



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

By Aaron B. Retish

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

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Russia's Peasants in Revolution and Civil War: Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914-1922 By Aaron B. Retish Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2915944 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Cambridge University Press
- Published on: 2012-02-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.02" h x .71" w x 5.98" l, 1.01 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 310 pages

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Review

"Recommended." -Choice

"This is a deeply researched, clearly argued, and elegantly written book that rehabilitates Russian peasants as political actors during a crucial period in the formation of the Soviet state...It will be read with great benefit and interest by scholars interested in the history of twentieth-century Russia or comparative peasant studies, and would be ideal for use in a graduate seminar on revolutionary Russia.

Canadian Journal of History, Robert H. Greene, University of Montana

"...Retish's data and narrative are fascinating. No existing study has brought us closer to the drama and tragedy of the era's peasant experience. In this reviewer's opinion, this is a high recommendation." -Choice

About the Author

Aaron B. Retish is Assistant Professor in the Department of History, Wayne State University.

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