**Ruling the Soviet Countryside**

**Behind the Frontlines:**

**Grain Procurement in Late Civil War-era**

**Penza Province, Fall 1920**

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**Abstract**

During the Russia civil war, weak rural organs justified outside intervention in the pursuit of centralization in the form of procurement agents and food brigades to implement state grain obligations and establish Soviet authority in the Russian countryside. This study of Penza province suggests that by late 1920 the types of resources available to provincial authorities to reinforce the procurement work of local officials had expanded well beyond agents and brigades. Procurement authorities in Penza engaged in a significant effort to raise the level of institutional discipline among *volost* and villageofficials. Provincial officials, in taking significant steps to strengthen the performance of the rural procurement machinery, were better positioned to use armed force more selectively rather than primarily. Their sense of caution about the use of armed coercion was heightened by the Antonov revolt and its potential for destroying or destabilizing the local procurement apparatus as it had in Tambov. Thus, when Penza reached 105% fulfillment of its rather modest procurement quota this was not a significant procurement success as much as a bureaucratic one; provincial officials managed to enforce expectations that subordinates work well beyond their previous capacity to accomplish institutional goals while peasant resistant was kept to a manageable level. Penza province’s procurement experience suggests a more complex picture of Civil War economic management and state-peasant relations and that stable provinces, strategically situated, allowed the Bolsheviks to avoid more widespread peasant violence, driven to a great degree by large-scale forced grain requisitions in 1920-21.

**Key Words**

Civil War, Peasants, State, Food, Rural Officials

Management of War Communism and grain procurement specifically were among the most significant challenges facing the Bolsheviks in their quest to reshape the countryside, establish a durable political authority, and win the Civil War. A central tension here is that from 1919 through 1920, implementation of Bolshevik procurement policy, the *razverstka*, was left to locally-oriented rural soviets that, for the most part, proved resistant to central goals.[[1]](#footnote-1) Writing about the Soviet state during the Russian Civil War, Murray Frame argues that for “much of early soviet Russia … the state’s authority was neither complete nor absent, but instead fragmented and unstable. Its administrative reach and organizational effectiveness were shifting and unpredictable phenomena, contingent upon fluctuating circumstances.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The challenges of surviving the civil war forced the Bolsheviks to divide their attention between urgent yet competing needs. As Erik Landis suggests, the Soviets’ Food Commissariat (*Narkomprod)* had two overarching yet mutually exclusive priorities. On the one hand, central authorities engaged in the “bureaucratic project of molding a sustainable and effective system of food supply.” This entailed monitoring the work of local officials and eliminating practices that “compromised the stability of the state-controlled procurement system.”[[3]](#footnote-3) On the other hand, officials in Moscow focused their limited resources on expediting the fulfillment of short-term procurement targets. This was a function of the persistent food supply crisis and involved armed confrontation with resistant peasant grain producers. Landis concludes, based on his study of Tambov province, that the Bolsheviks prioritized the latter.[[4]](#footnote-4) Rather than regressing to the crude compulsion of the imperial order during the civil war, Yanni Kotsonis suggests “Soviet officials acted to transcend the limitations of their own state machinery, ultimately resorting to mass violence.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Indeed, this was the case in provinces with historically high grain export averages which were directly impacted by military threat in 1919-1920. These include the Black Earth arc of White Army incursion – Tambov, Saratov, Samara – where Soviet resources were concentrated for urgent military and procurement operations reflecting what Landis refers to as the Bolsheviks’ “exclusive focus on short-term dividends of maximum procurement.[[6]](#footnote-6) Urgent short-term collection goals privileged the force mustered by central agents and armed brigades and disadvantaged local food-supply officials seeking to construct a stable, effective mechanism for acquiring grain from peasants. A vicious cycle emergedwhereby forced requisitions resulted inpeasant uprisings and instability in Tambov, Saratov, and elsewhere in 1919-1920 which “extinguished the prospects of … an accurate division of the *razverstka* targets among individual localities.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Of course, Bolshevik leaders acknowledged the necessity of addressing peasant needs on a number of occasions during the civil war.[[8]](#footnote-8) While Bolshevik leadership shifted to a rhetoric of accommodation with the grain-holding peasantry in 1919, Michael Melancon maintains that the reality of procurement operations was still one of forced grain requisitions and Donald Raleigh argues, by the beginning of 1920 in Saratov “a militant mood prevailed within the party, which, in desperate need of food squeezed the village even more.”[[9]](#footnote-9) S.A. Smith argues that while the *razverstka* was meant to provide districts and villages with “predictability” regarding grain requisitions, the food detachments took as much food as they could from the peasants.[[10]](#footnote-10) Quotas were over-fulfilled, peasants’ violent resistance increased and then exploded, threatening the very Bolshevik victory whose attainment justified the use of force to acquire grain in the first place.

This article contends that those grain-producing provinces with historically variable harvest yields and lower grain exports which were distant from or only indirectly impacted by military threats – those inside the Black Earth arc of White incursion - were more inclined to prioritize the bureaucratic project of molding local officials into a reasonably effective procurement apparatus and taking significant measures to maintain rural stability. These were areas where resources were concentrated for a brute-force approach only on a very short-term basis if at all. Consequently, procurement work fell overwhelmingly on the shoulders of local officials. Lars Lih finds that “under the *razverstka* system local officials were handed a quota and told to fulfil it or else lose their job and possibly go to prison.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Yet for much of 1919 and into 1920, local soviet officials faced infrequent monitoring and inconsistent pressure from their superiors to perform their procurement tasks fully.[[12]](#footnote-12) This article focuses on Penza province, a central Black Earth province on the edge of the middle Volga region, to examine in detail the 1920-21 Soviet procurement campaign, and the specific efforts made in the fall of 1920 to more effectively integrate, instruct, and discipline local rural officials to consistently work on assigning and collecting grain procurement quotas fully. The bureaucratic approach did not mean the absence of armed force, but rather a flexible use of coercion in conjunction with measures to accommodate peasant conditions including a modest goods-exchange effort as well as more robust agitation campaigns aimed at convincing peasants to meet their grain quotas for the good of the nation.

This research reveals three elements of the molding process. First, early and clear communication of expectations to *volost* officials, specifically achievable targets, how to allot them, and a firm deadline for completion. Second, consistent oversight of local officials to ensure proper and persistent procurement work. Third, the use of various disciplinary measures to reduce improper and inadequate official behavior as well as Revolutionary tribunal trials to discipline local officials and educate the public about official behavior that would not be tolerated. These efforts became more urgent with the threat posed to stability in Penza by the Antonov revolt in neighboring Tambov province. Rather than revert to desperate efforts to requisition the entire harvest to avoid the threat of loss to rebels, Penza officials doubled down on messaging about appropriate quotas and consistent local official work. I argue here that historians have tended to over-generalize the Bolsheviks’ reliance on armed coercion and short-term collection targets and in so doing have neglected the provinces where the Soviet procurement apparatus itself became the object of transformation and, by 1920, resources other than armed brigades were available to reinforce the procurement effort.[[13]](#footnote-13) Based on archival material drawn from multiple collections in Moscow and Penza, this article delves into an instructive example of a grain-producing province where soviet officials managed to avoid the procurement methods that contributed to widespread peasant rebellion and rural instability.

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The Bolsheviks’ capacity for concentrating ample administrative personnel and armed force to reinforce their grain procurement policies was not uniformly demonstrated across the disparate regions of Soviet Russia. The geographical shifts in the major battle areas between Reds and Whites in 1918-1919 had a destabilizing impact on the procurement apparatus and its grain procurement efforts along the eastern and southern fringes of Central Russia and in the Middle Volga region.[[14]](#footnote-14) The areas near the frontlines saw the largest concentrations of essential resources for procurement and military necessity. During the first Soviet procurement campaign, the Bolsheviks enlisted the rural poor and urban factory workers in a Food Supply Dictatorship in the desperate effort to find and collect grain as White forces pushed into the Volga region. During the fall of 1918, grain procurement peaked in Penza when food brigades and ample state funding for *kombedy* operations were concentrated there for a short six-week period before Samara and other grain-rich provinces, now under Red Army occupation, were targeted in November.

In fact, the Food Supply Dictatorship failed to produce the expected procurement results and succeed only in provoking peasant resistance to Bolshevik policies. Peasants in Penza neither revolted en masse nor passively accepted Bolshevik procurement efforts and goals. When weather and state procurement targets combined to threaten their rye stores, peasants expanded millet sowing for which there was no quota in 1918-1919.[[15]](#footnote-15) Anticipating grain registration, they sold or distilled their grain, leaving themselves only the allowed consumption norms. Peasants willingly sold rye to the state after the solid 1918 rye harvest when the fixed price was higher than the post-harvest market price and reduced their sales when the fixed price was lowered in November.[[16]](#footnote-16) Finally, given the very poor 1918 oat harvest peasants calculated their allowed fodder norms in rye.[[17]](#footnote-17) Procurement officials had to contend with many of the survival and resistance strategies that peasants had exhibited in the decades prior to the revolution as they encountered an ever encroaching tsarist state.

In early 1919 the Bolsheviks abandoned the Food Supply Dictatorship, opting instead for the *razverstka*. which began with top-down procurement quotas, based on estimates of state needs, assigned to provinces and districts without taking into account prevailing local conditions. V*olost* and village soviets were left to determine how to distribute the quota among peasant households. Upon depositing their grain, peasants received the fixed price and access to consumer goods (though in very limited supply) and responsible local officials were subject to arrest for failure to meet deadlines for collecting the quotas. Instead of mobilizing the village poor, the *razverstka* was meant to facilitate the building of a reasonably efficient procurement apparatus.[[18]](#footnote-18) The realities of wartime economy and the absence of peasant willingness to part with their grain complicated *razverstka* implementation. In practice, as indicated by the experience in Orel province in the fall of 1918, the *razvertka* had two main planks: strict consumption norms and extraction of surpluses, by force if necessary, with very partial compensation in the form of consumer goods.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Beginning in July 1919, owing to the steady expansion of soviet-held territory *Narkomprod* adjusted its procurement expectations for the various regions of Soviet Russia and these had important local ramifications. Penza saw a reduction in overall grain quota from 11.3 million in 1918 to 7.7 million *puds* for the 1919-1920 campaign. The shifting of a larger proportion of the national procurement quota to the newly occupied grain-rich peripheries continued in 1920-1921.[[20]](#footnote-20)By 1920central grain-producing provinces had experienced a 58% drop in production since 1916 and thus saw a significant reduction in procurement expectations.[[21]](#footnote-21) V.V. Kabanov found the 1920-21 procurement quotas in some central producing provinces, as a percentage of total harvest, fell to levels closer to those for consuming provinces. Among these were Riazan (7.1%), Kursk (9.5%), and Penza (9.3%).[[22]](#footnote-22) After the Red Army occupied the grain-rich regions of Western Siberia and the Don, Penza’s new procurement target was the average of what had been collected the previous two campaigns - 3.5 million *puds*.[[23]](#footnote-23) Subsequently, provincial officials based *raion* quotas on the previous year’s performance and made clear to *raion* officials that anything short of complete fulfillment was unacceptable. After a congress of *volost* and village soviets, a Titov *raion* food-supply official reported the *raion’s*  procurement quota was “minimal” - the quantity of grain collected in the previous year.[[24]](#footnote-24) Nizhnilomov *Raion* Commissar Perepelkin told local officials that while the district fulfilled only 45% of its 1919-1920 quota of one million *puds*, he expected the 1920-1921 procurement quota of 450,000 *puds* to be fulfilled completely.[[25]](#footnote-25) The grain quotas for some *volosts* indicated that *raion* officials took local factors into account in setting collection targets. In Penza *raion,* the procurement quota for Durasov *volost*, which possessed the largest amount of per capita sown area, consisted of 27, 510 *puds* of rye, 38,000 *puds* of oats and 22,000 *puds* of millet (total of 87,510 *puds*). Ramzai *volost*, by comparison, had 39% less per capita sown area and a 77% smaller grain quota thanDurasov.[[26]](#footnote-26) *Narkomprod*’s expectations became more realistic for Penza and other central provinces and r*aion* officials assigned *volost* quotas based on variations in local productive capacity.

At the outset of the 1920-21 procurement campaign, Penza authoritiesmoved pragmatically to expedite the work of grain collection by modifying their approach to the *razverstka* in two potentially stabilizing ways. For the second year in a row, provincial officials paid closer attention to local harvest conditions in planning their procurement objectives.In 1919, the average rye yield in Penza fell substantially to 26.1 *puds* per *desiatina* from 54.9 *puds* per *desiatina* in 1918.[[27]](#footnote-27) Notably, provincial authorities adjusted the procurement targets for each of the major grains. The rye quota in particular was nearly cut in half, from three million to 1.6 million *puds*.[[28]](#footnote-28) Given the increased sowings and solid yield of the 1919 millet crop, provincial officials set a new millet target at 3.8 million *puds* to make up for the shortfall of rye. In fact, sowings of millet in Penza increased from 144,910 to 166,499 *desiatinas* between 1917 and 1919.[[29]](#footnote-29) For the 1920-1921 grain campaign, grain production nationally in 1920 stood at 54% of prewar levels due, according to Wheatcroft, “to a 24% fall in sown area and a 29% fall in in yields.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Indeed, Penza officials had to weigh the impact of spring drought conditions which accounted for a significant decrease in the harvest yields of the major crops, particularly rye and millet.[[31]](#footnote-31) Yet rather than increasing state demands on peasant stocks, provincial officials lowered the quotas for food grains, reducing rye from 1.6 to 1 million *puds* and millet from 3.8 to 1.5 million *puds*.[[32]](#footnote-32) Finally, as in 1919-1920, Penza officials extended to peasants the option to deposit any type of grain they chose to meet their grain quota.[[33]](#footnote-33) Instead of being compelled to turn over to the state a significant portion of their already limited food grains, peasants in Penza could choose to use a larger portion of their fodder crops to meet their *razverstka* obligations. Local officials were likely to encounter less peasant resistance than if their expectations had been more rigid.

In the ongoing effort to expedite the procurement process, Penza officials modified procedures for assigning local quotas in each of the last two grain campaigns.Throughout the first procurement campaign in 1918-1919, household quotas were based on established consumption norms and completion of the grain registration that determined which peasants and villages had grain surpluses to be turned over. Frequent delays in completion and subsequent disagreements about registration data marred the procurement process. At the beginning of the 1919-1920 grain campaign, procurement quotas were instead determined by the amount of sown cropland in each *volost*. Lars Lih notes that Soviet “disillusionment with registration reflected a new realism about the scarcity of administrative resources.”[[34]](#footnote-34) While there is ample evidence that sown area declined from 1917 to 1920 overall, there was considerable local variation in available land and in per capita sown area.[[35]](#footnote-35) Moreover, using sown area for the basis of village and household quotas was expected to be quicker and less complicated for *volost* officials to assign and more difficult for peasants to circumvent.[[36]](#footnote-36) Nonetheless, peasants did not passively accept Bolshevik procurement efforts and goals. They sent petitions concerning quotas that did not match actual sown area. They appealed to food-supply officials seeking leniency when obstacles prevent the village or *volost* from meeting quotas.[[37]](#footnote-37) In spring and early summer, they withheld grain when poor weather threatened the upcoming harvest. When they did make deposits, peasants left sacks filled mostly with dirt, snow, and ice.[[38]](#footnote-38) Most significantly, they deposited far less rye and far more oats than the provincial quotas required.[[39]](#footnote-39) After the 1920 harvest, *raion* officials instructed *volost* and village officials to assign quotas consistent with the productive capacity of each village and farm, not just the amount of land possessed. Anticipating having to collect grain without the aid of food brigades, Nizhnilomov *raion* officials instructed *volost* officials to take into account all of the resources of each village and household when determining the size of the grain levies. *Raion* officials insisted that procurement quotas had to be “assigned correctly,” in other words, to households that really had produced grain, not just to those with a large number of “eaters.”[[40]](#footnote-40) Over the course of 1920, *raion* authorities in Penza realized that overburdening poorer *volosts* with grain quotas that exceeded local productive capacity drastically delayed collections and increased local committees’ workload by having to investigate appeals for lower quotas, or continue to pressure reluctant *volost* officials to collect unrealistic levies.

Since much of the procurement work was left in the hands of local soviet officials during this stage of the civil war, provincial authorities endeavored to set clear expectations for *volost* officials and hold them accountable. For the 1920-21 grain campaign, the deadline for completing village quotas assignments was September 1, and provincial officials aimed for 100% quota fulfillment by the end of 1920. During the previous campaigns neither grain registration nor the use of sown area as the basis for local quotas resulted in an early end to this essential first stage of the procurement process. Penza province managed to collect only 50% of the 1919-1920 quota, in part due to the delayed assignment of procurement quotas.[[41]](#footnote-41) Moreover, *raion* officials implored v*olost* officials to assign quotas accurately to avoid local disputes over onerous burdens that could distract them from collection work.[[42]](#footnote-42) By giving *volost* soviet officials complete responsibility for assigning local quotas, *raion* authorities sought to deflect peasant criticism of the quotas toward *volost* officials.[[43]](#footnote-43) Given the early deadline for quota fulfillment and peasant resistance expected due to the poor harvest, *raion* officials insisted that correct quota assignment was essential if procurements were to proceed successfully and relatively peacefully.[[44]](#footnote-44) For the first time in three years, local officials were able to provide peasants with early and clear procurement expectations.

Clear expectations as well as incentives were seen as essential for a well-functioning procurement campaign. One incentive involved a modest degree of goods-exchange which provided to peasants an allotment of basic manufactured goods if they fulfilled procurement quotas.[[45]](#footnote-45) Given the shortages of basic goods throughout the countryside, the chance to obtain quantities of scarce salt, cloth, grease, matches and soap spurred more villages to reach their partial quotas during the winter of 1920.[[46]](#footnote-46) In Nizhnilomov district, for example, supplies of salt had increased and local production of soap revived making 45 *puds* available. Only when *volost* levies were fulfilled did compliant communes receive their allotment of goods.[[47]](#footnote-47) Kamensk district commissar Levin expressed confidence that quotas would be fulfilled without dispatching brigades to requisition grain. “Now,” he said, “the peasants know that if they do not have salt and other goods and they want to receive them soon, then they will not turn over half *puds* of grain, but all their surpluses, because those who fulfill orders will soon receive goods.”[[48]](#footnote-48) While the overall success of goods-exchange was severely limited, at this point in Penza it was to play a role in stimulating collections.[[49]](#footnote-49)

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*Volost* committees’ procurement work during fall 1920 was subjected to significantly more monitoring by superiors than during the previous two procurement campaigns. Lower grain levies arguably made collection targets more achievable, but enhanced oversight by *raion* officials and their agents made it more difficult for local officials to limit their efforts to the partial fulfillment that was tolerated in the past. Provincial officials dispatched agents to work in local food-supply committees, employing what they called the striking fist (*udarnvi kulak*) method of political and technical pressure to ensure more effective procurement.[[50]](#footnote-50) To strengthen local procurement efforts and enhance institutional discipline among *volost* officials, an extensive network of agents was set up to monitor local officials’ procurement work. Penza authorities assigned “extraordinary” agents to work in each district to ensure fulfillment of the procurement quotas.[[51]](#footnote-51) The individuals deployed were mostly high-ranking food-supply officials previously transferred to Penza as *Narkomprod* agents during earlier grain campaigns. Most of these officials, including Bogomolov, Orlov, Usievich, Krivosheev, Buzdes, and Savchuk, had experience working in earlier grain campaigns in district food-supply committees. Even the recently-demoted provincial commissar, N. I. Sirotkin was deployed to his native Gorodishch district.[[52]](#footnote-52) Instead of a cohort of newly-arrived, temporary *Narkomprod* agents deputized to hastily maximize grain exports from Penza, these officials had each worked in the province for 12-24 months. They had become well-acquainted with the productive capacity of the various areas within the province and had been instrumental in establishing the *raion* committees and their growing capacity for effective oversight of the *volost* soviets. These provincial emissaries were charged with overseeing procurement work in three or four *raions*, pressuring officials to keep up the pace of grain collection in the localities.

R*aion* committees also mobilized procurement agents to work on grain collection in the *volost* and village soviets in the fall of 1920. *Raion* authorities dispatched “responsible agent-leaders” (*otvetstvennve upolnomochenve rukovoditeli*) to direct procurement work in the *volosts*. In Penza *raion*, these agents were each responsible for quota fulfillment in three or four *volost*.[[53]](#footnote-53) Under them, one additional food-supply agent was assigned to each *volost* in the *raion* to ensure that the *volost* officials assigned levies and collected their entire procurement quota.[[54]](#footnote-54) Titov *raion* committee agents working in the *volost* executive committees assigned each *volost* soviet member responsibility for quotas in particular villages. *Volost* soviet officials were instructed to divide each village into sections for which village soviet leaders would be responsible. Every *volost* and village official was subject to arrest for refusal to work or failure to reach 100% quota fulfillment in his area.[[55]](#footnote-55) The Penza *raion* agent in Ramzai *volost* convened all village soviets and assigned a portion of the *volost* quota to each soviet member, who returned to a specific part of their village to divide the quota among all households, bearing full responsibility for quota fulfillment there.[[56]](#footnote-56) At the Durasov *volost* congress of soviets, local officials were assigned to specific segments of their villages, and made personally responsible for the collection of the entire quota there.[[57]](#footnote-57) As Orlando Figes argues, the Bolsheviks’ increasing authority over rural Russia and civil war-era grain procurement resulted from the “transformation of the *volost* soviets.”[[58]](#footnote-58) In Penza, enhanced institutional oversight over *volost* officials was a major contributing factor in this transformation.

No longer was the *volost* or village soviet chairman or food-supply committee solely responsible for distributing quotas and ensuring their collection. Quotas were now assigned to a number of local officials who were held personally accountable in case of non-fulfillment. In Narovchat *raion*, *volost* executive committee members who did not assign procurement quotas to peasant communes in a timely manner were arrested and held in custody for seven days.[[59]](#footnote-59) In Mokshan district, the entire Bolotnikov village soviet was arrested for failing to assign quotas to peasant households on time. Provincial officials offered to release the officials and halt legal action against them only after the village fulfilled 100% of its procurement quota.[[60]](#footnote-60) Poor procurement results in Titov *raion* in mid-September, prompted the *raion* commissar to require *volost* officials to fulfill their entire quota by September 28 and personally present the gain deposit receipts to *raion* authorities.[[61]](#footnote-61) Meanwhile, each *volost* soviet official in Nizhnilomov *raion* was held personally responsible for complete quota fulfillment by all households in his area within three days or risk having their own grain confiscated, arrest, and trial before the Revolutionary tribunal.[[62]](#footnote-62) In contrast to Orlando Figes’ conclusions about centrally-oriented *volost* officials playing a leading role in local procurement during 1919-1920, the case of Penza suggests that persistent pressure from superiors was necessary to ensure that *volost* officials played an active role in assigning grain quotas correctly and monitoring grain collection.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Provincial officials’ ability to maintain pressure on *volost* officials was compromised by the continued efforts of local military commissars to draft any and all capable men into military service. In Narovchat, both the *raion* food-supply commissar and the director of the procurement department were called up for military service in mid-September, thus undermining the grain collection effort.[[64]](#footnote-64) Nonetheless, with the expanded number of agents, the provincial apparatus was able to establish, for the first time in the three years, consistent monitoring of the *volost* and village soviets’ procurement work. This persistent oversight reduced local officials’ ability to avoid or delay procurement work, as was common in past campaigns.

October was deemed the “Food Supply Month” and mobilization efforts sought out skilled city residents to fill support roles in the provincial procurement apparatus. Provincial authorities sought to enlist “the wide masses of proletarians in the city of Penza and in the districts” for procurement work.[[65]](#footnote-65) Two hundred city residents were mobilized to reinforce grain collection work in the province. Employees of the procurement apparatus, including secretaries, chief clerks, office workers, accountants, bookkeepers, and typists were assigned to work at the provincial or *raion* committee level or in the procurement centers. Most of the 118 deployed by late- September worked in procurement centers to help manage the influx of grain deposited by peasants.[[66]](#footnote-66) Procurement authorities also sent food-supply agitators to half of the 270 *volosts* in the province. In the remaining *volosts*, local Party members were mobilized as agents assigned to the *volost* executive committee. In addition, 250 Party members were to be mobilized -100 from the city and 150 from the district centers- to work as procurement agents in each *volost* in the province.[[67]](#footnote-67) Provincial authorities hoped to concentrate two or three party workers in *volosts* where peasant resistance was expected.[[68]](#footnote-68) By late- October, 300 local Communists had been mobilized for procurement work.[[69]](#footnote-69) By contrast, in neighboring Tambov province the spread of rural violence associated with the budding Antonov revolt dissuaded party members from volunteering for “requisition duty” as provincial authorities sought to quickly make up for a delayed campaign start.[[70]](#footnote-70) The mobilization of the civilian population in Penza stands in sharp contrast with the Don region, where Peter Holquist notes that “in order to “extract grain” Moscow relied upon a civilian apparatus that was staffed largely by soldiers and, even more significantly, was itself subject to military discipline.”[[71]](#footnote-71)

Given that pressure “from above” on local officials as well as the involvement of armed brigades had been inconsistent and typically short-term during past campaigns, peasant took a wait and see approach before depositing the required amount of grain. As the 1920-21 grain campaign began, procurement agents assigned to the *volosts* had to establish which areas required the intervention of armed force due to low procurement results.[[72]](#footnote-72) As in 1919, Penza officials concentrated their forces in the main grain-producing districts, Saransk, Chembar, Mokshan and Penza. To strengthen procurement work, brigades previously used to catch deserters were placed under the command of food-supply authorities.[[73]](#footnote-73) Provincial officials also sought out additional armed forces in order to place more effective pressure on selected areas where collections lagged significantly.[[74]](#footnote-74) As central officials increasingly concentrated more procurement brigades in Tambov, Saratov, and the grain-rich periphery, Penza authorities grew more adept at concentrating their limited forces specifically in poorly performing areas. Given that twelve of the twenty food brigades operating in the province in the fall of 1920 were unarmed, the majority of procurement units were confined to agitation work in the service of increasing peasant grain deposits rather than armed requisitioning.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Given the commitment to achieve 100% quota fulfillment, the swift deployment of armed force to target areas identified by *volost* officials and *raion* agents was essential for maximum effect in spurring grain collections. Yet, brigade records indicate that collection of oats, a fodder crop, significantly outpaced procurement of food grains, rye and millet. When they could no longer delay their grain deposits, peasants used the officially sanctioned option to substitute grains in order to retain for themselves the largest possible amount of rye and millet for their own subsistence.[[76]](#footnote-76) The involvement of procurement brigades did not appear to deter peasants from employing this strategy. Brigade No. 1385 from Vladimir province managed to collect 94% of its grain quota in Chembar *raion* by October 30, gathering 137,000 *puds* of oats (340% of quota), 11,475 *puds* of rye (21% of quota), and 1,304 *puds* of millet (2% of quota).[[77]](#footnote-77) Similar results were documented for Brigade no.1384 during September in Mokshan *raion*.[[78]](#footnote-78) Despite the involvement of procurement brigades, peasants’ were able to keep more of their rye and millet, so critical to their subsistence in the wake of the poor harvest.

Civil war-era grain campaigns in Penza were a product of multiple contingencies including procurement goals and methods in other provinces of Soviet Russia. A year earlier, Mamontov’s raid into neighboring Tambov province wreaked havoc there and forced Penza officials back on their heels as the 1919-1920 procurement campaign was about to begin. Tambov’s procurement organization had to be rebuilt from scratch, yet Moscow deployed trusted and experienced procurement commissars along with a significant armed force to gather enormous amounts of grain and fodder.[[79]](#footnote-79) Erik Landis strongly suggests that *Narkomprod* agents, procurement commissars, and brigade leaders arriving in Tambov all viewed officials in the rural soviet administration as obstacles to procurement, whose efforts “threatened to undermine the entire campaign.”[[80]](#footnote-80) Penza procurement officials had had to take precautionary measures during Mamontov’s incursion into Tambov when “peasants took advantage of the Cossacks to eliminate irritants like food-supply requisitioning agents and detachments.”[[81]](#footnote-81) As Penza authorities’ capacity for pressuring peasants to turn over grain increased with the arrival of additional armed forces in the fall of 1920, the ramifications of using armed coercion were complicated by yet another peasant uprising in Tambov, the *Antonovshchina*.[[82]](#footnote-82)

Publication of higher than expected procurement targets in Tambov in July had set off a “storm of protest,” from peasants and local officials, both fully aware of the implications since drought had produced gravely lower harvest yields.[[83]](#footnote-83) By late September, Antonov-led raids left forty one *volost* soviets destroyed in Southeastern Tambov province, and on October 5 rebel forces spread into Balashov district in neighboring Saratov province.[[84]](#footnote-84) Penza officials worried about cross-border attacks on their procurement apparatus. While their capacity for coercion had been reinforced by early October, Penza procurement authorities appeared reluctant to fully utilize armed force for procurement given the elevated risk of destabilizing the grain campaign. As the uprising spread, Penza authorities devised their own measures to defend the province and maintain stability there.[[85]](#footnote-85) Armed detachments were redeployed from procurement to defend the borders of Penza province against raids by units of Antonov’s peasant army. Additionally, in order to preserve stability, provincial officials sought to reduce the level of pressure for grain collections on peasants in western districts, the areas closest to the rebellion.[[86]](#footnote-86) Compared to central and eastern districts, the pace of grain collection slowed in Kerensk and Chembar while the Antonov threat persisted.[[87]](#footnote-87) Meanwhile in Tambov, procurement authorities pushed subordinates, amply supported with “armed squads and military personnel,” to continue with requisitions while the Antonov Uprising raged.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Procurement authorities sought to eliminate any pretext for a peasant uprising in Penza. They urged *raion* officials throughout the province to pay more attention to peasant petitions and complaints about procurement quotas. Petitions calling for a reduction in quotas were to be taken seriously by soviet officials whether they came from individuals or from communes.[[89]](#footnote-89) Penza officials again instructed *volost* and village soviets to base grain quotas on the economic strength of individual peasant households.[[90]](#footnote-90) Local officials were ordered to take seriously petitions from individuals or communes calling for a reduction in quotas.[[91]](#footnote-91) Their efforts were reinforced by the most robust procurement agitation effort to date, including agitation trains on each of the main railroad lines as well as concerts in rural areas used to attract peasants to meetings where Soviet procurement policies were explained in detail.[[92]](#footnote-92) Given the cautious approach to procurement taken in response to the Antonov threat, rural stability was preserved in Penza and the province reached 60% fulfillment of its annual procurement quota by the end of October, as central authorities had hoped.[[93]](#footnote-93) With an increased number of procurement agents in the localities, Penza authorities were in a stronger position to ensure that local officials conducted procurement work appropriately. These efforts to acknowledge, if not redress, local grievances, may in part explain why Antonov’s rebellion did not spread into Penza province. Provincial officials in Penza managed to maintain rural stability in the face of a significant external threat in large part through their flexible use of coercion and much more consistent oversight of *volost* officials than in previous campaigns that ensured proper and persistent procurement work among the peasants.

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During the previous Soviet grain procurement campaigns, collections tended to peak in October and decline rapidly in November, in part because armed brigades tended to be redeployed to other provinces after the October procurement push.[[94]](#footnote-94) During the last weeks of 1920, provincial officials focused intently on ensuring widespread compliance with Soviet procurement goals among local officials and the local peasant population, including, above all, complete fulfillment of grain quotas. Rather than merely accepting a higher level of grain procurement than had been achieved in previous years, *raion* agents and *volost* committees continued to pressure local officials to fulfill their quotas completely. Grain collections began to slow in November, according to one official, “primarily because the population, based on the experience of past years thought that partial fulfillment would be enough, especially since so much had been collected so quickly.”[[95]](#footnote-95) Given the continued threat of the *Antonovshchina* in neighboring Tambov, Penza procurement authorities sought additional soldiers to guard grain warehouses, collection stations, and grain elevators throughout the province.[[96]](#footnote-96) Yet, provincial officials believed they had to find a way to pressure local organs to fulfill the procurement quota completely, without taking extreme measures that might infuriate the population.[[97]](#footnote-97) *Volost* and village soviet officials continued to be viewed as the key link between the provincial authorities’ procurement goals and the peasants who wanted to hold on to as much of their grain as possible.

Maintaining the steady pace of grain collections required the continued monitoring of and accountability for local officials. *Raion* agents, assigned to supervise procurement in the *volosts*, were ordered to keep local officials actively involved in grain collection work in the countryside and not allow them to busy themselves with the office work. Besides monitoring *volost* soviets, *raion* officials were ordered to pay serious attention to petitions for quota reductions from individual peasants and communes.[[98]](#footnote-98) Provincial procurement authorities ordered *volost* and village officials to confine their activity to propaganda and agitation and categorically forbade them from conducting door-to-door searches for grain. The former did not want to risk dangerous confrontations with the peasants by engaging in measures that produced no concrete results in the past.[[99]](#footnote-99) Lagging villages or *volosts* were to be targeted separately and armed brigades would be concentrated there.[[100]](#footnote-100) While procurement brigades consisting of 894 men arrived for procurement work in November, they were no doubt cautioned, like *volost* officials, to conduct procurement work without taking action that might destabilize the area.[[101]](#footnote-101)

Though modest from an overall food-supply perspective, local quotas in Penza and the extent to which they were fulfillment comprised a benchmark for assessing the performance of local officials. With only a few weeks remaining before the end-of-the-year deadline for 100% fulfillment, provincial officials threatened to arrest commissars in poorly performing *raions*. During December, procurement commissars from Tsarevshchina, Pachelma, Kerensk, and Bolshe Zhmor *raions* were threatened with sentences of up to 15 days in prison if the grain quota for their respective *raions* was not fulfilled by January 1, 1921.[[102]](#footnote-102) Later in the month, the food-supply committee leadership in Tsarevshchin *raion*, which had collected only 84% of its grain quota, was ordered replaced by officials from *raions* that had already achieved 100% fulfillment.[[103]](#footnote-103) Effective *raion* leadership was indispensable to the close monitoring of *volost* and village officials as the final push toward reaching the procurement targets commenced.

While strengthening the procurement apparatus and employing targeted coercion, Penza procurement officials also relied on Revolutionary tribunals to pressure peasants, who in previous years had managed to avoid fulfilling their quotas, to comply with Soviet procurement policies. By mid-November, the two traveling sessions in operation paid particular attention to cases involving the accounting (*uchet*) of the mill tax, incomplete grain quota fulfillment, and crimes committed by procurement officials and employees of food-supply organs.[[104]](#footnote-104) District agents and *raion* food-supply committees prepared in advance for the traveling tribunals by selecting the most representative cases for review and investigation.[[105]](#footnote-105) Soviet authorities in Penza used the traveling tribunals to let the public know that it intended to deal sternly with the persistent attempts by peasants to avoid state obligations by hiding their grain. In many cases, however, “a low cultural level was often cited as a reason for leniency when sentencing as it suggested the defendant had not deliberately sought to oppose the state.”[[106]](#footnote-106) In an open trial in the district town of Nizhnilomov, the Revolutionary tribunal sentenced a peasant, Stoliarov, to death for concealment of grain and avoidance of state obligations. Published reports on the trial indicate the Revolutionary tribunal reconsidered handing out Stoliarov’s death penalty and, taking into account his “low cultural level” and “lack of [political] consciousness,” reduced his sentence to five years in jail.[[107]](#footnote-107)

The traveling sessions of the Revolutionary tribunal also played a key role in on-going efforts to discipline local officials and show the public that Soviet power expected responsible and efficient behavior from representatives of state authority.[[108]](#footnote-108) The tribunal paid special attention to cases of local soviet officials who tried to avoid fulfilling their own quotas. One such example in Poroshinsk *volost* (Nizhnilomov district) resulted in village soviet officials sentenced to five years of hard labor.[[109]](#footnote-109) Other cases involved soviet officials letting family members engage in unauthorized use of oil seed presses and producing *samagon*.[[110]](#footnote-110) Through the month of December, the traveling sessions of the Revolutionary tribunal operated in the districts where collections were the slowest, in order to make clear to the peasants the “firmness and legality” of Soviet food supply policy.[[111]](#footnote-111) The Soviet state’s ability to make effective demands on the local peasants, in the absence of massive coercive force, was highly dependent on popular perceptions that soviet officials were credible authorities, held accountable for their actions. Yet, by 1920, Revolutionary tribunals, holding trials of local officials in public, rural settings, tended to show lenience in sentencing citing “the educational importance of sessions” more than “their punitive impact.”[[112]](#footnote-112) In practical terms, the peasants saw that the Soviet state would not tolerate abuses or violations of Soviet procurement policy by its own local representatives and realized they could not hope to shirk their grain quotas.In the quest to establish stable their rural political authority in the fall of 1920, the Bolsheviks made a concerted effort to more effectively integrate, instruct, and discipline local rural officials to consistently work on assigning and collecting grain procurement quotas fully.

With volost and village officials under greater pressure to fully comply with Penza’s procurement goals, peasants continued to find ways to protect their own interests. In fulfilling procurement quotas, peasants in Penza continued to turn over fodder crops rather than precious food grains. Oats continued to dominate the collections, totaling 621,701 *puds* in November and over 2.2 million *puds* overall, more than twice the official target for the campaign.[[113]](#footnote-113) Evidence from *volosts* (Durasov and Ramzai) of quite different productive capacities in grain-producing Penza *raion* indicates that peasants failed to meet their rye (89.7% and 61% respectively) and millet quotas (18% and 33% respectively), but exceed their oat quotas by 40% to 62% respectively.[[114]](#footnote-114) Across the Volga region a reduced need for oats was a function of smaller livestock herds, due in large part to requisitions for the army which began in 1915.[[115]](#footnote-115)

Provincial officials intended to maintain a high level of pressure on the localities to ensure that the entire grain quota was collected by the end of 1920. However, once Penza reached 90% of its grain quota, central officials, now concerned about improving grain collections in outlying grain-rich areas, began to transfer experienced food-supply officials and brigades from Penza to along the periphery of central Russia. In early December, thirty Penza officials were transferred to Cheliabinsk province and Pokrovskii *Raion* (Samara).[[116]](#footnote-116)Mobilization for grain procurement elsewhere led to a reduction of coercive force for grain collection in Penza. Twelve of the procurement brigades operating in the province at the end of November and were reassigned to other provinces.[[117]](#footnote-117) During late 1920, food brigades were transferred from provinces that had fulfilled their procurement quotas to areas that lagged behind, for example, from Tartar Republic to Tambov, from Perm to Ufa, from Ekaterinburg to Cheliabinsk, and from Penza to Saratov.[[118]](#footnote-118) In contrast to Penza’s 3.5 million *pud* levy, central authorities expected to collect 13.5 million *puds* of grain in neighboring Saratov.[[119]](#footnote-119) The combination of modest procurement expectations and a reinforced procurement apparatus that was on the verge of reaching its quota left Penza in a relatively stable set of circumstances and thus able to redeploy its key personnel to provinces with higher quotas.

Through fall 1920, as the threat of White forces ended, peasant backlash against the burdens of the *razverstka* continued in Tambov as well as in Ukraine, the northern Caucasus, and Western Siberia. Since the 1920-21 quota for Penza was substantially lower than either of the previous two procurement targets, provincial officials remained intent on shaping an apparatus that was capable of collecting the entire quota by year’s end. In the midst of the late-1920 descent into post-war rural chaos across Soviet Russia, official figures indicate that Penza province reached 105% grain quota fulfillment in a mere five months without provoking rural unrest. Published statistics show that rye collections reached 560,000 *puds* despite a quota of one million *puds*, and a mere 152,000 *puds* of millet was collected, well below the 1.5 million *puds* expected. The available data indicates that Penza achieved overall quota fulfillment because peasant oat deposits accounted for 76% (2.65 out of 3.628 million *puds*) of the entire procurement total rather than the planned 33%.[[120]](#footnote-120) According to data from the provincial transportation department, grain shipments out of Penza for the month of December were comprised exclusively of oats.[[121]](#footnote-121) As a result of the small amount of rye deposited at collection stations in Penza, compared to the amount of oats turned in, provincial officials decided to reequip its high-capacity mills, including the Simanshchina, Studenets, and Bashmakovo mills, to grind oats into flour for local consumption, at a daily rate of 3,000 *puds* per mill.[[122]](#footnote-122) No doubt, the steep decline in livestock holding in the central agricultural region between 1916-1920 meant peasants required far less fodder in 1920.[[123]](#footnote-123) Due to the shortage of rye and the high quality of oats collected, provincial officials lobbied *Narkomprod* for permission to exchange Penza oats for rye from Siberia for the needy population.[[124]](#footnote-124) Soviet procurement officials were prepared to accept a trade-off in Penza: provincial officials were more circumspect in their use of armed force and local officials worked more persistently to achieve quota fulfillment, but they did so without demanding that peasants exceed or even reach their rye quota.

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During the civil war, weak rural organs had justified outside intervention in the pursuit of centralization in the form of procurement agents and food brigades to implement state grain obligations and establish Soviet authority in the Russian countryside. Often concentrated for brief operations aimed at large-scale grain collections, their methods antagonized peasants and local officials and their departure often left local state organs weaker than before. Rather than merely resort to mass violence “to transcend the limitations of their own state machinery,”[[125]](#footnote-125) procurement agents in Penza engaged in a significant effort to raise the level of institutional discipline among *volost* and villageofficials. By late 1920 the types of resources available to provincial authorities to reinforce the procurement work of local officials had expanded well beyond agents and brigades; provincial and *raion* officials with 1-2 years of on-ground experience could be deployed to work in or monitor local committees; a modest assortment of essential goods was available to incentive peasants to deposit grain, and Revolutionary tribunals operated to publicly expose deficient local officials, educate the rural masses, and demonstrate Soviet mercy. Penza authorities still relied on armed coercion and the threat of it in stimulating grain collections; November in particular was a time when peasants typically reduced their grain deposits in response to a sharp decline in state urgency and resources devoted to procurement. Yet, provincial officials, in taking significant steps to strengthen the performance of the rural procurement machinery, were better positioned to use armed force more selectively rather than primarily. Their sense of caution about the use of armed coercion was heightened by the Antonov revolt and its potential for destroying or destabilizing the local procurement apparatus as it had in Tambov. Penza officials doubled down on their messaging about appropriate quotas and consistent procurement work by disciplined local official.

Penza authorities were well-positioned to prioritize the “bureaucratic project” over the fulfillment of short-term procurement targets. When the civil war commenced, Soviet procurement operations were driven by a perception of the “countryside as a vast grain reserve”; by fall 1920 procurement officials in Moscow and Penza had developed a keener sense of how much grain could be collected.[[126]](#footnote-126) Local officials faced lower quotas than in the previous two years, paid closer attention to the productive capacity of the village and household in quota allocation, and afforded peasants the option to deposit whatever grain that made sense for their household’s survival. While official procurement figures must be viewed with a good deal of skepticism, when Penza reached 105% fulfillment of its rather modest quota by 31 December this was not a significant procurement success as much as a bureaucratic one; provincial officials managed to enforce expectations that subordinates work beyond their usual stopping point (28.6% in 1918-1919 and 50% in 1919-1920) to accomplish institutional goals while peasant resistant was kept to a manageable level. Penza province’s procurement experience suggests a more complex picture of Civil War economic management and state-peasant relations and that stable provinces, strategically situated, allowed the Bolsheviks to avoid more widespread peasant violence, driven to a great degree by large-scale forced grain requisitions in 1920-21.

1. The *razverstka* began with top-down procurement quotas assigned to provinces and districts without taking into account prevailing local conditions. See Malle, *The Economic Organization of War Communism, 1918-1921* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Lars Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914-1921 (*Berkeley:California University Press, *1991).* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Murray Frame, “State Expansion and the Criminal Investigation Militia during the Russian Civil War,” *History*, vol. 98 no. 3 (331) July 2013, 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Erik Landis, ”Between Village and Kremlin: Confronting State Food Procurement in Civil War Tambov, 1919-1920.” *The Russian Review* 63 (January 2004), 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Provincial studies have vastly altered our views of the 1917 Revolution, the Civil War, and the entire 1914-1922 period. Others include Donald Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia’s Civil War: Politics, Society, and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917-1922* (Princeton, Princeton University Press 2002*)*; Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: the Volga Countryside in Revolution, 1917-1921 (*New York: *Oxford University Press, 1989)*; Peter Holquist, *Making war, forging revolution: Russia’s continuum of crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Aaron Retish, *Russia’s Peasants in Revolution and Civil War Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914-1922 (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*,* 2008*)*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Yanni Kotsonis, “’Face to Face’: the State, the Individual, and the Citizen in Russian Taxation, 1863-1917,” *Slavic Review 63* no. 2 (Summer, 2004), 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Landis, ”Between Village and Kremlin,” 76. Export averages (1909-1913) for provinces in the region include Samara 25.1 million *puds*; Saratov 13.54 million *puds*; Tambov 12.23 million *puds*; Penza 7.05 million *puds*; Kursk, 6.7 *million puds*. N. D. Kondratiev, *Rynikh xlebov i ego regulierovania vo vremia voiny i revolutsii (*Moscow: *Nauka*, 1991*)*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Landis,”Between Village and Kremlin,” 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society between Revolutions, 1918-1929 (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*,* 1992*)*; Robert Himmer, “The Transition from War Communism to the New Economic Policy: An Analysis of Stalin’s Views”, *The Russian Review*, vol 53 (Oct 1994), 515-529. Jonathan Crompton, “Resistance and Authority in Siberia, 1920-1921,” *Revolutionary Russia* (1997) 10 (2), 1-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Michael Melancon, ““Trial Run for Soviet Food Requisitioning: The Expedition to Orel province, Fall 1918,”in *The Russian Review* (2010) vol. 69 (3),” 334; Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia’s Civil War,* 324. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. S.A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Lih, *Bread and Authority*, 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. From the late-19th century, local rural officials typically stopped short of fully collecting state-imposed obligations since trouble would rarely come of falling short and the difference was likely to be forgiven. Yanni Kotsonis, *States of Obligation: Taxes and Citizenship in the Russian Empire and Early Soviet Republic* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2014), 268-269. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. On the origins of the *razverstka* and its replacement of the Food Supply Dictatorship in mid-late 1918 see Lih, *Bread and Authority;* Melanson, “Trial Run”: Aaron Retish, *Russia’s Peasants.* [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Malle notes essential differences between Black Earth grain-producing provinces that remained under Soviet rule during 1918-1920 and those that experienced front-line fighting and military occupation. Malle, *The Economic Organization*, 434. In Figes’s account of the “Peasant Wars” that challenged the Soviet state in 1919 and 1920, the overwhelming number of the most dangerous rural uprisings occurred immediately behind the frontlines as the Whites retreated from the area. Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*, 323-324. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Obzor sel’skogo khoziaistva v Penzenskoi gubernii*, 95. Millet was one of only two crops whose ‘yield increased or did not decrease after 1917.’ Malle, *The* *Economic Organization*, 432. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki* (RGAE) f. 1943, op. 3, d. 210, ll. 291, 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Obzor sel’skogo khoziaistva*, 117. RGAE f. 1943, op. 6, d. 9, l. 30. IZVP, no. 260, 1918. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Lih, *Bread and Authority*, 168-171. Also see Patenaude, “Peasants into Russians.” The Russian Review (1995) 54(4), 552-570. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Melancon, ““Trial Run,” 330-335. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Grain quotas for Siberia were set at 163 million *puds*, a quarter of the national target. Moscow sent 26,000 “militant cadres” to Siberia from regions of European Russia most affected by food shortages. N. Pereira, *White Siberia: The Politics of Civil War*, (Montreal, 1995), 161. For example, the grain targets assigned to Omsk and Altai provinces each exceed 30 million *puds*. *Ochet Sibirskogo Revoliutsionnogo Komiteta o deiatel’nosti ego za ianvar’-iun’1921 g.* (Novosibirsk, 1921), 7-9 as cited in Crompton, “Resistance and Authority,” 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. R.W. Davies (ed) *From Tsarism to the New Economic Policy* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1991), 271. Penza province experienced bad rye harvests due to lack of rain (1917 and 1920) or wet spring conditions (1919). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. V.V. Kabanov, *Krest’ianskoe khozaiastvo v usloviakh voennogo kommunizma* (Moscow, 1988), 187-188. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War,* 250; Malle, *The Economic Organization*, 401; RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, 1. 153. Penza zemstvo data indicates that pre-war rye exports from Penza averaged 5.525 million *puds* (1912) and ranged from 8.989 million *puds* in 1908 (a bumper crop) to 3.369 million *puds* in 1911 (a poor harvest). RGIA f. 457, op. 1, d. 1053, l. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Penzenskoi oblasti* (GAPO) f. r-9, op. 1, d. 239, 1. 68. *Raion* procurement committees replaced the district (*uezd*) committees at the outset of the 1919-1920 grain campaign, having oversight of 7-9 *volosts* as compared to 18-30 *volosts* for the former district committees. Peter Fraunholtz, “The Collapse and Rebuilding of Grain Procurement Authority in Civil War Russia: The Case of Penza, 1919” in Sarah Badcock, Liudmila Novikova, and Aaron Retish eds. Russia’s Home Front in War and Revolution 1914-1922 Book I: Russia’s Revolution in Regional Perspective (Bloomington: Slavica, 2015), 67-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Golos bedniaka* August 21, 1920 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (GARF) f. 5556, op. 3, d. 707, 1. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Malle, *Economic Organization*, 437. GAPO f. r-136, op. 1, d. 34, l. 103ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The area sown with rye in Penza decreased from 580,765 *desiatinas* for the 1918 harvest to 499,528 *desiatinas* for the 1919 harvest, a 14% decline.*Obzor sel’skoe khoziaistvo*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Obzor sel’skoe khoziaistvo*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. S.G. Wheatcroft and R.W. Davies, “Agriculture” in R.W. Davies, Mark Harrison and S.G. Wheatcroft eds. *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913–1945*(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The 1920 millet crop proved disastrous, and the rye harvest in Penza amounted to only 25 *puds* per *desiatina*, 5% lower than the poor 1919 harvest. GAPO f. r-9, op.1, d.278, 1.57; *Statisticheskii Ezhegodnik* (1918-1920 gg.) vol. 8, 247, cited in Malle, *The Economic Organization*, 437. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Malle, *The Economic Organization*, 401; RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, 1. 68ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Lih, *Bread and Authority*, 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 233, ll. 44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 288, l. 430ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Peter Fraunholtz, “Crisis and Pragmatism: The Evolution of the Soviet Procurement Apparatus in Civil War Era Penza, 1919-1920.” *Revolutionary Russia* (2022) 35 (1), 110-130. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Golos bednota* July 3, 1920. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. During 1919-1920, oats accounted for 48% of the total grain collected in Penza while rye accounted for only 20%. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 677, l. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Golos bedniaka* August 21, 1920. This approach was to be taken in neighboring Tambov province, but the plan was derailed by the Antonov revolt. Delano Dugarm, “Local Politics and the Struggle for Grain in Tambov, 1918-1921,” in Donald Raleigh ed. *Provincial Landscapes: Local Dimensions of Soviet Power, 1917-1953* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 677, l. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. GAPO f. r-147, op. l, d. 6, l. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 239, l. 64-64ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. GAPO f. r-147, op. 1, d. 6, l. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 223, l. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Golos bedniaka* January 16, 1920. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *Golos bedniaka* January 1, 1920. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Patenaude indicates that, overall, only 20% of peasant grain deposits was compensated with goods in 1920. Patenaude, “Peasants into Russians,” 556. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 212, l. 14-14ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. A similar strategy was used in neighboring Simbirsk province the previous summer, an example of What Lars Lih calls the “gubernatorial solution.” Lih, *Bread and Authority*, 212-213. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 212, l. 12-12ob.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 233, 1. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 233, ll. 99-100; GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 233, l. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 239, ll. 64-64ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. GAPO f. r-147, op. 1, d. 10, l. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. GAPO f. r-147, op. 1, d. 10, l. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 278, l. 57. Penza officials employed this short-term arrest strategy during 1919-1920 grain campaign. Fraunholtz, “The Collapse and Rebuilding,” 84-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 212, ll. 12-12ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 239, ll. 64-64ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *Golos bedniaka* October 6, 1920. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 278, l. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 96ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 55ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 96ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 55ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Landis, *Bandits and Partisans: the Antonov Movement in the Russian Civil War*, (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press), 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Holquist, *Making war*,244. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 212, 1. 10-10ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. During October, the deployment of 240 Red Army soldiers and 1,208 Labor Army soldiers reinforced the provincial apparatus’s procurement work. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, 1. 68. By contrast, food brigades numbering 3,500 were deployed for procurement in neighboring Tambov in September 1920. Delano Dugarm, “Peasant Wars in Tambov Province,” in Vladimir Brovkin ed. *The Bolsheviks in Russian Society: the Revolution and the Civil Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 68ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. GARF f. 5556, op. 3, d. 712, l. 52. During the previous fall, peasants chose overwhelmingly to deposit millet rather than oats, given the rather poor 1919 rye harvest, which (26.1 *puds* per *desiatina*) was only slightly better than the 1920 rye harvest (25 *puds* per *desiatina*). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. GARF f. 5556, op. 3, d. 711, l. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Dugarm, “Peasant Wars in Tambov,” 182. The 1919-1920 quota for Tambov was set at 31 million *puds. Izvestiia Narkomproda* no. 17-20, 1919, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Erik Landis, Between Village and Kremlin,” 74-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Dugarm, “Peasant Wars in Tambov,” 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. For discussion of the contributing factors to the Antonov revolt see Landis, *Bandits and Partisans*, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Landis, *Bandits and Partisans*, 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Strizhkov, *Prodovol’stvennve otriady y gody grazhdanskoi voiny I inostrannoi interventsii, 1917-1921* (Moscow, 1973), 277. Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia’s Civil War*, 384.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Dugarm, “Peasant Wars in Tambov,” 185-188. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 55; GAPO f. r-2, op. 4, d. 154, l. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, ll. 42-43. The four *raions* in Nizhnilomov ranged from 59% to 80% quota fulfillment. *Golos bedniaka* November 14, 1920. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Landis, *Bandits and Partisans*, 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, 1. 60. By end of October 1919, the Penza procurement apparatus had collected a mere 365,000 *puds* of rye (23% of the rye quota) since the beginning of the grain campaign. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 288, l. 529. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 98ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 55ob. Peasants were acquainted with the costs and benefits of timely quota fulfillment, the latter included receiving an allotment of basic manufactured goods and avoiding the closure of the local mill. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, 11. 56, 62.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 68ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. By mid-November 1919, few volosts across the province had managed to collect 30% of their grain quota. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 288, l. 531ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 212, l. 37ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 35ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, ll. 42-43. During autumn 1919, local reports indicated that experienced brigades produced procurement results quickly without using armed force in their three-*volost* zone of operation while inexperienced brigades often provoked confrontations with peasants that required their replacement by more capable units, though forced requisitioning was often required at that point. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 288, 1. 430. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 9ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 665, l. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Matthew Rendle, “Revolutionary tribunals and the origins of terror in early Soviet Russia,” *Historical research: the bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 2011-11, vol. 84 (226), 720. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 665 l. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Matthew Rendle, “The Battle for spaces and places in Russia’s civil war: revolutionary tribunals and state power, 1917-1922” *Historical research: the bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 2017-02, vol. 90, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. *Golos bedniaka*, November 10, 1920. For more on the Bolsheviks’ ”Logic of Mercy” see Matthew Rendle, *The State versus The People: Revolutionary Justice in Russia’s Civil War, 1917-1922* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020), 181-219. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. By 1920, the Revolutionary Tribunal had shifted its focus away from anti- Bolshevik opposition to “inefficient work” and “illegal trading.” Rendle, “Revolutionary tribunals,” 721. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. *Golos bedniaka* November 11, 1920. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. *Golos bedniaka* November 13, 1920; *Golos bedniaka* December 4, 1920. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Rendle, “The Battle for spaces,“ 110-111. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 45. November rye collections in Penza increased to 50, 873 *puds*, bringing the overall total to nearly half a million *puds* or 50% of the rye quota. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. GARF f. 5556, op. 3, d. 707, l. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*, 277-278. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 212, l. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Strizhkov, *Prodovol’stvennve otriady*, 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. In Saratov grain collections exceeded 10 million *puds.* Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War*, 268*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Malle reports a 43% drop in livestock holding in the Central Agricultural Region between 1916 and 1920, making oats were far less significant than rye for peasants in 1920. Malle, *The Economic Organization*, 440. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. *Narkomprod* also allotted Penza 1.5 million *puds* of potatoes for local consumption. RGAE f. 1943, op. 3, d. 667, l. 6ob. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Kotsonis, “’Face to Face,’” 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Melancon, “Trial Run,” 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)