricultural matters, took pains to stress that the weakness of peasant participation in the rental market and the low wages were both the ultimate results of lack of land. This impression was confirmed by the correspondents of the Free Economic Society who were unanimous in assigning paramount importance to land hunger as the root cause of the disorders in all three provinces.

Peasants in the right bank, like those throughout Russia, ascribed their land hunger to the vastness of landlord holdings. In the southwest this conclusion was inescapable. Everything else flowed from this fact. Large landholders became the primary victims of peasant discontent. The immensity of many of the sugar plantations made these estates especially obvious targets, and the use of wage labor on them made the strike the most appropriate tactic for confronting what peasants thought was the cause of their misery.

Peasants made no distinction in choosing those whom they attacked—they struck not only owners but also large-scale renters (usually sugar companies). Neither the nationality, political persuasion, nor personal characteristics of landlords or renters mattered to the peasants. Ukrainian peasants were as quick to strike a supposedly Ukrainian Tereshchenko as they were a Russian Bobrinskii or a Polish Dovgiello. Jews, such as the Brodskii family

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42TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 115 ch. 2, l. 12. TsGAOR f. 102, o. 233 (1905), d. 2550 ch. 4, ll. 5–8.
43UD, 2:214. TsGIAL f. 1278, o. 1, d. 288, ll. 44–45.
44TsGIAL f. 1278, o. 1, 291, l. 298.
45Maslov, 1924, p. 22.
46AD, 2:74, 120, 140.
47Mirza-Avakians, pp. 6–8.
who rented large blocs of land for sugar beet farming, were also not exempt.48 Some landlords, like K. K. Sangushko, had a reputation for personal cruelty. As a result, the several strikes on his estates were especially bitter. On the other hand, personal kindness was no guarantee that one’s peasants would remain quiescent.49

Extremely low pay was the primary cause of the strikes, and wages in the right bank were particularly low because the supply of labor was especially abundant. The reason so many sought wage work was simple enough. They could not survive on their allotments. As elsewhere, lack of land was the root cause of the peasant movement, but in the southwest, land hunger was so acute that it pushed peasant actions, tactics, and choices in special, distinctive directions.

The poor winter and summer harvests of 1905 were important immediate causes of the peasant movement in central Russia.50 The violence and panic of the disorders in the Central Black Earth and Mid-Volga regions were more typical of short-term subsistence crises. In the right bank, on the other hand, the last four harvests had been good and the winter harvest of 1905 was no exception.51 According to the government’s statistics, winter grain production rose 1 percent between 1904 and 1905, and peasant production actually rose 6 percent. In contrast, the winter grain harvest in the left bank fell 3 percent, while production in three (of six) Central Black Earth provinces (Tula, Tambov, and Kursk) fell a disastrous 38 percent (see Table II). Newspapers reported that the winter harvest in the right bank went well, despite the serious labor difficulties of the spring.52 Nature offered few obstacles: during the first revolutionary years, weather conditions in the southwest were conducive to good harvests. Rainfall was more than adequate, and the average temperature during the growing season was slightly above normal.53 By 1907, rainfall fell and temperatures dropped. The growing season shrank to 197 days (it

48AD, 2:169.
49Ibid., pp. 31, 113, 146.
51AD, 2:38.
53Slezkin, 1913, I:15.

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Proletarian Peasants

Table 11. Winter Grain Harvest, 1904–1905

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1904 (in 1,000 pudy)</th>
<th>1905 (in 1,000 pudy)</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landlord Harvest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Bank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podoi’e</td>
<td>88,221</td>
<td>83,806</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>30,234</td>
<td>30,868</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volynia</td>
<td>31,151</td>
<td>31,397</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Bank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kharkov</td>
<td>26,836</td>
<td>21,541</td>
<td>-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poltava</td>
<td>44,678</td>
<td>43,640</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chernigov</td>
<td>11,932</td>
<td>10,808</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Black Earth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tambov</td>
<td>65,313</td>
<td>47,594</td>
<td>-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tula</td>
<td>11,917</td>
<td>9,298</td>
<td>-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peasant Harvest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Bank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podoi’e</td>
<td>101,041</td>
<td>107,601</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>31,189</td>
<td>37,282</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volynia</td>
<td>37,502</td>
<td>39,879</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Bank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kharkov</td>
<td>18,464</td>
<td>16,644</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poltava</td>
<td>21,285</td>
<td>24,574</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chernigov</td>
<td>22,766</td>
<td>18,745</td>
<td>-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Black Earth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tambov</td>
<td>109,141</td>
<td>61,297</td>
<td>-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tula</td>
<td>55,467</td>
<td>24,660</td>
<td>-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kursk</td>
<td>17,451</td>
<td>8,386</td>
<td>-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Harvest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Bank</td>
<td>189,260</td>
<td>191,405</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podoi’e</td>
<td>61,424</td>
<td>68,150</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>68,652</td>
<td>71,275</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volynia</td>
<td>59,184</td>
<td>51,980</td>
<td>-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Bank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kharkov</td>
<td>107,193</td>
<td>103,603</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poltava</td>
<td>30,396</td>
<td>27,452</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chernigov</td>
<td>42,114</td>
<td>48,109</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Black Earth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tambov</td>
<td>174,449</td>
<td>108,892</td>
<td>-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tula</td>
<td>90,491</td>
<td>45,462</td>
<td>-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kursk</td>
<td>31,448</td>
<td>16,860</td>
<td>-46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tsentral’nyi statisticheskii komitet Ministerstva vnutrennykh del Urozhai na 1904 god (St. Petersburg, 1904) and Urozhai na 1905 god (St. Petersburg, 1905). Prepared with the assistance of Penny Waterstone.
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had lasted 256 days in 1906). In the southwest, the appearance of unfavorable meteorological conditions appeared at the time of the decline, rather than the emergence, of the peasant movement.

Bad harvests provided a partial explanation for the emergence of the peasant disorders in 1905, yet they clearly had little to do with the sudden and massive growth of the strike movement in the southwest. Events in the cities had some demonstration effect, but one can also find causes in the predominant agricultural practices of the region. The position of the sugar industry was decisive. Wages played a crucial role in the budgets of peasant families in the right bank, and those who labored on the plantations of the region received less for their work than did agrarian workers anywhere else in the empire. The contemporary Bolshevik agrarian specialist Shestakov sought to extend the contrast. He claimed agricultural laborers in the right bank received eight times less than field workers in the United States and four times less than those who performed similar work in England.

Under the impact of the strike movement, wages rose dramatically in 1905, in some cases by as much as 50 percent for both men and women (see Table 12). These kinds of increases occurred nowhere else in the empire. Wages became the central demand of right-bank peasants, first, because pay was so low, and second, because outside earnings played so decisive a role in the survival of the peasant family. These facts were so brutally obvious even the government’s representatives could not ignore them. In April 1905, the Podol’ë Administration for Peasant Affairs reported to the governor that “Landlords and renters must recognize that wages, particularly day wages, are so low that they are insufficient to feed a worker’s family.” Similarly, police reports on strikes in Volynia cited “extremely low wages” as the primary cause of the disorders.

The ease with which peasants subsequently extracted wage in-

54Ibid., p. 19.
55Maslov, 1924, p. 80.
56Shestakov, 1907, p. 15.
57Drozdov, p. 20.
58TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 107, d. 7618, l. 82.
59TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 109, l. 111.
Proletarian Peasants

Table 12. Agricultural Wages in the Southwest, 1904–1907

Women's average wages (in kopecks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1904</th>
<th>1905</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>1906</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>1907</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podol’e</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volynia</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podol’e</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volynia</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podol’e</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volynia</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Men's average wages (in kopecks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1904</th>
<th>1905</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>1906</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>1907</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podol’e</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volynia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podol’e</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volynia</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podol’e</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>-21</td>
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<td>Volynia</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministertvo zemledeliia i gosudarstvennykh imushchestv, 1904 (and) 1905 god v sel’skokhoziaistvennykh otnosheniakh (St. Petersburg, 1904 and 1905). Prepared with the assistance of Penny Waterstone.

Increase was largely the result of the extremely low pay they received in the first place. Quite simply, landlords could afford to give peasants more and still make substantial profits. Landlords and renters reported increased wage levels to the government in 1905 and again in 1906. Yet it does not appear that peasants
believed they had made much progress. During the spring sowing of 1906, the Kiev Agronomic Society, a group dominated by landlords and professors of agronomy, interviewed 959 peasants throughout the province. The peasants were asked whether they felt wages had risen, fallen, or stayed the same. Fully 726 respondents replied that they felt wages had fallen. Only 139 peasants thought wages were higher. 60 There is no way of knowing the methods used by the society in choosing this sample, but the contrast between the official statistics and peasant perceptions is striking. The contradiction could, perhaps, be resolved if the peasants’ real wages failed to rise. Limited evidence suggests that this may have been the case. 61

According to official figures, prices for meat, butter, and cloth rose sharply between 1904 and 1905 in the right bank. The increases were especially severe in Kiev and Podol’e, the centers of strike activity. Prices in the left bank also rose, but less dramatically than in the southwest. In the Central Black Earth region (Tula, Tambov, and Kursk in particular) meat prices actually fell, cloth rose moderately, and only butter increased at a rate comparable to the rises in the right bank (see Table 13). A variety of government observers in the countryside also stressed the significance of steep increases in the cost of fuel and fodder in the right bank. 62 Police accused a number of landlords of raising prices in “company stores” on their estates. 63 Throughout the right bank, these price rises were first felt early in the spring of 1905. In May 1905, A. A. Eiler, the governor of Podol’e, reported to the Ministry of Interior that wages in his province had fallen slightly just at the time of rises in the cost of fuel and fodder. 64

The combination of low wages and high prices was obviously volatile. These trends suggest a specific, immediate cause for the emergence of the strike movement in the right bank during 1905. Wages, after all, had been scandalously low for some time, but

60 Obzor kievskogo agronomicheskogo obschestva (Kiev, 1906), p. 13.
62 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 525, l. 7. TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, o. 233, d. 2550 ch. 5, ll. 5–8.
63 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 109, l. 109.
64 Ibid., d. 113 ch. 1, l. 56.
Table 13. Prices of Beef, Butter, and Cloth, 1904–1905

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beef (in rubles)</th>
<th>Butter (in rubles)</th>
<th>Cloth (in rubles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>% change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Bank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podol’e</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volynia</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.22</td>
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<td>Kursk</td>
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Source: Ministerstvo zemledeliia i gosudarstvennykh imushchestv, 1904 (and) 1905 god v sel’skokhoziaistvennykh otnosheniakh (St. Petersburg, 1904 and 1905). Prepared with the assistance of Penny Waterstone.
inflation, in part the result of war, was a new element. Again, events outside the village played a role in sparking the manifestation of discontent in the countryside. Poor harvests did not touch off the many strikes in the right bank. Disorders in these provinces did not have the characteristics of short-term subsistence crises. Instead, the interaction of the labor and commodity markets produced the peasants' difficulties. Their response was not the traditional, violent, and disorganized bread riot. Instead, conditions led them to choose a more modern tactic, the strike.

Scenes of revolution in the cities also led peasants to challenge the structures of power, property, and authority in the countryside. This was true throughout the empire, and the southwest was no exception. Put most broadly, the general mood of the moment, the vague example of urban events, led peasants to confront landlords and renters. Strikes in the cities suggested, however imprecisely, similar tactics in the countryside.

Disputes over contested land became increasingly common and bitter. Struggles of this sort occurred in many regions, but they were especially acute in the right bank where landlords were active in modernizing their estates. Illegal pasturing was one of the most direct ways of protesting landlord-directed changes. On the Volynia estate of Anna Dovgiallo, peasants had been able to use the meadows until 1904. In 1905, the entire estate was turned over to a large-scale renter who planted the disputed land with wheat. No sooner had the meadow been sown than the peasants moved their livestock onto it. In the spring of 1905, Kiev peasants actually took to sowing unused land belonging to landlords. Peasant societies later brought similar disputes to the attention of their Duma deputies. In all these cases, lands that they had used for many years had been taken away from them, in some instances despite the existence of written documents guaranteeing their rights.

Whether they were appealing to the Duma or to local authorities, peasants presented clearly written, well-reasoned petitions that exhibited neither obsequiousness nor stridency. In nearly

65 Ibid., d. 109, l. 138.
66 TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, o. 233, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 12.
67 TsGIAL f. 1278, o. 1, d. 288, l. 12. TsGIAL f. 1278, o. 1, d. 785, ll. 34–39.
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every case, they were protesting changes in their rights, unilaterally instituted by landlords. The complaints of the village of Novomylska to the Volynia Administration for Peasant Affairs were typical of hundreds of similar petitions. The situation had been tolerable until the estate had been sold a few years ago (the date was not specified) to S. S. Galiatinskii. For years the peasants had driven their livestock onto their allotments through a forest belonging to the lord. Peasants had enjoyed this right since 1868. Now Galiatinskii was demanding two rubles from each household to allow the animals through the forest. Beyond this, a well on Galiatinskii's property had been used by peasants for what they claimed was "centuries." Not only could they no longer use the well, but now Galiatinskii had taken to herding his livestock through the peasants' allotments. Unable to feed their animals, peasants were forced to sell livestock. The villagers of Novomylska noted that they had protested this situation in several courts and to a number of authorities, all to no avail.68

Disputes of this type had been going on for some time. Unlike the strike movement, they did not represent anything particularly new. Now, under the general impact of the revolutionary situation, struggles over land use became more frequent and intense. Peasant resistance was extensive and strong precisely because the landlord attack on customary rights was especially severe in the right bank with its high level of noble-inspired agrarian capitalism. This trend could properly be seen as a disruption of the traditional moral economy of the region. Peasants in the right bank, like those elsewhere, did not believe that the changes would benefit them. Nevertheless, attempts to restore older agricultural practices played a secondary role in the peasant movement in Kiev, Podol'ë, and Volynia. Instead, rural cultivators sought to find more effective ways of adjusting to the new situation.

The Spread of Peasant Agitation

Disturbances and strikes were largely episodic and localized, although peasants were by no means unaware of struggles outside their villages. By the spring of 1905, disorders were no longer

68 ZhOGA, f. 115, o. 2, d. 2786, l. 1.
isolated incidents. Provincial governors received a daily flood of telegrams from distressed landlords as the movement spread rapidly. Peasants learned of events in other places through a variety of means. The most obvious source of information was the newspaper. Illiteracy was no barrier for peasants who wanted to gather information—if only one member of a community could read, that was enough. Dailies, weeklies, and monthlies from a wide spectrum of political tendencies appeared in the countryside. Peasants, many of whom sought news of their sons on the Far Eastern front, read them avidly and in doing so, learned of the urban struggle. It could not be said that news of disorders in the cities touched off the strike wave in the southwest; however, there can be no doubt that the press played a crucial role in broadening and deepening the movement. 69

A variety of government observers in the countryside stressed the significance of the reading of newspapers. It could be said that bureaucrats and policemen would, perhaps, be too attentive to possible sources of outside influence. Yet it is significant that they all noted the fact that any newspaper, regardless of its political coloration, could sow unrest in a village. In one village in Podol’e, the peasant society actually had a subscription to Birzhevie Vedomosti, the daily organ of Petersburg’s commercial and financial bourgeoisie. 70 In most cases, newspapers appeared in rural areas with less regularity. Nevertheless, the stream of information, however haphazard, was constant. Not only revolutionary agitation, but any information from the outside world, could upset the equilibrium of the village. Peasants certainly were not ignorant of events beyond the limits of their communities. In the spring of 1905, A. Rafal’skii, an assistant of the Podol’e governor, prepared a detailed survey of reports from the lowest government officials in the localities (mirovye posredniki). Rafal’skii was struck by the “enormous” dispersal of all kinds of periodicals throughout the province and, on the matter of rural awareness of urban struggles, he noted, “In all the villages, the peasants are fully informed about the strikes of factory workers.” 71

69 AD, 2:95.
70 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 526, l. 9.
71 Ibid., l. 3.
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As mentioned earlier, literate peasants read aloud to their fellow villagers or someone outside the commune, a teacher or sympathetic priest, would oblige. In other cases, peasant reading was more organized. Rafal’skii reported that in the Podol’e settlement of Solobkovtsy a group of ten men had actually formed an ongoing circle in which they read newspapers aloud to each other.72 Literate peasants in Uniev (Volynia) made a habit of using the public reading room in the neighboring town.73

In some instances, the reading of a newspaper might be the actual spark that provoked a strike or disorder. This occurred several times in the Gaisin district of Podol’e.74 Elsewhere, the Volynia vice-governor blamed newspapers for strikes on the Sangushko and Pototskii estates during the spring of 1905.75 In 1907, the governor of Volynia complained that press accounts of speeches by left-wing Duma deputies had set off a series of illegal pasturings in Novogradovolynsk district.76 This was no hallucination. Peasants did read radical and socialist newspapers.77 At the same time, the right kind of information in a conservative or liberal paper had similarly explosive effects.78 Some governors were urging the police to ban all newspapers. On December 1, 1905, Savich, the governor of Kiev, wrote to Stolypin, “the peasants have greater belief in the printed word than in the living word of a government figure.”79 One could only ask what else he expected.

Rural disorders have usually spread in more amorphous ways than by newspaper. Rumors, perhaps leading to panic, could move quickly through the countryside, as frightened travelers and refugees gave garbled versions of events in other places. In The Great Fear, Georges Lefebvre noted that distorted accounts spread rapidly throughout the French countryside of 1789, inducing a

72Ibid., l. 1.
73TsGIAL f. 796, o. 187, d. 6725, l. 2.
74TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 41, l. 84.
75TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 109, l. 4.
76Ibid., o. 857, d. 195, l. 1.
77TsGAOR f. 102, 1906, o. 236, d. 700 ch. 54, l. 106. TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 108, d. 6895, l. 3.
78Volyn’, May 28, 1905. TsGAOR f. 102, 1907, d. 53 ch. 1, l. 15.
79TsGAOR 102, 1905, o. 233, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 95.
wide variety of thoroughly irrational forms of behavior. In Russia, rumors of this sort usually centered around promises peasants might claim had been made by the tsar. Naive monarchism had been a highly visible element of peasant politics throughout Russian history. By 1905, especially after the disappointing October Manifesto, peasant faith in the autocrat began to erode. In the right bank, very few peasants justified their actions by citing imaginary decrees of the tsar. One of the few instances in which peasants claimed to be following the tsar’s will happened in the village of Studentsy (Volynia). Instead of hearing of the tsar’s “edict” from some itinerant traveler, peasants said they had learned of the autocrat’s wishes in a newspaper. It is difficult to imagine any periodical that might carry such news, but it is especially interesting to hear peasants claiming they learned of this development in the press.

When word of strikes and disorders spread through the southwest, news was transmitted in far more concrete ways than mere rumor. This information was not usually distorted, and accounts were rarely garbled. Instead, contacts among villages were most often direct and usually occurred during or immediately after a strike. Confrontations with one landlord would then be followed by disorders on neighboring estates. In many cases, landlords themselves were the unwitting messengers. When a strike began, word was passed immediately to nearby villages, as landlords searched for strikebreakers. Instead of helping to acquire substitute labor, the news only provided an example for peasants elsewhere. Patterns of this sort arose often in Kiev and Podol’e during the spring of 1905. In May 1905, strikes took place on the enormous sugar plantations of the Sangushko and Pototskii families. According to the vice-governor of Volynia, the entire gubernia knew of these events within days. Very quickly the leaders of one strike would become agitators in other villages, carrying news of their

81Daniel Field, Rebels in the Name of the Tsar (Boston, 1976), p. 20.
82TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 115 ch. 2, ll. 95–96.
83Ibid., d. 109, ll. 96–97.
84UD, 2:33 and 353.
85TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 109, ll. 105–113.
struggles and triumphs to neighbors. In Tarashchansk district of Kiev, peasants who had successfully struck a sugar plantation journeyed to nine nearby villages, urging other peasants to take similar actions.\(^\text{86}\) In May 1905, nine villages soon followed the example of the peasants of Ol’shevskii (Podol’e), striking for the same demands and acting in unison to prevent the hiring of strikebreakers.\(^\text{87}\)

Direct village-to-village contact was not always possible. Instead, bazaars and fairs became common vehicles for sharing experiences and spreading the movement.\(^\text{88}\) In March 1905, peasants in the settlement of Solobkivtsy (Podol’e) asked their landlord for a ruble a day to work the fields. The next day at a fair, they spread word of their action.\(^\text{89}\) Itinerant salesmen passed through local bazaars and with their wares brought news of events in other places. Later on, political agitators found it convenient to pose as traders, selling pictures and trinkets while passing out leaflets.\(^\text{90}\) In June 1906, peasants from Pilipy-Aleksandrovi (Podol’e) traveled to the town of Novo-Ushits to learn the various prices being offered for day labor throughout the district. This group returned to the village and informed the assembly of heads of households (the *skhod*) of prevailing wage levels. The peasants then voted to strike unless they were paid the going rate.\(^\text{91}\)

Less concrete information could also be communicated at local fairs, and more than a few rumors were hatched at bazaars. In May 1905, peasants on the Podol’e estate of Prince Abamelek-Lazarev were in the midst of disputes with the manager of the domain. A group of them attended the local market. There they were told the tsar had “ordered” the nobility to sell land to the peasants at the price of two rubles a desiatin. This “news” served only to enflame peasant expectations which, in this case, quite clearly were not going to be met. The resulting confrontation was the most violent of all the disturbances that took place in the right bank during the

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\(^{86}\) TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, o. 233, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 56.

\(^{87}\) Ibid., ch. 41, l. 2.

\(^{88}\) AD, 2:58.

\(^{89}\) Leshchenko, 1955, p. 129. UD, 2:143.

\(^{90}\) TsGIAU f. 442, o. 856, d. 526, l. 5. TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 107, d. 7618, l. 82.

\(^{91}\) TsGAOR f. 102, 1906, o. 236, d. 700 ch. 54, ll. 104–5.
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revolutionary period. In the right bank, however, the influence of demobilized soldiers was largely limited to Volynia, the least distinctive of the three southwestern provinces. Returning veterans were thought to have played an important role in spreading and deepening the movement throughout Russia. In the fall of 1905, the governor of Volynia blamed the problems of the previous spring on sailors, returning home from Odessa and Sevastopol. Early in 1906, he informed the police that soldiers had been spreading rumors that peasants would be relieved of redemption payments. That winter, veterans in several places in Volynia were involved in a series of forest offenses.

A few former soldiers actually turned to more active forms of agitation. Fillip Shevchuk and Nestor Fillipovich were arrested in December of 1905 in the Volynia village of Bogdanovka. Shevchuk was twenty-three years old. He was Ukrainian, literate, and unmarried. He had been demobilized on November 4, 1905, and returned to Bogdanovka, his native village. Shevchuk took a job working for a railroad where he met Fillipovich who had left the army in September when he refused to arrest a peasant engaged in a forest offense. Fillipovich was a twenty-five-year-old illiterate Bielorussian who had been born near Minsk. Together, he and Shevchuk had become itinerant traders, selling pictures of the Russo-Japanese War, while distributing revolutionary pamphlets at fairs and bazaars. Quite quickly, they were able to organize a gathering of 500 peasants in Bogdanovka. According to their indictment, this activity lasted little more than a month, when they were seized in the house of Shevchuk’s uncle.

Soviet historians have continued to stress the importance of contacts between peasants and militant urban workers. Given the capitalist character of agrarian labor in the southwest, proletarians and

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92 UD, 2:362.
93 AD, 2:61.
94 UD, 1:759.
95 TsGAOR f. 102, 1906, d. 700 ch. 37, l. 1.
96 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 109, l. 123.
97 TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 732, l. 37.
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peasants in the region could very well be expected to find a common language. Scholars of the 1920s, for example Shestakov, repeatedly claimed a role for city workers in the right bank.98 In 1955, F. E. Los’ argued along similar lines, and Leshchenko never stopped asserting the importance of urban proletarians in the rural struggle.99

Soviet historians are able to offer evidence of some contact, but their claims are, by and large, not corroborated by the contemporary correspondents of the Free Economic Society. These observers found limited evidence of worker involvement in the peasant movement of the right bank. Only in Kiev was there any significant contact, and nowhere did workers take the lead in agrarian strikes or other struggles.100 In June 1906, police did report the presence of urban proletarians in the course of a strike on the Kiev estate of Count A. A. Bobriniskii.101 Still, incidents of this sort were exceptional.

Sugar factory workers also did little to spread the peasant movement. At best, they played roles in local struggles. Their work was seasonal, and the refineries were located in the countryside. Most workers had been recruited right out of neighboring villages and could hardly be considered carriers of any sort of advanced, urban proletarian consciousness. In the spring of 1905, workers in the Skomoroshskii factory in Kiev province and in the Balashev estate refinery in Podol’e went on strike.102 There were several other moments of coordination between peasants and those working in the few Volynia refineries.103 But the work in the fields did not overlap with the peak season in the refineries, so chances for powerful coordination were rare. Beyond this, refinery workers were simply not sufficiently numerous (about 70,000) to have had a major impact. In fact, it proved possible to find only one recorded case of sugar factory workers leading a strike of peasants.104

98Shestakov, 1930, p. 25.
100AD, 2:25, 61, and 108.
101UD, 3:216.
102AD, 2:171 and 183.
104Russkie Vedemosti, June 3, 1905.
As has already been mentioned, the railroad network in the right bank was especially well developed. The system that had been built to carry grain and sugar to the cities now helped spread the peasant movement. Agitators moved swiftly from place to place by train, and peasants often came to local stations to learn of developments outside their villages. Shevchuk and Fillipovich, in particular, had used the railroads to cover the region quickly. During December 1905, railwaymen at the Podol'ë station of Strunkovka gave out newspapers and pamphlets to local peasants. Although peasants had doubts about the leaflets, they were, according to the police, tremendously impressed by the newspapers, which included the short-lived populist daily Syn Otechestva and Russkaia Gazeta. In November 1905, 150 peasants from the Kiev village of Ol'shanitsa gathered at a nearby station to hear a railway worker read them the October Manifesto. The peasants then decided to send two delegates, both decorated veterans, to attend the liberal-inspired Peasant Union which would soon gather in Moscow.

The railroads also allowed villages to maintain contact with each other. Savich noted a pattern, during the spring of 1905. Most of the points touched by the first manifestations of the strike wave were, he claimed, near railroad stations. In fact, on May 22, 1905, a crowd of fifty women appeared at the Pogrobishche station (Kiev). They had come from the village of Adamovka where peasants were on strike against the Dziunkovskii sugar plantation. They urged the railwaymen to quit work. The women then stopped several workmen who were delivering beer to the estate. They drank some of the beer and destroyed the rest, after which they proceeded to prevent the delivery of sugar from the estate to the station. At this point, police were summoned, and the women returned to the village peacefully.

Political activists from many parties and organizations were present in the southwest throughout the revolutionary period. Yet

105 AD, 2:118.
106 TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 732, l. 37.
107 UD, 1:751.
109 UD, 2:355.
110 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 115 ch. 2, ll. 2–3.
there is little evidence to suggest that outsiders either started or controlled the peasant movement. Representatives of many political groups flooded the countryside in 1905, but they became a significant presence only in 1906. Agitators had little or nothing to do with the first outbreaks of the movement in the right bank. When villages acted, they did so on their own. Even contemporary orthodox Soviet historians have accepted the disorganized and spontaneous character of the peasant movement. Both Dubrovskii and Leshchenko have readily acknowledged this fact. The more flexible Soviet authors of the 1920s also believed that the influence of political parties was not decisive.

No particular party or group could claim to control the movement. Peasants were often willing to cooperate with agitators, but such moments were episodic. No group, not the Socialist Revolutionaries, not the Social Democrats, not the Peasant Union, could claim to have a powerful, functioning network in any part of the countryside, including the right bank. Most important, peasants did not make precise distinctions among the various parties. Instead, they gave temporary audiences to anyone who made sense to them. In some cases, police found agitators carrying the literature of all three groups.

It should come as no surprise that landlords, bureaucrats, and police officials were quick to blame the disturbances on political agitators. The forces of order had a massive psychological and political investment in the peasantry's loyalty and conservatism. It was, after all, nothing new for targets of discontent to accuse outsiders of inspiring popular protests against those conditions created by the very propertied groups threatened by disorder. Claims of this sort were made throughout the empire. Here, the right bank was no exception.

In the summer of 1906, Eiler, the governor of Podol'e, sent a circular to all police personnel in the province. He warned them to be on the lookout for "agitators and other suspicious personalities." It was necessary to treat such figures harshly, because,

112AD, 2:216.
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according to Eiler (a relatively moderate figure for a high-level bureaucrat), agitators were the main cause of the disorders.¹¹⁵ A year earlier, Rafal’skii, who was particularly sympathetic to the peasants’ situation, had stressed the influence of socialist literature.¹¹⁶ At the same time, the head of the Podol’e gendarmerie informed his superiors of the influence of “socialist agitators.”¹¹⁷ At a spring 1905 meeting of Podol’e sugar producers, blame for the strikes was similarly fixed on the now familiar “outside agitators.” The Kiev governor, Savich, also saw the first strike wave as the “result of political propaganda.”¹¹⁸ None of these reports, however, mentioned specific names or places.

The claim of a countryside overrun by revolutionaries was clearly exaggerated, if the discussion is limited to 1905. Nevertheless, by 1906, political activists of all sorts had entered the villages. Peasants paid little attention to the affiliations of these agitators, but they were extremely interested in their messages.¹¹⁹ Soviet writers have always highlighted the presence of activists, especially Social Democrats. Leshchenko has cited a report by Savich that mentioned 140 cases in which Social Democratic literature was found in Kiev during 1905 and 1906.¹²⁰ Even Menshevik authors of the 1920s, Maslov in particular, have admitted a specifically Bolshevik influence in the right bank.¹²¹ Yet the evidence usually cited, though considerable, can hardly be considered massive given the universal character of the peasant movement itself. Even 140 cases of illegal pamphletting, while significant, seem miniscule when compared to the thousands of strikes and disorders that occurred in Kiev during the revolutionary years. In addition, it must be considered that Kiev province, given the decisive presence of the city of Kiev, would be the most likely place to find successful political activity.

If the level of agitation was not as high as landlords feared and

¹¹⁵TsGIAU f. 442, o. 856, d. 526, l. 5.
¹¹⁶Ibid., o. 855, d. 526, l. 8.
¹¹⁷TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 19.
¹¹⁸TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 115 ch. 2, l. 12.
¹¹⁹AD, 2:64.
¹²⁰Leshchenko, 1955, p. 177.
¹²¹Maslov, 1924, p. 199.
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political activists hoped, there can be no doubt that much propagandizing and organizing did go on. A surprisingly wide variety of people were arrested for all sorts of troublemaking. Some fit the stereotype of the student or the agitator from the city. Others were members of the so-called rural intelligentsia of teachers and doctors. One could even find the occasional priest.

According to the Kiev prosecutor, an “unknown agitator” addressed a “large meeting” of “local peasants” in the village of Lebedin, site of the Brodskii sugar refinery, on Sunday, June 18, 1906. The “agitator,” a young outsider, called the gathering by ringing the local church bell. He urged the peasants not to trust the authorities and claimed that many soldiers were now on the side of “the socialists.” The next day, he organized a similar large meeting. As a result of his influence, strikes soon occurred both in Lebedin and on the neighboring Rkazynaogovskii estate.122 Events of this sort fit perfectly both landlord nightmares and orthodox Soviet stereotypes. Other cases of agitation revealed a broader variety of carriers of the revolutionary message.

Most priests supported the landlords and authorities during the disorders. Some tried to act as mediators; a small number actually were arrested for fomenting discontent among the peasantry. The reasons for clergy activism were usually more personal than political. Father Tyniavskii of Sorokomiazhinets (Podol’e) had disputed the attempts of the local landlord to redraw land boundaries at the expense of the church’s holdings. When local peasants struck the estate in July 1905, Tyniavskii offered them his support.123 In 1907, a Father Pavel’ Vikul’ was arrested in Bashtanovka (Podol’e). He had been agitating for two years among the local peasants after his sixteen-year-old son had been jailed for subversion.124 A few teachers at church schools were also arrested. Their activities were usually more explicitly political and often involved the distribution of literature produced by various political parties.125

The old populist tradition of agitation by rural doctors did not

123TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 113 ch. 2, l. 1.
124TsGIAL f. 796, o. 188, d. 7007, l. 1.
125TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 115 ch. 2, l. 176. TsGAOR f. 102, 1906, d. 700 ch. 37, ll. 34–36.
entirely disappear in the southwest. In Vinnitsa district (Podol’e),
police reported on the activities of a Doctor Donskoi who roamed
the countryside with his son, organizing secret meetings and con­
vincing the peasants of their right to the land (as if the peasants
needed convincing). He had achieved a considerable following, and
local landlords urged the police to remove him from the
province.\(^\text{126}\)

Small merchants, members of the social estate called the mesh­
chanstvo, also played a role in fomenting and spreading disorder.
The motives of these figures were also mixed. Like the priests,
these members of the petty bourgeoisie in the structural rather than
polemical sense criticized the authorities for reasons that were de­
cidedly mixed.\(^\text{127}\) Nevertheless, their involvement could be ex­
plicitly political. Such was the case of Samuel Gel’man, a Jewish
merchant of modest means. Starting with the summer of 1905,
Gel’man and his sons traveled to many villages near their home in
Ol’shanitsa (Kiev). Gel’man was especially active in November
1905 when he helped organize a number of public and private
meetings for peasants, including the aforementioned gathering at
the Ol’shanitsa station. In addressing peasants, Gel’man took a
very general approach and focused on the land question above all.
When he was arrested in February 1906, it was claimed that he had
distributed literature from the Social Democrats, Socialist Revolu­
tionaries, and the Peasant Union. Gel’man, like the many other
agitators who were Jewish, had no difficulty in finding an audience
among the Ukrainian peasantry of the right bank.\(^\text{128}\) Peasants in
the southwest had not suddenly been overcome with the spirit of
brotherhood and cosmopolitanism, however. Rather, their concern
for their own aims and interests was stronger than their perhaps
too-well-advertised anti-Semitism. As shall be seen later, right­
bank peasants also could express less positive feelings for their
Jewish neighbors. Yet this did not prevent peasants from welcom­ing
Jewish agitators into their midst when the views of the two
groups coincided.

\(^\text{126}\)TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 113 ch. 2, l. 1.
\(^\text{127}\)Ibid., o. 856, d. 442, l. 1.
\(^\text{128}\)TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 302, ll. 3 and 223.
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It was also possible for peasants themselves to play a role in fomenting disorders. Early in 1905, a peasant named Badiuk was arrested in Liubanki (Podol’e) for holding a series of meetings in his house at which he gave out literature from several parties. Later that year in Krasnoiosk (Kiev), a Leonid Kovan was taken in for distributing a pamphlet published by the Social Democrats entitled “How to Take the Land from the Landlords.” Despite his leafleting, Kovan, who was forty and married with four children, was himself illiterate. When Timofei Kruk was arrested in Turichany (Volynia) on May 3, 1907, nine illegal brochures from a variety of groups were found. Born in the neighboring settlement of Novosel’, Kruk, no hot-headed youth at forty-nine, had been touring the region for a year. He was already known to the peasants of Turichany who invited him into their homes to hold meetings at which he read aloud from the literature he was carrying. Kruk was given three years. The two peasants whose house he used were also arrested. They received light sentences.

Duma members provided a final mechanism for the spread of the peasant movement. They had broad parliamentary immunity and were allowed to travel the countryside freely to address meetings of peasants. This practice became an especially acute problem for the authorities once the second Duma, with its more radical membership, was elected early in 1907. In two cases in Kiev, strikes followed immediately in the wake of appearances by deputies in the countryside. Often the mere promise of a speech by a Duma member was enough to spark an incident. Peasants also came together to draw up instructions (nakazy) for their deputies, and in doing so, they were led to take more direct forms of action.

Peasants in the southwest, like those elsewhere, directed their actions primarily against their own landlords, but this did not mean that they lived in hermetic worlds. Their awareness of events

129 Kolomiets, Polozhenie krestian, p. 16.
130 TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 409, l. 39.
131 Ibid., o. 1, 1847, ll. 2–100.
132 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 857, o. 193, l. 1. TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 193, d. 1674, l. 3.
133 AD, 2:202.
134 Maslov, 1924, p. 199.
outside the villages may have been imprecise, but there can be no doubt that even the most remote and primitive settlements knew about struggles other than their own—strikes in the cities and confrontations throughout the region. Right-bank peasants also learned of the outside world in direct and modern ways. As mentioned, the press played a decisive role, and low literacy rates were no impediment. Political agitators may not have always gotten their points across, but their very presence in the countryside was sufficient to awaken peasants to the significance of the revolutionary moment. Finally, the landlords themselves spread word of strikes through their calls to neighboring villages for working hands. If the estates of the southwest had not been capitalistically organized, steps of this sort would not have been required. In short, right-bank peasants were not ignorant prisoners of their customs and traditions. They knew of events external to their world, and outside forces influenced their actions.

Demands

Throughout central Russia, the demands of peasants were largely implicit in their actions. It was not necessary for peasants to state their aims openly in the course of crop stealing, arson, or illegal woodcutting. Upon their arrest, some individuals admitted their goals to the authorities, but those engaged in these kinds of activities felt no particular need to specify their aspirations. In central Russia, vague hopes of removing the landlords and acquiring the land were the norm. During the strike movement in the right bank, however, this was not the case. The logic of a strike required that the demands of those working on an estate be fully spelled out. Rural cultivators in the southwest had to formulate (sometimes with outside help) clear and specific demands. In many cases, it proved necessary for peasants to write out what it was they wanted.135 This process forced them to clarify and think through their aspirations with far greater specificity than was required of their central Russian counterparts.

135TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 113 ch. 1, p. 266.
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The conditions under which rural cultivators worked in the southwest very directly determined the character of their demands. Agriculture in the region was dominated by landlord-owned capitalist farms, employing large numbers of day laborers. Nobles, and those who worked with them, thoroughly controlled the lands of Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia. They showed few signs of giving up their estates. Accordingly, wages, rather than land, became the most direct and visible concern of the region’s rural cultivators. This expressed preference did not mean that right-bank peasants did not share the universal desire that all the state, gentry, and church lands be given them without compensation to the previous owners, only that it was not their most explicit demand.

Right-bank peasants also raised questions about a variety of working conditions; they even made specifically political demands from time to time. As the strike movement developed with each passing month, peasants and agricultural workers downplayed other demands and came to concentrate on wages. The reasons for this trend are not obscure. Wages were the only issue on which the strikers enjoyed much success. Peasants of the southwest rarely expressed traditional and millenarian goals (total repartition in particular). Instead, they came to concentrate on the more immediately realizable. In doing this, they chose methods (the strike) that were effective instruments for the attainment of their goals. Rural cultivators in the southwest rarely engaged in elemental, destructive outbursts that sought a return to a mythical golden, pre-capitalist way of life. In the right bank that era was long gone. Given the impossibility of moving backward, right-bank peasants sought the best possible deal for themselves under the conditions then existing in the region.

Wages in the right bank were extremely low, and early in the spring of 1905, peasants sought dramatic increases in their pay. In the spring of 1904, men had received twenty-five kopecks a day in Kiev and Podol’e. Women in both provinces got twenty kopecks.136 In April 1905, peasants in Ushits and Kamenets districts in Podol’e asked for fifty for men and thirty for women.137 Elsewhere, peas-

136 TsGAOR f. 102, o. 233, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 16.
137 AD, 2:168. TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 41, ll. 85–86.
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Peasants sought a doubling of wages up to fifty or sixty kopecks. After initial refusals, peasants very often got all or a large part of what they had demanded. Most landlords were doing well financially. The price of sugar was steady on the world market, and external and internal sales were solid. Given the initial low wage levels, it was possible for them to grant sizable increases and still make substantial profits. According to official statistics, wages for men went up 20 percent in Podol’e and 40 percent in Kiev. Women in both provinces raised their pay by 25 percent. It was rare that peasants asked for equal wages for all, despite the fact that women played a highly visible and important role in all aspects of the movement, not to mention the economy, in the right bank. There were, however, a few cases of explicit demands for the same wages for all adults. This occurred in May, 1905, on the Kashperovsky Company sugar plantation in Kiev. At roughly the same time, the correspondents of the Free Economic Society reported six instances of villages asking for equal wages for women and men. Yet the peasant communities of the southwest, despite their special circumstances, were still substantially patriarchal, and cases of this sort were rare.

During the next two springs, peasants demanded similar wage increases. The specific amount varied from place to place. During 1906, it still was possible to find demands for such modest levels as forty-five kopecks in Podol’e. As late as 1907, peasants in the Kiev village of Nadtochievka sought forty-five kopecks a day. At the same time, the villagers of Kashperovka (Kiev) asked for and got fifty kopecks. Requests of this type represented the lower levels of peasant wage demands, however.

Very quickly, peasants came to fasten on the clear, simple, and militant demand of one ruble for one day’s labor. To ask for a ruble a day did not require a precise calculation of realizable goals to be gained in the course of negotiation. Instead, it was a clear and

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138 TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 336, l. 57. UD, 2:334.
139 Kievlianin, May 27, 1905.
140 AD, 2:53.
141 TsGAOR f. 102, 1907, o. 236, d. 700 ch. 54, l. 64.
142 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 857, d. 193, l. 30.
143 Ibid., l. 17.
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readily understandable peasant aim that signified a decisive victory over the landlords. Nowhere was this goal achieved, but in asking for what could be a tripling or quadrupling of their pay, peasants were able to win large wage increases. Some of the real value of these gains was eroded by inflation. In addition, wage levels in the southwest were still comparatively low, despite the increases. Nevertheless, pay proved to be one area in which peasants did gain much of what they wanted, and the demand of a ruble a day became an effective rallying point.

Peasants began asking for a ruble a day (for men) as soon as the strike movement began in the spring of 1905. In itself, this was nothing new. As early as 1896, peasants in Podol’e had asked for a ruble a day in the wake of Nicholas II’s inauguration.144 On March 30, 1905, the assembly of heads of households in Solobkivtsy met and decided to ask for a ruble a day for men and fifty kopecks for women.145 The next month in Zavadovka (Kiev) peasants asked for a ruble (seventy-five kopecks for women).146 Almost instantaneously, the call for a ruble a day became widespread throughout the southwest. Peasants, for the most part, raised this demand on the sugar plantations of Kiev and Podol’e.147 The grain-producing estates in Volynia were by no means immune to the call.148

The campaign for a ruble a day became the single most common demand throughout the region during the revolutionary period.149 Nevertheless, documented instances of this demand diminish in 1906 and 1907.150 When it became clear that landlords could not give them the full, symbolically significant amount, peasants moderated their demands. To get a ruble a day, even if only for men, would have been a significant and unmistakable victory over the landlords. Peasants were unable to win this demand, but they did gain sizable increases in their wages. By striking at the moment of

144AD, 2:7.
145Leshchenko, 1955, p. 129.
146TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 351, l. 1.
147AD, 2:169.
148UD, 1:760.
150TsGIAU f. 442, o. 636, d. 401, l. 2. TsGIAU f. 442, o. 857, d. 195, l. 1.
peak labor demand, they found landlords unwilling to endure long work stoppages. In addition, those who owned the sugar plantations were in a sufficiently advantageous economic position to grant large pay raises and still make healthy profits.\textsuperscript{151}

The diminution of demands for a ruble a day is significant. This trend demonstrates that right-bank peasants were able to moderate their demands and focus on more pragmatic goals. Asking for a ruble a day was seen by some in the countryside as unrealistic. It was thought that the true motive of those working on the plantations was to force the landlords to abandon their estates. Industrialists, faced with the demands of striking workers, could protest that large wage increases would drive them out of business, rendering the workers jobless. By contrast, peasants knew what to do with any estate a landlord might abandon. According to this reasoning, peasants in the southwest appeared to have aims similar to their counterparts in central Russia. They too wanted the land immediately. Enormous wage demands were seen as a useful tactic for achieving this traditional peasant goal.

Yet peasants in Kiev, Podol' e, and Volynia did not cling stubbornly to the call for a ruble a day. Instead, they modified their demands as conditions changed, showing an ability to make precise and rational decisions in the course of the struggle. Had they maintained the goal of a ruble a day, one could confidently say that this demand was a ploy, masking traditional claims. But this willingness to show moderation undermines contentions that wage demands, by themselves, had no meaning.

Having said this, it would also be impossible to dismiss the land aspirations of peasants in the southwest. Even though the long-term goal of total repartition was not in the foreground of right-bank peasants' demands, one cannot deny that it constituted a significant element in their thinking. Petitions of southwest peasants to their Duma deputies reveal strong concern with the land question.\textsuperscript{152} On this count, the peasants shared the obsession of their counterparts in central Russia, Novorossiia, and the left bank. Drozdov, Maslov, and Dubrovskii have stressed the dis-

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., o. 855, d. 113 ch. 1, ll. 55–59. TsGIAL 1405, o. 107, d. 7578, l. 11.
\textsuperscript{152} Terence Emmons, \textit{The First Russian Elections} (Stanford, 1984), p. 244.
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tinctiveness of peasant demands in the right bank. On the other hand, such diverse scholars as Geroid Robinson and Leshchenko, citing the “land” basis of huge wage claims, have argued that the peasants of the southwest, much like peasants throughout Russia, sought simply to drive the landlords from the countryside. In this sense, the wage demands could be seen as less than serious. Robinson drew his conclusion from the survey of the Free Economic Society in which those correspondents reporting this phenomenon were, for the most part, landlords and estate managers. Leshchenko, relying primarily on bureaucratic and police documents, found a similar preoccupation among the guardians of order and property. Invariably, those government reports claiming to have unearthed the true nature of peasant demands came from the pens of provincial governors. Given the social origins of those characterizing peasant aims in the right bank, it could be argued that both Robinson and Leshchenko were too prepared to accept the worst fears of the gentry.

Fundamentally, however, there is little real contradiction between those who take right-bank wage demands seriously and those who dismiss them. Peasants in Kiev, Podol’e and Volynia were allotment holders and were well aware of the smallness of their holdings. It would have been unrealistic to expect them not to be concerned with the land question. Land hunger was, after all, the fundamental cause of the movement in this region, just as it was everywhere else. The special acuteness of the problem in the southwest forced peasants to take wage work; this labor contributed a significant portion of the household budget. For this reason, they could not ignore short-term concerns, even if long-term goals were never absent from their thoughts.

Nevertheless, open calls from right-bank peasants for total repartition were exceedingly rare. Not surprisingly, the few peas-

154AD, 2:170.
155UD, 2:337.
156TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 113 ch. 1, l. 266. TsGAOR f. 102, 1906, d. 700 ch. 54, l. 106. TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 41, l. 19.
157AD, 2:100.
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tant demands for the immediate departure of the landlord were nearly all from Volynia, the least agriculturally advanced of the three right-bank provinces. Instead, peasants concentrated on two other types of demands. They asked that parcels of disputed land be given entirely to the village, and they called for landlords to make more land available to rent at reasonable rates.

In 1906, the peasants of Popovaia-Grebnia (Podol’e) wrote to the Duma, asking that hay fields they had used before the emancipation be returned to them. They had tried all legal avenues. They had struck, and now they were turning to the Duma. On Countess Brannitskaia’s estate in Kiev, peasants demanded that 50 desiatiny they claimed were taken from them in 1861 be restored. The violent disorders on the Podol’e estate of Prince Abamelek-Lazarev were touched off by peasant calls for the use of land that had been in dispute since the 1880s. The governor of Volynia, reporting in November 1905, remarked that one common demand of peasants was for the use of idle land belonging to nobles. On June 19, 1906, peasants in Rubki (Volynia) demanded 27 desiatiny for hay raising. The landlord refused, and a strike ensued.

In the right bank, peasants had been unable to compete for land on the open market. Landlords rented their estates to large firms at much higher rates than peasants could possibly afford. Accordingly, peasants often asked that land be made available to them at what they called reasonable rental rates. Demands of this sort were a great deal more common than calls for immediate land seizure. In July 1905, the peasants of Kuzmin, on the Podol’e estate of Alexander Poltovich, asked him to rent 300 desiatiny that were not part of his arable land. He refused, and they struck.

158Los’, p. 245. AD, 2:193. TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 113 ch. 13, l. 17. ZhOGA f. 115, o. 2, d. 2593, l. 10. TsGAOR f. 102, 1906, d. 700 ch. 37, ll. 34–36.
159TsGIAL f. 1278, o. 1, d. 291, l. 256.
160Ibid., d. 785, l. 253.
161UD, 2:362.
162TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 391 ch. 4, l. 83.
163TsGAOR f. 102, 1906, d. 700, l. 19.
164Maslov, 1924, p. 25.
166TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 113 ch. 2, l. 36.
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During a 1906 strike in Tolmach (Kiev), peasants simply asked for more land to rent at what were called reasonable rates. For strikers in Podol'e, reasonable rates were six rubles per desiatin. On the Sakhnovskii estate in Kiev, they were willing to pay five rubles a desiatin. As the going market rate varied between twenty-five and thirty rubles a year, it becomes clear that peasants had to resort to extra-economic means to improve their position. As in the case of wages, they were willing to make compromises and accept less than they wanted, but on the matter of renting land they achieved few successes.

Demands for a part of the land were not central to the movement in the southwest. Wages were the most common concern. Almost as widespread was the call for limiting employment on the estates to "local people." In twentieth-century terms, this demand could be termed a "closed shop." On the other hand, it is possible to interpret it as a traditionalist attempt to affirm the cohesion of the village against the outside world. Whatever the case, such demands made sound tactical sense. Faced with strikes, landlords almost always sought to break peasant resistance by hiring workers from nearby villages. Unless they could prevent the use of strikebreakers, the peasants' efforts were doomed to failure. In addition, if they succeeded in limiting the pool from which landlords could draw, they could reasonably hope for higher wages. Thus, peasants always sought limitations on the hiring of "outsiders." 

Attempts to limit hiring to local people occurred throughout all three revolutionary years in all three provinces on all kinds of estates. Peasants even voiced this demand in the course of the few strikes that took place in the fall or winter. At other moments, they asked for an interesting variation on limitations against outsiders. In June 1905, in Sumovka (Podol'e), peasants demanded work for all who wanted it. They demanded that the landlord hire

167 AD, 2:196.
168 Ibid.
169 TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 347, ll. 2–51.
170 AD, 2:53, 172, and 198.
171 TsGIAL f. 1405, 1907, o. 193, d. 2460, l. 5.
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all seeking employment or no one would work. On May 7, 1907, peasants in Okninaia (Kiev) opposed a landlord who sought to hire only women. The next day a crowd of 300 men and women appeared on the plantation to demand work for all. By the time the revolutionary period came to an end, the demand for restrictions on the employment of outsiders had become almost as common as calls for higher pay.

Rural cultivators in the right bank also sought to improve their working conditions. They made these demands less often than calls for better pay and restricted hiring. Most often, peasants asked for a shorter working day, usually an eight-hour day. Peasants demanded better conditions throughout the southwest, but most commonly in Kiev and Podol’e, the main sites of sugar production. Peasants had little luck on this issue. Owners of sugar plantations were especially opposed to any concessions on working hours. Even more moderate demands for a nine-hour day or simply shorter hours were rarely met. Part of the landlords’ resistance may have been based on what had become the well-known symbolic meaning of the eight-hour day in the urban struggle. This demand had acquired a highly charged political significance in the wake of the crushing of the Moscow uprising during December 1905. That movement had made the eight-hour day its central aim, and it had been on this issue that the unity of the antitsarist movement had split in the wake of the October Manifesto. For peasants to have asked for an eight-hour day demonstrated an awareness, however dim and imprecise, of events in the cities.

Those who worked the estates of the southwest also sought “respectful and humane treatment” from their employers. This demand bears special attention. It appeared nowhere else in rural Russia during the revolutionary period. More important, it suggests a consciously proletarian, political, perhaps even revolution-

172 TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 41, l. 133.
173 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 857, d. 193, l. 19.
174 Shestakov, 1907, p. 27.
175 VSP 15 (1905), 1.
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ary awareness on the part of peasants and agricultural workers in the right bank. It would be an exaggeration to describe this demand as universal. Nevertheless, it did appear with some frequency. ¹⁷⁷

Correspondents of the Free Economic Society reported that peasants made requests for respectful treatment but reporters did not always specify what the peasants meant by the term. ¹⁷⁸ A police report from Podol’e stressed the strikers’ strong protest against the “inhuman treatment” by a large-scale renter who did not allow them to drink water during the working day. ¹⁷⁹ Peasants in Didovshchina (Kiev) refused to agree to return to work, despite some concessions, because of the “lack of respect” shown them by the landlord. ¹⁸⁰ In Novyi Chartori (Volynia), striking peasants made this an explicit demand along with calls for higher wages and the eight-hour day. ¹⁸¹ Strikers on Count Bobrinskii’s Kiev estate, where urban workers actually were involved, asked for the same things. ¹⁸²

Labor relations on K. K. Sangushko’s Volynia estate were particularly poor. He had experienced several strikes, and peasants complained to local authorities that they especially resented his “lack of respect” for them. ¹⁸³ They were incensed with the behavior of Sangushko’s estate manager who forced peasants to bow down before him. ¹⁸⁴ In Pikova (Podol’e), villagers protested the “inhuman treatment” carried on by the large-scale renter of the Ol’shevskii estate. ¹⁸⁵ During a strike in Koshevati (Kiev) peasants demanded that the plantation administrator explain why he beat their children. ¹⁸⁶ Strikers at Zhidovets (Kiev) presented a list of twenty demands including respectful treatment and the right to elect their own foremen. ¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁷Shestakov, 1930, p. 33.
¹⁷⁸AD, 2:15, 100, and 408.
¹⁷⁹UD, 2:353.
¹⁸⁰AD, 2:203.
¹⁸¹Ibid., p. 188.
¹⁸²Ibid., p. 177.
¹⁸³TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 109, l. 105.
¹⁸⁴TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 109, l. 111.
¹⁸⁵TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 32.
¹⁸⁶Butsik, 1957, p. 27.
¹⁸⁷Ibid., p. 11.
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The insistence on personal dignity is striking for two reasons. First, the southwest was the only rural region where this demand appeared during the Revolution of 1905. Second, these kinds of concerns were extremely significant in the highly militant and political strike movement in Petersburg on the eve of the First World War and in the army during 1917. In both cases, the consequences of these demands were explosive. That peasants and other laborers in the right bank should have such aims is not surprising, given the character of agriculture in the region. The lord-peasant relationship had been eroded but not destroyed in central Russia. Despite its obvious exploitative character, it was still a human relationship in which the lord had certain obligations to the peasant. Landlords in the southwest were seeking to abandon that traditional relationship as they modified agricultural practices. In making this shift, landowners abandoned paternalism. They now viewed the peasants simply as employees.

The demand for respectful treatment usually appeared along with calls for a constituent assembly and universal suffrage. This coupling suggests the influence of outside political agitators. Yet political activists in the countryside offered a number of demands and programs to peasants and other rural cultivators. Not all these ideas elicited a positive response. Those who worked the plantations of Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia came to adopt a demand that would later become a central aspect of a highly politicized, urban movement. The entire structure of peasant demands in the right bank underscores this fact. The concerns of rural cultivators were largely dictated by the conditions that confronted them. They behaved differently than peasants elsewhere in Russia and the Ukraine, because the conditions they faced were different.

A familiar dialectic appeared to be at work. The appearance of capitalist agriculture had induced peasants to copy the tactics and demands of city workers. The conversion to sugar beet production on landlord estates had caused rural cultivators in the right bank to become partly proletarianized. In confronting the estate owners, the women and men who worked the plantations did not act in the supposedly irrational ways associated with traditional peasants. Lenin had ascribed a measure of proletarian consciousness to rural

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workers whose lives had been affected by agricultural progress. The actions of right-bank peasants appear to support his contention.

Yet capitalism had come to Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia by the "Prussian path." Commercial agriculture was a landlord, not a peasant, venture. This fact meant that capitalist relations of production influenced the lives of right-bank peasants primarily in their contacts with estate owners. Peasant agriculture was still primitive. Within the villages, many traditional structures and practices persisted. For this reason, those in the southwest who worked the land could emulate only some of the practices of urban proletarians. They chose the strike weapon, but they did not always use it in the same manner as their counterparts in the cities.

The economic situations of right-bank peasants mirrored the experience of the urban worker only in limited ways. By some standards (primarily wage work) the peasants had become proletarianized. By others, they still retained the characteristics of peasants. They were, in fact, semi-proletarian, and their political actions were similarly mixed.