VILLAGE SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND PEASANT ACTION: RIGHT-BANK UKRAINE DURING THE REVOLUTION 1917-1923

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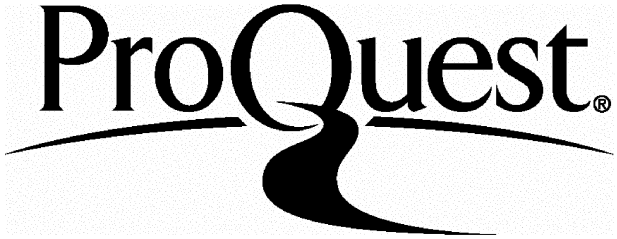


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VILLAGE SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND PEASANT ACTION: RIGHT-BANK UKRAINE DURING THE REVOLUTION 1917-1923

The thesis studies the role of peasant village institutions in the revolution in Right-Bank Ukraine during 1917-1923. The two schools of study which have so far dominated discussion of the subject, the Soviet and the Ukrainian National, have failed to produce a balanced history of events or follow the recent progress made in studies of the Russian peasantry. The work studies events from a village-level perspective and is based on records from peasant meetings and local government institutions, gathered from recently declassified fonds in Ukrainian and Russian archives.

The thesis begins by considering the roots of the region's economic and political diversity and their effect on peasant society before 1917. After February 1917, the peasant village community was instrumental in efforts to seize control of private land and establish limited local self-rule. However, peasant gains were soon threatened by the civil war which began in Ukraine in early 1918.

There is a discussion of the agrarian policies of political forces in 1918-1920 and their implications for peasant society. Peasants resisted the attempts of political groups to impose a settlement of the agrarian question from above and peasant organisations remained influential in economic and social matters. The final section considers peasant attitudes towards the establishment of a Soviet regime in the region after 1920 and peasant attempts to maintain control over village land and local political autonomy.

The thesis considers the points where revolutionary events in the Right Bank diverged from those in Central Russia and where they merged. Throughout the period the community represented the embodiment of a particular peasant culture which was not easily pacified by government. Peasants resisted 'alien' political and economic ideas through traditional and forceful means. The thesis concludes there was a was a close correlation between the village community and peasant political and social action.

The thesis is based on material gathered in archives and libraries in Moscow, St Petersburg and Kyiv during 1995-6. Conditions at this time were not exactly ideal for historians as a result of the continuing funding crises affecting archives in the Former Soviet Union as a whole. There were instances when there were delays in receiving material, archive staff went on strike for non-payment of wages, archives worked drastically reduced hours or they closed down for long spells without any warning or explanation. The *Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Vyshchykh Orhaniv Vlady i Upravlinnia* in Kyiv was also still in the process of reclassifying formerly secret fonds. Many of these related to the vital revolutionary period but had not been listed in any opys or guide. The process of outlining their contents given the lack of resources remained painstakingly slow. While the above experiences may be considered nothing out of the ordinary for those undertaking archival research in the Former Soviet Union and do not compare with the difficulties faced by researchers in earlier decades, there was still a number of fonds to which I could not gain access. These factors shaped the material presented in the study.

In Ukraine today the use of language, whether Ukrainian or Russian remains a sensitive subject. In line with prevailing linguistic trends I have transliterated place names from Ukrainian (i.e. Kyiv rather than Kiev). Where terms or individuals may be better known or understood to historians transliterated from the Russian, I have tried to give both the Ukrainian and Russian equivalent when first mentioned. When quoting from Ukrainian or Russian sources I have transliterated certain words or phrases to reflect the language used in the original text. To denote archival material collected from Ukrainian archives I have used the Ukrainian system of classification (i.e. fond, opys, sprava and arkush). I have used the Russian system for material from Russian archives (i.e. fond, opis, delo, stranitsa). I have also provided a glossary of terms used for Ukrainian, Russian or Polish terms at the back of the thesis for easy reference.

In terms of style I have mainly followed the guidelines laid out in the *MHRA Style Book: Notes for authors, Editors and Writers of Theses* (5th ed). However, the names of the publishers of works consulted in the thesis have been listed in the bibliography rather than in the footnotes. Dates before January 1918 have been given in old style (i.e. 13 days behind the rest of Europe). Dates thereafter have been given in new style. I have also used square brackets [ ] to denote insertions into quotations and parentheses ( ) at all other times.

The thesis was originally funded with assistance from the Economic and Social Research Council. When I began my research I received positive advice and encouragement from Professor Paul Dukes, Dr David Longley, and Professor David Saunders. I would like to thank the staff of SSEES Library, the British Library, Aberdeen University Library, TsGIA, GARF, TsDIA, TsDAVO, DAKO and libraries in St Petersburg, Moscow and Kyiv who fetched all the dusty books and documents I wanted to read. In terms of supervision, I am grateful to Dr John Channon for his efforts in the first year of my studies, Professor Robert Service for stepping in so ably at such short notice and Professor Roger Bartlett for checking over the final drafts. Any flaws within the thesis, however, are entirely my responsibility.

I will be forever in debt to my comrades-in-arms who picked me up when I fell, sometimes quite literally. In this regard I must mention Mark Baker, Nancy Slawski, Olga Ivashchenko, Mark Beck, Robert Blyth, Sergei Podbolotov, Cath Brennan, Sarah Davies and Roman Zyla whose intervention and support at various points almost certainly stopped me from giving up. I must also thank my family and friends for listening patiently to my rantings and ravings for the past four years. Caro Soury probably had to put up with more ranting than most but it is probably thanks to her sweet influence that this thesis was not completed six months ago. It was time well spent anyway.

Finally, I would like to dedicate the thesis, for what its worth, to my grandfather, Duncan Ross. I hope he would have been proud that I made it this far.

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A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RECENT HISTORICAL DEBATES ON UKRAINE, THE REVOLUTION AND THE PEASANTS

The Russian revolution remains a defining moment in modern history. It began in March 1917 with the fall of the three-hundred-year-old Romanov dynasty and culminated in the consolidation of a Soviet regime over the majority of the territory that had constituted Imperial Russia before the onset of war in 1914. The revolution had a fundamental effect not only on the masses who peopled the vast territory of the Russian Empire but also on the subsequent history of Europe.

Over the last eighty years historians have generated a huge volume of research and opinion which has considered the causes of the revolution, the actions of political parties and their supporters, the military conflicts of 1918-1921 and the establishment of the Soviet regime. The revolution and the development of the regime it gave birth to continue to absorb the efforts of contemporary historians. The break up of the Soviet Union and subsequent creation of new independent states, the accompanying changes in political attitudes and opening up of archival institutions have led to a reassessment of the history and significance of the events following 1917.

Despite the weight of historiographical discussion and the recent availability of new archival sources, several aspects of the revolution remain somewhat neglected by historians. The role of the peasantry in the revolution, as the majority social group in the Russian Empire, is one of the aspects of historical discussion which has been slow to attract concerted attention. Gregory Freeze, discussing the historiography of the peasantry in 1992, complained that historians had 'virtually neglected rural Russia'. He argued that scholars had instead concentrated their efforts on a narrow selection of topics and produced a limited view of history. This was perhaps unsurprising given the ideological conflicts at the heart of the Cold War. Another problem in the study of peasant behaviour is the problem of

sources.[1] Rural societies have traditionally had lower levels of literacy than urban ones. Russia at the turn of the century was at least a society in transition where literacy was increasing among certain groups, such as younger peasants, in the countryside.

The study of the peasantry by Russian historians has undergone fundamental changes in recent years. These developments have been charted by Iu. N. Afanas'ev in a recent reappraisal of history writing on the Russian peasantry during this century. He argues that historians are no longer constrained by the problem of ideology as they were during the Soviet period when facts were considered less important than theory. New documentary sources originating in the village during the revolution are now being declassified and published. Afanas'ev also notes changes in structural approaches to history. The focus of historians has shifted from a global to a local perspective and the subjects studied by them have increased immeasurably. The revolution in Russia is no longer considered the herald of a new epoch, the beginning of a new egalitarian society. Rather it is now seen as another outburst in Russia's periodic crises as it has struggled to cope with the fundamental questions of development and modernisation. Peasants were instrumental in this conservative reaction to change and Afanas'ev notes that this social group were the real power of 1917.[2]

The problems with historiography on the peasantry in the revolution, as outlined by Freeze and Afanas'ev above, affected scholarship in both East and West. The limitations of Soviet views of the history of the revolution are well documented. The writing of history in the Soviet Union tended to reflect contemporary political exigency rather than any balanced consideration of historical events. Therefore, the 'official' version of history changed with time. One historian who serves as an example of the changes in political fortunes and historical study is M. A. Rubach. Rubach's first works, published in the 1920s, viewed the peasant movement in 1917 as an organic phenomenon where protest spontaneously

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1 Gregory L. Freeze, 'New Scholarship on the Russian Peasantry', *European History Quarterly*, 22, 1992, 605-617 (pp. 605-606).

2 *Sud'by rossiiskogo krest'ianstva*, Iu. N. Afanas'ev (ed.), Moskva, 1996, pp. ii-x.

developed in the village.[3] However, in the 1930s, he retracted his earlier views, blaming his 'great political mistakes' on the influence of 'anti-Leninist national-deviation theories'.[4] His revised scheme of events in 1917 emphasised the role of the Bolsheviks and Stalin in particular in organising peasant action. After the death of Stalin, however, Rubach began working on one of the most important Soviet works which concentrated on the peasant movement during 1917 in a return to his earlier views of the 1920s.[5]

Another problem with the Soviet view of history is the belief in the existence of class divisions as a basic fact of human society. This differentiation was considered by Soviet historians as representative of urbanised industrial societies but also of rural societies. Soviet historians, following the ideas of contemporary Bolshevik politicians, believed that the 1861 emancipation of the serfs led to the development of capitalist economic relations in the countryside and the economic differentiation of the peasantry.[6] The village was split into three main social groups: poor peasants (*bedniaki*), middle peasants (*seredniaki*) and wealthy peasants (*zazhitochnye* or *kulaki*)[7]. The latter were thought to exert an undue influence over the village and to economically exploit their poorer neighbours through land rents and labour hiring. However, this delineation of social classes based on economic wealth was unsophisticated as it did not take into account a variety of factors which affected the viability of individual households. Furthermore, there were imprecise definitions of which peasants could be called poor or wealthy and ascribing common interests to individual groups within peasant society based on these labels is artificial.[8]

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3 See, for example, M. A. Rubach. 'Agrarnaia revoliutsiia na Ukraine v 1917g', *Letopis revoliutsii: Zhurnal po istorii KP(b)U i Oktiabrskoi revoliutsii na Ukraine*, 5-6, 1927, 7-45.

4 M. Rubach, 'K istorii krest'ianskikh vosstanii nakanune oktiabria 1917 g. (materialy po Ukraine)', *Istorik marksist*, 3, 1934, 29-58 (p. 29).

5 See Mikhail Abramovich Rubach, *Ocherki po istorii revoliutsionnogo preobrazovaniia agrarnykh otnoshenii na Ukraine: V period provedeniia Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii*, Kiev, 1957.

6 V. T. Gorbatiuk & T. D. Ionkina, 'Razvitie kapitalizma v zemledelii i razlozhenie krest'ianstva na Ukraine vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka', *Voprosy istorii*, 9, 1956, 110-19.

7 Kulak means fist and suggests being tight-fisted with money.

8 See, for example, the ideas of A. V. Chayanov, *Theory of Peasant Economy*, Wisconsin, 1986. B. Kerblay. 'Chayanov and the Theory of Peasant Economy as a Specific Type of Economy', *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, ed. by T.Shanin, Oxford, 1987. T. Shanin. *The Awkward Class: The Political Sociology of the Peasantry in a Developing Society*, pp. 96-141. See also the discussion in Robert S. Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants: The Revolution of 1905 in Russia's South West*, New York, 1987. p. 69.

Soviet historians have seen the events of 1917 and their aftermath as an enormous social revolution affecting the territory of the Russian Empire. For example, P. N. Pershin's landmark work on the agrarian revolution ambitiously sought to identify common links in peasant behaviour in the various regions of European Russia.[9] Soviet works tended to emphasise widespread poor peasant support for the regime which was established in October 1917 and the participation in the struggle to defend the fledging Soviet government from its internal and external enemies. Differences or anomalies in the course of the revolution in peripheral areas of the Empire was often attributed to social or economic developments in these regions.[10]

Once land was under peasant control, the question of how it was to be distributed and controlled arose. The state was seen by historians as playing a fundamental role in legitimising peasant land use. Soviet historians have also pointed to the existence of a second social revolution in the village, a process whereby the property of wealthier peasants was confiscated for distribution to poorer groups. The state also tried to introduce new forms of landholding and regenerate the economy after the end of the civil war. The village was slow to accept the concept of collective farming but concessions such as the introduction of the New Economic Policy enabled the stabilisation of the regime in the countryside. The belief that the state had played a fundamental role in the resolution of these questions is only one of the drawbacks of the Soviet approach to revolutionary events. As one of the more respected Soviet agrarian historians, V. P. Danilov, commented in 1962, historians had 'either ignored the peasant masses altogether or presented them as no more than an object of measures realised from above'.[11]

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9 P. N. Pershin, *Agrarnaia revoliutsiia v Rossii*, 2 vols, Moskva, 1966.

10 *ibid.*, II, pp. 525-538.

11 See Viktor Petrovich Danilov, *Rural Russia under the New Regime*, tr. by Orlando Figes, London 1988, p. 15. This comment is noted by Figes in his introduction to the work in which he outlines Danilov's career. Danilov's approach and refusal to adhere to Soviet historical orthodoxy marked him out as the target of criticism by his peers. This work is a translation of *Sovetskaia dokolkhoznaia derevnia: Naselenie, zemlepol'zovanie, khoziaistvo* which was originally published in 1977.

Historians in the West have considered a broad range of themes in relation to the history of the peasantry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The increased interest in social history and the new availability of primary sources material has added impetus to research on the peasantry over the last two decades. Historians have focused on rural economic conditions, forms of peasant social organisation, peasant political participation and the reaction of the village to the social changes precipitated by industrialisation, education and urbanisation.[12]

Research on the revolutionary period has considered the agrarian policies of political parties, their effect in the countryside, the organisation of soviets and committees and the progress of the agrarian revolution.[13] The events of the revolutionary years are also viewed by Western historians as a broad social explosion occurring across the expanse of the Russian Empire. Several historians have produced a time-scale of revolutionary events and a statistical analysis of the targets and frequency of peasant action. Peasant action during the Revolution was influenced by a number of socio-economic factors. The main peasant demand was undoubtedly for land. The rural economy affected the intensity and type of peasant action witnessed in local areas.[14] Peasant behaviour was also dictated by the labour demands of the agricultural cycle. When peasants were needed to work in the fields, peasant action decreased. Similarly, peasant action increased when land was required for sowing.[15]

Political forces struggled to make headway in the village although peasants were often aware of national developments.[16] Even those groups within the village which advocated moderacy were quickly marginalised (particularly political agitators and others who had

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12 See, for example, *Land Commune and Peasant Community in Russia: Communal Forms in Imperial and Early-Soviet Society*, ed. by Roger Bartlett, London, 1990. *World of the Russian Peasant: Post-Emancipation Culture and Society*, ed. by Ben Eklof & Stephen P. Frank, Boston, 1990. *Peasant Economy, Culture and Politics of European Russia 1800-1921*, ed. by Esther Kingston Mann & Timothy Mixter, Princeton, 1991.

13 See for example the discussion of the historiography in Maureen Perrie,'Peasants', in *Society and Politics in the Russian Revolution*, ed. by Robert Service, London, 1992, pp. 12-34.

14 John Channon, 'The Peasantry in the Revolutions of 1917', in *Russia in Revolution: Reassessments of 1917*, ed by Edith Rogovin Frankel, Johnathan Frankel and Baruch-Knei Paz, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 107-109.

15 Graeme J. Gill, 'Peasants and Government in the Russian Revolution: The Mainsprings of Peasant Action in 1917', *Soviet Studies*, 30, 1978, 1, 63-86 (pp. 75-76).

16 Perrie, 'Peasants', p. 22. For example, Viktor Chernov's instruction to land committees in July 1917 appeared to legitimise peasant seizures of estate land.

proved influential in the early months of 1917).[17] As factories stopped working and the system of trade between town and countryside broke down, peasants retreated into autarky. Former soldiers or urban workers returned to the village to try to claim a share of precious resources. Peasants were often reluctant to allocate land or food to outside groups. Indeed they withheld grain distilled alcohol from it rather than receive worthless paper money in exchange for it. This exacerbated the struggle for foodstuffs and central attempts to requisition grain elicited a violent response from peasants.[18] While central government defined rules for the distribution of resources within the village, in practice peasants usually followed their own beliefs about who was entitled to land and food.

Western historians have long emphasised the important role played by peasant institutions in the agrarian revolution.[19] The downfall of the Tsarist government and declaration of the Provisional Government in February 1917 was the spur for peasant communities to claim new responsibilities or organise special revolutionary committees. As a result of these measures peasant seizures of land began in March. The increasingly militant behaviour of peasants throughout 1917 heralded the re-emergence of the commune and a resurgence of community solidarity. Soviet historians began to accept this view only much later.[20]

Perhaps the most important contribution to the West's understanding of the village community during the revolution in recent years has been made by Orlando Figes. In a study of the agrarian revolution in the Volga region between 1917 and 1921, he utilised hitherto unprecedented access to sources to consider how the fundamental issues of land distribution

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17 Channon, 'Peasantry in the Revolutions of 1917', p. 122.

18 Vladimir N. Brovkin, *Behind the Front Lines of the Civil War: Political Parties and Social Movements in Russia 1918-1922*, Princeton, 1994, pp. 106-110.

19 See, for example, L. A. Owen, 'The Agrarian Revolution of 1917. Parts 1&2', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 12, 1933/4, 155-166/ 368-386. A more recent reiteration of the importance of the community can be found in Channon, 'Peasantry in the Revolutions of 1917', pp. 105-130.

20 See, for example, V. V. Kabanov, 'Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia i krest'ianskaia obshchina', *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 111, 1984, 100-150. Kabanov's article studied the role of the community in directing peasant political action. Kabanov noted that the community was ignored by Soviet agrarian legislation although it continued to exist in some shape or form after 1917.

and political power were resolved at local level.[21] Undoubtedly peasant community organisations transformed local village society and landholding themselves. In a more recent work, Figes noted that the community in these years, 'revived from its pre-revolutionary state of torpor and decay to become the main organising force of the peasant revolution on the land. All the main political organs of the revolution in the countryside, the village committees, peasant unions and the soviets were really no more than the peasant commune in a more revolutionary form'.[22] Throughout these years this institution remained the main point of contact between peasants and outside groups.[23]

Figes traces the predominance of the peasant commune during the Revolution to developments in village society after the outbreak of the First World War. The village was subject to new external influences and assumed greater responsibility as Russia geared itself for total war.[24] From early summer 1917, the community established control over local affairs in favour of its members. The village assembly became democratised, opening up to incorporate all adult males and sometimes women members also.[25] Groups on the margins of village life were allowed a voice in peasant decisions.[26] The community was active in directing peasant seizures of land. Typically, peasants convened in village assemblies, issued declarations asserting rights to land and then physically occupied it, placing it under the command of the assembly or village committee. Peasants issued such proclamations in the belief that village assembly decisions carried the status of law.[27] Other historians have remarked on the peasants' search for legitimacy for their behaviour.[28]

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21 Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution 1917-1921*, Oxford, 1989.
22 Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924*, London, 1996, p. 363.
23 Orlando Figes, 'Russian Peasant Community in the Agrarian Revolution, 1917-1918', in *Peasant Community*, ed. by Bartlett, pp. 237-253 (p. 238). See also Orlando Figes, 'The Village Commune and Rural Government', in *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914-1921*, ed. by Edward Acton, Vladimir Iu. Chernaiv and Willaim G. Rosenberg, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1997.
24 Figes, 'Russian Peasant Community', p. 241.
25 Kabanov, 'Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia', p 107.
26 Such groups might include priests, teachers and so on. Orlando Figes. 'Peasant Farmers and the Minority Groups of Rural Society: Peasant Egalitarianism and Village Social Relations during the Russian Revolution (1917-1921)', in *Peasant Economy*, ed. by Kingston Mann & Mixter, pp. 378-401.
27 Figes, *People's Tragedy*, p. 366.
28 In doing so the peasants continued a pattern of action witnessed before the revolution. Perrie, 'Peasants', p. 21.

The creation of peasant village committees was a common phenomenon. They were usually small executives charged with certain responsibilities such the collection of foodstuffs or supervision of land. These committees were usually elected in the village assembly and were representative of the community. These elected bodies were often known under a variety of names but they performed similar functions and peasants considered such titles interchangeable.[29] These were organs of self government rather than state government.[30] Higher authorities struggled to assert themselves over such village institutions in order to prevent illegal timber felling or the seizure and break up of estates.[31]

Throughout Russia those peasants who had taken advantage of the Stolypin reforms to establish their own consolidated households away from village lands returned to the commune. Sometimes they returned voluntarily to claim a share of gentry land but at other times they were forced to return by the village under threat of violence.[32] This re-assimilation reflected the renewed strength of the commune.

The consensus forged in the village by the events of 1917 was only partially eroded by subsequent events. Western historians have refuted the Soviet viewpoint that poor peasants wrested control of the village from their wealthier neighbours as a result of revolution. The kombedy appear to have failed in their objective of fomenting class struggle in the countryside and were disbanded as a consequence. Peasant remained ambivalent towards the local organs of the state but there was some sympathy within the village for the regime. In particular, younger literate peasants represented the nucleus of the new order in the rural areas.[33] The study of the role of peasant institutions, therefore, demonstrates their importance to the village in the period between 1917 and 1923, although scope remains for

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29 Kabanov, 'Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia', p 102. See also Channon, 'Peasantry in the Revolutions of 1917', p. 111.
30 Channon, 'Peasantry in the Revolutions of 1917', p.108.
31 Channon, 'Peasantry in the Revolutions of 1917', p.109.
32 Figes, 'Russian Peasant Community', pp. 240-241
33 Figes, *Peasant Russia,Civil War*, pp. 151, 225.

more detailed research. At the end of the Soviet period, there was at least a growing consensus between researchers in East and West over the role played by the community.[34]

Unfortunately, historians of the revolution in Ukraine have not emphasised the importance of social and economic developments in the village in the same way as historians of Russian events. In particular, historians of Ukraine have not considered the organisation of the revolutionary village in any depth. This can be partly attributed to the widely held but misguided belief that the community was much weaker in Ukraine than in Russia and was of less significance to the every day life of the peasants.[35] In large part, however, it is due to the particular nature of debates over Ukrainian history. The evident dichotomy in the historiography of the revolution is even more protracted and exaggerated when the question of Ukraine is considered. This is due to the existence of the Ukrainian nationalist tradition of history which flourished in Ukrainian émigré centres outside the Soviet Union. This tradition vehemently rejected the Soviet view of revolutionary events and often set the agenda for discussion of the subject.[36] The research produced by both schools of thought has always reflected the particular concerns of each individual group yet neither has studied the real questions and complexities of Ukrainian developments.

In the context of the revolution the national tradition shares a common 'narrative framework' which begins with the Central Rada in 1917 and follows the fate of successive Ukrainian nationalist governments. This tradition emphasises the efforts and activities of national political institutions and parties during the period 1917 to 1920. Ukrainian nationalist historians have tended not to concentrate on those areas which were not under the

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34 John Channon, 'From Muzhik to Kolkhoznik: Some Recent Western and Soviet Studies of Peasants in Late-Imperial and Early-Soviet Russia', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 70, 1992, 127-139.

35 For contemporary views on the supposed individualist traditions of the Ukrainian peasant see O de L, 'The Ukraine', *Edinburgh Review*, 229, 1919, 1, 92-109 (p104). Rothay Reynolds, 'Some Experiences in Kiev', *XIX Century and After*, 88, 1920, 217-224 (p 221). A more recent assessment is found in Bohdan Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth Century Ukraine*, London, 1985, p. 61. In contrast, a number of historians have stressed the similarities between village community customs in Ukraine and Russia. See, for example, Christine D. Worobec, *Patterns of Property Devolution among Ukrainian Peasants in Kiev and Kharkiv Provinces 1861-1900,* Kennan Institute Occasional paper No 206, Washington 1986, p 4.

36 For a discussion of the approach of the Ukrainian National tradition and debates over the revolution in general see John Paul Himka. 'The National and the Social in the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1920: The Historical Agenda', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 34, 1994, 95-110.

control of nationalist groups or those political groups which did not embrace nationalist ideals.[37] This breaks up the continuity of the history of the revolution and gives only a partial and subjective view of revolutionary events.

The study of history in Ukraine has undergone fundamental changes since 1991. New sources have been made available to researchers who are also now free of the constraints of Soviet history-writing. The nationalist tradition of history has not been subject to revision in the same way as the Soviet view of history has been almost totally revised over the last decade and historians continue to view revolutionary events within the same political framework. Indeed some Western historians have proved so influential that the nationalist viewpoint of émigré scholarship has been accepted as the new orthodoxy in Ukraine itself.[38] N. P. Kichigina wrote in 1994 that the North-American journal *Ukrains'kyi istoryk* had 'defended the interests of true Ukrainian historical science' and 'was the guardian of historical traditions'.[39] Similarly, a recent article by L. D. Sakada on the relationship between *Ukrains'kyi istoryk* and *Ukrains'kyi istorichnyi zhurnal*, the Ukrainian state-funded history journal, concluded that the former had opposed Russian historical conceptions of history and 'defended the best traditions of nationalist historiography'.[40] Even historians who held entrenched views in the Soviet period have completely reversed their opinions within a few years.[41]

Many contemporary historians writing on Ukraine have been influenced by the ideas of Mikhail Hrushevsky (1866-1934). His published works charted the development of the Ukrainian people and the territory they inhabited. He argued that the Ukrainian nation was a

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37 Himka. The National and the Social', pp. 96-98

38 Examples of the acceptance of émigré views of Ukrainian history by Ukrainians themselves are Taras Hunczak, *Ukraina, persha polovyna XX stolittia: Narysy politichnoi istorii*, Kyiv, 1993 and Orest Subtelny, *The Ukraine: A History,* Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1988. Hunczak, an American historian, outlines a particular scheme of historical events which is unabashedly nationalist in orientation. It evolved from a series of lectures given in Kyiv in Autumn 1991. Subtelny is a Canadian historian. His work has been translated into Ukrainian and is now apparently used as a major text book in Ukrainian educational institutes.

39 N. P. Kichigina, 'Agrarne pytannia Tsentral'noi Rady na storinkakh "Ukrains'koho Istoryka"', *Ukrains'kyi Istoryk*, 31, 1994, 120-23, 68-71 (p. 68). Kichigina is a member of the Ukrains'ke Istorychne Tovarystvo, Mykolaiv.

40 L. D. Sakada, 'Dva zhurnaly Ukrains'kykh istorykiv: "Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal" ta "Ukrains'kyi istorik', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 4, 1997, 58-68 (p. 66).

separate political and ethnic entity which had experienced a unique path of historical development but which had been gradually absorbed into the Russian Empire.[42] These ideas were considered dangerous to Imperial Russia and were repressed before 1917.[43] Hrushevsky became the first President of the Central Rada in 1917, returning from exile to lead the newly created autonomous territory. His tenure lasted only until January 1918 when he retired from the Rada and went into exile as Bolshevik troops advanced on Kyiv. He chose to return to Soviet Ukraine from exile in the 1920s but, following his death in mysterious circumstances in 1934, his works were proscribed and his view of history was officially rejected. Now, however, Hrushevsky has been rehabilitated and idealised by historians writing on Ukraine. Indeed, he is often cited by historians with the same fervour with which Lenin was quoted in historical works in the Soviet era.[44]

The revolution has remained a particularly relevant subject for consideration by historians because it was witness to the first attempt to establish an independent modern Ukrainian state. The question of nationalism undoubtedly colours much of the discussion of the revolution in Ukraine. The Ukrainian nationalist movement was chronically underdeveloped in ethnic Ukrainian areas in the Russian Empire. This was due in part to the repressive official policies of the Tsarist government aimed at subduing national-separatist tendencies. It was also due to the relative lack of an ethnic Ukrainian urban population and dominance of Russians, Jews and Poles in the towns. However, nationalism was sufficiently coherent a force for the establishment of an autonomous Ukraine to become a major issue in the revolution. Politicians from practically all parties and sections of the community were

41 Himka, 'The National and the Social', p. 108
42 See, for example, M. S. Hrushevsky, *Ocherk istorii ukrainskogo naroda*, 2nd edition, Kiev, 1991.
43 Thomas Prymak. 'Hrushevsky and the Ukraine's 'Lost' History', *History Today*. 39, 1989, 42-46.
44 See, for example, the special issues of *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal* dedicated to Hrushevsky's life and works published in 1996 (Nos. 5 & 6). See in particular P. Ia. Pyrih, 'Hrushevs'skoznavstva: Stan ta perspektyvy rozvytkiu', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 5, 1996, 71-83.

compelled by events to adopt a position on the subject, whether in support of an independent Ukraine or against it.[45]

Many nationalist works consider the social questions of the revolution are inextricably bound up with national questions of self-determination.[46] Indeed nationalist historians view the events of 1917 to 1923 not as a social revolution but as a 'national liberation struggle'.[47] They have concentrated primarily on the state building efforts of political powers.[48] This is particularly true of the left-of-centre regimes instituted by the Central Rada and the Directory.[49] It is also true of the conservative regime created by Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky.[50]

The peasantry are central to any discussion of the revolution because they constituted the vast majority of the ethnic Ukrainian population at the turn of the century. Peasant demands for land ensured that they intruded on any discussion of revolutionary events in Ukraine. Many nationalist historians have tried to demonstrate peasant support for an independent Ukrainian government. Steven L. Guthier, for example, has argued that the vote for Ukrainian nationalist parties in elections to the Constituent Assembly at the end of 1917 was evidence of the peasant desire for an independent national republic.[51] The problem with this argument is that it takes a simplistic view of peasant voting behaviour. There were

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45 See, for example, Ivan Majstrenko, *Borot'bism: A Chapter in the History of Ukrainian Communism*, tr. by S. N. Luckyj & I. L. Rudnytsky, New York, 1954. Majstrenko belonged to the *Borotbisty*, a group that developed from the Left SRs and espoused national communism within a Ukrainian context.

46 Examples of works published in the West which have studied revolutionary events from a nationalist viewpoint include Orest Subtelny, *The Ukraine: A History*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1988. *The Ukraine 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution*, ed by Taras Hunczak, Cambridge Mass, 1977. John S. Reshetar, *The Ukrainian Revolution: A Study in Nationalism*, Princeton, 1952. Jurij Borys, *The Sovietization of Ukraine: The Communist Doctrine and Practice of National Self-determination*, Edmonton, 1980.

47 See, for example, Ilia Vytanovych, 'Agrarna polityka Ukrains'kykh uriadiv rokiv revoliutsii i vyzvol'nykh zmahan' 1917-1920', *Ukrains'kyi istoryk*, 3-4, 1967, 5-60.

48 See, for example, A. P. Hrytsenko, *Politychni syly u borot'bi za vladu v Ukraini kinets 1917 r. - pochatok 1919 r.*, Kyiv, 1993.

49 See, for example, Ihor Kamenetsky, 'Hrushevskyi and the Central Rada: Internal politics and Foreign Interventions' and Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 'The Directory of the Ukrainian National Republic', in *The Ukraine 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution*, ed. By Taras Hunczak, Cambridge, Mass, 1977. Hunczak also publishes the four universals of the Central Rada in an appendix.

50 Skoropadsky's regime has been subject to recent reappraisals. See, for example, *Ostannyi Hetman: Iuvileinyi zbirnyk pamiati Pavla Skoropads'koho 1873-1945*, Kyiv, 1993, pp 103-5. Skoropadsky's memoirs of his period in office have also been republished recently. See Pavlo Skoropadsky, *Spohady: kinets 1917-hruden 1918*, Kyiv, Philadelphia, 1995.

probably complex reasons for the election results and a vote for a Ukrainian party might not necessarily have indicated peasant support for an independent Ukraine. Furthermore, the peasants' symbolic 'support' was not matched by deed. If peasants did support an independent Ukrainian state in November 1917 as Guthier suggests, they certainly did little to defend it when Soviet forces invaded the region in January 1918. Subsequent events demonstrated that, in other cases, peasants were quickly roused in defence of their rights when directly threatened.[52]

Soviet historians discussing the revolution in Ukraine were rightly criticised for failing to produce an 'intellectually usable' history.[53] They were bound by the same limitations as their counterparts writing about Russia, although Ukrainian historians were arguably keener to demonstrate popular support for the Bolsheviks rather than the nationalists. The Central Rada, Hetman Skoropadsky and Directory were criticised by Soviet historians for their moderate social policies and obviously for their national principles which were considered 'bourgeois'.[54]

Within this framework there have been periods in which interesting Soviet works have been published.[55] Soviet historians have considered the course of the agricultural revolution in the village, often drawing on valuable statistical material or detailed documentary sources. In particular, they have been concerned with the distribution of land and the existence of a class war in the village against the kulaks who were felt by Bolshevik leaders to be more deeply entrenched in Ukraine than in Russia. A number of works have produced statistics

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51 Steven L. Guthier, 'The Popular Base of Ukrainian Nationalism in 1917', *Slavic Review*, 38, 1979, 30-47 (p. 37).

52 See, for example, Oleh S. Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution 1917-1918*, New Brunswick, 1971. The first real incidence of peasant partisan activity arose in summer 1918 as a consequence of the Austro-German occupation.

53 See Rubach, *Ocherki*. I. V. Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia na Ukraine 1917-1920*, Kiev, 1990. N. I. Ksenzenko, *Revoliutsionnye agrarnye preobrazovaniia na Ukraine (dekabr' 1919-mart' 1921)*, Khar'kov, 1980. P. M. Pershyn, *Narysy agrarnykh problem budivnytstva sotsializmu*, Kiev, 1973. Ivan Kliment'evich Rybalka, *Ahrarna peretvorennia na Ukraini v period hromadians'koi viini (1919)*, Kharkiv, 1967.

54 See, for example, A. V. Likholat, *Rozgrom natsionalisticheckoi kontrrevoliutsii na Ukraine 1917-1922 gg.*, Moskva, 1949. In a work typical of the Soviet era, Likholat denounces the policies of the nationalist political forces and tries to demonstrate peasant support for Soviet power rather than an independent Ukraine.

which supposedly demonstrate the extreme level of economic differentiation in the Ukrainian village.[56] These studies have been cited as evidence of the exploitation by the kulak over the majority of peasants and grounds for poor peasant support for a Soviet government.[57] Indeed the kulak was thought to be more deeply rooted in Ukraine than in the central Russian village but this argument is unconvincing. Historians also emphasise the efforts of the state to introduce more collective forms of agriculture in a region which was noted for the relative absence of the communal landholding that was found in Central Russia.[58] These new innovations were not accepted by the broad mass of peasants in the early years of the Soviet regime when state farms and collective farms were based on voluntary principles rather than coercion.

Historians of both traditions have considered the efforts of political powers to introduce agricultural reform. In a way, the historical focus on agrarian legislation reflected pre-revolutionary debates about the most suitable path of reform and agricultural improvement. These debates were split over the question of whether individual or collective landholding was the more efficient means of farming. The revolution added a sense of urgency to these debates and more radical proposals for land reform were put forward after 1917. Historians studying the agrarian reform programmes of nationalist governments have seen such legislation as evidence of the state-building efforts of these political forces. They have also tried to demonstrate that nationalist politicians were sympathetic towards peasant demands for land and resources.[59] Soviet historians also sought to prove the existence of

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55 This is particularly true of the Twenties and early-Fifties. See V. V. Kalinichenko, *Selians'ke hospodarstvo Ukrainy v dokolhospnyi period (1921-1929)*, Kharkiv, 1991, p. 5. Kalinichenko notes that agrarian historians were among those repressed during the 1930s.

56 See, for example, I. K. Rybalka & F. G. Turchenko, 'Sotsialno-klasova struktura naselennia Ukraini naperedodni zhovtnevoi revoliutsii', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 11, 1981, 20-33.

57 See Rubach, *Ocherki*. Ksenzenko, *Revoliutsionnye agrarnye preobrazovaniia*. Pershyn. *Narysy*. Pershin, *Agrarnaia Revoliutsiia*. Rybalka., *Agrarna peretvorennia*. R. D. Liakh, *Rozv'iazannia ahrarnoho pytannia na Ukrainy 1917-1923*, Kyiv, 1975. B. K. Mihal, *Zdiisnennia ahrarnoi polityky na Ukraini u vidbudovyi period (1921-25 roky)*, Kharkiv, 1974.

58 See, for example, A. F. Chmyga, *Kolkhoznoe dvizhenie na Ukraine (1917-1929): Ocherk istoriia*, Moskva, 1974. Chmyga traced the origins and development of collective farming in Ukraine without considering the fact that, in the period before collectivization, only a very small proportion of the land was cultivated in this way.

59 Vytanovych, 'Agrarna polityka', pp. 5-60. Kichigina, 'Agrarne pytannia Tsentral'noi Rady', p. 68. V. S. Lozovyi, 'Ahrarna polityka Dyrektorii UNR', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 2, 1997, 68-76. The name

popular peasant support for Bolshevik agrarian policy beginning with Lenin's Decree on Land issued in November 1917.[60] Soviet agrarian policy in Ukraine underwent a great deal of refinement after 1918 but the influences on these changes were not fully explored by Soviet historians. Instead Soviet works concentrated on the distribution of land and transfer of resources to peasant control.[61] These studies often emphasise the role of the Soviet state in this process.

However, much of this research has failed to consider the peasant reaction to government plans for agrarian reform. Peasant agreement to any proposals for economic change were a vital factor in their success. This was the fundamental lesson gleaned from attempts to reform peasant agriculture in the pre-revolutionary period, most notably Stolypin's efforts to foster individual forms of landholding. Peasant reluctance to accept change manifested itself before 1917 in the ponderous pace of reform and traditional peasant disturbances directed against the landowners and state officials.

Many historians have studied agrarian legislation from a 'top down' perspective and have ignored the peasants' own attempts to transform the village. This attitude can be linked to an intellectual tradition which emphasises the role of central government authority and which views peasant demands as illegitimate. It is clear, however, that the peasants were not a passive, static force awaiting the state to implement reform. As some recent works on the revolutionary village in Russia have demonstrated the peasants themselves played a fundamental role in organising the village in accordance with traditional principles which directly contradicted the plans of the state.[62] Very few works on Ukraine have accepted this

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Ukrains'ka Natsional'na Respublika or *UNR*, usually refers to the nationalist government created by the Directory which held power during 1918-1919 but is also sometimes been used to refer to the government of the Central Rada. The Rada often used this title in official pronouncements during 1917.

60 I. V. Khmel, 'Borot'ba selian Ukrainy za zdiisnennia dekretu pro zemliu (zhovten-hruden 1917)', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 122, 1971, 5, 46-53. M. A. Rubach, 'Leninskii dekret o zemle i razvertyvanie vtoroi sotsial'noi voiny v ukrainskoi derevne (noiabr' 1917 - mart' 1918)', *Leninskii dekret o zemle v deistvii: Sbornik statei*, I. I. Mints ed., Moskva, 1979, pp. 203 213.

61 See, for example, V. V. Kalinichenko, 'Resultati pereraspredeleniia zemel'nogo fonda USSR 1917-1929', *Voprosy istorii SSSR. Respublikanskii mezhduvedomstvennyi nauchnyi sbornik*, 35, 1990, 19-25.

62 See, for example, Michael C. Hickey, 'Peasant Autonomy, Soviet Power and Land Redistribution in Smolensk Province, November 1917-May 1918', *Revolutionary Russia*, 9, 1996, 1, 19-32. Hickey's work, which develops

dichotomy between centralised intellectual proposals for reform and traditional peasant beliefs. Indeed, some historians have suggested that these two strands of thought converged in Ukraine, with intellectual nationalist politicians claiming to represent the interests of the rural constituency.[63]

One of the best studies of the Ukrainian village in recent years is Andrea Graziosi's study of the relationship between the Bolsheviks and the peasants during 1919.[64] His work studies in detail the evident contradiction between an essentially urban political philosophy, Marxism-Leninism, and the rural world of the peasant society. He also explores the ideological complications that compounded the course of the revolution in Ukraine, in particular, the importance of nationalism. Despite the effect of these influences, Graziosi ties Ukrainian developments into the broader social processes of revolution in the Russian Empire. Many of the conflicts occurring in Ukraine had traditional causes and peasant behaviour in the region had many parallels to that witnessed throughout Russia. At other points, however, Ukraine was a forging ground for future Soviet policies. Many issues that were to absorb the energies of the regime over the next decade first arose in this year. The Ukrainian experience was shaped by a number of factors such as the ideological splits within the Ukrainian Bolshevik movement, attitudes towards the peasants, peasant rejection of Bolshevik social and economic politics and ethnic divisions. Graziosi's great strength is to draw on documentary evidence to consider the ramifications of these influences as they affected the revolution in Ukraine. His study is one of the most balanced and detailed on Ukraine during 1919. In general, historians have tended to concentrate only on certain aspects of the revolutionary experience.

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many themes studied by Orlando Figes, concludes that local village committees created a de facto peasant autonomy which central government found difficult to break down.

63 Krawchenko, *Social Change*, pp. 64-65, 67-68. Krawchenko argues that the nationalist Ukrainian intelligentsia comprising around 0.3 % of the rural population were disproportionately influential. He cites as evidence Soviet propaganda rhetoric which denounced the nationalists and local activists. However, this Soviet view was undoubtedly over-exaggerated or simply wrong. He also claims that Ukrainian intelligentsia activists led armed revolts against White and Soviet military forces.

64 Andrea Graziosi, *Bol'sheviki i krest'iane na Ukraine, 1918-1919 gody: Ocherk o bolshevizmakh, natsional-sotsializmakh i krest'ianskikh dvizheniiakh*, Moskva, 1997.

The incidence of peasant banditism is one of the few areas of the revolution in Ukraine which has drawn parallels with developments in Russia. Unlike so many other aspects of the revolution in Ukraine which were considered unique to the region, the incidence of armed peasant resistance was seen as a typical expression of rural dissatisfaction.[65] The most conspicuous and notorious of the peasant bandit leaders of these years, Nestor Makhno, has attracted a large amount of historical study.[66] Makhno's movement was based in the southern Ukrainian hubernia of Katerynoslav and presented a real military threat to both White and Soviet forces. Much of the historical discussion on Makhno has centred on his ideological beliefs and his support for Ukrainian nationalism or anarchism. Very few historians, however, have looked at the wider phenomenon of Ukrainian peasant banditism and its links to traditional peasant behaviour and society.

Only a few historians have considered the organisation of the village and questions of local administration in Ukraine during the revolution.[67] One of these, Vsevolod Holubnychy, has studied the course of the agrarian revolution during 1917.[68] He charts the radical shift experienced by the Ukrainian village in the first year of the revolution drawing particular attention to where local developments diverged from those recorded in Central Russia. The peasant movement, based in villages and volosts, often displayed outright

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65 Similar types of peasant behaviour were recorded throughout Russia. See Mikhail Frenkin, *Tragediia krest'ianskikh vosstanii v Rossii 1918-1921 gg.*, Ierusalim, 1987. Such behaviour is seen as typical of peasant societies throughout history. See Eric Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*, London, 1971.

66 See Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement,* London, 1987. Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*, Montreal, 1975. M. I. Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina: Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v stepnoi Ukraine v gody grazhdanskoi voiny*, Leningrad, 1926. Michael Malet, *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War*, London, 1982. Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno 1918-1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution*, Seattle, 1976. Ditmar Dahlmann, 'Anarchism and the Makhno Movement', *Sbornik (Journal of the Study group of the Russian Revolution)*, 11, 1985, 4-25.

67 Certainly few have studied the question with the depth that Robert Edelman has considered the organisation of the revolution between 1905 and 1907. Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants.* See also the article by Edelman, 'Rural proletarians and peasant disturbances: The Right bank Ukraine in the revolution of 1905', *Journal of Modern History*, 57, 1985, 248-77. Edelman studied the movement of agricultural labourers in the sugar refineries of Right-Bank Ukraine. These workers were assuming a 'semi-proletarian' identity as a result of their experiences in the refineries but in many cases they also retained traditional ties to the land and the village. Edelman argued that the traditional village assembly remained the main forum for political discussion and continued to play a fundamental role in directing peasant protest..

68 Vsevolod Holubnychy, 'The 1917 Agrarian Revolution in Ukraine', in *Soviet Regional Economics: Selected Works of V. Holubnychy*, ed. by Ivan S. Koropeckyi, Edmonton, 1982, pp. 3-65.

opposition to higher authorities to lay claim to land and resources.[69] Holubnychy argues that the peasant unions introduced by the Central Rada were highly influential during 1917 but the evidence he cites is unconvincing and vague.[70] His study is affected by the lack of documentary sources. The published records he cites are mainly from povit and hubernia congresses which were often distant from events in the village and did not necessarily reflect peasant demands.[71]

Soviet historians believed that traditional village institutions disappeared during the revolution and were completely replaced by new Soviet organs. A number have studied the work of village soviets, revolutionary committees and executive committees in the countryside as evidence of popular peasant support for their regime.[72] The Soviet belief that the kulak continued to dominate the Ukrainian village was the rationale behind the introduction of the *Komnezamy* (*KNS* or Ukrainian Committees of the Poor) in 1920.[73] Unlike the Russian kombedy which were disbanded in 1918, the KNS remained in existence until 1933 and the full extent of their activities has not been studied in great detail in the West.[74] In general little is known about the organisations and institutions introduced into the village after the establishment of the Soviet regime. Few have considered traditional peasant organisations which might have proved influential in the Ukrainian revolutionary village after 1917.

The reasons for the lack is study of peasant institutions is again attributable to misconceptions about the organisation of the village before the revolution, in particular, the

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69 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', pp. 21-24.

70 Krawchenko has also emphasised the importance of peasant unions and cooperatives in the village during 1917 citing the large numbers of peasants who apparently joined them. These institutions were seen as the ideal means to organise the peasantry economically and politically by the nationalists. However, Krawchenko does not consider traditional peasant attitudes towards outside institutions fostered on the village or subsequent events in his analysis. See *Social Change*, pp. 57-58.

71 Many of the activists at povit and hubernia level would have been professional activists, teachers, intellectuals and so on drawn from non-peasant groups.

72 See Zh. P. Tymchenko, 'Rady selians'kikh deputativ na Ukrainy v 1917 r.', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 1971, 8, 49-57. P. N. Trygub, 'Sovety, ispolkomy i revkomy na Ukraine v 1919-1920 godakh', *Voprosy istorii SSSR*, 26, 1981, 7-14. B. M. Babii, *Mistsevi orhany derzhavnoi vladu URSR v 1919-20 rr.*, Kyiv, 1958.

73 There are numerous Soviet works on the Komnezamy. A typical example is V. Izhevs'kyi, *Korotka istoriia komitetov nezamozhnikh selian na Ukraini; Z peredmovoiu i stattieiu Iu Ozers'koho*, Khar'kov, 1924.

belief that Ukraine was a region of independent farmers. This can also be traced to the limited availability of sources on the region which afflicted scholarship until recently. Such has been the paucity of material that John Paul Himka, writing in 1994, suggested that more use should be made of contemporary Ukrainian newspapers and collections of published documents to illuminate local developments in the revolution.[75] There are problems with both of these sources in the discussion of the peasant role in the revolution. Newspapers tended to be printed in larger towns and were more likely to reflect the concerns of local intelligentsia. Their relevance to events in the village is limited given that political discussion trailed behind peasant action and the disruption of the civil war made the processes of gathering and disseminating information more difficult. The collections of archival documents published during the Soviet period are a valuable resource but they do not allow a full picture of events to be drawn up as they only record sources sympathetic to the Soviet regime.

Himka stresses the value of these sources because of the problems of access to archival material which were still occurring in 1994. Access to archival sources in Russia and Ukraine has markedly improved in comparison with previous decades but the archives remain in a chaotic condition. A large amount of documentary material from the revolutionary period has been declassified over the past decade. Examples of sources which have been made available to researchers include the records of the various Ukrainian revolutionary governments which are now kept in the *Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Vyshykh Orhaniv Vlady i Upravlinnia (TsDAVO)*.[76] However, present economic difficulties and funding shortages have undoubtedly continued to affect the availability of archival

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74 Indeed the main Western study is the article by James E. Mace, 'The KNS and the Structure of Soviet Rule in the Ukrainian Countryside 1920-1933', *Soviet Studies*, 35, 1983, 487-503 (p. 491).

75 Himka, 'National and the Social', p. 109.

76 This institution, based in Kyiv, was formerly known as the *Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Zhovtnevoi Revoliutsii i Sotsialistichnoho Budivnytstva URSR*. Information about the archive's holdings can be found in *Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv zhovtnevoi revoliutsii i sotsialistichnoho budivnytstva URSR: Putivnyk*, Kharkiv, Kharkivs'ke Knizhkove Vydavnytstvo, 1960. The putivnyk lists the number of fonds relating to the Provisional government, Central Rada, Hetman Skoropadsky, and the Directory but does not list details of the fonds themselves (pp. 565-575)

resources to researchers. A great number of fonds containing material from revolutionary period institutions or local areas await declassification but while funds are limited this process is likely to take some time. In the meantime the nature and value of much of the material in central and regional archives remains unknown.[77]

The archive material used in the thesis can be divided into two main groups. The largest of the two groups is the documentary material from 'outside' observers commenting or reporting on events in the village. The second group are those emanating from within the village itself. The perennial problem of the history of any rural society has always been the lack of sources and levels of literacy have undoubtedly affected the amount of material available. At least in the Russian Empire literacy skills were becoming more widespread in rural areas, allowing us to see revolutionary events from a range of perspectives.

The first group of archival records are those produced by what might be called 'official' sources. These include records left by local administrative officials, land surveyors, political instructors or agitators, agronomists, soldiers and representatives of central governments. Many of these individuals were almost certainly urban-based and possessed a relatively high degree of education in comparison with the peasants on whom they passed comment. However, these men (for there are precious few sources of these sources written by women) were charged with different responsibilities and would have considered events in the village from a variety of viewpoints. Many held different political views. Local volost officials, for example, may have been more sympathetic to peasant action than a higher government administrator who had only rarely ventured out of one of the larger towns in the Right Bank.[78] These 'official' sources tend to be typed or at least clearly

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[77] Many of the fonds from TsDAVO used in the thesis, particularly the material from village and volost bodies, have not been widely cited in Western works, if at all. Some of the fonds dealing with local institutions do not have detailed *opysy*, the register of a fond's contents. Many were classified during the Soviet period, with access being denied to all but a few Soviet historians. Aside from the numbers of the fonds being mentioned in some collections of published documents, few details of the material have ever been published.

[78] This would have been particularly true of ethnic Ukrainian officials who served in the local administrative organs of the nationalist governments. In contrast, members of other governments often held antagonistic and hostile views of the peasants particularly if they were based in urban centres. See. for example, Andrea Graziosi,

hand-written. They are written in both Russian and Ukrainian although the records of the nationalist governments are overwhelmingly in the latter language.

There is a wide range of sources included within this group which very much reflect the administration under which they were recorded. From the period before 1917 there are reports from militia officials reporting on the peasants' mood, peace mediators charged with maintaining calm between landowners and peasants, agronomists seeking ways of improving peasant agriculture and legal officials presiding over cases where peasants had transgressed the laws of the state. There are also the records of government administrators who wrestled with the perennial problems of agrarian reform in various congresses and meetings.

Material from 1917 traces the course of the agrarian revolution beginning with the first complaints of landowners about peasant action. Landowners sent telegrams and complaints detailing peasant attacks on their land to the local militia, the hubernia commissars of the Provisional government and Central Rada or the authorities in Petrograd and Kyiv. In cases where peasant claims were enforced violently, investigations were often subsequently conducted, revealing the influences on and rationale behind peasant behaviour.

The civil war undoubtedly disrupted the processes of government and administration but there are a large number of sources dealing with the period 1918 to 1920. These include the records from the internal ministries and agricultural departments of the Central Rada, Hetmanate, Directory and Soviet government of 1919. These sources record the efforts of various central congresses and commissions to preside over agricultural reform. There are also official reports from state supervisory or police organisations such as the Derzhavna Varta, the state guard under the Hetmanate. Documents from these sources consider peasant attitudes towards government and reform and record continuing peasant action on the land and against government representatives.

'G. I. Piatakov (1890-1937): A Mirror of Soviet History', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 1-2, 1996, 102-166. Graziosi studies the ideological influences and experiences which shaped Piatakov's viewpoints.

Sources from the Soviet government established after 1920 again concentrate on the records of the internal ministry and the agricultural ministry, Narkomzem. The latter source contains reports from political instructors, legislators and technical personnel on the progress of land division, agrarian reform and the creation of alternative forms of landholding.[79] The situation at local level is discussed in correspondence between Narkomzem and the hubernia land departments in the Right Bank. There are also records from the Kyiv hubernia land department and various legal commissions formed to arbitrate in disputes over land or to supervise the nationalisation of land.

The second group of sources are those left by the peasants themselves. The majority of these sources are peasant petitions to administrative authorities or records of peasant meetings. The practice of petitioning government institutions for access to land or other rights and also recording details of resolutions agreed in peasant meetings dated back to the pre-revolutionary period. Village resolutions were traditionally recorded by the *pisar*, a village official, in skhod registers before 1917. Peasants also pleaded with higher authorities, even the Tsar himself on occasion, to intervene on their behalf in disputes with local landowners. Peasant petitions from the Imperial period were always written in Russian in accordance with official moves to discourage the Ukrainian language. However, after 1917 petitions and records of village meetings were written in Russian or Ukrainian, and often, a mixture of the two. The low standard of literacy common in the countryside is often reflected in the spelling and erratic handwriting of many of the documents.

The peasant declarations, records of village meetings and volost congresses departed from pre-revolutionary tradition, where peasant rights were more clearly defined, by

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79 These issues are also discussed in a number of published sources which have not been widely cited by Western historians before. These include instructions to local party activists. See Klunnyi, H., *Do pytannia pro zemel'nu polytiku na Ukraini v diskusiinomu poraidkovi: Dlia chleniv KP(B)U*, Kyiv, 1921. Dmytro Manuil's'kii, *Poraidnyk volostnoho orhanizatora radians'koi vlady. Z dodatkom vidnovidnoho zakonodavstvo*, Kharkiv, 1920. There are the published results of a number of surveys carried out in the village after 1920. See Kievskyi gubkom K.P(B).U., *Kak zhivet ukrainskoe selo: Monograficheskoe obsledovanie grebenskogo i koshevatskogo raionov na Kievshchine*, Kiev, 1924. Kachinskii, V. N., *Ocherki agrarnoi revoliutsii na Ukraine. Vyp 1: Uravnitel'nyi razdel zemli,* Kharkiv, 1922. *Materialy po obsledovaniiu komitetiv nezamozhnykh selian (po dannykh obsledovaniia v*

addressing a broader range of topics. These declarations were also different from Soviet practice where autonomous peasant influence over local decision making processes was severely curtailed. The peasants recorded village decisions relating to land and resources as always but there are also documents relating to the punishment of individuals, membership of the community and social and cultural norms. A degree of caution must be exercised when studying peasant declarations. The records of peasant meetings usually note whether non-peasant individuals were present and the agenda that these men, often representatives of political forces, had introduced. It is therefore possible to distinguish when outside influences are perhaps at work in the village and when the declarations can be considered expressions of peasant demands. Peasants may also have been adept at exploiting the political situation for their own ends. Declarations expressing support for one or another political power may simply have been viewed as political expediency by peasants so that their demands would be met or they else reflected a degree of compulsion by outside forces.

The documentary material used in the thesis, both from within the village and outside it, allows a more detailed examination of peasant behaviour during the revolution in Ukraine than would have been possible a mere decade ago. An empirical study of local records enables comparisons to be drawn with the well documented events in the Russian countryside during 1917 to 1923. These records also challenge the central concepts that have guided Ukrainian historiography over previous decades, such as the influence of nationalism and the unique nature of the revolution in Ukraine.

Ukraine has often been considered as a distinct geographical entity, particularly by Ukrainian historians. Within this territory, however, there are a number of identifiable regions, each influenced by particular economic and social conditions. Himka argues there has been a particular absence of regional studies in the consideration of Ukrainian

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iiune 1925), Kharkiv, 1925. There are also the published findings of organisations such as the *Kievskoe gubernskoe ekonomsoveshchaniie.*

revolutionary history.[80] Left-Bank Ukraine (comprising the hubernias of Poltava, Chernihiv and Kharkiv) and Steppe Ukraine (comprising the hubernias of Katerynoslav, Odesa and Kherson) are both valid areas for study but for the purposes of the thesis attention will be focused on Right-Bank Ukraine.[81] This region presented a number of ethnic, political, economic and social problems to the Imperial government which reflected its unique path of development before the revolution (these factors will be discussed in chapter two). The importance of these influences have also been underlined by Robert Edelman in his study of the Right Bank during the revolution of 1905.[82]

The study of rural conditions before 1917 is important because it enables comparisons to be drawn with events during the revolution. Many historians, both Soviet and nationalist, have seen the revolution as a break from social traditions practised before 1917 and the dawning of a new epoch. A comparison of peasant attitudes before the revolution and after, whether through reports of physical action or expressions of peasant demands contained in village petitions, would test the validity of this viewpoint. Such a comparison would reveal the extent to which peasant behaviour was truly revolutionary or how much the events of 1917 were rooted in social and economic causes which dated back to earlier centuries. Some historians have stressed the elements of continuity in the revolutionary experience (see the comments of Afanas'ev above). The themes of continuity and change are indeed an important consideration in the study of developments at village level. Records of village petitions after 1917 reveal much about peasant concerns and how political, social and economic questions were resolved at local level.

A study of peasant political behaviour tests assumptions about levels of support for both the Bolsheviks or the nationalists, each of whom have claimed sections of the rural population as their constituency. Russian peasants, as discussed above, were often

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[80] Himka, 'National and the Social', p. 110.

[81] By Right-Bank Ukraine I am referring to the area west of the Dnepr river occupied by three Imperial hubernias; Kyiv, Podillia and Volyn. Today this territory is roughly organized into seven *oblasts* (modern administrative

ambivalent about national political developments and a comparison with peasant political behaviour in Ukraine would be useful in determining whether the revolutionary experience in this region was distinct from the broad social revolution occurring across Russia. The parallels which historians have drawn between armed peasant resistance in Russia and Ukraine have been discussed above. Peasant violence usually occurred when political options had been exhausted and therefore, a study of the causes and scale of peasant revolts would outline the main issues which roused peasant anger. The Ukrainian experience must be placed in the context of recent works on the course of the civil war which stress the importance of peasant partisans as a major power in the military conflicts of these years albeit on a localised scale.

The main economic demand of peasants in central Russia was for land. This concern shaped political debates in the village and sometimes led to conflicts over resources. Conflicts occurred between groups of peasants (between peasant separators and the commune for example) or between neighbouring villages. Ukrainian peasants were also concerned primarily with land but economic developments before 1917 are likely to have laid different emphases on the distribution of resources. In particular, it is not clear if the process of distribution followed a similar pattern as that observed in Russian villages where the repartitional commune held sway. The village community in Ukraine was considered a weak institution before 1917.[83] Peasant organisations are at least thought to have increased their influence in Ukraine after 1917. John Channon has argued that the 'hromada in the Ukraine and the mir in Russia both evidently gained ground and regions not strongly communal before 1917 became more so during 1917 and after'.[84] However, Soviet historians opposed this viewpoint. For example, V.V. Kalinichenko, argued that the

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units) of Western Ukraine; Kyivs'ka, Khmel'nits'ka, Zhitomirs'ka, Vinnits'ka, Cherkas'ka, Rivens'ka and Volyns'ka.

82 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, pp. 33-34.

83 Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*, p. 17. Figes commented of the Right Bank that 'the weakness of the commune and the semi-capitalist nature of agricultural practices were reflected in the concentration of land ownership and a relatively high degree of socio-economic differentiation among the rural population, compared with the central zone'.

commune 'could not reappear in places where it had long since disappeared'.[85] It would be naive to suggest, however, that traditional village institutions in Ukraine simply disappeared after 1917 when in Russia their influence over the village greatly increased.

These generalisations mask a lack of study of the question which have allowed such misconceptions to persist. Only by a detailed consideration of material relating to village decision-making from the revolutionary period can these perceptions be modified. Such an examination would test the validity of the nationalist assertion that the peasant unions, cooperatives and zemstvo organisations introduced by nationalist governments were instrumental in directing peasant action. Similarly it would reveal the success of Soviet local organisations when faced with the same requirement for strong authority in the countryside. The need for representative local organs to implement policy at local level is linked to wider debates about the interaction during the revolution between the intellectual tradition, on one hand and peasant traditions on the other.

The events in the Ukrainian countryside are integral to any consideration of the revolution. The thesis will seek to contribute to debates over the revolution in Ukraine, in particular to those questions which have taxed historians since 1917. These include the question of the extent to which nationalist ideals influenced peasant action in the revolution or whether the points at which the Ukrainian experience diverged from that witnessed elsewhere were attributable to the different economic and social conditions found in the region before 1917. It will also seek to answer the question of how Soviet power was ultimately established in the countryside after 1920. Nationalist historians have viewed the

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84 Channon, 'Peasantry in the Revolutions of 1917', p. 109.

85 V. V. Kalinichenko, 'Formi krest'ianskogo zemlepol'zovaniia na Ukraine v dokolkhoznii period 1917-1929', *Voprosy istorii SSSR: Respublikanskii mezhdyvedomstvennyi nauchnyi sbornik*, 30, 1985, 70-79 (p. 74). In another more recent work Kalinichenko claimed the traditional village community was 'paralysed' after 1917. Kalinichenko makes no reference to any recognised village organisations between 1917 and 1922. See 'Orhanizatsiia ta diial'nist' zemel'noi hromady v Ukrains'komu dokolhospnomu seli (1922-1930 rr.)', *Visnyk Kharkivs'koho derzhavnoho universitetu: Istoriia*, 29, 1997, 396, 124-128.

foundation of a Soviet regime as an alien institution forcibly imposed on Ukraine[86] while Soviet historians have argued that the regime received broad support from the population.

As is apparent from the discussion of the historiography of the revolution, the recent advances made in the study of Russian developments provide a template against which the Ukrainian experience can be compared. The availability of documentary sources and new approaches to history, not least in the writing of social history, have vastly increased our knowledge and understanding of the nature and impact of revolutionary events in Russia. The study of Ukrainian events has unfortunately lagged behind these developments as Ukrainian history has been riven by ideological conflicts and undermined by the failure to consider the revolution from a range of perspectives. Not enough is known about the course of the revolution in Ukraine, particularly at local level.[87] The thesis will try to address these concerns beginning with a survey of the social, economic and political conditions in Right-Bank Ukraine before 1917.

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86 See, for example, Borys' assertion that the Soviet regime in Ukraine 'was not a consequence of internal political and social situation, but as a result of an external intervention'. See *Sovietization*, pp. 294-295.

87 These points are stressed by Himka. See 'National and the Social', pp. 109-110.

RIGHT-BANK UKRAINE BEFORE 1917: HISTORY, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Within the Russian Empire, the Right Bank was a frontier region. Kyiv city, one of the main trading centres of Kyiv Rus, was considered one of the centres of Slavic civilisation. However, following its decline and sack by the Mongols in 1240, the territory came under the influence of first Lithuania and then the unified Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom. To exploit the region's resources, the Poles enserfed the native peasants between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1648, a Ukrainian nobleman, Bohdan Khmelnitsky, led a major peasant revolt against the Polish land owning class. As the Polish star waned, the fortunes of Russia began to rise. Left-Bank Ukraine and Kyiv were ceded to Russia under the treaty of Andrusovo in 1667. In the second and third partitions of Poland in 1792 and 1795, Russia acquired the remainder of the Right-Bank region including Podillia and Volyn.[1]

The Tsarist government took steps to transform these Right-Bank provinces into Russian regions. This involved restricting the influence of the Polish minority (largely comprising economically powerful nobility) and improving the condition of the Ukrainian population. This policy became a priority after the Polish revolts of 1830 and 1863. The Right Bank's unique development was reflected in its ethnic composition. The 1897 census calculated a population of 9,567,010 in the Right Bank. Of these 7,357,543 (76.9%) were Ukrainian (on the basis of language). Russians formed 4.3% of the remainder, Jews 12.8% and others (including Poles, German and Czech colonists) 6%.[2] Later estimates reveal some variation between the different hubernias. For example, Ukrainians in Volyn comprised 70.1% of the population. Poles comprised 6.2% and Jews 13.2%, showing a greater concentration of these minority groups than was found elsewhere in Ukraine.[3]

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1 For a fuller discussion of Ukrainian history during this period see W. E. D. Allen, *The Ukraine: A History*, Cambridge, 1963. Subtelny, *Ukraine*. Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Ukraine: The Land and its People*, New York, 1918.
2 Krawchenko, *Social Change*, p. 4.
3 Klunnyi, *Do pytannia*, p. 10. Jewish groups formed a considerable proportion of the population of the Right Bank.

These ethnic groups were spread disproportionately between town and countryside. The urban population numbered 914,970 in 1897 (9.6% of the total population). Of this figure only 27% were Ukrainian. The remainder were either Russian (25%), Jewish (39.6%) or other nationality (8.1%).[4] Throughout Ukraine as a whole 93% of Ukrainians were members of the peasant estate (*soslovie*) and the vast majority of these earned their living from agriculture. Other ethnic groups were more likely to be found in skilled or semi-skilled occupations. In the Right Bank, there was a correlation between nationality and class. The peasant conception of the town as alien to rural culture created a vast gulf between Ukrainians and others. This dichotomy between rural and urban life had a profound effect on how peasants viewed themselves and others.

The climate and conditions of the Right Bank were particularly suited to agriculture. There were on average 172 frost-free days a year (a month more than Central Russia).[5] Northern Volyn and Kyiv were largely covered by forest but the southern areas of these provinces and Podillia were rich in the black soil which stretched in a wide belt across Southern Russia.[6] These factors made the land particularly productive and supported a diverse range of crops. Peasants specialised in staple and subsistence crops: rye, spring and winter wheat, barley and oats. Cash crops became increasingly common in the latter half of the nineteenth century particularly on gentry estates where sugar beet, potatoes (for vodka) and *makhorka* (a type of tobacco) were refined or processed for the domestic market and export.[7]

Many noble landowners in Central Russia in the period following emancipation struggled to maintain their estates and balance their finances. A symptom of this difficulty was the gradual reduction in the proportion of land held by nobles as they sold their land to

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4 Subtelny, *Ukraine*, pp. 277-278.
5 Naum Jasny, *Socialized Agriculture of the USSR*, Stanford, 1949, p. 109.
6 Jasny, *Socialised Agriculture*, p. 109.
7 *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopaedia* (hereafter *UCE*), 2 vols., ed. by Volodymyr Kubijovyc, Toronto, 1971, II, p. 843.

cancel their debts.[8] This general process did not affect the Right Bank as profoundly as elsewhere. Here, gentry farmers had noted the example of Prussia where the East Prussian junker class had transformed their estates by reorganizing them for the modern market economy. This was known as the Prussian path to capitalist development and was adopted by many Western-looking Right-Bank noblemen who remained receptive to European innovations.[9] Many of these were Poles who accounted for forty per cent of all agricultural production.

These reorganised estates proved particularly successful in the production of sugar beet and Ukraine became the centre of the Russian sugar industry, producing seventy-five to eighty per cent of the Empire's needs.[10] As a cash crop, sugar-beets gave a return profit per pud five times greater than that on wheat and six times that on rye.[11]

By adapting to the needs of the rational modern economy, Right-Bank landowners were better able to prevent the disintegration of their estates. Some 8,535 landlord estates occupied an average area of 900 desiatins each. In contrast, 452,417 peasant households held an average of 9 desiatins each.[12] Noble estates or latifundia flourished as a result. For example, the Polish Pototski and Branitski families held estates of 107,000 and 167,000 desiatins, the Ukrainian Tereshchenko and Kharitonenko families held 140,000 and 40,000 desiatins and the Russian Bobrinsky family held 44,000 desiatins.[13] Estates of such sizes were relatively common in the Right Bank. There were 49 estates which owned over 10,000 desiatins.[14] Gentry production accounted for 56% of the sown area of sugar beet. More efficient crop rotations, new farming techniques and modern agricultural machinery were

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8 See Seymour Becker, *Nobility and Privilege in Late-Imperial Russia*, Dekalb, Illinois, 1985, p. 32. By 1914 landowners in European Russia (with the exception of the Baltic provinces) owned 47.1% (41.1 million desiatins) of the land they had held in 1862 (87.2 million desiatins).

9 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, p. 44.

10 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, p. 44. I. H. Romanenko, *Sil's'ke hospodarstvo Ukrains'koi RSR*, Kiev, 1958, p. 273.

11 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, p. 51. One pud equalled 36.11 pounds.

12 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, p. 46. A desiatina equalled 2400 sazhen or 2.7 acres.

13 Romanenko, *Sil's'ke hospodarstvo*, p. 273. Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 81.

14 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, p. 56.

also becoming increasingly common on noble estates, as landlords sought to improve the productivity and profitability of their lands.

In contrast, peasant households in Right-Bank Ukraine were slow to introduce new agricultural techniques or new crops on their holdings. One observer noted the peasants' continued use of 'agricultural techniques of the time of Yaroslav'.[15] This was due to the peasants' belief in traditional farming methods and the lack of available capital to improve the land. Peasants maintained a three-field system (whilst gentry farms were increasingly introducing multi-field rotations of up to eight or nine crops). Tradition dictated that crops were rotated each year so that one field was planted with a winter grain, the second with a spring grain and the third left fallow. The drawback of such a system was that the fallow field was often used for some other purpose and the productivity of the land declined gradually over time. The use of fertiliser on peasant land was quite rare and peasants proved wary of such innovations.

The agronomist A. A. Køfød, adviser to P. A. Stolypin, cited the example of peasants in Volyn who struggled to match the higher productivity of neighbouring German colonists.[16] After several years of experimenting, the root cause of their low productivity was attributed to their system of land tenure rather than to any more superficial features.[17] Three factors affected the productivity of the land: the intermingling of strips of land on peasant allotments (*cherezpolositsa*), small, inefficient plots of land (*melkopolositsa*), and large distances between the peasant household and land or between strips of land (*dal'nozemel'e*).[18] The average peasant in the Right Bank spent much time and effort trying

15 Reynolds, 'Some Experiences in Kiev', p. 223. 'Yaroslav' is a reference to the tenth-century ruler of Kyiv Rus'.
16 For a discussion of German-colonist farming see Roger P. Bartlett, 'Colonists, Gastarbeiter, and the Problems of Agriculture in Post-Emancipation Russia', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 90, 1982, 4, 547-71. These colonists were particularly common in Volyn.
17 A.A.Køfød, *Bor'ba s chrezpolositsieu v Rossii i za granitseiu*, St Petersburg, 1906, pp. 59-64.
18 P. P. Telichuk, *Agrarnie otnosheniia v pravoberezhnoi Ukraine v period reaktsii 1907-1910*, Avtoreferat, Kiev, 1960, p 12.

to cultivate various small distant plots. Households in the Right Bank usually held less than ten strips but the distance from one to another would often be several miles.[19]

Peasants frequently lacked the equipment to efficiently farm their land. The majority of peasants continued to use wooden ploughs which did not penetrate the soil as deeply as more modern metal ones. They also suffered from a lack of livestock. Nearly half the peasant land-owning households in Ukraine lacked draught animals (45.5%). A further 12.1% owned only one horse or ox. Considerable numbers were without even rudimentary ploughs (44.9%) and many households (48.5%) had only one cow.[20] In previous centuries peasants had increased productivity by increasing the area of land sown on the edges of the village. This had been possible when villages remained relatively small and surplus land on village boundaries was available for cultivation.[21] By the late nineteenth century this was no longer feasible.

Population growth put further pressure on dwindling land resources. Between 1858 and 1897 the population of the Right Bank increased by 90%.[22] The average increase for Ukraine as a whole between 1877 and 1917 was 72%.[23] Podillia, in terms of density of population at the end of the nineteenth century, was second only to the central Moscow region.[24] Peasants in Southern Ukraine which had only relatively recently been settled, held average plots of 9.3 hectares. Their Kyiv counterparts held an average of only 3.4 hectares.[25] This intensified conflicts over land between peasants and others.

The resilience of the gentry sector meant that little land was available to peasants. Between 1877 and 1905 landlords in Central Russia lost or sold 30% of their holdings. In the

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19 George Yaney, *The Urge to Mobilise: Agrarian Reform in Russia 1861-1930,* Urbana, Chicago, London, 1982, p 164.
20 *UCE*, II, p. 848. Figures according to 1917 census. See Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 4
21 See, for example, *Ukrains'ka mynuvshyna* on *zaimanshchina* rights of earlier centuries, p. 146.
22 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, p. 37.
23 Subtelny, *Ukraine*, p. 261.
24 Allen, *Ukraine*, pp. 349-350. The sugar industry helped prevent rural overcrowding by providing employment.
25 Figures according to *UCE*, II, p. 845.

Right Bank the corresponding figure was only 16%.[26] Prices for land were pushed beyond the reach of the average peasant. Land prices in Ukraine rose by a factor of 14.4 in the period 1861-1914.[27] The average price per desiatina in Ukraine was 169 rubles. In the three Right-Bank provinces, it reached 225 rubles.[28] Communities sometimes rented land for peasant use but usually any land that did come on to the market was snapped up by merchants.[29]

The economic dominance of the nobility in Right-Bank Ukraine put pressure on the peasant economy. High proportions of military conscripts from Right-Bank Ukraine at the turn of the century were rejected on the grounds of poor health. In Kyiv hubernia 21.9% of recruits were considered unfit to serve. The figures in Podillia and Volyn were 22.1% and 24%. A government survey of 1903 found that average income fell short of subsistence requirements in these provinces. Many households were dependent on outside earnings for survival. Those provinces where average incomes were lower tended to produce a higher proportion of unfit conscripts.[30] A correspondent visiting Volyn at New Year in 1909 found the peasant population in the grip of 'the most despairing poverty, bordering on destitution'. Alcohol was seen as the traditional peasant remedy for disease and hunger with the result that 'nowhere in the world is there such drunkenness than in the villages of Volyn'.[31]

Peasant households and village institutions employed a number of strategies to mitigate economic hardship. Some migrated eastwards through government sponsored schemes into the Urals or Siberia. It is estimated that during the years 1891-1914 around 20% of the 1,982,000 Ukrainians from the nine hubernii who crossed the Urals were from

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26 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, p. 45
27 *UCE*, vol II, p. 845. This is an average figure. The figure for Right-Bank Ukraine was undoubtedly higher.
28 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 82.
29 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 82.
30 H. R. Weinstein, 'Land Hunger and Nationalism in the Ukraine 1905-17', *Journal of Economic History*. 2-1, 1942, 24-35, (pp. 27-28).
31 *Russkaya Znamya*. 4 January 1909. in *Tsentralnyi Derzhavnyi Istorichnyi Arkhiv*. (hereafter *TsDIA*) fond 442, opys 707, sprava 346, arkush 2.

Right-Bank Ukraine.[32] Finding work outside the village was a simple necessity for many peasants especially the poorest and youngest who could not claim an automatic share of resources. This out-migration was particularly common in provinces like Kyiv and must have had a marked effect on peasant life in this period.[33] Other strategies existed, however. In some cases the property of a household head was partitioned while he was still alive to enable sons to support themselves in the village. This phenomenon, known as pre-mortem fission, was guided by notions of customary law. It was common in regions where hereditary tenure prevailed and reduced the need for out-migration but 'retarded the processes of modernisation and industrialisation'.[34]

The growth of the sugar-beet refining industry in the region provided new opportunities for employment and frequently allowed poorer peasants to find work relatively close to the village. Refineries were usually situated on landlord estates. In 1913 there were 126,300 permanent workers in sugar-beet plantations. A further 800,000 workers were called on to meet seasonal demands.[35] The conditions in which they worked were extremely difficult and the terms on which they were hired were often disadvantageous but such work provided peasant households with the means to survive though lean years.

During the nineteenth century imperial legislators sometimes acknowledged the influence of the unique historical, economic and social factors in the Right Bank by introducing separate legal statutes for the region. For example, the government tried to introduce inventories on gentry estates in the Right Bank with two decrees of 26 May 1847 and 29 December 1848.[36] It was hoped that by recording the rights and duties of the

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32 *UCE,* I, p. 195. These figures were later used by Ihor Stebelsky, 'Ukrainian Peasant Colonization East of the Urals 1896-1914', *Soviet Geography*, 25, 1984, pp. 681-694. Many people who migrated were unsuccessful and returned. Others died from disease or starvation. Exact figures are therefore difficult to verify.

33 Timothy Mixter, 'The Hiring Market as Workers' Turf: Migrant Agricultural Labourers and the Mobilization of Collective Action in the Steppe Grain Belt of European Russia 1853-1913,' in *Peasant Economy*, ed. by Kingston-Mann & Mixter, pp. 294-340.

34 Worobec, *Patterns*, p. 30.

35 N. I. Ksenzenko, 'Reshenie agrarnogo voprosa v svekloseiushchykh raionakh Ukrainy 1917-1922', *Voprosy istorii*, 1972, p. 24

36 V. P Terplyts'kyi, *Reforma 1861 roku i agrarna vidnosyny na Ukraini 60-90 ti roku XIX st*, Kyiv, 1959.

peasants with regard to land and service, abuses of peasant labour would be stamped out. It was also thought that the inventories would restrict the power of the Polish nobility who had shown their hatred of Tsarist rule in 1830.[37] Only in the Right Bank was such legislation actually enforced.[38]

The different approach in government policy towards the Right Bank was revealed again by the emancipation settlements of 1861-3. The region received a 'local statute' which granted peasants the land they had used in 1847-8. Landlords who had reduced peasant allotments were obliged to return the land.[39] A further law on 30th July 1863 established the compulsory redemption of land and a reduction of redemption payments by 20%. It also prohibited the practice of 'cutting off' strips of land from peasant allotments, common elsewhere in Russia.[40] These provisions were guided by the desire to restrict the Polish *shliakhta* following the Polish revolt of 1863.[41] Peasant allotments increased by an average of 18% throughout the Right Bank.[42] Elsewhere in Ukraine and in Russia peasant allotments were reduced. More fundamentally, Right-Bank peasants were not bound to pay their redemption dues through the community as in Central Russia but instead became 'fully fledged owners' (*vlasniky*), accepting individual responsibility for payment.[43]

The Right Bank continued to be treated as a special case in the following decades. The office of peace mediators (*mirovye posredniki*), set up to implement reform, remained in place in the Right Bank after being abolished elsewhere in 1874. In the absence of the *zemstvo* (local-government administration), *zemskii nachal'nik* (land captain) or other

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37 Peter A. Zaionchkovsky, *The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia*, Susan Wobst trans. & ed. Gulf Breeze, Florida, 1978, p. 39

38 Edward C. Thaden (with Marianna Forster Thaden), *Russia's Western Borderlands 1710-1870*, Princeton, 1985, p. 136. It was also introduced in the Lithuanian and Belorussian provinces but proved ineffective. Not surprisingly, it met opposition from Polish noble society, whose lack of cooperation caused the reforms to founder. The peasants themselves also proved hesitant, perhaps due to suspicion of government motives, and police officials noted an increase in peasant restlessness in these years. Over the following years the nobility succeeded in gradually clawing back much of what they had lost in the inventories.

39 Zaionchkovsky, *Abolition*, p. 83. See also Terplyts'kyi, *Reforma 1861*, pp. 94-95.

40 Terplyts'kyi, *Reforma 1861*, pp. 48, 97.

41 Zaionchkovsky, *Abolition*, p. 86. *Shliakhta* means nobility, specifically the Poles.

42 Zaionchkovsky, *Abolition*, p. 151. Note that for individual districts this figure varied widely.

institution, peace mediators were given particular powers to supervise village affairs and remove antagonistic village officials.[44] Peace mediators in the Right Bank were presumably retained because conflicts over land between landlords and peasants which they had been responsible for resolving were still occurring. The different legal conditions applied by the Tsarist government to Right-Bank Ukraine and its peasantry suggest a sensitivity to and acceptance of the region's diversity. Successive governments ignored this lesson at their peril.

In such a politically sensitive area, Governor-Generals represented strong executive authority.[45] D. G. Bibikov, for example, became military governor of Kyiv region in 1835.[46] He oversaw Nicholas I's Russification policy with particular zeal. Peasant conditions were a particular concern. Bibikov's successors were usually trusted servants of the Tsar who could be relied upon to forcefully implement government policy and keep a firm grip of these potentially troublesome hubernias.[47] Elected zemstva were only introduced into Right-Bank Ukraine in 1911 due to Russian fears of Polish gentry domination.[48] The failure to introduce zemstva earlier hindered progress in the fields of education and agronomy, areas in which Russian zemstva had excelled.

During the political disturbances of 1905-07, the village skhod continued to dominate despite the formation of new committees. However, one historian has concluded that while the skhod remained the 'centre of peasant life', by 1907 'it had assumed a different

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43 *UCE*, II. p. 842.

44 N. M. Tsytovich, *Sel'skoe obshchestvo kak organ mestnogo upravleniia,* Kiev, 1911, pp. 92-93. The peace mediator supervised peasant-landlord relations and reported to povit congresses of peace mediators. The activities of the povit congresses were overseen by the hubernia office for peasant affairs.

45 See N. O. Shcherbak, *Natsional'na polityka tsaryzmu u pravoberezhnii Ukraini v kintsi XIX-na pochatku XX st. (za materialami zvitiv mistsevykh derzhavnykh ustanov)*, Avtoreferat, Kyiv, 1995.

46 E. Willis Brooks, 'Bibikov, Dmitrii Gavrilovich', in *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, ed. by Joseph L. Wieczynski, Gulf Breeze, Florida, 1977. vol. 4, p. 129.

47 S. Frederick Starr, *Decentralization and Self-Government in Russia 1830-1870,* Princeton, 1972, pp. 164-65.

48 Thaden, *Russia's Western Borderlands*, p. 139. See also I. V. Sesak, *Zemskie uchrezhdeniia na pravoberezhnoi Ukraine 1904-1917*, Avtoreferat, Lvov, 1987. Zemstva were introduced in 1904 but their members were nominated by the government.

and less powerful significance'.[49] The disturbances of 1905-07 suggested that the skhod was no longer universally representative. Certain rural groups, often including sugar industry workers, were excluded from the decision-making process. There were also instances of conflict between the skhod and agricultural labourers deprived of rights to participate, the so-called 'rural proletarians'. However, these labourers usually formed a minority of the peasant population and it is likely that peasants continued to utilise community structures as a source of strength and support. Such minority groups were more fluid (perhaps peasants working as labourers on a seasonal basis) or more traditional (rejecting any notion of class consciousness) and the skhod would have retained its influence.

Peasant political behaviour developed in this period, as is shown by village assembly resolutions sent to the First Duma in 1906. Of 245 petitions from Ukraine, 240 related to land questions. Peasant communities from the Right Bank were responsible for 79 of these (32.9%). As well as demands for an improvement in local conditions there were also demands for changes in government policy.[50] The emphasis on rural conditions was most clearly observed in Podillia and Volyn.[51]

Historians have argued that the peasant movement intensified in the period before 1917 but do not distinguish between peasant protests against economic conditions and attempts to overthrow the government.[52] Peasant political demands underwent an evolutionary process as is evident from the petitions sent by communities to the Duma in much the same way as they had earlier petitioned the Tsar.[53] At local level peasants became

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49 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, pp. 152-159.
50 V. I. Mikhailova, *Nakazy i prigovori sel'skikh skhodov pervoi gosudarstvennoi dume*, Avtoreferat, Dnepropetrovsk, 1976, pp. 7-14.
51 F. E. Los quoted in *ibid.*, p. 14.
52 *Istoriia selianstva*, 2 vols., Kyiv, 1967, I, pp. 501-511. The theory that Russia on the eve of the First World War was on the verge of another social explosion like that witnessed in 1905-07 has been shared by several Western historians too, most notably Leopold Haimson. Such ideas remain current. See for example Figes, *People's Tragedy*, pp. 3-34, in which he contrasts the lavish celebrations of the 300th anniversary of Romanov rule in 1913 with the turbulent undercurrents of social disquiet evident in Russian life.
53 Very few of the petitions to the First Duma mentioned the Tsar, showing that he had perhaps begun to lose his talismanic, iconic status to peasants. See Mikhailova, *Nakazy*, p. 15.

more adept at defining their political demands and, through the community, employed more sophisticated strategies to achieve them.

Individual hereditary household tenure was one of the fundamental features of Right-Bank Ukraine's social and political diversity. This form of landholding had its roots in Ukraine's chequered past which had differed so much from Central Russia. The village community in Right-Bank Ukraine did not exercise the same direct authority over peasant land or tax as the Russian village obshchina. The head of the household was recognised as the full master of the property and had the right to put it up for rent or sale without any interference from others in the household. The peasant household usually possessed an *usad'ba* (garden plot adjacent to dwelling) and strips of land in the village fields.[54] The community could not interfere if a peasant wished to sell or lease his share of allotment land.[55] In the event of the death of the household head, the property passed to other members of the family.[56] Dues and taxes were levied on individual households but in the event of a household failing to produce heirs the land reverted to the community.[57]

The main problem with the hereditary system was the absence of a primogeniture principle governing the division of property.[58] Thus 'hereditary land holdings were parcelled into ever smaller strips among the heirs and could be consolidated only through marriage, purchase or exchange or through success in holding a large family together.'[59] Hereditary tenure subdivided land further and created a profusion of households which became increasingly uneconomic with each successive generation.

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54 A. A. Rittikh, *Krest'ianskoe zemlepolzovanie*, Sankt Peterburg, 1903, p. 78.
55 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 23.
56 *ibid.*, p. 78. See also Rittikh, *Krest'ianskoe zemlepol'zovanie*, p. 79.
57 Worobec, *Patterns*, pp. 6-7
58 See Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', note 84, p. 60.
59 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 60. Foreign Office, *The Ukraine: Handbooks Prepared Under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office,* London, 1920, p. 50. Land 'became more and more subdivided so that families owned more or less according to the number of children'.

The structure of village organisation in the Right Bank was the same as in Central Russia.[60] The community was governed by the skhod which had clearly defined responsibilities.[61] The male head of each household in the village was entitled to vote at village gatherings. The skhod elected village officials, the most important of whom was the *starosta* or headman. Others included tax collectors, police officials (*sots'ki* and *desiats'ki* representing a hundred and ten households respectively), overseers of the village grain stores (*nahliadachi khlibnykh hamazeiv*) and field inspectors (*ob'izhdchyk poliv*).[62] Peasant villages within a certain locality elected officials to represent the village in the volost skhod. The volost also had its own court.[63]

The skhod calculated and collected taxes and duties for the community and state and was responsible for peasants' compliance with military duty, care for orphans and the poor and the distribution of vacant land. The community supervised its own budget and spending. Community funds were spent on wages for village and volost officials, night-watchmen and storemen, transport costs to the volost, the maintenance of village buildings and roads, village police officials, horses for the village post, the rental of buildings to hold criminals awaiting trial, materials for the volost government and payment for religious services and buildings.[64]

The skhod also expelled peasants for anti-social behaviour and accepted new members.[65] Peasants were expelled for petty theft or arson by a unanimous decision of the skhod.[66] Those banished from the village were often sent to Siberia, from where they

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60 See Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, pp. 61-62. Worobec, *Patterns*, pp. 6-7.
61 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 23. O. F. Kuven'ova, *Hromads'kyi pobut Ukrains'koho selianstva: Istoryko-etnohrafichnyi narys*, Kyiv, 1966, p. 19. A. B. Shramkov, *Svedeniia o krest'ianskikh zakonopolozhenniikh dliia Kievskoi gubernii*, Kiev, 1918, p. 3.
62 *Ukrains'ka mynuvshyna,* p. 147.
63 See Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 24. Shramkov, *Svedeniia*, p. 3.
64 *Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Istorichnyi Arkhiv,* (Hereafter *TsDIA*) f. 442, op. 618, spr. 79, ark. 2. Zhurnal Kievskogo gubernskogo po krest'ianskim delam prisutstviia.
65 Shramkov, *Svedeniia*, p. 3
66 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 710, spr. 162, ark. 3-6. Report on case of M. G. Iaroshenko, a peasant in village of Vinnytsko-Staviv, Kovalevs'ka volost, Vasil'kivs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia. With reply by Kiev hubernator to Iaroshenko's request to overturn decision of skhod.

petitioned the authorities for permission to return to their villages.[67] In 1894, for example, 69 peasants in Kyiv hubernia were excluded from their villages for anti-social behaviour (*durnoe povedenie*) and a further 130 peasant men and 8 women were refused the right of return.[68] This suggests that membership of the community was fundamental to the peasants' sense of identity. It may also be indicative of the reluctance of other peasant communities to accept incomers. Communities were reluctant to accept new members where this further limited the amount of land available to peasants.[69] The community managed common land and resources including pasture, meadows, forests, ponds, dams, wells and mills. These resources could be rented out to others with the profits going to the community's coffers.[70] Only peasants within the community were entitled to use its resources.

Skhod decisions were considered valid when the village starosta and at least half of the representatives were present. Resolutions were recorded in the skhod registers. Meetings gathered at appointed times and met either on the public square of the village, near the church or lord's manor, or in the local tavern.[71] Skhod votes had to be unanimous. This unanimity was important to village decision-making and skhod resolutions were often therefore considered expressions of peasant will.[72]

Village government was not without its faults. Sensible, hard working peasants often stayed away from skhod meetings which frequently descended into drunkenness and chaos or even violence.[73] A fight over land rights in a village skhod in Chyhyryns'kyi povit between the starosta and a peasant-renter, which led to the death of the latter, was characterised by the

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67 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 710, spr. 152, ark. 1-4. This document relates the case of Vasilia Belous who petitioned the Podillia hubernator for the right to return to his village, claiming he had been banished unfairly, 22 March 1911.
68 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 625, spr. 272, ark. 66. Vsepoddanneishii otchet kievskogo gubernatora za 1894 goda.
69 Tsytovich, *Sel'skoe obshchestvo*, p. 42.
70 Kuven'ova, *Hromads'yi pobut*, pp 20-1.
71 *Ukrains'ka mynuvshyna*, p. 147.
72 Tsytovich, *Sel'skoe obshchestvo*, p. 17.
73 A. D. Bilimovich. *Krest'ianskii pravoporiadok po trudam mestnykh komitetov o nuzhdakh sel'skokhoziaistvennoi promyshlennosti: Doklad prochitannyi v sobranii Kievskogo Iuridicheskogo obshchestva 6 noiabria 1904 goda*, Kiev, 1904, p. 25.

Kyiv Provincial Governor (*Hubernator*) as merely an 'ordinary fight amongst peasants'.[74] There were also claims of corruption where individuals exploited the courts and volost administration through bribery and coercion in order to enforce their influence upon the village.[75] This was blamed on wealthier peasants or kulaks.[76]

The village community was also a cooperative organisation. Informal agreements to work together seem to have been common amongst the peasants, particularly poorer groups.[77] Such cooperation encompassed joint cultivation of land, pooling of livestock resources, house-building, wood-cutting and so on. Such help was particularly important for households whose labour capacity was affected by their small size or through some tragedy.[78]

Village officials were often of a low standard. It was difficult to find able candidates willing to accept responsibility. Many saw village duty as a burden best avoided with the result that the less intelligent or capable held posts. The system was therefore subject to general inefficiency or abuses such as bribery. The village *pisar* (writer) was often barely literate.[79] Skhod votes were often passed without the sufficient number of peasants present or decisions were recorded before the meetings had actually taken place. Village community government also frequently suffered from lethargy and apathy.[80]

The conduct of economic matters, village decision making, social relations and moral norms were governed by customary law (*zvichaieve pravo*). This was an accumulation of peasant wisdom, traditions and rights rather than a written legal code. It was therefore better understood by the peasants than the abstract concepts of law introduced by central government. The 1864 reform statutes on village law were influenced by these traditional

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74 *TsDIA*, f 442, op 701, spr 195, ark 3-5. Po telegramme kniazia Erostova ob ubiistve sel'skim starostiu s. Andrussovki arendatora Ignatiia Golobchenko.
75 Kuven'ova, *Hromads'kyi pobut*, p. 23.
76 Bilimovich, *Krest'ianskyi pravoporiadok*, p. 25.
77 *Ukrains'ka Mynuvshyna*, p. 160
78 *ibid.*, p. 159.
79 Bilimovich, *Krest'ianskyi pravoporiadok*, pp. 28-29.

codes.[81] There were problems in using oral customary law as the basis for legal procedure because it evolved over time and, as one observer noted, 'every old woman has her own customs'.[82] Defining universal principles was extremely difficult and subject to misinterpretation. Certain peasant customs were found almost exclusively in Right-Bank Ukraine, such as the 'rules' for the devolution of property in household tenure. The community acted as the guardian of these customs, ensuring that village matters were conducted in accordance with tradition.

Systems of land use (*zemlepol'zovanie*) did not differ very much from those found in Central Russia. A Soviet agrarian historian argued that 'it would be wrong to suggest that all the [...] drawbacks in land tenure in the commune were not characteristic of podvornoe landholding'.[83] For a three-field system to work, the agreement of the community was vital.[84] The secretary of the Kyiv Agricultural Society wrote in 1901 that, 'the land, despite the hereditary form of its use, is exploited in common.'[85] Land was held, therefore, on an individual basis but the choice and location of crops was decided by the whole community. Peasants with household tenure were no less subject to constraint than Russian communal peasants.[86] If a peasant tried to plough his strips of land in the peasant allotment fields before the other peasants were ready, his plot would be trampled flat once more by the rest of the village.[87] The community and a collective mentality therefore played an important economic role.

There also existed a class of free-holding *chinsheviki* in the Right Bank. These freeholders had been given hereditary plots of land in return for money or service to the

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80 Senator Polovtsov, *Zapiska senatora Polovtsova o polozhenii krest'ianskogo dela v Kievskoi gubernii*. Kiev, 1880, pp. 68-69.
81 Kuven'ova, *Hromads'kyi pobut*, p. 22.
82 Bilimovich, *Krest'ianskyi pravoporiadok*, p. 43.
83 A. M. Anfimov, *Krest'ianskoe khoziaistvo Evropeiskoi Rossii 1881-1904*, Moscow, 1980, p. 106.
84 Worobec, *Patterns*, p. 7
85 Anfimov *Krest'ianskoe khoziaistvo*, p. 106.
86 Term for member of an obshchina or commune.
87 Anfimov, *Krest'anskoe khoziaistvo*, p. 106.

landlord in earlier centuries.[88] This system shared similarities with *obrok* or quitrent and was further evidence of the region's alternative agricultural development.[89]

Peasants required pasture land, forest land, land for hay-making and access to water for their agriculture. Such resources were vital to the peasant economy. However, villages in Right-Bank Ukraine often lacked convenient access to them, struggled to cope with peasant demand or they were simply not available. Communities rented land as a body, thereby reducing costs to individual households and conferring real benefits on community membership.

The system of servitudes (*servituty*), guaranteeing peasants access to resource lands, remained. The origins of servitudes were rooted deep in the region's past.[90] *Servituty* comes from the Latin *servio*, to be in service or duty (*nakhozhus' v rabstve*).[91] It had several different aspects but was defined mainly as the peasant right to 'common pasture of cattle on fallow land, communal use of meadows and hayfields and use of undivided forest land.'[92] Peasants often lacked sufficient pasture land of their own, so use of landlord land, whether free, for a nominal sum or as part of an old informal agreement, was vital for the survival of their animals.[93] Servitude rights were found throughout the Right Bank, Baltic provinces and Belorussia.

Servitude rights were held by the village community and frequently became the subject of conflict between peasant and landowner over ownership and access. Under the Emancipation statutes peasants and landowners were granted joint use of land which had become very tightly interstripped over previous centuries.[94] Disputes increased in the late

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88 *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia entsiklopediia* (Hereafter *BSE*), 2nd ed., Moskva, 1957. vol. 47, p. 381.
89 Anatolyi Ilich Mamalyga, *Kapitalisticheskaia evoliutsiia pomeshchichikh i krest'ianskikh khoziaistv podol'skoi gubernii v poreformennyi period 1861-1900 gg.*, Avtoreferat, Dnepropetrovsk, 1978, p. 3.
90 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants,* p. 70.
91 *BSE*, vol. 38, p. 560.
92 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 81. It also conferred rights to use water wells, to fish in the landlord's ponds, and collect timber or mushrooms in the landlord's forests.
93 *TsDIA*. f. 442, op. 703, ark. 320, ark. 221. Kievskoe gubernskoe soveshchanie. Po peresmotru zakonopolozhenii o krest'ianakh: T. B. Lokot 'Po voprosu o toloke, servitutakh i razverstanii'.
94 M. H. Leshchenko, *Selians'kyi rukh na Ukraini v roky pershoi rosiiskoi revoliutsii*, Kyiv, 1956, p. 32.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as landlords tried to maximise the economic potential of their lands and the community defended peasant rights.[95] The rights held by peasant communities varied from village to village, making general rules or solutions very problematic. It is estimated that over 40% of peasants used some form of servitude lands.[96] In the 1880s servitudes existed on 1,199 out of 2,256 estates in Kyiv hubernia.[97]

Landowners increasingly attempted to rationalise their estates after the Emancipation, their aim being a systematic reallocation (*razverstanie*) of lands jointly held with the peasants in interstripped fields. Attempts were made to voluntarily negotiate a settlement with village communities where compensation in the form of land in another field or cash was offered for the loss of or change in rights to pasture or other use. Very few communities agreed to voluntarily renounce their rights, believing that such a move had greater advantages for the landlord than for themselves.[98]

The definition and defence of peasant rights often prevented landlords from moving to more modern ways of farming. A two-thirds majority vote in the skhod was required for any changes to village lands and communities rarely consented. Peasant customary law, which identified use with ownership, influenced the peasants' belief that their claims were legitimate.[99] The success of rationalising gentry estates was dependent on the introduction of new crop rotations and more efficient systems of land use. Peasant intransigence was therefore considered a barrier to further economic advance.

Although they dated back to the sixteenth century, servitudes were only legally defined in the inventories of 1847-1848. These rights were often not included in the later 1861 Emancipation documents. Conflicts over servitude lands began in the post-reform

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95 See Romanov, *Neskol'ko slov o servitutakh i razverstanii v iugo-zapadnom krae*, Kiev, 1902. A. A. Bilimovich, *Zemlestroitel'nye zadachi i zemlestroitel'noe zakonodatel'stvo Rossii*, Kiev, 1907.
96 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 81.
97 Polovtsov, *Zapiska*, p. 16.
98 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 703, spr. 320, ark. 223. See also A. A. Bilimovich, *Zemleustroitel'nye zadachi i zemleustroitel'noe zakonodatel'stvo*. Kiev, 1907, p. 119.
99 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 708, spr. 139/ part I, ark. 3-20. V gosudarstvennii dumu: Ob uprazdnenii pastbyshnikh i lesnykh servitutov v guberniiakh zapadnykh i belorusskikh, 6 October 1910.

period. The complex legal situation and the lack of clear land borders merely exacerbated the situation.[100] Both peasants and landowners believed they had legitimate claims to land although the former often had no documentation with which to back their case. Peasant land-use dating from 'time immemorial' (*s nezapamiatnogo vremeni*) often went unchallenged until the owner required the land for a different purpose or the estate changed hands. The courts were more ready to accept the documented case of the landlord than the unsubstantiated claims of the peasants.[101] The Volyn Provincial Governor, writing in 1895, blamed resultant conflicts on the landowners' failure to assert their rights in earlier decades and the peasants' lack of understanding of their land rights.[102] There were thirty-seven such cases in Volyn in 1895 alone.[103]

The burden of resolving these disputes weighed heavily on the Tsarist authorities at local and national level.[104] The government resolved to abolish servitudes and drew up a plan for Right-Bank Ukraine in 1899 but the subsequent disturbances of 1905-7 led to its suspension. Many incidents related specifically to servitude lands which made clear the pressing need for a resolution to the problem. However, if servitudes were to be abolished, village communities would have to receive some kind of compensation to prevent massive damage to the peasant economy.[105] A failure to offer terms would risk further peasant disturbances and the government wished to avoid any further turmoil.[106]

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100 Ibid. See also *TsDIA,* f. 442, op. 626, spr. 426, ark. 10. Po predstavlenii Volynskogo gubernatora s kopieiu vsepoddanneishii otchet volynskogo gubernatora za 1895 goda.

101 See for example *Rossiisskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv* (St Petersburg, RSFSR. Hereafter *RGIA*) fond 1291, opis 35, delo 29, stranitsa 3-5. The village of Urla, Volyn, maintained age-old claims to pasture despite the attempts of courts and administrative organs to explain that they had no legal right to this land.

102 *TsDIA,* f. 442, op. 626, spr. 426, ark. 10. V. A .Kud', *Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v Volynskoi gubernii v period mezhdu dvumia revoliutsiiami, iiun 1907 - fevral' 1917,* Avtoreferat, L'vov, 1974, p. 8. Kud' writes that servitude was more widespread and important in Volyn than in any of the other eight Western hubernii in which they were found.

103 *TsDIA,* f. 442, op. 626, spr. 426, ark. 10.

104 *TsDIA,* f. 442, op. 708, spr. 139/ part I, ark. 4. The courts became bogged down with cases. The number of outstanding unresolved cases involving peasant land questions in Kyiv hubernia increased from 107 to 178 in 1894 alone. *TsDIA,* f. 442, op. 625, spr. 272, ark. 65.

105 *TsDIA,* f. 442, op. 708, spr. 139/ part I, ark. 5.

106 *TsDIA,* f. 442, op. 626, spr. 426, ark. 10.

Servitudes had been successfully and peacefully abolished in Prussia but this country had not faced the same problems as the Tsarist government in the Right Bank.[107] Here, the state had to strike a balance with landowners who might face huge bills for compensation.[108] There were also fears that a total abolition would strengthen Polish landowners in the region.[109] The authorities made a further attempt to resolve the question in 1911, in one of the last projects overseen by Stolypin before his assassination. This project was ultimately delayed by questions of compensation and procedure and remained uncompleted at the outbreak of the war in 1914.[110]

In the absence of government action, many landlords took unilateral steps to restrict peasant use of their lands. Owners could often call on the backing of a court ruling or the collusion of local officials and estate workers to support their claims. The sustained attack by landowners on peasant servitude rights and a corresponding hardening of official attitudes in the pre-revolutionary period antagonised the peasants without offering a clear-cut solution.[111] Violent peasant protest and clashes with police often resulted.[112] A court protocol noted that, 'whilst waiting for further progress on legislation of servitudes, landlords have arbitrarily reallocated the land themselves, occupying a half to two-thirds of the pasture or common. If the peasant goes to complain he is given the lash'.[113] In 1909, in Volyn

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107 Bilimovich, *Zemleustroitel'nye zadachi*, p. 123.

108 Government policy towards landowners in the Right Bank was changing. Earlier its policy had been coloured by the predominance of the Poles (with legislation limiting their rights and giving the peasants a stronger hand than they enjoyed elsewhere in the Empire) but a systematic Russification of the region had reduced their influence. The government had no wish to harm the flourishing class of Russian landowners through legislation.

109 *RGIA*, f. 1291, op. 64, d. 469. str. 65. Po prosheniiu upolnomochennykh obshchestva krest'ian der. Beguna, Mirona Zhukovskogo i Ignatia Roslika o nepravil'nost' otvod im zemli, 19 September 1913.

110 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 708, spr. 139/ part I, ark. 1-113. Stolypin was familiar with conditions in the western areas of the empire having worked in Kovno province. He was aware of the problems of servitude and of course, the question of zemstvos. See Maria Petrovna Von Bock, *Reminiscences of My Father, P.A.Stolypin.* tr. & ed by Margaret Patoski, Metuchen, N.J., 1970. Mary Schaeffer Conroy, *Practical Politics in Late-Tsarist Russia*, Boulder, Colorado, 1976, pp. 4-5.

111 See Kud, *Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie*, p. 8. Telichuk, *Agrarnie otnosheniia*, p. 17. Kolomets, *Polozhenie krest'ian*, p. 14.

112 Telichuk. *Agrarnie otnosheniia*, pp. 17-8.

113 *RGIA*, f. 1291, op. 64, d. 469, str. 66.

alone, 19,800 households lost their servitude rights.[114] This pattern was repeated throughout the Right Bank.

Recorded incidences of violent peasant discontent in Right-Bank Ukraine were particularly high, despite the dubious reliability of Tsarist official figures. The "per capita" incidence of disturbances in the Right Bank during 1905-07 was 'higher than in any other region'.[115] Between 1907 and 1914, 'particularly in Right-Bank Ukraine, peasants increasingly frequently protested against changes made by the landlord to traditional land relations'.[116]

Of 479 peasant disturbances recorded in Ukraine during 1907-14, 323 (68%) were in the Right Bank. Only twenty-five of these disturbances related to the Stolypin reforms which otherwise had little relevance in the region.[117] Only in Umans'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia was communal holding found on any great scale and it was largely here that protests against the peasant separators occurred.[118] Most disturbances related to conflicts over land and servitude rights. Protests against the withdrawal of servitude rights were responsible for 31 disturbances in the Right Bank (9.6%) whilst illegal pasturing of animals was responsible for 137 incidents (42.4%).[119] Pasturing animals without the landlord's permission was a common form of peasant activity in this period and was based on historical claims. These resurfaced during the Revolution albeit more forcefully.[120]

Peasant servitude rights were challenged by proposed changes in the existing land order. In 1896, for example, an owner of forest land felled the area and replanted it. To protect the growing trees, the landowner forbade the peasant pasture of animals on this land. However, peasants continued to illegally graze their cattle. The obshchestvo issued a suit in

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114 Kud, *Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie*, p. 8.
115 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, p. 34.
116 *Istoriia selianstva*, I, p. 504.
117 *Istoriia selianstva*, I, p. 503.
118 See Telichuk, *Agrarnie otnosheniia*, p. 18. A. Zaluzhnyi, *Ukrainskoe krest'ianstvo i sovetskaia vlast'*, 2nd ed. Kiev, 1920, p. 16.
119 *Istoriia selianstva*, p. 503.

the okrug court and petitioned the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del* or *MVD*). Neither action was successful.[121] Few peasant complaints were accepted.[122] Communities often went to some lengths to have their case heard including petitioning the local Governor, the local office for peasant affairs, Duma members, MVD, the Council of Barristers (*sovet prisiazhnykh poverennykh*), Council of Ministers in St Petersburg or in some cases, the Tsar himself.[123] Special peasant representatives were elected to pursue the village's claims with these institutions.

Conflict between landlord and peasant frequently occurred when an estate changed hands. New landowners, wishing to maximise their profits, were less likely to tolerate the old informal agreements with the peasants that their predecessors had accepted. For example, a new landowner, acquiring an estate in 1902, refused to continue payments to peasants for breaking stones on their land which the old landowner had offered in return for their accepting land of a poorer quality in 1879. The peasants (in the village of Traktomirov, Kyiv hubernia) gathered the skhod (attended by 59 out of 85 householders) at which they elected three peasants to pursue the case with the authorities. The Kyiv Provincial Governor, receiving their petition, refused to act, arguing that it was a matter for the courts rather than administrative institutions.[124] This was a frequent response.[125]

Conflicts over land had resounding or damaging consequences for the peasants besides the costs of court cases and the risk of punishment. Peasants in the village of Urla, Volyn, involved in a dispute with the landowner over pasture rights were refused access to

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120 Figes, 'Russian Peasant Community', p. 237.

121 *RGIA*, f. 1291, op. 35, d. 27, str. 5. Po prosheniiu upolnomochennykh obshchestva krest'ian s. Velikikh Goliakov, Skvirskogo uezda, Efima Kornienka i Pavla Golubenka, 16 December 1900.

122 *RGIA*, f. 1291, op. 64, d. 209, str. 1-5. Po prosheniiu upolnomochennykh obshchestva krest'ian der. Luzhitsa, Gorodnitskoi volosti, Volynskoi gub. po predmetu o zakhvat pomeshchikam Semenom Gizhitskim ikh servitutnoi zemly.

123 *RGIA*,f. 1291, op. 64, d. 137. str. 1-2. Po prosheniiu upolnomochennykh obshchestva krest'ian s. Odai i der. Fedorovki, Timanovskoi volost, Podol'skoi gub., 23 July 1911.

124 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 704, spr. 298, ark. 1-9. Complaint to local hubernator from village community of Traktomirov about the local landowner, Countess Ekaterina Ignateeva, 30 October 1905.

125 *RGIA*, f. 1291, op. 65, d. 26, str. 1-19. Request of Kukurik village community to Ministry of Internal Affairs for access to pasture land. *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 705, spr. 27, ark. 28-34.

his lands. With no land on which to graze, the peasants' livestock soon began to perish. [126] The expanding sugar refineries put a strain on village resources. In a case in Kanivs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, the local sugar factory flooded a nearby pond and peasant fields.[127] In Ol'hopils'kyi povit, Podillia, the local sugar factory with the collusion of local officials used local peasant ponds as a dumping ground for its waste. The village water supply became polluted and the peasants and their animals began to fall ill.[128]

The obshchestvo was a vital focus for the articulation of peasant demands. This was especially true if community interests were threatened, either by the withdrawal of community-held rights or by the actions of an external group. The skhod was often characterised as serving the interests of a small minority within the village who could bring a degree of economic and social pressure to bear on their neighbours, and of course coercion and intimidation did exist in villages throughout the Empire.[129] However, concerted village action, directed towards the attainment or recognition of certain rights or privileges, benefited the community as a whole. Retention of vital resources benefited all, whether these were timber, rights to fish or collect food in the forest, water or hay.

The village community's defence of peasant rights was pursued through both illegal and legal means.[130] Examples of illegal activity included the grazing of cattle, the destruction of property, arson and the harassment of landlords, officials and estate workers.[131] Peasants often petitioned higher authorities, as we have seen, but their claims

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126 *RGIA*, f. 1291, op. 35, d. 29. str. 3-6. Representatives from Urla village community petitioning for rights to pasture cattle in the forest of the landowner, Griparii.

127 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 710, spr. 387, ark. 2.

128 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 626, spr. 393, ark. 2-29. Complaint by peasant representatives of Chechel'nik village community, Ol'hopil's'kyi povit, 26 October 1896.

129 See for example *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 703, spr. 320, ark. 62. It should be noted however that these views were largely held by outsiders. In this case a hubernia meeting (*soveshchanie*) comprising landowners and officials discussed the faults in peasant government.

130 Such terms as 'spontaneous' or 'elemental' are typically used to describe the peasant movement at various points but particularly during the revolution.

131 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 703, spr. 246, ark. 10. Peasants from village of Zozulinets complaining about activities of local landowner, Anna Chervonnaia, Kyiv hubernia, 5 August 1904.

were rarely accepted.[132] Instead peasants were repeatedly advised that 'any conflict over the right of ownership [of land] is subject to the rule of the courts and not of administrative power'.[133] Peasants rarely turned to the courts which reflects their lack of faith in the judicial process and the high costs involved. The court system was bureaucratic, slow, and expensive. Furthermore, conflicts over servitudes were more than squabbles over land. They revealed the clash of two concepts of law: the peasants' and the state's. It is not surprising that in the majority of cases the decisions seemed to favour the landowners. Peasants lacked the necessary understanding of the courts' processes and without this knowledge, found it difficult to challenge the landowners. This undoubtedly contributed to growing peasant disillusionment.[134]

One historian has written that disputes over the loss of peasant rights were a fundamental factor in the disorders of the early 1860s. Implicit in this argument is the idea that disputes over such traditional matters became less common as peasants protested more about the conditions they faced in the sugar industry.[135] However, such conflicts continued right up to the revolution of 1917. The instances cited above are typical of numerous cases which make clear the connection between peasant protests against losing their traditional rights to resources and the volatility of the peasant movement.

It has been a common assumption that 'the remnants of feudalism and the traditions of the peasant communal system were less in evidence' in the Right Bank.[136] However, traditional practices such as servitudes remained vital to the peasant economy. The modernisation of agricultural estates threatened these widely used traditions and put increasing pressure on peasant households in the early twentieth century. Village

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132 The formulaic answer of the MVD was that it could not give any kind of ruling on the matter: '*ne mozhet posledovat nikakoe rasporiazhenie*'.
133 *RGIA*, f. 1291, op. 35, d. 29, str. 4.
134 See for example *RGIA*, f. 1291, op. 64, d. 424, str. 4. Po prosheniiu pri sel Sukhoi Voli, Liakhovetskoi volosti, Ivana Rozovskogo i drug., Volyn hubernia, 11 June 1913. Peasants failed to produce the necessary documents in court despite repeated requests.
135 Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants*, p. 82.
136 Figes, *Peasant Russia*, p. 17.

communities in Right-Bank Ukraine supported members' claims to land. Such resources were for the use of the whole community rather than individuals. The obshchestvo organised itself to protect peasant rights and employed a wide range of strategies to achieve its aims. The difficulty in doing so, when faced with the unsympathetic attitudes of the courts and government, undoubtedly influenced peasant behaviour during the revolution.

Many of the features of peasant life in the Right Bank would have been familiar to peasants throughout the Russian Empire. Peasant behaviour and the structure of village administration in various regions did not differ radically. There was little to distinguish peasant protest over servitude rights or against landowners in the Right Bank and peasant efforts to defend resources witnessed in Central Russia.[137] In both areas peasants 'generally acted as a community and in the name of the community'.[138] Perhaps the surprising thing is that peasant culture was so similar. Contemporary observers and historians have often commented on the exclusive and particular nature of the Ukrainian peasant.[139] However, a community mentality remained strong in the Right Bank. It was responsible to some extent for defining the peasants' sense of identity and what belonged to them.

There were a number of factors influencing peasant society in the Right Bank which had either left their mark or were to have a bearing on the future course of agrarian relations in the region. Legal statutes different from those found in Central Russia governed the peasants' lives. There were different state institutions to implement government policy. There was a greater concentration of non-Ukrainian groups (including Poles, Jews, and Germans) in the Right Bank than was the case in central regions of the Empire. Systems of

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137 See Barbara Alpern Engel, 'Women, Men, and the Languages of Peasant Resistance', in *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late-Imperial Russia*, ed by Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg, Princeton, New Jersey, 1994, pp. 34-53. Engel discusses the role of women and men in defending peasant rights to resources in a number of cases in the late nineteenth century in various Russian provinces.

138 *ibid.*, p. 44.

139 An example of contemporary views of the Ukrainian peasant can be found in *Der Freide*, January 10, 1919. An unknown author commenting on Ukrainian political problems writes, 'the peasant of Russia was without exception always a serf and only a tenant on soil, belonging to the landed proprietors, which he had never called his own since it was everywhere common property of the parish (*obschtschina*): the Ukrainian, on the other hand, knew also private property of peasants farms and as regards political economy, is still now attached to the right of disposal of his private property'.

landholding differed from Central Russia where the repartitional commune held sway. Peasants maintained historical rights to land under servitudes which dated back several centuries in some cases. The small inefficient peasant plots contrasted with the huge estates of the landowners many of whom had transformed their estates to produce sugar beet or other cash crops. Peasants were increasingly subject to the demands of the burgeoning sugar industry in terms of labour and also resources.

The unsuccessful efforts of the Tsarist government to set Russian Imperial society on a war footing accelerated the processes of social change which in turn acted as the catalyst for revolution. Many peasants had benefited from the war economy and even as late as October 1916 reports from around the region considered the peasant mood to be quiet.[140] However, there remained a lingering sense of unease in the countryside which increased when the front lines moved inexorably eastwards, the number of deserters passing through Ukrainian villages began to grow, inflation climbed faster than wages and peasant demands for information were met with silence by the government.[141]

Militia reports during 1916 noted that the repossession of the property of German colonists had whetted the appetite of peasants for land.[142] There were small-scale peasant demonstrations during the year against landowners and sugar refineries for higher wages and better conditions.[143] An official in Cherkas'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, reported that peasant demands in 1916 'risked leaving fields unsown and untended and in such conditions calm and order cannot be maintained'.[144]

One of the main peasant complaints was that they were not given enough assistance by the povit zemstvo and government in terms of prisoners of war to work the fields. The impression persisted that landowners and government were lining their pockets at the

140 *TsDIA*, f. 274, op. 4, spr. 548, ark. 84, 309. Records of Kyiv hubernia gendarme reporting on peasant mood in 1916.
141 *ibid.*, ark. 43, 61, 70, 143, 144, 279, 296, 365, 373.
142 *ibid.*, ark. 43, 143.

peasants' expense.[145] These pressures of 1916 exacerbated existing social and economic tensions in Right-Bank Ukraine and help explain how events in far-off Petrograd in February 1917 had such an influence in the region.[146] The militia official in Cherkas'kyi noted in February 1916 that 'the peasant population settle the land question themselves. They are hostile towards the landowners, blaming them for their lack of land and are unhappy with the government'.[147] Some peasants were even reported as stating that 'the land must be taken from the landowners and given to the peasants'.[148] This prophetic statement reflected social and economic changes precipitated by war throughout the Russian Empire.[149]

The disturbances witnessed in the period before 1914 were proof that there was a large reservoir of social and economic discontent amongst peasants not just in the Right Bank but throughout the Empire. However, modern warfare ultimately proved the catalyst which exacerbated the existing divisions in Imperial society. This set the scene for an even more explosive expression of peasant demands when the special characteristics of the Right Bank influenced the course of the agrarian revolution there.

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143 In June 1916, 200 peasants staged a demonstration at Steblevs'kyi sugar refinery, Kyiv, for higher wages. *ibid.*, ark. 210.
144 *ibid.*, ark. 44.
145 *ibid.*, ark. 279, 373.
146 Petrograd was the Russian name given to St Petersburg in 1914.
147 *ibid.*, ark. 43.
148 *ibid.*, ark. 43.
149 See Dorothy Atkinson, *End of the Russian Land Commune 1905-1930*, Stanford, California, 1983, pp. 118-19. Atkinson describes the economic difficulties of 1914-16.

THE AGRARIAN REVOLUTION IN RIGHT-BANK UKRAINE, MARCH 1917 - JANUARY 1918

Peasants largely greeted the fall of the Tsarist government in February 1917 with joy. Congratulatory telegrams came flooding into the Provisional Government in Petrograd from all over the Empire, including Right-Bank Ukraine.[1] However, it soon became clear that the concepts that peasants on one hand and politicians on the other believed should provide the foundation of the new state differed radically. This initial period of revolution was marked by the clash of these two opposing ideas. The Provisional Government failed to construct a new liberal democratic state which could continue the war against Germany and create an acceptable new social order. The Ukrainian Central Rada, which asserted Ukrainian autonomy in the latter part of 1917, fared little better. Peasants initially welcomed both governments[2] but disillusionment grew when politics struggled to keep pace with developments in the village itself. The peasant view of society prevailed, albeit temporarily, and traditional village organisations played a fundamental role in achieving peasant aims.

One historian commented recently on developments in the villages of the Volga region of Russia that 'the most important organisational aspect of the peasant movement was the role of the commune'.[3] This institution exerted a large degree of influence over peasant economic, political and social affairs by maintaining its control over the land. Peasants viewed it as the 'obvious means' to redefine their relationship to the world around them.[4]

Social and economic conditions in Right-Bank Ukraine before 1917 and the region's political experiences during that year differed from those found elsewhere in Russia. If the community was indeed weaker and less well organised in this region, it might be supposed

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1 Petrograd was the Russian name given to St Petersburg in 1914.

2 See for example the telegram from the skhod of Radivets village, 29 May 1917; 'We, the peasants of the village of Radivets, Podillia hubernia, welcome the Ukrainian Central Rada'. The resolution went on to declare the peasants' support for an Ukrainian autonomy within a federal Russia. *TsDAVO*, f. 1115, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 20.

3 Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*, p. 50.

that peasants were slow to become involved in 'revolutionary' activity and that the progress of the agrarian movement here was slower and less intense. This does not seem to have been the case. Recent works have tentatively suggested that traditional village institutions in Ukraine grew stronger as a result of the revolution, although it remains an understudied question.[5]

In response to the euphoria and optimism of February, villages in the Right Bank began to form peasant committees. They were created at the peasants' own initiative, in advance of directive from higher authorities. A peasant gathering in the village of Novye Petrovtsy, Kyiv hubernia on 3 April decided 'to elect a village committee to which all powers over the peasants should pass', to replace the traditional starosta and maintain order in the village.[6] Such resolutions suggest a spontaneous grass-roots movement towards self-organisation.

The faults in the local rural administration before 1917 made existing structures unsuitable as the foundation for effective government. Villages lacked organisations which could wield strong executive power on behalf of a higher authority.[7] The Provisional Government was slow to address the problem. The zemstvo, having proved its worth during the war, became the basis of local administration. Commissars were appointed through the zemstvo to take charge at hubernia and povit level. These measures soon proved inadequate, however.[8]

A Provisional Government decree of 11 April 1917 tried to temper growing agrarian unrest by calling for the formation of land committees in the localities to oversee agrarian

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4 See Figes discussion on the commune's role in the villages of the Volga region, *Peasant Russia, Civil War,* pp. 50-61.

5 See Channon, 'Peasantry in the Revolutions of 1917', p. 109.

6 *TsDAVO,* f. 1115, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 1. Postanova sil'skogo skhoda s. Novykh Petrovets. Roku Bozhogo 1917, misiatsia aprilia (kvitnia) 3 dnia. The skhod also declares itself in support of the Provisional Government and a federal Russia.

7 Victor Ianovsky, 'Z istorii mistsevoho upravlinnia na seli', *Zbirnik sotsial'no-ekonomichnoho viddilu No 17: Pratsi komiisii dlia vyuchuvannia zvichaevoho prava Ukrainy,* vyp. 3. Kyiv, 1928. p. 99.

8 Grigorii Alekseevich Gerasimenko, *Narod i vlast 1917,* Moskva, 1995, pp. 50, 51 & 53. The commissars appointed were often the old officials with new titles. The extent of their power and authority was ill-defined which led to charges of abuse of office or inactivity.

matters and arbitrate in any land disputes until a Constituent Assembly could meet to lay down guiding principles for the resolution of the land question. However, the decree's call that no land remain unsown appeared to justify peasant seizures of landlord estates in May and June and increased village organisation.[9]

In the early months of 1917, there was a degree of cooperation between the various levels which constituted the rural administration. This was demonstrated by the First All-Ukrainian Peasant Congress held in Kyiv between 28 May and 2 June. Around 2,200 delegates from throughout Ukraine attended, reflecting the cooperative spirit which the revolution had engendered. Representatives were sent from peasant unions in each volost, povit and hubernia or from volost skhody where no union had yet been organised. Resolutions adopted by the congress were reasonably moderate. Unauthorised or violent seizures of land were not to be condoned. The Central Rada, which had sponsored the congress, wished to prevent a disorganised and chaotic transfer of land to peasants.[10]

Despite the apparent consensus presented by the congress, signs of a disparity between the higher levels of administration and local organs in villages and volosts were already beginning to manifest themselves. This gulf deepened as the revolution progressed. Hubernia and povit level land committees often contained zemstvo members, government officials and other non-peasant groups. However, village and volost committees were elected by the peasants themselves and were therefore more representative of wider peasant feeling.[11] Many of these committees were organised spontaneously and higher authority presided weakly over local political structures.

Local institutions set up after February lacked guidelines on the nature of their powers and responsibilities. There was little supervision of their activities and peasant committees assumed a high degree of executive power. The actions of these committees

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9 Rubach, 'Agrarnaia revoliutsiia', I, p. 26.
10 I. V. Khmil, *Pershyi vseukrains'kyi selians'kyi z'izd (28 travnia- 2 chervnia 1917r),* Kyiv, 1992, pp. 1-13. Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 25.

often contradicted government policy but their authority was not questioned by the vast majority in the village. Peasants used these committees as a 'means of "legally" justifying their attacks on the landlords'.[12] These committees derived their rights to gentry land from the traditional beliefs of the peasants, often linked to customary law and from the claims advanced by the community before the revolution, offering evidence of a thread of continuity between old and new.

Bringing arable land and other resources near the village under peasant control became the main concern of village and volost committees in 1917. This process can truly be considered an agrarian revolution.[13] It began with peasants asserting claims to land or preventing other non-peasant groups from using it and ended with the often violent outright seizure and distribution of agricultural resources.[14]

The behaviour of peasant committees in the Right Bank was similar to their Russian counterparts. The seizure of arable land played a fundamental role in both Russia and Ukraine. Soviet historians have argued that this was a peasant response to Bolshevik agitation. They argued that Lenin's Decree on land, issued in October, gave peasants the necessary justification to finally seize and distribute the land.[15] Undoubtedly some villages used Lenin's decree to legitimise their actions. A female landowner writing to the Podillia hubernia commissar in November 1917 reported that members of the local village committee with the support of soldiers from a regiment quartered nearby had begun taking an inventory of her estate's property. When the landowner asked on what grounds her property was being taken, 'one of the committee members showed [her] some kind of proclamation by

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11 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 25.
12 *Istoriia selianstva,* vol. II, p. 17.
13 See Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', pp. 8-17. E. K. Zhivolup, 'Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie na Ukraine v 1917 godu', *Uchenye zapiski Kharkivskogo universiteta: Trudy kafedry istorii KPSS*, 6, 1957, 255-271. A. M. Zaval'niuk, 'Selians'kyi rukh na Pravoberezhnoi Ukrainy v period provedennia Velikoi zhovtnevoi sotsialistichnoi revoliutsii ta vstanovlennia radians'koi vlady, zhovten'1917-sichen' 1918', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 7, 1979, 102-8. The first two authors consider events from a Ukrainian perspective whilst the latter concentrates on the Right Bank in particular.
14 Rubach, 'Agrarnaia Revoliutsiia', I, pp. 20-21.
15 See, for example, I. V. Khmil', 'Borot'ba selian Ukrainy za zdiysnennia dekretu pro zemliu (zhovten-hruden 1917)', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 122, 1971, 5, 46-53.

the Bolsheviks'.[16] Another landowner writes of the local peasant committee being 'guided by the decree of Ulianov Lenin'.[17]

The decree on land might have offered proof that there would be no return to the old order but other factors were just as influential. There was no real correlation between Bolshevik activity and peasant land seizures. Peasants were just as likely to cite the proclamations of the Central Rada as justification for their actions despite Soviet criticism of the Rada's policies as 'bourgeois'. A representative of the 'landowners of Podillia' noted that the 'local village population, led by their village committees, destroyed and plundered landowners' property long before the appearance of the Bolsheviks and on a much greater scale than that carried out by the Bolsheviks'.[18]

More important than Bolshevik agitation in the growth of the agrarian movement was the almost total paralysis and weakness of the representatives of central power in the localities. The Kyiv hubernia commissar admitted that 'hubernia authorities are powerless in the struggle [with agrarian disorders] as a result of the insufficient numbers and non-cooperation of the militia'.[19] The army had intervened decisively to restore order on several occasions before, most notably during the disturbances of 1905-7. However, this was not the case in 1917. A report to the Podillia commissar on 21 October related how regular troops had refused to fulfil an order to attack peasants in the village of Zvonitsa who had been involved in 'agrarian disorders' on the estate of a local landowner. A Cossack detachment intervened but their brutal tactics only succeeded in rousing the local population against the authorities.[20]

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16 *TsDAVO,* f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 130. Complaint about peasants of Bokievka village from N. P. Zheromska to Podillia hubernia commissar, 15 November 1917.

17 *ibid.*, ark. 81. Letter to Podillia hubernia commissar from N. P. Zheromskaia about events in village of Bokievka, 4 November 1917

18 *TsDAVO,* f. 628, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 125. Letter to Podillia hubernia commissar dated 27 February 1918.

19 *Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Kyivskoi Oblasty* (Hereafter *DAKO*), f. R-2796, op. 1, spr. 6, ark. 15. In letter to General Secretary of Internal Affairs of the Rada.

20 *TsDAVO,* f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 41, ark. 121-122. Head of military militia in letter to Podillia hubernia commissar, 21 October 1917.

In many instances soldiers participated in or even led revolutionary activity and were considered highly politically motivated. This was especially true in Right-Bank Ukraine where the South-West Front and the battle lines were not too distant. The chief of Lityns'kyi povit militia reported to the local procurator that the upsurge in violent incidents at the end of September had coincided with the arrival of the 2nd Guards corps in the area under his authority.[21] In particular, 'the 2nd and 4th Rifle regiments, with the mass participation of the local peasants, had destroyed property and carried out thefts and arson'. Troops sent from Vinnytsia to quell the disturbances ended up joining the movement.[22] Cases of joint attacks by soldiers and peasants or the destruction of property became increasingly common after September, particularly where alcohol was involved. Distilleries were a particular target and such attacks were often accompanied by violence.[23] With such an example being set by the army, it is not difficult to understand why peasant action in these months was so intense and far-reaching. The prospect of punitive expeditions into the village seemed unlikely.

Peasant action began in March. Prisoners of war who were drafted onto the land to make up the shortfall in labour caused by the war effort began to be chased from the fields. (The low cost of this labour meant that they kept peasant wages down). Agricultural machinery, which was increasingly found on the large estates and also reduced the need for peasant labour, was sabotaged. A report to the Kyiv hubernia commissar on 21 June 1917 noted that 'in many volosts of Vasil'kivs'kyi povit, volost and village skhods and committees have issued declarations to the renters of property or the management of estates stating that

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21 The procurator was an official of the Vinnyts'kyi District Court.
22 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7068, ark. 2. 10 October 1917.
23 Cases of attacks on distilleries noted in *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 46, ark. 155; spr. 49, ark. 142. *TsDIA*, f. 317, op. 1, spr. 6050, ark. 2-3; f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7068, ark. 1-2; f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7124, ark. 2.

the use of machinery to harvest grain will not be allowed. Machines will be broken if used'.[24]

Initially peasants attempted to improve the terms and conditions under which they worked on gentry land. They demanded increased wages and a restriction on working hours.[25] The impetus for changing these conditions clearly came from grass-roots level and higher bodies struggled to regulate their activities. A letter to the Berdychivs'kii povit commissar from the Kyiv hubernia commissar stated that 'only hubernia and povit food supply committees may intervene in the private economy. They decide the rates for agricultural labourers and the peasant share of the crop. Samhorods'kyi volost committee does not have the right to issue such decrees'.[26] Peasant demands had particular relevance for the sugar industry where a large proportion of those who worked as labourers found employment.

Peasants also attempted to renegotiate land rents and leasing agreements in their favour or bring unsown land under their control. This was a common phenomenon throughout Russia. The decree allowing committees to take control of vacant lands had been intended to resolve the food supply problem caused by the war effort. Peasants 'cloaked their desires for land seizures with expressions of concern for state welfare and necessity' and strove to find legitimacy for their actions.[27] In a case in Luchans'ka volost, a local soviet decided that land not sown by 25 April would be offered to poor peasants for rent at 5 rubles per desiatina. Peasants sowed some 100 desiatins before the landlord complained that he had earmarked the land for growing beet and the peasants' seizure of the land before he

24 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 26, ark. 17. The report was written jointly by the Council of Bilotserkivs'kyi Agricultural society, the board of the Union of Renters of Property and the main administration of the estate of Count Branitsky, 21 June 1917.
25 Cases noted in *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 42, ark. 87; spr. 46, ark. 45; spr. 47, ark. 64, 67, 80.
26 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 23, ark. 24. Letter dated 26 June 1917.
27 Perrie, 'Peasants', p. 21.

had been able to sow himself had caused personal losses of some 6,750 rubles. The chairman of the soviet was later arrested for encouraging peasant action.[28]

Peasants on the Kostanovskoe estate tried to renegotiate the rent prices with the local landowner in July 1917. Instead of paying between 30 and 45 rubles per desiatina (depending on season), they offered 5 rubles. The landlord required at least 18 rubles just to break even. When the landowner refused to agree to their demands, peasants seized the land including that rented by a neighbouring sugar factory.[29]

An intense battle for the grain harvest between the authorities and the peasants continued throughout Russia during the summer of 1917. Peasants had traditionally received a tenth or twelfth share of the harvest for their work under share-cropping agreements. Now they demanded a third.[30] In June and July the call for a third share of the harvest almost became a peasant slogan.[31] That peasants did not demand the entire harvest was an indication of how far peasants felt they could enforce their demands at this stage and was also symbolic of traditional peasant beliefs. A peasant congress in Kam'ianets'kyi povit on 29 June divided the harvest three ways with the peasants, army and landlord each receiving a third. Such action struck a chord with peasant notions of right and justice and was considered a fair distribution.[32]

Peasants in the village of Berezna, Skvirs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, gathered the harvest and kept a third share despite the protests of the landlord.[33] A large degree of consensus was required for such action to ensure that no group within the village tried to collect the harvest for less than a third share thus undercutting their fellow villagers.

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28 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7138, ark. 1. Case relating to seizure of land in Odessa court chambers, April 1917.
29 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 31, ark. 39. Declaration of landowner, S. N. Isakov, of Kostanovskoe estate to hubernia commissar, July 1917.
30 Perrie, 'Peasants', p. 25.
31 Rubach, 'Agrarnaia revoliutsiia', I, p. 29.
32 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7128, ark. 3. Report to head of Kam'ianets'kyi povit militia from head of local militia, 4 October 1917.
33 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 42. Dated 7 July 1917. Telegram to Kyiv hubernia commissar, 7 July 1917.

Peasants were also in a powerful negotiating position, for without their labour the harvest would simply not be gathered.[34]

Coupled with the struggle for the harvest, there were numerous attempts by peasants to assert control over mills where they could turn grain into flour.[35] Action continued throughout autumn and into winter. In Proianovs'ka volost, Volyn, for example, the volost land committee seized a local mill on 20 December, despite warnings from higher authorities not to do so.[36]

Peasant demands multiplied in number and scale during 1917. This constant upping of the stakes by the peasants was linked to the inability of the authorities to protect landowners from attack. The agrarian movement began with traditional forms of action.[37] When it became clear that the authorities were vulnerable, direct forms of action become more common. Peasants were influenced by the growing political extremism evident during 1917 which proposed ever more radical solutions to the agrarian question.

In some cases there were seizures of land which did not offer any justification other than peasant need. A resolution from a peasant committee was sufficient authorisation. This type of action increased at the end of 1917. In August 1917, the Procurator of Kyiv District Court wrote about a case in Uzin village, Vasil'kivs'kyi povit, where peasants had seized over 700 desiatins of land. A village committee had drawn up the decree to seize the land which was rented by a sugar factory. Peasants then divided the land into plots for use by villagers who desperately needed arable land.[38] The community carrying out this action clearly commanded the respect of the peasants.

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34 Similar instances of peasant action noted in *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 43, ark. 43; spr. 47, ark. 64; spr. 55, 74, 86, 179.
35 Attacks on mills noted in *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 51, ark. 90-91; spr. 54, ark. 60; f. 628, op. 1, spr. 6, ark. 136; f. 2520, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 21.
36 *TsDAVO*, f. 1598, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 1. To Proianivs'ka volost narodna uprava from A. B. Myskov, December 1917.
37 A. Irgizov, 'Selians'kyi rukh na Kyivshchini', *Litopis revoliutsii*, 4, 1931, 49, 5-29 (p. 6).
38 *TsDIA*, f. 317, op. 1, spr. 6030, ark. 1. Letter to procurator of Kyiv court chambers from procurator of Kyiv okrug court dated 3 August 1917.

Some historians have questioned the apparent trend towards radicalism and violence in peasant action at the end of 1917.[39] However, evidence bears out the impression that events were indeed characterised by extremism and force. Using archival material, A. M. Zaval'niuk calculated that between March 1917 and January 1918 there were 3,728 recorded disturbances in the Right Bank.[40] Of this figure, the seizure of gentry property constituted the most serious form of disturbance (1,287 instances recorded). Violent disturbances including seizures and destruction of property, whilst relatively rare in the first months of revolution, began occurring on a widespread scale from late-September and continued into January 1918.[41] In 554 of the total number of disturbances, some form of peasant committee was identified as initiating or influencing the action.[42]

Around 60-80% of landlord property in Western areas of Podillia and Volyn was destroyed. Figures for Kyiv were smaller but still greater than was noted in Left-Bank Ukraine.[43] Over 90 properties in Podillia were ruined by peasant action.[44] Records from individual areas of the Right Bank back up the impression that the agrarian revolution was an intense phenomenon. A report from Kam'ianets'kyi povit covering the period from 19 July to 21 November listed over fifty gentry estates and sugar refineries which had been subject to attacks by peasants or soldiers. Every forest without exception had been timbered.[45]

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39 Perrie, 'Peasants', p. 14. Studying the general statistical surveys of the revolution, Perrie suggests that the high figures for violent incidents in Right-Bank Ukraine might be 'disproportionately high', perhaps as a result of mistakes in the collection of data or uneven geographical coverage of events leading to the drawing up of inaccurate information. Holubnychy's attempt to draw a comparison between events in Russia and Ukraine concluded that peasant seizures of land were more intense and far reaching in the latter. However his study was drawn from a very small cross sample of published documents which might not give a representative picture of events.

40 A. M. Zaval'niuk, *Krest'ianskoe agrarnoe dvizhenie na pravoberezhnoi Ukraine. Mart 1917-January 1918*, Avtoreferat, Kiev, 1980, p. 20. There were 907 disturbances in Volyn, 1025 in Kyiv and 1796 in Podillia. Zaval'niuk's figures were based on a thorough collation of reports about peasant action from archives in Ukraine and Russia.

41 See M.A. Rubach in *Istoriia selianstva*, vol. II. p. 21. Zaval'niuk, 'Krest'ianskoe agrarnoe dvizhenie', p. 14, 18.

42 Rubach in *Istoriia selianstva*, vol. II, p. 21.

43 M. A. Rubach. 'Selians'ki povstannia na Ukraini proty tymchasovoho uriadu i ukrains'koi tsentral'noi radu', in *Z istorii borot'by za vstanovlennia radians'koi vlady na Ukraini*, ed by O.K. Kasimenko. Kyiv, 1957. p. 157.

44 Zhivolup, 'Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie', p. 269.

45 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 44, ark. 330. Vidomist o maetkakh zruinovanykh ta hrabovanykh viis'kovymy chastinamy ta selianamy u Kam'ianets'komu povitu za chas vid dnia 19-ho do 21 lystopada buzhuchnoho 1917 roku.

The large degree of land hunger evident in peasant society before the revolution and the availability of the land of the large estates influenced peasant behaviour in the region. At the end of 1917, the Berdychivs'kyi povit commissar commented that:

> Peasants, considering themselves as the masters of all the land, have seized estates and all their property, are carrying out inventories, installing their own representatives, locking up the premises and expelling administrators from authority. Timber felling in the majority of cases is supervised by the peasants, in other instances the forest is under the control of the village community which levies its own taxes. The struggle against these outbreaks, which had been proving difficult enough, is now impossible because peasants believe their activities are quite legal and reckon that the property of the landlord is now the property of the people.[46]

Masses of peasants participated in or condoned such action. On 2 October, a gang of peasants stole grain and fodder intended for the army and torched a barn belonging to a renter of estate land in Lityns'kyi povit, Podillia. The local executive committee and the village militia 'were passive spectators of the fire and the theft'.[47] The head of Vinnyts'kyi povit militia wrote that 'on the 9th November, peasants of the village of Krivoshinets, men and women, adults, youths and children destroyed the house of the local landowner'.[48] In Shepievki village, 'all the peasants destroyed the house and outbuildings of the local landowner...and pillaged the property'.[49]

The proximity of the front lines also influenced peasant behaviour.[50] The actions of soldiers whether they were deserters or came from regular units stationed in the region did

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46 *DAKO*, f. R-2796, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 20. Report of Berdychivs'kyi povit commissar to hubernia commissar on situation in territory under his control, November 1917.
47 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7078, ark. 2. Telegram to procurator of Vinnyts'kyi okrug court from renter on Krupinskoe estate, Tereshpol's'ka volost, 5 October 1917.
48 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7108, ark. 1. Procurator of Vinnyts'kyi court chambers to procurator of Odessa court chambers reportin on telegram received from chief of local militia in village of Pikova, 18 November 1917.
49 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7111, ark. 1. Telegram to Kyiv okrug court, 13 November 1917.
50 Towards the end of 1917 the front lines of the South-West Front (Romania) had pushed into Western areas of Volyn and Podillia.

much to incite peasant action. There were also the effects of national events played out on a regional stage. The Kornilov movement was considered particularly severe in the Right Bank because of the forces Kornilov could mobilise in the region.[51] This in turn influenced the measures taken by peasants from September onwards. Many attacks were linked to revenge or retribution.[52]

Some types of activity, common in Russia, had little place in the peasant movement of the Right Bank. As already noted, the Stolypin reforms, for example, were of little relevance to Right-Bank Ukraine except in Umans'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia where communal tenure existed. The movement to force peasant separators back into the commune therefore had little place in the Right-Bank peasant movement of 1917 except in that area. Peasants coveted the large landowners' estates rather than the land of other peasants at this stage of the revolution. Only after other avenues of increasing the peasant land fund in an area had been exhausted did action begin against other peasants.

Certain types of peasant action had greater relevance to Right-Bank Ukraine than Central Russia. There were even disparities in the development of the peasant movement within the three provinces of the Right Bank. The high people to land ratio in Podillia intensified the struggle for land there.[53] Volyn suffered more from the German military advance than other regions. The greater importance of forest land to the peasant economy in Volyn intensified the conflict over this precious resource in particular.[54] The development of the agrarian movement in Kyiv hubernia was probably influenced by the presence of the executive power of the Central Rada in the centre of the region.

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51 Rubach, 'Agrarnaia revoliutsiia', p. 33.
52 *Istoriia selianstva*, vol. II, p. 21.
53 V. I. Kachinsky, *Ocherki agrarnoi revoliutsii na Ukraine: Uravnitel'nyi razdel zemli*, Kharkiv, 1922, pp. 28-29.
54 See for example *Zhurnal Volynskogo gubernskogo lesnogo s'ezda sostoiavshegosia s 8 po 13 iunia 1917 v g. Zhitomir*, Zhitomir, 1917, pp. 3-6. The congress notes the high number of conflicts between the local population and the forest administration and requests that measures be taken to explain concepts of ownership to peasants as well as introducing a string of concessions enabling peasants controlled use of forest resources.

Servitude lands were a particular target of peasant action. A resolution drawn up by a village committee in Strizhavka (Podillia) on 21 April 1917 referred to the conflict between the village and the neighbouring landowner, Count Hrokhol'sky. The peasants claimed that in 1910 Hrokhol'sky had curtailed their rights, legally held through the terms of redemption documents possessed by the village community. The peasants had turned to the courts but the latter refused to recognise their claims. In 1917, however, the village committee sought redress for Hrokhol'sky's actions. Therefore, an ad hoc peasant organ acted as the champion of the land rights of the old village community in the belief that the revolution would allow the favourable resolution of an old conflict. The declaration was signed by all committee members and stamped with the seal of the old village starosta emphasising the link between old traditions and new revolutionary rights.[55]

The illegal pasturing of livestock on gentry land was one of the most common forms of peasant action in the early months of 1917. Peasants believed they possessed legal rights to these lands which had often been the source of conflict in previous decades. Such pasturing was also another indication of where the particular needs and requirements of the peasant economy lay. Peasants in the village of Dubovaia (Podillia) had grazed cattle on a plot of pasture land totalling 100 desiatins for 75 years until this right was withdrawn in 1900 by the landowner, Hrokhols'ky, cited in the case above. The land remained in his possession until 1917 when peasants 'believed that they were allowed control of this plot of land once again as a consequence of the revolution'.[56]

The manager of the Branitsky estate, complained to the Kyiv commissar on 13 July 1917 that 'peasants from the village of Prus, following a resolution from their committee, have pastured their cattle and horses in the nearby forest plot from early spring.[...].and this

55 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 42, ark. 162. Declaration to the Vinnyts'kii Committee of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies from Strizhavs'kyi village committee, Vinnyts'kyi povit, 21 April 1917.
56 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 55, ark. 74. Vinnyts'kyi povit commissar to Podillia hubernia commissar, 3 August 1917.

disorderly pasture has continued up to the present moment with the result that the hay-land in the forest has been spoiled'.[57]

The use of forest land, an extremely valuable resource in the Right Bank, was linked to the question of pasture rights. Peasant claims to land stretched back as far as living memory went. Peasants in Kopencha, Kanivs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, resurrected claims to a neighbouring forest which the village had used up until 1861. The land had not been included in the redemption documents with the consequence that they lost their legal rights to it.[58]

Sometimes village communities denied non-peasant groups access to local resources and raw materials. Peasants argued that the Constituent Assembly would confirm their rights to forests and other lands when it eventually convened.[59] In the interim they were keen to prevent any further deterioration of the value of the property. Consequently peasant committees declared authority over neighbouring resources. A Kyiv povit land committee protocol (5 July) recorded a conflict between foresters and the local village over 60 desiatins of hay land (*senokos*) situated in the forest. In March 1917 peasants had voted in the skhod to prohibit any further access to the forest by the foresters.[60] In April, the peasant committees of Iakhnye and Terlievka, Kyiv hubernia, withdrew workers from the neighbouring state-owned forest and declared that no further timbering was to be allowed.[61]

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57 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 26, ark. 31. Letter from manager of Branitsky estate to Kyiv hubernia commissar, 13 July 1917.
58 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 33, ark. 59. Report to Kyiv hubernia commissar from Kanivs'kyi povit commissar, 6 July 1917.
59 Many peasant resolutions contain references to the Constituent Assembly but it is open to debate whether this was a true belief in the power of this body to resolve the land question in a manner which the peasants would accept or simply a strategy designed to prevent use of nearby resources in the short term.
60 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 32. 1917. Protocol of Kyiv povit commissar about illegal timber-felling, 5 July 1917.
61 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 33, ark. 3, 1917. Nachal'nik Kievskogo udel'nogo okruga gospodinu komissaru M. A. Sukovkinu, 19 April 1917.

Peasant use of the forests continued unabated despite the authorities' attempts to prevent it.[62] A resolution by 'inhabitants' (*zhiteli*) of the village of Popel'na on 27 August agreed '(i) to prohibit the felling and export of timber by forest industry speculators until the Constituent assembly; (ii) the food supply committee will take command of the forest so that it may be used in the future for the needs of state and people'. Further points stated that the food supply committee was not to hinder timber gathering in the forest by peasants and that any profits from the sale of timber had to go to food supply committee accounts.[63]

A newspaper report from Volyn on 21 May noted that 'the timbering of the forests in the hubernia has still not been stopped. The peasant population, having chased away the forest guards, are timbering the forest for their needs'. In Novohrad-Volyns'kyi, a landlord sent a telegram to the Volyn hubernia commissar complaining that peasant timbering of the forests had already cost him 100,000 rubles and asked for protection.[64] The voracious peasant demand for access to resources remained a problem which every government was forced to consider throughout the revolutionary period.

Peasants also began to impose restrictions on the sugar industry, in particular its use of resources such as forest land. The refining process which turned sugar beet into sugar required a lot of timber. Refineries possessed large quantities of land and resources and peasants proved intolerant of the high demands the industry placed on the surrounding environment.

Peasant action began with resolutions to deny sugar factories access to timber. Sugar refineries had attempted to prevent peasant use of the forests but it was the peasants who

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62 Often peasant use would be allocated to particular groups. See, for example, *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 32. The wives of soldiers were granted particular rights to collect timber which resulted in a complaint to the povit authorities from the forest owners.

63 *TsDAVO*, f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 15, ark. 66. 1917. Protocal of inhabitants of village of Popel'na, 27 August 1917.

64 Both cases cited in *Trudovaia Volyn'*, 48, 21 May 1917, quoted in *Velikaia oktiabr'skaia sotsialisticheskaia revoliutsiia na Ukraine fevral' 1917-aprel' 1918: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov v trekh tomakh*, 3 vols, Kiev, 1957. I, p. 417.

soon gained the upper hand in the struggle for resources.[65] In the village of Popel'ne, Skvirs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, peasants took the local forest under their control (*rasporiazhenie*) in April 1917. By late June the owners of the forest were complaining to the hubernia commissar that peasants 'had decided to divide the timber prepared by us for the sugar factory among themselves. The village committee has prevented the export of any timber or any further felling for nearly three months now'.[66] A telegram of 7 September warned the Kyiv hubernia commissar that a local sugar factory lacked sufficient timber to process the sugar-beet harvest because peasants had prevented collection of the requisite amount.[67]

Sugar production began to suffer as a direct result of such peasant action throughout the Right Bank. A communication from Vyssheol'chedaevs'kyi sugar factory (Podillia) on 1 September warned the hubernia commissar that 'local volost executive committees of Lityns'kyi povit are preventing the export of timber purchased by the factory which threatens it with closure and a shortfall in sugar necessary for the population'.[68]

Besides denying sugar refineries the raw materials they needed, peasants also made impossible demands for wages and conditions which prevented their normal operation. Resolutions limiting working hours and raising wages featured prominently in meetings of village committees and skhods in areas close to sugar refineries in the first months of the revolution. The manager of a sugar factory in Vintsentovs'ka volost, Vasil'kivs'kyi povit, complained to the Kyiv hubernia commissar on 13 May about the demands of local peasants for increased wages and better conditions. Sugar-beet cultivation on the estate was becoming 'absolutely impossible' because 'a cost of four rubles for men and three for women for an

65 *DAKO,* f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 31, ark. 8. A letter from the head of the central sugar purchasing bureau (*Tsentral'noe biuro po ob'edineniiu zakupok sakhara*), 8 May 1917, informed the Kyiv hubernia commissar that volost skhods and peasant committees should be informed that timber felling in sugar factory forests was illegal.
66 *DAKO,* f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 18. Petition dated 23 June 1917.
67 *DAKO,* f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 33, ark. 98. From Commissar at *Tsentsakhar*, the central office of sugar production.
68 *TsDAVO,* f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 46, ark. 121. The sugar factory requests that strenuous measures be taken to curtail this peasant activity.

almost six-hour working day, incurs such a colossal sum that it is not worth turning it [the beet crop] into sugar'.[69]

A telegram from the managers of a sugar factory, dated 3 June, complained that the 'Haisins'kyi committee has set wage levels for a nine-hour day on sugar plantations at three rubles fifty kopeks'.[70] Peasants in villages in Podillia and Kyiv threatened to seize the plantation if their demands, which raised costs over eight hundred per cent in comparison with the previous year, were not met. The managers, who blamed the activity on anti-Russian and anti-state agitation, could not pay such a figure.[71]

Peasants placed other restrictions on factories which prevented them working normally. In Berdychivs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, peasants from the villages of Vuina and Fridrov would not allow the sugar factory to hire workers from other villages, so that there would be more work for themselves. The cultivation of sugar was a labour intensive process which required a large amount of work in a short space of time and the peasants' action risked spoiling the harvest. However, to the peasants it was 'completely immaterial whether the sugar beet flourishes or perishes'.[72]

In the summer there were also instances of the seizure of the beet crops by peasants, the seizure of the land of sugar refineries, or raiding of the factories' stores for foodstuffs or equipment.[73] Personal attacks on the management of the sugar factories also took place. In Uzin village, the seizure of sugar factory land had led to the arrest of the volost committee officials. The factory managers were held responsible by the village for the intervention of the authorities. A huge crowd of peasants gathered at the factory, beat up the guards, arrested the director and others including the village priest, and held them hostage until their

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69 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 26, ark. 8. The manager of the sugar factory also enclosed a copy of the protocal from the village commission dated 9 May which had legitimised peasant seizures.
70 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 41, ark. 24. The manager also notes that the protocol of Haisins'kyi povit committee, dated 26 May, had been used to legitime land seizures by peasants in Kropivans'ka and Orlovets'ka volosts.
71 *ibid.*, ark. 24.
72 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 23, ark. 10. Protocol of Berdychivs'kyi povit executive committee, 23 May 1917.

colleagues were released. The local procurator was forced to agree to these terms to calm the peasants' anger.[74] In July, peasants from three villages attacked the director and manager of a sugar factory for their refusal to give the peasants grain. Only the intervention of Cossack forces saved the men from being tried by a mob court.[75]

From September hostility towards the sugar industry spilled over into violent seizures. The chief of Bratslavs'kyi povit militia reported on 27 October that 'at night in the village of Shpikov, a crowd of local peasants under the leadership of armed deserters and other soldiers, advanced on the local sugar factory and, with rifles in their hands, smashed open the cellars and stole the sugar'.[76] The ultimate fate of the sugar industry remained a vital question throughout the revolution.

Peasant action was influenced by local conditions. Peasant committees often acted on decrees from higher bodies or accepted hubernia or povit congress resolutions as the basis for policy at local level. In some villages and volosts, however, committees defined their own terms and conditions without consulting other authorities, which frequently led to misunderstandings and conflicts between the various administrative strata.

Besides the land committees (*zemel'nyi komitet*), peasants also formed land commissions (*komissia*), executive committees (*vykonodavchyi komitet*), village authorities (*uprava*), supervisory committees (*nahliadal'nyi komitet*) or occasionally village soviets (*sovet*).[77] There was little discernible difference between these organisations. Each supervised some aspect of village affairs or was an extension of existing traditional institutions. Committees were established at traditional village meetings through unanimous votes and were therefore considered representative of peasant opinion. Many villages

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73 See, for example, the report of peasant seizures in Volyn from *Pravda*, 11 May 1917. As quoted in *Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia*, 1, no. 406, p. 415.

74 *TsDIA*, f. 317, op. 1, spr. 6030, ark. 3-9. Procurator of Kyiv court chambers to procurator of Kyiv okrug court, 3 August 1917.

75 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 94. Quoted in letter to commander of South-West Front (Kornilov) from the chief of the military police (*Voennaia Militsiia*), 21 July 1917.

76 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 41, ark. 148. Letter to Podillia hubernia commissar from chief of militia of Bratslavs'kyi povit, 27 October 1917.

maintained the skhod as an executive organ in its own right with many of the same official posts, titles and procedures remaining intact. The same was also true of volost level organs.

Peasant unions (*Spil'ky*) were also found in the village. The All-Ukrainian Peasant Congress at the end of May advocated their formation in an attempt to broaden the social base of the Rada. They were to be organised at every administrative level and were viewed by political parties such as the Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (UPSR) as a model for rural government. Peasant unions appear to have been different from the committees formed by the peasants themselves, as the impetus for their organisation came from outwith the village. Peasant unions probably did not penetrate the village effectively. They were more influential at the level of 'mass politics' (hubernia and povit level) but there was no correlation between political activity and peasant action at grass roots level.[78] A Central Rada official visiting Mohiliv-Podil's'kyi povit in September 1917 reported that peasant unions in the villages were poorly organised and traditional volost meetings more often provided the forum for peasants to discuss national political questions.[79]

The first months of the revolution illustrated the importance of the volost level of administration to the peasants. Before 1917 the volost was the highest level of local government in which peasants directly participated and subsequent events provided a spur to peasant activists within volost boundaries. The level of political activity in the povit was usually dependent on the degree to which volost committees were organised and the extent to which they were willing to participate at a higher level.[80] For many peasants the volost continued to represent the boundaries of the world with which they were familiar. Village committees sent elected representatives to the volost executive to which they were subordinate. Many volost organs acted like governments of small independent states, such was their influence.

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[77] See Ianovsky, 'Z istorii mistsevoho upravlinnia', p. 104.
[78] Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', pp. 27-31.

Village and volost committees did not just supervise the all-important land question. They took responsibility for social and political as well as economic matters. The zemstvo and peasant union were quickly marginalised because village committees dealt with the responsibilities the former were established to assume. For example, a gathering of the Tereshpol's'ka volost skhod, Lityns'kyi povit, Podillia, on 8 July decreed that peasants should receive a third of the harvest, set rates of pay for labourers and the prices of grain as well as raising objections to certain members of the volost electoral committee because they did not enjoy the 'trust of the obshchestvo'. Members of the volost gathering and representatives of the village executive committees were present at the meeting.[81]

Throughout the revolution, the skhod remained the forum for discussion for the authorities as well as for the peasants themselves. Meetings were frequently called so that government officials or political representatives could explain policy or recent developments. However, the resolutions and actions of peasant committees formed during 1917 revealed significant changes in attitude. The composition of the traditional skhod changed.

The new committees encouraged wider participation in village decision making by all adult village residents rather than the male household heads who had traditionally presided before 1917.[82] For example, both male and female peasants participated in a gathering of the Salikha village skhod (Vasil'kivs'kyi povit, Kyiv) in April 1917.[83] Secret ballots began to replace the often chaotic open votes taken in skhod meetings.[84] In many of the decrees issued by village committees, peasants no longer referred to themselves as

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79 *TsDAVO*, f. 1115, op. 1, spr. 44, ark. 21. Local Rada official reporting on progress of organisation of peasant unions to organisation committee of Central Rada, 9 October 1917.
80 Ianovsky, 'Z istorii mistsevoho upravlinnia', p. 100.
81 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 46, ark. 45. Miting grazhdan raiona Tereshpol'skoi volosti Litinskogo uezda, 8 July 1917.
82 The age at which peasants could participate in village gatherings was often set at twenty, thus allowing members of the younger generation a degree of influence they had not enjoyed hitherto.
83 *TsDAVO*, f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 15, ark. 1. Protokol Salikhskogo sobraniia o vozbuzhdenii voprosov po povodu pas'by skota i otoplenii zhilykh pomeshchenii, 27 April 1917.
84 Ianovsky, 'Z istorii mistsevoho upravlinnia', p. 104.

krest'iane or *seliane* (Russian and Ukrainian for 'peasants') but as *grazhdane* or citizens.[85] Clearly 'citizen' implied greater right to be treated as a legitimate, entitled member of society and be accorded a due amount of respect than the much maligned image conjured up by 'peasant'. The terms chosen by the peasants for their village committees, as mentioned above, were also important in defining a more rational and efficient approach to administration which emphasised the break with the image of the often corrupt or ineffective system of the past.

During 1917, peasants could not act without the risk of government intervention and therefore sought legitimacy for their actions.[86] This was linked to traditional forms of peasant behaviour and was evident in 1917 in the numerous petitions sent to higher authority requesting land. However, it is also apparent that through their village level committees, peasants often created their own legitimacy, their own justification for their actions. This explains the mass votes taken in committees and skhods on proposals to seize land or undertake some other form of action which then took on the force of law. Peasants believed their resolutions bore as much if not more weight than those from higher government institutions.

It is possible that the peasants' search for legitimacy was an astute strategy to attain their goals whilst apparently remaining within the limits of state law. Provisional Government policy towards the peasants only increased the general legal confusion. Peasant committees in Right-Bank Ukraine assumed jurisdiction over many areas of peasant life which extended far beyond the ad hoc basis on which they were founded or the supervisory powers the traditional community exercised over the village's socio-economic and political life.

Peasant behaviour in Right-Bank Ukraine bore similarities to that observed in Russia. Decisions to confiscate land were usually taken by a vote in the village or volost

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85 See, for example, *TsDAVO,* f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 46, ark. 45. Without, of course, the negative connotations the

skhod after a proposal by a member of the land committee. The latter then implemented the resolution.[87] This act was an important part of asserting control over land, as such resolutions thus acquired legal status in the eyes of the peasants. As before 1917, resolutions in the skhod were nearly always unanimous, which conferred on peasant action a sense of unity of purpose and solidarity. This required a degree of peasant organisation and consensus which challenges traditional views of seizures occurring spontaneously or peasants awaiting government assent for their actions

Complaints from landlords or reports from local authorities viewed such action as peasant anarchy or disorder. For example, a report from the procurator of the Kyiv District Court refers to a case where 'agrarian disorders' had taken place on a landlord estate. A crowd of 500 peasants had appeared on the property and gathered hay from the meadow, collected wood from the forest and seized food from the gardens (*usad'ba*).[88] Whilst the landowners viewed such instances as anarchy, peasant action had a clear economic rationale and a degree of organisation was evident in the execution of their aims.

Many of the peasant resolutions drawn up by village committees or communities related to economic matters. The new committees carried on the claims of traditional pre-revolutionary institutions, conferring a degree of continuity between the two. A village soviet (*sel's'ka rada*) in Cherkas'kyi povit set prices for timber in the presence of two hundred 'souls' (*dushi*).[89] A similar decree from a skhod meeting of the sel'skoe obshchestvo in Moshen village also set prices for timber at the proposal of the volost head (*holova*).[90] Another resolution passed in December by a skhod in Olevs'ka volost called to discuss the use of the local forest made clear the link between the traditional skhod and the

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term assumed in later years in the Soviet state.

86 Perrie, 'Peasants', p. 21

87 Zaval'niuk, 'Selians'kyi rukh', p. 104.

88 *TsDIA*, f. 317, op. 1, spr. 6029, ark. 1. Procurator of Kyiv court chambers to procurator of Kyiv okrug court, 12 June 1917.

89 *TsDAVO*, f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 15, ark. 33. Declaration of Baibuzskaia sel'saia rada (village soviet) to Cherkass'kyi povit land department, 6 August 1917.

90 *ibid.*, ark. 45. Postanovlenie Moshens'koi sel's'koi hromady, 6 August 1917.

new committee when it referred to 'our community in the form of the land committee' (*nashe obshchestvo v litse zemel'nogo komiteta*).[91]

A petition from the village of Slobodishcha, Podillia, requested rights to run a nearby mill. It provides an interesting example of traditional forms and language being used to realise relatively revolutionary aims. A resolution (*prigovor*) of the skhod was issued still referring to the obshchestvo and its representatives (*upolnomochennye*), terms which were common in pre-revolutionary petitions.[92] A meeting of Timar village skhod in the presence of the chairman, associate and secretary decreed that land should go to the 'toilers' including landowners if they worked their own fields, thus reinforcing the impression that traditional bodies took on new practices and forms.[93] Many peasant resolutions had a deeper social or political agenda, of which improving material conditions was only a part. The revolution offered peasants the fruition of the long held aim for a transformation of village life so that peasants could gain control over their own affairs.

Village committees had no tax raising powers and were supposed to be funded by grants from the hubernia and povit bodies.[94] However, many committees utilised proceeds from rent agreements or from the sale of food or timber taken from landlord property to fund their operation.[95] In some cases taxes were illegally levied on landlords by village authorities. Villages assumed autonomy over their own expenditure. A protocol of the Salikha village assembly (*sel'skoe sobranie*) on 2 July increased the wages of the secretary from 210 to 360 rubles per year.[96] The extra money came from a private village fund with the full agreement of the village community. The same gathering also fined peasants who

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91 *ibid.*, ark. 242. Meeting of peasants of Olevs'ka volost, 23 December1917.
92 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 14, ark. 1. Dated 6 July 1917. Declaration of representaitves of Slobodishch, Haisins'kyi povit, Podillia, 6 July 1917.
93 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 9. Kisliaks'kaia volost, Haisins'kyi povit, Podillia. Dated 8 December 1917.
94 Ianovsky, 'Z istorii mistsevoho upravlinnia', p. 103
95 Perrie, 'Peasants', p. 22. See also *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 32. The profits from the sale of timber felled from a landowner's forest are put at the disposal of the village food-supply committee chairman.
96 *TsDAVO*, f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 15, ark. 2. Protocol of Salikhskoe village community, 2 July 1917. Note that the term *sekretar'* (secretary) is used rather than the traditional *pisar'* (writer).

had broken the village decree on use of the forests. This money went into the village accounts.[97]

One illuminating example of a village penalising a landowner is found in Skvirs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia.[98] He was fined 200 rubles by a village gathering after he had levelled insults at members of Vcheraishans'kyi food supply committee and the village authority (uprava) for their efforts to bring his unsown land into use.[99] The money was donated to the Red Cross. This village assembly had therefore voted to protect its representative members' integrity. The village community before 1917 had no such powers to censure an individual who did not belong to the peasant class.

Peasants were willing to go to great lengths to protect their representatives and the authority of their committees, as is shown by the violent protests in the village of Uzin after the volost committee chairman was arrested. Peasants in the volost forced the authorities to back down and release the chairman by threatening to mete out peasant justice to officials.[100]

Peasant committees often genuinely misinterpreted commands from higher authorities or were able to exploit the lack of clarity in government decrees to suit their own ends. Even at state level during 1917 there was heated debate between the Central Rada and the Provisional Government over executive power in Ukraine. This led to confusion in the villages. An example of higher decrees being misinterpreted is found in Kanivs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia. A resolution by the povit land committee on the collection of the harvest precipitated a host of unauthorised seizures and other actions by peasants.

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97 *ibid.*, ark. 2. It is interesting that the two peasants caught violating the forest decree of the village were fined two hundred rubles (a large sum to the average peasant) and bore the same surname as the village chairman recently released from his duties due to ill health.

98 *DAKO,* f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 34. From communication to Kyiv hubernia commissar from Skvirs'kyi povit commissar dated 8 July 1917.

99 *ibid.*, ark. 38, 40, 41. The vote to fine the landowner (with surname Pliam, no initials given) for his insults was unanimously taken by over three hundred peasants. The committee argued they had reached an agreement with the management of the estate about sowing the vacant land.

100 *DAKO,* f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 26, ark. 56. Report dated 9 September

Representatives of a local agricultural society wrote that 'thanks to the decree of the Kanivs'kyi land committee, members of peasant committees, accepting this as law (*zakon*), violated order in the villages of the povit'.[101] Included with their complaint was a copy of a protocol from a meeting of landowners, renters and estate managers held in Kaniv on 20 July. It declared that 'the peasants' refusal, on the basis of the resolution of the povit committee, to gather the harvest for payment has forced the landowners to pay in kind (*naturoi*), a quarter-share, in some cases a third or even a half of their entire crop. Several farmers have been forced to give written consent to these sharecropping agreements under threat from the peasants'.[102] A share of the grain harvest was considered of greater value by peasants than the money traditionally paid by landowners.

Higher committees were required to intervene in many instances to clarify the legal rights of village and government organisations. For example, the Ialtushkovs'kyi sugar factory management complained that the volost committee had raised workers' wages. The Podillia hubernia commissar advised that such resolutions by local committees were not binding.[103] There were also instances where peasants rejected outright any other authority in the village but their own. The militia appears to have been a particular target. The chief of the Kam'ianets'kyi povit militia reported that a volost skhod meeting in June 1917 called on peasants not to recognise any government or power or accept food supply committees or militias in the villages.[104] In July in Kam'ianets'kyi povit a crowd of peasants, primarily women, attacked the chief of the volost militia and chased him from the area.[105] Peasants in

101 *DAKO*, f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 33, ark. 75. Letter from representatives of Truzhenik agro-industrial society to Kyiv hubernia commissar about activities of Kanivs'kyi povit land committee, July 1917.
102 *ibid.*, ark. 78. Protokol sobraniia zemlevladetsev arendatorov i upravlaiushchikh imeniami, Kaniv, 20 July 1917
103 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 30. Communication via Mohilivs'kyi povit executive committee dated 18 May 1917.
104 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7139, ark. 2. Head of Kam'ianets'kyi povit militia in report to the head of Lantskoruns'ka volost militia
105 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 44, ark. 92. Podillia hubernia commissar to head of Kam'ianets'kyi povit militia, 6 July 1917

the village of Kamenka resolved in a meeting of the skhod to arrest members of the local militia and other officials.[106]

One of the areas where the traditional most clearly merged with the revolutionary was in the assumption of judicial powers by peasant villages. In 1917 peasant committees and village gatherings began to try peasants for civil crimes on the basis of traditional peasant customary law. In Kuiava village, Kam'ianets'kyi povit, the chief of the militia reported that peasants 'formed a village court themselves which has jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases'.[107] The peasants considered this court a legitimate organ created by a resolution from a local peasant congress held in late June.[108]

All practical legal power passed to the peasant committees.[109] *Samosud*, the spontaneous punishment of individuals adjudged by fellow villagers to have violated peasant customary law or other moral principle, was relatively common in the pre-revolutionary countryside although death was a relatively rare outcome of such treatment. The revolution radicalised these concepts of peasant law. Political culture spilled onto the streets and mob justice became commonplace.[110] An especial hatred was reserved for those crimes which hit at the peasant economy: horse theft, the theft of foodstuffs or seed stock and arson.

In the village of Nemirovka, a peasant was accused of stealing maize from another peasant.[111] A vote was taken by the village gathering sentencing the peasant to death. A document confirming this decision was drawn up and signed by all the members of the village executive committee. The punishment was immediately carried out in front of the gathering and the body buried outside the village.[112] On 1 November a village skhod

106 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 49, ark. 109. Dated 20 July 1917. From chief of militia in 5th division of Ol'hopil's'kyi povit to procurator of the Vinnyts'kyi okrug court.
107 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7128, ark. 2. Report form head of Kam'ianets'kyi povit militia.
108 *ibid.*, ark. 3.
109 Stepan Borisenok, 'Samosudy nad karnymy zlochyntsiami v 1917 rotsi', *Zbirnyk sotsial'no-ekonomichnoho viddilu*, pp. 228-231.
110 *ibid.*, pp. 228-231.
111 In Pasats'ka volost, Balts'kyi povit, Podillia.
112 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7223, ark. 1-4. From Procurator of Vinnyts'kyi okrug court to Odessa court chambers, dated 17 August 1917.

'carried out a samosud on local peasants.[...].on suspicion of carrying out thefts in the village of Klembovka and surrounding area, thus violating the decree of the obshchestvo for maintaining order in the village'.[113] Such incidents were a frequent occurrence during 1917 throughout the Right Bank.[114]

It is indeed ironic that peasants were killing their fellow villagers for petty theft or other crimes at a time when they were trying, often forcibly, to expropriate the property of the landlords. It says much for peasant conceptions of ownership that peasant property remained sacrosanct despite peasant defiance of the laws of the state which respected all forms of ownership. The peasant considered that those who worked the land owned its produce. This obviously excluded the landowner.

Wealthier peasants were often in a better position to exploit the landlord's estate and it is often argued that this group dominated the political life of the village in 1917.[115] Soviet historians in particular believed that 'kulaks' dominated events in the Ukrainian village.[116] However, evidence seems to suggest that whilst wealthier peasants often took the initiative on the committees and in gatherings, they only did so with the consent and support of the other peasants. The large numbers of soldiers who returned to the villages in late 1917, often bringing radical ideas and organisational ability with them, would not have tolerated moderate or conflicting views.[117] Peasants whose attitudes did not reflect the prevailing mood of the village or those who were linked with the old regime were quickly ousted.[118]

A protocol of Budnovka village executive committee, 26 April, voted to replace their representative on the povit executive committee because he had spoken out against giving

113 *TsDAVO,* f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 51, ark. 325. Iampils'kyi povit commissar to Podillia hubernia commissar, dated 5 November 1917.
114 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 41, ark. 69; spr. 43, ark. 369; spr. 49, ark. 44; spr. 55, ark. 82, 202; spr. 56, ark. 339. *TSDAVO*, f. 628, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 14, 145, 173; spr. 4, ark. 227. *DAKO*, f. R-2796, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 4, 19, 20: spr. 5, ark. 22. Borisenko, 'Samosud', p. 232. Borisenko details four cases of samosud but notes that it was a 'common occurrence'.
115 Perrie, 'Peasants', p. 30. Rubach in *Istoriia selianstva*, II, p. 16.
116 See Zavalniuk, 'Selians'kyi rukh', p. 104.
117 Channon, 'Peasantry', p. 122.

land to poor peasants.[119] A former volost secretary, serving on a volost commission in Kyiv hubernia, was the subject of another peasant petition which claimed he was 'for the old regime', had accepted bribes and held a large plot of land (some sixty desiatins).[120] A village gathering in Chernobyl's'ka volost, Kyiv hubernia, referred the problem of 'six individuals in our obshchestvo who refuse to obey the village authorities and do not recognise the new regime' to the soviet of soldiers' and peasants' deputies. The protocol was signed by eighty-six fellow villagers, an indication of the ostracism which faced those peasants who opposed social change.[121]

Teachers were largely respected because their literacy helped inform peasants of contemporary political developments.[122] Two teachers received land confiscated from the parish priest in July in Ol'hopil's'kyi povit as a result of a village committee decision.[123] Others, however, experienced an altogether different kind of treatment. In June, peasants in the village of Chebotarka, Podillia, attacked a Russian teacher who was forced to seek protection from the authorities.[124]

Priests were singled out for particular attention. A letter from the Podillia and Bratslavs'kyi povit bishop (*episkop*) on 31 May complained to the hubernia commissar that peasants had seized church keys from parish priests and prevented them from carrying out religious services. These priests were probably unpopular or had been associated with the old order. Demands for land held by churches were often at the root of conflict between

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118 Irgizov,'Selians'kyi rukh', p. 10. He notes that where village officials enjoyed support they remained the same.

119 *TsDAVO*, f. 1116, op. 1, spr. 17, ark. 14. Protocol of Budnovs'kyi village executive committee, 26 April 1917. He was reported to have said; 'Let everyone buy land as I did'. The vote to replace him was sanctioned by the whole village (*vsem skhodom*).

120 *TsDAVO*, f. 1115, op. 1, spr. 43. ark. 14. Declaration of peasants in village of Pribors'ka village, Pribors'ka volost, Radomyshl'skyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, 6 September 1917.

121 *TsDAVO*, f. 1060. op. 1, spr. 21, ark. 18. Dated 13 October 1917. Note use of term 'obshchestvo'.

122 William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921*, 2 vols., First Princeton papaerback edition, Princeton, 1987, II, p. 224. Several peasant *atamany* (bandit leaders) had originally been teachers. Teachers were prominent in the spilky. Irgizov, 'Selians'kyi rukh', p. 17.

123 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 49, ark. 41. Plea of priest E. Solchansky about the confiscation of church land, 16 July 1917.

124 *ibid.*, ark. 42. The document emphasises the fact that the teacher was Great-Russian. Report dated 25 June 1917.

priest and village. In April, a priest in Iaroslavka wrote to the Podillia hubernia commissar about illegal peasant felling of timber on his farmstead. Peasants justified their action by claiming 'now everything is permissible and "church" means community' (*obshchestvennoe* i.e. belonging to the people).[125] The priest had initially complained to the volost authorities who, he said, had refused to help because the volost committee consisted 'of the very same peasants' who were attacking his property.[126]

Minority groups were subject to action. Female landowners were a particular target perhaps because it was assumed they were less able to protect themselves.[127] The economic and social position of the Jewish population made them prime targets for peasant attacks and anti-Semitic sentiment was widespread. Village meetings were sometimes used to incite peasants to attack Jewish shops or evict Jews from the village by a decree of the local committee.[128]

Attempts by village and volost committees to assert control over foodstuffs and resources meant that fewer supplies were available to feed the swollen urban population already suffering from the effects of the war. The dangers posed by a disillusioned and hungry population were clear. The chairman of the Uman-Lipovets Agricultural Society warned in September 1917 that if the harvest remained in the village 'there would soon begin events in comparison with which the February Revolution and its aftermath would seem no more than a child's game'.[129]

Peasant action against distilleries, refining industries, agricultural stations and schools obviously affected the ability of the agricultural sector to support the needs of the people not just in 1917 but in the long term. A letter to the Central Rada warned that 'by

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125 *TsDAVO,* f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 45, ark. 65. Priest in village of Iaroslavki, Letichyvs'kyi povit to Podillia hubernia commissar.
126 *ibid.*, ark 65.
127 See for example *DAKO,* f. R-2796, op. 1, spr. 16, ark. 3. Report of pomoshchnik to Kyiv hubernia commissar, 20 October 1917. The estate of a female landowner in Kyiv hubernia in mourning over the death of her husband and son was subjected to peasant attacks.
128 See *TsDAVO,* f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 73, ark. 1. *TsDIA,* f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7055, ark. 1; spr. 7139, ark. 3.
129 *DAKO,* f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 41, ark. 91. Letter to Council of Ministers in Petrograd.

depriving it [the sugar industry] of timber, the army and people may find themselves without any sugar and in a difficult situation'.[130]

Peasant action in the forests had further consequences. The pasturing of cattle by peasants in young forests often destroyed the growing shoots and therefore damaged future stocks. Peasants also felled huge amounts of timber which were then sold for next to nothing. In several cases peasants prevented the collection of timber for the needs of the South-West railway (*Iuzhno-zapadnaia zheleznaia doroga*).[131] This hampered the operation of the railway which was vital to the lines of military communication and supply.[132]

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The activities of peasant committees and other village organisations, when viewed collectively on a national scale, had resounding ramifications for the region and for the Russian Empire itself. The authorities recognised the dangers posed by allowing too much autonomy at local level. Both the Provisional Government and General Kornilov attempted to rein in the powers of village bodies but their efforts arrested the peasant movement only temporarily.[133] Peasants simply refused to recognise the authority of decrees calling for the cessation of activity by local committees.[134]

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130 *TsDAVO,* f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 15, ark. 38. Letter from the chief of the Umans'kyi povit timber-material department.

131 See *TsDAVO,* f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 45, ark. 95. Copy of telegram from *Stavka* (Army command headquarters) to the Podillia hubernia commissar, 10 May 1917.

132 See for example *DAKO,* f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 9. Kyiv hubernia prodovol'stvennaia uprava, June 1917. In the village of Popel'ne peasants refused to allow the use of the neighbouring forest even if intended for the needs of the railway and the general war effort because they had no wish to see the private foresters accumulate a profit.

133 Borisenko, 'Samosud', p. 227. On 19 September the Provisional Government issued a 'Provisional decree on Guberniia and Povit Commissars' intended to place committees under stricter supervision. Rubach. 'Agrarnaia revoliutsiia', part II, pp. 31-34

134 See for example *DAKO,* f. 1716, op. 1, spr. 26, ark. 38. *TsDAVO,* f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 94. 'The compulsory order from the Commander of the South-West Front from 8 July, thanks to mass agitation in the rear, is viewed with mistrust'. From report of chief of military police to commissar linked to commander of South-West Front. Dated 21 July.

The Provisional Government and Central Rada tried to marginalise those institutions whose responsibilities overlapped those of the volost zemstva.[135] However the zemstvo was not popular in the Right Bank either before the revolution or during it. The same could be said of higher government offices introduced by the Provisional Government, as revealed by a comment from the Podillia hubernia commissar who stated that 'the power of the hubernia and povit commissars, as organs of government, is illusory'.[136] Hubernia commissars established by the Rada after the fall of the Provisional Government were not able to command any greater respect for authority. Political groups also failed to influence the peasant movement because too often they were forced to follow a political agenda already set by peasant action.[137] The numerous peasant committees became the most efficient and influential local institutions.

The community was vitally important in achieving peasant goals of an agrarian revolution even in Right-Bank Ukraine where such traditions were considered weaker than elsewhere. The differences between peasant and outsider were more pronounced and more important than any differences within the village itself. In this period the targets of peasant action were largely those who stood outside the traditional community. The impetus of revolution was more important and motivational than any potential conflict between peasants over resources.

The revolution in the countryside was organised and directed through community-wide institutions which operated with the trust and consensus of the vast majority of the rural population. Representative peasant committees, as extensions of traditional village bodies, helped direct peasant action and realise peasant aims.

The types of peasant action proposed and undertaken by these committees had a very definite economic, social or political rationale or were linked to traditional peasant notions of

135 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 47, ark. 228. From proposals included in Ministry of Internal Affairs circular dated 29 September 1917.
136 *ibid.*, pp. 227-8.

justice and right.[138] This rationale, however, was very much a peasant one which contradicted modern ideas of economic management or civil society. The destruction or misuse by peasants of estates, property or resources such as forests had their own particular justification or reasoning but this did not augur well for the viability of a new socio-economic order in the countryside. Many of the forms that peasant action took in 1917 were similar to those found throughout Central Russia. Peasant action in Right-Bank Ukraine was clearly a small part of a much wider trend which had huge implications for society and the peasant's place in it. However, many incidents witnessed in the region had particular resonance for the Right Bank which dictated emphases and imperatives different from those common in Central Russia. Peasant action against the sugar industry is just one example of the specific forms of the agrarian movement in the Right Bank.

Developments throughout 1917 appeared to offer the fulfilment of a long held peasant wish to gain control of land and resources. Peasants set about transforming their villages according to traditional beliefs and codes. By the end of this year peasants had seized virtually all non-peasant lands within the region. The attempt to keep this land and its harvest in peasant hands and to distribute it fairly among the members of rural society became the major issue in the Right Bank after 1917. However, in comparison with the turmoil of following years, 1917 would appear as the zenith of concerted peasant action and organisation. After this period peasant aspirations and prospects of a peasant-orientated land settlement rarely again appeared so attainable.

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137 Irgizov, 'Selians'kyi rukh na Kyivshchini', p. 27.

138 See for example Channon, 'Peasantry', pp. 123-5 about the reasoning behind peasant action.

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMMES OF POLITICAL POWERS IN UKRAINE DURING THE CIVIL WAR, 1918-1919

> Woe to that party, woe to that government which does not consider all the peculiarities of the country.
>
> M. G. Rafes at a meeting of the Kyiv Soviet of Workers' Deputies, 13 February 1919 in the presence of members of the second Soviet Ukrainian government. See Pavlo Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia: Zamitky i materialy do istorii Ukrains'koi revoliutsii 1917-1920*, 4 vols, New York, Vidavnytstva Chartorys'kykh, 1969, vol. IV, p. 172.

On 9 February 1918, the Central Rada fled Kyiv city as Soviet troops advanced from the east. Over the following three years the city changed hands no less than sixteen times as Ukraine became engulfed in a cycle of military and political conflict.[1] Political groups wished to gain control of Ukraine for its vast agricultural wealth and strategic importance. However, peasant attitudes towards these groups were often instrumental in deciding their fate.[2] Agrarian policy was therefore of vital concern to the various governments.

The revolutionary period was witness to heated debate over the future development of agriculture throughout the former Russian empire.[3] The peasant question was seen as one of the most pressing and strenuous efforts were made to encourage peasants to accept a variety of agrarian programmes. Peasants, however, often understood little of the abstract concepts used in propaganda or agricultural reform. Bombarded with information, they frequently

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1 W.Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War*, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo. 1989. p. 303.

2 Himka, 'The National and the Social', p. 98.

3 The first attempts to resolve the land question had of course been introduced by the Provisional Government during 1917. For material relating to their appraoch see H. Klunnyi, *V borot'bi za selianstvo: Zemel'ne zakonodavstvo kontr-revoliutsiinikh uraidiv za chas revoliutsii na Ukraini*, Kharkiv, 1926, pp. 7-17, 43-57.

responded, 'may the saints help me! Not all at once!'.[4] Many of the contributions to this debate were put forward by agrarian specialists who had specific knowledge of local conditions.[5] Others were advanced by those who had political motives that ignored economic conditions.[6] The debate over agriculture, which was split between economic and political solutions of the problem, set the tone for the policies of the various political forces.

The agrarian programmes formulated by political groups during the civil war existed more often on paper rather than in reality. Many were never properly implemented as a result of the inability of political groups to construct a viable popular regime, to bring effective coercive force to bear on the peasants or because they failed to elicit any support from socio-economic groups within the village. The peasant village did not exist within a political vacuum, however. This was particularly true of Right-Bank Ukraine. During the period 1918 to 1920, the Central Rada, Hetmanate, Directory and the Bolsheviks tried to build a state incorporating the strategically and symbolically important city of Kyiv. The Poles and the White forces of Denikin were similarly drawn towards Kyiv, turning Right-Bank Ukraine into a major battle ground of the civil war. The programmes of the various political forces in the Right Bank are important for defining the political and ideological background for peasant action.

(i) The Central Rada.

The Central Rada, which had played such an important political role in 1917, returned to Kyiv on 2 March 1918 as a result of an agreement signed with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk on 9 February. In exile Vsevolod Holubovych had replaced Hrushevsky as head of the

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4 I. P. Dmitriev, 'Neskol'ko slov k vyiasneniiu agarnoi problemy v sviazi s tekushchim momentom', *Khoziaistvo*, 21-22, 2 June 1917, pp. 219-221.

5 See, for example, M. Baier, *Zemel'na reforma i osnovi zemel'noi polityky na Ukraini*, Kyiv, 1917. Baier was a *mezhovii inzhenir* or land surveyor.

6 See, for example, A. Zaluzhnyi, *Ukrainskoe krest'ianstvo i sovetskaia vlast*, Kiev, 1920. Zaluzhnyi plays down the individual tenure and stresses the communal mentality of peasants in the Right Bank, basing his convictions on the existence of the Great Russian commune in Umans'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia.

Rada.[7] The policies of the resurrected Rada, however, referred back to the initial period of the revolution, most notably the Third and Fourth Universals (issued on the 7 November 1917 and 22 January 1918 respectively) and the terms of the Land Law of 18 January, 1918.[8]

Problems with Rada land policy had become evident during 1917. The Third Universal, for example, had been misinterpreted by peasants as justification for their seizures of land and the Rada was forced to intervene to clarify the position.[9] Drafting legislation for the Land Law proved a protracted and complex process. Initial proposals allowing farms of up to 40 desiatins were rejected, forcing the resignation of Borys Martos, the Rada's secretary for agriculture.[10] The moderate terms of the proposed Land Law had resulted from the need to placate the broad range of political views the Rada encompassed.[11] The revised version was no real improvement, as it did not take into account the peasants' own autonomous seizures of land which were beginning to occur on a significant scale.

The Land Law declared that 'all land is the property of the Ukrainian National Republic' and envisioned an ultimate settlement of the land question in which autonomous peasant organs such as the village hromada and the land committees would play a role in supervising the distribution of land.[12] The reality was, however, that these bodies were undertaking their own land reform on principles which directly contradicted those of the Rada.[13] In its final months of office the Rada struggled to ensure that its decisions penetrated down the administrative structure.[14] The Land Law was seen as only a temporary measure

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7 Holubovych, a member of the Ukrainian Party of Social Revolutionaries, became President of the Council of Ministers two weeks after the publicaiton of the Fourth Universal in January 1918.

8 Vytanovych, 'Agrarna polityka', p. 36.

9 *Ukrains'ka tsentral'na rada: Dokumenty i materialy*, 2 vols, Kyiv, 1996. (Vol. I, p. 449, 'Rozviazannia heneral'noho sekretariatu z zemel'noho pytannia vykladenoho v tret'omu universali', 16 November 1917). Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 43.

10 Vytanovych, 'Agrarna polityka', p. 34.

11 See Holubnychy, 'Agrarian Revolution 1917', pp. 31-44, for a discussion of the political programmes of the parties which comprised the Rada.

12 *Zbirnyk zakoniv, obizhnikh ta ynshykh razporiadzhen' po spravam zemel'nym v Ukrains'kii narodnii respublitsi*, 2nd ed, Kyiv, 1918. See pp. 17-20 for text of Rada Land Law.

13 Holubnychy, 'Agrarian Revolution', p. 42.

14 *Zbirnyk zakoniv*, See p. 10. A circular to all hubernia, povit and volost land committees, dated 19 December 1917, notes that 'several land committees, deviating from the legal and circular decisions of the General Secretariat

until the All-Ukrainian Constituent Assembly could convene to resolve the land question permanently. This patient evolutionary approach was an abstract concept to the majority of peasants who had already seized land. The simple pronouncements of the Bolsheviks, in comparison to the often lengthy declarations of the Rada, proved easier for the peasant population to grasp. Soldiers who might have proved the defenders of the Rada were often instrumental in encouraging peasants to seize the land themselves.[15] The Rada's agrarian plan did little to raise peasant support for the regime and the Bolshevik invasion prevented its introduction on a broad scale.[16]

These problems continued upon the Rada's return. It 'failed to restore the processes of local government', which made administration arbitrary and difficult.[17] The Land Law continued to have little bearing on the course of events. The Rada had done little to introduce the Land Law into the areas of Western Ukraine it held during the Soviet occupation.[18] Neither did it attempt to introduce it throughout Ukraine thereafter. In the Right Bank, many Polish landowners who had been subject to attack in previous months found sympathy and protection from Austro-German officers against further action by local peasants.[19] In some areas of Volyn and Podillia, German colonists who had been ousted from their lands during the war years returned to claim their property from Halycian refugees who had taken their place.[20] In mid-March, a circular issued by Pavlo Khrystiuk called on peasants to return the property stolen from landlord estates in preceding months. None of these developments, revealing the character of the regime at local level and reinforcing the lack of direction at a national level, was likely to encourage peasant support for the Rada.

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of Agriculture under the influence of unauthorised and irresponsible organisations, have introduced a series of declarations which do not correspond to the state interests of the country'.

15 Vytanovych, 'Agrarna polityka', p. 34

16 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, IV, pp. 37-38.

17 W.Bruce Lincoln. *Red Victory*, p. 307.

18 Holubnychy, 'Agrarian Revolution', p. 44.

19 Vytanovych, 'Agrarna polityka', p. 41.

20 *Zbirnyk zakoniv*, pp. 29-30.

Most important in influencing the mood of the peasants towards the government were the demands placed on the Rada by the Central Powers. This was one of the most important contributory factors to the Rada's growing unpopularity with the peasants. The Rada agreed to furnish the Central Powers with food supplies under the terms of treaties signed on 9 and 12 February. A further agreement in April set quotas and dates for the delivery of these supplies.[21] Orders from the Austro-German military command made clear that these economic objectives in Ukraine were more important than guaranteeing Ukrainian political autonomy.[22]

General Eichhorn's order to the Ukrainian peasants on 6 April was an example of what was increasingly seen as German high-handedness. Without consultation with the Rada, Eichhorn decreed that the harvest would belong to those who cultivated the land and the government would buy grain at fixed rates. Peasants who possessed more land than they could sow were to be subject to harsh punishment and landlords were given increased powers over local peasant land committees to ensure that crops were grown and collected in an orderly and efficient manner.[23] The Rada had already refused to comply with a German 'suggestion' to restore estates to their former landowners which would have been tantamount to a counter-revolution on the land.[24] The arrival of the Germans had an unnerving effect on the peasants and placed the 1918 harvest in jeopardy.[25]

Given the advances they had made during 1917, it was inconceivable that peasants would accept the terms of Eichhorn's decree.[26] The Rada, as an institution which claimed to draw its mandate from the peasants, could not accept it either and protests were made to the

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21 *Dokumenty o razgrome germanskikh okkupantov na Ukraine v 1918 godu,* Moskva, 1942. pp. 65, 67.
22 See Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive*, p. 116-120, for a discussion of German economic demands.
23 For text of Eichhorn's Order, see Dmytro Doroshenko, *Istoriia Ukrainy 1917-1923 rr*, 2 vols, Uzhhorod, 1930.
24 Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive*, p. 124.
25 Kyivs'ke hubernial'ne narodne samovriaduvannia, *Zhurnaly protokoly komisii huberns'koi narodnoi rady: Nadzvichainoi kvitnevi sesii 1918 roku*, Kyiv, 1918. pp. 21-25.
26 This was particularly true when the peasant practice of subsistence farming and hatred of the old landlord order is considered.

Germans at a meeting of 13 April.[27] The Rada's intransigence persuaded the Central Powers that a new and more cooperative and forceful government would be required if they were to solve the problem of gaining access to Ukraine's resources and a decision was taken to engineer a change in the Ukrainian government.[28]

The assertion of national autonomy ultimately proved of greater importance to Rada politicians than the introduction of sweeping socio-economic reforms which might have created a stable social base of support. The Rada's agrarian policy fell woefully behind developments in the countryside. The Rada's brief existence is now seen as one of the first attempts to establish a modern Ukrainian state. However, such was the divide between the Rada's policy makers and their constituency, they failed to carry popular support with them.

(ii) The Hetman.

Pavlo Skoropadsky became Hetman of Ukraine on 29 April 1918 reviving a hereditary claim to leadership of the region which dated back to the Cossack Sich of the eighteenth century. His regime was supported by the Central Powers and traditional elites. Skoropadsky's first policy statement (the *Hramota* of 29 April) declared that private property, 'as the foundation of culture and civilisation, is restored in full'.[29] The decrees of the Central Rada and the Provisional Government were declared void and the land committees which had proved so important to the peasant movement during 1917 were abolished.[30]

Legislation rapidly followed the Hetman's accession to power. A provisional decree on the sale and purchase of land was issued on 14 June 1918, enabling individuals to acquire plots of up to 25 desiatins. A State Land Bank was to oversee purchases of land. [31] The emphasis on allowing peasants limited access to land whilst trying to improve the efficiency of their

27 Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive*, p. 135-136.
28 Holubnychy, 'Agrarian Revolution', p. 45.
29 Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, pp. 147-148
30 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, p. 41.
31 *ibid.*, p. 57. Vytanovych, 'Agrarna revoliutsiia', p. 47.

plots was reminiscent of the ideas of P. A. Stolypin. The ultimate aim was the creation of a stratum of wealthy peasants who would be economically viable and defend property rights and the state. The large numbers of poor peasants who could not provide for themselves would be forced to find work in the towns.[32] The traditional village gathering was to discuss and rule on matters such as the consolidation of village lands through a majority vote.[33] This also harked back to Tsarist attempts to encourage increased peasant productivity which had earlier failed because of peasant unwillingness to challenge the status quo on the land or to vote for change.[34] In the resolution of the land question the Hetman favoured evolution rather than revolution.

Skoropadsky's plans for rural government promised strong authority in the regions. At hubernia and povit level, the Rada commissar was replaced by the *starosta*. These were typically local landowners who were given broad powers to enforce administrative rule in the countryside.[35] Unpopular officials whose actions inflamed the delicate political situation were frequently appointed.[36] The state militia force (*Derzhavna Varta*) supported the tarosta. Its conservative character was confirmed by a statute of August 1918.[37] The authorities could also rely on Austro-German troops when the need arose.

Skoropadsky's government initiated a virtual counter-revolution on the land. Any gains won by peasants in the preceding fourteen months of revolution were withdrawn. Land commissions were set up at hubernia and povit level in May under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture. These commissions were comprised of landowners, officials and wealthy farmers and aimed to improve agriculture by reorganising the land (*zemleustroistvo*).

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32 Doroshenko, *Istoriia Ukrainy*, p. 283.
33 *TsDAVO*, f. 1061, op. 3, spr. 6, ark. 121. Ministerstvo zemel'nykh sprav Ukrains'koi derzhavy: Kopii tymchasovoho zemel'noho zakonu 1918. See also *TsDAVO*, f. 1061, op. 3, spr. 11, ark. 3-5.
34 Another indication of the continuity between the last Tsarist government and the agrarian policies of Skoropadsky was the latter's revival of the system of Peace Mediators who had settled disputes between peasants, landowner and state. A UNR document discusses the fate of these officials after the fall of the Hetman. *TsDAVO*, f. 538, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 6. Kam'ianets'kyi povit commissar to Podillia hubernia commissar, 21 December 1918.
35 Doroshenko, *Istoriia Ukrainy*, II, p. 261. Doroshenko likens the Starosta to the former Tsarist Gubernator.
36 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, p. 41-44. Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, pp. 159-60.
37 Doroshenko, *Istoriia Ukrainy*, II, p. 261.

They harked back to the former Tsarist land reorganisation commissions (*zemleustroitel'nye komissii*) of 1912 whose work they continued.[38]

A law on the 'struggle with the disruption of agriculture' was published on 8 July, giving increased powers to landowners over the running of the local economy and its resources.[39] Provisional Land-Liquidation Commissions (*zemel'no-likvidatsiini komisii*) were formed under an order of 15 July. These Commissions restored land rights which had existed before March 1917, returned property taken from the landlords under revolutionary decrees and apportioned compensation for losses suffered by landowners during the revolution.

The interpretation of legislation at local level and the attitude of many landowners did much to incite peasant opposition to Skoropadsky's regime. Force was frequently employed to persuade peasants to return property or pay charges levied for use of resources the previous year despite the voluntary provisions laid down in the legislation.[40] The Podillia hubernia starosta urged an official to 'suggest to Dumanov village obshchestvo to voluntarily pay the owner of Hedinskii forest 22,500 rubles for the felling of five desiatins of timber'. If the village failed to accept to this 'voluntary agreement', the matter would pass to the Land-Liquidation Commission for a new (and undoubtedly higher) assessment of losses incurred by the landlord.[41] Landlords also formed guard detachments which were frequently used for punitive expeditions.[42] They enforced the return of property taken from landlords' estates in the winter of 1917 or extracted contributions from the peasants for their use and resultant lost profits to the landowner.[43] Starostas forcibly seized grain from peasants in local districts.[44]

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38 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, p. 52.
39 Khrystiuk likened this law to the return of serfdom. *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, p. 58.
40 See *TsDAVO*, f. 1782, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 30, Mohiliv-Podil's'ka povitova zemel'na uprava - viddil stat, 18 January 1919. Lists contributions levied by Hetmanate officials on individual peasant villages.
41 *TsDAVO*, f. 628, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 307. Podillia hubernia starosta, 7 August 1918.
42 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, p. 53.
43 Vytanovych, 'Agrarna Polityka', pp. 48-49.
44 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, p. 53.

They also arrested those peasants who had been particularly politically active in the villages in preceding months.[45]

Skoropadsky's regime was faced with peasant opposition from its inception. A protocol from the village of Milevets, Podillia, in early May voiced its opposition to the Hetman and its support for the Rada 'which had already begun to introduce land reforms for the people and tried to call a Ukrainian Constituent Assembly as soon as possible'. Villagers denounced the restoration of the 'old order'.[46] A protocol from Vrublivets village mobilised peasant troops to defend the Rada's regime in the local area.[47] A decree from the Rada povit commissar in Podillia provided the spur for peasant action against the Hetman.[48] Elsewhere local government officials, sympathetic to the Rada's policies, began to organise peasant resistance.[49] This was the beginning of a bitter struggle for political autonomy in the countryside.

Violence was common in the Right Bank, as many Polish landowners took retribution on those peasants who had attacked them in earlier months. The village began to rise in protest, with landowners and Varta officials singled out as particular targets of action.[50] Peasant uprisings were particularly fierce in Kyiv hubernia where partisan commanders like M. Shinkar began to operate.[51] Austro-German troops were frequently called into villages by the Ukrainian authorities and landowners to restore order. They were to prove the backbone of the state in the face of social unrest. The Hetman censored information about this emerging

45 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 117.
46 *TsDAVO*, f. 1115, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 84. From Rykhtets'ka volost, Kam'ianets'kyi povit. Dated 8 May 1918.
47 *TsDAVO*, f. 1115, op. 1, spr. 15, ark. 5. Vrublits'ka volost, Kam'ianets'kyi povit. Dated 5 May.
48 *ibid.*, ark 6. From protocol of village of Kalino, 6 May 1918. The Rada commissar's decree was addressed 'To peasants and workers of Kam'ianets'kyi povit'.
49 *TsDAVO*, f. 1115, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 85. See protocol of Havrilivs'ka volost skhod, 9 May.
50 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, p. 55.
51 *ibid.*, p. 55.

peasant war.[52] Peasant congresses, such as the one held in Zvenihorod in May, were dispersed.[53]

Skoropadsky's agrarian policies were directly influenced by the demands of the Central Powers for grain and raw materials.[54] Austro-German support was conditional on a free hand being granted in the collection of food and supplies. In practice this meant relying on 'direct measures and the initiative of [...] local military commanders' to procure food.[55] Such arbitrary and direct action inflamed peasants throughout Right-Bank Ukraine who burned their grain rather than hand it over to the Germans or formed armed detachments to resist German demands.[56] German attempts to requisition food were seen as little more than theft, as proposed exchanges of goods broke down. Peasants sometimes proved willing to exchange grain for manufactured goods with private traders but would not give it freely.[57]

It is estimated that nearly 30,000 German and Austrian troops lost their lives in the struggle to obtain grain supplies from the Ukrainian countryside.[58] This high cost in lives was spent to procure a limited amount of supplies. It has been calculated that 113,421 tonnes of grain, 30,757 carloads of meat and 15,000 carloads of other food items were taken from Ukraine during 1918 by the Central Powers.[59] The German attempt to procure food had a negative effect on the peasant economy. Peasants were either unwilling or unable to hand their grain stocks over or even sow a crop that might be taken from them. The area of sown land fell almost 35% during 1918.[60]

In the final days of his regime Skoropadsky tried to formulate general principles for a future land settlement although it could be argued that this was a last desperate attempt to

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52 *ibid.*, p. 53.
53 *ibid.*, p. 55.
54 Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, p. 176.
55 Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive*, p. 184.
56 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, p. 50.
57 Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive*, p. 189.
58 *ibid.*, p. 187. There seem to be no available figures for separate regions of Ukraine.
59 *ibid.*, p. 190. Although when unofficial requisitions are taken into account the figure must have been somewhat larger.

placate peasant opinion.[61] N. M. Leontovich presided over the proposals which aimed to address the glaring chasm which existed between the Hetman government and the peasants.[62] The project envisioned the state purchase of the large landlord estates. These units would then be broken up and distributed to peasant farmers via the State Land Bank. Land plots would be limited in size to twenty-five desiatins.[63]

Some of Skoropadsky's advisers recognised that only more intensive farming of the land would resolve the problems of land hunger and food shortages.[64] They concluded that the 'most rational means of agrarian reform would be through an evolutionary path (*evoliutsionnym putem*)'.[65] The proposals developed ideas which had been set forth in Skoropadsky's provisional legislation but the plan to purchase large estates was very ambitious. Other political groups, the Bolsheviks for example, favoured the preservation of these large economic units. Stolypin's plans for reform, which profoundly influenced the Hetman, failed because sustained social calm and favourable economic conditions had been prerequisites for success in changing peasant attitudes. Developments such as the onset of the war conspired to prevent their full realisation. The Hetman's plans similarly failed because such an evolutionary approach required a firm and stable state and a large degree of social consensus. Skoropadsky's government could not guarantee this. A Hetman official wrote in July 1918:

> The cause of recent disorders appears to be dissatisfaction with the presence of German troops on Ukrainian soil but also chiefly a distrust of the Hetman, with whom, according to the rebellious peasants, land reform on a desired scale is

60 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 117.
61 Indeed, some historians give a positive assessment of his attempts to mediate between peasants and landlords. See Taras Hunczak, 'Ukraine under Skoropadsky', pp. 74-75
62 Leontovich was appointed in place of the unpopular incumbent, Kolokol'tsev, to try to bring a sense of unity and purpose to policy. Kolokol'tsev originally helped draft the proposals. See Skoropadsky, *Spohady*, pp. 282-283
63 Doroshenko, *Istoriia Ukrainy*, II, p. 290.
64 *TsDAVO*, f. 1061, op. 3, spr. 6, ark. 46. Zhurnal zasedaniia osobogo soveshchaniia pod predsedatel'stvom ego svetlosti...dliia razrabotki osnovanii zemel'noi reformy, 29 November 1918.
65 *ibid.*, ark. 47.

> impossible. Recent orders of the Hetman, which promised poor peasants allotment land and limited personal ownership of land over twenty-five desiatins, have done little to reduce the disturbances in the uezd because the peasants view the decrees with indifference.[66]

The regime could not compete with the propaganda of political opponents which promised peasants free access to land, nor could they satisfy the political demands of all the groups which supported the Hetman.[67] There was a large degree of political skirmishing over policy among those groups which supported Skoropadsky and gentry representatives only dropped their opposition to land reform in December, by which time it was too late to attract peasant support.[68] The Hetman regime, protected by foreign troops and faced with internal political opposition and civil disobedience, struggled to achieve the social conditions which would have made the introduction of broad reform possible.

(iii) The Directory.

The Directory was the executive of the Ukrainian National Republic comprising left-of-centre elements similar to those which had participated in the Central Rada. The two most influential and dynamic of these were Volodymyr Vynnychenko and Symon Petliura.[69] The Directory was swept to power at the end of 1918 on a wave of popular peasant uprisings which rapidly revealed themselves more anti-Hetman than pro-Directory in character. The Directory's hold on Kyiv city proved short lived as support simply melted away. It continued to be politically active in some form until October 1921, but always struggled to form a lasting, popular, effective government.[70] The UNR often found itself squeezed into a strip of

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66 *TsDAVO*, f. 3158, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 8. Report form chief of personal staff to chief of Hetman's staff dated 6 July 1918.
67 *TsDAVO*, f. 1060, op. 3, spr. 6, ark. 48.
68 Iaroslav Malyk, 'Zemel'ne pytannia v Ukrains'kyi Hetmans'kyi Derzhavi', in *Ostannyi Hetman*, pp. 103-105.
69 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, IV, p. 9.
70 Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 'Directory of the Ukrainian National Republic', p. 82.

Right-Bank Ukraine between the Poles and either Denikin's troops or Soviet forces. This area became the power base of Petliura and the Ukrainian Nationalists.

Directory policy was revealed in the Declaration of 26 December. The peasants were promised that the rights and the freedoms they had enjoyed before the Hetman would be fully restored.[71] The land was to be nationalised and would ultimately belong to the state but poor and landless peasants would be granted access to the land fund. A successor to the zemstvo, the *narodna zemel'na uprava*, was to help oversee the progress of reform in the volosts.[72] This was unsurprising given the Rada's adherence to the zemstvo administration in 1917 and the attempts by Petliura to build a social movement against the Hetman based around the All-Ukrainian Union of Zemstvos during 1918.[73]

The Declaration also envisioned a network of congresses of 'toiling people' (*konhresy trudovoho narodu*) from which the Directory would draw its mandate and support. They were to oversee and supervise such matters as the return of contributions: an inventory was to be made of the 'contributions' levied on the peasants by the Hetman government so that they could be returned.[74] Those landlords or officials who had committed crimes against the peasants under the Hetman were to be punished. Some sections of the Directory's support considered the Declaration too moderate while for others it was too extreme. The Directory was therefore split politically almost from its inception.[75]

The Directory published a land law on 8 January 1919.[76] It was drawn up under the guidance of M. Shapoval, the Directory's agricultural minister. Poor peasants were to receive plots of not less than five or six desiatins of the best land. Farms were to be limited to fifteen desiatins of land. Land departments were to be set up at village, volost, povit and hubernia

71 Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, pp. 216-217.
72 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, IV, p. 15.
73 Reshetar, *Ukrainain Revolution*, p. 153.
74 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, IV, pp. 15-17.
75 Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, pp. 216-7. Vynnychenko drew up the text of the Declaration. Parties like the Social Democrats who comprised the political forces of the Directory objected to its terms and the revolutionary rhetoric which framed them.

level. The law envisioned the participation of the village community which was to assume responsibility for increasing productivity and reorganising peasant land. The community was to control common lands within the village and could requisition pasture land for peasant needs.[77] The participation of local institutions was to ensure that any reform suited existing local conditions.[78]

A law on forest land was published on 10 January 1919, nationalising all forest land and urging peasants to preserve this national resource which had been decimated by years of fighting and illegal felling.[79] A supplementary clause on 18 January decreed that additional lands and capital for agriculture would be made available to soldiers as long as they did not desert.[80] This was a particular incentive to UNR troops upon whom the survival of the Republic depended.[81]

In practice, it proved impossible for the Directory to implement these plans for land reform. The terms of the land law were not disseminated widely as a result of the ensuing military conflict with Soviet Russia in the winter of 1919. The Directory, reacting to increased political tension in relations with Moscow, declared war on Russia on 16 January 1919.[82] Soviet troops entered Kyiv on 4 February, ousting the Directory after only six weeks. That the Directory proved unable to maintain power was attributed to its failure to introduce sweeping agrarian reforms which would satisfy the broad mass of peasants. Peasants, whose armed uprisings had helped establish the Directory in Kyiv, did not intervene to protect the Republic whilst Soviet troops advanced on the capital.[83]

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76 *Zakony pro zemliu i lisu v Ukrains'kii narodnii respublitsi i universal Direktorii Ukrains' koi narodnoi respubliky do trudovoho selianstva*, Kyiv, 1919, pp. 3-9.
77 *ibid.*, pp. 3-9.
78 Lozovyi, 'Ahrarna polityka', p. 69.
79 *Zakony pro zemliu i lisu v Ukrains'kii narodnii respublitsi*, pp. 11-14.
80 Vytanovych, 'Agrarna polityka', p. 50.
81 *ibid.*, p. 50.
82 Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, p. 229.
83 *ibid.*, pp. 251-52, 257-58.

There were other reasons for the Directory's failure to attract support in the winter of 1919. It proved unable to introduce a coherent administrative structure. There was a great deal of abuse of executive power by groups and individuals tacitly linked to the Directory. At local level *otamany* (local military chieftains) often ruled arbitrarily. Many indulged in anti-Semitic pogroms, looting or other destructive acts.[84] In terms of its domestic political profile and its international reputation, the inability to create a disciplined organisation reflected badly on the UNR.[85]

The main problem of agrarian reform was the lack of any administrative apparatus which had the authority to introduce the legislation outlined above. The UNR relied on the spil'ky (peasant cooperative unions) to help introduce reform in the absence of widespread peasant support or community initiative. However, these bodies failed to catch the popular imagination and the impetus for their creation came from the state rather than the peasants.[86] They were supposed to act as temporary guardians of state property until permanent institutions could be established.[87] Many of these spil'ky took control of former landlord estates, particularly where valuable or special crops were cultivated, and prevented local peasants from dividing such lands among themselves. This frequently led to conflict, as peasants considered such action as an attempt to introduce collectivisation surreptitiously.[88]

There was also confusion over the precise nature of the Directory's agrarian policy. On one hand, the declaration of all land as the property of the state was akin to nationalisation. On the other, allowing peasants rights to land which could then be passed between family members was typical of socialisation. One historian has commented of the Directory's land law that it was a 'political document' rather than a rational economic plan.[89] It was, however,

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84 Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, p. 253.
85 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, IV, p. 26.
86 Lozovyi, 'Ahrarna polityka', p. 70.
87 *TsDAVO*, f. 538, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 1. Telegram to hubernia commissar, 3 December 1918.
88 Lozovyi, 'Ahrarna polityka', p. 70.
89 *ibid.*, p. 71.

symbolic of the approach forced on political groups in their attempts to attract peasant support and build a viable regime.

The UNR authorities once again allowed peasant congresses to convene and a number were held throughout Ukraine over the winter months. For example, a povit peasant congress in Rivne (Volyn) on 29-30 December attracted some three hundred delegates. A similar congress was held in Uman (Kyiv hubernia) on 21-23 December.[90] However, when these congresses called for extremist solutions to the land question they were dispersed by over-zealous local officials who interpreted these demands as 'Bolshevik'.[91] This left the Directory open to further criticism and drew away peasant support.

These problems remained throughout the Directory's political life. When Directory forces advanced on Kyiv city from the West in late summer 1919, attempts were made to improve local administration.[92] A decree on the 'Provisional organisation of power in the localities' was published on 11 August 1919. It outlined an administrative structure of commissars at all levels of local government, closely linked to the *narodni upravy* (the zemstvo system) which could vote to remove unpopular officials. In the village, the commissar was to be elected by the hromada and supported by a host of other officials including a deputy commissar, secretary, tax collector and *desiats'ki.*[93] However, local conditions in the wake of the Soviet retreat made such a system very difficult to introduce.

A Directory official, V. Poltavs'kyi, travelling in areas freed from Soviet troops noted that although the population greeted the Directory relatively warmly, local government was crippled by a lack of finances. Peasants were dissatisfied with the composition of the land departments and the fact that the contributions extracted by the Hetman still had not been returned. Far more worrying was the conclusion that 'there is an absence of a firm land policy

90 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, IV, pp. 46-47.
91 *ibid.*, IV, p. 47.
92 Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution,* pp. 285-86.
93 Ministerstvo Vnutrishnikh Sprav, *Obizhno. Do p.p gubernial'nikh i povitivykh komisariv. Pro tymchasovu orhanizatsiiu vlady na mistiakh*, 2nd ed. Kam'ianets-Podil's'kyi, 1919.

(*pevna zemel'na polityka*)'.[94] Only a few peasants in Podillia and Volyn were acquainted with the actual terms of the Directory's land programme.[95] This suggests problems not only with deciding the principles on which land reform should be implemented but also with disseminating these ideas to the wider peasant population. A report from the Ministry of Agriculture of the UNR entitled 'Programme of questions which require further clarification by the Ministry' proves that this indecision and lack of clarity afflicted the very highest levels of government also. The Ministry was asked to provide accurate definitions of policy and terminology.[96]

The quest to find a practical land settlement acceptable to the peasants continued. The Directory wished to encourage peasants to improve the productivity of the land through the eradication of interstripped fields and allotment of consolidated plots (*razverstanie*). The village community was to reorganise the peasants' plots and confiscate land from those who did not make best use of their holdings. The peasants themselves were to be able to decide the form of land use in the village (whether communal or household) which was particularly relevant in Right-Bank Ukraine where individual household tenure predominated.[97]

The village community was given special responsibility to introduce the land law of January 1919. It would have been impractical to introduce reform without some village cooperation. Communities were to elect representatives to supervise the survey of village lands and provide assistance and resources to land surveyors and statisticians. Communities were also held responsible for all common property within the village.[98]

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94 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 78, ark. 4. UNR predstavnik M.S.V V. Poltavs'kyi. Do pana Ministra Sprav Vnutrishnykh, Proskuriv, 8 August 1919. Poltavs'kyi travelled in Kremenets'kyi, Staro-konstantivs'kyi and Proskurivs'kyi povits.

95 *ibid.*, ark. 47. Protocol mizhvidomstvennoi narady pry ministerstvi narodnoho hospodarstva/ dep. zahotovky ta postachannia, 19 Lypnia 1919.

96 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 89, ark. 9. UNR Narminzemsprav. Prohramm pytan' iaki potrebuiut poiasnennia Ministerstva Zemel'nykh Sprav.

97 *ibid.*, ark 189. Dated 14 September 1919. Vypyska z protokolu Iu. Lityns'koho povitoho selians'koho zizdu vidbuvshehosia 14 veresnia 1919 roku z Litynsk'im narodnim domi v m. Lityni: Pro nadil zemli. The proposals noted that land could pass in *spadshchina* from fathers to children unlike the obshchina in *Moskovshchina* (i.e. Russia).

98 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 131, ark. 13. Zakon pro obo'iazky sil's'kykh hromad pry perevedenni zemel'noi reformy po zakonu 8 Sichnia 1919.

As in the case of other political powers, the success of the Directory in forming an effective government was conditional upon the introduction of a concrete social policy. A representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Vlasenko, wrote that the most credible means of strengthening the Directory's authority would be the 'immediate introduction of land reform, which the masses have long expected, but until its realisation remain sceptical, saying that for three years they have been promised everything but up to now have received nothing'.[99] Peasants cynically wondered whether they would receive rights to land in their lifetimes (*ne v posmertnu vlasnist' a v pozhiznenu*). This lack of belief in the ability of the Directory to guarantee social change was one of the primary reasons for its failure.

(iv) Right-Bank Ukraine under White and Polish Occupation.

The conservative forces led by A. I. Denikin in 1919 (commonly referred to as the Whites) and the Poles must be distinguished from Soviet forces and Ukrainian Nationalists because their interest in Ukraine was largely strategic or territorial. Unlike the latter groups, their plan was not to create a single political regime throughout Ukraine. The White forces occupied Ukraine in mid-1919 capturing Kyiv en route to their ultimate objective, Moscow. The Poles, trying to resurrect the idea of a Greater Poland, renewed centuries old claims to lands in Right-Bank Ukraine where up to 1917 there still remained a strong Polish landowning noble class. Their policies towards the peasants and administration of rural areas were still important, for they challenged traditional peasant beliefs. Peasant reactions towards these groups contributed to the complicated political and military situation in Ukraine but also had ramifications for the course of the revolution throughout the former Russian Empire as a whole.

Denikin's northward advance in summer 1919 necessitated securing his left flank in Ukraine. V. Z. Mai-Maevsky, commander of the Volunteer Army, captured Kyiv on 31

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[99] *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 89. ark. 104. Vytiah z dokladu predstavnyka minvnusprav Vlasenko vid 6 serpnia 1919.

August.[100] The Whites, a largely military force, were widely criticised for the character of the regime they introduced to occupied areas. Indiscipline, looting, pogroms, reprisals and arbitrary justice were commonplace. Jews were a particular target.[101] White supporters (comprising army officers, officials and property owners) and political ideas which identified strongly with the old regime were never likely to appeal to the peasants.

Denikin later accepted that the Whites' attitudes towards land policy played a pivotal role in creating peasant hostility. They proved unable to put forward feasible land proposals that would have been acceptable both to the peasants and to the landed gentry who were a strong element of White support.[102] The proposal to defer an ultimate decision on the land question to the Constituent Assembly was unsatisfactory, the provisional law (reinstating the principle of private property) and the actions of local officials simply had the effect of inciting the peasants.[103] Green peasant partisans who gave local villages a share of their spoils against the Whites were always more likely to attract local peasant support.[104]

Under the White regime, landlords returned to their estates and demanded compensation for losses sustained during previous months and for land and resources used by local peasants. Land was returned to its former owners and only then was any surplus land to go to poorer peasants. The population was also forced to bear the requisition demands of Denikin's troops. This was the reality of White agrarian policy that proved so unpopular with the peasants.[105] Baron Wrangel, who succeeded Denikin as military commander of the White forces in 1920, tried to draw up a more conciliatory approach to peasant demands for land, but his proposals were too moderate and failed to gather support.[106]

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100 Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, II, p. 246.
101 Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, pp. 676-79.
102 Material relating to Denikin's agrarian policy can be found in Klunnyi, *V borot'bi*, pp. 33-5, 138-152.
103 General Anton Denikin, *The White Army*, tr.by Catherine Zvegintsov, London 1930, p. 299.
104 Richard Luckett, *The White Generals: An Account of the White Movement and the Russian Civil War*, Edinburgh, 1971, p. 326.
105 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 95.
106 See Klunnyi, *V borot'bi*, pp. 35-39, 153-176.

The Poles laid claim to large parts of Right-Bank Ukraine on historical grounds.[107] During early 1918, Polish legions formed by the Central Powers from prisoners of war (led by Pilsudski) as well as irregular detachments of Polish troops protected isolated Polish communities or intervened on behalf of Polish landowners.[108] Relations between these Polish groups and local peasants were unsurprisingly very hostile and there were reports of clashes. In May 1919, buoyed by a resurgent nationalist spirit and by French diplomatic support, the Poles went on the offensive against Western Ukraine (Halychyna).[109] Later in the summer, the Poles pushed into Podillia and Volyn.[110]

Polish forces tried to protect the interests of their compatriots in Right-Bank Ukraine and secure every possible advantage for their emergent state. In Novohradvolyns'kyi povit, Polish troops arrested workers in the local land department who had been accused by Polish landowners, following in the wake of their army's advance, of destroying their estates in preceding years.[111] In Podillia in September 1919, the Lantskoruns'ka volost commissar reported that Polish troops had requisitioned grain and a threshing machine in a local village. The peasants were forcibly chased away.[112] Throughout Kam'ianets'kyi povit there were reports of Poles overseeing the harvest, sending troops into the village to requisition grain from peasants.[113] These events simply exacerbated existing national antagonisms between Ukrainians and Poles. Petliura's final desperate alliance with the Poles in 1920 was bound to

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107 See Sophia Kossak, *The Blaze. Reminiscences of Volhynia 1917-1919.* Translated from original Polish. London, 1927. These memoirs serve as a reminder of the Polish belief that these lands had a strong Polish minority and should belong to a resurrected Poland. See also Michael Palij, *The Ukrainian-Polish Defensive Alliance 1919-1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution,* Edmonton, Toronto, 1995, pp. 31-33.

108 *Podillia v roky hromadians'koi viiny (liutii 1918r-hruden 1920r): Dokumenty i materialy*, Vinnytsia, 1959. pp. 17-20, 429.

109 Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, pp. 276-277.

110 *ibid.*, p. 298. The Polish push further eastward was influenced by the political fall out from the negotiations between the victorious powers in Western Europe and a hardening attitude towards Soviet Russia which meant that the victorious powers were less likely to restrict the aggressive tendencies of her neighbours.

111 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 112. The Novohradvolyns'kyi povit land department appealed to the Ministry of Agriculture for the release of the men in September 1919.

112 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 78, ark. 154. Liantskoruns'ka volost commissar to Kam'ianets'kyi povit commissar, 14 September 1919.

113 See, for example, the report to Kam'ianets'kyi povit land administration, *ibid.*, ark. 194. 9 September 1919

fail for that very reason because peasants could not support anyone who could be identified with the former Polish landowning class.[114]

(v) The attempts to establish a Soviet regime 1918-1919.

The principles of Soviet agrarian policy towards Ukraine underwent considerable change between 1918 and 1920. This was partly dictated by the political necessity of securing peasant support for the Soviet government. Only at the third attempt in 1920 was a viable Soviet Ukrainian government established. Two previous attempts to occupy Ukraine in early-1918 and mid-1919 came to grief and peasant opposition played a large part in their failure.

The first Soviet attempt to take control of Ukraine was little more than a military offensive by largely Russian Soviet troops in January 1918. Soviet troops initially received a warm welcome from Ukrainian peasants, as a result of propaganda which reinforced peasant rights to land. However, their regime in the Right Bank lasted a matter of weeks before the German advance caused them to retreat. Soviet policy was simply not given enough time to filter through to the village. In some cases, Soviet food requisitioning policy antagonised peasants, as did their political demands.[115] The result was that peasants refused to help Soviet forces defend Ukraine from the Germans or even attacked retreating Soviet troops.[116]

Soviet agrarian policy proved of greater significance during the second attempt to create a Soviet Ukrainian republic in spring and summer 1919. Soviet efforts were again spearheaded by military movements as troops advanced from eastern Ukraine. The Soviet leadership believed that the Hetman regime of 1918 had strengthened the class of wealthy peasants in the countryside who might oppose Soviet rule.[117] Central Russian concerns also influenced policy. Chronic food shortages in urban centres of Soviet-held territory dictated

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114 For a discussion of this campaign see Palij, *Ukrainian-Polish Defensive Alliance,* pp. 99-123.
115 Borys, *Sovietisation,* pp. 283-284.
116 *ibid.*, pp. 194-195.
117 V. Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia politika Sovvlasti na Ukraine v 1919 godu', *Letopis revoliutsii,* 1, 1929, 7-51 (p. 8, 41).

that securing the 1919 harvest and foodstuffs in Ukrainian villages became a Soviet priority.[118] The regime was also characterised by concerted efforts to introduce collective agriculture.

Soviet agrarian policy in Ukraine was heavily influenced by that which had already been introduced in Central Russia. These principles were chiefly those laid down by Lenin but offered a mix of spontaneous improvisation and political doctrine. In April 1917, Lenin had called for the confiscation of gentry estates and the nationalisation of land. He was not in favour of partitioning large estates which were particularly common in the Right Bank.[119] However, the terms of Lenin's policy were vague and subject to misinterpretation and during 1917 he wrestled with the question of securing peasant support. This was reflected by the dropping of open Bolshevik demands for the nationalisation of land.[120]

The Decree on Land, issued on 7 November 1917, reflected Lenin's new opportunistic position on agrarian policy.[121] After stating five basic points, Lenin appended the terms of the Socialist Revolutionaries' programme for land. These were drawn from demands made in peasant petitions collated by the SRs during 1917.[122] The SR programme largely reflected genuine peasant views on agrarian policy and demands for the socialisation of the land. It is interesting to note that the programme adopted by Lenin reflected the concerns of the Russian SRs. The Ukrainian SRs had rejected Russian policy, as it did not correspond to local social and economic conditions.[123] Lenin's adoption of the SR programme must be seen as an attempt to secure peasant support for the Bolsheviks. The terms of the Decree were vague but Lenin was possessed not by a slavish attention to ideology, but rather by the will to rule.

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118 *ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
119 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 46.
120 Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life*, 3 vols, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, 1991. Vol. II, p. 158.
121 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 47.
122 Service, *Lenin,* Vol. II, p. 236.
123 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', pp. 48-49.

Soviet officials believed that the wealthy peasant 'kulak' class in Ukraine was more significant in economic and social terms than was the case elsewhere.[124] In the Soviet view the village was just as split by class differences as the town. They argued that wealthier sections of the village were able to enforce their hegemony over the poorer sections in peasant meetings such as the village skhod.[125] Soviet policy aimed to split this unified peasant front and foment class war in the villages. This idea continued to shape Soviet policy throughout the Civil War.[126]

The 'Main law on the socialisation of the land' issued on 9 February 1918 set out the fundamental principles of the Soviet approach in Ukraine.[127] A manifesto of the new Soviet Ukrainian regime (issued 14 January) and a further declaration (28 January) confirmed the principle of peasant rights to land whilst still placing the large landlord estates under the control of the *Narodnyi komisariat zemledelii* (People's Commissariat of Agriculture abbreviated to *Narkomzem*).

These principles were developed at a meeting of the Kharkiv Hubernia Congress of Soviets (20 February 1919) when Soviet forces began their second attempt to gain control of Ukraine.[128] A unified land fund was to be created from former landlord land and peasants were to be encouraged to move from individual to collective agriculture. The Ukrainian Narkomzem administration in 1919 was guided by a veteran Russian revolutionary, M. L. Meshcheriakov, who was seconded from the Russian Narkomzem in Moscow. This was an example of the way in which Soviet leaders initially sought to enforce centralised views of agricultural policy over Ukraine. Meshcheriakov's experience in administration had been gained in Russia and he had no knowledge of the specific conditions which existed in Ukraine. Indeed, in a pamphlet published in Petrograd in 1919 he set forth his belief that collective and

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124 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 84.
125 See, for example, Graziosi, *Bolsheviki i krest'iane*, pp. 76-81. Graziosi discusses the almost outright hostility of Bolshevik figures towards the peasants in general. The idea that kulaks were dominant led Soviet leaders to advocate a strict class policy in the village.
126 Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia politika', p. 41.

state farms should be introduced into Ukraine.[129] As was to become apparent during 1919 and after, this was not an option Ukrainian peasants could accept.

The third congress of the KP(b)U (Ukrainian Communist Party) endorsed the introduction of collective agriculture in Ukraine as a major Soviet priority. However, at a congress of hubernia land departments in May 1919, a different view of collectivisation was expressed. Delegates emphasised that the most 'conscious elements' within the peasantry had to be involved if collective agriculture was to succeed in Ukraine. Communes were 'desirable but not compulsory'.[130] This shows that disagreement over the course of policy in Ukraine during 1919 existed amongst the Soviet authorities themselves.

The Soviet government planned to abolish private ownership of land, including the right to hold small farms which was the cherished aim of many peasants. Agricultural production was to be organised in collective units such as collective farms, state farms or *artels* (cooperatives). Former landlord estates were not to be divided amongst individual peasants but maintained as large economic units run by collective enterprises under state supervision. These large estates were to become 'grain factories', organised and run along similar lines to urban factories.[131] Equipping them with supplies and materials was a major part of the work of local Soviet organs.[132]

Collective enterprises assumed several forms, including the *kolhosp* (*kolektivne hospodarstvo* or collective farm, *kolkhoz* in Russian), and the *radhosp* (*radians'ke hospodarstvo* or state farm, *sovkhoz* in Russian).[133] The kolhosp was a cooperative venture where all the members' resources were pooled. In the radhosp, all the equipment was owned by the state and peasants simply worked the land. There were also looser forms of association such as the artel or *TSOZ* (society for the common cultivation of the land). These collective

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127 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 13.
128 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 90.
129 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 14.
130 *ibid.*, p. 21.
131 Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, p. 59.

forms of agriculture were to be created from 'the confiscated land of estates.[...] as a first priority'.[134] The large sugar producing estates were seen as one particular sector which should remain under the supervision of the state and the industry was nationalised by a decree of 16 January 1919. This roused the anger of peasants in sugar-growing areas who wanted access to the large land area which had belonged to the factories.[135]

Collective forms of agriculture (especially the kolhosp and radhosp) were identified by Ukrainian peasants with the Great-Russian commune and were seen as an alien imposition particularly in those areas of Right-Bank Ukraine where it had not existed before and farming in this way ran contrary to peasant traditions.[136] A Narkomzem information letter from Lipovets'kyi povit in July noted that 'the idea of the collectivisation of agriculture does not receive any sympathy among the peasants which explains the uncertainty of the majority of them in the stability of Soviet power'.[137]

As one Soviet Ukrainian historian admitted, Soviet land policy in 1919 'did not consider the real needs of the Ukrainian village'.[138] Furthermore, peasants were forced into collective units by local land organs and the principle of voluntary membership of the state forms of agriculture fell by the wayside. Only the valuable specialised agricultural sectors were supposed to be placed under state control unless peasants voluntarily decreed to form a kolhosp or radhosp themselves.[139] However, common peasant farms also suffered.

The display of peasant hostility which greeted this action caused a rethink of policy.[140] The excesses of the second Soviet regime were blamed on over zealous local activists, 'careerists' and 'adventurers' but there can be little doubt that they acted on what

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132 Borisov, *Z dosvidu*, p. 39.
133 Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia politika', p. 12.
134 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 92
135 *ibid.*, p. 92.
136 Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia politika', p. 13.
137 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 67. Information listok, No. 26. Dated 23 June 1919.
138 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 92.
139 *ibid.*, p. 94.
140 *ibid.*, p. 94.

they believed were state instructions.[141] In Right-Bank Ukraine in 1919, 271 state farms were established covering an area of 214,945 desiatins.[142] At the beginning of June, fifteen collective farms and thirty artels were registered in Kyiv hubernia. There is no information about Podillia and Volyn but their proximity to the front lines suggests that farms were only organised there with great difficulty.[143]

Peasants in the Right bank remained firmly opposed to collective forms of agriculture. They maintained a wish to obtain their own individual plots of land. Even in Umans'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia (i.e. an area where communes were already relatively common), it was reported that 'the mood of the peasants towards collective farms is hostile'.[144] The Soviet leadership was forced to concede that their attempt to build collective agriculture in Ukraine had been premature because the necessary conditions for its introduction did not yet exist. Soviet policy in Ukraine was subjected to severe criticism at the VIII Congress of the RKP (B) (Russian Communist party). The result was a reinforcement of the voluntary principle for entering the collective farms and a policy decision to win over the section of middle peasants who still wanted access to individual land plots and who were considered a numerically and strategically important force in the countryside.[145]

During 1919 concessions were accordingly made towards the Ukrainian seredniaki.[146] The latter had interpreted any decision to prevent the distribution of land as an assault on their personal landholding which further contributed to their refusal to accept Soviet rule and to a series of revolts.[147] Measures were taken to ensure that the demands of the

141 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 20.
142 I. I. Shevchenko, *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Ukrainy v bor'be za ukreplenie soiuza rabochikh i krest'ian*, Kiev, 1958, p. 137. According to figures of Narkomzem.
143 Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia Politika', p. 29.
144 *TsDAVO*, f. 1498, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 74. Anketa do instruktsii dodatok no. 2. Posukhivs'ka volostna zemel'na uprava, 1919.
145 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 95.
146 *ibid.*, p. 94.
147 Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia politika', p. 12.

razverstka[148] did not fall disproportionately on the middle peasant. A decree of 12 April 1919 ordered that no farm under five desiatins of land should be subject to requisitions. A further decree of 26 April 'on the advantages of paying tax in kind', shifted the burden of taxes from middle peasants.[149]

The Soviet government's plans for agriculture entailed disappointing the hopes of their natural constituency, the poor peasants, for access to land. Poorer peasants had particularly suffered from the effects of the civil war and requisitions which had deprived them of seed-stock, livestock and other necessary equipment. They were often unable to capitalise on any surplus land which became available within the village (such as the former landlord estates which in many instances had not yet been distributed to individual peasants as a result of the actions of the Hetman government). Therefore poor peasants were just as likely to oppose Soviet plans for radhosps or kolhosps as these similarly deprived them of the means to become independent farmers in their own right.[150]

The campaign to collect grain from Ukraine absorbed the energies of the Soviet leadership in 1919.[151] The demand for foodstuffs led to the initiation of 'class war' within the village and requisitions from peasants.[152] The need to extract grain from the village required 'extraordinary measures'.[153] Soviet officials were faced with the problem of establishing a food collection network in the countryside. Soviet power remained a largely urban phenomenon.[154] The revolutionary committees which established Soviet rule in the localities and the food collection organs at the front attempted to collect grain but it was the Red Army which played the fundamental role. It acted as an 'extraordinary commission for the collection

148 The razverstka was the Soviet system of food collection operated in 1918 to 1919.
149 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 20.
150 See S. V. Kul'chits'kyi, *URSS v dobu "voennoho komunizmu"*, Kyiv, 1994, p. 112.
151 Soviet requisition efforts were led by O. H. Shlikhter. A collection of his writings on Ukraine from the period can be found in *O. H. Shlikhter: Vybrani tvory*, Kyiv, 1959. He likened Narkomprod, the People's Commissariat for Food-collection, to 'a fighting organ of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat on the food-collection front', making clear the forcible aspects of the policy.
152 Adams, 'Great Peasant Jacquerie', pp, 265-266.
153 Borisov, *Z dosvidu*, p 39.
154 Borys, *Sovietisation*, pp. 232-236.

of grain'. Soviet officials were forced to use such methods because they failed to guarantee a supply of manufactured goods which might have persuaded peasants to part with their grain through legitimate and fair means.[155] Paper money also had little meaning when governments changed so frequently.[156] This helps explain peasant reluctance to hand over the harvest to the Soviet government.

In place of fair exchange for the harvest, peasants were asked to accept something much less tangible, a union of the peasantry and the urban working-classes. This was the stated aim of the Soviet state, for working peasants to realise where their true interests lay. Thus the activities of the food collection organs had a political as well as an economic rationale. They were to aid poor and middle peasants in the battle against the kulaks in the village.[157]

The use of troops to collect grain inevitably led to the use of coercion and force in the villages. The employment of violence superseded administrative efforts to secure grain and in so doing helped increase the brutality of the civil war.[158] Central targets for the razverstka were set in spring 1919 based on estimates of the harvest. These targets were often exceeded by local activists who were blamed for the subsequent turn in the peasant mood against Soviet rule.[159] A report from an instructor sent into the localities noted that the 'requisitions, in particular, agitate the peasants. Requisition detachments, not considering local government organisations and the needs of the population, frequently leave peasants without sowing stock and sometimes without even grain for food.'[160]

155 Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia politika', p. 9.
156 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 295. Kollegia zemledeliia pri Fastovskom ispolkome, 27 May 1919.
157 Iu. Iu. Kondufor. *Ukreplenie soiuza rabochego klassa i krest'ianstva na Ukraine v period grazhdanskoi voiny (v khode provedeniia prodovol'stvennoi politiki 1918-1920 gg,* Kiev, 1964, p. 67. Shevchenko. *Kommunisticheskaia partiia*, p. 144.
158 Borisov, 'Z dosvidu', p. 43.
159 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 20.
160 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 8, ark 54. From report of agrarian instructor, I.Stepanin, in Ovruchs'kyi povit, 1919.

The concentration on securing foodstuffs and introducing collective forms of agriculture left little energy for work on land reorganisation in 1919.[161] Land divisions occurred in a haphazard manner. Soviet organs were unable to enforce any kind of pattern over these distributions. Local peasant bodies decided on these matters.[162] Soviet organs also tried to prevent peasant use of resources they had seized from the landlords. An order of 13 May to a volost land department forbade peasants in Ovruchs'kyi povit to collect, sell or buy timber from a local forest.[163] Peasant rights to pasture were also withdrawn.[164] Attempts to introduce long-term land reorganisation were held back by the priorities of ensuring all land was sown (rather than concentrating on the manner in which it was sown), by the lack of instructors and land surveyors in the localities, and by the suspicion and opposition of local peasants.[165] Soviet land reorganisation departments spent much of their time intervening in peasant quarrels over land.[166]

The Soviet regime introduced its own network into the countryside to help realise its policies. Revkoms established Soviet rule until soviets could be organised in villages and volosts.[167] Special detachments were given responsibility for food collection in the countryside. In Russia in 1918, kombedy had been introduced into the village but they created too much antagonism between peasants and government and were abolished in December of that year.[168] They had failed to attract widespread support and were frequently comprised of marginal elements within the village.[169] They had little or no influence over land

161 Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia politika', p. 18.
162 *ibid.*, p. 21. Rybalka, *Agrarne peretvorennia*, p. 109. See also *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 6, ark. 53.
163 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 354. Prikaz No.4 13-go Maia 1919. Vsem selkim komitetam, naseleniiu m. Lugin i Luginskoi volosti.
164 *ibid.*, ark. 355. Protocol No. 3, 15 May 1919.
165 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 17, ark. 367. Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 94.
166 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 20, ark. 44.
167 Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia politika', p. 42.
168 Shanin, *Awkward Class*, p. 149. Shanin writes that the official reason for withdrawing the kombedy in Russia was that their tasks had been fulfilled but there was little doubt that the real reason was they had failed to become the 'revolutionary vanguard of the poor peasantry'.
169 Figes, 'Russian Peasant Community', p. 249.

divisions.[170] In other cases, entire villages joined these organisations, thus contradicting any notion of inter-peasant conflict.[171]

Nevertheless, the kombedy were introduced into Ukraine in the summer of 1919 to carry Soviet authority into the villages and foment the class struggle against the class of kulaks which was thought to be all-powerful. In 1919, 165 volost and 1,500 village kombedy were registered in Ukraine. The kombedy were charged with implementing Soviet policy and given specific responsibility for preventing illegal timber felling and any unauthorised seizures of land.[172] However, they made little impact.[173] The Ukrainian peasant reacted no differently to kombedy interference in village affairs than their Russian counterparts had the previous year. The difference was that the state persevered with their existence in Ukraine while they had been dissolved in Russia for turning the peasantry as a whole against the Soviet government.

Local Soviet voices warned of the possible consequences of pursuing too harsh a line against the Ukrainian peasants. In February 1919, N. N. Popov (who would later write histories of the Ukrainian and Soviet Communist parties) noted that the methods employed to negate the kulaks in Ukraine, i.e. grain requisitions, the kombedy etc., had already been withdrawn in Soviet Russia because of their negative effect on peasant support.[174] Popov declared that 'if the broad mass of the Ukrainian population had been won over to Bolshevism by spring (particularly the peasantry), the occupation of Ukraine would have been easier than it is at the moment'.[175] The danger was that 'conflict could result between the centralising policy of the

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170 Shanin, *Awkward Class*, pp. 147-149.
171 Figes, *Peasant Russia*, p. 190.
172 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 21, ark. 115. From *prikaz* No. 6 of 30 March 1919.
173 Liakh, *Rozviazannia*, p. 40.
174 N. N. Popov, 'Ukreplenie Sovetskoi vlasti na Ukraine', *Mysl':Ezhenedel'nyi nauchnyi marksistskii zhurnal*, 5, 1919, 156-158, (p. 157).
175 Popov, 'Ukreplenie', p. 157. Note Popov's use of the word 'occupation' (*okkupatsia*) which makes clear the military element in the Soviet attempt to gain control of Ukraine.

Soviets and the independent and semi-anarchist Left-SRs and Ukrainians' much as the Directory had been split by agrarian policy a few months before.[176]

Popov's views were shared by others. A representative of the Russian Soviet organisation attached to the Ukrainian Soviet government, D. Gopner, sent several letters to his superiors in Moscow detailing local developments. He informed Soviet leaders in a letter of 3 March that peasants were reacting with hostility to activities of the kombedy in Ukraine. Furthermore, the continued existence of requisition detachments 'compromised' Soviet power in the eyes of the peasants.[177] Members of the Soviet Ukrainian government including G. L. Piatakov[178] had 'unfortunately supported the creation of kombedy in Ukraine'. The latter defended the use of the kombedy because of what he saw as the increased class differentiation in the Ukrainian village.[179] It is clear from the tone of the letter that Gopner did not fully endorse such a policy and he later suggested naming such organs 'Aid Committees for the Starving of Great Russia' which he felt would better appeal to the sensibilities of the Ukrainian peasants.

The evident disagreements over the course of policy pursued by the Soviet regime in Ukraine were linked to two opposing strands of Bolshevik thought which had developed there before 1919. The Kyiv group were considered to be 'Right-Bank communists' and featured men such as Vladimir Zatonski, Mykola Skrypnyk and Vasil Shakrai. This group, having its roots in the rural world of the Right Bank, believed in the revolutionary potential of the peasants alongside urban workers. They were also in favour of a separate Ukrainian party organisation.[180] The Katerynoslav group, on the other hand, looked to Moscow for leadership and concentrated their attention almost wholly on the urban proletariat.

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176 The political groups Popov mentions were indeed quite influential in Ukraine. In 1919 many of them had initally lent tacit support to the Soviet regime.
177 *Ekonomicheskie otnosheniia*, p. 65.
178 Andrea Graziosi considers Piatakov one of the key figures in Ukrainian history during the early Soviet period, 'G.L. Piatakov (1890-1937): A Mirror of Soviet History', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 1-2, 1996, 102-166.
179 *Ekonomicheskie otnosheniia*, p. 68. The kombedy were not, however, supported by another member of the Ukrainian government, Artem.
180 Adams, *Bolsheviks in Ukraine*, pp. 16-22.

The Kyiv group had initially proved sufficiently influential in 1918 to impose their demands on the embryonic Soviet Ukrainian party organisation. A separate Ukrainian party was created at the Taganrog conference of April 1918. From the second conference of the KP(b)U, in October 1918, however, the Katerynoslav group began to gain the upper hand with support of Bolshevik leaders in Moscow.[181] The activities of the Ukrainian party leadership (mainly Kyivans) were sharply criticised at this conference.[182] Piatakov led initial efforts to create a Soviet Republic at the end of 1918 but he was replaced as the head of the Ukrainian government by a Moscow-sponsored candidate, Khristian Rakovsky, on 25 January 1919.[183] This move heralded the subordination of the Ukrainian party leadership to the demands of Lenin in Moscow although many of the Kyiv group continued to hold posts in the Soviet administration. These men could not be replaced, such was the shortage of personnel, and conflicts apparently continued over policy between men of various factions and viewpoints within the party.

There was a clear gap between Soviet organs at national and local level. Many of the faults and mistakes in Soviet policy were attributed to Soviet local representatives either misinterpreting or being completely unfamiliar with Soviet decrees.[184] This made the achievement of the objectives of Soviet policy more difficult. A report on the activity of Rivens'kyi povit land department noted that 'acquainting the population with the agrarian policy of Soviet power has not been achieved as a result of unreliable contacts with the centre and the absence of the appropriate instructors. Therefore the population view collective cultivation mistrustfully.'[185] An information bulletin from May 1919 noted local activities in the povit diverged from central policy. There was a general lack of information and

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181 Borys, *Sovietisation*, pp. 148-152. The central committee elected at the second congress of the KP(B)U in Moscow were almost exclusively members of the Katerynoslav group.

182 *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Ukrainy v rezoliutsiiakh s'ezdov i konferentsii (1918-1956)*, Kiev, 1956, pp. 24-30. In particular, the leadership was criticised for premature calls for an armed uprising and a reliance on 'peasant elements which dropped the conditions of the working class from view'. (p. 26).

183 Adams, *Bolsheviks in Ukraine*, pp. 116-118.

184 Kachinsky, 'Zemel'naia politika', p. 25.

propaganda.[186] A volost land department in Vasil'kivs'kyi povit had not received any instructions from the centre despite being in its fourth week of existence. It is little wonder then that the progress of reform was considered so poor (*ochen' slabo*).[187] The Soviet regime therefore faced a similar problem to every other government in creating an administrative apparatus in the localities which could carry out social reform.

Where peasant opposition arose it was frequently attributed to the population's misunderstanding or ignorance of the aims and principles of Soviet agrarian policy rather than to the faults of the policy itself.[188] Strenuous efforts were made on the propaganda front to spread the Soviet message. This involved Soviet representatives issuing as much literature to the peasants as possible, such as the newspaper *Golos Krest'ianina.*[189] Soviet instructors were also sent into the villages to explain agrarian policy to the peasants. These efforts were often somewhat naive and took peasant goodwill for granted. This was not always the case. A telegram from July 1919 revealed the fate of some Soviet officials in the countryside: 'Ten instructors were taken for work in the village. Some of them spoke tactlessly about collectivisation and roused the peasants against them. Several have even vanished without trace'.[190]

Soviet efforts to implement policy refinements which the events of spring 1919 had forced upon them were cut short by the advance of Denikin. However, the Soviet government had been compelled to accept and take into account local conditions in Right-Bank Ukraine, as throughout Ukraine as a whole. The acceptance of the need for a more subtle approach was to

185 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 18, ark. 1. Kratkii obzor deiatel'nosti Rovenskogo uzemotdela Vol. Gub s ego vozniknovenii k 1-mu Iulia s.g..
186 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 45. Information bulletin No. 20.
187 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 17, ark. 14.
188 See for example *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 45. Narkomzem Info-listok No. 20, 16 May 1919.
189 *ibid.*, ark. 67. Note the newspaper has a Russian title, 'Voice of the Peasant'. This is mentioned in the report referred to above which describes the extreme difficulties faced by peasants in the villages. It seems to place more emphasis on the use of propaganda than on any attempt to find a practical solution to peasant grievances.
190 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 6, ark. 59. Dated 4 July 1919. From report of comrade Dzeval'tovskii, member of voenkom to Narkomzem.

stand the Soviet authorities in good stead when they succeeded in proclaiming a Soviet Ukrainian republic in 1920.

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This discussion of the agrarian policies of the various powers in Ukraine makes clear that the failure to resolve the land question was a fundamental reason for peasant opposition towards practically all governments during the civil war. Plans for land reform and agrarian legislation usually trailed behind political developments in the villages. The immediate material demands of political powers, whether for grain or recruits, overrode any altruistic or economic rationale to improve peasants agriculture or grant them access to land.

In the emergency conditions of the civil war little energy was spent on land reorganisation or on any measures which might have contributed to the amelioration of peasant conditions. Political powers dreamt up schemes for land reform that had their own particular rationale and took little account of peasant demands. This was the primary reason for their failure. Those political powers who did draw up plans for land reform that reflected the peasants' own demands were hampered by internal divisions or lacked the ability and will to deliver what they had promised.

Virtually every government found it impossible to penetrate the village through any means except force. Peasants were reluctant to accept an unfair exchange for their produce, which increased the chasm between national politics and local autonomy. No government was able to bridge the gap between peasant demands and national demands. This caused many of the powers to be critically destabilised by peasant revolts or opposition. No political power during the civil war was able to rely on cooperation from within the village to implement its plans. They were all forced to rely on networks introduced into the countryside which then faced peasant opposition. This was a fundamental weakness of all political powers. Peasants were not passive actors in the struggle to resolve the land question and maintain control over

the political life of the village during the civil war. However, they were forced into employing new and more subtle strategies in order to safeguard their economic position and their new found autonomy.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE VILLAGE AND CONDUCT OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS DURING THE CIVIL WAR, 1918-1919

After May 1918, the authority of the village community began to be challenged by new social organisations introduced into the countryside by political groups. We have already discussed how the plans of political powers for reform were contingent upon constructing a stable administration which could implement legislation in the village. No government succeeded in this aim. The continued vitality of peasant traditions and practices was a fundamental reason for this. Political powers were faced with the harsh reality of rural resistance when they tried to interfere in the village's affairs. However, the interaction between traditional institutions and state organisations reveal much about peasant culture during the revolution. Three themes will be explored in this chapter: the administration of the countryside during 1918 to 1919, the relationship between peasants and armed resistance to political regimes; and the efforts of a particular volost to cope with changes in the balance of political power.

Until May 1918, the village committees and land commissions formed during 1917 continued to hold power. Often committees were formed to take responsibility for certain aspects of village life such as defence, food collection and so on. The Soviet invasion of January 1918 gave an apparent impetus to village organisation. For example, following on from a peasant congress held in Vinnytsia between 11 to 14 February 1918, village land commissions (consisting of three or five members with two candidate members) were elected throughout Haisins'kyi povit.[1] Between 16 February and 27 March, such commissions were elected in twenty-three villages.[2] One commission was reported to have been formed on 5 February (i.e. nine days before the congress), which suggests autonomous peasant election of executive bodies. The commissions usually had a chairman and a secretary although in

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[1] *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 111, ark. 5-11. Records of elections of land commissions in Kisliaka, Karbivka, Chichilivka, Hnativka and Rakhniv-Kiblistska villages, Podillia.

some cases they were still referred to as *holova* and *pisar*, more traditional peasant terms for these roles.[3] These commissions probably existed before the Soviet advance in one form or another but were officially confirmed in their places thereafter.[4]

The Hetmanate returned agrarian administration to its pre-revolutionary structure, disbanding the committees which had sprung up after March 1917.[5] Conservative forces began to take control of volost organisations which had been the preserve of progressive intellectuals and nationalists up to that point.[6] A report from the Proskurivs'kyi povit Starosta on 3 September suggested that, in the localities, nothing short of the old order was being restored: 'executive power in the villages is fully organised and in the majority of cases former pre-revolutionary volost starshiny and pisaria or newly-appointed figures head the volost. To the office of chief (*nachal'nik*) of the Derzhavna Varta, mainly officers or individuals who earlier held posts in the police and have sufficient service experience have been appointed.'[7]

Some peasant committees went underground to avoid the censure of the new government. In Ostorozhs'kyi povit the chairman of one committee went into hiding taking its finances with him. In Novohradvolyns'kyi povit committee members accused of agitating against the Hetman were arrested.[8] After a series of peasant disturbances in Krasnohirka and Il'iasheva, Iampil's'kyi povit, Podillia, in June 1918, Austrian troops arrested the former Krasnohirs'kyi village committee, presumably for their involvement in the peasants' action.[9]

The Directory, which briefly came to power in December 1918, envisioned a role for the village community in its structure of administration. Special representatives were elected

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2 *ibid.*, ark. 51
3 *ibid.*, ark. 11.
4 The timing of the voluntary resignation of a chairman in Nizhe-Kranivians'ka village skhod, 24 January 1918, suggests that it was motivated by the political changes precipitated by the Bolshevik advance. *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 111, ark. 55.
5 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 249. Report to Podillia hubernia starosta from proskuriv povit starosta, 3 September 1918.
6 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, pp. 41-44.
7 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 249.
8 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 75, ark. 12.
9 *Podillia v roku hromdians'koi voiny*, No. 54, p. 58.

to oversee the introduction of land reform.[10] Other organisations were also introduced. The peasant unions were maintained by the Directory as an excellent means of organising the peasants and disseminating information.[11]

The Soviet regime introduced its own system of rural administration to supersede traditional institutions. However, despite calls for the final destruction of the community as an administrative organ, the latter continued to play a role in the political landscape of rural Russia after 1917. The gathering continued to elect officials, and to look after its responsibilities and even assumed new functions. Without a legal definition of the community's role ambiguities arose in its relationship with Soviet organs of power. Often the soviet, the *revolutsionnyi komitet* (or revkom), *vykonadavchyi komitet* (*vykonkom* or executive committee) or kombedy became executive manifestations or extensions of traditional village organisation.[12] In Right-Bank Ukraine, as in the rest of the former Russian Empire, there were links between traditional community institutions and the new Soviet organs. These new bodies were elected at village gatherings. Membership was drawn from the wider community and did not always reflect or represent Soviet policy or viewpoints sympathetic to the government.

Soviet power in the Right Bank in 1919 was organised in the wake of military action by the Red Army. On 8 February 1919 a 'Provisional statute on the organisation of local organs of Soviet power and the order of administration' was issued.[13] It envisioned a permanent structure of Soviet power in the localities and laid down guidelines for their election, composition and responsibilities. These guidelines mirrored similar provisions issued in Russia in 1918.[14] At hubernia and povit level, executive committees were to be formed. Attached to these committees were several departments which had responsibility for

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10 Zakon pro obov'iazku sil'skykh hromad pry perevedenni zemel'noi reformy po zakonu 8 Sichnia 1919 roku. *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 131, ark. 13.

11 See Shchadiliv, *Instruktsii po zemel'nykh spravakh selians'kym spilkam, selianam, zemel'nym upravam i ahronam*, Kyiv, 1919, p. 3.

12 Kabanov, 'Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia', pp. 104, 135-141.

13 B. M. Babii, *Mistsevi orhany derzhavnoi vladu URSR v 1917-1920 rr*, Kyiv, 1956, p. 161.

14 *ibid.*, p. 163.

administration, land, military affairs, legal affairs, social provision, education, labour, finance, food collection, economy, health and publication of civil legislation.[15]

The foundation of Soviet power in the localities was the revkom. This body organised the seizure of power in the locality and therefore was often a quasi-military organ. Membership of the revkoms was largely comprised of committed local revolutionaries. Once power had been established in a volost, authority theoretically passed to the executive committee. This body had four departments: land, administration, food collection and information.[16] The difficulties faced by the Soviet regime in Ukraine in many areas, including Right-Bank Ukraine, prevented the construction of an administrative apparatus along these lines. Organisation was often weak, Soviet officials lacked experience or political opponents were active.[17] In some areas where military opposition to Soviet rule remained especially strong, revkoms were the predominant form of organisation. Indeed, there were cases where vykonkoms were reorganised back into revkoms in the face of a military or political threat.[18]

The kombedy were introduced into the village in 1919 to work in tandem with other Soviet organs to mobilise poorer peasants and organise the tasks of administration. The opposition faced by the Soviet regime meant that there were differences in regional approaches to their organisation. A decree of 13 January from the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Ukraine ordered that kombedy should be organised in territory freed from the Directory. Where a revkom had not yet been formed all power was to pass to the kombedy until a soviet could be elected.[19]

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15 *ibid.*, pp. 162-3, 164-5. At povit level there were economic departments but at hubernia level economic councils often replaced these departments presumably with greater responsibility to implement and discuss policy.
16 *ibid.*, p. 163.
17 I. K. Rybalka, 'Z istorii radians'koho budivnytstva na Ukraini na 1919 r.', in *Velikyi zhovten' i hromadians'ka viina na Ukraini*, ed. by M. I. Suprunenko, Kyiv, 1993, pp. 183-199 (p. 185).
18 See examples of this process in Kyiv hubernia cited in Babii, *Mistsevi orhany*, pp. 172-173. A protocol of a common gathering of Hornostaipil'ia village on 11 May 1919, in response to a military threat from Otaman Struk, resolved that 'the executive committee of the volost soviet is considered dissolved and a temporary revolutionary committees is to be elected. Until the convocation of a soviet, the power of the revkom is to extend over the whole territory of the volost'. *DAKO*, f. R-87, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 26. Protokol sel'skogo skhoda m. Gornostaipolia, Radomyshl'skogo uezda, Kievskoi gub, 11 Maia 1919.
19 Trigub, 'Sovety', p. 9.

In Kyiv hubernia, the kombedy worked in parallel with the soviet, fulfilling the task of food collection which was such a high priority of the state.[20] In Podillia and Volyn, however, the kombedy practically replaced the soviet. In May and June 1919 only kombedy were created in these hubernias.[21] Thus in 1919, there were 1,113 kombedy in eight povity of Kyiv hubernia, 1,528 kombedy in seven povity of Volyn and 1,320 kombedy in the central povity of Podillia. From an estimate of 16,000 soviet organs created in 1919 nearly 5,000 were kombedy organised in place of village executive committees.[22] The high occurrence of kombedy in the villages of the Right Bank in comparison with other areas reflects the Soviet regime's expectation of opposition to their rule. The kombedy, founded on the principle of empowering a minority within the village, had much broader authority than other local bodies to enforce soviet policy. They were ultimately responsible, not to the wider village community, but to the Soviet administrative hierarchy.

Local committees concentrated martial power in their own hands and were known under a variety of names; revkoms, staffs-of-five, revolutionary staffs and military-operational staffs.[23] Soviet decrees set down guidelines for those groups who were to be excluded from participating in elections to local soviets as well as those who were entitled to vote.[24] One of the Soviet practices which became widespread was the frequent re-election of village soviets. This had the two-fold effect of enabling the participation of more capable and experienced members and excluding those who had a less desirable political history.[25] On the orders of Soviet organs certain individuals were to be liable for arrest such as landowners, merchants, those who used hired labour and so on.[26]

There was a disparity between the guidelines for Soviet power and its reality. The effective devolution of power into the localities meant that the construction of a Soviet

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20 *ibid.*, p. 9.
21 *ibid.*, p. 10.
22 *ibid*, p. 11.
23 Rybalka, 'Z istorii', p. 190.
24 Babii, *Mistsevi orhany*, p. 161.
25 Rybalka, 'Z istorii', pp. 192-93.
26 Babii, *Mistsevi orhany*, p. 192.

apparatus differed from area to area. Local Soviet organs, particularly the kombedy and revkoms, were given wide-ranging powers including military responsibilities. There were few avenues for peasants to complain about the activities of such organs. The activities of the kombedy were legitimised by the Soviet authorities. To object was to risk being seen as a kulak. These extraordinary Soviet organs were more widespread in the Right Bank during 1919, which suggests that the Soviet regime struggled to establish a foothold in the village.

On taking power in the area, the Whites tried to return rural administration to its pre-revolutionary structure, as the Hetman had before them. At a volost meeting in Hermanivs'ka volost, Kyiv hubernia, on 1 September 1919, nine representatives of village communities were summoned by a leader of a White detachment.[27] They were ordered to send supplies and equipment required by the Volunteer Army to the volost for collection. The peasants were also ordered to 'elect the volost administration that existed before 1 March 1917, i.e. the volost starshina and volost court. The population of the volost should respect order and law and obey authority.'[28] This was clearly an attempt to resurrect the old administrative order in the countryside. A later document, in which a peasant appointed by the Volunteer Army as head of the volost militia requested to be released from his duties, suggests that his position was no longer tenable or he was unwillingly held responsible for the village's behaviour.[29]

As in pre-revolutionary times, the skhod remained the executive organ of the community and continued to be the forum for debate and decision-making. Skhod resolutions were often important expressions of collective will during the civil war. Decisions independently reached by peasants were considered binding on all village members. Even in instances where executive power had been transferred to another body

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27 This representative is described as the head of the Volchansk partisan detachment but there is little doubt, considering his actions, that he was linked to the White forces. Certainly the White forces had reached Kyiv hubernia and the areas around Hermanivs'ka volost by the end of august 1919. See *Istoriia mist i sil Ukrains'koi RSR: Kyivs'ka oblast'*, Kyiv, 1971, pp. 38, 467.

28 *DAKO*, f. 1156, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 48. Prigovor of volost skhod, Hermanivs'ka volost, 1 September 1919.

29 *ibid.*, ark. 50.

(such as an executive committee or village soviet), the skhod usually elected members or was called on to give its assent to decisions regarding the wider community, thereby reinforcing a social consensus.

One of the functions of the pre-revolutionary village obshchestvo was the 'dismissal from the obshchestvo and acceptance of new members'.[30] During 1917 the village community had often expanded to include all village residents rather than the members of the peasant soslovie alone.[31] Numerous other social groups remained in the countryside after 1917 but peasant tolerance of their continued presence varied.[32] That some communities carried on the practice of admitting new members into the obshchestvo is evidence of the continued relevance and importance of traditional peasant institutions. Being accepted into the community officially entitled incomers to a share of village resources or other rights within the village.

The countryside during the revolution must have been characterised by increased social movement and contact between various groups. The war had led to an influx of refugees fleeing the front. This process continued during the civil war. In addition, there were the troops of various powers whose advances crossed Right-Bank Ukraine, deserters from these armies, political activists and officials and, as the situation in urban settlements deteriorated, workers and townspeople searching for food.[33] Many Jewish families and members of the nobility travelled in the opposite direction, seeking refuge from peasant violence in the towns.[34] Peasant attitudes towards each of these groups varied considerably. Not all of those resident in the village were so readily accepted into peasant society. As

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30 Shramkov, *Svedeniia*, p. 3.

31 Kabanov calls this process the 'democratisation of the skhod', 'Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia', p. 106.

32 See Orlando Figes, 'Peasant Farmers and the Minority Groups of Rural Society: Peasant Egalitarianism and Village Social Relations during the Russian Revolution 1917-1921', in *Peasant Economy*, ed by Kingston-Mann & Mixter, pp. 378-401.

33 See Krawchenko, *Social Change*, p. 47. Between 1914 and 1920 the urban population of Ukraine declined from 5.6 million to 4.2 million; See A. V. Likholat. *Razgrom burzhuazno-natsionalisticheskoi Direktorii na Ukraine*, Moskva, 1949, p. 188. The town of Radomyshl, Kyiv, for example, was practically emptied of its pre-war population of 30,000 in 1919 as a result of military action in the area.

34 See Kossak, *The Blaze*, pp. 118-19. Kossak contrasts the comparative safety of the towns in comparison with the countryside for groups like Polish landowners.

became evident from disputes over land rights and entitlement to economic resources, there was often a great reluctance to grant access to those considered 'outsiders'. Peasants who held land in a number of villages as a result of claiming hereditary property or through purchase were often disenfranchised by the community's desire to look after its own.[35]

In comparison with the number of people who returned to the villages, evidence suggests that the number of those accepted into the community after 1917 was small.[36] The acceptance of new members was often linked to a historical claim, long-term residence in the locality or the benefit that a potential new member could bring to the community.

In general peasants were reluctant to admit not just outsiders but fellow Ukrainian peasants into their local community. Under the Central Rada there was discussion of the return of ethnic Ukrainians from the Central-Russian areas of Samara, Saratov, Simbirsk, Penzensk, Orël and elsewhere. By April 1918, some 345 requests by individuals and groups of Ukrainians wishing to return to their homeland, some 40, 000 people in all, had been received. Many were motivated to return by ill-treatment at the hands of the local Russian peasant population which had similarly rejected the presence of those they considered outsiders. A Rada official concluded of these petitioners that 'it has to be said with great regret that the [Ukrainian] peasants appear hostile towards these victims and do not wish to accept them within their community (*v sklad svoei hromady*)'.[37]

Membership of the community continued to be important, as it was the decisive factor in peasant access to village resources and participation in village decision-making. Consequently village assemblies deliberated carefully on the admission of new members. A

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35 See, for example, the evidence of action against those peasants who had purchased land with the aid of the Peasant Land Bank in Tsarist times. *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 103, ark. 10. Zhurnal zasidannia Haisins'koho povitzemkoma, 10 February 1918.

36 This was quite a common phenomenon throughout the former Russian Empire. A survey conducted in 1922 by the TsSU (Central Statistical Department) found that new members were accepted into the obshchestvo and given land in only half of rural Russian settlements. The average obshchestvo admitted only seven new members. Many of those who returned to the village after 1917 did not receive land. Refugees who settled in the village between 1917 and 1921 frequently had no wish to work on the land or tried to eke out an existence by hiring out their labour. See V. V. Kabanov, *Krest'ianskoe khoziaistvo v usloviiakh "voennogo kommunizma"*, Moskva, 1988, p. 219.

37 *TsDAVO*, f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 25, ark. 93. Protokol 3-i sessii holovnoho ukrains'koho zemel'noho komitetu, 15 Kvitniia 1918 roku.

protocol of the village community (*sel'skoe obshchestvo*) of Sofievs'ka-Borshchahivka on 9 April, 1919, declared:

> We, the undersigned peasants of the village of Sofievs'ka-Borshchahivka, Nikol's'ka volost, Kyiv hubernia and povit, gathered at the order of our village committee, in the village gathering, in the number of 80 persons having the right to vote. We listened to the request of the peasant M. M. Safanchuk to include him and his family in our Sofievskoe obshchestvo even though he is registered in Mohilev hubernia. However, as he grew up in our village from early childhood and knowing him to be of upstanding character, we, the whole village skhod, unanimously resolve to include him and his family in the list of our Sofievskoe obshchestvo.[38]

In Hermanivs'ka-Slobodka village skhod, 8 November 1919, peasants passed a resolution accepting a female peasant and her son formerly registered in Bilatserkovs'kyi povit into the obshchestvo. The basis for the village's decision was that the woman had lived in the village for sixteen years. The document stressed that during this time her behaviour had been honourable and upright and that she had never been suspected of any criminal activity. Two-thirds of the villagers (numbering 335 householders) had participated in the discussion, making it very much a joint decision.[39] The same village also accepted a veterinary assistant, previously registered in Tambov, into the community by a protocol of 15 February 1919.[40] His skills would obviously have benefited the community.[41] Individuals accepted into the community assumed the same legal rights as other members.[42]

Decisions over whom was accepted into the community varied. In Hermanivs'ka village a prisoner of war and two former landowners were accepted into the community. In

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38 *DAKO*, f. R-94, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 1, 5. Under the authority of Nikol's'ko-Borshchahivka volost ispolkom the list of family members was added to the obshchestvo on 2 May, 1919.

39 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 14, ark. 17. The prigovor was registered in the *ustanovlennaia kniga*, a book for recording village decisions which very much mirrored pre-revolutionary practice.

40 A veterinary assistant (*veterinarnyi fel'dsher*) lacked a standard qualification but had practising experience of veterinary duties.

41 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 14, ark. 4.

such cases much depended on the community's judgement of the claimants' character. The landowners were accepted as 'upright people who had not experienced a hostile relationship with the peasants'.[43] However, it is possible that compulsion was applied by political powers to induce communities to accept new members. The rules governing the acceptance of new members into the community dated back to the Tsarist period.[44] It is unlikely that, in the difficulties of the civil war, peasants would gather to discuss the acceptance of new members into their community if this institution had ceased to have any real significance.

The continued importance of the gathering was recognised by political powers. When trying to establish authority in a given area, representatives of political groups called meetings of the community to explain policy or issue orders. However, as before 1917, the skhod had an ambivalent character. At times it acted as an instrument for maintaining order and observing the rule of law laid down by government, but at others it was a rallying point for political or military opposition and the assertion of peasant political or social ideals. The community was therefore an unreliable institution from the point of view of state authority. Peasant behaviour was unpredictable and the community's capacity to generate anti-government feeling was considerable.[45]

In 1917 peasants largely achieved supremacy in the battle to assert the legitimacy of their institution's claims for land and legal, social and political freedoms. Neither the Provisional Government or Central Rada was able to put a brake on the irresistible social movement of peasants towards achieving these aims. However, the entry of the Austro-Germans into Ukraine heralded a new period in which central governments tried to claw back some of the rights peasants had gained before spring 1918 and build a viable state whose social policies were somehow acceptable to the peasants.

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42 The standard phrase was '*na ravnykh pravakh so vsemi grazhdanami*', on equal rights with all citizens.
43 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 14, ark. 1.
44 The pre-revolutionary law concerning the 'acceptance and dismissal of members of peasant communities' was passed on 28 May 1885. See Bilimovich, *Krest'ianskii pravoporiadok*, p. 23. However, the practice dated back to the eighteenth century. See Isabel de Madariaga, 'Catherine II and the Serfs: A Reconsideration of Some Problems', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 126, 1974, 34-62 (p. 41).
45 See Kabanov, 'Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia', p. 144.

Peasants often accepted the need for authority within the village . In Tsarist times, serving as a village official was often viewed as a burden which was shared out between village members over time.[46] From 1917, however, more capable and experienced men were placed in positions of influence and power, replacing those who were not up to the job. For example, the village gathering of Kivacheva village in March 1918 discussed the question of village administration, in particular, the election of a new village head. The incumbent official was illiterate which was seen as a great disadvantage, for 'in times such as these, we need a person who is literate'.[47]

Political powers tried to supervise the activities of village organisations. Immediate responsibility rested with the volost authorities. In March 1918, for example, Stanislavchiks'ka volost land committee carried out an inventory of the resources of the land committee in Budek village. A local peasant official had supervised the sale of timber from a nearby forest but no record was kept of the proceeds. The account book had been tampered with and 2,503 rubles from the sale of the timber were missing from the community's coffers. The village issued a protocol holding this peasant personally responsible for the money. Reports of such abuses of power were relatively rare. It was the duty of the volost to investigate but responsibility often passed further to povit or even hubernia level.

Peasants were often obliged to elect new members to village institutions when there was a change in the balance of national or regional power. Peasants who were identified too strongly with previous regimes were undesirable members of any prospective administration. However, the pressure to re-elect peasant bodies in this way usually came from the political authorities rather than the peasants themselves.

Village meetings allowed the more influential members of village society to make their views known. In the village of Severinovka, Lityns'kyi povit, Podillia, May 1918, the

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46 See Polovtsev, *Materialy*, p. 69. Bilimovich argued that the lack of interest in serving as a village official meant that the less capable were often the only willing candidates. See *Krest'ianskii pravoporiadok*, pp. 28-29. This situation changed during the Revolution.

47 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 139. Protocol of Kivacheva village, 7 March 1918

village starosta called a meeting to discuss the changes of government at national level. Several peasants spoke against the new Hetman state. On 12 May they held a meeting at which a teacher, Kuzminskyi, was instrumental in drawing up an anti-government manifesto which passed to other villages within the volost (Mezhirivs'ka).[48] In a neighbouring village (Hliniavka) the leader of anti-government protests was also a teacher.[49]

Individual peasants could be particularly vocal and influential in village gatherings, for good or for ill. In the village of Bubnovka, it was said of one peasant, Semenov-Krasnovskii, that 'in all skhods and meetings around Bubnovka he called the peasants to pogroms and to the destruction of the "landlords' nests" in his speeches; in general his speeches were of a pogrom character'.[50] Semenov-Krasovskii was accused by the village starosta, Andrei Ustrian, of rousing the peasants against the landlords and authorities. Peasants were apparently too frightened to complain about him.[51] Whether this peasant intimidated the entire village or whether other peasants were hiding their own involvement by offering up a scapegoat to the authorities is open to debate.

Village gatherings during 1918 provided the impetus and legitimacy for peasant action much as they had during 1917. For example, several peasants in the village of Penkovka, Lityns'kyi povit, Podillia, were accused of inciting their fellow villagers to destroy the estate buildings of the local landowner.[52] In Bratslavs'kyi povit, August 1918, a peasant of the village of Mikhalevka, Rodion Slipenskyi, 'being a representative of the village community, began to persuade the peasants to strip the landowner's forest as if it somehow belonged to them'.[53]

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48 *TsDIA,* f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7325, ark. 2. Prokuror Odesskoi sudebnoi palaty po obvineniiu uchitelia Kuz'minskogo i dr. v uchastii manifestatsii v s. Severinovka, Litinskogo uezda, Pod. gub..

49 *ibid.*, ark. 3.

50 Though now commonly associated with anti-Semitic violence, the term 'pogrom' applied to any kind of destructive disorder.

51 *TsDIA,* f. 419, op. 3, spr. 403, ark. 130. Prokuror Vinnitskogo okruzhnogo suda, G. sudebnomu sledovateliu 3 uchastka Gaisinskogo uezda, 24 August 1918.

52 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7284, ark. 75.

53 *ibid.*, ark. 91.

Village gatherings had traditionally been immersed in a culture of coercion and violence but during the civil war they became particularly brutalised. In October 1918, Austrian troops shot and killed a peasant in a village gathering in Troiana. He had been seen smiling during a speech warning peasants not to use a neighbouring forest.[54] In Kholotsovka village, Vinnyts'kyi povit in August 1918, the volost starshina whose responsibilities also included maintaining public order, appeared in the village gathering. Peasant uprisings in neighbouring districts had unsettled the villagers and the starshina ordered that peasants turn out for a nightly patrol (*dlia nochnogo obkhoda*, presumably to prevent any illegal activity). When he warned that peasants who did not turn up would be arrested, 'from out of the crowd appeared a blind soldier F. Ianchishin, who declared that the starshina had no right to place people under arrest. At this moment three shots were fired from the crowd and the starshina was killed.'[55] Following this murder speeches condemning the Hetman and Germans were made and a gang of peasants subsequently tried to attack landlord property and local officials.[56] Thus, village gatherings could foster peasant disorder.

Despite the growing potential for conflict within the village in the intense political conditions of the civil war, the community usually tried to protect its own people. In September 1918, the village gathering in Starai-Siniava drew up a prigovor supporting one of its members, a peasant called Vaisenberg, who had recently been arrested. The villagers unanimously declared that it was well known that Vaisenberg had not participated in any political activity and vouched for his reliability and character.[57] Similar declarations were recorded in support of three other peasants who also been arrested for political activity without any apparent grounds.[58]

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54 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 289. Telegram of 30 October 1918.
55 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7306, ark. 4. Prokurory Vinnitskogo okruzhnogo suda - tovarishcha prokurora Vinnitskogo okruzhnogo suda po YI i IY uchastkam.
56 *ibid.*, ark. 4.
57 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 158. Protocol of village skhod in Staraia Siniava, September 1918.
58 *ibid.*, ark. 160, 164, 165.

Another means of protecting the village from the actions of outsiders was through appeals to higher authorities. The Kyiv povit commissar of the Central Rada received a string of complaints from peasant villages about requisitions by German troops. Complaints were received from a number of groups; Markhalevka village representatives, Budaivs'ka narodna uprava, Mikhailivka village skhod, Romanivs'ka and Bilyts'ka village administrations and Bilohorods'ka volost administration.[59] These organisations were essentially variants of village community organisations. Most continued to draw their authority from the village gathering or wider community.

Central governments recognised that controlling the community and limiting peasant activity was vital if their regimes were to penetrate the countryside. Throughout the civil war period efforts were made to supervise village gatherings for signs of anti-government sentiment. Villages were often held collectively responsible for the actions of individual peasants, which challenged the solidarity witnessed in peasant village action in 1917. Villages were often subject to intense conflict between those groups who supported continued peasant opposition and those who stood for order and compromise. In some instances there were attempts to marginalise or prevent large village gatherings.

Village meetings were often convened not at the behest of peasants themselves but at the command of a representative of authority. In such instances the agenda of the meeting was dictated by the latter and peasants were often compelled by the threat of force to accede to his demands. This reinforces the notion that the authority of skhod decisions was flexible. Resolutions were only binding if peasants considered them so. A skhod meeting in Hornostaipol'e, Kyiv hubernia, in May 1919, recognised that the 'executive committee [of

59 *Kievshchina v gody grazhdanskoi voiny*, pp 7-8. 'Iz doneseniia kievskogo uezdnogo komissara Tsentral'noi Rady Kievskomu gubernskomu komissaru o rekvizitsiiakh i grabezhakh, chinimykh germanskimi voiskami i bor'be trud'iashchikhsia protiv okkupantov', 23 March 1918.

the skhod] only fulfilled the demands of Struk at gun-point and therefore they are not liable for punishment'.[60]

Under the Hetman village gatherings were frequently observed by officials. In the village of Bol'shaia Bubnovka, a village meeting was held in Proskurivs'kyi povit in July 1918 and attended by the chief of the fifth division of the povit Derzhavna Varta. When a particular peasant urged the gathering to resist efforts to return stolen property and pay for damages caused during 1917, Derzhavna Varta officials were sent into the crowd to arrest him.[61]

The case against this peasant, P. P Ivanitsky, demonstrated the limits of village solidarity. Once he had been apprehended there was no reaction from the village. The Derzhavna Varta pressurised the village starosta to issue a resolution and the peasants subsequently agreed to the arrest of Ivanitsky for agitation and to return stolen property.[62] Increased pressure was thus placed on peasants to maintain order and oto stracise those who wished to carry on the political struggle. In some instances the obshchestvo gave way to the authorities, particularly if the crimes of an individual were of a purely opportunistic, profiteering character. A report from Chyhyryns'kyi povit noted that 'communities have begun to hand over suspects to the authorities'. In Ositniazhets village the community had named a suspect accused of a series of murders and thefts and apprehended him.[63]

The village gathering became the arena for conflict. Semenov-Krasovskii, discussed above, was denounced in the village gathering by a peasant called Cherevchuk and was arrested. Cherevchuk was later found murdered, allegedly by friends of the arrested.[64] The onus on village starosty or other officials to safeguard public order meant that they were

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60 *DAKO*, f. R-87, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 26. 11 May 1919. Struk was, of course, one of the more well known otomany (leaders of local military bands) who were active in Kyiv hubernia at this time.

61 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7334, ark. 4. Protocol Nachal'nika 3 uchastka Proskurivs'kogo uezda. 1 August 1918.

62 *ibid.*, ark. 4. The case against Ivanitsky, lodged in the Odessa court chambers, was later halted by the Directory who doubtlessly would not have wished to proceed with an action concerning the previous regime. This particular fond holds court records of cases heard in Odessa up to 1919, long after the state whose laws the Chambers implemented had disappeared.

63 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 97, ark. 75. Zvodka pro nastryi naselennia. 30 August 1918.

often targeted by other peasants who objected to their interference. The village starosta in Bortnika, like his counterpart in Kholotovska already mentioned, was murdered in August 1918 whilst in June 1918 the Cherno-Ostrovskii volost starshina was also attacked and murdered.[65] Often these officials had returned to their posts having been rejected as too moderate or traditional during the events of 1917.

Peasants often tried to avoid the supervisory methods of the authorities. A Derzhavna Varta report of July 1918 that in Kodnians'ka volost, Iankovstye village, a village gathering was held without the participation or permission of the village head. The peasants had threatened to lead him to the meeting 'on a rope'.[66] In Baranovets village, Volyn, in August 1918, 'there was an illegal gathering of peasant deputies from many villages for the consideration and realisation of issues cited in a programme brought from Kyiv'.[67]

Realising that peasant opposition was rooted in their traditional institutions or was organised in traditional ways, central governments tried to prohibit skhod meetings. A UNR decree stated:

> (i) All meetings in the open or in buildings may be convened only with the permission of the Chief Commander of the South-Western Front of the UNR. (ii) General meetings of registered societies, unions and cooperatives and also lectures, papers, declarations and party meetings can be convened only with the permission of the hubernia commissar.[68]

The latter organisations might have been expected to be more supportive of the Directory and therefore their executive organs (in the shape of three-man committees) were more likely to

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64 *TsDIA,* f. 419, op. 3, spr. 403, ark. 130. Procurator of Kam'ianents-Podil's'kyi okrug court, 6 July 1918.
65 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7306, ark. 2; spr. 7320, ark. 1. Prokuroru Odesskoi sudebnoi palaty Kamianets-Podol'skogo okruzhnogo suda.
66 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 95, ark. 96. Volyn starosta to head of Derzhavna Varta, 9 July 1918.
67 *ibid.*, ark. 85. Presumably a political manifesto of some kind, perhaps the peasant congress which convened outside Kyiv between 8-10 May 1918. See Bunyan, *Intervention*, p 18. Khrystiuk. *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, III, p. 15.
68 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 11. Oholoshennia of Volyn hubernia commissar, Sutnevich.

be allowed to meet.[69] General meetings were forbidden, however. The Podillia hubernia commissar, Stepura, noted that:

> The compulsory decree of 26 November 1918 prohibited every gathering and skhod even if official. However, according to information, gatherings have been held in several places without the required permission. In view of the fact that such violations should not be permitted, I order povit commissars and chiefs of defence to take the necessary measures to suppress this phenomenon. Furthermore, I inform the population of Podillia that all meetings and skhods may take place only with the permission in Kam'ianets, of the hubernia commissar and in other areas, the povit commissar. In case of violation of the compulsory decree of 26 November, I order that meetings and skhods be dispersed by force.[70]

This example reveals Directory attitudes towards peasant protest originating in the village. During 1917 and 1918 the village met to discuss the political questions of the day and declare support for political action. However, by 1919 the Directory was suppressing those social forces which once might have supported it. Peasant support could rapidly evolve into hostility if their demands were not met, which explains the cautious attitude towards such gatherings.

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During the civil war peasants played an important role in opposing the forces of various political groups by organising limited military efforts against them. Peasant military action affected every government in Ukraine during the civil war. This was far from surprising, given the gap between the policies of political powers and the aspirations of the peasants. These efforts had very strong links to community organisations.

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69 *ibid.*, ark. 11.

70 *TsDAVO,* f. 538, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 29. Nakaz Podil's'koho huberns'koho komisara, No. 12103, 30 hrudnia 1918. Text also printed in *Podillia v roku hromadianskoi viiny*, pp. 124-25.

As a consequence of war, large numbers of peasants received military training and experience. Many of these men were well armed or able to obtain arms relatively easily.[71] The agrarian revolution of 1917 had been witness to a degree of violence as peasants seized control of land. However, it was the arrival of the Austro-German forces in spring 1918 which became the main catalyst to violent action. Their policies led to hostility, as did attempts to force peasants to give up their arms. They proved reluctant to do so. This can be linked to developments during 1917 when there had been discussion of organising village militias under the supervision of the skhod. In 1918 villages were searched, threatened and in some cases actually bombarded in an attempt to induce peasants to submit their weapons. [72]

There was certainly no shortage of weapons in the Right bank. As well as the arms that returning soldiers had brought back from the front, peasants were sometimes able to obtain arms from Austro-German supplies.[73] A secret Varta report on the disturbances in Mohilivs'kyi povit, August 1918, detailed how rifles were distributed among the villages of the district in preparation for the uprising by a former commandant, Vovka.[74] At the end of 1918, when the Central Powers began to withdraw their troops from Ukraine, there were also reports of Austrian troops selling or handing over their arms and equipment to peasants and returning prisoners of war.[75]

Peasant opposition to the Hetman manifested itself in violent forms. At its most extreme there were concerted uprisings against the Hetman authorities and the Austro-Germans as well as local-level armed resistance which took the form of opportunistic

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71 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 11.

72 *ibid.*, ark. 48. 5 July 1918. Ol'hopil's'kyi povit starosta to hubernia starosta about case in Ovsievka village, 5 July 1918. *Podillia v roku hromadianskoi viiny,* p. 70.

73 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 100. The chairman of the Union of Landowners and a notary were murdered by a mob of peasants in what appeared a pre-planned attack. The peasants then forced an Austrian commander to hand over a quantity of arms.

74 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 19. Over 1,300 rifles and 19 machine-guns had been distributed in the volost.

75 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 240. Telegram dated 8 November 1918; *ibid.*, ark. 270-8. In some cases the sale of armaments to the peasants by the Austrians sparked off further disturbances; See also *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 3, spr. 403, ark. 276. Odesskaia sudebnaia palata procurator, 12 November 1918.

partisan attacks on certain targets or armed reaction to government policy. The summer of 1918 witnessed several large-scale revolts in Right-Bank Ukraine, particularly in Zvenihorods'kyi, Tarashchans'kyi, Kanivs'kyi povity, Kyiv hubernia.[76] A telegram from Zvenihorod in June 1918 reported that peasant uprisings in Lisians'kyi raion had 'assumed the character of a partisan war against the Ukrainians and Germans (*protiv Ukrainsko-Nemtsev*). The partisan detachments around Lisianka number 15,000 men.'[77] Peasant action had begun as a direct reaction to German policy in local areas.[78]

Further revolts arose in August 1918 throughout the Right Bank. In Mohiliv-Podil's'kyi povit, for example, a revolt began in the village of Kukovka after agitators had called an illegal skhod meeting and issued the population with a call to arms.[79] Agitators (so-called '*Radovtsy*') called for the restoration of the Central Rada and the destruction of the Hetmanate.[80] Such uprisings created panic within the towns and villages of the Right Bank.[81] They also elicited a firm response from the Austro-German military authorities which often failed to distinguish between those villages which opposed the Hetman openly and those who passively accepted it.[82] The success of this peasant war in the countryside cannot be doubted, given the difficulty which the authorities experienced in pacifying the uprisings and the high Austro-German casualty figures.[83]

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76 A report from Izvestiia VTsIK reported that 'All of Kiev guberniia is engulfed by the peasant movement'. In many areas 'peasant detachments were attacking German and Ukrainian troops'. They were well armed and well organised. *Izvestiia VTsIK*, No. 118, 11 June 1918, *Kievshchina v gody grazhdanskoi voiny*. No. 25, .p. 23; See also Iu. Iu. Belan, *Otechestvennaia voina Ukrainskogo naroda protiv Nemetskikh okkupantov v 1918 godu*, Kiev, 1960. Belan discusses the course of peasant uprisings in Right-Bank Ukraine; in June and July, pp. 226, 227, 228, 230, 231, 232 and in August, pp. 240-3; See also Fedyshyn, *Germany's drive to the East*, pp. 144-5, 186-7. Reports of peasant uprisings in *Svoboda Rossii*, No. 19, 4 May 1918 and *Novaia zhizn* No. 108, 5 June 1918, cited in Bunyan, *Intervention*, p. 22. A. V. Likholat, *Razgrom natsionalisticheskoi kontrrevoliutsii na Ukraine 1917-1922 gg*, Moskva, 1954. p. 111. *Krakh Germanskoi okkupantsii na Ukraine (po dokumentam okkupantov)*, M. Gorkyi, I.Mints & R.Eideman (eds), Moskva, 1936. pp. 166, 168, 169, 170.

77 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 16, ark. 6. Kiev UTA. Iz Zvenigorodki, 6 June 1918.

78 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op.1, spr. 97, ark. 14. Letter to Kyiv hubernia starosta from Zvenihorodsyi povut commandant, 18 June 1918.

79 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7307, ark. 1. O vosstanie krest'ian Mogilevkogo uezda.

80 *ibid.*, ark. 1. SR involvement was cited in disturbances in Zvenihorod (*TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 97, ark. 224) and Mohiliv (*TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7307, ark. 1).

81 See for example, *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 16, ark. 6.

82 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 24, ark. 10. Head of povit Derzhava Varta to head of Iz'iaslavs'kyi district Varta, Volyn, 29 July 1918

83 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 16, ark. 6. German forces in Zvenihorod were reported as being too small to effectively combat the peasant uprisings.

Peasant action was led by those members of village society who commanded influence and respect. In Chebotarka village, Podillia, a teacher was charged with carrying out secret political agitation against the government in secret meetings.[84] Soldiers and sailors were also frequently cited as the instigators of peasant action. A report from Volyn in July put the continued resistance to the Hetman down to the agitation and influence of soldiers returning home to Ukraine from abroad.[85] In June 1918, it was reported that 'in many villages of Umans'kyi povit soldier-peasants mobilise, arm themselves and rise up against the government, Germans and estate owners'.[86] The attempt to restore order in Tarashchans'kyi povit and return stolen property to its owners had led to 'violent discontent among the peasant population and as a result, soldiers, returning from the front, are organising themselves in rebellious bands'.[87]

The armed struggle against the Hetman and the Austro-Germans polarised the community. An *obiavlenie* (announcement) to the population of Mohilivs'kyi and Iampil's'kyi povity required volost starshiny and village starosty to report 'bandit activity' in their villages to the authorities. They were forbidden from supplying food or shelter to any rebels and failure to comply with the decree was punishable by death.[88] Under pressure from the government, many villages complied with these demands.

After a peasant uprising was forcibly pacified by German troops in Dubens'kyi povit, Volyn, in July 1918, a skhod meeting was held by the hubernia starosta. The skhod 'expressed regret at recent events'. The starosta demanded that the suspects be turned over to the authorities if they reappeared and that all weapons be handed in. The skhod gave a 'guarantee of complete calm'.[89] In Mohiliv, following the disturbances of August 1918, peasants 'issued resolutions about the rejection of agitators and bandits and handing them

84 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 211. Head of information department to hubernia starosta, 13 October 1918.
85 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 10. Doklad No. 1 regarding mood of population, 17 July 1918.
86 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 97, ark. 55. Zvodka from povit starosti, 12 June 1918.
87 *ibid*, ark. 49. Tarashchansyi povit starosta to Kyiv hubernia starosta.
88 *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7307, ark. 10.

over to the authorities'.[90] Within the village, only twenty per cent of peasants were said to be in favour of violence. The remainder wished for peace.[91]

Peasants and village officials played a large role in political and military opposition to the Hetman. A report on the mood of the population in Skvirs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, in August 1918 noted that 'throughout the district there is general agitation by members of the spilka, former land committees and soviets'.[92] In some villages starosty were reported forming bands of 'red hundreds' from local peasants.[93] The former chairman of Iz'iaslavs'kyi land committee was reported to be agitating against the government. His efforts were gaining success because he 'stood so close to the people'.[94]

Peasant revolts against the Hetman established a pattern of action that was repeated against successive governments. Local government agents and officials were often threatened or attacked. Administration, therefore, became a difficult and dangerous task and peasants within the village were discouraged from supporting the regime. Hetman officials, Austro-German troops, members of punishment detachments and landowners were singled out in particular for attack and assassination attempts.[95] Many Varta officers were killed in ambushes, clashes and skirmishes with armed bands of peasants.[96] Far from being a

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89 *TsDAVO,* f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 14, ark. 19. Note that the hubernia starosta was a Hetman official and was not similar to the village official of the same title.

90 *TsDIA,*. f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7307, ark. 2.

91 *TsDAVO,* f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 58. Svodka o nastroenii narodnykh mass, Podil'skoi hubernii, 22 July, 1918. Given the nature of the peasant reaction, this is likely to have been a conservative estimate.

92 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 97, ark. 87. Zvodka 1-15 chervnia 1919

93 *ibid.*, ark. 87.. The 'Red hundreds' were probably an allusion to the Black hundreds (*chernosotentsy*), a monarchist cossack organisation with military terrorist elements which acted in support of the Tsar and Russian Empire in the period after 1905. See *Modern Encyclopedia*, ed by Wieczynski, Vol. 4, pp. 197-200. *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 97, ark. 3.

94 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 11. Svodka agenturnykh svedenniia, 5 July 1918.

95 Those targetted also included Jewish forest workers, estate workers, estate managers and forest guards. See *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 19; spr. 97, ark. 55, 315; op. 2, spr. 2, ark. 28. *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7284, ark. 208; spr. 7321, ark. 4.

96 See *TsDIA*, f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7303, ark. 16. 19 October 1918. Prokuroru Kamanets-Podil'skogo okruzhnogo suda ot prokurora Mohilivskogo uchastka. The chief of the 3rd Division of Mohilivs'kyi povit Varta and a subordinate were murdered; *TsDIA,* f. 419, op. 1, spr. 7306, ark. 2. Chief of division of Bratslavs'kyi povit Varta murdered; *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 19. Two Varta officials murdered, chief of volost Varta injured. *ibid.*, ark. 20. Volyn, July 1918. Two Varta officials murdered. Chiefs of povit Varta and division Varta murdered. Varta detachment defeated. *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 95, ark. 85; *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 97, ark. 49. Povit Varta attacked; *ibid.*, ark. 348; *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 2, spr. 1, ark. 15. Varta detachments attacked; *ibid.*, ark. 25. Varta officials murdered, contributions levied on villages as a result; *TsDAVO,* f. 1216, op. 2, spr. 2, ark. 3, 10, 17, 32, 52. Attacks, woundings and murders of Varta officials in August 1918.

'motiveless killing spree',[97] these peasant murders had a distinct motive, the eradication of the presence of outsiders in the village.

The Directory failed to establish efficient executive power following its seizure of Kyiv.[98] Rather than support the UNR in its struggle with Soviet troops in early 1919, peasants turned against them. The same regions which had led opposition against the Hetman rebelled against the UNR in January, particularly in Kyiv hubernia.[99] By February revolt had spread to Iampil's'kyi, Mohilivs'kyi and Kam'ianets-Podil's'kyi povits of Podillia.[100] Peasants in Iampil's'kyi povit, mobilised by the Directory in February 1919, refused to fight against Ukrainian Soviet troops.[101] Wider revolts occurred in Volyn in March 1919. Peasants in Kremenets'kyi povit began targeting UNR officials.[102]

The UNR faced such problems throughout 1919. The Podillia hubernia commissar reported the difficulties of mobilising men from the villages of Kam'ianets'kyi povit in June 1919. Of 750 men summoned to join the Directory army, only fifty-five appeared of whom only eighteen were fit for active service.[103] Clearly it was difficult for the Directory to maintain military operations in such circumstances but they were not the only political force to suffer from peasant armed revolts. Both the Whites and the Soviet forces were to find the task of government made all the more difficult by peasant intransigence.

A report from the Soviet *Zafrontbiuro*[104] noted that 'peasants oppose all governments. In areas where Petliura has not arrived, where Denikin or Soviet troops are or

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97 Consider, for example, A. E. Adams' opinion that the agrarian revolution was 'a peasant cossack jacquerie, a series of bloody rebellions expressing in the most violent terms the agrarian population's protest at the conditions of its life', 'Great Ukrainian Jacquerie', p. 248.

98 Hrytsenko, *Politychni syly*, pp. 57-8. Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, pp. 252-3. Rudolph A. Mark. 'Social Questions and National Revolution: The Ukrainian republic in 1919-1920', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 14, 1990, 1, pp. 113-131.

99 Khrystiuk, *Ukrains'ka revoliutsiia*, IV, p. 76.

100 Suprunenko, *Ocherk istorii grazhdanskoi voiny i inostrannoi interventsii na Ukraine 1918-1920*, Moskva, 1966. pp. 124-25.

101 *Grazhdanskaia voina na Ukraine: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov v trekh tomakh, chetyrekh knigakh*, 3 Vols, 4 books, ed by S. M. Korolivsky, Kyiv, 1967. Vol. 1, bk. 1, document No. 745, p. 655.

102 *ibid.*, document No. 782, p. 684.

103 *Podillia v roku hromadianskoi voiny*, p. 286. No. 277, 24 June 1919. Of the remainder, 4 later escaped, 19 were excused duty permanently and 11 excused duty temporarily.

104 The *Zafrontbiuro,* or *Zafrontove Biuro TsK KP(b)U* to give its full title, was the Bolshevik revolutionary committee formed in July 1919 and charged with directing military efforts against Denikin and the Directory in

have been, they [the peasants] await Petliura. Where Petliura has been established for some time they are dissatisfied with him.[...] The cause of dissatisfaction is one and the same. All governments collect grain but give nothing in exchange.'[105] Peasant partisan detachments in Kyiv hubernia appeared sympathetic to Soviet troops during the attempt to defeat Denikin but once the area was placed under Soviet rule the revolts began once again.[106]

Peasant revolts likewise resulted from White attempts to mobilise troops. White sources recorded rebellions in Cherkassy, Kyiv hubernia, in November 1919. These revolts displayed a 'common peasant' character which involved mass participation by all groups within the village, whether rich or poor.[107] This peasant military force was so strong that Skvirs'kyi and Tarashchans'kyi povits were not held by any political force during the latter part of 1919.[108] White security reports noted that social and economic questions were of primary importance to the peasants and dissatisfaction quickly arose in the village when these issues were not addressed. Action by 'peasant insurgent leaders' often decided the fate of White as they had decided the fates of others.[109]

The Soviet regime was not spared peasant discontent.[110] In April 1919, 93 separate uprisings against Soviet power were recorded throughout Ukraine.[111] In the first six months of 1919 there were over 500 reports of 'kulak disturbances' in Kyiv hubernia alone.[112] These revolts were supported by all peasants (*pogolovnye*) rather than the small wealthier strata.[113] Whole villages turned against the Soviet forces in Right bank Ukraine.[114] Soviet

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Ukraine. See *Velykyi Zhovten' i hromadians'koi viina na Ukraini: Entsyklopedychnyi dovidnyk*, Kyiv, 1987, p. 209.

105 D.Kin, *Denikinshchina*, Leningrad, 1926, pp. 210, 213. P. Popov in a report of 21 October 1919.

106 *ibid.*, p. 213.

107 *ibid.*, p. 189, 212.

108 Ibid, p. 210,

109 Anna Procyk, *Russian Nationalism and Ukraine: The Nationality Policy of the Volunteer Army during the Civil War*, Edmonton, Toronto, 1995, pp. 125-126, 133.

110 Kin, *Denikinshchina*, p. 215.

111 Adams, 'Great Ukrainain Jacquerie', p. 266.

112 *Istoriia Mist i sil; Kyivs'ka oblast*, p. 38.

113 Frenkin, *Tragediia*, p. 204.

114 Kin, *Denikinshchina*, p. 214.

rule extended only hesitantly into the countryside and was largely confined to the towns and railways.[115] The chief reason was peasant armed opposition to Soviet land policy.[116]

Peasant uprisings in Right-Bank Ukraine began in March throughout Kyiv hubernia in areas which Soviet forces had seized from the Directory only two months before. Soviet reports noted the hostile mood in many villages. A village gathering was reported to have supported a call by officers of otaman Struk's detachment to join them. There were also reports of clashes between peasants and Cheka detachments.[117] Peasant revolts against the Soviet authorities in June weakened their ability to fight Denikin and the Directory.[118] Soviet leaders admitted that these peasant revolts were a decisive factor in causing the withdrawal of the Red Army. It was this '*partizanshchina*' (or peasant partisan war) that caused an internal crisis in the Soviet regime.[119]

Peasant discontent frequently developed links with the local otamany, particularly in the Right Bank (see Table A in appendix).[120] Some of these otomany were interested in purely criminal ends and indulged in pogroms and looting.[121] Others were identified with a political cause.[122] The most important factor in the power of these otamany, however, was the respect and authority they could command in local villages.[123] Antonov-Ovseenko wrote that, 'organising themselves on the initiative of some local leader, rebellious detachments linked with this personality, maintained faith in their "otaman". Entering the detachment voluntarily with their own weapons and poorly observing discipline, not breaking with the psychology of the peasant masses and only reluctantly leaving their localities, rebels were relatively immobile, unreliable and easily scattered.'[124] This comment succinctly encapsulates the essence of peasant military strength and its weaknesses. These otamany

115 Borys, *Sovietisation*, p. 234.
116 Frenkin, *Tragediia*, p. 204. Popov, *Narysy*, p. 194.
117 Antonov-Ovseenko. *Zapiski*, pp 160-161, 166.
118 Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, p. 280. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski*, p. 311.
119 Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski*, p. 336.
120 Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, p. 6. Kin, *Denikinshchina*, p. 191
121 Frenkin, *Tragediia*, pp. 193, 201.
122 Likholat, *Razgrom buzhuazno-natsionalisticheskii Direktoriia*, p. 185.
123 Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, pp. 5-6. Kyiv hubernia was one of these 'bandit regions'.

were no less important than more celebrated otamany in other regions of Ukraine, namely Makhno and Hryhoriiv. Some achieved a more widespread notoriety, such as Struk, Sokolovsky and Zelenyi. The latter's detachment was 15,000 strong, suggesting wide peasant support.[125]

Peasant action, whilst it was often illicit, was a general expression of peasant discontent, a reaction to the policies of governments towards them. It has often been characterised as chaotic anarchism but there was usually a definite rationale detectable in these peasant uprisings. They resisted the encroachment of government into the village.[126]

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One source which documents the often bewildering political changes and the organisation of village administration during 1918-19 are the records of Emil'chyns'ka volost, Volyn.[127] Based around the administrative centre (or *mistechka*) Emil'chyne (known as Mezhyrichka up to the beginning of the twentieth century and with a population of 1,835 in 306 households in 1906), the volost was situated to the north-west of Novohradvolyns'kyi.[128] To focus on this volost does not suggest that its experiences were common to all Ukrainian villages in the civil war. Different economic and social forces would have undoubtedly been highlighted had a Kyivan or Podillian village been studied. What makes Emilchyns'ka stand out is the way in which the documentary material, held in a fond of TsDAVO, reflects change over the whole period rather than during a limited term or

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124 Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski,* p. 336.

125 His personal history also reveals much about these years. Zelenyi (real name Daniel Terpilo) served in the Tsarist army and became a member of the Independent Ukrainian Social Democrats. Before 1918 he agitated for Soviet power but after the fall of the Hetman accepted a post in the Directory army. His soldiers, however, simply went home and Zelenyi organised a local division comprised of peasants. He offered this division to the Red Army in 1919 but the Soviets refused to accept such an independent unit. As a result, Zelenyi turned against them. See Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski*, pp. 170-171.

126 Frenkin, *Tragediia*, p. 211.

127 Fond 1642 in *TsDAVO*, deals with the administrative changes in Emilchyns'ka volost during 1918 and 1919.

128 *Istoriia mist i sil Ukrainskoi RSR: Zhitomyr'ska oblast'*, Kyiv, 1973, pp. 252-253.

for a particular institution.[129] Material from Central Rada, Soviet, Directory and Polish sources are all included in the fond. Furthermore, the records of the volost during 1918 and 1919 reveal much about peasant reactions to events which were common throughout the Right Bank and other areas of the Russian Empire. The experiences of Emilchyn'ska volost reveal how peasants coped with the constant advances and retreats of military forces, how they organised the local administration and how they reacted to other social groups.

Agriculture was the predominant livelihood for the inhabitants of the volost, which had experienced social changes similar to those occurring throughout European Russia in the late imperial period. Several hundred villagers migrated to Siberia in 1899 and a number of agro-industrial enterprises had been organised in the volost.[130] In 1905 there were seizures of land by the peasants and clashes with the authorities. As in other areas of Right bank Ukraine, there was a great shortage of available land for the burgeoning peasant population in the volost.[131]

By the end of 1917, the volost zemstvo was assuming responsibility for the social administration of local areas. Zemstvo councillors (*glasnye*) discussed such issues as supplying timber to peasants, asserting control over grain mills and maintaining the volost postal service.[132] These councillors were elected at village meetings. The Soviet invasion in January 1918 led to the formation of a revkom in the volost. However, little was achieved before the advance of the German troops at the end of February ended its existence. The leaders of the revkom were then exiled from the volost.[133]

In December 1918, after the brief rules of the Rada and Hetmanate, the Directory established its authority in the volost as part of the movement which swept the Hetman

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129 Archival fonds generally contain the records of particular institutions. This creates several fonds where there were frequent changes of power such as occurred in Ukraine in 1918 and 1919. Few studies have tried to concentrate on such small areas to demonstrate the course of revolutionary events.

130 A fabric works, a tar works, a distillery and an iron works were organised in the volost before the Revolution.

131 *Istoriia mist i sil: Zhitomyrs'ka oblast'*. p. 253.

132 *TsDAVO*, f 1642, op 1, spr 20, ark. 1, 6. Protocols of zemstvo gatherings held November 1917 and January 1918.

133 *Istoriia mist i sil: Zhitomyrs'ka oblast'*, p. 254.

authorities from power.[134] The UNR commandant in Novohradvolyns'kyi ordered on 16 December 1918 that information about the new regime should be read out in village gatherings.[135] On 1 January 1919, Seredy village community discussed various matters of organisation and voted delegates onto a number of commissions which were given responsibility for particular tasks, such as supplying timber to peasants. Representatives were also elected to the selian'ska spilka in the village and a presidium was formed with the specific purpose of collecting foodstuffs for Directory troops.[136]

A second protocol from a meeting in the same village on 17 January 1919, clarified the administrative structure. The community elected two representatives who, along with two members of the spilka and the starosta, were to supervise use of a neighbouring forest. A delegate was elected to a peasant congress on land reform in Novohradvolyns'kyi. A new chairman was installed as head of the village administration and sots'ki and desiats'ki were elected.[137] The resurrection of the spilka alongside this traditional structure was considered 'compulsory'.[138] An administrative structure had been created where the responsibilities of each organ were more rigidly defined and within that structure traditional peasant institutions played a significant role.

Protocols from village meetings dealt directly with administrative matters. In Apolonivka village, on 1 April 1919, new sots'ki and desiats'ki were elected because the previous incumbents had 'refused to carry out their duties'.[139] No reason is specified in the declaration for their refusal, though the tasks of administration in general often proved

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134 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 20, ark. 15. The zemstvo was refounded as the narodna uprava in December 1918. *Istoriia mist i sil: Zhitomyrs'ka oblast'* notes that representatives of the Directory arrived in Emil'chyne in November 1918, p. 255.

135 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 8. The *oholoshennia* (declaration) limiting independent skhod meetings followed soon after.

136 *ibid.*, ark. 59. Protokol obshchego sobraniia selian seredynskogo sel'skogo obshchestva, 1 January 1919.

137 *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, ed by Volodymyr Kubijovyc, Danylo Husar Struk, 5 vols, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1984-1991, 661; IV, p. 833.

138 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 60. Protokol obshchego sobraniia grazhdan seredynskogo sel'skogo obshchestva, 17 January 1919.

139 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 4. Prigovor, 1 April 1919.

difficult during the civil war.[140] Some historians have drawn attention to the generational shift in village power which took place as a consequence of the revolution. Traditional hierarchies based on age began to break down, as younger men with literary, military or political skills were appointed to positions of influence. For example, on 24 January 1919 the village of Mikhailivka elected a twenty-five-year-old peasant, I. K. Borovsky, as village head (*holova*). His assistant, K. Sh. Ostrovsky, was forty. The community attested to their good character (thereby demonstrating a link to traditional community practice).[141] A certificate (*posvidchyne*) from Mikhailivka on 27 March confirmed Borovsky's position as village head, noting that he had been elected by the whole community (*tsiloiu hromadoiu*).[142] After 1917, men of Borovsky's generation became more influential and it became less unusual for them to be elected to positions of power.

Another feature of the revolution in Volyn was the organisation of groups of foreign colonists who had settled there in Tsarist times. These groups were not always welcome in local peasant society and many colonists had suffered during the war and revolution. Protocols from gatherings in the colonies of Krilinska (9 January 1919), Bahomobovka (20 January) and Uvarovka (31 January) elected sots'ki and desiats'ki for the forthcoming year. Colonists appear to have organised themselves into communities with their own officials that corresponded to those of peasant villages.[143] The existence of such communities also suggests that these colonists continued to remain outside Ukrainian peasant society even though their main livelihood was agriculture. A declaration from the 'German obshchestvo' of the village of Kosiak, dated 9 February, elected sots'ki and a chairman. A later declaration

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140 The records of Hornostaipil'ska volost reveal the practical difficulties of encouraging peasant participation in rural administration. Two meetings of volost representatives convened on 24 August and 7 September 1919 could not proceed to discuss any business because an insufficient number of villages sent members. The volost was at this time faced with the threat of the advance of Denikin's troops, so their non-appearance is perhaps understandable. *DAKO.* f R-87, op 1, spr 1, ark 54, 55.

141 The document states that 'Both men are distinguished by their upright behaviour and they have not been and are not the subject of any court investigation'. *TsDAVO,* f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 63. Prigovor, 24 January 1919.

142 *TsDAVO,* f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 101. Posvidchyne, 27 March 1919.

143 *TsDAVO,* f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 62. Protocol of community of Krilins'ka colony, 9 January 1919; spr 10, ark 7, 68. Protocol of common gathering of Bagomobovka colony, 20 January 1919 and declaration of colonists from Uvarovka colony, 31 January 1919.

from the 'orthodox citizens' (*pravoslavnye grazhdane*, i.e. Ukrainians) within the same settlement on 3 July elected a committee from their own community.[144] This distinction between the two groups in the same village seems typical of this frontier region inhabited by several different ethnic elements; it was also characteristic of peasant mistrust of outsiders.

The Directory administration, to which village organisations were supposedly subordinate, enforced the interests of the state. For example, acting on a decree of the Novohradvolyns'kyi povit commissar on 26 February, the volost narodna uprava ordered village heads to ensure that peasants appeared at certain meeting points.[145] The narodna uprava was responsible for ensuring that the village heads mobilised a sufficient number of men for the Directory army.[146] Peasants often made poor soldiers who looked for the first opportunity to desert.[147]

The Directory struggled to maintain its resolve in the face of the Red Army's spring advance. A request from the Novohradvolyns'kyi povit commissar pleaded with members of volost organs to remain at their posts and to try to maintain some kind of order in the localities with the agreement of village communities.[148] This suggests that the links between the various levels of government were already beginning to break down. The povit commissar was still trying to clarify UNR policy as late as 30 January. He ordered that 'there should be village heads, not village starosty' in the village.[149] There was little difference between the duties each carried out but semantically the former was more representative of the regime the UNR intended to institute.

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144 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 30-31. Declarations of colony of Kosiak,9 february 1919 and 3 July 1919.

145 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 6, ark. 11. Prikaz of volost zemstvo to village starosta. The rules for mobilisation were that officers and personnel up to forty years and cossacks up to twenty-five years were to be inducted into the armed forces.

146 *ibid.*, ark. 32.

147 Peasants (defined by birth) constituted over seventy-five per cent of Red Army soldiers. Desertions increased during agricultural seasons when workers were required on the land. Conditions within the armed forces of all governments were often terrible and indiscipline was common. Figes notes, however, that the Red Army was eventually better able to solve the question of peasant mobilisation as peasants faced the stark choice of Red or White governments. See Orlando Figes, 'Red Army and Mass Mobilisation during the Russian Civil War 1918-1920', *Past and Present*, 129, 1990, pp. 168-211. (pp. 168, 171-2, 192-3, 196-209)

148 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 89. Order from UNR povit commander to all volost organs, 16 Jnauary 1919.

In mid-April 1919, UNR troops retreated and the initiative passed to the Soviet forces.[150] On 18 May representatives of all thirty-nine villages in the volost gathered in a volost congress. The meeting was opened by the chairman of the volost narodna uprava who then read the 'Provisional Statute on the organisation of local organs of Soviet power'.[151] A revolutionary committee was then elected from those present.[152] The duties of the narodna uprava were taken over by this volost congress of village representatives.[153] The Soviet regime, therefore, formed its new administration from the ashes of the old but soon set about introducing its own form of local government.

Foremost among new Soviet organisations were the kombedy. In an order of 18 May 1919 the 'Provisional Commissar of zemstvo and land institutions' ordered all narodnye upravy to 'organise village and volost kombedy' in accordance with the 'Provisional Statute'.[154] Kombedy were duly elected in the volost. On 19 May the colony of Zdorovets elected three members to sit on the kombedy.[155] Both the Ukrainian and German sections of the village participated in the meeting. On 1 June peasants in Apolonivka elected a chairman and members of the kombedy in a village gathering.[156] It is interesting that two of the peasants elected onto the kombedy, I. Zhelits'kyi and I. Rozbits'kyi, had been present just two months earlier at a community gathering which elected sots'ki and desiats'ki. Peasants, therefore, adapted to different organisations which appeared in the village, particularly when they were similar to existing institutions. In Iakimentsy, for example, the village community

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149 *ibid.*, ark. 94.
150 *Istoriia mist i sil; Zhitomyrs'ka oblast,* p. 255.
151 This provisional decree aimed to transfer 'all power to the hands of the working class and poorest peasants'. The highest organ of power was to be the congress of soviets at volost, povit and hubernia level. Soviets were to be formed in the villages with one deputy per hundred inhabitants. These deputies were to serve for three months. Villages with less than three hundred inhabitants were able to rule themselves directly through representatives elected in the skhod. *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 10. Vremmenoe polozhenie ob organizatsii mestnykh organov sovetskoi vlasti i poriadke upravlennia, as signed by Khristian Rakovsky.
152 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 20, ark. 22. Protocol of meeting of representatives of village congress, 18 May 1919.
153 *ibid.*, ark. 23.
154 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 1. Prikaz novograhvolynskogo vremmenogo komissara vsekh zemskikh i zemel'nykh uchrezhdenii, 18 May 1919.
155 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 24; See also the meetings of the colony of Nepoznanacha, 19 May 1919 (ark 42) and the village of Bliznet'skyi, 22 May (ark 6).
156 *ibid.*, ark. 5.

issued a declaration 'unanimously resolving to relieve the village committee of its old chairmanship and instal a kombedy'.[157]

The volost executive committee (*volvykonkom*) was the main administrative organ in the area. On 23 May three committee members were sent to Novohradvolyns'kyi, where two were elected to represent the volost at the hubernia congress. One of these representatives was then chosen to attend the All-Ukrainian Congress of representatives of volost vykonkoms. He returned to the volost on 10 June and held a volost congress, informing delegates of the work of the national congress. By this time departments of the vykonkom had taken over responsibility for administration and land from the old narodna uprava.[158] The newly-created *zemviddil* (land department) apparently supervised a number of land divisions in the volost in June.[159]

Despite these efforts, the Soviet regime struggled to assert its authority, as the Directory had before them. On 10 June a revision commission was elected to investigate former members of the land committee who had 'permitted abuses' of power and had failed to keep proper accounts.[160] The volvykonkom noted that although land had been distributed amongst peasants, a lack of seed-stock was hampering efforts to sow it.[161] A report of 12 June noted that, in the political sphere, very little work had been carried out thus far. The kombedy, despite having been in existence for a number of weeks, was 'completely inactive'.[162] The report went on to state that 'in the villages of Emil'chyns'ka volost through which we travelled there was no political work (*provokatsia*). Peasants said that if a kombedy were elected it would be arrested.'[163] The population was 'passive' towards

157 *ibid.*, ark. 10.
158 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 13. Doklad s deiatel'nosti Emilchynskogo volostnogo ispolkoma.
159 Rybalka, *Ahrarne peretvorennia*, p. 121.
160 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 20, ark. 30. Report to Novohradvolyns'kyi povit zemotdel, 10 June 1919.
161 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 13.
162 *ibid.*, ark. 13.
163 *ibid.*, ark. 13.

Soviet power. Typhus was spreading in the villages and there was a lack of salt and other products.[164]

A few documents hint at the nature of Soviet rule. On 11 June the volvykonkom complained to the povit vykonkom about the arrest of one of its members, I. E. Pominchuk, on 23 May. The volost congress on 10 June and Mokliaky village community on 9 June both declared that Pominchuk had never served in the military forces of the Hetmanate or the Directory; this allegation was presumably the reason for his arrest. This shows a Soviet organ and a traditional village institution working together to protect one of their own members, a very traditional peasant impulse.[165]

A declaration of Ianche-Rudnia village of 30 June recorded that 'a full skhod was gathered and it was decided to elect a new (starosta) chairman as H. Mel'nyk could not fulfil his responsibilities'.[166] The use of the traditional term 'starosta' alongside 'chairman' suggests these terms were interchangeable and that the traditional meaning of such an institution still had some significance for peasants. Peasants in Zdorovets, where Ukrainian and German sections of the population had earlier formed a kombedy, issued a declaration in the final days of the Soviet regime in Volyn. The Ukrainian section decided 'in view of our oppression at the hands of the Germans, to elect from our peasant party, a village starosta and a deputy'.[167] The Soviet authorities appear to have had as little success in tempering ethnic divisions in the frontier regions as had other powers.

An advance by UNR troops once again brought Emil'chyns'ka volost under their control by the end of July 1919. A peasant congress in Novohradvolyns'kyi on 17-19 June laid down provisions for local government, perhaps to correct faults which had become apparent on earlier occasions. Local communities and volost organs were to supervise grain

164 *ibid.*, ark. 14. Doklad of 12 June 1919.
165 *TsDAVO,* f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 114. Volost executive committee to povit executive committee-legal department, 11 June 1919.
166 *ibid.*, ark. 82. Declaration of village of Ianche-Rudni, 30 June 1919. The insertion of 'starosta' in brackets as shown in original text.
167 *ibid.*, ark. 28. Declaration of 20 July 1919.

collection and distribution, agricultural enterprises, land distribution and mobilisation.[168] At povit level there was to be a Toilers' Council (*trudova rada*) with nine elected members. In volosts and villages the narodna uprava was restored (the volost body possessed four or five members; the village, three).[169] These decrees led to another round of elections for officials in the localities.[170]

The narodna uprava was recognised as the highest civil authority within the volost.[171] Measures were taken to elect members and pay them. Elections were also held for the volost militia.[172] There were further attempts to mobilise troops for the UNR army.[173] However, little was achieved before UNR forces were once again swept from the region by a Soviet counter-attack in September 1919.[174]

A protocol of Emil'chyne village gathering on 22 September discussed the re-election of the kombedy.[175] The present officials were unable to continue their responsibilities because they did not receive any wages and had had to work to survive. The skhod granted them five hundred rubles for duties undertaken between 1 May and the end of August. From September members received payment in kind.[176] On 12 October a further declaration yet again elected new members because the former could not discharge their duties.[177]

The close similarity between traditional institutions and new organs at village level was revealed by a declaration of Emil'chyne village skhod on 4 November 1919. The village 'heard the proposal of the village kombedy chairman, I. Horbik, to elect him as village

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168 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 354. Postanovy zviahel'skoho povitovoho selians'koho z'izdu vidbuvshehosia z 17 po Zviahli.
169 *ibid.*, ark. 354.
170 See, for example, *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 29. Election of volost narodna uprava, 29 July 1919.
171 See protocol of representatives of Emil'chyns'ka volost congress, 'O vozstanovlenii volostnoi narodnoi upravy. *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 20, ark. 33.
172 *ibid.*, ark. 33.
173 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 344. Postanovlenie zhitelei sela Emil'chyni, 24 July 1919.
174 *Istoriia mist i sil; Zhitomyrs'ka oblast'*. p. 255.
175 Note that the meeting was held by the community of household heads (*obshchestvo domokhoziaev*). It was therefore not representative of the whole community and mirrored the pre-revolutionary system where rights to vote were accorded to male household heads only. Neither did the meeting represent the poorest section of the village who were the proper constituency of the kombedy under Soviet guidelines.
176 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 72. Prigovor Emil'chinskogo sel'skogo skhoda, 22 September 1919.

starosta'.[178] The village agreed to his request; his post appears to have been an amalgam of two distinct and incompatible institutions.[179] Five days later the village voted once more. Horbik was replaced as starosta by I.Semek but maintained a post as deputy (*kandidat*).[180] It is not clear why Horbik should have been replaced so quickly but it seems indicative of the difficulty which political powers faced in their efforts to establish and maintain a stable administrative structure in this period.

Polish troops pushed eastwards in November 1919 in military action against the remnants of the Directory's forces.[181] Volost institutions came under Polish influence. The starosta of Emil'chyne, I.Semek, elected on 9 November, was re-elected as the *sol'tes* on 23 November.[182] Militia officials and a volost representative were also elected.[183]

Polish administration spread throughout the area. Several villages elected village administrations between 6-10 December on the basis of a decree from the *voita* of the volost.[184] Redka colony elected a representative (*vybornyi*) to serve on the volost committee which was to be convened on 14 December. These representatives were then to elect a *voita* of the *gmina* (the Polish equivalent of the starshina of the volost).[185] This was the basic structure of administration later introduced into those areas of Western Ukraine held by the Poles in the inter-war years.[186] Further proof of the Polish influence in the region can be found in a document dated 1 December 1919 sent to the *'voita gminy Emilczynskiej'* from the authorities in Zviahel, the Polish name by which

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177 *ibid.*, ark. 73. Decalaration of gathering of kombedy, 12 October 1919.
178 *ibid.*, ark. 74. Prigovor Emil'chinskogo sel'skogo obshchestva, 4 November 1919.
179 *ibid.*, ark. 74.
180 *ibid.*, ark. 75. The *Kandidat* was usually an elected representative of the village sent to volost, povit or guberniia political congresses or to present the village's case in a certain matter to the authorities.
181 See Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, p. 298. The movement of Polish troops was tied in with political developments at the Paris Peace Conference. (pp. 281-284, 295-298). An agreement of 1 December 1919 between Polish troops and Ukrainian forces about the right to use the railway from Novohradvolyns'kyi, Shchepitovka and other towns certainly suggests a Polish military presence at the time. *Ukraine and Poland in documents 1918-1922*, ed. byTaras Hunczak, two parts. New York, Paris, Sydney, Toronto, 1983. Part I, pp. 403-404.
182 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642,op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 76. Prigovor Emil'chinskogo sel'skogo skhoda, 23 November 1919. The Sol'tes was the Polish equivalent of the starosta. It was similar to the German *schultheis* or village mayor.
183 *ibid.*, ark 76.
184 *ibid.*, ark. 53. Village of Roda; ark. 19. Village of Zabari-Davidovka, 10 December 1919.
185 *ibid.*, ark. 142. Prikaz of voit of gmina, 6 December 1919
186 *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, II, p. 243.

Novohradvolyns'kyi had been known up until 1796 when Volyn was absorbed into the Russian Empire.[187]

Emil'chyns'ka volost was the scene of particularly intense clashes between Soviet and Polish troops in April and June 1920 before Soviet power was finally established in the region.[188] Thus, in the period from January 1918 to the ultimate Soviet victory, Emil'chyns'ka volost was witness to political rule and military offensives by Soviet forces, the Central Rada, the Austro-Germans, the Hetman, the Directory and the Poles. The volost changed hands at least nine times within the period 1918 to 1920. This does not include the host of armed bands and local powers which were also active in the region.[189]

The example of Emil'chyns'ka volost in these years reveals much about peasant and government attitudes towards local administration. At local level systems of administration introduced by successive governments overlapped or were interchangeable. In other words, there was a disparity between the theoretical plan for local administrative structures and their reality. In practice, local government was an amalgam of codes and offices. Such systems of administration introduced into the village were not completely alien to peasants but neither were they entirely traditional in character. Peasants adopted an ambivalent attitude towards the representative institutions of political powers. They elected the various committees on the orders of higher authorities but their passive attitude or hostility frequently prevented the new bodies from working effectively. Therefore, a committee elected by the community under pressure from a non-peasant official or government representative was not considered to have a mandate unless the peasants agreed that this was so. Such a situation arose because there was a clash of concepts which motivated the actions of local government. Peasants wanted a government which would give them the land on a permanent basis and intrude into the village as little as possible. Governments wanted supplies of men and materials. These

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187 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 374. Letter to 'vojta gmini Emilczynskiej', 1 December 1919. *Istoriia mist i sil: Zhitomyrs'ka oblast'*, p. 460.
188 *Istoriia mist i sil: Zhitomyrs'ka oblast'*, p. 255.

conflicting ideals of the purpose of government were at the root of many misunderstandings and confrontations between peasants and higher authorities during the civil war.

Underlying these arguments was the fact that traditional peasant structures and beliefs were of continued relevance. In some cases the traditional structure of peasant government remained but under a new name. In others the terminology itself was retained (obshchestvo, skhod, starosta, sots'kyi, desiats'kyi). This was government by peasants for peasants. It remained at the heart of the village despite the external changes to rural administration wrought by successive political powers.

Membership of a representative body, whether it was the community, village gathering or village committee still had importance for the peasants' sense of identity. This is shown by the organisation of separate groups within the villages of Emil'chyns'ka volost where both Ukrainians and Germans organised their own representative communities. It is also revealed by the continued use of the *udostoverenie*, a document attesting to a peasant's identity (stating the village from which he came) or certifying that the peasant was an elected representative and had the right to negotiate or petition on behalf of the village.[190] In those instances where there were re-elections to those posts which had a more traditional origin it is unlikely that peasants would gather, discuss and vote for these officials if the institution of which they formed part had ceased to have any real meaning or responsibility. The fact that peasants strove to ensure that their village had an active and conscientious group of officials at the head of their executive organs suggests that their social and political traditions remained viable.

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189 *ibid.*, p. 465. A number of attacks were recorded in the Novohradvolyns'kyi area in 1919 by 'counter-revolutionary bands' which probably referred to the activities of local otomany.

190 *TsDAVO*, f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 1-4, 32, 42. In some cases the document was signed and stamped by the starosta, a traditional practice which pre-dated the Revolution. Incidentally, the stamps used by village authorities often dated back to the Tsarist era and were based on traditional symbols. An *udostoverenie* issued by Hermans'ko-Slobids'kyi village on 22 February 1919, still bore a double headed eagle, the Imperial Russian symbol.

THE INITIAL ATTEMPTS OF COMMUNITY AND STATE TO RESOLVE THE LAND QUESTION IN RIGHT BANK UKRAINE DURING THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY TURMOIL OF THE CIVIL WAR

In Central Russia the peasant community (*obshchina*) played a fundamental role in resolving the land question at village level. It had formulated and then implemented the principles and plans for land distribution.[1] It decided who received land, how much they received and where. Seizures of land in Right-Bank Ukraine began in March 1917 and increased in intensity throughout the year. Events such as the fall of the Provisional Government and the Soviet invasion of Ukraine provided an impetus to peasant efforts to gain control of local resources. By early 1918, the bulk of former gentry estate land in Right-Bank Ukraine was in peasant hands and the question of how this land was to be controlled and distributed became an important issue.

The village community in the Right Bank had little experience of distributing large amounts of land between its members compared to the Russian obshchina.[2] Property passed between families in hereditary ownership and the community only intervened in the absence of heirs or family to claim the property of a household head or when there were disputes over the devolution of property between family members.[3] Constant changes of government and the disruption of the civil war further complicated the picture and contributed to the absence of social calm and consensus necessary to introduce a fundamental resolution of the land question.

Despite the attempts of political powers to induce peasants to accept their demands, the latter employed a number of strategies to stake their claims to land. Peasants demanded

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1 Kabanov, 'Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia', p. 127. Even obshchiny which had not observed frequent redistributions of land in the pre-revolutionary period became active in this area.

2 Worobec, *Patterns*, p. 6. P. A. Anan'eva. 'O nasledovanii v krest'ianskom podvornom nadele v Kievskoi gubernii', *Zhurnal ministerstvo iustitsii*, 6, 1898, 114-148 (pp. 119-120, 122).

3 Worobec, *Patterns*, p. 7; On *spadshchina* see Irynarkh Cherkas'kyi, 'Spadshchina v Ukrains'komu pravi zvichaevomu', *Chasopis' pravichna*, 9, 1899, 1-66 (p. 13).


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the land of their former landlords or that held by rural groups considered 'outsiders'. The village community was central to efforts to unilaterally satisfy their needs. The supervision of an authoritative representative body and the enforcement of a village-wide consensus was important if peasants were to receive land in an orderly manner and avoid conflict. The community dealt with matters such as allocating land, defending peasant rights to land and preventing conflict between groups of peasants.

In Right-Bank Ukraine in early 1918, the Rada attempted to give poor and landless peasants priority in the distribution of surplus land.[4] The Land Law of 18 January guaranteed all citizens the right to land but stated that land intended for distribution for private farming purposes had to be given to poor and landless peasants in the first instance.[5] In practice, however, the land situation was more complex than legislators accepted. In the chaos of war and revolution, executive power was exercised at local level by peasants themselves.

Protocols issued by villages in Haisins'kyi povit in December 1917 and January 1918 provide an example of this growing autonomy over the land question. Each protocol contained a similar twenty-two-point programme for the division and use of agricultural land and was unanimously passed by members of the gathering.[6] The points listed in the declarations, whilst in some ways similar to the proposals of the Bolsheviks and the Rada, were different enough to suggest that they had been drawn up by a local peasant congress.[7] For example, the programme decreed that land should go to the 'workers' (*trudiashchii*) but allowed former landlords to retain a share of their estate if they worked it with their own

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4 See, for example, *TsDAVO*, f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 25, ark. 39. Zhurnal zasedaniia Volyns'koho hubzemkomiteta, No. 1, 16 March 1918.

5 See 'Tymchasovyi zemel'nyi zakon', 18 January 1918, in *Zbirnyk zakoniv*, pp. 19-20. Poor peasants were considered to be those whose plots of land did not meet consumption norms (*spozhivcha potreba*), i.e. the land area required to provide the household with a basic level of subsistence.

6 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 9. Villages issuing such decrees included Meleshkiv, Barsukova, Kushelets, Shurans'ka, Metlyntsi and Karbivs'ka , most of which were situated in Haisins'kyi povit.

7 Lenin's Decree on Land had four main points and was accompanied by the *Krest'ianskii nakaz o zemle* which had eight points. The latter section was based on demands put forward by local peasant soviets. See V.I. Lenin. *Pol'noe sobranie sochinenii*, 5 ed. Moskva, 1962, Tom 32, Okt-Mart 1918, pp. 23-27. The Rada Land Law, issued in January 1918, had thirty-three main points. See *Zbirnyk zakoniv*, pp. 19-20. It is notable that a similar

labour.[8] Local peasant bodies appear to have been instrumental in formulating their own plans for reform or adapting decrees from higher authorities to suit themselves.

Villages frequently sought recognition for their rights from higher authorities, part of a process of 'striving for legitimacy'.[9] This action had its roots in traditional peasant forms of political action and protest.[10] In early 1918, peasants frequently cited the land laws of the Central Rada in their resolutions as justification for their decisions. A village gathering of peasants in the village of Karbivka, 13 March 1918, based its decision to distribute land to poorer peasants on the Rada's Land Law and the protocols of the Podillia hubernia congress. Peasants who possessed more than five desiatins (considered by the village to be the consumption norm) were to have the surplus confiscated and redistributed among poorer groups.[11]

Resolutions from village and volost organs referring to official government agrarian policy were common in this period. Peasant action, however, was often characterised by misinterpretation of these guidelines or ambivalence towards them. Peasants in Chechelivka village, for example, confiscated land from one of their neighbours, using the Rada's Land Law as a pretext. The victim of this action complained to higher authorities after which the volost land committee was reminded that such seizures of land were totally illegal.[12] In a similar case, Raihorods'ko-Slobids'kyi village land committee was reminded by the povit authorities that private farmers who owned fifty desiatins or less were not supposed to be

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programme was endorsed by such a number of villages within a small geographic area. Thus the twenty-two point programme most likely originated in a local peasant congress or from a local peasant activist.

8 Of course, this drew on elements of both the Bolshevik and Rada programmes but was also deep-rooted in peasant traditional beliefs that linked labour on the land with ownership.

9 Perrie, 'Peasants', p. 21.

10 For example, David Moon notes 'the psychological need to give [peasant claims] a cloak of legality' in relation to Tsarist legislation of the 1840s. Moon also cites other studies of this phenomenon in other periods and contexts. See *Russian Peasants and Tsarist Legislation on the Eve of Reform: Interaction between Peasants and Officialdom 1825-1855*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke and London, 1992, pp. 176, 217-218.

11 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 23. Protokol obshchego sobraniia naseleniia grazhdan s. Karbovki otbuvshego 13-go Marta 1918. Poor peasants were granted land temporarily until the Constituent Assembly could convene. See also *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 127, ark. 2. Protocol of skhod in Zavadovka village.

12 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 114. Letter to Kislians'ka volost land committee from Podillia povit land committee, 17 April 1918. Point 21 of the land law, at issue here, dealt with special crops and cultivations. (See *Zbirnyk zakoniv*, p. 19). Working farms were supposed to remain unaffected, a point the peasants of Chechelivka either misunderstood or wilfully misinterpreted.

subject to confiscation of land. Several peasants had had their land illegally seized.[13] A representative from Podillia spoke of the effect of this peasant ambivalence at a meeting of the Main Ukrainian Land Committee in April 1918:

> The hubernia congress has tried to resolve declarations of peasant congresses which have diverged from the land law. On one hand, land is confiscated from the better-off peasants, a congress decrees that all land is to be divided equally...then there are disagreements and many complaints associated with the introduction of working land norms.[14]

There were several methods by which land was distributed between individual peasants. The community usually resolved how the distribution was to take place. Their decision was based on the availability of land in the village, the purpose for which this land was used and the number of claimants to land (whether they were members of the community or 'outsiders').

In Ukraine, as in Central Russia, there was a great deal of discussion of *chernyi peredel* or black repartition, an equal division of land in the village between the peasants. A number of peasant resolutions from early 1918 refer to equal divisions as the ultimate goal of any land reform.[15] However, there was little attempt to introduce sweeping changes to landholding in this period because broad reform required a degree of social stability.

There was increased discussion of collective forms of land cultivation in this period. For example, Ternivs'kyi volost land committee decreed that church and landlord land should be divided into plots. Each of these plots would be divided between ten peasants who

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13 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 27. Uprava Haisins'koho povitovoho zemel'noho komitetu, 29 March 1918. The basis for this decision was the Third Universal of the Central Rada which was published on 7 November 1917. However, the figure of fifty desiatins referred to was not specifically mentioned in the document, only in an accompanying explanation by the Secretary for Agriculture.

14 *TsDAVO*, f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 25, ark. 72. Protokol 3-I sessii holovnoho ukrains'koho zemel'noho komitetu, 15 April 1918. From Cherediev, representative from Podillia.

15 See for example *TsDAVO*, f. 1830, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 25. Zhurnal zasidaniia Mohilev-Podil'skogo uezdnogo zemel'nogo komiteta, 27/8 Febraury 1918. *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 64. Protokol obshchee sobranie grazhdan sela Rakovki, 10 March 1918. All land was to be divided equally between all citizens irrespective of age or gender.

would jointly sow and work the whole area. The land commissions in the volost, together with the neighbouring obshchestvo, would draw up lists of those peasants who were to receive land.[16] However, discussion of collective cultivation largely continued at political level and these efforts were not widely popular among peasants themselves.

Far more common was the practice of confiscating surplus land from peasants who possessed more than the village or volost norm and temporarily redistributing it to poor or landless groups. The peasants did not view these divisions as a final, permanent settlement of the land question. A protocol from Kivachevka village, Podillia, voted to 'take away the surplus quantity of land from peasants in the village and leave them with land necessary to maintain their farms and feed their families'. This amount of land was estimated at one desiatina per family member.[17] The village calculated land norms in relation to the subsistence needs of the average inhabitant (also known as the consumption norm). Villages also used working norms as the basis for deciding how much land a family could maintain. This took into consideration the amount of land which could be farmed by the household's own labour without hiring any other workers.[18]

In some cases there was no shortage of surplus land. Ternivs'ka volost land committee, for example, calculated that a large family unit could farm up to sixty desiatins of land. It decreed that land was to be confiscated from those households which possessed twenty desiatins or more . This still left larger households with an average holding of two desiatins per family member.[19] Such instances were quite rare, however. A gathering of peasants from Karbovs'ke settlement took land away from peasants possessing above the land norm prescribed in the Rada's Land Law. The village then created a common land fund from which the needs of poor and landless peasants were to be satisfied.[20]

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16 *TsDAVO,* f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 103, ark. 24. Zhurnal zasidannia Haisins'koho povzemkomu, 9 April 1918.
17 *TsDAVO,* f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 139. 1 March 1918.
18 Rybalka, *Ahrarne peretvorennia,* p. 110.
19 *TsDAVO,* f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 103, ark. 124. Zhurnal zasidannia Haisins'koho povitovoho zemel'noho komiteta, 9 April 1918. Village protocol from 7 March.
20 *TsDAVO* f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 7. 11 March 1918.

The transfer of land was a complex and difficult matter but did not necessarily provoke conflict. A peasant in the village of Slobodka-Raihorods'ka, F. Honcharuk, agreed in the village skhod to the confiscation of five desiatins of his land for use by poor peasants. A decree confirming the transfer noted that 'the land was handed over without hindrance'. (It is not clear whether the peasant giving up the land respected the needs of fellow villagers or whether a degree of intimidation had been used.)[21] The confiscation of surplus peasant land was more common in those areas where there was little available gentry, state or church land. Here the plots of wealthier villagers provided the only means of satisfying demand.

Only on rare occasions was confiscation of surplus land rejected in favour of some other system. For example, peasants in a village gathering in Karbivka discussed confiscating land from those peasants possessing more than five desiatins.[22] However, they resolved instead to grant poor peasants temporary joint use of land plots together with the owners within current boundaries.[23] Therefore, peasant owners maintained control of their holdings but, at the same time, poor and landless peasants were given the means to cultivate.

Communities did not always observe the principle that those in need should receive land. Wealthier villagers were in a better position to cultivate land than their poorer neighbours who possessed little in the way of livestock or tools. The shortage of food dictated that it was more important that the land was sown than who had sown it. This conflict between principle and necessity resurfaced in 1919.

In this initial period of the civil war, land distribution became a major issue for the first time in the Right-Bank and community organisations played a primary role in attempts to resolve this complex question. A Rada official lamented in early 1918 that 'people don't believe in the introduction of reform by the state'.[24] In the absence of national consensus,

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21 *ibid.*, ark. 5. 7 March 1918.

22 This village Karbivka is not to be confused with the khutor settlement Karbivs'ke mentioned above. Although situated in the same povit the two were distinct villages. Khutor settlements tended to be groupings of more isolated farmsteads. See *Istoriia mist i sil Ukrains'koi RSR: Vinnyts'ka oblast'*, Kyiv,1972, pp. 212, 214.

23 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 23. 13 March 1918.

24 *TsDAVO*, f. 1060, op .1, spr. 25, ark. 80. Lutskevich at third session of Main Ukrainian land committee, 15 April 1918.

the responsibility for the land passed to local bodies who could command the authority necessary to enforce decisions relating to resources. A number of peasants in Novohradvolyns'kyi povit petitioned the povit land committee for rights to land. The povit committee, however, upheld the rights of local institutions, stating, 'the right to divide land within a village community belongs to that same community and if the community accepts the necessity of exchanging land between members then such an exchange will take place'.[25]

The community discussed and decided on the most appropriate means of managing land within the village. Its decisions were relevant to individual villages or entire volosts. For example, Ternivs'ka volost land committee discussed the various solutions to the land question including communal farming, equal division between members or the creation of a land fund to satisfy the needs of poor and landless peasants. The latter option was considered the most suitable.[26] The community calculated the average land norms which peasants in the village required to subsist and tried to ensure that each of its members reached that level. A village gathering in the village of Chechivka found that there was only enough land to provide half a desiatina per soul which was considered insufficient for peasant needs.[27] Responsibility for improving the conditions of the peasants in such cases lay with the community. Communities tried to claim land from other villages or from the state or took action against non-peasant groups within the village.[28] Virtually all community organisations accepted that the needs of the poorer sections of the village had to be addressed as a primary priority of any reform or change in the land situation.

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25 *TsDAVO*, f. 1465, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 27.

26 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark .51. Protokol zasedaniia Ternovskogo volostnogo zemel'nogo komiteta, 5 March 1918.

27 *TsDAVO*, f. 1465, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 10. 11 January 1918. The village then decided to take control of the lands of a neighbouring colony, Nova Rzhadkivka, because the German colonists who were resident there up to 1914 had fled and the refugees who had arrived from other areas were not considered the 'real owners' *(faktícheskie khoziaeva)*. These types of action were particularly common in Volyn where there had been a considerable number of colonists of different nationalities before 1914 and where there were also large numbers of refugees as a result of the war.

28 See note 27 & *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 67. From records povit land department. The conflict between the villages of Chemeriana and Semireka over the same plot of land, 16 April 1918; ark. 14. Complaint by peasants of Kitaihorod over seizure of their land by obshchestvo of Rakhnov-Sobovii.

Communities also intervened in disputes between their own members over land. For example, a common gathering in Kiblich settlement in March 1918 discussed a number of seizures of land in the village. The meeting urged peasants to refrain from land seizures until the Constituent Assembly should draw up a plan for land reform.[29] Many villages expected that government would eventually resolve the land question but in spring 1918 it was the community which ruled on the land.

Skoropadsky's restoration of private land ownership in May 1918 forced a change in peasant attitudes. Many peasant gatherings initially expressed their support for the agrarian policies of the Central Rada and promised to resist the Hetman.[30] This overt political resistance lasted a number of weeks.[31] Thereafter peasant activity reverted to more traditional forms of resistance (such as illicit timber felling and pasturing on land and covert attacks on property) and outright armed opposition, including concerted uprisings against the state.[32]

Now the village community no longer claimed authority over local land and was instead expected to make good the damage caused by peasant excesses of the previous year. Trade in land resumed and communities were expected to enter into new rental agreements as well as to pay compensation for breaking the terms of previous accords.[33] Peasants had to find more subtle and less confrontational ways of expressing their desire for land. Many Hetman officials reported that the new regime was received calmly in the villages. Proskurivs'kyi povit starosta reported that landowners had returned to their properties without any opposition from the peasants. In the majority of cases compensation had been

29 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 66. Protokol 1918 roku Berezolia 9 dnia.
30 *TsDAVO*, f. 1115, op. 1, spr. 12, ark. 60. Order to delegates from Volyn hubernia peasant congress, 26 April 1918.
31 See, for example, *TsDAVO*, f. 1115, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 85, 6. Declarations against the Hetmanate from peasant skhods, 8 & 9 May 1918. Thereafter such open opposition became dangerous. Many skhod meetings were watched by Derzhavna Varta officials for evidence of anti-Hetman sentiment.
32 See I.Malyk, 'Zemel'ne pytannia', in *Ostanii Hetman*, ed. by Lupanov, p. 100.
33 *ibid.*, p. 100.

agreed for illicit peasant use of land and stolen property was being returned.[34] Reports from Volyn noted that the land committees had been disbanded without any peasant objection whatsoever.[35]

However, many peasants only appeared to acquiesce in the Hetman's rule. Resistance to Skoropadsky remained evident in peasant behaviour. A letter from Proskurivs'kyi povit dated 27 May 1918 noted that there was some reluctance among the peasants to return stolen property to the landlords. Furthermore, executive power in the village lay overwhelmingly with 'individuals who undertook the original socialisation in the peasants' favour of everything that belonged to people not of their class'.[36] The Lityns'kyi povit commissar reported on 22 May 1918 that he had recently received 'many declarations from landowners that peasants have begun to attack sown fields in connection with the transfer of power to the Hetman of Ukraine'.[37] Peasants reverted to traditional means of resistance amidst fears that the harvest would not belong to them.

Conflicts arose from attempts by the authorities to prevent illicit use of gentry land. Derzhavna Varta officials were sent to the village of Dobrohorshcha, Podillia, to curtail damage to winter and spring sowings on landlord property. As the Varta approached the village the peasants, 'armed with rifles, began to open fire and attack them'. Two officials escaped but two of their colleagues were captured and murdered. The village gathering met and voted to resist the government. The village prevented the authorities from recovering the bodies of the victims. Only a bombardment of the village by Austrian troops succeeded in

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34 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 249. Report to Podillia hubernia starosta from Proskurivs'kyi povit starosta, 16 July 1918.

35 *TsDAVO*, f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 95, ark. 12. Information from Luts'kyi, Ostorozhs'kyi, Rovens'kyi and Novohradvolyns'kyi povits.

36 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 251. From representative of Proskurivs'kyi department of Podillia Society for Agrarian Industry.

37 *TsDAVO*, f. 628, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 291. Report to Podillia hubernia starosta. Such forms of resistance and protest were common against landlord property before the revolution.

restoring order.[38] Here there was a direct link between the prevention of peasant use of land and peasant political protest.

Peasant action was often conducted covertly. Peasants joined partisan bands throughout Ukraine to resist the Hetman and the Austro-German military. Two primary causes of revolts which erupted in 1918 were Austro-German requisitions and government agrarian policy.

As early as January 1918, peasants accepted the need for order and social calm so that agrarian reform might take place. A protocol issued on 22 January by Haisins'kyi povit land committee with the participation of volost land committee members called for the establishment of a force in the region to combat anarchy and make reform possible.[39] In March 1918, at a meeting of the Volyn hubernia land committee, a representative of Starokonstantinovs'kyi povit noted that peasants had been subject to requisitions by the Bolsheviks, Poles and Germans in recent months. They 'demanded guarantees that grain sown by them on former landlord land will belong only to them'.[40]

The seizure of power by the Hetman and subsequent retributions against the peasants dissuaded many villages from making overt claims to land even after a regime more sympathetic to peasant claims was restored. The more uncertain peasants appeared about the stability of the Soviet or other governments, the less likely they were to take full control of the land within the village. This created delays in the full liquidation of former landlord estates and in some instances peasants even continued to observe rent agreements with wealthier peasant owners.[41]

These problems were widespread in 1919 with the result that partial divisions became the most common means of resolving the land question, albeit on a temporary

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38 *TsDAVO,* f. 1216, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 60. Head of Proskurivs'kyi volost Varta to Podillia hubernia starosta, 16 July 1918. See also *TsDIA,* f. 419, op. 3, spr. 403, ark. 29-30. After the bombardment the village was forced to hand over the guilty peasants and was subject to a contribution levied by the authorities.

39 *TsDAVO,* f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 103, ark. 1. Protokol No. 1 Zahal'noho zasidannia Haisins'koho povitovoho zemel'noho komitetu, 22-25 January 1918

40 *TsDAVO,* f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 25, ark. 29. Zhurnal No. 1 zasidannia Volynskogo gubernskogo zemel'nogo komiteta, 12-17 March 1918.

basis.[42] Meshcheriakov, writing to Lenin on 13 April 1919, noted that 'in many areas peasants are afraid to take gentry land', exclaiming 'what if the landowner (*Barin Pan*) returns?'.[43] A letter to the UNR Podillia hubernia commissar in September 1919 noted that the majority of former landlord land remained unsown. Peasants had learned their lesson from the Hetman and Bolsheviks 'who had taken back land, and up to now hesitantly come forward to use it'. This was also partly attributed to propaganda from Polish forces and right-wing groups who warned that Denikin's advance would force peasants to hand land back to the landowners.[44] The lack of specialists was another factor which, along with the absence of political stability, caused delays in the full distribution of the land

The collapse of the Hetman regime and the successive efforts of the nationalist Directory and Bolsheviks to build new Ukrainian republics once again placed emphasis on the all-important land question. Admittedly, land redistribution was of secondary importance to the struggle to obtain foodstuffs, but both governments adhered to the principle that land should be transferred to the peasants.[45] Issues similar to those which had accompanied the discussion over land in early 1918, arose in 1919. There were some important differences, however, such as the greater caution evident in peasant action after their experiences under the Hetman and the role played by local land organs in organising divisions.

As a result of the lack of political stability, many peasants continued to observe agreements struck during the Hetman period. Peasants continued to rent land from landowners who remained in the villages.[46] This was in direct contradiction to the

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41 Rybalka, *Ahrarne peretvorennia*, p. 90.
42 *ibid.*, p. 134.
43 *Ekonomicheskie otnosheniia*, p. 60.
44 *TsDAVO*, f. 538, op. 1, spr. 52, ark. 247. From report of Lityns'kyi povit commissar, 24 September 1919.
45 For a discussion of the priorities of Bolshevik policy in 1919 see Borys, *Sovietisation*, pp. 232-233.
46 Throughout the Russian empire, many landlords could be found in the countryside after the revolution. They often remained after 1917 with the permission of local authorities and usually worked land by their own labour within set norms. See John Channon. 'Tsarist Landowners after the Revolution: Former Pomeshchiki in Rural Russia during NEP', *Soviet Studies,* 34, 1987, 4, 575-598. (pp. 580-584). Channon noted that evidence for Ukraine was sparse but later Ukrainian historians have studied this phenomenon, showing that a number of former landowners survived until well into the Twenties. See P. M. Denisovets. 'Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie itogi agrarnykh preobrazovanii na Ukraine v pervye gody Sovetskoi vlasti', *Voprosy istorii SSSR*, 32, 1987, 17-25 (p. 19). F. G. Turchenko, 'Likvidatsiia klasu pomishchikiv na Ukraini', *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 6, 1984, 18-30.

principles of Soviet and Directory agrarian policy.[47] Only in spring 1919 was rented land subject to new seizures by other peasants.[48] Wealthier peasants continued to rent land out to their poorer neighbours or allowed them access to land in return for their labour.[49] However, many villagers remained cautious about holding land. A circular in Vasil'kivs'kyi povit complained that there had been no redistribution of former landlord land despite the fact that the time for sowing had arrived.[50]

Government land organs at local level provided some of the impetus for the division of land in 1919. The Directory attempted to enforce its agrarian policy in the areas of territory that it held.[51] The Soviet regime, although it was largely confined to the towns and railways, similarly made strenuous efforts to introduce its agrarian policy into the villages.[52] Many Soviet organs supervised the distribution of land. In Volyn, in spring 1919, Luhins'kyi volost land department defined its tasks as 'regulating relations between peasants in the question of the redistribution of former landlord and other lands in temporary equal use and the resolution of numerous lawsuits and conflicts over land in the localities which have arisen in connection with this redistribution'.[53] Many peasants again sought higher acceptance of their actions and confirmation of their rights at higher levels.

Soviet organs also organised collective agriculture in Right-Bank Ukraine. These efforts were not welcomed by the overwhelming majority of peasants. They identified collective forms of agriculture with the Central-Russian commune. Peasant resistance remained, despite the efforts of more tactful Soviet activists to argue that collectives were voluntary organisations. This was a major factor in turning peasants away from the Soviet

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47 See Rybalka, *Ahrarne peretvorennia*, p. 90. Land renting continued. See also *TsDAVO,* f. 538, op. 1, spr. 52, ark. 91. Report from Kamianets'kyi povit land administration, 11 April 1919, which reported that landlords in several villages (e.g. Kul'chaevka, Dontsova) were putting land up for rent.

48 *TsDAVO,* f. 1498, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 38. Umans'ka povitova zemel'na uprava to Posukhivs'ka volosna zemel'na uprava, 10 April 1919.

49 Rybalka, *Ahrarne peretvorennia*, p. 136.

50 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 168. From Hrebivs'ka volosna zemel'na uprava, 14 April 1919.

51 See for example the Directory's attempts to construct an administrative framework that could carry reform in the villages. *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 74-6.

52 On the difficulties of implementing Soviet power in the countryside, see Borys, *Sovietisation*, p. 234.

53 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 361. 30 June 1919. Bereznens'ka volostrevkom, Prikaz No. 15, 30 June 1919.

regime, even if they were broadly sympathetic to its aims. A resolution from Orlovets'ka volost decided 'in principle to recognise Soviet power but to oppose the instructions of the government in relation to the agrarian question'. In particular, the peasants stated, 'there can be no communes in our volost in view of the individualism observed among our peasants'.[54]

A protocol from Lityns'kyi povit peasant congress in September 1919 in Directory-held territory expressed objections to the commune at length. The delegates viewed socialisation of the land as division into equal shares. This was equated in turn with the obshchina of Central Russia. There 'land is not the property of a single owner but of all the citizens of the village and is allotted to every family in accordance with the number of souls'. Frequent distributions of land, as witnessed in Russia, were 'absolutely impossible' in Ukraine where peasants had their own little plots (*klaptik*) of land and were unused to such traditions. Furthermore, 'such a means of farming ruins the peasants' well-being because no one wants to work when next year the land will be given to someone else'. The congress resolved that the communal-obshchina form of socialisation was unacceptable and that another means of socialisation appropriate for Ukrainian peasants should be sought.[55]

Poor peasants were given priority in land divisions in 1919. Skvirs'kyi povit land department noted that 'almost all poor peasants and labourers have their own plot'.[56] However, there was a general lack of order in such divisions and chaos unsurprisingly reigned in the localities. There were no village plans or other technical information to guide the distributions.[57] As a result, the principle of giving poorer peasants sufficient means to farm land was not always observed. A Narkomzem report from Kanivs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, in May 1919, for example, claimed that in several volosts the land of former landlords was being distributed equally among all peasants, without specifically targeting

54 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 46. Postanovlenie deputatov ot sel'skikh obshchestv raiona Orlovetskoi volosti, Cherkasskogo uezda, 13 March 1919.
55 *TsDAVO,* f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 89, ark. 189. Vypiska z protokolu Lityns'koho povitovoho selians'koho zizdu, 14 September 1919.
56 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 18, ark. 22. Kratkii obzor deiatel'nosti Skvirskogo uezdzemotdel.
57 *ibid.*, ark. 22. See also *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 367.

poor groups or taking into account how much land a peasant held already. Some peasants who received land possessed fifteen to twenty desiatins of allotment land when the average farm in the povit was calculated at four desiatins.[58] There was less land for those who most needed it.

In 1919, as in early 1918, necessity overruled principle. An agronomist travelling in Kyiv hubernia reported that 'the basic principle for the division of land appears to be, not the provision of land for landless peasants but simply the satisfaction of anyone who wants it'. As a result, even those not experiencing a shortage of land could receive it.[59] Reporting from Volyn, a Soviet agronomist wrote that 'peasants are redividing former gentry land but without any kind of norm, without any kind of system; those who organise themselves the quickest, sow the land'.[60]

Land remained the major issue which defined relations between the authorities and peasants and between peasants themselves. Rights of ownership and use were the subject of frequent disputes. For example, in the first thirty-nine days of operation, Kyiv povit land department dealt with over 1,100 conflicts relating to land.[61] Peasant behaviour in relation to land and economic matters displayed many traditional characteristics. Local needs remained important. For example, peasants in Lipovets'kyi povit refused to allow surplus seed stock to leave the volost boundaries.[62] This suggests that they were unwilling to permit other peasants or the authorities to use what they considered a vital resource.

Peasants still proved reluctant to admit 'outsiders', irrespective of whether these were members of non-peasant groups resident in the countryside or peasants from other villages or volosts. For example, when a number of priests tried to cultivate land in Podillia in 1918-1919, they were subjected to attack by local peasants who seized church property,

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58 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 33. Informatsionnyi listok Narkomzema No. 20, 16 May 1919. Posivy i zakhody v zemel'nyi sprav v Kanivs'komu poviti, 8 May 1919; K.Berezovii.
59 *ibid.*, ark. 61. Informatsionnyi listok NKZ No. 27, 1 July 1919: Iz doklada instruktor-agronoma L.Kolomnitsa.
60 *ibid.*, ark. 4. Informatsionnyi listok NKZ No. 24, 1 June 1919: Iz doklada instruktor-agronoma I.Stepanina.
61 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 20, ark. 44. Admin-khoziaistvennyi otdel, 10 March-11 June 1919.
62 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 67. Informatsionnyi listok No.26, 23 June 1919.

felled timber and pastured cattle on church land.[63] Peasant action continued against estates which remained under state protection and control. There were reports in February 1919 of peasants committing petty thefts of estate property in Posukhivs'ka volost.[64] Peasants attacked the management and workers of an estate in Iarominets village, Kupins'ka volost in August 1919. The Directory authorities even suggested sending in troops to restore order in the village and secure the harvest.[65]

The village community in 1919 was at the heart of debates over the control of land and resources. Local peasant institutions, whether the village or volost skhod or representative committee, drew up land norms and oversaw land divisions. This ran contrary to Narkomzem instructions that Soviet organs at povit level were responsible for this.[66] In addition, peasant institutions decided which properties were liable for confiscation of surplus land, supervised the use of community lands, organised the sowing and collection of the harvest and were responsible for maintaining order within the village.[67] In Volyn, a Soviet agronomist reported in 1919 that 'no sowing norm has been followed during this sowing campaign. The land question has been amicably resolved in the skhods of separate settlements and in joint skhods of those villages which border on former landlord land'.[68] When the community had not sanctioned ownership, seizures of land and conflicts were common.[69]

Despite the fact that the community was not mentioned in official pronouncements or state legislation, local Soviet land organs were forced to consider its influence at grass roots

63 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 78, ark. 24. Do Pana Ministra Zemel'nykh Sprav UNR ot Ministerstva Kultiv, dept Pravoslavna Tserkov, 10 July 1919. Although this property nominally belonged to the church, it is unlikely that local peasants would have viewed it as such.
64 *TsDAVO*, f. 1498, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 9. M.Z.S. Umans'ka povitova zemel'na uprava to Posukhivs'ka volosna zemel'na uprava, 24 February 1919.
65 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 78, ark. 117. 20 August 1919.
66 Rybalka, *Ahrarne peretvorennia*, pp. 109-110.
67 *ibid.*, p. 70.
68 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 53. Informatsionnyi listok No. 24, 1 June 1919: Iz doklada Agronoma A.A.Mikulinskogo o polozhenii zemel'nykh del v Volynskoi gubernii.
69 *ibid.*, ark. 53.

level.[70] A peasant in the village of Rudna-Krupchatka complained to the local volost land department that he was being denied access to a farmstead plot (*usad'ba*) he had used for the previous eight years. The land department replied that 'in view of the fact that the farmstead plot formerly belonged to the landlord and is now being used by the sel'skoe obshchestvo, the matter will be passed to Rudna-Krupchatka obshchestvo for a decision'.[71] This illustrates the authority which community bodies held over local lands.

The community had been characterised by consensus during 1917 but the Soviet introduction of the Kombedy in 1919 challenged peasant traditions. Soviet policy empowered the minority within the village and gave them executive power which was every bit as legitimate as that employed by the community as a whole. The kombedy and the community were not always distinct organisations. Kombedy membership often reflected wide sections of community opinion. The kombedy also assumed responsibility for areas traditionally associated with the community, such as petitioning for the right to use certain lands.[72] Antagonisms did surface, however, where zealous members engaged in excessive action. For example kombedy members in one village in Volyn were punished for seizing a farmstead plot belonging to another peasant without authorisation. They were fined and given sentences of three days in jail.[73] If such sentences were rare, the offences were not. The kombedy sometimes succeeded in rousing whole villages against them or were ineffectual as an organ of state power in the villages. However, the principle of village solidarity and unified action had been breached and this was to have repercussions when the komnezamy was instituted in 1920.[74]

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70 See Kabanov, 'Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia', p. 103. Kabanov makes the point that the legal definition of the obshchestvo was a grey area in Soviet legislation. Its functions were supposed to be transferred to village and volost soviets but, of course, traditional community bodies continue to exist in some shape or form well after 1917.

71 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 350. Zhurnal Luhinskoho volosnoho zemel'noho otdela, Ovruchs'kyi povit, Volyn. Protocol No.2, 13 May 1919.

72 *DAKO*, f. R-94, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 25. Protokol soedinenogo zasedaniia volzemotdelov Nokol'sko-Borshchagovkoi i Belogorodskoi volostei i sel'skikh zemel'nikh komissii ss. Belich i Gorenich pri uchasti zemlemera Iorga, 2 June 1919.

73 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1,spr. 19, ark. 351. Protocol No. 7, 4 June 1919.

74 See Mace. 'Komitety', pp. 487-488.

Attitudes in peasant communities towards land reorganisation varied. In the decades before the revolution, peasants had frustrated Tsarist government attempts to improve the way peasants held their land. Most political forces during the revolution recognised the need for a complete restructuring of agrarian relations, since only by changing peasant attitudes to land would it be possible for any improvements in rural conditions to appear.

Some peasants began to accept the need for change and it is possible to detect a more rational approach towards land reorganisation in peasant resolutions discussing the land question. For example, Shliakhovskoe village asked the povit land committee to send a member to oversee the distribution of their land and ensure an orderly transition of property.[75] A protocol from a peasant congress held in Lityns'kyi povit in March 1919 recognised that it was impossible efficiently to farm a plot of land under six desiatins within the povit. Peasants were to be encouraged to eradicate inter-stripping (i.e. parcellisation) and to allot villagers land in one area.[76] The Mohiliv-Podil's'kyi land committee in February 1918 issued a resolution calling for the interstripping of fields to be eradicated and the distance between plots to be reduced.[77] This was the avowed aim of any rational land reorganisation.

However, most peasants were far more likely to try to prevent any changes to their landholdings and were suspicious of governments who tried to introduce it. In December 1917 a land instructor charged with drawing up an inventory of estate property met 'an insurmountable obstacle in the form of Hunchanskoe obshchestvo which declared in the village gathering in the presence of representatives from the committee of public order and the land committee that it was taking control of estate property'.[78] Haisins'kyi povit land committee noted that many instructors and typists sent to the villages returned to the

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75 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 61. Declaration to Shliakhovskoe obshchestvo Haisins'kyi povit land committee.
76 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 89, ark. 189.
77 *TsDAVO*, f. 1830, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 25. Zhurnal zasedannia Mogilev-Podol'skogo uezdnogo zemel'nogo komitetu, 27-28 February 1918.
78 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 1. Letter from instructor, 29 Decemebr 1917. So that no other authority or group could stake a claim to it.

administration without having completed their task of registering former estate land because 'the local population did not allow them to take an inventory and literally chased them from the villages'.[79] Opposition to intervention by higher authorities in the village's land affairs had links to the community's behaviour before 1917. One of the reasons for peasant resistance was the fear of higher taxes being levied should the full extent of their holdings become known.

The state also found it hard to introduce such measures in the turmoil of the civil war. Representatives of Shuma obshchestvo complained to the authorities about a degree issued by Zhitomirs'kyi povit land department on land reorganisation on 28 March 1918. Their complaint was not taken further because 'at the current moment the government is not carrying out any kind of land reorganisation'.[80]

Throughout Russia, peasants based their rights to land on past holdings and on traditional claims. Such claims related to lands held by the landlord or rented by the peasant community before 1917. These claims were also relevant in the Right-Bank, for the community rather than individual peasants had rented and used *pomeshchik* land before 1917. Such claims justified peasant land use after the revolution, if only in the eyes of the community. Conflicts frequently arose between neighbouring communities over land use and the legal basis of peasant rights. Clashes first occurred during the summer of 1917.[81]

Peasants cited former gentry ownership of land as a motive for political action. Villages in Semirechka, Haisins'kyi povit, seized forest land from a neighbouring obshchestvo on the basis that it had belonged to their former landlord and was therefore now their property.[82] Peasants in Horishkivka collected the harvest from twenty-five desiatins of land in Iampil's'kyi povit in 1919, despite the fact that the land had been rented by a

79 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 104, ark. 9. Zhurnal sovitu, 9 Liutnia 1918.
80 *TsDAVO*, f. 1598, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 36. Zhitmyrs'kyi povit land department to Troianivs'ka volost committee, 31 March 1918
81 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', pp. 10, 12, 58-59.
82 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 67. Neighbouring obshchestvo, Chemeriana, issued a complaint to the povit authorities, 16 April 1918.

neighbouring obshchestvo from the landowner. They justified their action by claiming that, according to the redemption charters freeing them from serfdom (drawn up after 1861), the land had belonged to their former master (*Pan*).[83] As these two examples indicate, there was a great potential for conflict between villages over land. Landlord estates in Right-Bank Ukraine tended to be very large, with the result that several communities could contest neighbouring lands.

Not only former landlord land was subject to this type of action. Sugar factories and other agricultural enterprises were often targeted. Peasants demanded the entire area of neighbouring factories as a right.[84] It is questionable whether these references to historical land rights were a true belief in traditional peasant codes which linked labour and ownership or a cynical expedient exploited by peasants to justify their actions.

Within the village peasants based their claims to land on membership of the community or permanent residence in the volost. A report from the agricultural section of the Podillia hubernia land committee in April 1918 noted that peasants who had purchased land in the area were being forcibly chased from their property. This was a result of the conviction that 'the land does not belong to the purchasers who have come from other villages but only to the local population'.[85]

Additionally, peasants drew rights to land from family membership, where the family unit had been accepted into the community. Peasants in Russia drew their rights to land from membership of the obshchina which acted as the arbiter of all questions relating to land. In Right-Bank Ukraine the household unit maintained control over the devolution of property.[86] Thus, claimants to land could utilise family rights to justify their demands. For example, a demobilised soldier living in the town of Novohradvolyns'kyi asserted a claim to

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83 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 113. Thus, their claim dated back several decades. Redemption charters were drawn up in the years following emancipation in 1861and not later than 1881 and included an inventory of village property.

84 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 92. Discussing peasant attitudes to the sugar industry, Pershyn noted that they 'demanded the permanent transfer of, more or less, the area of factory land'.

85 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 146. Podil's'kyi huberns'kyi zemel'nyi komitet, viddil s. hospodar. V povitovi i volosni zemel'ni upravi Podil's'koi hub..

five desiatins of land in the village of Suslova, Volyn, in early 1918. This plot had been held by the soldier's father and had been seized by local villagers (who would have no doubt considered him an outsider).[87]

The Stolypin reforms had had little effect in Right-Bank Ukraine and there were few cases of peasant separators being forced back into the commune. There is little evidence of a 'second social war' against wealthier sections of the village.[88] That is not to say that there was no conflict between peasants over land. On the contrary, as already indicated, there were countless land disputes evident between peasants, although these rarely assumed the class character in which the Soviet authorities believed.

Inter-peasant conflicts over agricultural land had four main causes. Firstly, throughout the revolution conflicts erupted between neighbouring villages over land situated in the locality. Secondly and more commonly, in the initial period of revolution (late 1917-early 1918), village communities made attempts to confiscate land within the village which belonged to outside groups even if these were also peasants. Thirdly, disputes arose relating to family ownership of land within the village. Disputes between family members or attempts to resurrect hereditary claims to land were common throughout the revolutionary period. Finally, there were frequently more general disputes over land use between individuals or groups of peasants in the village.

Conflict between villages was more common in areas where non-peasant land available for distribution was limited. Village communities in such regions tried aggressively to assert claims to a share of land in the volost or zealously protected their own members and property. Villages without land were given official assent for their actions. Haisins'kyi povit land committee issued a decree on 28 February 1918 which declared that 'poor and landless peasants of those villages where there is no gentry land should receive

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86 Worobec, *Patterns*, pp. 6-8.
87 *TsDAVO*, f. 1465, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 12. Complaint of Khmelevsky to village committee of Susla.
88 See Shanin, *Awkward Class*, pp. 145-147.

land due to them from neighbouring villages where such land exists'.[89] Metlinets village committee and land commission issued a protocol on 10 March, declaring their inability to achieve the land norm set by the hubernia (one desiatina per soul) and their demand to be granted land from neighbouring gentry estates. There were over 3,000 souls in the village but only 1,568 desiatins of arable land.[90] Their request received short shrift from neighbouring villages. Nosovets village 'unanimously resolved to refuse the request of Metlinets village to distribute land because the community lacks land itself (*samo malozemel'noe*). In the land fund of Nosovets there are 3,317 desiatins but the population of poor and landless numbers 4,050 souls'.[91] The peasants advised that landless Metlinets peasants should consider resettlement elsewhere. Issues of land ownership and resultant disagreements continued to absorb the energy and attention of the government well into the Soviet period.[92]

Pressure on land resources often forced villages to discriminate against peasants who held more than the set land norms or individuals who resided or possessed property within the village but were not members of the community. Peasants who had purchased land through the Peasant Land Bank before 1917 began to be targeted by village communities during the revolution. The Peasant Land Bank had played a fundamental role in the agrarian policies of the government in the late-Imperial period. It had particular relevance for the Right Bank where 'the agrarian question assumed a particular sharpness'.[93] The Bank had enabled wealthier peasants to acquire land throughout Ukraine, as well as advancing loans to those peasants who wished to resettle elsewhere.[94] These outsider peasants were frequently chased from their properties after the revolution. Unlike the peasant separators in Central

89 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 128. Haisins'kyi povit land committee to Navaev village land committee, 3 April 1918..
90 *ibid.*, ark. 45-46. Protokol zasedaniia Metlinetskikh sel'skikh komitetov i zemel'noi komissiei, 10 March 1918.
91 *ibid.*, ark. 54. Protokol obshchego sobraniia Nosovetskogo sel'skogo obshchestva
92 See, for example, *ibid.*, ark. 32. Protokol obshchego sobraniia Kunskogo sel'skogo obshchestva, 15 February 1918.
93 N. A. Iakimenko & A. V. Opria, 'Pereselencheskaia politika tsarisma i krest'ianskii pozemel'nyi bank', *Voprosy istorii SSSR*, 31, 1986, 106-113 (p. 110).

Russia who were integrated back into the commune, often forcibly, these peasant purchasers were often not considered a part of the community and were often excluded.

Action against peasant purchasers was not class-based. Communities wished to alleviate the poor conditions of their own members. For example, Doiakov village land commission decreed that land in the village acquired with help from the Peasant Land Bank by peasants not actually resident there was to be confiscated and put at the disposal of the commission. The village suffered from extreme land hunger and had a large number of poor and landless peasants. There was no other land available within the village to satisfy their demands.[95] Threats of violence often accompanied the demands by village communities for peasant purchasers to leave their land. In early 1918, peasants who had purchased land in 1909 were informed by a full skhod meeting (*polnym skhodom*) in Semirechka village that they were to leave before spring. According to one of the purchasers, peasants had declared 'that this is their land and if we do not agree they will tear down the buildings and leave us to go who knows where'.[96] Mohiliv-Podil's'kyi povit land committee noted that 'peasants have begun to chase from their villages those peasants not registered there ('*ne pripisanykh do dannogo sela*') and those possessing land purchased with help from the Peasant Land Bank'. The committee resolved that such violence should not be permitted in any case.[97]

In many cases victims of such peasant action possessed purchased land which did not exceed the village norms. A report of April 1918 noted that 'frequently the individuals from whom land has been confiscated possess very little land (from two to four desiatins) in the family and have long ago sold their allotment land to their neighbours'.[98] Haisins'kyi povit

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94 *ibid.*, p. 110.

95 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 36. Ot dvoiakovskoi sel'skoi zemel'noi komissiiTernovskoi volosti Haisinskomu uzemkomu.

96 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 10. This was the subject of a complaint to Haisins'kyi povit land committee. Many of the peasant purchasers were widows who had lost their husbands in the war and had nowhere else to go.

97 *TsDAVO*, f. 1830, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 5. From Zhurnal Mohiliv-Podil's'koho povitovoho zemel'noho komiteta, 17/18 December 1917. Jews also were chased from the village which is an interesting analogy to make with these peasants. Peasants who committed such acts were to be considered the 'enemies of freedom and the Ukrainian Republic' but in truth such instances were widespread.

98 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 146.

land committee asked that attempts be made to explain to peasants that chasing people from purchased land was not permissible because 'they are just as poor as other peasants'.[99] Traditional peasant belief in community membership and entitlement rather than class divisions was the motive for such behaviour. Where land was limited peasant solidarity did not extend beyond community members.

Right-Bank Ukraine, as an area where the household held more direct control over land rights, was unsurprisingly the scene of countless conflicts between family members or over family rights. For example, in Nikol's'ko-Borshchahivs'ka volost a local peasant, M. M Tkachenko, had been refused a share of land in 1905 by his father after his parent's divorce. Tkachenko had then rented land in a neighbouring village but during the revolution this plot was confiscated. The basis for this seizure was that Tkachenko had a legal right to other lands, i.e. his father's land or *batkivshchina,* and he duly petitioned the volost authorities for this right to be recognised.[100]

An example of disputes between family members can be found in Petropavlovs'ka-Borshchahivka in July 1919. A local peasant, M. Draba, complained to the authorities (here comprising the village kombedy, land commission and land committee) that his father had seized land granted to him by the community. His father held land above the accepted norm for the volost. The village authorities resolved that the land in dispute (1.13 desiatina) should be divided equally between the father, the son and a brother.[101] Such quarrels were commonplace, as peasants attempted to gain access to precious land resources.[102]

Throughout the revolution, peasants continued to seize land without permission from the village or other authorities, particularly in areas where there was little land for

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99 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 103, ark. 10. 10 February 1918.

100 *DAKO*, f. R-94, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 91. The two peasants who had farmed the plot of land since 1905 vigourously rebutted Tkachenko's claims but it is apparent that the village which had confiscated his rented land believed he was entitled to land in Sofievs'ka Borshchahivka.

101 *DAKO*, f. R-94, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 219. Zhurnal zasedannia zemel'nogo komiteta sela Petropavlovskoi-Borshchagovki, sovmestno s volostnim zemel'nim Nikol'sko-Borshchagovskogo udostnogo ispolkoma, 7 July 1919.

102 See, for example, the refusal of peasant A. D. Varenko to allow his son access to property or the dispute between brothers over hayfield rights, *DAKO*. f. R-94, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 279.

distribution. Conflict frequently resulted when land was seized forcibly or when seizures violated the rights of other peasants. For example, in Mikhailivka-Borshchahivka, Kyiv hubernia, in June 1919 two peasant brothers seized a plot of land belonging to a fellow villager, Ivan Kovalenko. Kovalenko, who had ploughed the land in preparation for sowing, issued a complaint to the Soviet volost executive committee. When the latter investigated the matter they found that both households held more than the average volost land norm (one desiatina per soul) and recommended that the surplus be confiscated.[103]

In some instances land issues polarised wealthy and poor groups in the village. The material conditions of poor peasants were exacerbated by the economic crisis brought about by the war and revolution.[104] For example, in Dzhulinok village, Podillia, wealthier peasants walked out of a gathering called to discuss the measurement of village lands in preparation for redistribution. The remainder elected a land commission but the wealthier peasants protested and obstructed the drawing up of an inventory of village lands.[105] Hostility did not necessarily result from such polarisation. The village remained a cohesive unit. For example, in Kyiv hubernia, Soviet officials noted that poor peasants had elected wealthier villagers onto local land commissions.[106]

Peasants also demanded access to resource land. During the civil war peasant communities made concerted efforts to maintain control of the pasture, forest or other lands which were of such intrinsic importance to the peasant economy. In the Right Bank access to these lands had proved a major concern to the peasants in the period before the revolution and during 1917. In the years 1918-1920, however, peasants faced numerous governments whose agricultural policies protected such lands and placed limits on peasant use. This led once again to peasant resistance which centred around the community, for it had been this

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103 *DAKO,* f R-94, op. 1, spr. 13, ark. 10. The average land norm for the volost was one desiatina per soul. Both households held 11.5 desiatins. Kovalenko's household contained six members, the brothers' household contained seven members.

104 See for example *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 18, ark. 1. Kratkii obzor deiatel'nosti Rovenskogo uzemotdela, Volyn, s ego vozniknoveniia k 1-mu Iiulia s.g. Former *batraky* (labourers) and poor peasants were in a particularly terrible condition in 1919.

105 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 108, ark. 128.

institution which had negotiated contracts in the pre-revolutionary period for use of such lands by the village as a whole.

The types of conflict over forest land which began in 1917 continued well into the Soviet era. In December 1917, a village in Olevs'ka volost appealed to higher authorities for free access to forest land in the area. The village did not produce enough grain to feed itself all year round and had traditionally relied on forestry and cattle breeding to make ends meet. Access to timber would ensure the village's survival. The community requested the right to decide which peasants were entitled to 'free distribution of timber'. The community further demanded that the 'newly arrived population and Jews should pay money for the pasture of cattle in the forests', thus reinforcing the link between peasant rights and land use and the important role played by the community in defining such rights.[107]

Pleas for such rights were common and were normally issued by the community to furnish its poorer members with a means of existence or raw materials. Slobodianka village committee, Tarashchans'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, requested the right to fell timber for 'supplying the poor population'.[108] A protocol from Seredynka village gathering, in January 1919, petitioned the authorities for the right to receive an allocation of forest land to meet the needs of the village for timber. The obshchestvo elected two representatives who were to supervise the use of the forest along with the starosta and the members of the village spilka.[109]

Peasant demands for access sometimes spilled over into violence. Forest workers on the Tereshchenko estate in Kyiv hubernia were chased from their posts in January and February 1918. The volost land committee, rather than preventing this, had 'colluded in the expulsion of the guard and the timbering of the forest'. Throughout the whole forest

106 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 20, ark. 47. Protokol zasedanii kollegii zemotdela, Kyiv hubernia.
107 *TsDAVO,* f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 15, ark. 242. Protocol of village skhod in Olevs'ka volost, 23 December 1917.
108 *TsDAVO,* f. 1060, op. 1, spr. 21, ark. 35. Protocol zasedannia Tarashchans'koi poviyovoho zemel'noi upravy, 5 January 1918.
109 *TsDAVO,* f. 1642, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 60. 17 January 1919. During the Directory's period of office in Kyiv hubernia. Note the use of pre-revolutionary terms for peasant bodies (starosta and obshchestvo) and the reliance on the spilka or union to oversee agricultural matters.

'peasants freely pleased themselves and cut down the very best building timber'. When the manager of the estate restored the forest guard they required arms to protect themselves from the local peasants who continued to use the forest regardless.[110] The effect of peasant action on the forests was catastrophic. The Letychivs'kyi povit commissar in July 1919 reported that peasants were continuing to fell timber in local forests without any kind of system with the result that some forests were being threatened with total destruction. Rich and poor peasants alike engaged in the illicit felling of this timber.[111] A letter from the Kyiv-Podillia department for state property to the Hubernia Starosta in May 1918 also warned of the threat to forests from peasant use. Peasants from various villages were indiscriminately using local forests for their needs and destroying young trees in the process.[112] A Soviet report from Volyn in spring 1919 noted that 'destructive timber felling continues uninterruptedly'.[113] Various governments attempted to stamp out this rapacious use of resources. For example, an order to village committees of Luhins'ka volost from the Soviet authorities, in May 1919, prohibited any kind of use of forest land by village inhabitants. Offenders were threatened with punishment.[114] Despite these official efforts to restrict peasant access to forests many villages continued to fell timber illicitly. Many village authorities condoned such action while seeking official recognition for peasant rights from whichever government held power. Government efforts usually remained 'without result' (*bezrezul'tatno*).[115]

Closely linked to peasant forest use was the demand for pasture land. Peasants pastured cattle in forests or on particular meadows; hayfields were also important. All these lands were subject to peasant action. For example, a water meadow purchased by several

110 *TsDIA*, f. 830, op. 1, spr. 182, ark. 1. F. Belyi, from estate of the heirs of Tereshchenko. When Austro-German troops intervened and searched local peasant houses, sixty-seven households were found in possession of timber in one village alone.
111 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 8, ark. 35. In report to Podillia huberniia commissar of Directory, 5 July 1919.
112 *TsDAVO*, f. 628, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 125. Letter to Podillia hubernia starosta from Kyiv-Podillia uprava for state property, 30 May 1918. The destruction of younger trees threatened the future growth of the forest.
113 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 18, ark. 1. Kratkii obzor deiatel'nosti Rovenskogo uzemotdela.
114 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 354. Prikaz No. 4, 13 May 1919.

peasants in the settlement of Kharosha with the aid of the Peasant Land Bank in 1909 was seized by peasants from the neighbouring village of Semirechka in April 1918. Around a hundred peasants, led by the village committee, marched on to the land and measured and divided the meadow on the basis that 'meadow land should be distributed among all peasants'.[116]

The tendency towards the distribution or claim to use such lands was common throughout the Right Bank. Ialtushkova village petitioned the povit authorities for permission to distribute hayfields belonging to a local sugar factory among its members. The matter was passed to the Ialtushkova village land commission for consideration.[117] In Kyiv hubernia in 1919, the Belich village kombedy and land commission petitioned the volost land department to be granted a share of hay-land formerly belonging to the landlord Savchenko. The volost replied that the request would be granted once the needs of the poor peasants in the area had been satisfied.[118] Most of the hay-land in the volost had already been divided among neighbouring villages.

In Volyn in 1919, the village committee of Velikii-Les was denied a share of hay-land by local soviet authorities because their petition was made after the land had already been divided among other villages.[119] In the same povit a conflict arose between three villages over the distribution of a former landlord's hayfields in the area. The authorities had to intervene to establish the boundaries of the hayfields and a special commission was formed to bring the villages to agreement.[120]

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115 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 18, ark. 1. Kratkii obzor deiatel'nosti Rovenskogo uzemotdela Vol. Gub. S ego vozniknovenii k 1-mu Iiulia s.g.

116 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 109, ark. 131. Declaration to Haisins'kyi povit land committee.

117 *TsDAVO*, f. 1830, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 33. Zhurnal zasedaniia Mogilev-Podol'skogo uezdnogo zemel'nogo komiteta, 27-28 February 1918, point 28. The village land commission was probably comprised of village peasants and would have viewed the request of their fellow villagers sympathetically.

118 *DAKO*, f. R-94, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 25. 2 June 1919. Note that the former landlord is mentioned, thereby reinforcing traditional peasant rights to land.

119 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 19, ark. 353. Protocol No. 13, 28 June 1919. Zhurnal Luginskogo volostnogo zemel'nogo otdela, Ovruchskii uezd.

120 *ibid.*, ark. 351. Protocol No. 7, 4 June 1919.

Illicit use of pasture and hay-land continued under every government. The latter attempted to prevent peasant use or abuse of these lands.[121] In most cases the community was held directly responsible for such action. A protocol of Hornostaipil's'ka volost executive committee, Kyiv hubernia, 22 June 1919, ordered that 'every village community should protect *senokos* land from damage [caused by grazing] and in the case of illegal damage communities will be deprived of their hayfields'.[122]

Thus, communities continued to carry out the traditional economic functions and responsibilities which had been performed by the pre-revolutionary sel'skoe obshchestvo. They continued to see themselves and be seen as the appropriate channel for peasant demands, and the community continued to negotiate on behalf of the interests of all its members. This applied to land and resources but also to other vital areas of peasant concern.

Flour mills were just one example of resources that had relevance to all peasants, not just a few. Peasant action against flour mills and mill owners was a small but significant part of the agrarian movement in 1917.[123] Peasant demands for free use of flour mills or a reduction in rental costs were voiced after 1917 as well. Mill owners before the revolution had tended to be either landlords, agricultural enterprises, wealthier peasants or Jews, and the relationship with the community was often hostile. For example, in April 1918 a volost militia chief called on Malo-Zherebskii village to return a mill to a renter who had earlier been attacked. In reply, the village, 'having listened to the plea of instructor P.V.Zolonskii decided to categorically refuse to return to the former exploitation of the renter but agreed to pay the renter for his losses and petition the Central Rada about the transfer of ownership to the working common population, paying rent or a deposit in agreement with the Provisional Law'.[124] Three hundred peasants attended the meeting, practically every inhabitant of the

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121 *ibid.*, ark. 350. Protocol No. 3, 15 May 1919. A Soviet volost department decreed 'to forbid the pasture of cattle on senokos land from 22 May. Offenders will be liable for punishment.'
122 *DAKO*, f. R-87, op. 1, spr. 1, ark. 41. Protocol of 22 June 1919.
123 Holubnychy, '1917 Agrarian Revolution', p. 10. He suggests that the seizure of mills was of greater relevance in Ukraine than in Central Russia, causing 1.6% of disturbances recorded in Ukraine in 1917 compared with 0.1% in Russia.
124 *TsDAVO*, f. 1061, op. 1, spr. 395, ark. 8. Protocol No. 3, 11 April 1918. Volyn.

village, and the decision not to return the mill was unanimous.[125] At about the same time members of a volost committee demanded the transfer into their hands of a mill in Vasil'kivs'kyi povit. When their request was denied, the committee returned with armed soldiers, and under threat of attack, the mill's administrators relinquished control.[126]

The return of landowners' property under the Hetman stopped villages declaring outright ownership of mills. In July 1918, two mill renters wrote to the Podillia hubernia starosta complaining about 'Bolshevik'[127] village committees, who had acted under the slogan 'everything for the people' (*vse dlia naroda*) and chased them from their property.[128] The community was urged by the Starosta to conclude a new agreement with the renters.[129]

Many communities continued to observe agreements struck by representatives with mill owners during 1918, even after Skoropadsky had fallen. Peasants feared taking direct action whilst the risk of the old owner returning remained. A survey of mill ownership and use in Starokonstantinivs'kyi povit in 1919 revealed the continuing role of the community in negotiating rental contracts on behalf of the whole village. In some cases the renter was listed as a cooperative enterprise or group of village workers but, of seventy-four mills registered in the document, twenty-seven were rented directly by the community on one-year contracts.[130] This suggests continued community influence over economic affairs.

The sugar industry was a major priority of all political powers.[131] However, the lands of the sugar estates were the subject of peasant action. From 1918, peasants tried to bring these resources under their direct control and redistribute the huge area of land which had formerly been under sugar-beet. It was reported in July 1919 that in Lebedińskyi forest

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125 *ibid.*, ark. 8.
126 *ibid.*, ark. 2. 6 April 1918.
127 The two renters, P. P. Kropivnitskii and I. Z. Kutisman, refer to 'Bolsheviks' but it is unlikely that the members of these village committees were actually so. The number of Bolsheviks in Ukraine at this time was probably quite small. The term 'Bolshevik' was more likely to be applied to any anti-Hetman or revolutionary activity. Classifying peasant action as Bolshevik, even if it had no links with Bolshevik organisations, might ensure a more sympathetic response from the authorities.
128 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 50, ark. 236. Letter to Podillia hubernia starosta from inhabitants of Nova Kurovechka, P. P. Kropivnitsky and I. Z. Kutisman, 3 July 1918.
129 *ibid.*, ark. 236.
130 *TsDAVO*, f. 1062, op. 1, spr. 82, ark. 218-230. Vidomost pro arendu staniv ta mliniv v Starokonstiantinivs'komu poviti, June 1919. The community is referred to as the hromada in the original text.

which was used by a local sugar refinery for its timber needs, local peasants had threatened the forest manager, with the result that he fled from his post. His assistant had been murdered and the forest guard had deserted. Maintaining the normal operation of the sugar industry in such conditions was extremely difficult.[132] Throughout Ukraine, the area of land under sugar-beet cultivation fell by 40% between 1914 and 1918.[133] Production of sugar fell by 80% in the same period.[134] By 1919 to 1920, sugar production had fallen to 4.8% of the 1914 to 1915 level.[135]

Peasants were encouraged to carry on sugar-beet cultivation themselves. In 1918, several villages concluded agreements pledging to sow land with beet. Flivka village in a resolution of 3 March 1918 agreed to sow 200 morgs of land.[136] In a similar protocol, the village of Cherniatka, Podillia, drew up a list of peasants who were willing to sow sugar-beet on 300 morgs of land which had already been prepared by the landowner. Peasants were to be granted a share of this land.[137] To aid these efforts, Haisins'kyi povit land committee issued a twelve-point plan for the restoration of the sugar industry on 14 March 1918.[138] In Kyiv hubernia, 1919, Kalnova village gathering accepted a proposal by a member of a local agricultural society to take control of a sugar-beet plantation 'for special cultivation on cooperative foundations'.[139]

However, when the land needs of the sugar industry were given priority over those of the village, peasant attitudes changed.[140] This was particularly true in areas where the land of the sugar factories provided the sole reserve land fund for distribution to peasants. In

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131 See Ksenzenko, 'Reshenie', p. 18
132 See *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 6, ark. 89. 15 July 1919.
133 Ksenzenko, 'Reshenie', p. 22.
134 *ibid.*, p. 22. The sown area fell by 40%, which suggests that sugar factories were unable to process the surplus raw sugar-beet.
135 *ibid*, ark. 22..
136 *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 27, ark. 6. A *morg* was an area roughly equal to one acre.
137 *ibid.*, ark. 7.
138 *ibid.*, ark 7. See also *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 127, ark. 44. 5 March 1918. Declaration of Cherna-Hreba village to sow beet on landlord land. *TsDAVO*, f. 1390, op. 1, spr. 114, ark. 5. Nicha-Krepians'ka land committee. Two representatives were elected to oversee the sowing of beet.
139 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 127, ark. 7. Protocol of Cherniatka village, 4 March 1918.

Skvir in 1919 there were 'many disputes between the population and the management of the sugar factories'.[141] In large part this resulted from the implementation of Soviet policy at local level.[142] The existence of large sugar-beet refineries agitated local peasants.[143] Meshcheriakov wrote to Lenin that 'the bunglers from the local *Sovnarkhoz* and *Glavsakhar* in no way want to understand the general policy in relation to the peasant. They chase him from such land by force, then say it has been nationalised'.[144]

Action against the sugar industry continued under all governments. In late-April 1918, the management of Makova sugar factory complained to the Podillia hubernia commissar that the local village committees had taken control of the factory. All the buildings and property belonging to the factory were taken over by the committees and all workers were chased away. The seizure had been preceded by a number of peasant attacks during the winter months. The community also placed a guard around the factory in February 1918 so that no other group could use its resources and to strengthen their claim to it.[145]

At the end of May 1918, the management of Kulikovetskii sugar factory sent a report lamenting the terrible destruction wrought by local peasants. They called for the disarmament of local peasants, the return of stolen property and the provision of a guard of 200 soldiers to protect the factory. Clearly the threat of further peasant violence was still present. Only massive investment, they said, would enable the factory to resume

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140 Skoropadsky in his memoirs makes the point that without the land of the sugar factories and other agricultural enterprises going to the common land fund there would have been very little left for peasant use. *Spohady,* p. 285.

141 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 1, spr. 18, ark. 22. Outline of activities of Skvirs'kyi povit land department.

142 See Pershyn, *Narysy,* p. 92. Pershyn talks of the insoluble conflict between peasant calls for land and the essential requirements of factories.

143 *Ekonomicheskie otnosheniia,* p. 59.

144 *ibid.,* p. 60. Glavsakhar was the Central Committee for sugar production. Sovnarkhoz (Sovet narodnogo khoziaistva) was the committee of the economy.

145 *TsDAVO,* f. 628, op. 1, spr. 3, ark. 275, 282, 283. Letter to Podillia hubernia commissar from Makovs'kyi sugar factory, 28 April 1918. The seizure directly preceded the arrival of the Hetman. See also *TsDAVO,* f. 628, op. 1, spr 6, ark 195. After the departure from the villages of Austrian troops sent to restore order, peasants refused to sow sugar-beet and issued increasing demands to the manager of Vyshe-Olchedaevskii sugar factory, 25 April 1918.

operation.[146] During autumn 1918, as a result of peasant action, Volyn hubernia land committee expressed fears about the collection of the 1918 beet harvest and preparation for planting next year's crop.[147] The director of Horodok sugar factory in Podillia complained that peasants were preventing the use of a neighbouring forest and were refusing to enter into any discussion or agreement with the factory.[148] A report to the Soviet povit land department in Bila-Tserkov in May 1919 noted that 'there have been complaints about the behaviour of peasants in Bilatserkivs'ka volost over the theft of factory property and damage to all winter crops on former landlord land'. Decisive measures were required to prevent such activity, for it was 'vital to protect the nationalised factories'.[149] In Cherkas'kyi povit a report noted that 'local peasants have taken away the inventory and wounded the director of the estate of Balakliivs'kyi sugar factory. Smelians'kyi factory is being threatened with destruction'.[150] Peasant behaviour and the assertion by the community of peasant rights over sugar-factory land played a large role in the extreme downturn witnessed in the sugar industry in these years.

From this discussion it is clear that, despite the attempts of whatever authority held power at national level, in the villages it was the community which took the leading role in the resolution of the land question. Traditional village institutions which assumed executive power during 1917 continued to have the final say over that most fundamental of village resources, land. From late 1917 village committees set about formulating rules and systems for the redistribution of land which had been seized by its members. The Hetman regime in May 1918 forced a more cautious approach by the peasants in declaring their desire for land but conflicts between villages and landowners and governments continued nonetheless. The social debate about land division resurfaced after the fall of the Hetman and the community

146 *TsDAVO*, f. 1792, op. 1, spr. 48, ark. 330. Letter to Podillia hubernia starosta from management of Kulilovets'kyi sugar factory, 26 May 1918.
147 *TsDAVO*, f. 1061, op. 1, spr. 319, ark. 26. 29-31 August 1918. Zhurnal Volynskoi gubzemkom, 29-31 August 1918.
148 *TsDAVO*, f. 628, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 274. Director G. M. Marants notes that over the previous winter peasants had taken 400, 000 pudy of timber. He asked for the Varta to intervene in the dispute.
149 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 12, ark. 198.

was central to attempts to give land to poorer peasants. Conflicts over land did result between peasants and villages but the village or volost often sat as arbiter in disputes and its authority was accepted. The community, articulating the demands of its members, often stood in direct opposition to the interests of the state which wished to maintain the economy, prevent divisions of land or extract foodstuffs from the village.

In the years 1918 to 1919, therefore, no lasting division of land took place and peasant disillusion grew as a result. The failure to distribute land to those who demanded it was unsurprising given the constant political and military turmoil. Attempts to distribute land were also hampered by the difficulty of introducing concepts such as land distribution and rights to land not based on hereditary claims into the villages of the Right Bank.

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150 *ibid.*, ark. 193.

PEASANT ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SOVIET REGIME IN THE RIGHT BANK, 1920-1923.

> Ukraine does not believe in anyone and does not respect any kind of authority. She will only respect and submit to him who possesses a powerful military organisation and complete economic apparatus.
>
> N. I. Muralov, in a report to Lenin, Felix Dzerzhinsky and others about the situation in the rear of the Soviet 12th army in Ukraine, May 1920. *Pol'sko-Sovetskaia Voina*, ed. by Kostiushko, p. 99

N.I. Muralov's comment quoted above succinctly encapsulates the twin imperatives of Soviet policy towards Ukraine in 1920. During 1919 the Soviet regime, in common with other governments, failed to win lasting support in the countryside. Some rethinking of Soviet policy was vital, if peasants were to be placated and the attempt to construct a viable regime was to succeed. Firm military power was required, if the countryside, the stumbling block of previous regimes, was to be pacified. A practical economic framework also had to be introduced which would satisfy peasant demands for land but ensure an adequate supply of foodstuffs to urban areas.

Serious efforts to organise a Soviet Ukrainian republic began only in 1920. Two previous attempts, in January 1918 and spring 1919, had ended with Soviet troops being forced to retreat in the face of an advancing military threat. Denikin's occupation of eastern areas of Right-Bank Ukraine in 1919 totally destroyed the Soviet administration there.[1] Soviet leaders were forced to rebuild a Ukrainian republic from scratch.[2] Rather than founding the Soviet regime on an indigenous social revolution, however, power was established on the back of the military campaign against Denikin.[3] Peasant uprisings

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1 Majstrenko, *Borotbism*, p. 170.
2 Borys writes that 'the Soviet authorities therefore had to begin the social revolution each time from the same point as in the previous period', *Sovietisation*, p. 293.
3 *ibid.*, p. 248.

seriously destabilised Denikin's rear but it was the Red Army which played the pivotal role in founding a Soviet Ukraine. The obstacles facing the regime were considerable and Soviet power did not penetrate some parts of Right-Bank Ukraine until 1921. The main danger came from the Polish invasion of 1920[4] but the White military commander, Baron Wrangel, remained a lingering threat in Southern Ukraine, as did peasant 'bandits' who became particularly widespread in the Right Bank.

By 1923, the Soviet government had instituted a rural administrative framework to supersede traditional village and volost organs on paper at least. In reality, however, penetrating the village proved extremely difficult. Many Soviet organs did not correspond to their theoretical role or faced opposition from within village society. This was often expressed by peasants through violent means. The Soviet authorities responded by trying to extinguish any semblance of peasant autonomy and asserting the legal rights of their own Soviet organs. These efforts took place against a background of social change precipitated by the revolution which had broken down many traditional structures of village life. However, despite the best efforts of the Soviet regime, many peasant traditions continued to thrive.

The Soviet regime accepted that mistakes had been made in policy in 1919 which should be avoided in future.[5] Party conferences, organs and activists 'particularly underlined the necessity of considering the lessons of work before Denikin and not repeating the mistakes and defects which were earlier permitted in a number of areas'.[6] A decree of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party laid out these new priorities at the Eighth Party Congress in December 1919. Ukrainian independence was to be recognised,

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4 The Polish invasion of Ukraine began on 25 April 1920. Immediately preceding the invasion (21 April) an agreement was signed between the Poles and the Ukrainian nationalists under Petliura. Polish troops swept rapidly across the Right Bank at the end of April and beginning of May. On 6 May Polish troops took Kyiv. By 9 May most of the Right Bank was under their control. The Red Army's counter-attack began on 26 May and by mid-July, following fierce fighting, the Soviets forced Polish troops to retreat and established their control over Right Bank once again. Thereafter there were only limited engagements. See Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920*, London, 1972, pp. 102-103, 120, 226, 259. Supruenko, *Ocherk*, pp. 377-380, 432, 437-8. Reynolds, 'Some Experiences in Kiev', pp. 217, 221-222.

5 Kolisnyk, *Vidnovlennia*, pp. 116-117. Babii, *Mistsevi orhany*, p. 227.

greater subtlety was to be employed in dealing with the national question and strenuous efforts were to be made to implement Soviet land policy.[7] Lenin espoused similar sentiments in an open letter to workers and peasants of Ukraine.[8]

The most important task for the Bolsheviks was winning the trust 'not only of the poor peasants but also of the wide strata of middle peasants'.[9] The requisitioning of grain from these groups was to be strictly limited in an attempt to gain their support.[10] The middle peasant was to become the foundation of the new Soviet order in the Ukrainian countryside. The alleged predominance of the kulak class in the village was to be smashed and resistance to Soviet rule ended. One Soviet writer wanted to 'incite the class enmity on the part of the village towards the wealthy kulak part' by exploiting 'those contradictions which appear in the Ukrainian village today'.[11] Peasants were reported as welcoming Soviet government as the change in policy began to bear fruit. They were quoted as saying of Red Army troops that 'these are not last year's Bolsheviks and they have not committed any thefts or violence against peasants'.[12]

Guidelines for Soviet volost organisers written by Dmytro Manuilsky took heed of Right-Bank Ukraine's particular conditions.[13] Right-Bank Ukraine was 'a region of the village poor' where poor and middle peasants comprised the rural majority.[14] Communists in the countryside were supposed to pay special attention to the needs of these groups.[15] The numerous sugar factory workers were also to be targeted by Soviet officials, as they were

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6 Babii, *Mistsevi orhany*, p. 227.
7 *VKP(B) v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK (1898-1935)*, 5 ed., 2 vols., Moskva, 1936. vol. I, pp. 324-326.
8 Lenin paid particular regard to the national question and the need for Ukrainian workers and peasants to unite with their Russian counterparts. See Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 40, pp. 41-47. 28 December 1919.
9 *VKP(B) v rezoliutsiiakh*, pp. 324-326.
10 *ibid.*, p. 325.
11 Dmytro Manuilsky, *Poradnik volostnoho organizatora radianskoi vlady z dodatkom vidpovidnoho zakonodatel'stva*, Kharkiv, 1920, p. 25
12 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 12. Doklad ot 25 dek po 11-oe Ianv. 1920 politrab t.t. Cherepanova i Shenberova.
13 Manuilsky, *Poradnik*, pp. 17-18.
14 *ibid.*, p. 18.
15 Klunnyi, *Do pytannia*, p. 34.

'proletarian elements through which it would be easy to influence the village'.[16] Manuilsky accepted the difficulty of this task, as these workers were the 'least organised, the least conscious and the most ignorant proletariat'.[17] His doubts were shared by Muralov who wrote that 'the population is exclusively peasant, and it is not possible to consider as proletarian those peasants working in sugar factories, closely linked with the village who, after the revolution, received large strips of land from the landlord's fields and forests, most of which had belonged to large Polish magnates'[18]

The revolution had done nothing to change peasant views of the importance of property ownership, thereby reinforcing the traditional Marxist viewpoint of the peasant as a conservative social force. Peasants still cherished the ideal of owning and working their own land. H. Klunnyi lamented that 'as long as the working peasant is an owner, he is an unreliable companion of the proletariat in the Communist revolution'.[19] Political efforts had to be made to win over the peasant masses in the Right Bank. Numerous reports underlined the need for the best party workers, or if need be, industrial workers, to be despatched to Ukraine to strengthen the Soviet regime.[20]

The Soviet authorities were hindered by another feature of the Right Bank. The village remained isolated from the town. This situation had been exacerbated by years of revolution and civil war. In Kyiv hubernia a report of 1920 stated that the countryside was 'completely cut off from Kyiv [city] in terms of information. They have not received any newspapers, journals or agitation literature.'[21] Muralov complained that, such was the effect of the lack of information, 'in March [1920], ten versts from Kyiv [city], peasants were under

16 Manuilsky, *Poradnik*, p. 18.
17 *ibid.*, p. 17.
18 *Pol'sko-Sovetskaia voina*, ed. by Kostiushko, p. 95.
19 Klunnyi, *Do pytannia*, p. 33.
20 See reports of Trotsky from Western front. On 26 April, for example, he wrote 'strong workers from central institutions must be sent'. See *Pol'sko-Sovetskaia voina*, ed by Kostiushko, p. 69; *ibid.*, pp. 89, 91. Manuilsky, *Poradnik*, p. 25.
21 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 23-27. Report to hubernia revkom from local information department, 20 February 1920.

the impression that Denikin held Moscow'.[22] Getting the Soviet message across was therefore extremely difficult.

The other feature that marked the Right Bank out for special attention, and which remained an ever-present reminder to the Soviet authorities of the strength of peasant resistance, was the high incidence of 'banditism'. Manuilsky noted that of all regions, the Right Bank was 'the most turbulent, where last year [i.e. 1919] bandits and rebellious elements rose up with the greatest force'.[23] Soviet rhetoric defined violent clashes as 'kulak banditism', but in many instances it is clear that these were united peasant revolts. In early 1920, Muralov complained that in several districts of the Right Bank[24] peasants took advantage of the absence of Soviet troops to rebel:

> Whole villages, armed with rifles, pitchforks and axes, attacked our convoys, taking Red Army men prisoner. Communists, Jews and Commissars were executed, Great Russians beaten, stripped and sent to "Kursk".[25] They stripped the Ukrainians and let those who wished return home or gave them the choice of joining their band.[26]

When peasant revolts enabled Soviet forces to advance they were seen as partisans but when the same areas rose up in revolt against Soviet rule they became 'bandits'. There were obvious links between the two. Peasant bands offered to join the Red Army but Soviet leaders would not accept independent or potentially unreliable military formations.[27] Neither could such units be allowed to remain in existence for peasant uprisings had already

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22 *Pol'sko-Sovetskaia voina*, ed. by Kostiushko, p. 95. Denikin had, of course, been beaten back from Moscow the previous winter. (1 verst equalled 0.663 miles or 1.067 km).

23 Manuilsky, *Poradnik*, p. 18.

24 Muralov mentions Lipovets'kyi and Berdichevs'kyi povity in particular.

25 The quotation marks are from the original text. It seems therefore that some meaning other than the Russians being physically sent to Kursk is implied.

26 Kostiushko, *Pol'sko-Sovetskaia voina*, p. 96

27 See, for example, Majstrenko, *Borot'bism*, pp. 176-7. The Borot'bist-influenced brigade of Otaman Vorokh in the Right Bank who were considered 'irregular' by Red Army units. Their failure to be taken seriously as the foundation of a Ukrainian Red Army affected the political fortunes of the Borot'bisty (Ukrainian Communists), who argued for the creation of an independent Soviet-Ukrainian republic.

put paid to several military forces.[28] Peasant resistance proved a continuing obstacle to the stability of Soviet power in the Right Bank right up to 1923 and after.

On 22 December 1919, the 'Provisional decree on the organisation of Soviet power in Ukraine' laid out the structure of Soviet administrative rule in the countryside.[29] In areas within a hundred versts of the front lines, revkoms were to be formed at hubernia, povit, volost and village level. Each revkom was subordinate to the institution at the immediate level above it in the structure.[30]

At village and volost level, revkoms were to be formed in meetings of traditional institutions.[31] In Spichinets'ka volost, Berdychivs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, for example, a circular of 9 January 1920 addressed to all 'village starosty' declared:

> The village committee with three members constitutes the authority in the village. Therefore you are ordered to call a village gathering of all citizens, men and women, as soon as possible and elect this committee whose members should come from the poor population, be of upright character and more or less educated.[32]

Protocols electing village revkoms were sent to the volost for ratification.[33] Traditional institutions, therefore, were the basis for new Soviet organs which drew legitimacy from such elections. [34] However, there was confusion about the role of traditional organs thereafter. The community remained influential among peasants, often to the detriment of Soviet interests. A report from Kyiv hubernia in 1920 noted: 'in the village there is the so-called community at the head of which stands the former starosta who holds the most stupid conception of Soviet power which he then passes on to the peasants'.[35] In

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28 Klunnyi, *Do pytannia*, p. 33.
29 Babii, *Mistsevi orhany*, p. 220.
30 *ibid.*, p. 221.
31 Kolisnyk, *Vidnovlennia*, p. 63.
32 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 194. Spinets'kyi volost revkom, 9 January 1920
33 *ibid.*, ark. 194.
34 At Neshcherivka village the starosta similarly presided over precedings to elect the revkom. *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 123.
35 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 23-27.

some areas village heads were simply renamed as village revkom chairmen.[36] Therefore, the traditional community and new Soviet organs were not always at odds with one another but were often the same institution under a different guise or very closely linked.

Revkom organisations spread throughout the Right Bank between December 1919 and February 1920.[37] Revkoms were elected at village level and delegates chosen to represent the village at volost congresses.[38] The impetus for their creation came from outside the village. A central Revolutionary Military Council helped to co-ordinate local revkoms, reinforcing the link between the establishment of Soviet power and the Red Army.[39] However, revkoms were only considered provisional 'extraordinary' organs of power. Once Soviet rule was established, authority was supposed to pass to elected soviets, encompassing all levels of the administrative structure.[40] From within these soviets, executive committees were formed to take responsibility for administrative tasks. However, the Polish military offensive and continuing prevalence of banditism meant that these revkoms continued to exercise power at local level well into 1921.[41]

Soviet administration at local level did not follow a uniform pattern. In Podillia only four out of eleven povits were considered safe from bandits in 1920 and revkoms rather than soviets continued to exist.[42] These committees functioned at povit and hubernia level and were staffed by Communists. Delegates from these committees represented Podillia and Volyn at the Fourth All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets in March, as no elections for peasant representatives could be held due to the military situation.[43] Soviet organs under a variety of names were organised in the village. These included kombedy, soviets, land commissions,

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36 *ibid.*, ark. 85. Protokol zasidannia z'izdu predstavnkiv volosnikh revoliutsionnykh komitetov kyivs'koho povitu 5-ho lypnia 1920 roku.
37 Babii, *Mistsevi orhany*, pp. 224-226.
38 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 121-145. Various prigovory resolving to elect village revkoms in Kyiv povit.
39 *Revolutsionnyi-voennyi sovet* or *Revvoensovet* for short. *Revviiskrada* in Ukrainian.
40 Kolisnyk, *Vidnovlennia*, p. 183.
41 Babii, *Mistsevi orhany*, p. 237.
42 *ibid.*, p. 237.
43 Kolisnyk, *Vidnovlennia*, p. 193.

executive committees and revkoms.[44] This diversity was attributed to the 'creative initiative' of the peasants.[45] In other words, peasants organised their own villages rather than simply fulfil Soviet degrees.

The Polish invasion unsettled Soviet attempts to bring the Right Bank under its control but this was only a temporary phenomenon. A Kyiv hubernia circular spoke of the damage wrought by the five-week Polish occupation. The region's infrastructure and economy had been severely affected and Soviet objectives suffered a setback.[46] Some Soviet departments were evacuated but quickly recommenced their activities once the Poles had retreated from the Right Bank.[47] In many villages, however, party organisations had been dealt a crushing blow. A party cell in Obukhivs'ka volost had 'been dispersed during the Polish assault and until now [i.e. August 1920] has not been organised'.[48] The mood of the peasants remained nervous, fearful of the return of Polish troops.[49] However, the Soviet regime was now safe from external threat and could now turn its attention to the internal threats.

A congress of volost revkom representatives in Kyiv povit outlined the tasks which faced the administration and the extent of ruin in the countryside after the Polish occupation.[50] The system of exchange between town and village had completely broken down and even the villages were suffering severe shortages of foodstuffs. 'Bandits' were influential in the volosts.[51] A representative of Kyiv hubernia revkom argued that the age-old ignorance (*temnota*) of the peasants had been exploited by anti-Soviet powers.[52] The head of the povit revkom went further, stating that 'the peasants themselves are to blame for

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44 *ibid.*, pp. 84-5. Where kombedy had been formed revkomy were not created in the Right Bank, an anomaly which had parallels with the situation in 1919.
45 *ibid.*, p 85..
46 *Radianske budivnytstvo*, 24 June 1920.
47 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 81-87. Protokol zasidannia z'izdu predstavnkiv volosnikh revoliutsionnykh komitetov kyivs'koho povitu 5-ho lypnia 1920 roku.
48 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 59, ark. 22. Instructor Shopenko to povit revkom from Obukhivs'ka volost. August 1920.
49 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 67, ark. 10. Report to hubernia revkom from instruction section of Skvirs'kyi povit committee.
50 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 81. Congress held 5 July 1920.
51 *ibid.*, ark. 82-83.

the ruin from which they are all suffering because they did not come to an accommodation with Soviet power, did not work in the village and volost organs, and supported the counter-revolution'.[53]

The Soviet administration appeared to be in a chaotic condition. In Hermanivs'ka volost, according to the revkom representative, 'every village has its own life, not recognising Soviet power'. This was attributed to powerful individuals able to exert a strong influence in the village. There were frequent changes of power and 'in the villages authority is elected in turns, sometimes more than once in one day'.[54] The Soviet regime in the countryside, therefore, remained on very unsteady foundations.

The kombedy were re-introduced in Right-Bank Ukraine during the establishment of Soviet power in winter 1919-1920.[55] For example, a meeting of village kombedy representatives in Dimers'ka volost, February 1920, discussed numerous administrative questions and elected the volost revkom. It claimed authority over local village communities, obliging them to provide timber for the needs of the population.[56] However, the kombedy were generally ineffective. Peasants ignored the class principle of Soviet organs such as the kombedy and allowed people from all strata to be elected as members.[57]

A decree of 9 May 1920 established the *Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selian* in order to strengthen the Soviet regime in the countryside. The KNS was a specifically Ukrainian poor-peasant organisation akin to the kombedy. It seems no coincidence that the KNS were organised in the Right Bank in the wake of the counter-offensive against the Poles, as Soviet leaders argued that the Polish invasion had revealed a reluctance on the part of the peasants to actively defend the Soviet regime.[58]

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52 *ibid.*, ark. 82.
53 *ibid.*, ark. 84.
54 *ibid.*, ark. 85.
55 Kolisnyk, *Vidnovlennia*, p. 98
56 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 198. Protokol zasedannia volostnogo sobraniia iz predstavitelei sel'skikh kombedov, 19 February 1920.
57 A speech at the IV party conference, 20 March 1920, noted that soviets were full of 'kulaks and speculators'. *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian 1920-1933: Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv*, Kyiv, 1968. pp. 5-6.
58 *ibid.*, pp. 5-6

The Kyiv povit meeting of volost revkom representatives discussed the introduction of the KNS in the region. One speaker declared that 'Soviet power is strong only in the town but in the village, in order to strengthen it, a great deal of work must be done to defeat its enemies'.[59] The KNS was to rouse 'inert' peasants and force kulak sections of the village to fulfil their responsibilities.[60] The 'constant changes of power in Ukraine show that here there is a reason why Soviet power has not taken a foothold. This cause is evident in the fact that the kulaks are masters in the village once again.'[61] This was the starting point for Soviet conceptions of rural relations irrespective of whether or not evidence of kulak domination existed. The difference between the KNS and the kombedy of 1919 was that the latter were exclusively composed of poor peasants but the former also allowed middle peasants to join. Elections were held and courses convened for volost revkom representatives.[62]

The number of these committees formed throughout Ukraine was seen as evidence of popular poor peasant support for the Soviet regime. The process of establishing the KNS in the Right Bank started later than in other parts of Ukraine but by September 1920 there were approximately 1,200 committees in Volyn; in Kyiv, 1,271 were organised.[63] Fewer committees were organised in Podillia in 1920 but numbers varied from area to area (157 formed in Proskurivs'kyi povit, 27 in Ol'hopil's'kyi povit and 22 in Vinnyts'kyi povit).[64] A survey of 1 October 1923 calculated that there were 1,717 KNS in Volyn with 71,524 members, 1,562 in Kyiv (82,636 members) and 1,463 in Podillia (125,437 members).[65] These figures are misleading because the KNS underwent a number of changes and reforms

59 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 87.
60 *ibid.*, ark. 87.
61 *ibid.*, ark. 87.
62 *ibid.*, ark. 87.
63 See M. I. Remnev, 'Deiatel'nost' komitetov nezamozhnykh selian na Ukraine v 1920 godu', *Voprosy istorii*, 4, 1954, 93-103 (pp. 97-98).
64 Babii, *Mistsevi orhany*, p. 252.
65 V. Izhevs'ky, *Korotka istoriia komitetov nezamozhnykh selian na Ukraini: Z peredmovoiu i stattieu Iu. Ozhers'koho*, Kharkiv, 1924, p. 56.

of membership between 1920 and 1923. Volyn contained the lowest number of literate members and also the fewest number of Communist Party members.[66]

There were benefits to membership which encouraged many peasants to join, not just those the KNS were intended to attract.[67] An order of 6 June 1920 freed KNS members from the razverstka, gave them priority in any land divisions, allowed them to keep a certain quantity of foodstuffs and granted them seed stocks from state supplies.[68]

Peasant attitudes towards the KNS varied. Symbolically, their introduction was important because for the first time it legally empowered any disgruntled minority within the village. Their claims for land or executive power were now considered just as legitimate, if not more so, than those of the majority.[69] They could hold their own gatherings separate from those of the village and decisions taken at such assemblies were legal even if reached by a minority.[70] In some cases this led to splits within the village along the lines the Soviet leaders envisioned. For example, in Obukhivs'ka volost, Kyiv, a gathering was called on 2 August 1920 by the head of the revkom in order to form a KNS. An instructor, Shopenko, reported on what followed:

> After I had read out the declaration on the KNS, many kulaks were unhappy that they could not be members and, after long discussions, they were asked to leave the skhod. (They began to shout and declare their opposition to the KNS.) They refused to comply with the request and remained as before, obstructing work. In view of the fact that it was difficult to expel the troublemakers, it was decided to disperse the skhod without electing the KNS and convene a skhod of poor peasants the next day.[71]

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66 *ibid.*, p. 56.
67 Mace, 'Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selian', p. 488.
68 *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, pp. 9-14.
69 *ibid*, pp. 9-14.
70 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 97, ark. 5. See protocol drawn up by KNS members in Volyn with only 36 members.
71 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 59, ark. 22.

The following day the new skhod met and elected the KNS without interference.

In many cases, rather than being formed from the poorest sections, as Soviet leaders intended, the KNS were formed by the entire village. A report on the role of the KNS in Volyn in 1922 admitted that there was little class differentiation in the village organisations. Wealthier sections of the village were reported agitating among the 'ignorant poor peasantry' saying 'they are organising us in the KNS only so that they can take our grain. They want to separate us into two communities but we citizens are all equal.'[72] Many peasants objected to the idea of separate organisations within the village and the breaking down of village consensus. A report on the organisation of the KNS in Volyn in 1921 confirmed that very few of the KNS were organised on class principles:

> In KNS organisations, the movement of poor peasants actively splitting from the kulak element of the village and joining together in the struggle against them has not been observed. The Komnezamy in many cases are organised in common gatherings by all peasants under the well-known influence of the kulak element and including all those who have applied irrespective of their property conditions.[73]

Soviet officials opposed the election of the KNS in common gatherings because these did not differentiate between sections of the village and were based largely on the communality that pre-revolutionary village organisations represented.[74] Behind Soviet rhetoric about the kulak, seredniak and bedniak there was an acceptance that they were struggling to gain a foothold in the village. That peasants continued to elect KNS in general village gatherings suggests a basic misunderstanding of the principles of such committees or a refusal to accept them.

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72 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 3, spr. 454, ark. 4. Vidozva - materialy o komnezamakh Ukrainy, 1922.
73 *TsDAVO,* f. 257, op. 1, spr. 32, ark. 52. Otdel po rabote KNS pri NKVD, Volyn, 21 Spetember 1921.
74 *TsDAVO,* f. 5, op. 1, spr. 635, ark. 93. A report on Soviet power in Tarashchans'kyi povit requested that measures be taken to prevent the KNS being elected in common gatherings.

In rare cases peasants refused to form komnezamy. A gathering in Hlevye village, Budaevs'ka volost, Kyiv hubernia, refused to form a KNS in July 1921, because 'we do not find the election of a komnezamy necessary'.[75] In a meeting in March 1921 Budaev village refused to form a KNS.[76] The fact that neither of these villages had formed a KNS by 1921, despite the fact that they had been introduced several months previously, suggests a lack of peasant interest or of confidence in Soviet intentions. A report by instructor Shopenko, from Veliko-Dmitrovs'ka volost, Kyiv hubernia, in 1920 noted that the KNS still had not been formed in this village. Several times he 'called the skhod to organise [the KNS], but every time the peasants refused, saying "we are all poor"'.[77] Soviet conceptions of class had obvious difficulty finding support in the village.

The KNS often existed in name only or were completely inert. This was a frequent complaint of local Soviet activists, who found them, particularly those elected in common gatherings, 'lifeless and inactive as if they existed purely formally'.[78] A report from Kyiv hubernia in September 1922 noted that 'povits have not submitted any information, which creates the impression that, there, the KNS do not exist'.[79]

There were numerous reasons for the inactivity of the KNS. In Vashevats'ka volost, Kyiv hubernia, in 1920 half of the KNS members elected in common gatherings were completely illiterate. The only literate members of village society were described as 'kulaks' and therefore prevented from entering the KNS.[80] A later report from Umans'kyi povit admitted that such was the difficulty of finding able KNS members that illiterate peasants

75 *DAKO*, f. 1031, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 37. Protokola obshchego sobraniia s. Hlevakh, 20 June 1921.
76 *ibid.*, ark. 13.
77 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 318. Instuktora Shopenko komandirovannogo v V-Dmitrovskuiu volost' v informatsionno-instruktorskii podotdel uezdrevkoma, 26 August 1920.
78 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 32, ark. 52.
79 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 107, ark. 7. Otchet tret'ei gub. sessii komisii komnezamov Kievshchini.
80 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 138, ark. 170. To Kyiv povit revkom from revkom in Vashevats'ka volost on formation of KNS in local villages, 1920.

were sometimes elected as secretaries. Sometimes non-KNS members were appointed or no secretary was elected at all.[81]

A speaker at the meeting of Kyiv povit volost revkom representatives, in July 1920, explained that the KNS 'is not an organ of power in the village, it should only help the organs of power and strengthen Soviet power'.[82] In late 1920, however, the role of the KNS underwent a reappraisal. A meeting of KNS representatives in Kyiv hubernia in November 1920 outlined the primary task of the KNS as 'the formation of firm authority which we do not have in the Right Bank, especially in the volosts. Here, elements indifferent to Soviet power often stand at the head of Soviet organisations and while these people are in power, there will not be strong authority.'[83] The KNS were to provide the necessary strong backbone.

The KNS fulfilled decrees from the centre but were also given special responsibilities within the village. They assisted in the collection of grain and taxes, particularly ensuring that wealthy sections of the village fulfilled their responsibilities.[84] They were also responsible for the political supervision of 'kulaks' within the village.[85] They were to join the military struggle against the bandits who terrorised Soviet organs in the countryside.[86] Members were responsible for the redistribution of land and ensuring that any division favoured poorer sections of the village.[87] Finally, they also helped eradicate illiteracy and encourage cultural work.[88]

Alongside the KNS, the *Komitety Vzaimopomoshchi* (or *KVP*, Committees of Mutual Assistance) were organised under a decree of 23 December 1921. They were responsible to

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81 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 37, ark. 37. Report about the the reregistration of the KNS in Umans'kyi povit from administrative department of povit executive committee.
82 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 87.
83 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 59, ark. 182. Protocol of congress of KNS representatives in Kiev povit, 28 November 1920.
84 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 107, ark. 105. Vypiska iz doklada Kievskogo gubotuprava za noiabr'1922. *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, pp. 10-13.
85 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 107, ark. 50. Appeal to peasants from head of hubernia commission on KNS, Izhevs'kyi, 24 September 1922.
86 *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, p. 30.
87 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 59, ark. 182.
88 *Spravochnik*, p. 72.

the local KNS. The KVP was a social organisation which aimed to assist poor peasants who had suffered from natural disasters such as fires or family deaths. It therefore shared the social functions of the pre-revolutionary community and was another step towards the introduction of a village administration which fulfilled the same beneficial functions the peasants traditionally expected but was loyal to the state.[89] The KVP's links to the KNS were such that, where the latter were inactive, the KVP played very little role in the village. They tended to be seen more as a Communist party organisation than a peasant one. As a result, the types of questions which should have been discussed by the KVP were more frequently, as before, resolved in the village skhod.[90]

There were several attempts to stamp out anomalies in the behaviour of the KNS. Legislation covered the re-election of village committees and purges of KNS membership. New guidelines governing the KNS were published on 13 April 1921. They gave greater powers to KNS members to seize and distribute the land of wealthier peasants in the village.[91] A further decree of 27 May 1922 set out guidelines on eligibility for KNS membership, members' rights (for example, to land) and responsibilities (aiding socialist land reorganisation and fighting banditism).[92]

A report of 8 August 1920, three months after the formation of the KNS, was already complaining about the number of 'kulaks' who had entered its ranks.[93] As a result of the influence of wealthier peasants and general inactivity, a decree of 30 July 1921 proposed the re-registration of the KNS.[94] Information from Kyiv hubernia showed that in November 1921, 4,675 out of 17,705 members in Zvenihorods'kyi povit were excluded after re-registration, 1,556 out of 5,409 in Umans'kyi povit and 824 out of 7,824 in Kyiv povit.[95] Further purges of KNS membership in 1922 also limited numbers. In Kyiv povit only 14,516

89 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 67, ark. 50. Postanovlenie SNK USSR: O komitetakh vzaimopomoshchi na sele, 23 December 1921
90 *Kak Zhivet*, pp. 52-53.
91 *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, p. 119.
92 *Spravochnik*, p. 66. *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, pp. 157-167.
93 *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, p. 18.
94 *ibid.*, p. 143.

out of 26,378 were re-registered. Of the remainder, 4,592 were officially excluded, the rest did not attempt to re-register.[96] Nationally, the figures for the KNS in October 1923 were only forty three per cent of those listed in September 1921 when membership had been at its height.[97] This dramatic fall in numbers and the high level of official exclusions give the impression that the majority of members were inactive or did not correspond to the image of a poor peasant.

The KNS have been viewed by some as the fundamental cause for the destruction of opposition to Soviet rule in the Ukrainian village.[98] Western historians have often accepted this viewpoint.[99] However, as evidence from the Right Bank between 1920 and 1923 demonstrates, the KNS were often not as active or decisive as this view suggests. The KNS were often extremely weak and the peasants' experience of the KNS varied enormously.[100] This is not surprising given the relative isolation of the village which continued to obstruct the Soviet consolidation of power well into the 1920s.[101]

In some villages the KNS were a fundamental source of Soviet support in the countryside, fulfilling higher decrees in the all-important areas of food collection, land distribution and 'dekulakisation'.[102] However, materials prepared by Soviet organs themselves supported the view that the KNS were not necessarily as universally influential as portrayed.[103] In some villages the KNS struggled to make its presence felt. The KNS in the village of Nova Hutins'ka was said 'not to have played a particularly significant role in the

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95 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 37, ark. 34. Svodka o pereregistratsii KNS na 5 noiabr' 1921.
96 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 32, ark. 25. Vidchyt pro rabotu pidviddila KNS viddilu upravlinnia Volhubkom, October 1921.
97 *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, p. 310.
98 See *ibid.*, p. 143. A call for the re-registration of all KNS members, 30 July 1921, notes they are 'the best support for Soviet power and the leading force in political and economic activities'. Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 96.
99 Krawchenko, *Social Change*, pp. 61-66
100 Mace, 'Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selian', p. 493.
101 Allen, *Ukraine*, p. 357.
102 Dekulakisation or *raskulachivanie* was the forcible expropriation of the property of those considered kulaks in the village by Soviet officials or KNS members.
103 *Materialy po obsledovaniiu komitetov nezamozhnykh selian (po dannym obsledovaniia v iiune 1925 g.)*, Khar'kov, 1925. This survey of the state of KNS organisations, prepared by the Central Statistical administration, looked at Ukrainian village life after 1920.

village, while the KVP were inactive'.[104] In the village of Podlesnyi-Aleksinets and Sihak, Podillia, the KNS was not organised until 1922. In the village of Suhak 'almost no one had participated in uprisings or took part in the revolutionary struggle'.[105] The majority of KNS members in the village still attended church. Therefore the KNS 'did not and does not have any serious meaning in the village'.[106]

Some Western historians, studying the social background of KNS membership, have viewed them as Lumpenproletariat elements which had experienced urban life and returned to the village through necessity rather than choice.[107] Soviet leaders viewed this group as the natural constituency of the KNS.[108] However, the revolution had fundamentally changed the social nature of the village. Social and economic differences between peasants largely diminished and the number of households increased. Middle peasants now made up the great mass of the village with very small numbers of poor or wealthy peasants existing alongside them.[109] Conceptions of class have always posed problems.[110] However, if, as appears to be the case, the group the KNS were established to eradicate had evaporated, it is likely that the continued existence of the KNS was due to its importance in upholding Soviet rule in the village. There were certainly no traditional village organs which could reliably perform this function.

The military situation engendered by bandit activity after 1920 was such that revkoms had to be re-established to marshal resources against the threat faced by Soviet power. Revkoms were re-established in Kyiv hubernia in spring and again in autumn 1921.[111] Documents from Hermanivs'ka volost show a Soviet instructor from the povit

104 *ibid.*, p. 8.
105 *ibid*, p. 47.
106 *ibid.*, p. 47.
107 Krawchenko, *Social Change,* p. 66.
108 Manuilsky, *Poradnyk*, p. 11.
109 *Materialy*, p. 8.
110 Lewin, 'Who was the Soviet Kulak?', pp. 189-190.
111 *Istoriia derzhavy i pravy,* p. 391.

revkom, Khvorostavets, initiating the re-election of revkoms throughout the area.[112] In a protocol from Hrihorivka village on 8 February 1921, 'in view of the introduction of military conditions in Kyiv povit, the common gathering elected a village revkom in place of the volvykonkom and soviet'.[113] Revkoms were reorganised in Volyn and Podillia in November 1920, as a result of the great weakness of Soviet authority in the localities.[114]

As the Soviet regime stabilised, however, the introduction of soviets at village level became more common. In villages with over 10,000 inhabitants, an executive committee was elected to supervise the government of the village. Those with less than 10,000 inhabitants were under the executive control of the head of the village soviet. The soviets were to represent the village through the election of one delegate for every thousand inhabitants. However, the maximum number of delegates was set at fifty per village.[115] A record of a typical village soviet election is found in a protocol from Hermanivs'ka-Slobidka, Kyiv hubernia, dated 23 May 1921. The election was carried out in the presence of a representative of the volost election commission and the protocol recorded the numbers of peasants in the village, those entitled to vote and those elected onto the soviet.[116]

In contrast with the traditional principles of village democracy - where, before 1917 all household heads had voted and during 1917, whole villages had been enfranchised - the Soviet authorities strictly limited voting rights and excluded those who were considered politically unreliable or anti-Soviet. Thus, while the soviet was a legal-administrative institution, it was by no means representative of the village as a whole. Volost election committees decided at local level who was to be excluded from voting. These committees comprised povit-level representatives and members of the volost revkom and KNS so that

112 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 59, 71-73. Protokol No. 2 Germanovskogo Slobodskogo sel'skogo skhoda, 7 February 1921.
113 *ibid.*, ark. 76.
114 See *Radians'ke budivnytstvo*, pp. 652, 698.
115 *Spravochnik*, p. 15.
116 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 128. Protokol vyboriv Hermanivs'koho Slobids'koho sil's'koi rady, 23 May 1921.

centralised supervision could be maintained. Election committees were not permitted at village level.[117]

The effect of such measures was to reduce the numbers of those entitled to vote in elections to village soviets. Coupled with the fact that many peasants could not or would not exercise their rights to vote, this often meant that village soviets were formed from a very small section of the village population. Hermanivs'ka volost, Kyiv hubernia, was a case in point. In the village of Antoniv with 517 'souls', five members were elected by a gathering of 50 peasants. In Matiashivka, population 936 souls, 9 members were elected by 53 peasants. In Sushchansk, with a population of 1,543, only 70 took part in the elections. Finally, in Hermanivs'ka Slobidka, out of a population of 4,272, only 218 voted in the skhod.[118]

The soviet functioned alongside the KNS and village land commissions at local level. The KNS acted as supervisory organs over potentially unreliable soviets to ensure government decrees were fulfilled.[119] Members of village organs were supposed to join the KNS but those whose background or beliefs did not correspond with those of the Soviet state were to be expelled.[120] A Kyiv hubernia administration (*Hubuprava*) report for November 1922 calculated that after measures to expel undesirable elements, ninety per cent of the members of soviets were poor peasants.[121] There were supposed to be close links between the KNS, the soviets and land commissions. This did not always prove to be the case and there is evidence that Soviet organs were often in direct conflict with one another. In March 1920, the chief of the Kyiv povit militia reported that the actions of Red-Army detachments had led to clashes with local Soviet militias. The population had also been roused. In one village, representatives of the hubernia Cheka had also clashed with the head of the

117 *DAKO*, f. R-100, op. 1, spr. 101, ark. 19. Ot chernobyl'skoi uezdnoi izbiratel'noi komissii po vyboram v sovete.
118 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 128, 130, 131, 134.
119 Mace, 'Komitety Nezamozhnykh Selian', p. 489.
120 See, for example, the appeal to peasants by Izhevsky, head of the Kyiv huberniia komissiia of the KNS, 24 September 1922. *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 107, ark. 50.
121 *ibid.*, ark. 105.

kombedy.[122] Later reports from Kyiv povit also mention clashes: for example, that between a village KNS and revkom in Dymers'ka volost.[123]

The activity of soviets varied greatly. In smaller villages it often depended on the dynamism of individual members. A general rule seemed to be that where 'the representative was good, work went well and where he was poor the work went badly'.[124] One active member in Hlushka village was said to perform a role 'similar to the village starosta, who decided all questions independently'. Whilst this might ensure that some work was done, it did not make for efficient administration.[125]

There existed a reservoir of support for the Soviet government in the countryside, particularly in the wake of Denikin and the Poles. The Soviet regime appeared as manifestly the more peasant-orientated power. Peasants initially welcomed Soviet power as a better alternative than previous regimes which they had experienced. Peasant attitudes changed when they became more acquainted with the reality of Soviet rule or remained hostile towards certain tenets of Soviet policy. For example, a report on the political situation in Volyn, in 1921, noted that in Iz'iaslavs'kyi povit 'the mood of the peasants towards Soviet power is good but hostile towards the communes'.[126] Soviet officials often tried to exploit this reserve of sympathy towards their regime. A meeting in Votylevka, Zvenihorods'kyi povit, Kyiv, in 1920 called for peasants to submit foodstuffs for collection, reminding them that the demands of the Whites and Poles 'had been several times worse for the population than the equitable razverstka'.[127]

Membership lists for Soviet village organs provide indications of the level of support for Soviet power and its constituency in the village. For example, a list detailing the

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122 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 271. Head of Kyiv povit militia to chairman of Kyiv povit revkom, 22 March 1920.
123 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 59, ark. 186. Doklad po zemel'nomu otdelu.
124 *Kak zhivet*, p. 60.
125 *ibid.*, p. 61.
126 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 633, ark. 7. Ob organizatsii vlasti na mestakh, Zhitomyrs'kyi povit, November 1920 to February 1921.
127 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 130, ark. 8. Declaration of comon gathering of citizens in Votylevka village, 8 July 1920.

composition of thirty-two revkoms in Makarovs'ka volost contained personal information about the three members of each committee (the three posts being head, associate and secretary). Most had become members of the revkom between November 1920 and April 1921. The majority described themselves as poor peasants, with only one classified as a middle peasant, although many of those listed as being poor possessed reasonable plots of land (between three to five desiatins) and livestock. In some circumstances these men would not have been considered 'poor' but clearly saw themselves as such. All cited their nationality as Ukrainian. Interestingly, all were listed as not belonging to any single party (*bezpartiinyi*) although several were described as 'sympathetic towards Soviet power'.[128]

Several of the revkom members had served in the Tsarist army, but none in the Red Army. Soldiers, of course, had been one of the major social groups active in the revolution. Also of note is the young age of many of those holding office, particularly the secretarial posts which would have required a degree of literacy.[129] Several were as young as twenty-one. One village revkom was staffed by three twenty-six-year-olds, which indicates a radical shift from the patriarchal gerontocracy of pre-revolutionary decision-making.[130]

Information from other areas, such as the list of revkom members in Hermanivs'ka volost in early 1921, supports such conclusions.[131] A study in Kyiv hubernia recorded the generational shift in power, commenting 'it is a rare thing to see an old man in power in the village today. The young hold the village in their hands.'[132] Unsurprisingly, this caused consternation among the older generation who exclaimed that 'now the egg is teaching the chicken'.[133] The head of one village KNS was nineteen years old while the head of a village soviet was twenty years old. Most village officials were between nineteen and twenty-

128 *DAKO*, f. R-93, op. 1, spr. 65, ark. 1-6. Spiski i svedeniia o chlenakh sel'revkomov, April 1921.
129 *ibid.*, ark. 22-4, 30-31.
130 *ibid.*, ark. 30-31.
131 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 85-102. Protokol Semenovskogo sel'skogo skhoda, 20 March 1921. See also *DAKO*, f. R-112, op. 1, spr. 102, ark. 4. Spisok sotrudnikov Erkovetskogo volispolkoma, 1 January 1922, This source details the membership of volost ispolkoms in Erkivts'ka volost in neighbouring Poltava. This area later became part of modern day Kyiv oblast and its experiences show that such developments were common place elsewhere too.
132 *Kak zhivet*, p. 64.

five.[134] This phenomenon in the Right Bank was similar to social shifts occurring throughout the Soviet countryside in the 1920s.[135]

Great efforts were made by the Soviet government to win over the peasants and spread the principles of Soviet power to potentially sympathetic elements. In large part this meant explaining Soviet policy to village gatherings. One Soviet instructor noted that in Berdychivs'kyi povit he called a meeting where he outlined the basis of Soviet policy. His explanation, he reported, was 'greeted with several shouts of hurrah'.[136] Another instructor, Martiniuk, travelling in Samhorodets'ka volost, also noted the positive effect of explaining Soviet policy at village gatherings. In one village gathering he explained Soviet land policy to the peasants who then accepted other resolutions about combating banditism.[137] Therefore, satisfying peasant demands for information and explaining policy at village meetings could have a beneficial effect on support.

The Soviet government sent thousands of organisers, political agitators, instructors, agents and urban workers into the countryside to assist the spread of information. Propaganda was as important a weapon in pacifying the village as the Red Army. The number of Soviet activists sent to Ukraine in 1920 was put at 10,576. Only 1,323 of these were Communists.[138]

Peasant 'weeks' and independent peasant congresses were organised to spread the Soviet message. One of the first peasant weeks in the Right Bank was organised at the end of March 1920. Special commissions were elected to set up peasant weeks during which Soviet policy was explained at peasant meetings and the village bombarded with Soviet literature.[139] The independent non-party congress (*bezpartiina selians'ka konferentsiia*) was also a means of putting the Soviet viewpoint across to elected peasant delegates (there was

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133 *ibid.*, p. 65.
134 *ibid.*, p. 65.
135 See, for example, Shanin, *Awkward Class*, pp. 176-177, 192, on the prestige enjoyed by younger groups within the Russian village.
136 *DAKO,* f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 12.
137 *ibid.*, ark. 171. Doklad instructora martyniuka.
138 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 153.

little of the *bezpartiinist* or impartiality implied by their title).[140] The agenda was that of the Soviet government and aimed to encourage peasant support. However, the peasants' apparent support for the Soviet regime often belied the true nature of conditions in the localities. Thus, while an independent peasant congress in Skvir in September attracted 198 delegates, all of whom were said to support Soviet power, reports from the localities told a different story.[141] There were severe clashes between peasant bandits and Soviet troops in the povit and the mood of the peasants was noted as decidedly 'Petliurist' and anti-Soviet in character.[142]

Where peasant resistance to Soviet rule remained strong or where their efforts met with little response, the Soviet authorities resorted to force and coercion. Peasant 'banditism', as small-scale armed opposition to Soviet rule was called, was a widespread phenomenon that threatened the development and stability of the regime after 1920.[143] Villages were often well-armed and well-organised. Banditism was a particular problem in two areas of Ukraine: the South East, where Nestor Makhno's band was a powerful influence until 1921, and the Right Bank.[144]

Soviet leaders believed that peasant action in the Right Bank was influenced by the nationalist leader Symon Petliura, but this was unlikely. Peasant opposition traditionally revolved around strong characters, many of whom would have served in UNR forces, but this did not make peasant revolts Petliurist in general. Petliura's desperate alliance with Polish forces in Spring 1920 marginalised his political influence in the countryside.[145]

Violent incidents were on a small, localised scale. There was little co-ordinated action between peasants of neighbouring regions which was an obvious weakness when faced with the sheer numbers and more sophisticated military tactics the Soviet government

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139 *Radians'ke budivnytstvo,* pp. 539-540.
140 *ibid.*, pp. 539-540.
141 *DAKO,* f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 67, ark. 10.
142 *ibid.*, ark. 170, 215.
143 Borys, *Sovietisation,* p. 294.
144 *Sbornik otchetov narodnykh komisarov USSR,* Kharkiv, 1921, p. 4.

could employ.[146] Peasant bands were easily destroyed one by one by the Red Army.[147] Throughout Ukraine 86 battalions and 224 squadrons were deployed alongside Cheka and other units to combat this peasant resistance.[148]

An example of a typical peasant revolt can be found in Zvenihorods'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia. It began on 17 August 1920 in Vinohrads'ka and Voiars'ka volosts and spread to neighbouring areas. Almost the whole able-bodied male population (those liable for mobilisation born between 1896 and 1900) participated in the revolt. The leaders were rumoured to be former officers. The band attacked local Soviet organs, destroying files and stealing printing machinery. Local men mobilised by the Red Army went over to the band. A meeting in Vinohrad village ordered peasants to join the uprising or face execution. Soviet troops were sent to put down the revolt which had by then attracted nearly 2,000 supporters.[149] Soviet work ground to a halt as a result of the uprising. By October, when the revolt appeared to have been quelled, the number of Soviet organs had fallen from 17 volost and 134 village revkoms to 13 and 115 respectively and there was only weak supervision of the latter.[150]

The Soviet response to these events was extreme. The revolt was blamed on the influence of kulaks and intellectuals in the village. Hostages were taken indiscriminately ('avoiding *where possible* teachers and others engaged in community work')[151] from the wealthier and intelligentsia sections of the population in those villages where Soviet organs had not yet been formed. For every Soviet worker killed in the village, three of the 'kulak' hostages were to be executed.[152] These measures further incensed the population In

145 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 76, ark. 33. On the formation of underground organisation, the Volyns'ka Povstans'ka Armiia (VPA), an insurgency army with alleged links to Petliura in Volyn in 1923.
146 This was a typical feature of peasant insurgency. See Wolf, *Peasant Wars*, pp. 276-302
147 *Sborkni otchetov*, p. 4.
148 Frenkin, *Tragediia*, p. 215.
149 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 130, ark. 54. Viddil upravlinnia Kyivs'koho hubrevkoma, 24 August 1920.
150 *ibid.*, p. 131. Zvenihorods'kyi povit revkom to adminsitrative department, 25 October 1920
151 *ibid.*, p. 138. Zvenigorodskogo uezdnogo revkoma postanovlenie No. 238, 22 November 1920. My italics.
152 *ibid.*, p. 138.

November and December 1920, new revolts broke out involving up to 4,000 peasant insurgents.[153]

The Soviet government squandered much energy in quelling peasant revolts.[154] The KNS in Piatkivs'ka volost, Podillia, could not function properly due to the frequent attacks on it by peasants.[155] In Haisins'kyi povit, Podillia in 1921 the spring sowing was threatened by the activities of such units.[156] In the same povit 'bandits' had also burned all the materials of the local Soviet land organs which made administration more difficult.[157] Peasant bandits severely unsettled the population in some areas, each military success creating the assumption that Soviet power was quite unstable and unlikely to last very long. Soviet officials or anyone associated with the government were particular targets for peasant bands. KNS officials, land surveyors, Red-Army soldiers, militia men, political activists and members of the revkoms, soviets and cooperatives were all subject to attack.[158] Some 4,000 Soviet activists were killed in 1920 and 1922 in Ukraine.[159] Nearly 400 KNS members were killed in the Right Bank up to 1923.[160]

Peasant revolts increased in 1921 and 1922. Peasant bandits were more active in 1921 than in 1920 according to one Soviet source.[161] A Kyiv hubernia report stated that 'at the moment [banditism] has considerably increased and is evident in the majority of hubernii'.[162] Opposition to Soviet rule in Volyn in 1921 and 1922 took on a nationalist

153 *ibid.*, p.135. Report on condition of Zvenihorods'kyi povit in November and December 1920 prepared by povit revkom.
154 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 588, ark. 15. Protocol of village of Kamenna Hreblia, 17 April 1921.
155 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 624, ark. 3. Report on activities of volost executive committees.
156 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 620, ark. 1. Doklady o deiatel'nosti Podol'skogo gubrevkoma
157 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 190, ark. 4. Podil's'kyi hubzemviddil to Narkomzem, 19 May 1921.
158 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 588, ark. 29. Doklady inf. instr. podotdela otchetupravlinnia Skvirskogo urevkoma za mai mesiats. 1921. *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 377, *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 107, ark. 12.
159 Frenkin, *Tragediia*, p. 212.
160 *Komitety nezamozhnykh selian*, p. 276. However, deaths in Poltava (530) and Donets (307) suggest that the struggle was just as extreme elsewhere throughout Ukraine. This may be due to the fact that Soviet organs were less able to penetrate the Right Bank and thus there was less opportunity for conflict to arise.
161 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1160, ark. 5. Kratkii istoricheskii obzor deiatel'nosti zemel'nykh organov Kievskoi gubernii.
162 *TsDAVO*, f. 257, op. 1, spr. 107, ark. 17. T. Vladimirov on land reorganisation

political character. [163] Tiutiunnik, one of the better-known otamany and a supporter of Petliura, was active in Volyn in 1921. Even in June 1922, ten bands were still operating in the hubernia. Twenty Soviet workers were killed in June alone. In 1923 there were conflicts between Soviet troops and peasant and VPA detachments.[164]

Elsewhere otamany frequently advocated nationalist or anti-Semitic views.[165] National antagonisms played a part in peasant action.[166] Over eighty five per cent of Red Army troops stationed in Ukraine in 1920 were Great Russians which might easily have created the impression of Russian domination in the Ukrainian village.[167] The association of the Jews with the Bolsheviks in the minds of many also gave rise to ugly and indiscriminate violence.[168]

The Soviet government responded to peasant action with force and tried to disarm the population.[169] A report on the political mood in Kyiv hubernia noted that 'Kanivs'kyi povit is one of the most well-armed povity in the whole hubernia. There is a mood of kulakism and banditism among the peasants and therefore they are not handing over their weapons. It is impossible to fight well-armed peasants with repression.'[170] Even in 1922, a reported 11,000 rifles were captured in Podillia. In February 1923, a further 7,000 rifles and revolvers were found.[171]

In December 1920, a special commission was formed in Moscow under Dzerzhinsky with the aim of quelling peasant rebellion in Ukraine.[172] A decree on the 'Battle with Banditism' was published on 29 January 1921 calling for the intensification of measures to end peasant opposition. Punishments for those aiding the rebels were increased whilst local

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163 P.P Moskvin. 'Rozhrom Petliurivs'koho banditizmu na Volyni u 1921-1922 rokakh', *Naukovi zapiski Zhytomyrs'koho derzhavnoho pedahohichnoho instytutu im. Iv. Franka: Seriia suspil'nykh nauk*, 8, 1961, 2, 97-134.
164 *ibid.*, pp. 109-124.
165 Brovkin, *Behind the Front Lines*, p. 355.
166 Brovkin, *loc. cit.*
167 *Sbornik otchetov*, p. 5
168 Frenkin, *Tragediia*, p. 180.
169 Kubanin, *Makhnovshchina*, p. 140. Brovkin, *Behind the Front Lines*, p. 346.
170 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 756, ark. 21. Svodka o politicheskom polozhenii v Kanivskim uezde, 1-15 February 1921. From papers relating to the central administration of communal agriculture.
171 Frenkin, *Tragediia*, p. 214.

Soviet organs were strengthened and incentives were offered to the population for maintaining social calm.[173] The activities of all Soviet organs, the army, hubernia authorities and the KNS, were to be co-ordinated to help stamp out banditism.[174] The Cheka in Right-Bank Ukraine were put under the control of a special commission in Moscow.[175]

The use of force did not necessarily quell peasant opposition. When troops tried to suppress bandit action in Podillia, a 500- to 1,000-strong band hid in the forests and carried on underground activity.[176] Soviet officials tried to hit at the social base of the rebellious movement by offering amnesties and other incentives to peasants to give themselves up. A protocol from 10 May 1921 offered an amnesty for any peasant bandit who had served under the 'agents of Petliura and the Entente' and who voluntarily surrendered.[177] Kamens'ka volost ispolkom, Podillia, announced a week of 'voluntary surrender for bandits and deserters' in village gatherings, thereby emphasising the connection that existed between the bandits and the village.[178] An amnesty in Haisins'kyi povit in May 1921 persuaded 130 men to give themselves up. The hubernia authority's report tried to characterise these men as kulaks.[179] Yet half of them 'were completely without land'.[180] All peasants participated in such uprisings. The men were allowed to return home under the supervision of the village community, revealing the extent to which Soviet authorities used collective responsibility to control the village.[181]

The attitudes of village communities towards bandit activity varied. There was sympathy for those peasant rebels who had political motives but little for those whose

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172 Frenkin, *loc. cit.*.
173 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 157, ark. 1-7. Postanovlenie SNK USSR po bor'be s banditizmom.
174 *TsDAVO, loc. cit.*
175 Frenkin, *Tragediia*, p. 212. The Cheka was the Extraordinary Commission charged with stamping out opposition to Soviet rule.
176 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 620, ark. 48. Doklad viddilu keruvannia pod hubrevkoma, May 1921.
177 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 588, ark .129. Protokol s'ezda sel i voltroek po provedenie vyborov v sovete raboche-krest'ianskikh deputatov.
178 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 624, ark. 4.
179 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 620, ark. 48.
180 *TsDAVO, loc. cit.*
181 *TsDAVO, loc. cit.*

interests were purely criminal. For example, in Vinnyts'kyi povit, 1921, peasant representatives organised an armed force of 500 men to flush robbers from a neighbouring forest. [182] In other cases the actions of the bandits had the support of the peasants. Soviet leaders recognised that the 'battle with banditism' entailed cutting off the sources of supply of men, food and horses to the bandits from the village. The Skvirs'kyi povit revkom in 1921, discussing the development of banditism in the area, reported that '[bandit] military detachments are spread across the povit. Despite the energetic battle with them they cannot be liquidated because banditism is met with wide sympathy by the population which, in the majority of cases, must be called support.'[183] This support was 'one of the main causes of banditism'.[184] Such support often took the form of material aid. For example, in Zhitomyrs'kyi povit, Volyn, in 1921, peasants refused to take part in a Soviet mobilisation and there were rumours of preparations for an uprising in the area. One village, Slobodka, was reported as giving twelve machine-guns to representatives of the otaman Mordalevich who was active in the area.[185]

The 'bandit' movement left little room for complacency in Soviet policy. In many cases Soviet authorities were aware that an uprising would be the result of imposing harsh policies on the population. A report to Kyiv hubernia revkom in 1920 noted that the 'spirit of Zelenyi continues to exist', especially among the young.[186] It was an ever-present danger and even after 1923 the Soviet regime in the Right Bank was plagued by isolated peasant attacks.

Peasant political culture underwent fundamental changes as a result of the Revolution. New Soviet institutions were established to replace traditional village organisations and officials. This was reflected in the language, form and conduct of village

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182 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 639, ark. 6. Svodki i biuleteni o politicheskom polozheniia v uezdakh Podol'skoi gubernii, 12-14 May, 1921.
183 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 588, ark. 27. Doklady inf. instr. podotdela otchetupravlinnia Skvirskogo urevkoma za mai mesiats. 1921
184 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 635, ark. 58. Report on internal conditions in povits of Kyiv hubernia, June 1921
185 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 633, ark. 8. Ob organizatsii vlasti na mestakh, Volyn hubernia.
186 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 237. Zelenyi was a peasant bandit leader active in Kyiv in 1919.

political culture which appeared vastly different from that observed before 1917. In practice, however, elements of village-level decision-making, peasant autonomy and pre-revolutionary rural tradition continued to surface in the first years of the Soviet regime in the Right Bank.

The relationship between the soviet as an elected village institution and the wider community from which it supposedly drew its mandate remained ambiguous. The soviet was often marginalised and existed on the fringes of the village's political life. At other times it seemed no more than the executive organ of the village community which had more in common with the elected committees which ran village affairs between 1917 and 1920 or even the pre-revolutionary community than the organ of state control envisaged by Soviet leaders. Many of the functions undertaken by the soviet had traditional antecedents or roots which did not correspond with Soviet views of its role.[187]

The skhod, once the centre of village decision making, had been affected by the course of the civil war. The transformation brought about by revolution and conflict was largely played out in the skhod during 1917 and 1919. By 1920, however, many peasants had grown weary of the dangers a skhod meeting might present. Two instructors from the information-instruction department of Kyiv povit revkom noted that it was impossible to call a skhod in several volosts of the povit in 1920. Peasants feared a 'Denikinite reaction' and refused to appear. Sometimes small numbers did gather but did not consider the meeting representative of the village and dispersed before resolving any questions.[188] This was a common phenomenon.

Where meetings still gathered, they remained the primary means of disseminating government decrees to the population. Meetings would be called, a proclamation or decree read out by a representative of Soviet power and the peasants expected to comply.[189] Of course, this was not always the case. An instruction to Rohtin village skhod from

187 This view is not uncommon in Western historiography on the Russian Revolution. See Shanin, *Awkward Class*, p. 166. Figes, *Peasant Russia*, p. 239.

188 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 202. Doklad instruktorov informatsionnogo podotdela kievskogo uezdrevkoma I. Kudriavtseva i M. Reshitela v kievskii uezdnyi revoliutsionnyi komitet.

Hornostaipil's'ka volost land department on 1 December 1921 to elect a village land committee was not carried out because the village had independently elected its own body four months previously. This committee, 'holding the trust of the obshchestvo and fulfilling its duties properly', remained at its post.[190] Another example is shown by a report of a meeting in Veliko-Dmitrovichi in February 1920 in which the villagers, allegedly under the influence of a minority of influential peasants, rejected the suggestion of a Soviet instructor to elect a revkom and dispersed the skhod.[191]

New terminology defined habitual activities in the village but also indicated social change. Gone was the deferential, formal language which characterised pre-revolutionary peasant petitions. The inclusive community spirit which had opened up village democracy seems to have dissipated, for many gatherings were again limited only to household heads (*domokhoziaeva*). Village meetings were more likely to be described as a 'common gathering of citizens' than as a 'village skhod' despite the fact that the difference between the two was largely semantic.[192] No matter how village gathering described themselves, meetings were still a forum to air grievances or petition higher authorities. For example, a protocol issued by Hermanivs'ka village community on 24 April 1921, signed by 136 members, protested that foodstuffs had been illegally requisitioned by povit militiamen at a village fair.[193] A village meeting in Hlukhovtsa, Kyiv hubernia, in 1920 discussed the ownership of a local mill with a neighbouring sugar factory committee.[194] The skhod was, therefore, still acting in the interests of all village inhabitants.

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189 See, for example, *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 238, 262, 293. In the latter example, peasants elect a five-man committee to help fulfil the razverstka at the suggestion of the head of the soviet.

190 *DAKO*, f. R-87, op. 1, spr. 24, ark. 203. Protokol Rogtichskogo sel'skogo skhoda, 1 December 1921.

191 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 5, ark. 248.

192 See, for example, *DAKO*, f. R-1031, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 18. Common garthering of citizens of village of Skitka, 22 March 1922.

193 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 122. Protokol zahal'nykh zboriv Hermanivs'koi sil's'koi hromady, 24 Kvitnia 1921.

194 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 44. Doklad instruktora Naumov, January 1920. Records meeting in Berdychiv at which Borotbisty were also in attendance. The meeting discussed questions of organsiation in the povit.

Village bodies were subject to supervision by higher authorities which limited their capacity to exploit the Soviet system. For example, a village soviet in Krushin, Budaivs'ka volost, Kyiv hubernia, informed the volost vykonkom that it would not fulfil the full terms of the prodnalog in July 1921. The soviet members were ordered to appear in person to explain the non-fulfilment of the tax and the unauthorised re-election of the soviet.[195] Later decrees from December 1921 threatened to arrest the tax commission and soviet members for 'sabotage'.[196]

Alcohol continued to play a large role in the village. *Samohon* was widespread.[197] Extreme measures were introduced to prevent the illegal brewing of alcohol from precious grain stocks. In Iz'iaslavs'kyi povit, Volyn, samohon was reported to be endemic with the close proximity of the border allowing greater production and speculation in the trade.[198] A report on Soviet land organs in Kyiv hubernia in 1920 admitted that they 'appeared in the majority of cases to be drunk and it was obvious that drinking was seen as the main part of their duties'.[199]

The experience of revolution changed the way peasants viewed themselves and others. The degree to which peasants had assumed a specific Ukrainian national identity remains open to debate but regional identities remained strong. The Soviet authorities introduced a number of territorial administrative changes in the Ukraine. A new hubernia, Kremenchutsk'a, was created in Central Ukraine and included several volosts of Eastern Kyiv.[200] The old Tsarist local government system of povity and volosts was replaced by a new system of okruhs and raions in 1923.[201]

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195 *DAKO*, f. R-1031, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 39. To Budaiivs'ka volost ispolkom from Krushinka village soviet, 15 August 1921.
196 *ibid.*, ark. 82. Krushins'komu sel'sovetu i sel'nalogovoi komissii Budaevskii volostnoi ispolnitel'nyi komitet.
197 See Roger Pethybridge, 'Social and Political Attitudes of the Peasantry in Kursk at the Start of the NEP'. *Slavonic and East European Review*, 63, 1985, 3, 372-387, for a discussion of the influence of samohon (Russian: *samagon*) in Nikol'skaia volost, Kursk Guberniia (p. 377)
198 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 632, ark. 5. Report on political situation in Volyn hubernia, June-December1921.
199 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 130, ark. 66. Vypiska iz doklada prodrabotnika Zvenigorodskogo otriada metalista A. Tereshchenka.
200 *Istoriia derzhavy i prava*, p. 392.
201 *Istoriia derzhavy i prava, loc.cit.*

However, such changes conflicted with peasants' sense of their own identity. Attempts to create a new povit (Vasil'kivs'kyi) in Kyiv hubernia met with protests. A protocol drawn up by the skhod of Sushchana village in January 1921 'unanimously declares that we citizens do not wish to be included in Vasil'kivs'kyi povit but wish to remain within the old Kyivs'kyi povit'.[202] Similar protocols were issued from a host of villages in Hermanivs'ka volost.[203] Peasants thus identified themselves with a specific area. Peasants were resistant to such changes and, where change threatened the village, peasant will was expressed in collective gatherings.

Village consensus still played a large role in the political life of the community. The activities of village organs after 1920 bore parallels with peasant traditions and behaviour witnessed before 1917. Thus, Hermanivs'ka volost revkom, in Kyiv hubernia, on 18 April 1921, issued a document to a peasant confirming his inclusion in the 'family list' (*simeinyi spisok*) of the volost. This was similar to the function of the pre-revolutionary obshchestvo The peasant's inclusion in the list was discussed by a 'common gathering of the hromada' on 6 April and a decree subsequently issued confirming the community's assent.[204]

Besides the Soviet officials in the village, many communities continued to elect peasants to traditional offices which had no place in the new state. A gathering in Boiar village, Kyiv hubernia, 11 January 1921 elected a new tax collector for the year and also desiats'ki. These officials dated back to Tsarist times but were maintained by villages throughout the revolution.[205] Therefore, new Soviet organs did not necessarily replace those in existence before 1920 but were set up alongside them.

Peasant mistrust of government and the traditional desire to hide as much of their business as possible from the eyes of the authorities also remained strong. Soviet authorities in Dymers'ka volost, Kyiv hubernia, met great opposition from the population when they

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202 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 92, ark. 9. Protokol' sushchanskogo sel'skogo skhoda, 7 February 1921.
203 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr 92, ark. 8, 10, 12, 18; spr. 86, ark. 7. Similar protocols were recorded in Matianivka, Husachiv, Antonivka, Hermaniv in January and February 1921.
204 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 120. Viddil upravlinnia, posvidchennia, 18 April 1921

attempted to draw up a register of population and livestock. When a Soviet instructor called a village meeting to organise the register, peasants 'threatened him and called him and the Red-Army soldiers dogs and bandits'. The instructor then took fifteen peasants hostage until the peasants agreed to the inventory being carried out.[206] Concealing the true extent of land holdings and property was another frequently employed peasant tactic. Indeed, such was the scale of the problem that Narkomzem considered introducing special measures punishing peasants for giving inexact information.[207] During an attempt to draw up a list of cattle in the village of Hlushka for the purposes of the prodnalog, peasants tried to conceal 53 of the 171 head of livestock they held. This was attributed to 'a particular peasant patriotism, in the wish to "defend" the village from Soviet power'.[208] This patriotism was evident among Soviet village officials also.

Religion also continued to play a role in early Soviet village life. It became one of the main areas of generational conflict in the village where the elder section wished to maintain their traditions. For example, in the village of Khrapachki, Kyiv hubernia, a conflict arose between a father and his son who was head of the soviet, after the latter had removed crosses and other religious paraphernalia from the village.[209] The Soviet regime attempted to undermine traditional faith through propaganda.[210] Their efforts did not meet with great success, however. Records from Budaivs'ka volost, for example, show a continuing observance of religious tradition. A village meeting on 16 January 1921 resolved to help rebuild the local church and elected a church starosta and associate who were to be paid from village funds.[211] The village of Boiarka elected a delegate to attend a povit church congress in spring 1921. Upon his return, the village voted to recognise the All-

205 *DAKO*, f. R-1031, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 4. Protokol zahal'noho zibrannia Boiars'koi sil's'koi hromady, 11 January 1921.
206 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 317. Doklad instruktora Vil'khovoho komandirovannoho v Dymers'ku volost' v informats.-instruktorskii pidviddil pry povit revkomi, August 1921.
207 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 36, ark. 195.
208 *Kak zhivet*, p. 61.
209 *ibid.*, p. 65.
210 *ibid.*, pp. 67-69.

Ukrainian Church Council[212] and urged the local priest to deliver services in Ukrainian.[213] A protocol from Krushinka village reveals the links that could exist between Soviet bodies and the religious traditions of village life. The chairman of the village soviet put forward a proposal to elect a church council (*tserkovna rada*) for which several members were chosen. The village gathering 'resolved to confirm the council on legal foundations according to the outcome of the elections'.[214] In this case the church council drew its authority from the traditional skhod.

In other instances, too, local Soviet forces showed themselves sympathetic to religious activity. One report from Petropavlivs'ka-Borshchahivka, Kyiv, in September 1920 stated that peasants were celebrating a feast day according to the 'old customs' (*po staromu zvichaiu*) when a detachment of Red-Army troops appeared on the village square, creating panic amongst the villagers who must have been aware that their activities were not condoned by the state. The Red-Army men conducted a search of the village, fearing illegal peasant activity, but found no weapons. This led to a rapprochement between the peasants and soldiers. The latter joined in the festivities, 'firing in the air with joy after having drunk some samohon with dinner'.[215]

A priest in the village of Makieva, Kyiv hubernia, I. Kolosovsky, provides another example. He held a plot of land above the working norm within the volost (13 desiatins) and it was alleged he had concealed the true extent of his holdings, failed to pay sufficient dues for the land under the prodnalog, given false information about the number of eaters in his household in a bid to reduce the prodnalog and hired out land under a sharecropping agreement. Despite the fact that his tenure of this plot of land ran counter to numerous

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211 *DAKO*, f. R-1031, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 11. From joint gathering of village of Zvonkova and khutir settlement of Spodartsa.

212 For a history of the Ukrainian autocephalous church of which this council was a part, see Bohdan R. Bociurwiz, 'The Ukrainian Autocephalous Church', in *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine*, ed by Geoffrey Hosking, London, 1991, pp. 228-249.

213 *DAKO*, f. R-1031, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 21. Protokol zahal'noho zibrannia hromadian s. Boiarky, 4 April 1921.

214 *ibid.*, ark. 36.

215 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 320. Zaiava raionnoho instruktora M. Ryzhoho u povitrevkom, 17 September 1920.

Soviet laws, local village and Soviet organs condoned his ownership.[216] The case was examined by a number of higher Soviet authorities including the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal (*Vyshchyi Revoliutsionyi Tribunal*) of VUTsIK, the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee.[217]

It appears that Kolosovsky had been given a plot of former church land by the village community in return for providing religious services. The volost land department had not interfered with the village's decision. Land departments at povit and hubernia level similarly failed to raise any objections. The tribunal report declared that 'the village obshchestvo could not have failed to have known that citizen Kolosovsky was sixty-one years old and therefore, as a result of his age, was in no position to cultivate the land by his own labour'.[218] Furthermore, the village community and the volost land organ 'could not have failed to know that the norm of land in the area was considerably lower than that given to Kolosovsky'.[219]

Hefty punishments were meted out by the tribunal. Officials in hubernia, povit and volost land departments were held personally accountable for allowing such a situation to arise. Kolosovsky was fined five times the prodnalog norm. In the event that he could not pay, wealthier members of the village community were to contribute the difference. The village community officials who had approved the original grant of land to Kolosovsky were also punished.[220] Therefore, the village community was held collectively responsible for the actions of its members, as it had been before 1917. Soviet officials believed that 'religion and cult members serve the interests of the kulak element who pursue their aims in the village skhod'.[221] The tribunal decision on Kolosovsky's case was later read out in Makieva village skhod, suggesting that it had been at the root of the continued observance of religious

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216 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 527, ark. 103. High Tribunal VUTsIK, 19 July 1922.
217 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 317, ark. 5. Prikaz gubispolkoma No. 455, 21 November 1922.
218 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 527, ark. 104.
219 *DAKO, loc. cit.*
220 *DAKO, loc. cit. TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 317, ark. 5.
221 *ibid.*, p. 105.

traditions.[222] This case exemplified a widespread phenomenon: villages illegally granted land to priests throughout Ukraine.[223]

Spontaneous peasant justice (samosud) was not immediately eradicated by Soviet rule either. A protocol of Iurkovets'ka village skhod reported on the murder of a peasant, F. K. Mitnik, for 'numerous thefts within the village'.[224] Mitnik was caught stealing from fellow peasants. A crowd gathered and attacked him (*pod samosudom*) and his body was later taken away for burial. An order of 8 April 1922 to all village and volost organs in Kyiv hubernia tried to end such instances. It stated that 'cases of samosud carried out by the population on enemies and bandits they have apprehended have recently been observed. Such instances, in a Republic where legal courts exist, is not permissible.'[225] Those committing such offences in the future were liable to punishment.[226] Soviet officials were committed to introducing more systematic concepts of law but these did not easily sit with traditional peasant methods for dealing with those who had transgressed village norms.

These cases show that concepts which lay behind the Soviet government met with little response from the rural population of the Right Bank. Peasants continued to observe the traditional way of conducting village business. Village institutions, whether they were traditional organs under a new guise or remained as before, were instrumental in this. The skhod was considered dangerous by the Soviet authorities because it was a means by which groups opposed to their rule could still exert influence.[227]

Soviet legislation in Russia made no reference to the community between 1918 and 1921. It sought to channel power 'through a system of soviets, the lowest of which, the village soviets, were to fulfil the functions of administrative power and self rule'.[228] The land community (*zemel'noe obshchestvo*) was first established in 1922 through republican

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222 *TsDAVO, loc.cit.*
223 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 317, ark. 5.
224 *DAKO*, f. R-1031, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 72. Protokol Iurovskogo sel'skogo skhodu, 8 November 1921.
225 *DAKO*, f. R-1031, op. 1, spr. 71, ark. 108. Prikaz No. 70, otdel upravlinnia, Kievskogo uezda, 8 April 1922.
226 *DAKO, loc. cit.*
227 Kabanov, 'Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia', p. 104.
228 *ibid.*, pp. 103-4.

legislation.[229] Ukraine followed these legal and social developments through its own separate republican land legislation.[230]

The creation of the land community was an important step in the development of a Soviet rural administration, for the tasks of land reorganisation and spreading Soviet land policy were more easily organised through such institutions. In contrast with Central Russia, membership of the land community in Ukraine was obligatory to all peasants, irrespective of the form in which they held their land, revealing yet again the special nature of the country.[231] Peasant rights to land were to be derived from membership of the community. The land community was to be ruled by a common gathering, the skhod, comprising all adult land users. It did not necessarily share the same territorial boundaries as the village soviet and several land communities could exist within the same village. The soviet dealt with administrative matters whilst the responsibilities of the land community were strictly limited to agricultural and economic affairs.[232] This division of village government between the political and economic was not without its advantages. Indeed, some experts had proposed just such a reform before 1917.[233] Soviet officials could supervise the administration of the village whilst ensuring that peasants with specialist knowledge could make decisions relating to land such as the sowing of crops.

The land community therefore resembled the pre-revolutionary village community albeit shorn of its social and political powers. The legal institution of the land community showed that such an organ still had a role to play in village life. The link between the old village community and new land community remained implicit. Material discussing the introduction of the land law in Kyiv hubernia made the connection clear by stating that the 'existing village community can only be considered a land community by observance of the

229 Kabanov, *loc. cit.*
230 See *Zemel'nyi Kodeks USSR: priniatyi 3-1 sessiei VUTsIK IV sozyva 16-go oktiabria 1922g i utverzhdennyi v okonchatel'noi redaktsii presidium VUTsIK 29-go noiabria 1922 g*, Khar'kov, 1922, pp. 7-10
231 V. P. Danilov, *Sovetskaia dokolkhoznaia derevnia: Naselenie, zemlepol'zovanie, khoziaistvo*, Moskva, 1977, p. 98.
232 Danilov, *loc. cit.*
233 Tsitovich, *Sel'skoe obshchestvo*, pp. 16-17.

outlined procedures' for legal registration.[234] The creation of the land community gave rise to 'the possibility of destroying the artificially assembled village community which took upon itself the conduct of various matters not just economic'.[235] Thus, the traditional community still survived in some form in 1922 but without any legal basis in the Soviet state.

Despite the obvious similarity between the land community and pre-1917 organs, Soviet officials were at pains to deny any link between the old and the new. The land community (*zemel'noe obshchestvo*),

> was an institution completely unknown in pre-revolutionary law or revolutionary law before the publication of the Land Codex. The land community has nothing in common with the pre-revolutionary village community (*sel'skoe obshchestvo*) which was an administrative unit with certain administrative functions. The land community is a collective of working land users, outside which land use is not permitted. It is necessary to distinguish the land community from the pre-revolutionary village community which is completely unknown in Soviet law. The basic administrative unit in the village is the village soviet and not the village skhod.[236]

Having introduced an alternative system of administration into the countryside which mirrored traditional structures, fulfilled much the same functions and provided the same benefits, the government set about dismantling any last remnant of the pre-revolutionary order. In Central Russia, Soviet leaders believed this change had occurred spontaneously. In Ukraine no such shift in power towards Soviet rule had taken place and therefore greater attention was required to remove any threat to their regime.[237]

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234 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 89, ark. 24. Point 16. Postanovy huberniial'noi narady zavpovitzemviddilami povit ahronomiv i zemleustroiteliv kyivshchiny 11-14 serpnia, t. Markevich.
235 *TsDAVO, loc. cit.*
236 M. Gershonov & E. Kelman, *Kommentariia k zemel'nomu kodeksu USSR*, 2nd ed, Khar'kov, 1925, pp. 94-95.
237 See comments of Manuilsky as quoted in Borys, *Sovietisation*, p. 292.

An expert in Soviet law described the soviet as 'the lowest territorial administrative unit in the Soviet state'.[238] There were two important differences between the soviet in Russia and Ukraine. In Russia, village executive committees were allowed to function in villages with more than 10,000 inhabitants. In Ukraine, however, the raion executive committee maintained authority. This enabled tighter supervision by higher organs over the activities of lower institutions. In Russia, the village community retained executive power in settlements of less than 400 inhabitants. However, Ukrainian law did not 'recognise the village skhod as a particular organ of power alongside the village soviet'.[239] The soviet in Ukraine was considered the sole representative voice of the village common gathering.[240] There was thus less opportunity for peasant autonomy to manifest itself in the local administration. In Soviet eyes any expression of peasant autonomy indicated a destructive kulak influence at work.

A decree of 31 March 1922 to all village soviets in Budaivs'ka volost from the hubernia and povit authorities made clear the shift in authority from traditional to Soviet organs:

> a) All local questions are to be discussed *only* in meetings of the village soviet which should meet no less than once a week.
> b) The chairman should chair the meeting of the village soviet and the secretary of the meeting should be the secretary of the village soviet.
> c) Gatherings of the so-called "village skhod" are not permitted and any decrees issued by such skhody are to be considered inactive and will not be considered by higher organs of power.[241]

Despite these efforts to eradicate traditional institutions, question marks remain about the effectiveness of such legislation. A circular sent to local Soviet organs as a result of information that 'in local villages, village skhody, in contradiction of current law, are

238 V. Kobalevsky, *Ocherki sovetskogo administrativnogo prava*, Poltava, 1924, p. 85.
239 *ibid.*, p. 86.

acquiring rights and functions which belong to village soviets', reminded officials of the restrictions on peasant meetings.[242] The Kyiv hubernia executive committee (*Hubvykonkom*) ordered that:

> 1) Village skhody, as gatherings of all inhabitants of the village without exception for the resolution of business, should be immediately liquidated as all power in the village belongs to the village soviet, decrees from which may be changed only by the volost executive committee, volost congress of soviets or other higher placed organs.
> 2) Decisions of village skhody held before this time should not be considered by any soviet organ as evidence of the will of the village.[243]

Additional circulars, from VUTsIK and NKVD on 20 September 1923 and NKVD and Narkomzem on 15 November 1923, placed further restrictions on any remaining peasant influence on the Soviet decision-making process.[244]

The Soviet regime thus introduced its own system of local administrative organs into the Right Bank which, although similar to traditional institutions, were supposedly loyal to the state alone. However, rather than superseding traditional or existing peasant organs, the Soviet administration was often dependent upon or marginalised by them. Some semblance of autonomous peasant decision-making continued to exist if not with the complete knowledge or agreement of the authorities. Many existing institutions simply changed their names or became part of a Soviet administrative hierarchy. In many cases peasants continued to organise their own villages and oversee their own affairs, as they had done since 1917. These peasant institutions were considered unreliable and doubts persisted about peasant loyalty to the Soviet government. Therefore, extraordinary organs of Soviet power such as the revkom continued to exist in the Right Bank long after they had been disbanded

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240 Kobalevsky, *loc. cit.*.
241 *DAKO*, f. R-1031, op. 1, spr. 71, ark. 108. Emphasis in original text.
242 *Spravochnik*, p. 56. Circular No. 156.
243 *Spravochnik, loc. cit.*.

elsewhere. From this discussion, it is apparent that one of these 'extraordinary' organisations, the KNS, has a more subtle and complex history than has been accepted thus far. Its acceptance by peasants varied from volost to volost and peasants adopted various strategies to nullify the effect that it had in the village.

Soviet power was eventually established through a combination of military force, offers of incentives and social calm to the population, and reliance on a small minority within the village to fulfil higher decrees. The Right Bank was subject to similar social developments to those which were witnessed throughout European Russia: the increasing rise of younger men to positions of influence within the village is just one example of such changes. Despite these broad social shifts, many peasant traditions remained as before. Peasants maintained an affinity to their local region, their religion, their customs, language, political culture and beliefs. They also firmly adhered to their forms of land tenure and economy.

244 Gershonov & Kelman, *Kommentariia*, p. 95.

LAND DISTRIBUTION AND THE ISSUE OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES IN THE RIGHT BANK AFTER 1920

The unique character of the Right Bank was most apparent in the economic sphere. Once Soviet executive power was re-established in 1920 the rebuilding of the economy, particularly agriculture, began to dominate discussion. The government was forced to moderate the unpopular policies which had proved so detrimental to its rule in 1919. Peasants wanted rights and access to land, as they had in 1917. The Soviet regime wished to make peasant agriculture more efficient and grain collection easier to safeguard the country's natural resources and restore agricultural industries (especially sugar), whilst maintaining control over production. The clash of these competing demands formed the backdrop to the history of the Right-Bank Ukrainian countryside between 1920 and 1923.

The first real attempts by the Soviet government to improve peasant agriculture began in 1920. The difficulties it faced in introducing socialist concepts of landholding and agriculture were considerable. Qualified personnel to help supervise land reform were lacking. Soviet officials also lacked a 'firm policy' to guide them in resolving the peasant problem.[1] There was little statistical information on which to base plans for reform, a legacy of the Imperial government's attitude towards the region.[2] A report from Cherkassy accused the Tsarist government of 'not taking any measures to regulate peasant land holding and land use'.[3] The Tsarist government had studied conditions in the Right Bank but felt unable to resolve them without upsetting the delicate relationship between landlord and peasant, a problem with which Soviet leaders were not faced. A number of special commissions were formed after 1920 to gather material on local conditions as a guide for policy.[4]

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1 Klunnyi, *Do pytannia*, p. 32.
2 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 145, ark. 96. V adminorg Podol'skogo gubernskogo zemel'nogo otdela, 1922
3 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 903, ark. 1. Otchety Cherkasskogo UZO [uezdnyi zemel'nyi otdel] o rabote za 1922.
4 See *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 231, ark. 39. Protokol zasedaniia kollegii NKZ ot 6 aprelia 1921.

Despite the revolution and constant changes of government, land tenure largely continued as before. Individual peasant households farmed several small plots in strip fields to which they had a hereditary or other claim. The community or representative land committee supervised land relations within the village. The population of the Right Bank had shown extreme opposition to the introduction of collective agriculture in 1919. Soviet officials supported the concept of organising peasant land in large scale agricultural units so that resources and inventory could be concentrated and new rational means of farming introduced. Creating such enterprises in 1920, whether they were state farms or collective farms, risked rousing opposition once more. Peasants associated socialist forms of landholding with the traditional Russian commune and opposed both. In Berdychivs'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, they were quoted as saying that 'if there are no communes, we will all stand behind Soviet power and support it as much as possible'.[5]

The attempt in 1919 to maintain the large estates and create state farms was viewed by the peasants as 'a new form of landlordism' where land ownership passed from the gentry to the state.[6] In order to maintain social calm in the village and improve the prospects for stabilisation, Soviet officials had to accept that collective agriculture was not popular among the broad mass of peasants for the time being.[7]

The Soviet mistakes of 1919 were acknowledged by the Ukrainian Land Law of 5 February 1920 which took peasant demands into account. Land was to be redistributed temporarily. In particular, the land of the state farms formed during 1919 was also to be distributed unless local peasants specifically desired to continue farming as a collective. The amount of land given over to the sugar industry and other special crops was to be limited.[8] Soviet propaganda echoed this message:

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5 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 7, ark. 104. Report of Instructor Kots to Berdychiv povit revkom, December 1920.
6 *Sbornik otchetov*, p. 12.
7 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 165.
8 *TsDAVO*, f. 2360, op. 1, spr. 10, ark. 17. Zakon o zemle, 5 February 1920.

> No Soviet farms, except voluntary ones, founded on small plots of land with the agreement of the local peasantry. No communes, apart from working associations, founded on the initiative of local peasants without any outside influence.[9]

This conciliatory approach was extended to the whole Soviet state when the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced in March 1921 to alleviate the severe economic and social crisis affecting the entire country. Peasants had considered the razverstka deeply unfair and arbitrary, which led to problems with grain collection. A report from Podillia blamed the failure to collect foodstuffs on the weakness of local Soviet organs, the lack of cadres and peasant opposition. The highest collection of grain in Podillia was achieved in Iamil's'kyi povit where only seventy-three per cent of the target was successfully gathered.[10] Peasants hid grain rather than hand it over to the state.[11] Little allowance had been made for those villages which had difficulty meeting the targets set by the razverstka, despite the fact that Soviet demands were often unreasonable. Targets had been set for the collection of wool out of season and for eggs which the peasants struggled to fulfil. However, peasant inability to fulfil the tax was mitigated by the fact that village organs, not just revkoms but also village communities, often assumed responsibility for collection, which undoubtedly allowed for some manipulation of the system.[12]

The NEP replaced the razverstka with the *prodnalog*.[13] Peasants paid a fixed amount of grain in kind to the state. They were then free to sell any surplus on the market for profit. This inspired a more cooperative approach from Ukrainian peasants. A local survey declared that 'the mood of the peasants during the period of study (January to November 1921) has improved with the introduction of the NEP. Thanks to this, the

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9 This quotation is taken from a heading in Dmytro Manuilsky, *Shcho dae novyi zemel'nyi zakon selianstvu?* Khar'kiv, 1920, p. 1.
10 TsDAVO, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 620, ark. 1. Doklad viddilu keruvannia Poil's'koi hubernii, 1 April 1921.
11 *DAKO*, f R-1, op 1, spr 194, ark 57. Khar'kov, Narkomvnudel - inf. instr. otdel, July 1920.
12 See, for example, *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 293. Protokol Sushchanskogo sel'skogo skhoda, Germanovskoi volosti, Kievskogo uezda, 2 January 1920.
13 See *DAKO*, f. R-87, op. 1, spr. 23, ark. 1. Protokol Obukhovskogo sel'skogo skhoda, 24 April 1921.

prodnalog has been fulfilled (which was not observed under the razverstka).'[14] A report from Podillia stated that 'peasants had begun to feel the possibility of the renewal of their farms as a result of the NEP'.[15] Peasants in Volyn were the first in Ukraine to fulfil their prodnalog targets, an achievement over-optimistically attributed to their political loyalty.[16] Strict measures remained in force for those who did not hand over a sufficient amount of grain.[17]

Further decrees regulating the position in Ukraine followed the land law of 5 February 1920. On 2 March 1921 a decree strengthening peasant rights to land was issued. It followed discussions at the Fifth All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets held in spring 1921. In those villages where surplus land had already been confiscated and redistributed, peasants were to be granted rights to land use for a period of nine years (three cycles of a three-field rotation) to ensure stability.[18] No more divisions were to take place during that time. This decree had particular relevance for Right-Bank Ukraine where peasants, used to farming hereditary plots of land, abhorred the idea of exchanging their land in a village distribution of land with a possibly less assiduous neighbour who had not tended his land with the same care.

A new land law on 27 May 1922 superseded all previous land legislation and tried to institute a regulated system of land relations. It mirrored similar provisions introduced in Russia in 1922. It reiterated the principle that the land belonged to working people and laid down rules for land redistribution and use. It created the land community (as described in the previous chapter), outlined provisions for the renting of land for the first time, regulated state and urban use of land and drew up guidelines to govern the composition and rights of

14 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 581, ark. 48. Doklad uchet o rabote otdela upravlennia, January to November 1921
15 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 620, ark. 57. Svodka info-svodochnogo podotdela Podgubispolkoma, November to December 1921.
16 *TsDAVO*, f 27, op 3, spr 144, ark 3. Vypiska iz biuletena zasedanii Volynskogo GZO [gubernskyi zemel'nyi otdel]. *Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo na Zhitomirshchine 1921-1941: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, Kiev, 1983, pp. 21, 26.
17 *DAKO*, f. R-1031, op. 1, spr. 11, ark. 82. Krushinskomu sel'sovetu i sel'nalogovoi komissi Budaevskyi volostnoi ispol'nitel'nyi komitet.
18 *Rezoliutsii*. p. 112. *Istoriia derzhava i prava*, vol. I, p. 440.

individual households and their members.[19] The principles were confirmed by the Land Codex published at the end of 1922.[20] This was a major piece of legislation, a fundamental building block of the new state in legal terms.[21]

While Soviet officials viewed state farms and socialist land reorganisation as the ultimate aim of their policy, the land law accepted the status quo in the villages. This appeared a rational and realistic approach to agricultural legislation.[22] However, the difficulty of spreading the Soviet message into the village and of implementing policy, together with peasant opposition, nullified the potential of such legislation. Perennial problems in the introduction of higher decrees manifested themselves at local level. A Narkomzem note in 1924 complained about peasant attitudes towards agrarian legislation:

> Every day the village population's ignorance of the land laws and land reorganisation became clearer and clearer, leading to a vast number of conflicts and lawsuits which were frequently without foundation. This hindered the successful introduction of land-reorganisation measures, intended to resurrect agriculture by making improvements and choosing more appropriate forms of land use to correspond to local conditions.[23]

There was a broad chasm between the aims of the Soviet state and what it could actually achieve.

The fundamental task of the Soviet regime lay in the resolution of the land question by providing a lasting legal settlement of peasant landholding and instituting peasant rights to land. This was a hugely complex business, compounded by the constant attempts of successive political powers during the civil war to impose alternative systems of landholding on the peasants. The agrarian revolution of 1917 had brought about a 'full equalisation of

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19 *Istoriia derzhavy i prava*, Vol. I, p. 442. E. Markevich, 'Ocherk po istorii zemel'nykh otnoshenii na Kievshchine v epokhu pervoi i vtoroi revolutsii', *Zhurnal Kievskogo gubernskogo ekonomsoveshchaniia*, 7, 1923, 66-93 (p. 91)
20 *Zemel'nyi kodeks*, pp. 3-32.
21 *Istoriia derzhavy i prava*, pp. 442-443.
22 *Istoriia derzhavy i prava. loc. cit.*
23 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 5, spr. 289, ark. 39. Ob'iasnitel'naia zapiska.

land' in Ukraine.[24] However, peasants did not always cultivate the land they had seized. At several points (under the Hetman and White regimes) the original owners returned to claim their property. The sown area in Volyn had fallen thirty per cent by 1920 (against the Ukrainian average of thirteen per cent).[25] The establishment of the Soviet regime in 1920 offered a fresh opportunity for a new land distribution.

The Soviet state tried to influence the direction that agrarian reform took by drawing up central plans for increasing productivity and resurrecting the agricultural industries which had been so important before 1917, especially in the Right Bank. The state's priorities in 1920 were to distribute former gentry, state and church land among poor and landless peasants, draw up an inventory of land and population in preparation for agricultural reorganisation and allocate land to state organisations, enterprises and other groups at volost level.[26]

Later Soviet historians emphasised the role of the state in distributing land but peasants themselves were fundamental to this process.[27] By the end of 1920 it was reported that most former landlord land had been divided, though not necessarily properly.[28] In 1920, there were less than 1,500 land surveyors (*zemlemiri*) to cover the whole of Ukraine. They were estimated to have overseen less than thirty per cent of land divisions. Therefore, peasants themselves or local village organs supervised the remaining proportion. Information drawn up by Bilatserkivs'kyi okruha land department revealed that the land laws of 1920 were implemented 'by the population itself'. Soviet organs only intervened in the event of disputes over land between individual peasants or villages.[29]

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24 *Sborknik otchetov*, p. 12.
25 *ibid.*, p. 14.
26 I. Maksimov, 'Itogi zemleustroistva na Ukraine na 1-e Ianvaria 1922-go goda', *Sil's'ke hospodarstvo*, 3-4, 1922, 44-56 (p. 44).
27 See Ksenzenko, *Revoliutsionnye agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, pp. 36-45, which discusses the role of the Soviet administration in carrying out reform without mentioning spontaneous peasant action.
28 *Sbornik otchetov*, pp. 12, 14.
29 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1869, ark. 37. Svodnye vedomosti o zemleustroitel'nykh rabotakh s 1920-go goda do 1 Okt. 1923-go goda po Belotserkovskomu okrugu: Ob'iasnitel'naia zapiska.

The first task in any distribution was to calculate the area of land in the volost and the number of 'souls', 'eaters' or workers this land had to support. This work was supposed to be undertaken by land surveyors but villages and volosts themselves often took responsibility. From this information, a volost land-norm was established. This took into account the proportional productivity of the soil (for example, one desiatina of sandy soil was less productive than one desiatina of black earth).[30] Soil conditions in the Right Bank varied more than other areas of Ukraine and there were large differences in land norms even between neighbouring regions.[31] Within particular villages minimum and maximum levels of landholding were established. Households possessing more than the average land norm had the surplus confiscated and redistributed to poorer families (See Tables B & C in Appendix.)

When land surveyors could not carry out this work, the local KNS and other Soviet organs were supposed to take responsibility.[32] The ultimate decision, however, as already stated, often lay with the village community. A protocol from Hrihorivka village gathering, Kyiv hubernia, on 8 June 1921, decided that 'all the land of the estate, church and individuals is to be distributed per soul (*na dushu*)'.[33] A village soviet in the same region decided to draw up a list of land users, pass it on to the village gathering for discussion and acceptance and then divide the land between the peasants.[34] These lists, which helped decide the priorities of any distribution, took into account the composition of a household, the amount of allotment and other land it possessed and the amount of equipment it required

30 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 106, ark. 56. Pravila o zemel'nykh normakh, Kyiv hubernia, May 1921. One desiatina of black-earth soil (*chernozem*) was considered as productive as 1.2 desiatins of semi black-earth soil, 1.4 desiatins of grey-forest soil, 2 desiatins of loamy grey-white soil, 2.5 desiatins of sandy grey-white soil and 3.25 desiatins of sandy soil; Mihal, *Zdiisnennia*, p. 29.
31 Liakh, *Rozviazannia*, p. 65.
32 Pershyn, *Narysy*, pp. 114-115.
33 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 178. Protokol obshchego sobraniia grazhdan s. Grigorovka, Germanovskoi voosti, Kievskogo uezda, 8 June 1921.
34 *ibid.*, ark. 193. Protokol No. 24, 24 July 1921.

to farm this land.[35] The assent of the community to this list was a vital part of the process, through which it could still influence who received land.

An example of a community assenting to such a list is found in Sushchana village, Kyiv, where seventy-seven householders discussed and approved the list in a village gathering.[36] The majority of land in the Right Bank was divided according to the 'eater' criterion, the total number of individuals within a household. The 'worker' criterion (the number of people of working age in a household) was also sometimes used. In some villages all inhabitants received a share of the available land fund. Where there were land shortages or large populations, land went only to poor and landless peasants.

In other cases local peasants' demands took priority, as evidence from Lipovets'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, reveals. The former private land fund was first to go to 'local peasants registered in the hromada before 1918 even if they were absent' and those who had lived and worked in the village without being registered. Those who held land in several hromady (a common occurrence in the Right Bank) could choose the community in which to receive a share of land. The second priority in any redistribution of land were those who had arrived in the village after 1918 to work on the land or as hired labourers. At the bottom of the scale, there were those who were registered in the hromada but who had lived outside it for years, and those who did not work on the land, whether permanent or temporary residents in the village.[37] Therefore, in some instances, the land went to those groups who had the most direct and longest historical claim to it.

Soviet guidelines were rarely observed, which is unsurprising given the lack of central supervision over local action. In one case in Volyn, land was seized by those

35 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 203, ark. 2. Doklad predstoiashchikh v 1920 gody zemleustroitel'nikh i mezhevikh rabot v Radomyshl'skom uezde po provedeniiu zemel'noi reformy.
36 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 193.
37 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1159, ark. 83. Instruktsiia po rospodilu buvshoi netrud. ta lykshkiv kurkulivs'kykh zemel' v koristuvannia mizh naseleniem do ostatochnoho zemleustroiu v Lipovets'komu poviti, 25 August 1922.

peasants who could cultivate it and no village-wide redistribution was carried out.[38] In others, land was given to those who could not farm it. Natural disasters sometimes affected the household's working capacity or peasants were unwilling to pay tax on land. In the case of those who had returned from urban areas, there was often a lack of traditional farming knowledge. In such circumstances Soviet officials accepted the difficulties which peasants faced and the Land Codex of 1922 allowed peasants to temporarily rent out their allotments to others.[39] Such instances were common.[40] The state's main concern was that the land be sown.

In the Right Bank, where over-population contrived to limit the amount of allotment land available for redistribution, peasants clamoured for farmstead land (*usad'ba*).[41] This was a plot of garden land adjacent to the household and was kept apart from village lands. The productivity of allotment land had fallen drastically after 1917 which increased the importance of farmstead land to small households. During the revolution, 13,227 new farmstead plots were measured out in Kyiv hubernia alone, an increase of 8.4%.[42] Land surveyors were frequently employed to oversee the measuring of these plots.[43] Indeed, it was often a peasant priority. In Podillia in 1921, peasants were interested 'only in the granting of farmsteads to them and only for this work do they give horses and workers'.[44]

Without effective supervision from a central authority, the resolution of the land question and division of land during 1920 was characterised by chaos at local level. Local organs lacked the necessary information to keep control of the situation or did not keep accurate records of decisions. Volost land departments sometimes gave the same piece of

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38 Iakimanskii. *K itogam agrarnoi revoliutsii na Ukraine: Po dannym anketnogo obsledovaniia 1922 goda.* Khar'kov, 1924, p. 30.
39 *Zemel'nyi kodeks*, p. 5.
40 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 203, ark. 2. *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 527, ark. 82. *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 145, ark. 40. Protokol zasedaniia Zhmerinskogo uezdnogo zemel'nogo soveshchaniia sostoiavshegosiia 28-go Fevralia-1 Marta 1922 goda. Tov. Kaz, Molchanskyi volzemotdel.
41 *Sbornik otchetov*, p. 18.
42 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1869, ark. 37.
43 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1187, ark. 2. Kopiia zhurnal zasidannia Kyivs'koi povitovoi tekhnichnoho zemleustriinoi kolehii, 29 November 1922.
44 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 190, ark. 4. Podil's'kyi hubzemviddil Narkomzemu, 19 May 1921.

land to different peasants. Frequently, 'no one knew which plots of land went to which peasants and in what measure, or many farmers did not know how much land they used'.[45] The situation deteriorated further during 1921 when there were attempts to confiscate land from wealthier peasants. Attempts to keep records of land divisions or obtain information were hindered by the uncooperative attitude of village communities. In Volyn, the 'hereditary household system of land use and the absence of exact planning material' hindered attempts to draw up an inventory of land holding. The 'hostile' local population expressed 'constant and categorical refusals to give the necessary information and material'.[46]

There was a fundamental shortage of qualified personnel who could bring order to this chaos.[47] There had been no proper measurement of the land and little in the way of planning material or other data existed.[48] Land surveyors drew up contracts with village communities agreeing to measure the land in return for food, shelter and assistance. Elected community representatives normally signed the contract on behalf of the village.[49] A certificate from a village in Chernobyl'ska volost, Kyiv hubernia in November 1922, attested the fact that the village representatives had a mandate to conclude such agreements and receipts were issued to the land surveyor by the representatives as proof of payment on the community's behalf.[50] The land surveyors usually issued their own protocols to communities certifying that the work had been completed.[51] The responsibility for carrying out a land survey, therefore, ultimately rested with the community.

In the early period of Soviet government the efforts of the land surveyors in the Right Bank were hindered by several factors. For one thing, the land surveyor was the

45 Maksimov, 'Itogi', p. 45.
46 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 288, ark. 30. Kratkii predvaritel'nii otchet ob ispolnenykh rabotakh po zemleustroistvu na Volyni, 1922.
47 *Sbornik otchetov*, p. 16.
48 Maksimov, 'Itogi', p. 48.
49 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1524, ark. 340, 341. Records of contracts between land surveyors and village communities signed in 1922 and 1923.
50 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1197, ark. 28-29.

intermediary between the state and the village, implementing higher decrees on land reorganisation at local level. Peasant attitudes towards the land surveyors were ambivalent, reflecting a traditional peasant mistrust of government representatives and their motives. Peasants were unsure whether the land surveyors' work was 'for the peasants or for the government'.[52] Surveyors in the countryside were frequently threatened, particularly when they attempted to measure the village lands and register the population. Only on rare occasions did they win the peasants' trust and respect. In the majority of cases they were viewed as representatives of central government and therefore as little different from the requisition detachments or political commissars whose activities antagonised peasants.[53]

Furthermore, material conditions were extremely difficult. Peasants would not exchange goods for Soviet paper money.[54] Many surveyors lacked the necessary equipment for their work: in Podillia only eight per cent had geodesic instruments for land measurement.[55] In Kyiv and Podillia there was almost no paper or drawing materials. Many land surveyors lacked even basic clothing or footwear.[56]

In Kyiv hubernia in April 1920 there were 109 zemlemiri but only 60 sets of instruments.[57] By 1922 there were only 167 land surveyors to cover 202 volosts with each surveyor forced to cover 1.3 volosts on average.[58] This fell far short of the estimated 250 required to complete the tasks of land measurement and reorganisation in the region. In Podillia each land surveyor had to cover an average of two volosts. Land surveyors became isolated and were singled out for attack by peasants.[59] Fear of attack, harassment and destruction of the land surveyor's work severely restricted the progress which could be made

51 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr 1861, ark 11. Copy of agreement between peasants of Sharnopol'e and land surveyor Pavel K. Radzin, Umans'kyi povit, 4 October 1922.
52 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr 1160, ark 6.
53 *ibid.*, ark. 6-7
54 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 292, ark. 119. Protokol tekhnicheskogo soveshchaniia zemlemerov KUZO, 2 March 1921.
55 Maksimov, 'Itogi', p 52.
56 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 124, ark. 35. Letter to Narkomzem from Narkomat RKU, 14 July 1921.
57 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 98, ark. 21.
58 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1160, ark. 13.
59 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 124, ark. 35.

in the countryside in the first years of the Soviet regime. Moreover, incompetent men often maintained their positions. Anecdotal evidence from Podillia suggests that some of the land surveyors were barely literate.[60] Therefore, the land surveyors could not have overseen large-scale land distributions.

In those areas where less gentry land was available for redistribution, there was more emphasis by Soviet officials on expropriating the land of wealthier peasants. Dekulakisation (*raskulachivanie*) was intended to transfer property to the poor in a bid to eradicate the social base of the 'kulak' class which the Soviet authorities believed was deeply rooted in the Ukrainian countryside.[61] In practice this was an extremely arbitrary process which followed few guidelines and depended very much on local prejudice. The first All-Ukrainian KNS congress held in Kyiv in October 1920 initiated the call for the expulsion of kulaks from the village and the expropriation of their land.[62] One Soviet historian calculated that 'kulak' land holding in the Right Bank was smaller than in other parts of Ukraine.[63] According to contemporary sources, kulak households in 1917 constituted only four per cent of the total.[64] There were no guidelines to help Soviet organs identify who was a kulak and some struggled to single out these exploiters within their midst. A report from Molchans'ka volost, Podillia, found that there were 'not more than four or five kulaks in the whole volost'.[65]

In effect, any peasant who opposed Soviet rule or possessed land above set local land norms could be called 'kulak'. For example, in a Kyiv volost in November 1922 a register of confiscated land was drawn up. Before confiscation, one family of six members possessed 9.49 desiatins. After confiscation the family was left with 8.9 desiatins, an average plot of 1.48 desiatins per member. The amount of land held by the family above the set

60 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 96, ark. 19. Doklad zav. Podgubzemuprav, tov. Popova: O rabote za Volyni, 1922.
61 See for example, O. I. Ganzha, 'Chastichnaia ekspropriatsiia sel'skoi burzhuazii v khode agrarnoi revoliutsii na Ukraine (1918-1923)', *Voprosy istorii SSSR*, 32, 1987, 34-41. V. K. Mihal', 'Konfiskatsiia zemel'nykh lishkiv i kurkul'skykh hospodarstvakh na Ukraini v 1920-1923 rr.', *Pytannia istorii narodiv SRSR*, 6, 1969, 109-119.
62 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 114.
63 Ksenzenko, *Revoliutsinnye agrarnye preobraovaniia*, p. 78.
64 Markevich, 'Ocherk', p. 88.

village land norms was therefore relatively small. However they were still described as 'kulaks'. Another family's holding (seven members in the household) was reduced from 11.879 to 10.3 desiatins.[66] They were also classified as kulaks, which seems harsh. These families possessed 'surplus' land calculated at between 0.098 and 0.165 desiatins per member, a relatively negligible amount. In Podillia, in 1921, Soviet organs were advised to liquidate 'kulak farms' which still possessed as much as 1.2 desiatins per member (or 'eater'). These households possessed only 0.1 desiatins per member above the basic level required to provide enough food for the household to work its land.[67] The line between subsistence and being seen as an exploiter was, therefore, a very fine one.

Under hereditary household tenure it was not unusual for land plots to vary greatly between households, since equalising land divisions were much rarer than in the Russian commune. Furthermore, households with larger numbers of able-bodied workers were able to farm more land, so it would not have been surprising to find families with six or more members in control of larger plots. These families do not really correspond to typical Soviet images of the exploitative kulak. Moreover, official definitions of kulaks were vague. Manuilsky advised Soviet organisers that they would rarely find the type of 'ideal kulak' they imagined in the village. The term 'kulak' was extended to include those who had some influence in the village, had held official posts in the past or who now sat on the management of village cooperatives. These 'kulaks' might not even have spoken in the gathering nor participated in bandit activity, which were the usual characteristics attributed to this group.[68]

In the villages of the Right Bank, local organs dragged their heels in implementing measures against the 'kulaks', primarily the confiscation of their surplus land.[69] An order to

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65 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 145, ark. 40.
66 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1396, ark. 36. Decalaration to Kyiv povit land department from representatives of village of Khudor, 1922. The land norm was calculated at one desiatina per soul.
67 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 219, ark. 4. Report to Narkomzem from Podillia hubernia land department on distribution of land of sugar refineries in Podillia, 25 June 1921.
68 Manuilsky, *Poriadnik*, pp. 10-11.
69 Mihal, 'Konfiskatsiia', p. 115.

povit land departments in Kyiv hubernia in June 1922 noted that the process of confiscating surplus land from the kulaks had not yet been carried out and recommended that action be taken against them immediately. Thereafter the decree of the previous year (March 1921), guaranteeing peasants the right to land for nine years, could be implemented.[70] In Podillia, the process of confiscating land was still continuing in 1922 but had been hindered by a lack of paper with which to draw up a register of the population.[71] In Volyn, the KNS made no effort to confiscate surplus peasant land. A Soviet report complained that 'unfortunately, the peculiarities of Volyn have led to the well-known inertia on the part of the poor peasants towards taking away kulak surpluses'.[72] In some areas surplus land was 'of the most insignificant quantity' and therefore not worthy of confiscation.[73] Peasants were often passive because they were unsure who the kulaks were or because there was little land to requisition for their needs.

It was calculated that in Kyiv hubernia 52,301 peasant households (9.8% of the total) had land confiscated in 1920 to 1921. In Volyn 18,642 desiatins were confiscated in 1921 and a further 24,624 desiatins in 1922.[74] Another estimate from Volyn suggested that by the end of 1923, 31,607 desiatins had been taken from 'kulak' households. In one district of Podillia in 1923, 40 peasant households were subject to confiscation.[75] Yet there are numerous reasons why we must treat such information with caution. Soviet historians produced wildly varying views on the scale and importance of the confiscation of kulak surpluses.[76] In these years land was often distributed on paper rather than in reality.[77]

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70 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1159, ark. 17.
71 *TsDAVO*, f 27, op 3, spr 145, ark 40.
72 TsDAVO, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 288, ark. 15. Obshchie itogi zemleustroistva Volyni, 1 July 1921 to 1 October 1922.
73 *ibid.*, ark. 24 (a).
74 *ibid.*, ark. 15.
75 Mihal, 'Konfiskatsiia', pp. 114, 117.
76 See Kalinichenko, *Selians'ke hospodarstvo Ukrainy v dokolhospnyi period (1921-1929)*, Kharkiv, 1991, p. 33. Some Western historians have doubted the existence of a second social war against the kulaks. See Shanin, *Awkward Class*, pp. 145-147.
77 *Kak zhivet*, p. 90.

Many larger households possessing more land (and therefore liable to be accused of being kulaks) responded to the threat of raskulachivanie by splitting to form separate households, each with its own legitimate share of land. In areas of Podillia after redistribution, households possessed less land on average than they had before 1917. Despite the large amount of non-working land which passed to the peasants, 'the number of households has increased so much that, not only is the allocation of land completely hidden by family divisions, it has resulted in the further subdivision of farms'.[78] Between 1917 and 1922 the number of households in Podillia increased from 509,000 to 675,000.[79] In one volost in the Right Bank (Shamraivs'ka) the number of households increased from 976 to 1,211, an increase of 24%.[80] In Kyiv hubernia the number of households increased from 655,000 in 1917 to 840,000 in 1922. By 1923 this had risen to 870,000, a 32.7% increase on the 1917 figure. This increase was not matched by a corresponding rise in population (3,667,896 in 1917 to 3,769,775 in 1923).[81] Some of these new households would have been formed by semi-urban elements returning to the village after 1917 but many would also have been formed from family divisions. The cohesive social forces of the pre-revolutionary household would have been reversed by the sudden availability of gentry, church and state land after the revolution, enabling smaller and younger households to establish themselves earlier than would have been possible before 1917.

The Soviet government created an arbitration system to oversee the resolution of conflicts over land so that individuals, households and communities who felt that land had been taken from them unfairly were also able to issue claims to higher organs. A special commission (*osoba kolehiia vyshchoho kontroliu po zemel'nym superechkakh pry Narkomzemi URSR* or *OKVK*) was set up under the auspices of Narkomzem which laid out

78 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 96, ark. 17.
79 Mihal, *Zdiisnennia*, p. 31.
80 Mihal, *loc. cit.*
81 *Kak zhivet*, p. 120.

the guidelines for arbitration at national level.[82] Peasants, either individuals or distinct groups, submitted petitions relating to the land settlement in the village. Complaints which arose as the result of confiscations, resettlement from the land, village demands for resource land and so on, were usually investigated further.[83] However, the main role of the special commission was often to enforce the claims of poorer peasants for land.

Special Soviet organisations were formed at local level to replace the old system of peasant land courts which had previously been responsible for settling conflicts in the village. Under a VUTsIK decree of 13 September 1922, land commissions were formed at hubernia, povit and volost level.[84] Cases could be brought by the community or by groups within it if they wished to resettle on a plot of community land - to start a collective, for example.[85] These commissions settled land disputes within the village between individual households (in the case of unauthorised seizures) or within households (in the case of family divisions). KNS members were urged to take a leading role in these commissions which suggests the process of settling disputes was arbitrary.[86]

Chaos ensued, as Soviet organs were swamped by peasant petitions. For example, in 1923 an area land department in Volyn had 52 outstanding cases on 1 July. During the month a further 89 claims were submitted by peasants. Only 28 of these cases were resolved, leaving 113 cases outstanding by 1 August.[87] Many land disputes occurred in Volyn in particular.[88] In Kyiv hubernia in 1922 over 3,000 conflicts resulted from confiscations of 'kulak' land. A further 3,000 cases arose from Soviet attempts to reorganise the land.[89] In view of the 'extraordinarily large number of cases over land disputes' passing to the land court commissions in 1923 the powers of the latter were increased. Difficulty in resolving old disputes over land hindered further progress towards land reorganisation and

82 See Liakh, *Rozviazannia*, p. 82.
83 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 259, ark. 12, 14, 18.
84 *Istoriia derzhava i prava*, vol. I, pp. 442-443.
85 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 239, ark. 57. O poriadke rassmotrenie zemel'nykh sporov, 1 September 1922.
86 *TsDAVO*, f. 12, op. 1, spr. 364, ark. 5. Novyi poriadok razbora zemel'nykh spornykh del, 1922.
87 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 175, ark. 36. Otchet otdela zemleustr. za iiul' 1923, Volyn hubernia.
88 *TsDAVO*, f, 12, op, 1, spr, 365, ark, 7. Svedeniia o chisle spornykh del, pazreshaemykh zemorganami, 1922.

required urgent measures.[90] Such was the pressure exerted on Soviet organs by the countless peasant petitions over land that the state was forced to retreat somewhat and try to reduce the flow of complaints, particularly over dekulakisation. Land holding in the early years of the Soviet regime was by no means a settled phenomenon and repeated changes in ownership or arguments over land rights were not unusual.

The importance of black repartitions in the revolutionary village, particularly in Russia, has been played down.[91] Contemporary accounts of black repartitions are thought to have been exaggerated and yet there are constant references in the records to full divisions taking place in the Right Bank after 1920, particularly in parts of Kyiv hubernia. A report on the activities of Kyiv hubernia land department (*hubzemviddil*) in 1920 noted that 'a tendency towards the full redistribution of land exists amongst the peasants', which the authorities had struggled to prevent.[92] The situation in the Right Bank was contrasted with that in Russia where Soviet rule had been established for nearly two and a half years. Russian peasants viewed agricultural policy in a more open manner, it was said, and considerable advances had already been made.[93]

Black repartitions were particularly evident in areas where the amount of former non-peasant land available for distribution was very small. Peasant demands could only be satisfied by a general division of all peasant lands. The trend towards black repartitions was also more obvious in those scattered areas of the Right Bank where the repartitional commune (obshchina) had existed before the revolution. One such example was Umans'kyi povit, Kyiv hubernia, where black repartitions were calculated to have covered an area of over 10,000 desiatins.[94]

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89 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1160, ark. 18.
90 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 187, ark. 62.
91 See John Channon. 'Peasants and Land Reform in Ukraine in the early 1920s'. Paper presented to the Thirteenth Conference of the Study Group of the Russian Revolution, Exeter College, University of Oxford, 9-11 January 1987.
92 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 302, ark. 127. Vidchyt pro diial'nist' hubzemviddilu Kyivshchyny z 20 Chervnia po 1 Serpnia 1920 roku.
93 *TsDAVO, loc. cit.*
94 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1160, ark. 11.

Soviet officials tried to stamp out total divisions of land wherever they occurred. Soviet land organs maintained the belief that 'black repartitions in village communities are in general an undesirable phenomenon'.[95] In Podillia, the subsistence norm (i.e. the land required to produce enough food to prevent starvation) was estimated at 0.55 desiatins per person. The consumption norm (the land required to produce enough food to enable a peasant to work) was 1.1 desiatins. A common repartition of all the land in Podillia would have produced only 0.92 desiatins per person, below the level required to sustain peasant households and the economy.[96]

Total divisions were tolerated in rare cases in Kyiv hubernia. They were permitted where land had been seized and divided in the wake of Denikin's advance in 1919 or where communities had passed to four field crop rotations.[97] In the overpopulated regions of Podillia however, they were 'completely forbidden'.[98] The black repartition led to the 'complete economic ruin of the village as it creates exclusively consumer farms which are not able to exist without working on the side or to feed working cattle'.[99]

A black repartition was alleged to have taken place in the village of Kobeliaki, Zvenihorods'kyi povit in spring 1921.[100] A peasant within the village complained to the authorities because instead of the three desiatins he had traditionally cultivated and looked after, he was given three desiatins of former landlord land whose productivity had declined as a result of the turmoil of revolution, leading he claimed to his economic ruin. (His complaint also demonstrates that many peasants believed they had an inherent link to certain plots of land and a right to land use which predated the revolution.) A gathering was called to give its assent to the distribution. Those in favour of the black repartition packed the

95 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 527, ark. 47. Report to Kyiv hubernia land department from povit land reorganisation division, 8 May 1922.
96 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 219, ark. 3.
97 *TsDAVO, loc. cit.*
98 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 145, ark. 29. Rezoliutsiia po tekushchim delam po dokladu tov. Demchenko pro uchet zemel'.
99 *ibid.*, ark 96. Report to administrative department of Podillia hubernia land department, 1922.
100 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 658, ark. 5. Land reorganisation department to Zvenihorods'kyi povit land department, 29 March 1921.

gathering with their wives and children to ensure a majority vote in favour. The peasant's only option, knowing that black repartitions were forbidden by the state, was an appeal to higher authorities.

The large number of villages seeking permission for a black repartition from the authorities or enlisting the help of land surveyors to carry out such a division reveals much about peasant conceptions of Soviet land laws. A report from Podillia in 1921 testified to two petitions and several oral requests for such permission within a matter of a few months.[101] The peasants' failure to consider broader questions of land reorganisation was compounded by the activities of Soviet organs at local level which allowed such misunderstandings to take root. In Kyiv hubernia, for example, a local Cheka arrested a land surveyor who had refused, quite correctly, to carry out a total redivision of village lands.[102]

The incidence of black repartitions suggests, in contrast to the situation during 1918 and 1919, that peasants had more belief in the stability of the current Soviet regime. They had avoided full equalisations of land up to this point because the return of the landlords or a conservative government who would restore their claims to land had been a real possibility. Black repartitions also show the survival of a consensus viewpoint within the village. A complete redistribution of village lands required no small degree of organisation and the agreement of the majority.[103] No doubt there were some peasants who were dissatisfied with the redivisions but they were swept along by the demands of the majority and by their own fear of opposing their neighbours.

Soviet officials learned from their experiences during 1919 that it was difficult to force changes in peasant land-use without antagonising the countryside. In 1920 they accepted that any shift towards collective forms of agriculture by peasants had to be voluntary. Narkomzem refused to impose collective farming on the Ukrainian peasants, despite the fact that many in the government believed this was the ultimate solution to the

101 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 190, ark. 6.
102 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1160, ark. 11.

agrarian question.[104] The problem of poor productivity remained. The state, therefore, had to 'regulate the land affairs of the population by *influencing* the choice of form [of land holding] which appeared the most progressive and expedient'.[105]

Perennial weaknesses of peasant agriculture persisted after 1920 and in some cases were exacerbated by land divisions during the revolution.[106] A Soviet report on the progress of land reorganisation in Volyn commented that 'peasant allotment land is interstripped with forest resource land which makes our first priority the destruction of interstripping, [the reduction of] the distance between plots of land and the irregular shapes and sizes of plots.[107] Late claims and sometimes redivisions and cut-offs are obstructing this work.'[108] In Podillia and Volyn, in particular, the average peasant holding of three to four desiatins was often made up of as many as fifty tiny strips of land. In one volost (Sloveshchans'ka) holdings of six to ten desiatins were often composed of between sixty and 130 strips of land.[109]

To resolve these problems the state encouraged the introduction of new farming methods and more cooperative forms of agriculture. This formed part of a general government plan for the amelioration of peasant land use which included provisions for the nationalisation of the land, allocation of land to settlements and individuals and the creation of a state land fund.[110] Peasants were encouraged to introduce new multi-crop rotations on their lands to replace the old, inefficient three-field system.[111] Particular attention was also paid to allocating land to collective enterprises, but within set limits.

Peasants were offered certain benefits and advantages by the state to persuade them to adopt more efficient practices. Prizes were awarded (usually in the form of tax

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103 Liakh, *Rozviazannia*, p. 67.
104 Mihal, *Zdiisnennia*, p. 33.
105 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1160, ark. 23. My emphasis. Coercion does not seem to have been an option.
106 *Rezoliutsii*, p. 114.
107 These three concepts translated in Russian (as the Narkomzem document is in Russian) as *chrezpolosnost*, *dalnozemel'ia* and *vklinavanie*.
108 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 288, ark. 24.
109 Mihal, *Zdiisnennia*, p. 50.
110 Maksimov, 'Itogi', p. 50.

reductions) for introducing such new farming techniques. In 1923 there were fifty-three such prizes awarded in Podillia, fifty-three in Volyn and forty-six in Kyiv.[112] New farming techniques and peasant willingness to adopt them were, therefore, making some small inroads into the traditional peasant beliefs about agriculture. There was a slow but perceptible shift towards peasant use of multi-field crop rotations during the early 1920s.[113]

The collective enterprises introduced into Ukraine in the early 1920s were different from those which the peasants had experienced during 1919. The radhospy and kolhospy which had survived the Soviet rethinking of policy were now to act as model farms and agricultural support stations which would provide a clear example of the benefits of collective farming methods to local peasants. They were to assist peasants in practical ways by providing improved seed stock, working animals, help with repairing agricultural implements and machinery and constructing buildings for the benefit of the community.[114] In areas where specialist crops were grown, special farms (*kultradhospy*) were organised to concentrate resources and expertise and ensure stable production. These were closely linked to research stations and agricultural schools and were similarly required to assist local poor peasants wherever necessary. In the Right Bank in 1920 there were forty-three such enterprises covering an area of 6,290 desiatins. By 1923 their area had expanded to cover 57,180 desiatins.[115]

There were various types of collective and cooperative organisations.[116] Cooperative farming, where peasants organised themselves in groups to farm a particular plot of land or produce a particular crop, was increasingly seen by the state as a more suitable

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111 Mihal, *Zdiisnennia*, p. 74.
112 Mihal, *loc. cit.*
113 V. V. Kalinichenko, 'Systemy zemlerobstva v indyvidualnomu selains'komu hospodarstvi URSR (1917-1929rr)', *Pytannia istorii SRSR*, 36, 1991, 3-10. Kalinichenko, *Selians'ke hospodarstvo*, pp. 70-76.
114 Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovanie*, p. 202.
115 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 109.
116 Five such types of collective organisation have been identified by Khmel in *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 185: the 'agricultural labour commune, the socialist agricultural labour artel', the society for the joint cultivation of the land, the cooperative farming agricultural labour society and the temporary farming artel'. These terms represented various levels of organisation and differences in the extent of obligation on individual members of each group.

means of introducing more collectivist forms of agriculture. It was hoped that these cooperatives would prove a transitional stage towards the ultimate collectivisation of the countryside.[117] They were given a national Ukrainian leadership and direction.[118] At local level cooperatives were organised territorially or around a particular agricultural sector.[119] Peasants in the Right Bank often proved reluctant to accept these methods of farming. A Soviet report from Volyn noted that the concept behind cooperative farming was relatively new to the region and peasants were hesitant to join such enterprises. Soviet organs were encouraged to take energetic measures to provide material assistance and expert staff.[120]

As the Soviet regime stabilised, there were increased efforts to introduce collective agriculture and rescind the voluntary principle in peasant landholding which had earlier been introduced. For example, by May 1923 the resettling of peasants on khutir land in Volyn was officially considered 'economically undesirable'.[121] Collective farming by contrast, was 'the sole means to achieve the resurrection and improvement of agriculture'.[122] However, village communities continued to exercise the right to choose their own forms of landholding as laid down in the Land Codex of 1922. The shift towards positive encouragement of collective agriculture, therefore, sat uneasily with official legal provisions and sent mixed signals to peasants.

Despite Soviet claims that collective farming was proving increasingly popular in the early period of Soviet rule,[123] it does not seem to have found immediate widespread acceptance by the peasants of the Right Bank. The lack of firm leadership from the state, before responsibility for collective agriculture was placed solely in the hands of Narkomzem,

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117 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 90, ark. 7. Doklad administrativno-organizatsionnogo upravleniia, April-May 1921. Khmel, *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*. p. 186

118 See, for example, Orbiuro Sil'sko-hospodars'koi Kooperatsii, *Biuleten' 1-ho Vseukrains'koho ziz'du upovnovazhenykh sil's'ko-hospodars'koi kooperatsii*, Kharkiv, 1922. p. 3.

119 For a discussion of the ideology behind the coops and their function, see V. I. Butenko. 'Razvitie selskokhoziaistvennoi kooperatsii na Ukraine v 20-e rr', *Vestnik Kharkovskogo universiteta*, 343, 1989, 23, 3-10. (p. 5).

120 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 1, spr. 107, ark. 27.

121 *Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo na Zhitomirshchine 1921-1941:Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, p. 45.

122 *Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo, loc. cit.*

contributed to this. Peasant attitudes still identified collective forms of agriculture with the Russian commune, a system which they considered totally alien to Volyn, Podillia and much of Kyiv hubernia.[124] The faults evident in peasant farming before 1917 remained.[125] Poorer peasant farms continued to lack necessary equipment, since state attempts to provide it were slow to bear fruit. The lack of resources (whether tools or livestock) was a particular problem in Right-Bank Ukraine.[126]

Peasants did not embrace the ideological concepts of cooperative or collective farming as readily as the Soviet government had hoped.[127] A report from Podillia suggested that peasants sometimes formed collectives not through any ideological or practical belief in the superiority of collective farming, but to gain access to the best land in the village and the resources and support of the state. Once these had been obtained the collectives went into decline.[128] Where a small group of peasants took advantage of the provisions for setting up a collective, there were very often conflicts with the rest of the village. The report cited the example of Kurnitskyi collective in Miziakovskyi settlement which had been organised on peasant allotment land. This had dealt a 'deep blow to the land use of the entire community' and created great hostility in the settlement.[129]

There was little real change in the way that peasants held their land before and after the revolution as figures drawn up by Narkomzem in 1925 revealed (See Table D in Appendix.) Some collective forms had been introduced but these were the result of efforts by the state rather than of any popular move by the peasants. Indeed, there was some slight

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123 See Butenko.'Razvitie', on Soviet view of popularity of cooperatives. For a view on the popularity of collective farming see A. F. Chmyga, *Kolkhoznoe dvizhenie na Ukraine (1917-1929):Ocherk istorii*, Moskva, 1974, pp. 135-6, 139, 142.

124 Klunnyi, *Do pytannia*, p. 14.

125 See, for example, *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 175, ark. 19, 20, 21. Informationnaia svodka o rabote okrzemupravy, July 1923.

126 Chmyga, *Kolkhoznoe dvizhenie*, pp. 125, 128. As in other regions of Ukraine and Russia, the majority of agricultural tasks continued to be done by hand. V. V. Kalinichenko, 'Sil's'ko-hospodars'kyi remanent v indyvidualnomu selians'komu hospodarstvi URSR (1917-1929)', *Vestnik Khar'kovskogo universiteta*, 362, 1992, 10-15. (pp. 13,15).

127 Khmel notes that the main slogan of agricultural communes was 'from each according to ability, to each according to need', a clear reference to Communist beliefs. *Agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 208.

128 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 215, ark. 16. The author cites the example of the villages of Hlinsk and Kobyl'na, Vinnyts'kyi povit, Podillia. Otchet otdela zemledeliia, Podillia hubernia, July 1923.

shift evident towards more individualist forms of landholding, the khutir and vidrub, which ran counter to the ultimate plans of the state for agriculture. Peasant opinion in some areas considered them the most suitable way of farming the land.[130] On the whole, however, peasants resolved to remain as they were; or else forms of landholding were not an issue. Traditional forms of land holding, based on hereditary household tenure and supervision by the community, continued to be the predominant form of peasant agricultural organisation in the early 1920s.

In 1920, supervision of land distribution among the peasants had been the primary task of the state.[131] Land reorganisation and land nationalisation (bringing it under state control and allocating it to various organisations) became the main priorities of 1921. Introducing rational concepts of land holding was intended to increase the efficiency of peasant agriculture. One practical example of land reorganisation in action is found in the village of Vorontsa, Kyiv. A local peasant, T. P. Ocherets held four desiatins divided into twenty strips up to ten versts away. After land reorganisation Ocherets' holding comprised four consolidated plots not more than four versts away.[132]

The Ukrainian Central Commission for the Nationalisation of Land now redoubled its activities. A special bureau for the Right Bank was organised to deal with the particular problems posed by this region (*Pravoberezhnoe Biuro Vseukrainskoi Tsentral'noi Komissii* or *Pravbiuro*).[133] It had responsibility for overseeing the process of nationalisation, particularly of the sugar industry. It covered the Right Bank plus the areas of Odesa and Chernihiv, splitting the region up into nineteen separate area commissions.[134] Attempts to nationalise the land in 1920 were hindered by the ongoing military conflict and need for

129 *TsDAVO, loc. cit.*
130 *TsDAVO,* f. 27, op. 4, spr. 96, ark. 9. Doklad zav. Volynskogo gubzemuprava, tov. Fremelia: O rabote za 1922-1923 god, 21 November 1923. The peasant preference in terms of landholding in Volyn was reported as favouring khutir and vidrub plots. *ibid.*, ark. 20.
131 Maksimov, 'Itogi', p. 50.
132 Mihal, *Zdiisnenia*, pp. 63-64. Similarly in Hermanivets village, Kyiiv, 11.1% of peasants held more than four strips of land. After reorganisation no peasant held more than four plots.
133 Liakh, *Rozviazannia*, p. 75.
134 Ksenzenko, *Revoliutsionnye agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 115.

caution in Soviet policy: there was also a shortage of workers.[135] One Soviet report, reviewing the history of Kyiv hubernia land department, argued that the change in emphasis towards nationalisation in 1921 contradicted the Land Law of 5 February 1920 which stated that all land was to go to the peasants unless they specifically decided otherwise. This had led to dissatisfaction in the countryside particularly among the poorest, who were now being denied access to the land of the old estates, sugar factories and forests.[136]

The Soviet authorities had quite rational reasons for bringing such land under state control, given the terrible destruction suffered by agriculture during the war and revolution and the pressing need to protect natural resources and resurrect agricultural industries. One sector which had suffered particularly was the forests, and in an attempt to prevent any further damage, the state nationalised the forest land of the Right Bank. As we have seen, illegal timber felling by peasants and passing armies had been widespread during the civil war. By 1922 the ruin of forests in the Right Bank was 'assuming an extraordinary scale and approaching catastrophe'.[137] It was estimated, for example, that of 25,000 desiatins of forest land in Zhmerins'kyi povit in Podillia, twenty per cent had been destroyed by illegal timber felling.[138] The slogan of Soviet organs in forest regions was "Save the Forests" but they were hampered by the difficulties of implementing government decrees in the countryside.[139] A report from Podillia in early 1922 noted that local organs had taken no measures to combat illegal felling and therefore their attempts assumed a simple 'moral character' which was reliant on spreading the message to volost and village gatherings.[140]

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135 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 123, ark. 15. Commission on nationalised land to Narkomzem, 20 July 1921. In Kyiv hubernia in 1921 only four of the twenty workers conscripted reported for duty and even then they appeared a month late. Sixty workers in all were required to organise the land nationalisation project.
136 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1160, ark. 18.
137 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 89, ark. 3. Communication between Kyiv hubernia land department and Narkomzem, 1922.
138 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 90, ark. 2.
139 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 89, ark. 3.
140 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 145, ark. 39.

Local organs were powerless to prevent peasant timber felling.[141] Implicit in Soviet reports was the suggestion that local organs, particularly if they were drawn from the volost or village in question (the soviet, for example), condoned peasant action.

Forest land which formed part of the landlords' property used by peasants under servitude agreements before the revolution had often been the source of disputes between them. Peasant action in 1917 began over such lands and peasants believed that the revolution would confer permanent entitlement to them. Peasants 'had acquired non-working land which gave them the distinct psychological impression that they had exclusive rights to it, the more so because state organs in the beginning did not declare their demands for land decisively'.[142] In Volyn (where servitudes had had the greatest importance), Soviet officials were forced to confront this peasant attitude. The question of giving forest land to the peasants 'acquired a very sharp form' because such lands were vital to the peasant economy.[143] Soviet officials, therefore, had to balance the demands of the peasants with the needs of the state, although the latter usually took precedence. An order from the head of the Volyn hubernia land department in June 1922 transferred a hayfield plot totalling some four hundred desiatins to the state forest land fund in its entirety. No claims on the hayfield 'either from any organisation or from the local population' were to be tolerated or pursued.[144]

Peasant petitions laying claim to certain land were in many ways similar to those issued by the village community before 1917. However, these petitions were now addressed to new Soviet institutions and this was reflected in the language used.[145] Often the petitions

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141 *ibid.*, ark 41; *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 588, ark. 42. Doklad za fevral' mesiats, 1921. From information-instruction department reporting on condition in local areas.
142 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 288, ark. 33.
143 TsDAVO, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 96, ark. 13.
144 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 144, ark. 17. Prikaz No. 213. Zavedyvaiushchego Volynskim gubzemotdelaom, 27 Iiunia 1922: Po otdely zemleustroistba i sel'skogo khoziaistva.
145 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 118, ark. 51. Peasants were often at pains to stress their poverty in the hope of eliciting government help. For example, in a decree the village of Kazennaia-Motilivka referred to themselves as 'poor peasants' (*nezamozhnye seliane*), thereby echoing the propaganda of the state.

would be drawn up in the village gathering with the support of village Soviet organs.[146] The majority of petitions for land continued to be made in the name of a representative community body, either the obshchestvo or skhod.[147] Often special representatives (*upolnomochennye*) were elected to pursue the village's case, just as they had been in Tsarist times.[148] From 1922, these official representatives were elected from the new Soviet land community rather than the traditional village community. In 1920 a project to redistribute hay-land ordered that those communities (obshchestva) which permitted unnecessary unauthorised use of the land were to be liable for financial damages.[149] The village community was still also considered responsible for common property. A decision of the Kyiv povit land department decreed in August 1920 that flour mills could not be transferred to artels or be freely used by any group without permission from the community. However, if the community proved reluctant to allow such property to pass to poor peasants, the latter were entitled to seek permission from the local KNS.[150] Therefore, the initial decision remained with the community but its position was considerably undermined.

The state often accepted petitions from communities claiming access to lands to which they believed they had an historical right or which was vital for their needs. Of 497 petitions about land allocation received in Ol'hopil's'kyi povit in April and May 1921, 195 were accepted and measuring work carried out.[151] Peasant claims to land were investigated and information about land norms and land holding was gathered. After peasants in Dorohinka village, Kyiv hubernia, issued a claim to forest land, a special commission was formed under the chairmanship of a local forestry expert. This commission drew up a chart of village landholding which calculated that 241 households or 949 peasants possessed very

146 See for example, *ibid.*, ark. 106. Decree issued by Koshchiiv village skhod, 27 March 1921.
147 *ibid.*, ark 102, 106, 127. Protocols from Katsiev village, Kyiv hubernia, 27 March 1921 and 15 May 1921, protocol from Stavki village, Kyiv hubernia, 16 October 1921
148 *ibid.*, ark. 51. On petition of representatives of the village of Plisets about access to forest land fund, 9 July 1921.
149 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 194, ark. 3. Proekt pravil po raspredeleniiu senokasnykh ugodii v Kievskoi gubernii na 1920 g: Obshchee polozhenie.
150 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 96. Protokol zasidannia Berdichivsoho povitovoho zemel'noho viddila, 21 August 1920.

little land (*malozemel'nyi*) and suggested allocating the village the land it requested (see Table E in Appendix.) The basis for the decision was that the average land norm within the village could not reach those for the volost or povit without the inclusion of this forest land from the state land fund and no alternative source of land existed. The povit land department accepted the submissions and the land was distributed among poorer households.[152] This was not an isolated case. (See Table F in Appendix.)[153]

The settlement of Borova was the subject of a report to the Kyiv hubernia land department on 12 May 1921. Borova suffered from an extreme shortage of land and in 1917, in a flush of revolutionary enthusiasm, the village community had issued a petition to the new authorities asking for neighbouring forest land to be allocated to them for distribution to poor peasants. Just as it appeared that the appeal might succeed in early 1918, the arrival of the Hetman regime deprived the village of the land. New petitions to the Directory and Soviet authorities in 1919 were again overtaken by a change in political fortunes and Denikin's military advance. In 1920, the community petitioned the povit land department and Narkomzem for the land which covered some 62.8 desiatins. In March 1921, Narkomzem finally accepted the village's claims and the village revkom and KNS drew up a list of poor and landless peasants in preparation for the redivision. The povit land department took urgent action to carry out the transfer of land, thereby satisfying a peasant claim which dated back to 1917.

Not all petitions were granted, however. A request by Plisets village for an allocation of forest land was refused because all the available land within the povit from the state forest land fund had already been distributed.[154] Such petitions tended to come from those villages where there had been little estate, church or 'kulak' land to be

151 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 90, ark. 2.
152 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 118, ark. 46. Report to head of Kyiv hubernia land department from head of land reorganisation department, D. I. Koval'sky, 1921.
153 *ibid.*, ark. 47, 48. Koval'sky discussing villages of Velika Ofirna and Iaroshevka.
154 *ibid.*, ark. 51.

redistributed.[155] However, despite the Soviet regime's varying attitude towards demands for land, a system to study peasant claims had at least been introduced. Responsibility for distributing resources was also devolved by central organs to local communities or committees, such as the elected peasant committees which helped distribute hay land in Kyiv hubernia in 1920.[156]

One aspect of land nationalisation, the resurrection of the sugar industry and allocation of land to it in the Right Bank, was more complicated than in most other areas. Just under two-thirds (sixty-four per cent) of Ukrainian sugar factories were situated in the Right Bank.[157] There were eighty-four factories in Kyiv hubernia of which seventy-eight were still working in 1922. The other six were beyond repair.[158] Many factories in Podillia had also been destroyed.[159] The state had to strike a balance between allocating land for peasants and the needs of the wider population for sugar.[160] The need for a compromise concerning the sugar industry was vital in Podillia 'where the land hunger of the peasants acquired a high intensity'. A Soviet report warned that 'a mistake from one side or another can have a severe effect on the sugar industry: either it will remain without supplies of raw material or it will be doomed to an existence in a sea of peasant hostility'.[161] Despite the attempt of Soviet officials to introduce a rational approach, their decisions frequently antagonised local peasants.

Throughout Kyiv hubernia and other sugar-producing regions, the pre-revolutionary sugar-estate management largely remained in control until 1922.[162] Many of these factory managers had been maintained in office by governments who required their specialist

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155 *ibid.*, ark. 127. The village of Stavka had only 11 desiatins of church land and 50 desiatins of 'kulak' surpluses. The working norm (based on the the number of workers in the household) was calculated at 1.4 desiatins, but the average holding was only 3.9 desiatins.
156 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 194, ark. 2.
157 Ksenzenko, 'Reshenie agranogo voprosa', p. 28
158 Markevich, 'Ocherk', p. 88.
159 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 219, ark. 4.
160 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 3, spr. 239, ark. 7. Copy of decree of VUTsIK on the nationalisation of land for the Ukrainian sugar industry, 4 January 1922.
161 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 219, ark. 2.
162 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 96, ark. 13.

knowledge to keep the factories running, even if these men had been involved in disputes with local peasants before 1917. In Volyn this situation had led to 'censure and misunderstandings';[163] in the Kyiv Salivonkovsky factory the retention of the old administration had a negative influence on the mood of peasants and sugar-refinery workers from surrounding villages.[164] Another problem was that land nationalisation entailed confiscating land from local villages for the factories' needs, which served to antagonise peasants further. Factories often received the best land in the district at the expense of the peasants.[165] The allocation of land to sugar factories forced a new division of former estate land by peasants where every household suffered a reduction in its holdings. Therefore, protests were 'inevitable'.[166] Such was peasant opposition that Soviet officials failed to reach their targets for allocating land to sugar factories in Kyiv hubernia in 1922.[167] There were no links between factory management and peasants or rational plans for land reorganisation. Soviet workers complained that peasants did not understand the importance of the task of nationalisation and were unlikely to listen to calls to support such work.[168]

Around Salivonkovsky factory, peasants were said to view the nationalisation of local land 'with hostility'. Yet they did not pay sufficient attention to the actual process of nationalisation itself. This enabled the factory to claim more land than might otherwise have been justified and led to more peasant protests.[169] This was a common phenomenon. Peasants in Kyiv hubernia generally viewed the process of allocating land 'passively'. Even the sugar factory management was often indifferent to such work.[170]

Throughout the Right Bank peasant dissatisfaction manifested itself in traditional ways. Peasants refused to cooperate with the factory administration and state organs in

163 *TsDAVO, loc. cit.*
164 *Kak zhivet*, p. 55.
165 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 109. Do dokladu pro diial'nist' pidviddilu s.g. August 1920. Report on activities of Berdichiv land department in the first months of the Soviet regime in the Right Bank.
166 Markevich, 'Ocherk', p. 87.
167 A. Slipanskii, 'Zemleustroitel'stvo na Kievshchine', *Zhurnal Kievskogo gubernskogo ekonomsoveshchaniia*, 1, 1921, 47-50 (p. 49).
168 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 123, ark. 15.
169 *Kak zhivet*, p. 25.

allocating land for nationalisation. Andrushivskyi refinery in Kyiv hubernia could not be granted land in 1921 because peasants from a neighbouring village 'agitated against such allocations'.[171] Peasants refused to elect representatives to oversee the allocation of land to Tsybulevskyi factory. Over 1,700 desiatins of land, used by local villages up to October 1922, passed to the factory without any peasant participation. Peasant representatives, elected in the village gathering, usually refused to appear to supervise the allocation of land to the factories. After such conflicts sugar-refinery workers similarly refused to turn up for work. At Andrushevskyi factory, in the case described, only four workers appeared.[172] Many of the workers in the sugar industry gained better access to land as a result of the revolution. Their status had changed and they would have been affected by the state taking back the factory's resources.

There were more direct forms of resistance to the sugar industry's incursion onto peasant land. The attempt to satisfy the land demands of the sugar industry led to an 'increase in the hostility of the peasants towards the sugar factories which threatens the entire business of nationalisation'.[173] Attacks on sugar factories by peasants never completely abated. A refinery in Kyiv hubernia, for example, was looted of 8,000 puds of sugar during an attack in 1920.[174] In Medivs'ka volost, also in Kyiv, peasants were 'roused and there were instances of seizures' of nationalised land in 1921.[175] In the village of Poporiv, the head of the volost land department was held responsible for the seizure by local peasants of over 190 desiatins of disputed land from a sugar factory.[176] In Podillia in 1921, 'numerous cases of unauthorised seizures of land given to the sugar factories in autumn were

170 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1159, ark. 45. Protokol naradi zemlemiriv povitu 12 Zhovtnia 1921 roku.
171 *ibid.*, ark. 46.
172 *ibid.*, ark. 47-48.
173 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 190, ark. 5.
174 *DAKO*, f. R-1, op. 1, spr. 60, ark. 1.
175 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1159, ark. 46.
176 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 149. Korotkyi zvit pro diial'nist' IX raikomisii za chas 3 po 14 Kvitnia 1921 roku.

observed in the localities'.[177] Peasants were particularly unhappy when sugar factories sowed land with grain rather than sugar-beet.[178]

This situation was sometimes made worse by the actions of local Soviet officials. In Kyiv hubernia Soviet political workers in 1921 'hardly had any effect'.[179] Some activists advised peasants not to give land to the sugar factories until their holdings reached a set norm, a message entirely at odds with central policy. One particular official passed a resolution in a volost congress advising peasants to withhold their land. The resolution was accepted by the higher povit authorities and only later annulled by a hubernia congress.[180] There were numerous reports of local Soviet organs also assenting to peasant seizures of land from the sugar factories.[181]

Peasant action against the sugar industry demonstrated the limits of the state's ability to achieve an equilibrium between the demands of the peasants and the needs of the economy. Two Soviet decrees of 10 October 1921 and 4 January 1922 recognised this, limiting the amount of land held directly by the sugar factories in Ukraine to 400,000 desiatins (roughly 2,000 desiatins per factory).[182] This was still more than the average 800 desiatins each factory had used during the period 1919 to 1921.[183] The area Nationalisation Commissions stepped up their activities at the beginning of 1922 and by the end of August, seventy-eight projects nationalising sugar factory land in Kyiv hubernia had been completed.[184]

In the nationalisation process peasants in fact received a greater share than previously of sugar industry land but this only created more problems. The land remaining in the possession of the refineries could only provide twenty per cent of the raw sugar-beet

177 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 124, ark. 35.
178 *TsDAVO, loc. cit.* Factories presumably sowed grain to ensure a supply of food for their workers but this nonetheless angered peasants who believed the factories had been granted land solely to sow beet.
179 *DAKO*, f R-349, op 1, spr 1160, ark 11.
180 *DAKO, loc. cit.*
181 Ksenzenko, 'Reshenie agrarnogo voprosa', p. 29.
182 *ibid.*, pp. 29-30.
183 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 219, ark. 5.
184 Markevich, 'Ocherk', p. 87

required to meet demand. Responsibility for the cultivation and production of sugar-beet therefore passed to the peasants.[185] Peasant land was now sometimes included in compulsory crop-rotations and its owners were obliged to grow sugar-beet in preference to a subsistence crop. This guaranteed a balanced supply of raw material to the factories and food for refinery workers.[186]

Concessions granted by the state in the decree of 4 January 1922 were said by Soviet sources to have been warmly accepted by the peasants.[187] However, it is likely that peasant dissatisfaction remained, fuelled by the sense that land had been taken from them unfairly. Two village communities (Rzhavets and Parafiev) petitioned Narkomzem in August 1923 for permission to use land which had been nationalised for Parafiev sugar factory. When Narkomzem studied the case further it was discovered that the two villages possessed land holdings well above the average norm for the volost. The authorities ruled that the peasants could keep the land for a further year, as work to reorganise the land would not be completed until 1924. In this case peasants already possessed more than sufficient land in comparison with their neighbours but nevertheless their perception was that the nationalisation project had harmed their interests.[188]

Peasant attitudes, which reflected an ignorance of Soviet land laws and the Soviet failure to provide effective leadership in land affairs, manifested themselves in other ways as well. Seizures of land and conflicts over land rights continued long after the land had supposedly been finally distributed. This was evident from the huge number of cases concerning land disputes passing through Soviet legal and administrative organs. Conflicts ensued between state organs and peasants, between villages and volosts, and between individual households.[189] In December 1920, peasants seized farmstead land in Skvirs'kyi povit which had already been earmarked by the volost land department for another

185 Pershyn, *Narysy*, p. 108.
186 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 90, ark. 4.
187 Ksenzenko, 'Reshenie agrarnogo voprosa', p. 30.
188 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 2, ark. 191. Protokol zased. Kollegii NKZ, 10 August 1923.

purpose.[190] In early 1921, one povit land department in Podillia had to deal with thirty instances of peasant land seizures.[191] Seizures affected state enterprises as well as individual peasants.[192] The community often initiated such action or intervened to protect its members against encroachment by other communities.[193]

The root cause for the continuation of such action was the high degree of peasant dissatisfaction with the land settlement. The amount of land peasants ultimately received was quite limited and many continued to live in great poverty. (See Tables G&H in Appendix.) A questionnaire sent to numerous villages in Ukraine in spring 1922 documented the results of the agrarian revolution. Throughout Ukraine peasant replies gave an impression of general discontent. Those unhappy with the land situation comprised 39% of the total of 654 replies. The reasons given for discontent were the frequent divisions of land, inequality in the final distribution, the changing status of land allocations to sugar factories, lack of land and interstripping, all of which had relevance to the Right Bank.[194]

The activities of the state and local organs of power only served to exacerbate the confusion and disappointment evident in the countryside after 1920. Local organs believed they had complete 'freedom of action' which precipitated numerous peasant actions such as black repartitions, land seizures or land sales, which contradicted the central plans of the state.[195] Peasant conceptions of land legislation were somewhat different than those of the state, leading to great confusion in the countryside. In Volyn in June 1923, over a year after the publication of the Land Law (May 1922), several conflicts arose as the result of peasant misunderstandings.[196] Local Soviet organs 'spent much strength and energy trying to

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189 *Kak Zhivet*, p. 90.
190 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 223, ark. 72. Report of information section on land reorganisation in Umans'kyi povit, December 1920.
191 *TsDAVO*, f. 5, op. 1, spr. 620, ark. 49. Doklad viddilu keruvannia Pod gubrevkoma, May 1921. Report on conditions in Proskurivs'kyi povit, Podillia.
192 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 124, ark. 35.
193 *DAKO*, f. R-1156, op. 1, spr. 86, ark. 204, 232. Protocols of Leoniv village skhod from 12 July and 30 August 1921.
194 Iakimanskii, *K itogam*, pp. 31-32.
195 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1160, ark. 19.
196 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 259, ark. 32. Prikaz No. 97 Volynskogo gubispolkom po gubzemotdelu, 14 July 1923.

regulate the conflicts which became a common phenomenon' as a result of divisions and the lack of a firm direction in state policy.[197]

There were problems too in communication, not only between government and peasant, but also between state organs, which sometimes spilled over into outright disagreement. For example, in August 1923 a raion executive committee was criticised in the newspaper *Selians'ka Bidnota* for allegedly resolving disputes in favour of wealthy peasants, a charge that was vehemently denied.[198] In Volyn there was disagreement between hubernia and povit land departments over land re-organisation. The latter tried to prevent the resettlement of peasants on khutir and vidrub plots whilst the former had allegedly encouraged them.[199] Narkomzem's failure to set out its policy clearly and to publicize it efficiently came in for subtle but cutting criticism from Kyiv hubernia land department in 1922. This failure was cited as a major reason for the misunderstandings and contradictions which arose in the localities and the inability to complete the reorganisation of the land.[200]

The revolution and subsequent institution of a Soviet government did little to change traditional peasant beliefs about rights to land. A land department in Volyn complained about the poor state of land organisation in the area. This was attributed to the 'survival of the "right of ownership" among the population in relation to family hereditary property and the fear of losing their *batkivshchina* in any redistribution'.[201] Not only peasants but whole communities continued to believe that they had special rights to particular plots of land, rights based on tradition rather than need. For example, two villages in Kyiv hubernia, Kolonshchina and Buzova remained locked in conflict for a number of years over an area of land. A protocol from Kolonshchina in 1920 claimed the land had been cultivated by their

197 *TsDAVO*, f. 27. op. 3, spr. 288, ark. 14.
198 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 259, ark. 30. V redaktsiiu gazety *Selians'ka bidnota*. Letter from Ianushpol'skii area executive committee, 4 August 1923.
199 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 96, ark. 8.
200 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 1160, ark. 12.
201 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 175, ark. 21. Batkivshchina was a plot of land passed down to heirs through male line in hereditary household land tenure.

'fathers and grandfathers' under the old landlords. The povit land department intervened and divided the land proportionately between the villages in 1920 but conflict continued regardless. Peasants from Kolonshchina seized the disputed land from their neighbours and drew up a resolution in the village gathering justifying their action. Buzova's claim was based on the fact that the owner of the estate before 1917 had been resident in their volost. After more than two years and numerous attempts by the Soviet authorities to resolve the dispute, the povit land department issued a final decree ordering both villages to accept the August 1920 division of the land and stop their squabble.[202]

This example, however trivial, demonstrates that peasants in the early 1920s continued to draw their claims to land from traditional rights which stretched back to the period before the revolution. Some village land committees worked on the basis of the rule 'our lord, our land', which meant that the village had a right to the land it had worked under serfdom.[203] This contradicted the Soviet belief in rights to land based on need. It also demonstrates that, as in the period before 1917, the peasant community continued to act as the champion of village claims to land and the channel through which grievances, complaints and demands were expressed. This was also at odds with the Soviet attempts to forge a new regime in the countryside based on village soviets and other organs which would fulfil the demands of the regime. It reemphasises the continued strength and resilience of the community and its importance to the peasants of the Right Bank, not only in spite of the turbulent political and social changes of the years of civil war and revolution but perhaps also because of them.

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202 *DAKO*, f. R-349, op. 1, spr. 199, ark. 1-32. This source includes a number of protocols from both villages, declarations and reports from local soviets, KNS committees and land commissions and decrees and rulings of the povit land department, 1921-1922.

203 Ksenzenko, *Revoliutsionnye agrarnye preobrazovaniia*, p. 72. Rendered in Ukrainian as '*Nash pan, nasha zemlia*'. This is similar to Orlando Figes' description of peasant villages using the slogan 'ours was the lord, ours is the land' to justify land seizures. See 'Russian Peasant Community', pp. 237-238.

COMMUNITY, CONTINUITY AND COMPROMISE IN THE VILLAGES OF RIGHT-BANK UKRAINE

The peasants' world in 1923 was almost unrecognisable from the one they had inhabited before 1917. Peasants lived under a well-established Soviet regime which had practically nullified any lingering internal threat to its rule. Work to construct a new post-war, post-revolutionary society was well under way and an authoritative political administration was beginning to infiltrate rural areas. A new land law at last gave peasants the legal right to use the vast majority of the land in their locality. More cooperative, socialist forms of agriculture began to appear in the countryside. The state also began to eradicate the last vestiges of peasant autonomy and the traditional village institutions which had been so characteristic of peasant culture not just during the civil war but also the Tsarist era.

The need for the settlement of the peasant question had been glaringly apparent before 1917 not just in Right-Bank Ukraine but throughout the Russian Empire. The pressures on peasant society manifested themselves in periodic outbursts of violent unrest. An everyday culture of general resistance to the demands of landlord and state was typical of village life.[1] The Right-Bank countryside in particular was marked by its unique historical development which left a legacy of individual hereditary household land tenure, a Polish land owning class, remnants of historical forms of land holding (chinsheviki and servitudes), advanced agricultural industries and extreme pressure on the limited land resources.

The Tsarist government made a number of attempts to alleviate peasant conditions in the region but these met with little success. Village communities acted in defence of traditional peasant land rights and the government feared further upsetting the balance between peasant and landlord. The failure to implement effective reform was proof that any

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[1] David Moon, 'Peasant Protest in Russia (17th-19th centuries): Summary', paper presented to BASEES Annual Conference, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, 12-14 April 1997, pp. 1-5.

solution which did not take account of peasant opinions could not be universally or unilaterally imposed.

In February 1917, the fall of the Tsarist government brought about a new optimism, and a land settlement which took peasant needs into account appeared tantalisingly possible for the first time. Peasants acted unilaterally and independently to seize land to which they believed they had traditional claims.[2] The village community was transformed and enlivened, as it directed peasant efforts to take control of local political affairs and economic resources. However, peasant action was not recognised or matched by political will and developments at national level fell behind events in the village. Villages asserted control not just over economic resources but also over social, legal and political matters in the village.

Reviewing the period 1918 to 1920, an historian recently commented that 'anarchy pure and simple reigned throughout the Ukrainian countryside'.[3] This was a common perception even among contemporary observers.[4] The frequent changes of political authority and relentless military conflict of 1919 almost certainly contributed to this view. However, while fewer sources exist for this year in comparison with other periods of the revolution, there appears a distinct rationale behind peasant action in the material that has survived.

Reports of peasant anarchy began in 1917 when landowners were forcibly dispossessed of their property. They continued when peasants rebelled against the efforts of political groups to extend their regimes into the countryside during 1918 to 1920. Those who considered peasant action anarchic were more likely to be educated, urban-based or linked to

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2 See *TsDIA*, f. 127, op. 1005, spr. 183, ark. 1. Peasants from the villages of Kupchinets and Kantelina Lipovets'kyi povit seized control of a neighbouring forest owned by the church in August 1917 and began selling the timber for profit. The priest complained that peasants now believed thay had rights to 'discuss and resolve common matters for themselves without reference to any of the laws which were earlier established'. However, the peasant's claim of ownership of the land dated back decades and peasants had been involved in an almost identical case of illegal timber felling in 1873.

3 Magocsi, *History of Ukraine*, p. 499.

4 W. H. Chamberlin, the correspondent for the American *Christian Science Monitor* during the revolution, later drew on his knowledge to write a history of the revolution. The chapter on Ukraine during 1918 to 1920 was entitled 'Whirlpool of peasant anarchism'.

a political cause.[5] Therefore, they were either unwilling or unable to understand the social forces at work behind peasant action. It was far easier to view the rejection of government authority as the manifestation of mindless peasant anarchy than consider their demands legitimate or justified.

Records of village and volost meetings during the civil war show that communities ran their own affairs. In exercising such a degree of executive power village authorities filled the political vacuum at national level which had been created by the ongoing political turmoil. It is little wonder that a British observer likened the Ukrainian countryside in early 1920 to a kaleidoscope of tiny peasant republics 'consisting sometimes of a single village'.[6] There were often a number of villages 'united in a tiny state' governed by the 'local communal authorities'. They were 'not to be mistaken for "soviets" of any kind; they are simply the authorities which existed in pre-revolution times'.[7]

In early 1918 many peasants believed that a government would grant them rights to the land they had seized in 1917. It was immaterial whether this government was Nationalist or Soviet as long, as it legally recognised their claims.[8] After 1918 peasants retreated into autarky and engaged in all manner of strategies to ensure that their grain did not pass into the hands of others. However, they could often be persuaded to part with grain in exchange for manufactured goods. This reveals the basic economic sensibilities of the peasant. When governments adopted a less coercive policy towards the village, peasants could be drawn into

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5 See, for example, Graziosi, 'Piatakov', pp. 119-120, 138. Graziosi comments on Piatakov's privileged upbringing and the antipathy between the Bolsheviks and the peasants. James W. Heinzen has also discussed the Soviet bureaucracy in the early years of the Soviet regime in Russia. Many of those who held posts in Narkomzem in particular were drawn from those social groups which were considered 'alien' in the countryside: former nobles, former Tsarist officials and so on. See '"Alien" Personnel in the Soviet State: The People's Commissariat of Agriculture under Proletarian Dictatorship, 1918-1929', *Slavic Review*, 56, 1977, 1, 73-100.

6 Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watt, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Part II, Series A: The Soviet Union 1917-1939, 5 Vols., Soviet Russia and her Neighbours*, USA, 1984, II, pp. 338-339. Political report on the Ukraine: General situation. Geneva, 3 March, 1920. The report was based on notes provided by a man who had journeyed from Kyiv on 10 January. His route would almost certainly have taken him through the Right Bank.

7 *ibid.*, p. 338.

8 This was a fundamental problem with peasant behaviour. See Kolin Ross, 'Doklad nachal'niku operatsionnago otdeleniia Germanskogo vostochnago fronta o polozhenii del na Ukraine v Marte 1918 goda', *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii*, 3, 1922, 288-294. Ross writes that 'in those villages in which Bolshevik bands had been, where they had looted and requisitioned, peasants were anti-Bolshevik. But in other areas it was obvious that Bolshevik

co-operation. Therefore, peasant attitudes were not shaped simply by opposition to the principle of government but by an objection to the particular policies of Ukrainian political groups.

The reasons for the peasants' rejection of higher government authority are clear. At the level of state politics in this period neither the Central Rada, Hetman Skoropadsky, the Directory nor the Bolsheviks were able to establish stable regimes with policies which were acceptable to the peasants. The city of Kyiv, as the seat of government, changed hands with alarming frequency. Peasants were expected to serve as soldiers in the armies of political forces and hand over their precious grain for next to nothing. In contrast, political powers were unwilling to grant peasants free access to the land they demanded or tried to rein in the village's executive powers. The result was a vast gulf between the demands of political powers and peasant expectations.

Despite the efforts of political powers to introduce new organisations into the countryside, the village community continued to provide the most important forum for discussion. The former were distinct from peasant institutions and rarely enjoyed support from wide sections of the village. Peasants distinguished between the authority of their own institutions and that of bodies set up by outside forces. They were under no moral obligation to fulfil the demands of non-peasant institutions, if these conflicted with peasant wishes. The community continued to resist demands from outside forces but its authority was considerably challenged. Efforts to control and distribute economic resources during the period 1918 to 1919 were hampered by continual changes of political power, military conflict, the agrarian policies of political groups and disputes within the village.

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propaganda among the peasants was successful', p. 289. There was, therefore, no co-ordinated peasant action on a scale that might have presented long term resistance to the demands of government.

After 1920, the Soviet government succeeded in establishing a political administration but was still faced with the problem of peasant opposition in the Right Bank.[9] The survival of the Soviet regime depended on acknowledging the mistakes of 1919 and defining an agrarian policy that was acceptable to the peasants. Coercive measures remained in force for those who continued to oppose Soviet rule, however. Soviet activists tried to neutralise peasant opposition by marginalising those village groups and institutions around which protest developed. This involved nullifying the traditional village community and asserting the legitimacy and rights of Soviet organs over important political and social issues.

Extraordinary organs of power such as the revkom or KNS remained in existence in Right-Bank Ukraine long after they had been replaced by soviets in other regions. Revkoms comprised small groups of dedicated Soviet workers with wide powers and military support. The KNS continued to exist in Ukraine until 1933, although a similar policy had been rejected in Russia in 1918. This reveals once again the specific problems the region presented to political powers. However, they remain an understudied phenomenon. An acceptable history of the KNS and its activities and membership at local level after 1920 has still to be written.[10]

Soviet attempts to eradicate the traditional community and introduce their own institutions forced peasants into new strategies to maintain control over economic and social affairs in their village. Peasants continued to act as a group where issues like land resources were at stake and the village was often treated as a collective unit. However, the effects of the revolution and policies of the Soviet regime served to legitimise the claims of minority groups such as landless peasants within the village. Thereafter, village solidarity began to be gradually eroded.

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9 See Graziosi, 'Piatakov', p. 138. Piatakov and others considered that 'the most dangerous enemy of the new power was the "*ukrainskaia krest'ianskaia stikhiia*", the militant spear-head of the only social force still present in "Russia" that could open the way for the restoration of capitalism'.

10 There are numerous Soviet works on the subject but only one Western historian, James Mace, has studied the question in any depth. However, he had no access to primary source material. Material certainly exists either in *TsDAVO* (f. 257) or in the numerous regional archives throughout Ukraine which hold records relating to local

The state simply did not possess the resources to stamp out the manifestations of peasant autonomy or opposition throughout the countryside. While the Soviet regime was originally founded on military strength and did employ coercive measures when its authority was threatened, it could not survive without offering incentives to peasants. The culture of peasant banditism which persisted in isolated pockets of Right-Bank Ukraine into the late 1920s shows that the stability of Soviet rule was by no means completely assured.

The evidence presented in this study reveals the limitations of both the Soviet and the Ukrainian-Nationalist schools of historical thought which have so dominated discussion of the subject. It is clear that, contrary to the Soviet viewpoint, peasants objected to Soviet government as much as they opposed other political powers. The village proved much more cohesive and cooperative than Soviet views of kulaks exploiting their poorer neighbours allowed. The village largely presented a united front against those it considered outsiders. For this reason peasants rejected the *smychka*, the union between urban workers and peasants, which was supposed to lie at the heart of the new Soviet system.[11]

Peasants appeared to support the nationalist cause at certain points in the history of the revolution, most notably during the heady days of 1917 and once again in late 1918 when peasant forces joined the movement which swept Hetman Skoropadsky from power. However, at other crucial points peasants stood passively by while nationalist governments met their fate at the hand of some military force. While peasants may have agreed with nationalist ideas, they often found the social policies of nationalist political groups unacceptable. They were not, therefore, reliable supporters of nationalism. For many the boundaries of the village or local volost represented the limits of their world. Of course, the process of revolution had begun to change these ideas but not enough to shift the peasants'

KNS committees from village level upwards. See, for example, *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kievskoi Oblasti: Putevoditel*, Kiev, 1965, pp. 150-162.

11 See Lenin, *Pol'noe sobranie sochinenia*, vol. 40, pp. 41-47. Pis'mo k rabochim i krest'ianam Ukrainy po povodu pobed nad Denikinym, 28 December 1919. Lenin called on peasants to recognise their common interests with urban workers.

attention from local matters to national level. The idea of the nation remained an abstract concept.

The revolution totally eradicated or threatened the continued existence of many traditional features of rural life which had been characteristic of Right-Bank Ukraine. Historical forms of land holding, servitudes and chinsheviki, were finally eradicated. A number of social groups in the village almost or completely disappeared, including landowners, peasant land purchasers, Jewish merchants, Poles and the scattered foreign colonists (Germans, Czechs and others). The state tried to direct peasants away from individual hereditary tenure towards more collective forms of agriculture, and also to rehabilitate the shattered sugar industry that had proved so productive in the pre-war era.

Younger, more literate men found themselves in positions of influence. Peasants were guaranteed rights to land use which they had not hitherto enjoyed. Certain benefits were also conferred on women, including the right to participation in the political life of the village (although such rights were difficult to implement in reality). New holidays marking important dates in the socialist calendar replaced the traditional peasant ones. New village co-operative shops, reading huts, village hospitals, and schools put former church and gentry buildings to use.[12]

Despite these fundamental changes in peasant society, there were also currents of continuity running through peasant life and experience. The material features of peasant life (buildings, clothing, foodstuffs) did not change. Peasants continued to observe religious traditions in the face of the state's disapproval (and that of the younger generation). Agricultural practices (traditional crop rotations, types of crops sown and farming techniques) in 1923 were little different from those observed before 1917. Peasants resisted state attempts to encroach on traditional areas of their lives, the right to dispense peasant

12 Rybak, 'Preobrazovaniia', pp. 85-88.

justice being but one example. A peasant 'mentality' was deeply ingrained in rural society and could not easily or quickly be reformed, much to the frustration of Soviet leaders.[13]

This mentality was expressed most clearly through community institutions. The village community (*sel'skoe obshchestvo*) had been considered an unreliable means of local administration. A Soviet legal professor argued it had been 'at the beck and call of the landowner and frequently served as an instrument of his influence, his power'.[14] The community's officials were nevertheless considered to have important supervisory and administrative functions. The government required a representative village institution which could act as a focal point or a mediator in its attempts to exert its authority over all peasants. Such a body was still the most efficient means of disseminating information or collecting taxes and resources. The community acted in this capacity, although its officials were local peasants and were therefore more likely to act in the village's interests.

The experiences of landowners before 1917 bore witness to the fact that the community could rapidly become a means through which peasant discontent could be channelled and expressed. The link between the community and peasant action was most transparent during the disturbances of 1904 to 1907 but violence was only one of the options employed by villages against landowners.[15] There are numerous cases which show that landowners did not have a free hand even on their own land. The wishes of peasants had to be considered, albeit reluctantly, if any change to existing agrarian relations was to take place.

Peasant action in defence of their rights after 1920 also bore similarities to that witnessed before 1917. In Zabars'kyi forest, Kyiv hubernia, in 1921, peasants of surrounding villages were reported to be illicitly felling timber despite the attempts of the authorities to curtail it. A forester on the estate complained that trying to prevent the timber felling with

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13 *ibid.*, p. 85.
14 Stashevsky, 'K voprosu', p. 99
15 The types of action employed by peasants is typified by a case listed in *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 708, spr. 141, ark. 14-21. In 1909 a landowner was involved in a dispute with the village of Shpakov, Volyn, over the use of a local

only one guard was useless for 'not one of the peasants recognised his authority or order in the forest'. When the forester tried to restore control he was 'threatened with peasant justice'.[16]

Peasant concerns in terms of land and resources remained the same. For example, Puzyrok village community had petitioned the Tsarist authorities in 1907 for the right to use a local pond: there were very few other sources of water for the needs of the local population. Similarly, a local collective and KNS in Havrons'kyi village, Kyiv hubernia, in 1922 requested the use of a local pond which earlier had been under the control of the village community. Traditional claims of pre-revolutionary institutions were frequently revived by new village organs to legitimise peasant demands for land.

Peasant claims to land were generally made through representative village institutions. Even after 1920, peasants still maintained rights to particular plots of land or believed that the state would recognise the need for greater resources to support their population. Often special officials were elected to carry the village's case to the authorities. In 1925 peasants from the village of Pedinok, Kyiv hubernia, requested through a representative that they be granted land from a neighbouring agricultural station under the control of Narkomzem;[17] similarly, peasant representatives from Zozulintsa village petitioned the authorities for rights to the land of a recently liquidated state farm.[18]

The Soviet government instituted the land community as a peasant institution with certain economic functions in 1922. Its creation was an acknowledgement that creating a stable rural administration demanded a degree of peasant participation and cooperation. The traditional village community had supposedly been eradicated by the agrarian revolution of 1917. However, it continued to exist in one form or another although it was not legally

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mill. The landowner's mill was twice destroyed by arson attacks, his employees were chased from the land, peasants prevented the landowner from reconstructing his ruined mill and pastured cattle on his land.

16 *DAKO*, f R-349, op 1, spr 179, ark 16-17. Kopiia vidnosheniia Lisnichnoho Zabars'koho lisu vid 29. V. 1921 - do lispidviddilu.

17 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 6, spr. 912, ark. 276. Po zaiavi Pedynkovs'koi zemhrom. Liubars'koho raoinu pro peredachu ii 86 des. zemli zemel peredanykh chartor. Ahrotekhnik.

recognised by the state. After 1922 existing village communities were often simply re-registered as official land communities.[19] This enabled the survival of a peasant mentality while granting peasants legal rights and access to state resources.

The land community was responsible for all agricultural decisions within the village but it had no designated political powers. Unlike the soviet, which often represented a minority, the land community included all groups within the village. It was, therefore, more reflective of community opinion as a whole than those institutions which had a purely executive role to play.[20] A degree of ambivalence characterised peasant attitudes towards the Soviet government. The land community sometimes acted not as an efficient administrative organ, but as a means to resist the intrusions of the state.

The income-generating powers of the land community allowed its influence to extend over the village and other bodies such as the soviet. The latter was often reliant on the land community for its financial resources.[21] This placed limits on the extent to which the village soviet could exercise its political will and enabled peasants to direct the conduct of political life within their own village.[22] The land community fulfilled such a wide range of functions and assumed such a degree of influence that a member of the Kyiv okruha executive committee likened its powers to the village skhod of pre-revolutionary times.[23] The parallel between the two institutions does not appear coincidental.

Therefore, despite strenuous efforts, the state struggled to break down the barriers to its rule in the village.[24] Peasants maintained elements of a traditional rural culture that was

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18 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 6 spr. 1316, ark. 42. Vysnovok v spravi prpunennia vidvodu zemli dliia radhospa Zozulintsi, Kyivs'koi hub. Berdychivs'k. Okruzi, zhidno z postanoiiu Kyivs'koho HZU vid 10/XII 24 r.

19 B. M. Amenitskii, *Zemel'nyi kodeks USSR v voprosakh i otvetakh s raz'iasneniem osoboi kollegii vysshego kontrolia po zemel'nym sporam pri Narkomzeme: Nastol'naia kniga-spravochnik dlia zemel'nykh, sudebnykh i sel'skikh rabotnikov i dlia nezamozhnykh selian* Kharkov, 1925, p 83. Clarifying the land community's legal position, Amenitskii cites article 49 which states that 'every newly formed community comes into existence from the moment of its registration' with the appropriate local organ. Clearly communities could exist without being officially registered.

20 Hanzha, *Opir selian*, p. 26.

21 T. Sosnovy, 'Problema selbiudzheta na Ukraine', *Khoziaistvo Ukrainy*, 11-12, 1926, pp. 131-136.

22 M. Rezunov, *Selskie sovety i zemel'nye obshchestva*, Moskva, 1928. pp. 51, 56, 61.

23 Hanzha, *Opir selian*, p. 26.

24 *Russkie*, ed. by Aleksandrov et al, p. 558. M. N. Shmeleva writes that the village skhod continued to meet regularly in Russian villages for up to a decade after 1917.

inward-looking, hesitant to embrace the innovative and which avoided the demands of government. Peasants were still able to exert a degree of leverage over the political system through whatever means existed for the resolution of political, social and economic problems. Writing in 1926, V. Kachinsky urged village gatherings to adopt more formal procedures to distinguish them from the administrative chaos which had characterised pre-revolutionary village meetings. He argued that peasants were too easily swayed by wealthier villagers in such gatherings: the Soviet regime must strengthen the foundations of the state at this lowest level by eradicating the unpredictable and unreliable character of the village skhod and replacing it with the organised power of the village soviet.[25] Kachinsky's view of the village gathering was almost certainly influenced by his political beliefs but it is clear that the Soviet government's executive power in the village was limited.

Traditional village mentality proved similarly resilient after 1923. Village organisations continued to carry out land divisions. At a higher level the state objected to such practices but at local level Soviet land organs which were closer to the peasants sometimes tolerated land divisions quite openly. They condoned such peasant behaviour by arguing that specific local conditions had to be taken into account.[26] Countless disputes continued to occur over rights to land between peasants themselves and between peasants and government. State authorities attributed this partly to a lack of knowledge or understanding of Soviet land laws and the rights which peasants held under them.[27] More importantly, conflicts over land continued to arise 'on the basis of old pre-revolutionary legal relations which stemmed from the rights of private ownership of land, pre-revolutionary land-holding etc., and also on the basis of hereditary claims in the division of allotment and farmstead land which remained after the death of relatives.'[28] These types of disputes were particularly common in the Right Bank, where hereditary household tenure predominated.

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25 V. Kachinsky, *Scho povinna pobyty sil's'ka rada?* Odesa, 1925, pp. 20-25.
26 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 5, spr. 289, ark. 368. Narkomzem communication to all okrug land departments, 1 September 1925.

Peasants were slow to accept the laws of the state in place of the traditional rules for the devolution of hereditary property.

A degree of continuity was evident in peasant resistance to the introduction of more rational forms of land use. The eradication of scattered-strip farming and creation of more efficient agricultural units (whether these were consolidated plots or large-scale collective enterprises) was the stated aim of all governments both before 1917 and after. This problem was particularly acute in Right-Bank Ukraine, where overcrowding and land hunger were widespread. Improvements in the peasants' condition could only come through improvements in existing land use rather than from utilising hitherto unused land resources. However, this concept was unacceptable to peasants who were largely suspicious of state attempts to change existing arrangements.

In the Tsarist period, the government had struggled to make headway in changing peasant attitudes towards land in Right-Bank Ukraine. A number of studies concluded that peasant opposition was the major barrier to unilateral resolutions of servitude rights.[29] A settlement could not easily be imposed on the peasants even in those communities where there were calls for moderation.[30] In a case from the village of Zarytska, Volyn, in 1909 peasants were repeatedly offered terms to come to an agreement with the landowner over land reorganisation. These were refused, however, and the local peace mediator was of the opinion that peasants would not come to an understanding under any conditions.[31] In other

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27 *ibid.*, p. 201. Reply of Narkomzem to Kyiv hubernia land department about question of clarification of land rights, 4 June 1925.

28 *ibid.*, p 204. Narkomzem to all hubernia land departments in Ukraine, 27 March 1925

29 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 703, spr. 320, ark. 214-5. Doklad podkomissii ob otgranichenii krest'ianskikh nadelov. This conclusion was drawn by the Kyiv hubernia counsel which met during the period of the 1904 to 1907 disturbances to discuss questions of peasant government.

30 *RGIA*, f. 1291, op. 64, d. 469, str. 8. In a dispute between a landowner and local community over a plot of land in Begun village, Volyn, in 1910, a significant section of the community was reported to be in favour of compromise. However, they would not act against their fellow villagers in openly expressing a desire for agreement.

31 *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 708, spr. 141, ark. 24. This case was discussed in a letter from a peace mediator to General-Gubernator about former's visit to village of Zaritsk to bring peasants and landowner, Bogush, to agreement over question of land rights.

words, their intransigence was deliberate. Peasants would not rescind land rights at any price.[32]

A report from Podillia in 1922 described the effect of introducing Soviet land laws into the region. There were illegal seizures of land by peasants, khutir and vidrub farms had been organised and land divisions continued unabated.[33] These divisions sometimes assumed a mass scale which undermined any efforts made by the state towards reorganising the land and improving agriculture.[34] As late as 1925 a Soviet official in Volyn complained that minimum limits for household land-holding had not yet been set. This was attributed to the large number of land division acts awaiting confirmation and the 'surviving traditions of the peasants towards the ownership of land' which complicated the government's task.[35] It was little wonder that a local official discussing the work of land departments in Right-Bank Ukraine in 1922 encouraged stricter implementation of the land laws. Central bodies were to intervene in conflicts, deviance from the law was frowned upon and special commissions were to be formed to clarify the land code.[36]

The head of the Volyn hubernia land department expressed his astonishment at the lack of peasant understanding of the potential benefits of land reorganisation in a report of November 1923. When he asked peasants if they knew of the existence of other forms of land holding they replied 'that they did not know of any and furthermore they did not know there was a great difference between the cost of otrub and communal crop-rotations'.[37] Unauthorised seizures of land and unsupervised land divisions continued in 1923 also. Poor

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32 See also *TsDIA*, f. 442, op. 697, spr. 57, ark. 5. Government organs and landowners favoured the division of disputed lands in a case in Zabian village, Kyiv hubernia, in 1898. A number of incentives were offered to peasants in order to encourage them to come to agreement including exchanging the disputed land for a similar sized plot elsewhere and a cash payment, both of which were refused.

33 *TsDAVO*, f 27, op 3, spr 145, ark 96.

34 *DAKO*, f. R-op. 1, spr. 658, ark. 5.

35 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 5, spr. 289, ark. 193. Report to Narkomzem from head of raion land department, Larin, 9 May 1925. Changes in land holding were subject to approval by higher Soviet administrative organs and acts recording land divisions were frequently drawn up.

36 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 2, ark. 135. Protokoly zasedaniia kollegiia NKZ USSR, 9 Iiunia 1922: O rezul'tate oznakomleniia s rabotoi zemorganov na pravoberezh'i.

37 *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 4, spr. 96, ark. 15. Doklad zav. Volynskogo Gubzemuprava Tov. Fremelia: O rabote za 1922-23 g.g.

peasants participated in these activities whilst the KNS looked on passively.[38] The progress of any reform was, therefore, frustratingly slow.

An analysis of peasant experience of the revolution in Right-Bank Ukraine contributes towards the historical understanding of the huge social and economic shifts which took place in the former Russian Empire after 1914. Peasants throughout the Empire shared a common desire for land and the freedom to work it as they wished. The Right Bank's particular economic and social characteristics demonstrate the diverse influences which affected the course of political events. Local conditions had an obvious influence on peasant actions.

It has been a popular misconception that Ukraine was a region of individual farmers who were completely distinct from their Central-Russian communal counterparts. It is clear, however, that the village community institution in the Right Bank played a fundamental role in organising peasant villages and expressing peasant beliefs in much the same way as community organisations throughout the Russian Empire. The community conferred practical benefits such as access to common land for peasants and represented the most immediate executive authority within the village.

In the Right Bank the community led efforts to defend traditional rights to servitude lands in the latter-half of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. In this and other ways it was of direct relevance to peasants and played a large role in their lives despite the great changes which overtook the Empire in this period. In 1917, when Imperial society began to fragment, the community assumed a new, more powerful role, taking advantage of the lack of direction at political level to enforce traditional claims to local resources. The community's new-found authority was considerably challenged by political changes in the years after 1917 but it remained influential in resisting the demands of higher authority.

The Right Bank's particular circumstances presented sufficient grounds for the Soviet government to offer a compromise to the population in 1920. Various incentives were

38 *ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

offered to peasants to ensure social calm and the stability of the fledgling Soviet regime which considered Ukraine just as much an integral part of Russia as its Imperial predecessor had. Peasants were given rights to land and state help was offered to help rebuild the rural economy after the damages inflicted by years of chaos and war. There were also concessions to Ukrainian nationalism.[39]

Nevertheless, peasant attitudes towards the Soviet regime remained uncertain. Soviet leaders were faced with the same dilemmas that Tsarist officials had faced in the region decades earlier. Peasant demands ensured that progress towards a new Soviet society could not be made immediately or rapidly. Official attitudes towards the peasants soon hardened and the incentives offered to peasants in the initial period of Soviet rule began to be withdrawn. For example, legislation allowing peasants to freely choose forms of land tenure was at odds with bureaucratic efforts to discourage those forms of land holding which the state did not approve and which were common in the Right Bank.[40]

In 1917 peasants resisted the interference of higher authority in local affairs and asserted the legitimacy of their own village and volost institutions. This was not necessarily unusual. Open peasant opposition to Soviet rule continued in Central Russia after 1918. However, peasant resistance in the Right Bank continued until well after 1920. During the years 1918 to 1920 peasants had resisted every one of the political powers which had attempted to assert authority over them. In 1917, one peasant village skhod declared 'all power to the people, that is to say the village, immediately. We will not carry out any other decrees except the resolutions of the skhod.'[41] This intransigence continued throughout the Right Bank in the following years. Therefore, the agrarian revolution in this region was indeed directed by the village community, as it was in other regions.

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39 See Robert S. Sullivant, *Soviet Politics and the Ukraine 1917-57*, New York and London, 1962, pp. 84-5.
40 One could also note the change in the attitude of the Soviet leadership towards Ukrainian nationalism. See Yury Shapoval, '"On Ukrainian Separatism": A GPU Circular of 1926', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 18, 1994, 275-302 (p. 285).
41 Zaval'niuk, 'Selians'kyi rukh', p. 107.

The history of the Right-Bank Ukrainian village during these years can be viewed as the attempt of village communities to resolve important social and economic questions for themselves without interference from outside groups, specifically those political forces based in urban centres. The roots of peasant antipathy towards authority lay in the region's past. Political groups in the revolution may have offered many positive benefits, such as education, modernisation or agricultural improvement, but peasants resisted their progress because they threatened traditional beliefs. There were, however, limits to peasant resistance. The establishment of a stable Soviet regime in Right-Bank Ukraine after 1920 and the creation of a new bureaucratic apparatus can be seen as a re-imposition of the state and the state's values on the rural world of the peasant.[42]

The conflict between the demands of the state and peasant intransigence began to manifest itself with increasing frequency in the period after 1923. Official criticism of the 'dual power' in the village, between the village soviet and land community, mounted.[43] There was only slow progress towards the state's ultimate aim of collectivisation of agriculture. By 1929 only 0.9% (355) of land communities in Ukraine had taken the decision to form a TSOZ, considered a stepping stone towards more collective forms of organisation. Peasant reluctance to embrace collective cultivation was attributed to their fear of losing economic autonomy.[44]

Legislation in October 1927 signalled the desire of the state to seize the initiative once again. It increased the powers of the village soviet which 'in many cases had lost its importance as a local organ of power'.[45] In particular, the village soviet was to supervise the finances and property of the land community and was to have the final veto over land

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42 See Graziosi, 'Piatakov', p. 109, 155-157. Graziosi notes that the bureaucracy established by the Bolsheviks contrasted with the utopian simplicity of Marx's views of the state. The Bolsheviks were guided in the main by theory rather than practical experience. When theory failed to provide a solution to the problems of executive rule the Bolsheviks developed a huge centralised bureaucracy.

43 Hanzha, *Opir selian*, p. 27.

44 Kalinichenko, 'Orhanizatsiia', p. 135.

45 *Istoriia derzhavy i prava*, I, p. 531.

reorganisation projects within the village.[46] Once the soviet had established its control over the economic resources for which the land community had been responsible, the latter 'was no longer necessary to the totalitarian state'.[47] A letter from Narkomzem to *Radnarkom*[48] in December 1929 argued that the land community no longer had clearly-defined functions and recommended that it should cease its activities. A decree of 3 February 1930 laid the foundations for collectivisation and finally liquidated the land community. Its rights and obligations passed to the village soviet, signalling the last act in the total elimination of independent local peasant control over the economic and social life of the village.[49]

46 *Istoriia derzhavy i prava*, I, p. 531.
47 Kalinichenko, 'Orhanizatsiia', p. 135.
48 Radnarkom was the *Rada Narodnykh Komissariv* or Council of People's Commissars, one of the main executive organs of the Soviet state.
49 Kalinichenko, 'Orhanizatsiia', pp. 136. Hanzha, *Opir selian*, pp. 27-28.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE RIGHT-BANK UKRAINIAN COUNTRYSIDE, 1917-1922

Administrative organs centred in towns or settlements down to volost level were supposed to supervise the activities of the committees or organisations immediately below them in the hierarchy of power. After 1917, this authority was not always recognised by those at lower level and the links between the various levels of government began to fragment

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Based in Kyiv or wherever political powers were able to exert their authority.

|

HUBERNIA - Region (Russian Guberniia)

Province directly responsible to central government or political power. There were three hubernii in the Right bank: Kyiv, Podillia and Volyn.

|

POVIT - District (Russian Uezd)

The povit was a subdivision of the hubernia and was the lowest level at which central authority was assured.

|

VOLOST' - Area

The volost became the vital focus for peasant activity during the Revolution. It typically comprised a number of villages and settlements and the centre of the volost tended to be the largest settlement within the area.

|

VILLAGE

The lowest unit of rural administration. The peasant terms for their village were *mistechka*, *derevnia* and *selo*, depending on how large the settlement was.

In 1923 the Soviet government introduced a new system of administration into the countryside. Ukraine was divided up into *okruhy* (singular *okruha*) which were further subdivided into *raiony*. The *raion* became the most direct authority over the village.

Table A; Otaman leaders in Right-Bank Ukraine in 1919

NAME OF OTAMAN	REGION IN WHICH THEY OPERATED	POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS, IF ANY
Zelenyi	Kyiv	USD
Struk	N.Kyiv/Chernobyl	
Volinets	Podillia/Haisin	Petliura
Sokolovsky	Radomyshl	
Bozhko	Mohilev-Podil'skyi	
Tiutiunnik	Kyiv/Volyn	Petliura
Konovalets	Kyiv	
Shitenko	Podillia	Petliura/independent
Khomadovsky	Right-Bank	anti-Directory
Oskil'ko	Volyn	
Marenko	Bila Tserkov	All-Ukrainian Revkom
Shohrin	Uman	
Anhel	Kyiv	
Nesmianov	Skvir	
Piatenko	Kyiv	
Chuchupak	Cherkassy	anti-White
Kotsura	Chyhyryn	
Fedorenko	Kaniv	pro-Soviet
Kotsuba	Fastiv/Vasil'kiv	pro-Soviet
Mordalevich	Brusilov	anti-Soviet
Honchar (Batrak)	Fastiv/Vasil'kiv	Left-SR
Orlovsky	Bila Tserkov	former officer
Iatsenko	Tarashcha	
Holub	Tarashcha	
Klimenko	Uman	
Popov	Uman	
Mazurenko	Right-Bank	

Drawn from Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, II, p. 224; Brovkin, *Behind the front lines*, p. 111, 135; Frenkin, *Tragediia*, pp. 192-3; Likholat, *Rozgrom burzhuazno-natsionalisticheskii Direktorii*, p. 187; Kin, *Denikinshchina*, pp. 212-3; Popov, *Narysy*, p. 194

Table B: Land Norms in Podillia Hubernia, 1921.

Povit name	desiatins per soul
Vinnytsia	**1**
Bratslavs'kyi	**0.75**
Haisins'kyi	**0.6 -0.65**
Liatichivs'kyi	**0.75**
Lytyns'kyi	**0.75-1**
Proskurivs'kyi	**0.5-0.65-0.85**
Kamianets'kyi	**0.58-0.62**
Zhemerins'kyi	**0.75**
Ol'hopil's'kyi	**0.625-0.75**
Ushits'kyi	**0.75**
Mohilivs'kyi	**0.75-0.8**

Source: *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 90, ark. 5. Cited in doklad of Podillia hubernia land department, May 1921.

Table C: Land norms in Kyiv Hubernia, 1921.

Povit name	desiatins per soul
Berdichivs'kyi	**0.59**
Bilatserkivs'kyi	**0.68**
Zvenihorods'kyi	**0.52**
Kanivs'kyi	**0.5**
Kyivs'kyi	**1.1**
Lipovets'kyi	**0.5**
Radomysls'kyi	**1.25**
Skvirs'kyi	**0.72**
Tarashchans'kyi	**0.76**
Umans'kyi	**0.7**
Chernobyl's'kyi	**1.6**
Average for hubernia	**0.84**

Source: *TsDAVO*, f. 27, op. 2, spr. 106, ark. 56. Pravila o zemel'nykh normakh. Cited in instruktsiia o zakreplenii krest'ianskogo zemlepol'zovaniia, Kyiv hubernia land department, May 1921.

Table D: Changes in Peasant Land Tenure, 1917-1925.

	Pre-1917 Landholding in per cent				Post-1917 Landholding in per cent				
Right bank Okruha	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	E
Korostens'ka	-	77	6	17	-	62	10	28	-
Kyivs'ka	2.2	90.1	5.5	2.2	2.2	86.2	7.3	3.2	0.6
Proskurivs'ka	-	96.1	3.1	0.8	-	94.4	3.1	0.8	1.7
Kamianets-Podil's'ka	-	95	3.8	1.2	-	94.6	3.5	1.1	0.3
Mohilivs'ka	-	95	4	1	-	94	3	1	2
Tul'chyns'ka	-	94	4	2	-	93.3	4	2	0.7
Berdichivs'ka	-	97.4	2	0.6	-	96.2	2.9	0.9	-
Bilatserkivs'ka	-	96.1	2.9	1	-	93.1	3.2	1	2.7
Umans'ka	0.5	89.1	10	0.5	-	93.1	3	0.5	1.4
Cherkass'ka	-	98	2	-	-	98	1	-	1

Key to Table D:

A) Communal strip farming.

B) Hereditary Household strip farming.

C) Vidrub.

D) Khutir

E) Agricultural societies.

Source: *TsDAVO*, f 27, op 6, spr 529, ark 1. Meliozem-inspektors'kyi viddil: Materialy ta lystuvannia z okrzemviddilamy pro formy zemlekorystuvannia do revoliutsii ta pislia nei.

Table E: Distribution of land per household, Village of Dorohinka, Bilotserkivs'kyi povit, Kyiv Hubernia, 1921.

Farm holdings	No. of h/holds	No. of 'souls'	Total amount of land held by households	Average holding per farm in desiatins	Average holding per soul in desiatins
Landless	**4**	**17**	-	-	-
Up to 0.5 des	**10**	**27**	**3.71**	**0.37**	**0.11**
0.51-1 des	**27**	**112**	**21.34**	**0.79**	**0.19**
1.1-2 des	**139**	**566**	**259.66**	**1.89**	**0.46**
2.1-3 des	**61**	**227**	**146.29**	**2.4**	**0.64**
Above 3.1 des	**184**	**912**	**941**	**5.11**	**1.03**
Average	**425**	**1861**	**1372**	**3.23**	**0.85**

Source: *DAKO*, f R-349, op 1, spr 118, ark 46. Report to dead of Kyiv hubernia land department from head of land reorganisation department, D. I. Koval'sky.

Table F: Distribution of land per household, Village of Koshievka & Khutirs of Rudenkovii and Stashukovii, Kyiv Hubernia, 16 June 1921.

Farm	No. of households	Total amount of land held by households in desiatins	No. of souls	Land holding per farm in desiatins	Land holding per soul in desiatins	Percentage of households
0-0.5 des.	**14**	**3.78**	**53**	**0.27**	**0.07**	**6**
0.51-1 des.	**22**	**18.17**	**93**	**0.82**	**0.19**	**8**
1.1-2 des.	**64**	**96.12**	**267**	**1.5**	**0.36**	**24**
2.1-3 des.	**56**	**138**	**267**	**2.46**	**0.51**	**21**
Above 3 des.	**108**	**526.2**	**616**	**4.87**	**0.85**	**41**
Total	**264**	**782.27**	**1296**	**2.95**	**0.6**	**100**

Source: *DAKO*, f R-349, op 1, spr 118, ark 92. Material submitted in relation to declaration of obshchestvo of village of Koshievka and khutirs of Rudenkovii and Stashukovii, 16 June 1921.

Table G: Percentage spread of peasant households according to land holding 1926/1927.

	Right bank Ukraine average holding per farm	Average holding per farm for Ukraine
up to 1 desiatina	**5.5**	**4.2**
1.1-2 desiatins	**14.6**	**8.6**
2.1-3	**23.6**	**14**
3.1-4	**23.2**	**15.9**
4.1-5	**15.4**	**13.8**
5.1-6	**8.5**	**10.9**
6.1-7	**4.6**	**7.8**
7.1-9	**3.4**	**10.1**
9.1-12	**1**	**7.5**
12.1-15	**0.2**	**3.7**
Over 15	**0**	**3.5**
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Figures cited in Kalinichenko, *Sil's'ke hospodartstv*o, p. 37.

Table H: Percentage spread of household groups according to land holding in Volyn, 1922.

No. of desiatin	Ovruchs'yi povit	Zhitomyrs' kyi povit	Novohrad-volyns'kyi povit	Ostorozhs' kyi povit	Iziaslavs'k yi povit	Average for hubernia
up to 3 des	**22.4**	**45.0**	**34.7**	**38.3**	**32.1**	**33.2**
3.01-6	**28.5**	**33.4**	**35.7**	**40.2**	**45.4**	**36.8**
6.01-9	**18.3**	**11.8**	**16.8**	**13.5**	**17**	**16.0**
9.01-12	**11.3**	**4.6**	**7.1**	**5**	**3.3**	**6.8**
12.01-15	**6.6**	**1.9**	**2.7**	**1.3**	**1.3**	**3.0**
15.01-18	**3.9**	**1**	**1.4**	**0.3**	**0.5**	**1.6**
18.01-21	**3.0**	**0.4**	**0.7**	**0.4**	**0.2**	**0.9**
21.01-24	**1.5**	**0.3**	**0.3**	**0.2**	**0.1**	**0.5**
24.1 and over	**4.5**	**0.6**	**0.6**	**0.3**	**0.1**	**1.2**
Totals	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: *TsDAVO.* f 27, op 3, spr 288, ark 31. Kratkii predvaritel'nii otchet ob ispolnenykh rabotakh po zemleustroistvu na Volyni: Protsentnoe raspredelenie khoziaistv po gruppam.

The letters 'Ukr','Rus' or 'Pol' in brackets denotes whether the terms used are Ukrainian, Russian or Polish in origin.

artel' (Rus & Ukr) - loose cooperative agricultural society formed by group of peasants to cultivate land or fulfil some other labour intensive task

ataman (Rus) - leader of local military band common during the civil war

batkivshchina (Ukr) hereditary plot of land passed down between generations in hereditary household land tenure. From *bat'ko* meaning father

bedniak (Rus) - poor peasant

buriak (Ukr) - sugar-beet

Cheka (Rus) - Extraordinary Committee, formed by the Soviet Government to eradicate political and social opposition.

cherezpolositsa (Rus) - interstripping of plots of peasant land, a problem which commonly afflicted peasant agriculture

chernyi peredel (Rus) - black repartition, a total redivision of village land between peasants

chinshevik (Rus) - landholding peasant who received rights to land in return for fixed payment or some form of service.

dal'nozemel'e (Rus) - phenomenon where peasant household is situated at a great distance from strips of land

derevnia (Rus) - village

Derzhavna Varta (Ukr) - state guard responsible for policing the countryside under the Hetman government of 1918

desiatina (Ukr & Rus) - unit of land measurement equalling 2.7 acres

desiatskii/desiats'kyi (Rus/Ukr) - pre-revolutionary village official elected by peasants to represent ten households

Dyrektoriia/ Direktoriia(Ukr/ Rus) - name given to the five-man executive committee of the UNR in 1918-1919

domokhoziaiev (Rus) - household head

dvir/ dvor (Ukr/Rus) - household unit

dusha/ na dushu (Rus) - soul or person/ per soul, the means for measuring land received in land distributions

glasnyi (Rus) - elected councillor especially of *Zemstvo*

gmina (Pol) - rural unit in Polish areas corresponding to Russian volost. Linked to German *Gemeinde*

guberniia (Rus) - region

Hetman (Ukr) - head of the Ukrainian state in 1918 connected to the office of Cossack commander-in-chief of earlier centuries

holova (Ukr) - head, chief

hromada (Ukr) - term for rural community and meeting of its members

Hubernia (Ukr) - region

imenie (Rus) - estate

ispol'kom (Rus) - short form of *ispol'nitel'nyi komitet* or executive committee

khleb/khlib (Rus/Ukr) - grain or bread

khokhol (Ukr) - derogatory term for peasant

khutor/ khutir (Rus/ Ukr) - consolidated individual farmstead plot where peasant household lived outside village

kolkhoz/ kolhosp (Rus/ Ukr) - collective farm

kombedy (Rus) - committees of poor peasants instituted in 1918 throughout Soviet-held areas

komnezamy (Ukr) - Ukrainian committee of poor peasants instituted in 1920

krest'ianin/krest'iane (Rus) - peasant/peasants

krugovaia poruka (Rus) - mutual responsibility. Peasants were held liable for the behaviour of their fellow villagers

kulak/kurkul' (Rus/Ukr) - derogatory term for wealthy peasant

kultradhosp (Ukr) - special state enterprises established to protect crops of particular value or scientific interest after 1920

Malorossiia (Rus) - Little Russia, the name by which Ukraine was often referred to in the pre-revolutionary period

mel'kopolositsa (Rus) - phenomenon where peasant land consists of several small uneconomical plots

mel'nitsa (Rus) - mill

Ministerstvo Vnutrennykh Del (Rus) - Ministry of Internal Affairs

mir (Rus) - name given to a peasant community which regulated its own internal affairs.

mirovoi posrednik (Rus) - peace mediator, a pre-revolutionary administrative official, introduced in 1861.

mistechka (Rus) - settlement

mlin (Ukr) - mill

muzhik (Rus) - derogatory term for peasant

nadel/nadil (Rus/Ukr) - allotment of land

nachal'nik (Rus) - chief, head

Narkomzem (Rus & Ukr) - People's Commissariat of Agriculture

narodna zemel'na uprava (Ukr) - successor to the *zemstvo* which it closely resembled established by the Central Rada in 1918 and UNR in 1919 to handle the administration of areas under their control

obiavlenie (Rus) - announcement

oblast (Rus & Ukr) - district in re-organised local administration instituted by the Soviet government in the early 1920s.

obshchina (Rus) - village commune particularly found in Central Russia commonly practising frequent equal repartitions of the land according to number of workers or mouths to feed in a household

otaman (Ukr) - leader of local military band common during the civil war

otrub (Rus) - form of land holding in which the peasant retains a household within the village settlement but farms a consolidated plot of land separate from that of fellow villagers

pan (Ukr) - landlord

pererаspredelenie (Rus) - redistribution esp. of land

pisar' (Rus) - village scribe

podvorno-uchastkovoe (Rus) - hereditary household form of land tenure

pomeshchik (Rus) - landowner

posvidchynnia (Ukr) - document attesting to peasant representative's identity

povit (Ukr) - district

prigovor/pryhovir (Rus/Ukr) - decision of village meeting

prodnalog (Rus) - tax in kind system introduced by the Soviet Government in 1921

prodovol'stvie (Rus) - foodstuffs

rada (Ukr) - council

radhosp (Ukr) - state farm

Radnarkom (Ukr) - Council of Peoples' Comissars, the executive organ of the early Soviet state

raion (Rus & Ukr) - local area in re-organised local administration instituted by the Soviet government in the early 1920s.

raskulachivanie (Rus) - dekulakisation

rasporiazhenie (Rus) - control

razverstanie (Rus) - process of consolidating landholding by eradicating interstripping and allocating peasants land in single plots

razverstka (Rus) - civil war system of food collection and distribution practised by the Soviet government

revkom (Rus & Ukr) - revolutionary committee

revvoensovet (Rus) - revolutionary military council

rozkurkulennia (Ukr) - dekulakisation

sakharnyi zavod (Rus) - sugar refinery

samogon/samohon (Rus/Ukr) - home brewed alcohol common in villages during the revolution

samosud (Rus & Ukr) - summary peasant justice

seliane (Ukr) - peasants

sel'ians'ka spilka - peasant union which was a means of peasant organisation favoured by the Central Rada and UNR

selo (Rus & Ukr) - village

sel'skoe obshchestvo (Rus) - village community

senokos/sinokis' (Rus/Ukr) - mowing particularly meadow land, an important feature of the peasant economy

seredniak (Rus) - middle peasant

servitutnoe pravo (Rus & Ukr) - servitude rights allowing peasants access to land and other resources

s'ezd (Rus) - congress

shliakhta (Ukr) - nobility

skhod/ skhodka (Rus/Ukr) - gathering of household heads which discussed and voted on the affairs of the village community

soslovie (Rus) - estate or social group

sotskii/ sots'kyi (Rus/Ukr) - pre-revolutionary village official elected by peasants to represent a hundred households.

soveshchanie (Rus) - meeting

sovet (Rus & Ukr) - council

sovkhoz (Rus) - state farm

Sovnarkom (Rus) - Council of Peoples' Comissars, the executive organ of the early Soviet state

starosta (Rus &Ukr) - pre-revolutionary village official elected as the head of the village. The same term was also used for the Hetman official, analogous to the Gubernator or Hubernia Commissar, charged with the administration of a given region.

sud (Rus/Ukr) - court

sudebnaia palata (Rus) - high court tribunal in large cities with jurisdiction over several provinces

svekla (Rus) - sugar-beet

TSOZ (Rus & Ukr) - Society for the common cultivation of land promoted by Soviet Government after 1919.

trudiashchii (Rus) - workers, toilers

tsukrovyi zavid (Ukr) - sugar refinery

udostoverenie (Rus) - document attesting to peasant representative's identity

uezd (Rus) - district

ugodia (Rus) - land resources

upol'nomochennyi (Rus) - elected representative esp. of village

uprava (Rus) - administration

urozhai (Rus/Ukr) - harvest, crop

usad'ba (Rus) - farmstead plot around peasant household

versta (Rus & Ukr) - unit of measurement equivalent to 0.663 miles

vidrub (Ukr) - form of land holding in which the peasant retains a household within the village settlement but farms a consolidated plot of land separate from that of fellow villagers

vlasnist/ vlastnost (Ukr/Rus) - concept of ownership

voita (Pol) - prefect of *gmina* or volost which dated back to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

volost' (Rus &Ukr) - district

vykonkom (Ukr) - executive committee from revolutionary period

zazhitochnyi (Ukr) - wealthy peasant

zemel'na hromada (Ukr) - land community introduced throughout Ukraine and Russian Federation in 1922

zemel'noe obshchestvo (Rus) - land community introduced throughout Ukraine and Russian Federation in 1922

zemel'nyi komitet (Rus) - land committee common in the countryside throughout the revolution

zemlemir (Rus &Ukr) - land surveyor

zemlepol'zovanie (Rus) - land use

zemleustroistvo (Rus) - land reorganisation

zemlevladenie (Rus) - landownership

zemlevolodinnia (Ukr) - landownership

zemlevporiadkuvannia (Ukr) - land reorganisation

zemliia (Rus& Ukr) - land

zemskii nachal'nik (Rus) - land captain, Tsarist-period administrative official usually drawn from the nobility

zemskoe uchrezhdenie (Rus) - better known as the *zemstvo.* Rural self-governing councils introduced into the Russian Empire in 1864

z'izd (Ukr) - congress

zvichaeve pravo (Ukr) - customary Law, system of folk knowledge and traditional norms which governed peasant behaviour

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