A Peasant Movement—
Patterns and Participants

Because agrarian capitalism in the southwest was organized by landlords, peasant agriculture had advanced little. The availability of wage work on the estates allowed peasants to stay in the countryside, rather than move to the cities. They continued to live in communes that retained many traditional practices. Peasant capitalism would have undermined the old structures, but peasant capitalism was scarcely in evidence in the right bank. The persistence of traditional institutions meant that the peasants of Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia organized their strikes in specifically rural ways. Social cohesion proved to be the norm. The assembly of heads of households played a crucial if diminished role, and landless laborers found themselves on the outside at most crucial moments.

Strike Scenarios

Between the spring of 1905 and the summer of 1907, more than 2,000 strikes took place in the right bank. Nearly all of these manifestations appeared to follow a well-understood script from which there were few variations. The logic of wage labor on the southwest’s large estates dictated actions undertaken by the peas-
Proletarian Peasants

ants. There was little need to improvise. Both the Social Democrat, Shestakov, and the governor of Kiev, Savich, were struck by this fact. The strikes, they each noted separately, were “all of one type.” Indeed, a reading of the available police reports on the strikes leaves one with the impression that the peasants had received instructions from some central source. So uniform were their actions that it is possible to construct a scenario of the typical strike. The only significant variation concerned violence between local peasants and strikebreakers. These kinds of confrontations occurred 80 percent of the time. The peasants of the southwest quickly learned the methods, logic, and order of the agrarian strike. They used this weapon until it was no longer effective.

In their homes or in the fields, peasant men and women discussed their grievances and refused to work. Often this step came in response to a specific provocation from the landlord. In other cases, peasants learned of higher wages in other villages and sought the same for themselves. At this point, they called a meeting of the assembly of heads of households. Demands were formulated, and the skhod informally assumed the role of a strike committee. No one hesitated to use this traditional institution in this manner. It was, after all, the place peasants met to discuss most matters of importance. Even in the hereditary communes of the west and south, the assembly contributed to peasant cohesion. Ad hoc meetings in the woods and independent strike committees took

1TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, o. 233, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 23. Shestakov, 1930, p. 23. Kievlianin, June 2, 1905.

2Leshchenko, 1955, p. 128. Soviet archival authorities made available detailed police or bureaucratic reports on 244 strikes. If we are to believe Leshchenko’s probably inflated figures, this material would comprise 10 percent of the total of strikes. Unfortunately one can do little to quantify the information in the documents I was allowed to see. Roughly the same number of reports was made available from all three provinces. Yet, 90 percent of the strikes occurred in Kiev and Podol’e. Although the archival accounts correspond in their details to the descriptions in published materials, one can make no easy assumptions about their typicality. The overrepresentation of Volynia in the sample of documents is, in part, the result of my access to the Zhitomir regional archive. Zhitomir was the capital of Volynia. Similar materials were not available for Kiev and Podol’e.

3TsGIAU f. 442, o. 857, d. 221, l. 2. TsGAOR f. 102, 1907, o. 236, d. 700 ch. 54, l. 60.
place far less frequently, especially in the initial stages of the movement.

After the village assemblies met, peasants organized deputations to present demands to manor houses or company offices. In nearly every case, the initial requests were refused. Strikes then began in earnest. In response, landlords hired strikebreakers. These outsiders were either landless laborers or, more often, peasants from other villages.⁴ Local villagers understood full well the disastrous implications of allowing strikebreakers to work on the estates. Peasants consistently demanded limiting employment to "local people." Accordingly, peasants bent all efforts to preventing strikebreakers from working the large estates. If force was required, then force was used. Clashes between outsiders and local peasants were the rule, not the exception. On the roads leading to estates, peasants, armed with the usual arsenal of pitchforks, axes, sticks, and rocks, confronted strikebreakers. Later on, peasants from other villages, whether from fear or solidarity, would refuse to accept work as strikebreakers.⁵ Initially, however, bloody clashes were common.

The hiring and subsequent repelling of outsiders always proved a crucial moment in any strike. These clashes provided the excuse for landlords to summon the authorities to repress the strikers.⁶ In general, the government, especially after the appointment of Stolypin as Minister of Interior in 1906, sought to defend the gentry. In the localities, however, soldiers and policemen from time to time expressed reluctance to come to the aid of the more odious landlords. Yet, by and large, the guardians of order engaged in a wide range of summary arrests, executions, beatings, and burnings of peasant dwellings in order to defend landlord property.⁷

Soldiers or gendarmes would appear at a striking village. Strike leaders would be arrested, but the work would not resume.⁸ Often

⁴UD, 2:337. TsGlAl f. 1405, o. 108, d. 6861, l. 3. TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 1. TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 526, l. 26.
⁵AD, 2:125, 229, and 231.
⁶Ibid., p. 36.
⁷UD, 2:203.
Proletarian Peasants

Peasants demanded the release of their arrested comrades, leading to clashes with the police. Soldiers might be stationed in a village, but the strike would continue. Peasants would not return to work until at least some of their demands had been met. Women day laborers, in particular, were able to rely on the food and money generated by the allotments worked by their families. Usually, strikers won victories on wage matters: sugar beet prices were rising, and landlords had the funds to pay increases to workers. By 1907, however, repression was so universal and severe that not even the right-bank peasants could resist it. By then the countryside was peaceful once again.

Events in Popovaia (Podol’e) during May 1905 closely followed the well-understood script. Some 160 men and women stopped work on the local sugar plantation and asked the manager for a raise from thirty to sixty kopecks a day. When they were refused, they went on strike and succeeded in getting day workers from a neighboring village to join them. On May 23 (the next day), a crowd of 500 men and women marched onto the plantation’s fields and removed 60 landless wage laborers who left without a struggle. The next morning 1,000 peasants appeared on the estate and met 800 strikebreakers who had been brought in from neighboring villages. With some limited force, these outsiders were driven off. The local peasants then surrounded the lord’s livestock to prevent it from grazing and convinced his household servants to join the strike. In a few days, the estate owner gave in to their demands.9

Other strikes followed slightly different patterns. Also during May in Germanovskaia Slobodka (Kiev), during the second day of a strike on the sugar plantation of Mikhail Savchenko, a crowd of 600 men and women marched on the lord’s manor house. Very shortly, 50 peasants were chasing Savchenko’s wife around her house, shouting, “The devil take you. Give us work. We want to eat.” Quickly and wisely, Savchenko yielded to their demand of fifty kopecks a day. The peasants, however, insisted on a written agreement witnessed by local authorities.10 Earlier in May, much

9TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 4, ll. 85–86.
10UD, 2:349.
the same pattern prevailed on the Podol’e estate of Peter Balashev, one of the province’s wealthiest lords. Strikebreakers were also brought in, but local peasants convinced them to leave, after which Balashev acceded to their wage demands.\textsuperscript{11}

Nonstrike Scenarios

Not all the disorders in the right bank were strikes. Disturbances like those in central Russia were far from uncommon. On May 24, 1905, an accidental fire began in a building on the Podol’e estate of Stanislav Kholonevskii. To extinguish the blaze, Kholonevskii set off with water taken from a well he had forbidden the peasants to use. Learning of this, 100 men and women surrounded him. Yelling and screaming, they threatened him with the usual peasant arsenal. He promised to let them use the well in the future, but the peasants simply encircled him and allowed the building to burn to the ground.\textsuperscript{12}

Peasants in Volynia were equally threatening and direct. Several of them were arrested near Zhitomir for stealing mushrooms in the course of a forest offense. When asked why he had taken the mushrooms, one peasant replied with characteristic directness, “I don’t like \textit{borshch} without mushrooms.”\textsuperscript{13}

Other nonstrike activity involved resistance to the plans of modernizing landlords. Peasants did not welcome the conversion of an estate to sugar production. This step may have created jobs, but, more important, it took away land. In April 1907, peasants in Kachanovka (Podol’e) continued a confrontation with a landlord who was converting from a three-field to an eight-field rotation. In doing this, he diminished the amount of fallow land peasants could use to graze their livestock. On April 24, they let their animals loose on the disputed land. They repeated this act over several days despite an increasing police presence. Eventually arrests took place.

\textsuperscript{11}TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 526, l. 24. TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 41, l. 36.
\textsuperscript{12}TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 108, d. 6823, ll. 14–15.
\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Volyn’}, June 12, 1905.
Proletarian Peasants

In response, 1,000 peasants massed and marched to the estate's office in order to free their fellow villagers. In the face of such a crowd, the police had no choice but to let the arrested go. Illegal pasturing then resumed. When police appeared to halt this new round of activity, the village church bell was rung, and a crowd of 1,000 quickly appeared in the fields to confront the police. The peasants had pitchforks, axes, sticks, rocks, shovels, and rakes. The police had guns. Vastly outnumbered, the police used their weapons to disperse the peasants, wounding two in the process. Incidents of this sort were common in central Russia between 1905 and 1907. They also happened in Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia, but strikes proved the most common form of the movement.

**Peasant Violence, Official Force**

Peasants in the southwest set few fires and destroyed few estates, but this did not signify any special restraint in the use of force. Peasant violence in the right bank was primarily defensive, initiated either to prevent arrests of fellow villagers or stop work by strikebreakers. Yet violence was common, and it gave landlords suitable reasons for summoning the army and gendarmerie. Of course, members of these repressive forces could not, by themselves, till the fields of the southwest's plantations, but they were able to exact a heavy toll on the peasantry. Most detailed accounts of peasant confrontations with the authorities came from local police. These reports usually describe the actions of a group of guardians of order who were summoned to protect the property or person of a local landlord. The soldiers or police would order peasants to cease whatever illegal acts they were committing. They also might enter a village with the intention of arresting so-called instigators. When peasants resisted these demands, police and soldiers felt they had no choice but to use force. They always claimed to have fired warning shots. When peasants continued to resist, the next step was a volley into the crowd. Inevitably, deaths and injuries resulted, and these were always reported.

14TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 194, d. 117, l. 3.
A Peasant Movement—Patterns and Participants

One of Savich’s reports to the governor-general of the south-west, N. Kleigels, described this pattern of police action. Savich depicted the events of May 24, 1905, on the estate of Baroness Wrangel’ in Kozatskii (Kiev). Some 200 peasants refused to work for thirty kopecks a day. They then marched to the estate’s distillery where they got the staff to join them. Soon, this crowd was confronted by 10 soldiers who had orders to arrest Kornei Sych, a peasant they claimed was the leader of the strike. It was, after all, a crime, in the police’s words, “to disturb economic relations between workers and landowners.”15 Sych, however, refused to go along. The crowd was then supposed to have said, “If you take Sych, you’ll have to take all of us.” At this point, according to Savich, the 200 peasants attacked the 10 soldiers, seeking to take away their rifles. After a warning shot, a peasant named Luka Kudym told his fellows, “Don’t be afraid, brothers. The soldiers are shooting with blanks.” The soldiers fired again, this time into the crowd, killing 2 peasants. The crowd quickly dispersed.16

The account of July 1906, in Korzheva (Kiev) was also typical of official views of peasant violence. According to the indictment of the Kiev court (Kievskaia sudebnaia palata), peasants on the estate of Vladislav Podgarskii demanded more money for the harvest of winter grain. They stopped working and, using force, got day laborers and household servants to join them. On July 19, 1906, 50 cossacks, the most feared guardians of order, were sent to the village to arrest leaders. The cossacks entered a meeting of the skhod and informed the peasants of the illegality of their acts. The peasants refused to turn over anyone to the cossacks. In fact, the peasants claimed they had no idea who the leaders were. In response to this resistance, the cossacks went door to door, taking grain and chickens. Soon a crowd of 200 massed in front of the village church to protest the expropriations. The cossacks then claimed they heard three revolver shots. In response, they fired the usual warning shot which went unheeded, whereupon they fired on the crowd, killing 2 women.17

15TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 349. l. 59.
16Ibid., f. 442, o. 855, d. 115 ch. 2, ll. 26–27.
17UD, 2:227.
Proletarian Peasants

Correspondents of the Free Economic Society gave an even more graphic picture of repression in the right bank. They described soldiers pulling peasants out of their huts and destroying their homes in several Kiev villages. They claimed cossacks were "unrestrained" in whipping, beating, and shooting peasants.\textsuperscript{18} In Ol'shanitsa, during the spring of 1905, dragoons occupied the village for six weeks, forcing peasants to feed and supply them.\textsuperscript{19} In 1906, police in a number of Kiev villages broke up meetings of several assemblies of heads of households.\textsuperscript{20} Peasants complained to their Duma deputies. For example, villagers from Zherdenevka (Podol'ë) said that soldiers had been lodged there for ten days. They had broken into their cupboards, demanded money, taken grain and poultry, and attacked fourteen-year-old girls.\textsuperscript{21}

Some bureaucrats, soldiers, and police often had mixed feelings about their duties. Within the administration, there was a range of views, concerning the propriety and limits of government action on behalf of the landlords who, of course, expected immediate assistance in moments of peril.\textsuperscript{22} Governor-General Kleigels, in particular, advocated swift and ruthless action.\textsuperscript{23} Many troops were away at the Far Eastern front and the movement was so massive that provincial governors often had to choose whom to defend. Police were not fond of intervening on behalf of landlords with especially bad reputations; for example K. K. Sangushko, who had a particularly difficult relationship with the Volynia gendarmerie.\textsuperscript{24} Soldiers also did not like the constant patrol that was required in the first months of the movement, during the spring of 1905.\textsuperscript{25} On the other hand, landlords were unhappy with the work of the lowest level of government bureaucrat in the countryside, the \textit{mirovye posredniki}. These figures worked closely with the peasantry. Landlords thought they had advance knowledge of disturbances and strikes, knowledge

\textsuperscript{18}AD, 2:198.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 175.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., p. 260.
\textsuperscript{21}TsGIAL f. 1278, o. 1, d. 695, l. 8.
\textsuperscript{22}AD, 2:36.
\textsuperscript{23}TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 109, l. 23.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., l. 111.
\textsuperscript{25}TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, o. 233, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 12.
A Peasant Movement—Patterns and Participants

that was not shared with the landlords. At times, mirovye posredniki even called assemblies of heads of households to warn peasants of the illegality of their impending actions. This, however, did not satisfy many landlords.26

In contrast to Kleigels and Savich, A. A. Eiler, the governor of Podol’e, sought to have those below him play a mediating role.27 He warned landlords that they could not count on protection unless they made concessions on wages.28 In particular, Eiler became embroiled in a heated controversy with one landlord, Prince Gudim-Levkovich, who used convict labor on his estate in order to avoid paying the local peasantry. Eiler pointed out the potential dangers of this course, not the least of which involved allowing prisoners out of jail. Gudim-Levkovich was, predictably, incensed and wrote to both Eiler and Kleigels, claiming that Eiler was merely seeking a way to avoid his responsibility to repress the peasantry.29

In the light of the autocracy’s need to favor industrialization, the interests and views of the government and the landed nobility had long ceased to be identical. Differences of this sort were inevitable, but generally exceptional. In the end, the guardians of order came to the defense of the landlords and exacted a severe price from the peasantry. This repression led to the loss of thousands of peasant lives in the southwest, as well as in the rest of the empire. More than any other single factor, it was the state’s use of force that brought the peasant movement to an end.

Patterns of Participation

The steps taken by striking peasants shed light on one of our central questions. Which of the village strata took part in the movement? Long before 1905, revolutionaries had searched for those elements of the peasantry most likely to exhibit militant opposition to the landlords and the state. After 1905, policymakers

26TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 526, l. 11.
27Ibid., d. 113 ch. 1, l. 12.
28Ibid., l. 34.
29Ibid., ll. 187, 198, and 213.
Proletarian Peasants

and scholars continued to debate this most central of political questions, much as they do today. Historians have generally stressed the cohesiveness of the entire rural population during what is called the first Russian revolution. Soviet writers have not sought to challenge this conclusion. Instead, they have argued that the experience represented only a first phase of the struggle in which the entire peasantry opposed the gentry and the autocracy. With the central Russian experience in mind, S. M. Dubrovskii was reluctant to assign a paramount role to poor peasants and landless laborers even in the right bank.30 On the other hand, Leshchenko and Los’, the leading Soviet specialists on the Ukraine, continually stressed the role of what they called “day laborers and batraks.” Leshchenko went so far as to argue that “agricultural proletarians and semi-proletarians were in the vanguard of the movement.”31

On the surface, there would appear to be some basis for such a claim, especially given the importance of wage labor and the overall poverty of the peasantry.

Moshe Lewin and Teodor Shanin have made abundantly clear that the standard categories for dividing the peasantry are quite imprecise. Criteria that may seem meaningful in a general sense often become useless when analyzing specific situations. The terms “poor,” “middle,” and “rich” are best used relatively, for what was rich in the right bank might have been poor by the standards of central Russia. The uncertain definition of the term kulak would later have the most deadly consequences after the revolution at the time of collectivization. Nor is it possible to be entirely sure that the batrak (landless peasant) was the pure rural proletarian on which the Bolsheviks would place so much hope, both in 1905 and later.

The imprecision of the meaning of batrak has special significance in the analysis of the strike movement in the southwest. The sources, published and unpublished, make repeated references to “batraks,” “agricultural workers,” “day laborers,” “monthly workers,” and “period workers.” Yet the same sources emphasize the role of “peasants” and the organizing function of the assembly

30 Dubrovskii, 1955, p. 15.
31 Los’, p. 183; Leshchenko, 1955, p. 5.
of heads of households during the disturbances. These facts made it clear that pure rural proletarians, agricultural workers, were not at the center of the strike movement. The large number of female wage workers, members of allotment-holding households, suggests that landless male laborers were far from a majority of those who worked the estates in this region. Despite the extent of wage labor in the right bank, landless laborers dominated neither village life nor the strike movement.

Instead, poor peasants, Lenin’s semi-proletarians, led the disturbances in the southwest. They did not do this, however, by consistently opposing rich or middle peasants. Because landlords had retained so much land and because they rented little of it to peasants, the total amount of land available to peasants in the southwest was extremely small. If one uses, as do most Soviet scholars, the admittedly crude criterion of sown area, the majority of peasants in the right bank fell into the so-called poor category. Middle peasants were a minority, and rich, landowning peasants were rare. The movement, therefore, was led by peasants who were truly poor. The majority of the region’s rural cultivators were poor peasants, just as middle peasants were thought to be the largest of the village strata in central Russia. This meant that the special theoretical significance of the role of the right bank’s poor was necessarily limited.

In the words of a correspondent of the Free Economic Society in Zvenigorod district (Kiev), “Here all the peasants are the same—poor. . . . In the villages a rich peasant is a rarity.” In short, if poor peasants led the movement in the southwest, this occurred because most peasants there were poor. As in central Russia, the movement appears to have been carried out by most of the region’s peasantry. In central Russia, the majority of peasants fell into the middle category. In the right bank, most of them were poor. This fact led to the appearance of the same kind of political cohesion in the southwest that Shanin and others claim existed elsewhere in Russia. Although the forms of the movement in the right bank were sharply different from those elsewhere in Russia, the absence

32AD, 2:103.
33Ibid., p. 105.
Proletarian Peasants

of intrapeasant class tension was much the same as the general experience.

Surprisingly, the correspondents of the Free Economic Society were the only firsthand observers who were concerned with the class character of the participants in the movement. They generally noted that all social and economic levels of the southwest’s villages participated not only in strikes but in the more spontaneous and disorganized disturbances as well. The general need of all was so great that differences within the peasantry appeared minimal in the face of the struggle with the landlords.

Although Free Economic Society correspondents stressed cohesion, they did note that the movement was met with indifference or even hostility by what were called “prosperous” (zazhitochnyi) peasants. This term was broadly used to describe anyone from a stable middle peasant up to a kulak. Landowning peasants did not take part in the strike movement. They did participate in forest offenses, and at exceptional moments were, themselves, the victims of peasant violence. Peasant attacks on kulaks and other wealthy villagers were rare, however.

At the Voitsovtsy strike, all levels of wealth and age took part. Poor peasants controlled the strike at the F. I. Tereshchenko estate, but middle peasants also participated there. On the Podol’e estate of Admiral Chikhachev, the Free Economic Society’s correspondent reported that “the solidarity, order, and lack of opposition were staggering.” In Iampolsk and Gaisin districts (Podol’e), middle peasants led strikes while the poor and rich stayed on the sidelines. The same phenomenon took place in Bratslav (Podol’e) and Chigirin districts (Kiev). Elsewhere in Chigirin and in nearby

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34Ibid., p. 58. TsGAOR f. 102, 1906, o. 236, d. 700 ch. 54, l. 93.
35AD, 2:139. TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 526. l. 3.
36AD, 2:211.
37TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 817, l. 2. TsGAOR f. 102, 1907, o. 236, d. 700 ch. 54, l. 75.
38AD, 2:142.
39Ibid., p. 174.
40Ibid., p. 170.
41Ibid., pp. 58 and 193.
42Ibid., pp. 27 and 60. Correspondents did not always name specific villages in their reports. Instead, they merely mentioned the district (uezd) in which disorders occurred.

I44
A Peasant Movement—Patterns and Participants

Radomylsk district (Kiev) poor peasants led strikes that were opposed not only by the wealthy but by the middle strata as well.\textsuperscript{43} Only in the villages of Lebedin (Chigirin district, Kiev) and Prus (Cherkass district, Podol’e) did the pattern of participation resemble the expected Bolshevik scenario, with poor and middle peasants opposing \textit{kulaks} and landlords. According to the Free Economic Society’s correspondent in Lebedin,

\begin{quote}
The strike was carried on in a friendly manner. There was class enmity for the landlord. Nevertheless, the leading elements were the youth and the poor peasants. The middle groups were not especially interested in the strike as they did not work on the estate. . . . The rich simply chuckled.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

In Prus, “all were divided into two camps. The poor and middle peasants participated in strikes, while the rich acted as one with the landlord.”\textsuperscript{45}

This highly mixed picture given by the Free Economic Society’s correspondents is not contradicted by any of the available archival evidence. Policemen, judges, and bureaucrats produced this material, and they were uninterested in this particular issue. They did not care to know the precise level of the village from which striking peasants came. Quite simply, the local authorities thought all those involved were dangerous. They were not seeking allies, only criminals. Although it is true poor peasants led the strike movement, it appears they did not do so with consistent opposition from any other element among the peasantry. Only those who had purchased land were antagonistic to the strikers, but such peasants were so few that they could not be said to have played a significant role in the right-bank.

Agricultural workers have so far been omitted from this discussion. Their situation proved highly precarious, and they found it difficult to play the role assigned them by Lenin and most Soviet scholars. Though landless laborers most often took part, in no way could they be described as “the vanguard of the movement.” Rural

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., p. 106.
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., p. 22.
Proletarian Peasants

Proletarians confronted situations that were fundamentally different from those facing their supposed urban counterparts. They were not members of the village communes where they worked. They could not participate in the functions of the central social institution in the Russian and Ukrainian countryside. This body (the skhod) was responsible for much of the cohesion that the peasantry was able to demonstrate. Rural proletarians had no similar mechanism to bring them together.

The social relations that supported political cohesion were not created by the labor process itself, as was the case in the city. The plantation field was not a factory. The processes of interaction that took place on the factory floor and in the working-class neighborhood did not occur in the fields with quite the same ease. Laborers were often physically separated from each other. There were few regularly frequented meeting points, and dispersed living conditions made constant contact and exchange difficult. Mobilizing rural proletarians was far more difficult than organizing urban workers. This has been true in modern commercial agriculture as well: as has been seen since the 1960s in California, the task of organizing farm workers on the vast factory farms of the Central and Imperial valleys has been a difficult and trying process.

Peasant mistrust of outsiders was a central element of their political behavior. Of course landless laborers were not the same sort of enemy as landlords or soldiers, but they were also outsiders and therefore mistrusted. Landlords continually used these workers as strikebreakers. This practice created an obvious tension between rural proletarians (strictly defined) and poor peasants with some land, the so-called semi-proletariat. Agricultural workers were social and cultural outsiders. Their work situations created few significant social and political relationships. Accordingly, those within the community viewed agricultural workers with suspicion. The situation of the rural proletariat was by no means identical with that of the poor peasantry. As a result, these two groups behaved quite differently in the course of the strike movement.

The record of landless laborers in the southwest was not one of unremitting militance and leadership. Rather, those who fit the strict definition of rural proletarian played a hesitant and fearful role. Their reluctance had its roots in the processes described by
Eric Wolf.\textsuperscript{46} The precariousness of their situation was more a source of fear than of revolutionary fervor. Instead of behaving like employed city workers, they acted much like Marx's urban \textit{lumpenproletariat} of drifters, beggars, and petty criminals who composed an amorphous pool of support for political conservatives and proto-fascists. Their fear made landless laborers well suited for strikebreaking. In time, it became possible to overcome that fear. Meanwhile, assuring the participation of the propertyless required the best efforts of the peasantry, the poor peasants in particular.

The landless depended on a daily wage for survival. As a result, they lacked what Wolf called "tactical mobility." They could not retreat to their allotments to ride out a strike.\textsuperscript{47} When work was halted, they always demonstrated an initial reluctance. According to Savich's report on events in Kiev, "\textit{batraks} and day laborers" joined strikes only after they had been forced to do so by regular peasants.\textsuperscript{48} They had been reluctant to take part, in Savich's opinion, precisely because of their complete dependence.

Initially, peasants had to use physical force to coerce the landless into participating. Soon, however, more benign forms of solidarity emerged. Peasants began to subsidize the landless with food collections.\textsuperscript{49} Often, the village assembly would designate a portion of the harvest to aid the landless.\textsuperscript{50} In Mogilev (Podol'e), striking peasants simply took up a collection to aid agricultural workers who had at first expressed fear.\textsuperscript{51} The hesitancy of the landless was not the result of any conscious political antipathy toward peasant goals. Rather, the absence of militance was caused by the lack of tactical options in a strike situation. Despite many cases of rural proletarians exhibiting full solidarity with peasant strikers, there is no case in the available sources of the landless actually leading a strike, playing a "vanguard" role.

Some observers went so far as to say that this initial reluctance was simply a self-protective tactic to avoid reprisals from land-

\textsuperscript{46}Wolf, 1969, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{47}AD, 2:211.
\textsuperscript{48}UD, 2:334.
\textsuperscript{49}AD, 2:23.
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., p. 212.
\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., pp. 60, 170, and 232.
Proletarian Peasants

lords; therefore, it was incorrect to assume a lack of militance on the part of the landless. Maslov claimed such an approach was common throughout Podol’e. Correspondents of the Free Economic Society confirmed this view. But opinions of this sort were decidedly in the minority.

The experience of rural proletarians in the right bank during 1905 confirms much of Wolf’s picture. In time, landless laborers were able to overcome their initial reluctance to participate, but these steps were nearly always made with the assistance of allotment-holding peasants. Although cohesion was usually achieved, it became necessary to overcome a fundamental tension between the needs and fears not only of landless laborers but of poor peasants as well. Peasants were afraid that agricultural workers could easily be used as strikebreakers, while workers feared that peasant militance could cause their wages to be cut off. The interests of the landless and the poor peasant were, therefore, not identical. The record of their behavior during the strike movement in the southwest suggests that lumping them together into the same leadership group overlooks serious differences in their situations. Even in a region with much wage labor and extensive strike activity, landless laborers played a secondary role that was not the same as that of the peasant.

Peasant Leadership

If it is difficult to specify which groups participated in the disorders, it is even harder to pinpoint what kinds of people became its leaders. The movement in the right bank did not produce any visible regional leaders. Peasants who became instigators and agitators rarely acted beyond the boundaries of their villages. The police paid special attention to identifying and arresting “instigators” in the belief that such actions would strike fear into the peasantry and quiet the rest of the village. This approach proved useless. The forces of order could only guess which individuals

52Maslov, 1924, p. 18.
53AD, 2:108 and 171.
A Peasant Movement—Patterns and Participants

required special attention. When they went so far as to name indi-
viduals, they rarely described any of the “instigator’s” charac-
teristics. Police and soldiers also found that their attempts to enter
villages and arrest so-called leaders were met with violent re-
stance from the entire community.54

The case of Phillip Skirda of Kumeika (Kiev) was typical. On
July 1, 1906, 20 soldiers entered the village to arrest the leaders of
a recent strike. They quickly found 3 of the men they wanted.
Immediately, they were surrounded by a crowd of local peasants.
At this point, Skirda was strolling jauntily down the village street;
he saw the soldiers just as they saw him. Skirda ran for his life but
was chased by the soldiers who quickly captured him. At this point
he yelled, “Brothers, don’t let them take me. Save me from these
scorpions.” The village responded and quickly a crowd of 200
peasants surrounded the soldiers and began beating them. The
soldiers escaped, only to be confronted by another large group
coming from the opposite direction. According to the indictment,
the soldiers fired the usual warning shot which had no effect. They
then sent a volley toward the crowd, killing 1 and wounding 2. At
this point, the peasants prudentely dispersed and the soldiers took
the arrested to jail.55

In the face of government attempts to pinpoint and arrest lead-
ers, peasants responded with solidarity. Quite often, they told po-
lice or soldiers that they would have to arrest the entire village, if
they took a particular individual.56 Peasants simply refused to
admit there were any significant differences between those who
instigated disorders and the rest of the village. From time to time a
village elder or a worker from the city might be pointed out by
informers as a leader but such incidents were exceptional.57

The police may well have thought the people they arrested actu-
ally were leaders. Peasants, on the other hand, contended that

54TsGIAU f. 442, o. 857, d. 195, l. 5. TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 830, l. 2, UD, 6:229.
55TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 1334, l. 2.
56TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 113 ch. 2, ll. 26, 27, and 42. TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d.
1346, l. 1.
57TsGIAL 1405, o. 116, d. 628, l. 6. TsGIAU f. 442, o. 857, d. 195, l. 6.
TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, 1344, l. 2.
those apprehended were simply ordinary villagers. Limited evidence seems to indicate that the peasants were right. Either there was little to distinguish instigators from other peasants, or the authorities took in unruly villagers largely at random.

It was generally the case that the village youth had played an especially militant role throughout rural Russia. In the right bank, young men were joined by the rest of the village. Information concerning the age of arrested peasants was available on 313 individuals charged in all three provinces in 1905, 1906, and 1907. Their average age was thirty-three, and those arrested ranged from thirteen to sixty-five. Quite a few peasants in their fifties and sixties came to trial. In addition, a considerable portion of the 313 arrested peasants, some 70, were women. Given the importance of women in the labor process and the frequency with which they were mentioned as strike participants, it is not surprising that so many of them were arrested.58

By and large, we know little about the thousands of peasants who were arrested in the southwest during the revolutionary period. At the time of their arraignment, peasants answered certain basic questions about themselves and gave preliminary statements. It was possible to find only 135 of these questionnaires in the records of the Kiev court (Kievskaia sudebnaia palata).59 Most of the peasants’ statements are of little use. All villagers, even those caught in hand-to-hand combat with the police, denied any involvement in the disorders. Most claimed to have been somewhere else. If they did not deny their own participation, they always claimed to have been coerced by others.

If the 135 statements were unreliable and tell us little, the same cannot be said of the more factual information furnished by the peasants. It is important to be cautious when extrapolating from such a limited sample. Nevertheless, it does appear that the peasants arrested by the authorities in the right bank were very typical of the rest of the population. Nearly all of them were members of

58Police filled out a questionnaire when each peasant was arrested. The information cited here comes from these questionnaires. One hundred thirty-five of them were found scattered through the files of the Kiev court (Kievskaia sudebnaia palata) in TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1.
59Ibid., d. 348.
the peasant estate, locally born, Ukrainian, married with children, and illiterate. Only 5 of them had been arrested previously (see Table 14).

In only one aspect were the arrested peasants atypical. This matter is so tantalizing that the limited character of the data must be stressed. The allotments of peasant households in the right bank were particularly small. In Podol’e the average holding was as low as 3.8 desiatiny. Given this fact, it is especially interesting that the 129 peasants on whom we have information concerning land generally came from households with even smaller holdings. Of those interrogated, 26 claimed to be from landless families, and 56 said they owned less than 2 desiatiny. The households of 47 peasants possessed more than that amount. One could then argue that peasants militant enough to be arrested came from the ranks of the poor and the landless, perhaps even that the leaders came from these strata. At the same time, there is no evidence that police went out of their way to protect better-off peasants. This finding would seem to support orthodox Soviet conceptions concerning the behavior of the various rural classes. It may not contradict fully the general impression of cohesion, but it does indicate a need for caution before completely embracing this particular culturalist emphasis.

Given the possible significance of this finding, several warnings are in order. First, the sample is quite small, nor is it clear why

| Table 14. Characteristics of Peasants Arrested in the Right Bank, 1905–1907 |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Member of peasant estate        | 133 | 1   | 134 |
| Locally born                    | 113 | 21  | 134 |
| Ukrainian                      | 133 | 2   | 135 |
| Married                        | 89  | 8   | 97  |
| Have children                  | 76  | 12  | 88  |
| Previously arrested            | 5   | 130 | 135 |
| Illiterate                     | 112 | 17  | 129 |

Source: Tsentral’nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Ukrainskoi SSR, fond 318—Kievskaiia sudebnaia palata.
Proletarian Peasants

Some documents were preserved while others destroyed or lost. Second, the argument that those charged were peasant leaders, though plausible, cannot be established, given the arbitrariness of so many of the arrests. Third, police probably did not independently check the information peasants gave on their holdings. Whether to protect themselves from confiscation or to elicit sympathy from their captors, peasants may well have reported smaller holdings than they actually had. Nevertheless, it appears possible that those arrested in the southwest, although generally typical of the village, did in fact come from its poorest elements. By itself, this evidence does not prove that better-off elements of the rural population did not participate. Yet it does confirm an important role for those in the village who were least wealthy. Cohesion may have been the rule, but it is clear that the village's semi-proletarians were at the forefront.

Role of the Village Assembly

The continued vitality of the village assembly of heads of households was the primary reason for the tension between the landless and the rest of the peasantry. The skhod divided the propertyless from the poor peasant and reinforced the antagonism between insiders and outsiders. Peasants in the southwest may have chosen tactics (the strike) and made demands (higher wages) that were typical of urban workers, but, ironically, rural proletarians did not share this militance. Agricultural workers, because they were not heads of local households, could not participate in the village assemblies where they worked, and it was in these gatherings that many important decisions were made. This distinction became especially significant during the disorders. Throughout the revolutionary period, peasants met especially often, and their gatherings, regular and irregular, were much better attended than in more placid times.

61 Leshchenko, 1955, p. 155. TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 526, l. 9.
A Peasant Movement—Patterns and Participants

The *skhod* did not operate according to formal rules of procedure. Given the general vagueness of peasant customary law, the legal status, powers, and membership of the *skhod* were always imprecise. In no way was it a participatory and democratic institution of the entire village. Patriarchy alone would have made that impossible. Women were not supposed to participate, nor were unmarried youths without allotments. Still, most assemblies did not take place behind closed doors. Persistent and noisy outsiders could make their views known, even if they were not supposed to vote. The village assembly, much like the commune of which it was the central element, was thoroughly oligarchical. Given the way in which the *skhod* operated, the more powerful members of the community were usually able to exert power over the weak.

Beyond the imprecision concerning the character of the assembly, there was yet another crucial area of confusion. The Russian word *skhod* was applied in the sources to a broad variety of gatherings, not all of which could be called regular meetings of the traditional assembly of heads of households. In many cases, the police or other local officials called villages together to explain the illegality of certain actions and to issue warnings. These meetings, summoned by the authorities and not the peasants, were also called *skhody*, at least according to the reports of the authorities.

Distinctions of this sort were significant. Police and soldiers were somewhat reluctant to intervene in the activities of a legally recognized institution of the village, however unclear its status. This hesitancy provided a certain protective cover and explains why the peasants sought to call any strike deliberation a formal meeting of the *skhod*. Independent strike committees organized by landless laborers or outside agitators enjoyed no such legal protection, however flimsy it might be. If any such groups did surface, they found it necessary to merge quickly with the official assembly.

Eventually, the authorities ceased to respect the sanctity of the

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64Mirza-Avakians, p. 33.
Proletarian Peasants

skhod. By 1906, they exhibited little hesitancy in breaking up any village meeting, regardless of its formal status. When peasants were arrested, they were never charged with taking part in a skhod. Instead, their crime was participation in an “illegal public gathering” (nezakonnnoe publichnoe skopishche).65 The purpose of these meetings, according to later indictments, was to reorganize economic relationships on the estates. In spite of this claim, the police descriptions of these “gatherings” made them sound not unlike supposedly legal meetings of the village assembly. Quite simply, what the peasants called a skhod the police called something else. The ambiguity of the terms made it possible for both groups to use different language to describe similar phenomena.

Once the skhod ceased to provide protection from repression, peasants began to organize strikes in other ways. Independent groups became more common.66 A number of strike committees sprouted in Podol’e during 1906.67 At the same time, illegal meetings took place in all three provinces.68 At the initiative of sugar factory workers on the Rogovskii estate in Kiev, 3,000 peasants gathered on June 19, 1906.69 With the skhod no longer providing large gatherings certain protection, peasants now had to meet in forests and pastures far more often than earlier.70 In all, Leshchenko estimated that 284 illegal meetings took place in the right bank during the revolutionary years, primarily in 1906 and 1907.71 The traditional assembly still was the main arena for peasants to meet and discuss all matters of interest. In the course of the crisis, however, it had lost some of its special importance as a force for cohesion among the right bank’s peasantry. Rural cultivators were finding new ways of organizing themselves, and in this process, the skhod and the commune began to show some signs of erosion.

65TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 302, l. 3. ZhOGA f. 24, o. 16, d. 621, l. 3. TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 193, d. 2857, l. 9. TsGIAL f. 1363, o. 2, d. 1665, l. 2.
66AD, 2:59.
67Ibid., pp. 200 and 207.
68TsGIAU f. 442, o. 856, d. 789, l. 29. Leshchenko, 1955, p. 150. A. Smirnov, Kak prosobili vybory vo 2-uu gosudaratstvennuu dumu (St. Petersburg, 1907), p. 3.
69Butsik, 1957, p. 63.
70TsGIAL f. 1363, o. 3, d. 147, l. 29. TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 119, d. 2636, l. 5.
A Peasant Movement—Patterns and Participants

The traditional leaders of the peasantry found it difficult to maintain their positions in the face of growing peasant militance. Some village elders, in deference to their superiors, opposed strikes.\(^{72}\) Others were thrown out by peasants who felt they lacked militance.\(^{73}\) In Mezhirechka (Kiev), striking peasants removed their starosta (elder) and accused him of acting on behalf of the landlord.\(^{74}\) At one point in the Voitsovtsy strike, the canto (volost') elder actually went to the neighboring village to recruit strikebreakers.\(^{75}\) Traditional leaders also informed on their fellow villagers to the police. In fact, many of them had always seen this function as one of their essential roles.\(^{76}\) During June 1905 in Ometintsy (Podol'e), 100 peasants, meeting in their traditional assembly, ignored the pleas of their elder and went on strike.\(^{77}\) And 300 peasants in Bolshaia-Ternovka (Podol'e) physically attacked the village starosta for collaborating with the police.\(^{78}\) Events of this sort occurred throughout rural Russia, but above and beyond this tendency, the peasants of the right bank systematically refused to elect their traditional leaders to any position at any level in 1906 and 1907 during the course of the elections to both the first and second Dumas.\(^{79}\) In the southwest, there was a search for new authorities.

It could not be said these examples of leadership turnover formed the complete picture. Many times, elders led strikes and stood up to the police. Several refused demands by the authorities to turn in leaders and agitators.\(^{80}\) One starosta in Podol'e warned his villagers not to take work as strikebreakers.\(^{81}\) In Shtakov (Volynia), elders led hay stealing.\(^{82}\) In moments such as these, peasants were only too willing to accord their leaders respect and authority.
Proletarian Peasants

On the other hand, when the elders stood in the way of the wishes of the mass of peasants, they were nearly always swept aside. Events of this sort were not limited to the right bank. There, as elsewhere, the Revolution of 1905 changed the political significance of traditional structures of authority. What were thought to be elements of stability had now eroded in the face of massive disruption.

The patriarchal character of the right bank's communes was further undermined by the important role played by women both in the economy of the region and in the peasant movement. Russian peasant women had never been particularly militant at moments of disorder, and women usually have been depicted as a conservative force in peasant societies. This had always been true in Russia and proved to be the case almost everywhere in the countryside during the revolution of 1905. The southwest, however, was an exception. More women participated there than in any other region.83 They were, after all, a major part, perhaps the majority, of the labor force on the estates of the region.84 As noted previously, many sugar plantation owners thought women were better workers than men and sought to hire only female day laborers: they were as productive as men and could be paid much less.85 Women workers were supported by their families, who took care of their own allotments while providing food and shelter.86 Wage work was not restricted to any particular group of female peasants. Women of all levels of wealth labored on the estates of the region.

Because women composed such a large segment of the right bank's work force and because the movement was characterized by strikes for higher wages, it was unavoidable that women should become active participants in the movement. This appears to have had little to do with the very real differences between Ukrainian and Russian family structures and communes. Women in the left bank and in Novorossiia were not particularly active. The reason

83Istoria selianstva, i:471.
84AD, 2:25.
85TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 194, d. 160, l. 9.
86AD, 2:22.
A Peasant Movement—Patterns and Participants

for the unusual militance of right-bank women seems straightforward. The conditions confronting them in Kiev, Podol'e, and Volynia forced women to work on the estates, and the difficult conditions on those estates led to labor unrest. Female wage workers did not go out of their way to avoid confrontations. Whenever a strike occurred on an estate that employed women, women always participated.

Female peasants in the southwest did not simply limit their activity to joining the men's struggle. In many instances they assumed leadership roles. This activity went beyond the familiar tactical ploy of assuming a physical presence in the front lines of demonstrations in order to forestall police violence. Women had their own protests. In nine villages in Chigirin district (Kiev), only women took part in strikes during May 1905. One of these strikes occurred on the Sakhnovskii estate where fifty women demanded a raise to fifty kopecks a day. When they were refused, they mobilized the rest of the plantation's workers and led a strike that lasted several days. According to the correspondent of the Free Economic Society, women also played a leading role in the strike at Smela (Kiev). Four thousand women in Zhitomir district (Volynia) marched on several railroad stations in a series of coordinated strikes. Police also reported that a strike during July, 1905 in Shukaivoda (Kiev) was dominated by women.

Female militance was not limited to strike activity on sugar plantations. They also took part in forest offenses, illegal pasturing, and arson. Women also played roles in the few political committees established by the various parties in the right bank. The

87Ibid., pp. 21 and 227.
88Butsik, 1957, p. 35. TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 526, l. 4. TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 346, l. 3. TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 86.
89AD, 2:104.
90AD, 2:179.
91TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 336, l. 57.
92AD, 2:180.
93Shestakov, 1907, p. 28.
94TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, o. 233, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 14.
95TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 347, l. 51. TsGAOR f. 102, 1907, d. 53 ch. 1, l. 21.
96AD, 2:208.
Proletarian Peasants

lessons learned carried over into actions that elsewhere were the exclusive province of men.

The partial weakening of patriarchal authority in the right bank was attributable to the importance of women in the labor force of the region. Peasant societies have strictly regulated the roles and functions of women. The communes of Russia and the rest of the Ukraine were not exceptional. The economy of the southwest gave women a new, if not especially fulfilling role. Ironically, the availability of wage work allowed the peasant households of the region to continue existing even as it undermined traditional patterns. Had the sugar plantations not provided employment, many households would have had to abandon the countryside entirely. Yet this kind of activity could not be hidden behind the trappings of custom. It was obvious to the men and could not be denied. The wages earned by women were decisive to the continued survival of the average peasant household in the southwest.

If processes of change had been set in motion, traditional village institutions continued to dominate rural life in Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia. When strikes were imminent, peasants discussed matters in their skhody more often than in any other arena. This fact meant that the tension between insiders and outsiders continued to be a crucial element of life in the southwest. The reasons for the continued vitality of the commune are not elusive. They afforded peasants forms of ongoing social contact and, in the process, made political cohesion eminently realizable in moments of crisis. The reasons for making use of these institutions were sensible, logical, and rational. The skhod had always been the arena for consultation. There was no reason to change this practice unless conditions warranted such a course. Peasants did not necessarily need custom and tradition to dictate their actions. In the special conditions of the revolutionary years, old institutions acquired new meanings and functions. Peasant willingness to make use of the skhod was politically sensible. This was the institution peasants had created over the centuries. Yet, in the new context, the persistence of the assembly did not represent a blind clinging to the old ways. The village assembly was still the center of peasant life, but by 1907 it had assumed a different and less powerful significance.
The tension between outsiders and insiders controlled many peasant actions. But landlords and soldiers were not the only external forces affecting the peasantry. Other groups came in contact with the village and influenced it in complex and unpredictable ways.

Other villages. If peasants considered landlords, policemen, soldiers, merchants, and landless laborers to be outsiders, the same can be said for peasants from other villages. Most strikes and disturbances were localized and directed against the landlord for whom the peasants labored. The cohesion demonstrated by peasants during 1905 was primarily intravillage. It did not extend to the entire social estate. When strikes occurred, landlords sent to neighboring villages for strikebreakers. Other peasants served in this capacity far more often than landless laborers, largely because landless laborers were such a small fraction of the available labor pool. As a result, violent clashes between peasants from different villages became common. In several locations, peasants began to refuse offers to break strikes. In other places, the people of one village had to explain a situation in order to gain their neighbors' support. Although landlords believed they could always find other hands when their own peasants went on strike, this did not always work out. Invitations might be turned down, or willing strikebreakers might be run off by local peasants. Nevertheless, peasants from one village could be threatened by their neighbors, who in every other way were very much like them.

This isolation was by no means complete. Sometimes peasants from several villages were actually able to coordinate their actions. This occurred in both Kiev and Podol'ë during the spring of 1906.97 Because peasants could know in advance the time of their strikes, it became possible to make mutual plans with surrounding settlements for maximum effect. Some villages, for example Zhidovtsy (Kiev), actually propagandized on neighboring estates.98 Where a landlord might own several settlements, peasants

97TsGIAU f. 272, o. 66, d. 193, l. 34. AD, 2:217.
Proletarian Peasants

were quick to seek each other out and agree on mutual plans.99 This occurred in Didovshchina during 1906.100 Yet events of this sort were atypical. The peasants of the right bank demonstrated an awareness of developments outside their villages. They acted in ways that differed sharply from peasants elsewhere. Nevertheless, they continued to direct their wrath against local targets. Solidarity from village to village was not typical. If peasants in both central Russia and the right bank acted cohesively, that cohesion did not extend beyond the borders of their settlements. Solidarity with others who shared their relation to the means of production was not extensive. In the fundamental struggle between outsiders and insiders, every peasant was some other peasant’s outsider.

**Jews.** The widespread literary and journalistic picture of the Ukrainian peasant as an arch anti-Semite is not entirely supported by events in the right bank during the revolutionary period. As has been made clear, peasants in the southwest harbored a variety of resentments toward all outsiders, of which Jews were merely one group. There was special animosity toward the few large-scale Jewish renters of sugar plantations.101 The Brodsky family sugar company had a long-standing reputation as a difficult employer, but, more generally, Jewish merchants were blamed for driving up the price of rented land.102 Rafal’skii reported extensive rumors of potential pogroms, and in Nesets (Podol’e) on December 28, 1905, peasants destroyed the house and took the property of a Jewish family.103 There were other isolated incidents of pogromlike activity in the right bank, but violence of this sort was not extensive.104 The limited number of anti-Semitic attacks in the countryside of the southwest was largely the result of the limited number of Jews in the rural areas. There were some Jewish mer-

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99TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 193, d. 1999, l. 4.
100Shestakov, 1930, p. 31.
101AD, 2:113.
102TsGAOR f. 102, 1905, o. 233, d. 2550 ch. 4, l. 5. TsGIAU f. 442. o. 855, d. 7. l. 1. TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 107, d. 7618, l. 82.
103TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 526, l. 15. TsGAOR f. 102, o. 236, d. 700 ch. 54, l. 1.
104Maslov, 1908, p. 232.
A Peasant Movement—Patterns and Participants

chants and tavern keepers, along with the large-scale renters, but, for the most part, Jews were urban dwellers. Most of the worst pogroms of the era took place in the cities.

If the absence of overt and widespread anti-Semitic activity had more to do with lack of Jews than with peasant open-mindedness, it should not be forgotten that peasants in the right-bank Ukraine welcomed a variety of political agitators into their midst, and many of these outsiders were Jewish. When peasants agreed with the message of Jewish revolutionaries, they were open and friendly. In June 1907, Jews participated alongside peasants in several acts of arson on the Kiev estate of Countess Brannitskaia. Dozens of youths, a few of them Jewish, engaged in propaganda on the Volynia estate of the Tereshchenko family. During the fall of 1905, peasants in Ol’shanitsa (Kiev) elected a strike committee which included two Jewish members. Clearly then, the picture is mixed. If right-bank peasants saw Jews engaged in activity that threatened their interests, they did not hesitate to resort to violence. On the other hand, if they felt Jewish outsiders shared their sense of anger and injustice, they were only too glad to provide a welcome. Ukrainian peasants in the right bank, therefore, exhibited a wide range of attitudes toward their Jewish neighbors in much the same way that Jews related to peasants in many different ways.

Political parties. It has already been noted that various organized political agitators played a role in spreading the movement in the right bank. Illegal organizing and propaganda had been practiced in the countryside for decades before 1905. After the October Manifesto, however, parties became legal. The populist Socialist Revolutionary party had always been most disposed toward working with the peasantry. For many years the Socialist Revolutionaries had operated underground groups in the Central Black Earth and the Mid-Volga regions. The wings of the Social Democratic party were less concerned with the peasantry. Instead, they focused on the urban proletariat. Of the two wings, the Bolsheviks, and

105 AD, 2:31.
106 TsGIAU f. 442, o. 857, d. 193, l. 28.
107 AD, 2:187.
Proletarian Peasants

Lenin in particular, showed more interest in peasants, seeing them as a group that merited support despite their uncertain political aims. Historians of the peasant movement, both Soviet and Western, have not ascribed a controlling role to any of the political forces that appeared in the countryside. The disturbances were too spontaneous, disorganized, and broad for any political group to have controlled. The isolation of most villages and the low level of literacy made the political culture of rural Russia different from that of the cities. In urban Russia, there were specific party labels and a clear awareness of a national struggle. By contrast, political parties had no place in the traditional world of the Russian village. This absence of party affiliation was not limited to the peasants who were not likely to formulate elaborately nuanced political programs. Noble landlords were equally suspicious about parties. Even after independent organizations were legalized, the gentry did not rush to form modern political parties despite the clear necessity for such groups in the newly created semi-parliamentary system.

No party could claim to control or call into action the tidal wave of peasant discontent that was witnessed during the first Russian revolution. This held as true for the right bank, as it did for the rest of Russia. Yet in other ways this region presents a picture different from that of central Russia. In most places, either the Socialist Revolutionaries or the short-lived, amorphous Peasant Union were prominent. In Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia, various Social Democratic groups were more visible. The right bank was one of the few regions (the Caucasus and the Baltic were others) in which Social Democrats elicited a response from peasants. The significant presence of wage labor may have played a role in this success, but the Social Democrats, like the Socialist Revolutionaries, talked primarily about the land question in their appeals and proclamations. Nevertheless, it is more than interesting that a party with such an

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109 Leshchenko, 1955, p. 82.
110 Maslov, 1924, p. 45.
111 TsGIAL f. 1405, o. 108, d. 6824, l. 7. TsGIAU f. 318, o. 1, d. 404, l. 39. TsGIAU f. 442, o. 855, d. 526, l. 8.
urban bias could find an audience in a region of extensive commercial agriculture.112

In some cases, peasant awareness of the Social Democrats was quite specific. During June 1905, in the village of Maidenetsk (Kiev), the provincial prosecutor reported that peasants left a strike negotiation chanting, “Hail the republic and the eight-hour day. Hail the Social Democratic party.” This particular official had elsewhere been an accurate describer of events, and it was usually assumed that so concrete a peasant utterance signified the involvement of agitators with specific party affiliations.113 On June 28, 1906, 1,000 peasants held a meeting in Kiev province at which calls for political freedom and the eight-hour day were combined with a vote of solidarity with the Social Democratic Duma group. The peasants took this last step despite the fact that the party’s boycott of the first Duma elections meant that there was no organized Social Democratic delegation in the new lower chamber.114

The most active single group in the right bank was the Ukrainian Social Democratic Union (the Spilka) which joined the Russian Social Democratic Labor party in December 1904, as an organization of Ukrainian-speaking workers.115 By October 1905, the Spilka claimed 7,000 members. Most of them lived in the city of Kiev and in the smaller towns of the left and right banks.116 Agitators fanned out from the city of Kiev to distribute literature and hold meetings. A regional strike committee was formed in Kiev province, and individual party members helped striking peasants formulate demands.117 But the successes of the Spilka, like those of all other groups in the right bank, were limited and episodic. In the left bank, the Social Revolutionaries and the Peasant Union were more successful.118 A well-organized meeting addressed by an ac-

113TsGIAL, f. 1405, o. 108, d. 6824, l. 7.
114AD, 2:259.
116Mirza-Avakiant, p. 37.
117Moiseevich, p. 34. Maslov, 1924, p. 152.
118Mirza-Avakiant, p. 34.
tivist did not signify the presence of an ongoing effective political organization. Quite often activists of all three groups worked together to coordinate strikes, form committees, and distribute each other’s literature. So large was the task and so limited the resources that the rural activists of all groups spent little of their time in the countryside engaged in factional fighting.119

In the springs of both 1906 and 1907, nationwide elections were held for the lower house (the Duma) of the new semi-parliamentary system. This process might be considered an opportunity to monitor contemporary peasant views, but the complexities of the electoral system, the peculiarities of rural politics, and the inadequacies of the sources make the Duma elections a less than useful guide for understanding peasant political attitudes. It is true that the original framers of the electoral law (of December 1905) thought the peasantry a repository of conservatism and, accordingly, gave allotment holders a near majority of the electors who met in the provincial assemblies that actually chose the Duma deputies. Property restrictions were placed on participation, and the election was a multistage process (peasants went through four stages) which created ambiguities and anomalies at crucial moments. Through a variety of means, the government was able to intervene in the election, limiting certain unreliable groups from the franchise. Because women were not allowed to vote, the election in the southwest was especially unrepresentative, given their crucial role in both the labor process and the strike movement. Finally, the various socialist parties that might have been expected to compete for peasant votes boycotted the first Duma elections. In 1906, peasants throughout Russia then elected the most radical candidates available. Their votes went to the classically liberal Constitutional Democratic party (the Kadets) and an amorphous group that coalesced into the so-called Labor Group (Trudoviki). In 1907, during the second Duma elections, the radicals participated, and peasants gave their support to a variety of individuals who were even further to the left.120

In the first Duma elections, twenty-four right-bank peasants

120M. Boiovich, Chleny gosudarstvennoi dumy, pervyi sozyv (Moscow, 1906).
were chosen deputies. Once they got to St. Petersburg, and only then, did they ally with a specific party. Often, they chose not to affiliate. Four of them were simply described as “left,” six were Kadets, six were simply “progressives,” and eight were nonparty. In the second Duma elections, there were twenty-seven peasants from Kiev, Podol’e and Volynia. Eight were “left,” four were Social Democrats, eight were monarchists, six were on the “right,” and one was “progressive.”

These political labels were even more imprecise at the lower levels of the process. Nearly all the peasant electors chosen to sit in the final provincial assemblies that named the deputies to the first Duma were described by observers from the Kadets as “nonparty.” In Volynia, of the sixty-nine peasant electors, sixty-two were unaffiliated; in Podol’e all eighty-two of the peasant electors were unaffiliated; and in Kiev, of the eighty electors, fifty-six were unaffiliated. Specific political labels were not part of peasant politics. Like other parts of the empire, local groupings did not mirror the party divisions on the national level. No one campaigned as a Socialist Revolutionary or as a Social Democrat. Instead, peasants searched out men of talent and honor. The ability to read was obviously desirable, and peasants everywhere sought people with the talent to defend them. 121 This had little to do with the organized political alternatives. Yet the limited success of the Social Democrats in Kiev province (all four peasant Social Democratic deputies were from Kiev) demonstrated that peasant politics in the southwest did differ in some ways from practices elsewhere.

Peasants in the southwest wrote and petitioned their deputies. Many skhody actually drew up instructions (nakazy) to send to the president of the new Duma. Few of these nakazy have survived, and most bear the stamp of outsiders. 122 Eleven such documents are extant from Kiev and Podol’e, and peasants in those two provinces showed they generally shared the concerns of their counterparts in other regions. 123 Right-bank peasants also directly petitioned their deputies. Here too, their demands differed little from

121 Vestnik Partii Narodnoi Svobody 6 (1907), prilozhenie; cited in Emmons, p. 250. Smirnov, p. 175.
123 Maslov, 1924, p. 125. TsGAOR f. 102, 4-o dp., d. 108 ch. 38, ll. 1–32.
Proletarian Peasants

those of peasants elsewhere. On June 25, 1906, the villagers of Strizhevka (Kiev) wrote to the Trudovik Duma group calling for a constituent assembly, the establishment of democratic freedoms, and the transfer of all land to the peasantry. Once they began working in the Duma, deputies from the right bank spoke little. For the most part, they limited their remarks to the land question, and they did so in the most general terms.

As has been mentioned, Duma deputies were local heroes who could travel the countryside with parliamentary immunity and agitate comparatively freely. They gave speeches and, in a few instances, fomented actual strikes. Yet it cannot be said that these men represented a clearly defined constituency, organized along modern, political lines. The Duma elections can furnish some indications of peasant views, but they do not reveal all that might be known. The structure of the electoral process made it impossible to gain a clear picture of peasant views. After June 3, 1907, Duma elections became even less representative once Stolypin unilaterally restricted the franchise, penalizing the peasantry for their unexpected rebelliousness. The new third Duma was dominated by the landed gentry who gave their votes to a variety of moderate and extreme conservative groups.

Aftermath of the Revolution of 1905

By the fall of 1907, a tense and guarded peace had come to the Russian countryside. The toll of government repression had been heavy, and peasants were exhausted. They had won some victories, but there were few objective changes. Wages had risen, Sugar prices were up, and despite all the turmoil, the harvest of 1906 was especially good. Otherwise, little had changed. Land prices in the southwest had fallen only slightly. Renting land was no less costly. Large-scale landholding emerged from the turbulence with

\[124^\text{UD, 2:214.}\]
\[125^\text{Gosudarstvennaia duma, Stenograficheskie otechety, soz. 1, zas. 16, cols. 969–702; soz. 1, zas. 21, col. 987.}\]
\[126^\text{TsGIAU f. 442, o. 857, d. 193, l. 2.}\]
\[127^\text{AD, 2:126.}\]
\[128^\text{Ibid., p. 42.}\]
few losses. Moreover, any vestiges of landlord paternalism had evaporated along with the last remnants of peasant monarchism. Stolypin’s attempt to reform the village commune was met with great skepticism by right-bank peasants. Plans for the consolidation of peasant holdings meant little when these holdings were too meager to support a family.

As it did elsewhere, the level of disorders dropped sharply in the southwest between 1907 and the outbreak of the war in 1914. In that period, there were 547 incidents. Only 43 were strikes. Most disturbances (119) involved arson. The gentry of the southwest did not see the new peace as anything more than a temporary reprieve. They had become convinced of peasant irresponsibility and began to mobilize politically much more actively than their counterparts in central Russia. After a period of intense political activity during the early years of the third Duma, most Russian landlords returned to their political apathy. By contrast, the gentry of the right bank remained vigilant up to the last moment. They knew that the peasantry of the southwest, although peaceful for the time being, was in no way satisfied. During the prewar years, peasants returned to their fields. They eschewed formal political activity and, instead, waited for a new opportunity.

When revolution finally came to the empire during 1917, the right-bank Ukraine proved to be an especially volatile region. Peasants in the southwest had been cautious in 1905 when it appeared the power of their landlords was still strong. With the collapse of authority in the countryside, the peasants of Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia joined the nationwide campaign for the seizure of state, gentry, and church lands without compensation. The time for “total repartition” had finally come. Kiev, in particular, was one of the few provinces in which the specially organized committees of poor peasants played an important role.

129Ibid., p. 124.
Proletarian Peasants

Overall, the circumstances in 1917 were quite different from those of 1905. The landlords and the authorities that supported them had lost their power. In 1905, when landlords sent telegrams to provincial governors, someone answered. In 1917, there was no reply. Accordingly, peasants in Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia behaved differently in the course of this new revolutionary moment. Many of the more distinctive features of the earlier movement were not repeated. Few strikes took place. It is, after all, difficult to ask landlords for higher wages, when they are fleeing for their very lives. The events of 1905 may have been a series of strikes and disorders, but it could not be said they constituted a true and successful revolution. In 1917, the peasants of both Russia and the right-bank Ukraine at last got their wish, and the hated landlords were gone.

The conditions confronted by peasants in the southwest had changed drastically. In Kiev, Podol’e, and Volynia, the events of the first Russian revolution did not turn out to be a “dress rehearsal” for 1917. When outside conditions changed, right-bank peasants changed with them. Tactics appropriate in 1905 made less sense in 1917. When revolution finally came, it was necessary to make different choices.