**Crisis of Authority and the State Grain Monopoly:**

***Mnogovlastie* and the Food-Supply Crisis, Penza Province, 1917**

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**Abstract**

The Provisional Government pursued an ambitious effort to simultaneously transform the Russian state and resolve the pervasive food crisis. At each level, state officials’ actions and interpretations of food-supply policies were shaped by varying degrees of pressure from superiors and from their constituencies, embolden by the revolution to insist that their demands be met by local state organs. This article uses a provincial study of Penza, part of the fertile Black Earth zone on the edge of Central Russia and the Middle Volga region, for a close examination of the local manifestations of the Provisional Government’s implementation of the state grain monopoly. This study extends previous research on the structures and practices of power in provincial Russia during 1917. Proximity to resources and responsibility for local implementation of central policies led to the dispersal of authority, thus producing *mnogovlastie* or the multiplicity of locations of power, where completing claims for grain and local resources more generally were worked out. This examination follows that cycle through three essential stages that reflect the increasing rate and significance of the dispersal of food supply authority toward *volost* food-supply committees. This research illustrates how the dispersal of authority within the state apparatus was hastened by Penza’s series of provincial peasant congresses (April, May, July) which exhibited a predilection for openly accepting central decrees and goals, while also pushing forward with practical, often temporary measures to resolve urgent local resource issues. Finally, the evolution of grain registration in Penza suggests a significant degree of continuity between the late tsarist period and 1917, specifically perpetuation of a reformist vision of a modern state, penetrating into the village and into peasant households, and the continued inability of state institutions to either implement such a vision or marshal the coercion necessary to overcome local unwillingness to comply strictly with state instructions and obligations. This research finds that the state grain monopoly, rather than help reconstitute central political authority in 1917 Russia, contributed to the very dispersal of that authority that seriously undermined the Provisional Government well in advance of the Bolshevik take over in late October.

The food supply crisis of 1917 posed one of the most significant challenges for the Provisional Government as it sought to establish its political authority, construct a new state apparatus, and strike a functional balance between popular participation and institutional discipline in local food-supply organs. The new political elite intended to reestablish Russian society along modern, rational, and democratic lines yet fully expected to maintain the political and social hierarchy. The Provisional Government went to great lengths to instill in citizen-peasants a sense of discipline and duty to the nation.[[1]](#footnote-1) The intent was to transmit policy and implementation instructions from the center to the localities in order to enforce a state grain monopoly and thereby create a centripetal dynamic for both grain surpluses and political authority. While political elites sought to counter what they saw as village “darkness” contributing to rural anarchy, peasants had made great strides prior to and during WWI as political actors pressed to engage with an encroaching state and keen on finding ways to use reformist and mobilizing trends in any way possible to defend local interests.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The combination of revolutionary dynamics and provisioning inadequacies produced both a “crisis of bread” and a “crisis of authority.”[[3]](#footnote-3) The new regime, while internally divided, remained firm in delaying action on much-anticipated land reform until the conclusion of the war and the convening of a constituent assembly. Central authorities also firmly resisted persistent calls from many quarters to establish fixed prices on consumer goods, preferring instead to maintain fixed prices on grain only. The standard narrative holds that there was plenty of grain in Russia given the collapse of exports during the war, and without an ample supply of affordable consumer goods, peasant producers had no incentive to sell their grain at the state’s fixed price.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Provisional Government pursued two main solutions to the food supply crisis: maximize the sown area across rural Russia during both spring and midsummer planting seasons and employ grain registration to locate household surpluses the state could claim for redistribution to consuming provinces or districts (*uezdy*), using requisitioning when peasants refused to deposit their surpluses for the fixed price. Yet food supply policy implementation was a multi-tiered process in 1917 and the intensity and priorities of different levels in the state apparatus were frequently at odds with each other.

The national food crisis of 1917 was both a cause and product of numerous local food crises across Russia, urban and rural. The variety of local circumstances across rural Russia in 1917 led to regionally-specific approaches taken by peasants and their representatives to the grain monopoly, grain registration specifically, and the demands of their superiors.[[5]](#footnote-5) This article uses a provincial study of Penza, part of the fertile Black Earth zone on the edge of Central Russia and the Middle Volga region, for a close examination of the local manifestations of the Provisional Government’s implementation of the state grain monopoly.[[6]](#footnote-6) Before 1914, Penza exported a modest amount of rye in the autumn and depended on wheat and wheat flour shipments from outlying provinces during the winter and spring.[[7]](#footnote-7) In the interregional food-supply chain, Penza was both a producer-exporter and a consumer-importer in normal years.[[8]](#footnote-8) The case of Penza indicates that the country’s ample grain supply was nowhere near evenly distributed across rural Russia in 1917. Interregional transfers of grain to Penza stopped in February and a spring drought resulted in a 55% drop in the 1917 rye harvest in the normally productive Volga region.[[9]](#footnote-9) Thus, as the war-time mobilization of rural resources continued through 1917, Penza’s urban population and peasant households, growing more numerous as the pace of *razdel* accelerated, faced increasing uncertainty about their provisioning prospects for the final months of 1917 and well into 1918.[[10]](#footnote-10)

This article explores the various competing voices within the state food-supply apparatus. At each level, state officials’ actions and interpretations of food-supply policies were shaped by varying degrees of pressure from superiors and from their constituencies, now embolden to insist that their demands be met by local state organs. This study extends previous research on the structures and practices of power in provincial Russia during 1917.[[11]](#footnote-11) Proximity to resources and responsibility for local implementation of central policies led to the dispersal of authority, thus producing *mnogovlastie* or the multiplicity of locations of power, where completing claims for grain and local resources more generally were worked out. This article uses contestation over the terms and implementation of the state’s food-supply/ grain procurement policies to explore what Michael Hickey calls the “simultaneously vertical and horizontal competition for authority among actors at all geographic-administrative levels.[[12]](#footnote-12) Rather than merely following elite guidance, peasants acting on behalf of their own interests, played a significant role in pushing their officials to focus on immediate local concerns. The latter increasingly used their authority to take action to resolve what they understood as an overlapping national and local food supply crisis.

As others have argued, the revolutionary dynamics in rural Russia in 1917 followed the annual agricultural cycle.[[13]](#footnote-13) This examination of the emergence of *mnogovlastie* in Penza follows that cycle through three essential stages (March-May, June-July, and August-September) that reflect the increasing rate and significance of the dispersal of food supply authority toward local committees. This approach reveals three important features of the political and provisioning dynamics of 1917. First, provincial peasant congresses played a significant role on two fronts: while agreeing with the Provisional Government’s policies on delaying land reform and implementing the grain monopoly these bodies devised pragmatic, temporary measures to address overlapping national and local crises and empowered local committees to take control of and utilize local resources. Second, *volost* food-supply committees adjusted their approach to grain registration in response to local contingencies. From March through June, following the guidance of the provincial peasant congress, rather than open rejection most quietly resisted registration of the remnants of the 1916 harvest, especially as the extent of the spring drought grew more ominous. Eventually, the poor harvest that became apparent in late June and official recognition of the impact of the drought prompted a shift towards compliance, reinforced by a third peasant congress that supported implementation of the grain monopoly. Ultimately, local committees appropriated grain registration in the effort to establish official claims to consumer status and avoid the obligation to find and export grain surpluses. Once *volost* committees accepted the necessity of grain registration, they sanctioned grain embargos until the process was completed there and in neighboring *volosts*. Finally, the evolution of grain registration in Penza indicates a significant three-fold continuation from the late tsarist period through 1917, including: 1) the persistence of reformers’ visions of state penetration into the countryside and assessment of peasant households, 2) the continued inability of the state machinery to implement such a vision, and 3) the lack of coercion necessary to overcome local unwillingness to comply strictly with state instructions and obligations.[[14]](#footnote-14)

**Contested Authority: Central Decrees, Provincial Interpretations,**

**and Local Autonomy, March-May 1917**

The post-Tsarist visions of administrators at central and lower levels were shaped by the wartime mobilization efforts which, for very pragmatic reasons, had facilitated greater local administrative autonomy.[[15]](#footnote-15) Food-supply dynamics in Penza during the last months of 1916 and the first part of 1917 bear this out. Despite early indication of an above-average rye harvest, Zemstvo Chairman Kugushev reported in late September it would likely be impossible to export the expected five million *pud*s of rye and, furthermore, Penza’s consumption needs required importing four million *pud*s of wheat flour.[[16]](#footnote-16) By late November, flour shipments were delayed due to transport disruptions and embargos on grain exports in grain-producing areas.[[17]](#footnote-17) Kugushev’s hope to continue rye exports and maintain Penza’s food reserves through pre-war channels was challenged by the harsh reality of economic disintegration throughout Russia.[[18]](#footnote-18) When central food-supply officials shifted to the *razverstka* in late 1916, Penza officials concluded that the combination of central demands (3,859 million *pud*s of rye) and the needs of Penza’s urban population required procuring 6.64 million *pud*s.[[19]](#footnote-19) They parceled out this amount among the ten districts and district officials immediately imposed embargos to prevent grain from escaping their areas before quotas could be fulfilled. In January, local grain embargos along with the steep decline in imports contributed to a growing food crisis in district towns and consuming districts.[[20]](#footnote-20) By late February, the situation worsened as peasant carting of grain came to a halt and no further wheat shipments arrived in Penza.[[21]](#footnote-21) As provincial procurement official Barshev observed, “all the grain that was shipped out earlier was not compensated with shipments of wheat.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Chairman Kugushev informed his superiors in Petrograd that he planned to stop all shipments out of the province until mid-May and use rye flour supplies to stabilize the food situation.[[23]](#footnote-23)

As the Provisional Government and its provincial lieutenants attempted to resolve the food crisis, they expected to rely on the good will of a peasantry now liberated from Tsarist rule.[[24]](#footnote-24) Yet, from early on, central authorities struggled to control local interpretations of the new order. On March 25, the new regime established a state grain monopoly, declaring any grain in excess of what individual peasant households required for food, fodder, and seed was to be deposited with local food committees for a fixed price.[[25]](#footnote-25) Peter Gatrell notes that this price-control effort was “part of a broader vision of economic planning” that “entailed an unprecedented degree of state intervention” as well as citizen participation.[[26]](#footnote-26) Operationally, district and *volost* food-supply committees were to gather data on local grain surpluses and then procure grain for transport to the army and the grain-consuming population. The fixed price for grain was raised by 60% to incentivize peasants to voluntarily sell their surpluses to the state.[[27]](#footnote-27)  The sowing of the spring fields to ensure a robust 1917 harvest was an urgent concern as well. The Provisional Government sought to prevent the decline in the amount of cropland sown with the major food grains, which Agriculture Minister Shingarev relayed to provincial commissars on March 31.[[28]](#footnote-28) The urgency with which central authorities addressed significant aspects of the current and potentially long-term food crisis contributed to the dispersal of authority to local state organs from the spring of 1917 onwards.

Overlapping priorities played a key role as well. Concern about sown area prompted a provincial peasant congress convened in Penza (April 7-8) to empower local food-supply committees to maximize the amount of land in cultivation. While peasant delegates agreed that a general redistribution of land should await the convening of a Constituent Assembly, the prevention of a decline in sown area required immediate practical measures and these dominated the delegates’ discussions. They expressed great concern that "empty" estate land, state bank land, and even peasant land be sown completely.[[29]](#footnote-29) Dating from the emancipation settlement, private gentry and communal land was “highly intertwined.”[[30]](#footnote-30) The congress resolved, in the interest of the state, that all unused land should be sown and that the *volost* executive committees should take all measures toward that end, regardless of infringement of private property rights. These were to be temporary measures guided by instructions from the congress.[[31]](#footnote-31) The peasant congress empowered v*olost* committees to determine what land was likely to be left unsown and the right to decide who would cultivate those fields. [[32]](#footnote-32)

A central decree of April 11 also tasked *volost* food-supply committees with taking control of unsown land, particularly land that owners refused to sow, to ensure the maximum cultivation of spring crops. The Provisional Government's efforts to mobilize resources for the war meant that local committees, increasingly under peasant control, now had the authority to take temporary control of unsown land and to arrange its cultivation, either by agricultural workers or by renting it out to local peasants.[[33]](#footnote-33) Favorable published comment on the law indicated that it was essential for local food committees “to ensure that the land is actually tilled and to establish the causes when the lands remain idle.”[[34]](#footnote-34) At the village level, given persistent state appeals for grain for the army, peasants "kept the question of unsown land at the forefront ... to justify their claims against particular landlords."[[35]](#footnote-35) The April 11 decree reinforced the dispersal of authority to *volost* officials, already responding to local demands and empowered by provincial peasant congress resolutions, to initiate distribution of estate land to the local peasants. *Volost* officials found legitimation in food-supply policy for the temporary takeover of unused portions of the spring field on local estates by *volost* committees.

During May, the food-supply crisis received continued provincial and central attention. At the Second Provincial Peasant Congress (May 12–14), delegates again espoused a set of temporary measures concerning the fallow field that allowed peasants to cultivate unsown estate land until the 1918 harvest.[[36]](#footnote-36) Since prevailing labor and pricing conditions left many owners of landed estates reluctant to work their fields, the congress extended the authority of local committees to take control of estate land, and for peasants to take control of the land they had agreed to rent or sharecrop. To local officials and neighboring peasants, unused estate fields represented an opportunity to augment local food supplies, since the rye planted in August 1917 and harvested in 1918 would have to feed the local population until July of 1919. If the state required grain supplies for the front, *volost* committees were to take it upon themselves to ensure that peasants cultivate private land that might go unused.[[37]](#footnote-37) Subsequently, a May 30 central decree took a position on unsown lands similar to the Penza peasant congress’s resolution. The former stipulated that land left uncultivated by its owner due to a lack of resources was to be taken over by local committees. Further, it stressed that peasant use of such lands was not to affect a fundamental change in landholding but was intended only for the duration of the war-induced food supply crisis.[[38]](#footnote-38) In contrast to peasant congresses in other Volga provinces, some of which declared themselves an autonomous government, the Penza congress, in a decidedly pragmatic approach, agreed with the Provisional Government on land reform and the grain monopoly and came up with temporary measures to resolve the current crisis locally.[[39]](#footnote-39) The overlap between urgent central initiatives and those of the peasant congress empowered local committees to take control of local resources.

In its resolution on food-supply, the provincial peasant congress accepted Penza's status as a grain producing province and acknowledged that the current food-supply situation could be improved only through immediate implementation of the grain monopoly. Specifically, congress delegates resolved to accept the centrally-established fixed price for grain, but insisted that the Provisional Government set fixed prices for consumer goods. It called on all citizens of Penza who possessed grain reserves to cart them immediately to the collection stations; that all grain supplies be registered and all surplus grain be turned over to local supply-food committees.[[40]](#footnote-40) *Volost* committees were to use official consumption norms to determine which households possessed grain surpluses.[[41]](#footnote-41) Yet major questions remained concerning organization and order. At the All-Russian Food Supply Congress in Moscow on May 22, Agriculture-turned-Finance Minister Shingarev lamented the absence of an effective food-supply organization at the local level.[[42]](#footnote-42) Across the Volga’s grain-producing provinces, local food-supply committees were few and where they existed popular hostility towards them, and the prospect of state control over peasants’ surplus grain, was commonplace.[[43]](#footnote-43) Nonetheless, procurement officials established a May 31 deadline for completing the registration of grain supplies.[[44]](#footnote-44)

With the June military offensive on the horizon, central procurement authorities increased Penza’s expected grain exports from nine to fourteen freight cars per day.[[45]](#footnote-45) However, across the province, grain registration was carried out hastily by newly formed food-supply committees in the last days of May, and provincial authorities were dismayed with the initial results. In Insar district, the *volost* food-supply committees merely made rough estimates of local grain supplies, approximating the quantity of grain in storehouses by way of quick visual inspections (*na glaza*).[[46]](#footnote-46) One by-product of weak committee work in Zubovsk *volost* (Narovchat district) was that estate owners and others who possessed grain reserves were able avoid registration by selling off their surpluses in the nearby towns.[[47]](#footnote-47) In late-May, district officials called a series of congresses of *volost* food-supply chairmen to criticize the inadequate methods used by *volost* committees to "approximate" grain reserves. Provincial authorities believed that grain surpluses existed in rural Penza and ordered a second, "more exact," registration of grain to be conducted in June.[[48]](#footnote-48)

**Signs of Drought and its Impacts: The Potential for Continued Crisis and Local Control over Grain,** **June-July 1917**

Tensions emerged between the state’s aspiration to fully implement the grain monopoly and the dual role of *volost* officials as state administrators, subordinate to district superiors and subject to local pressure to protect local interests. Rural resistance to the grain monopoly in Penza intensified during the month of June. One factor complicating the grain registration was ominous weather conditions. Throughout most of the province, no rain had fallen since mid-May, and the dry June heat severely harmed the growth of the rye crop. Given persistent demands for grain for the Army and workers, signs of drought forced peasants to confront the possibility of a significant food shortage that might extend well into 1918. The fixed price for grain played a role as well. In early June, local peasants refused to sell grain at the fixed price to the Ruzaevka railroad employees, complaining that the salaries of the latter had just risen to 900 rubles per month.[[49]](#footnote-49)  In the absence of fixed prices for basic consumer goods, many peasants depleted their marketable surplus by turning their grain into *samogon* to sell for high prices in order to buy necessities.[[50]](#footnote-50) Having experienced drought-induced bad rye harvests in 1911and 1914, peasants and their officials understood that Penza’s classification as a producing province was variable and insufficient grain supplies requiring outside help was not unfamiliar.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Given the dire weather conditions and the amount of fieldwork required of peasants during June, *volost* food-supply committees had little appetite for conducting the second grain registration. Indeed, the slow pace of registration work allowed peasants to keep surplus grain in their localities later into June, when they would know clearly the 1917 harvest yield.[[52]](#footnote-52) While the Provisional Government claimed ownership of all the nation’s grain, early on it avoided using force to compel peasants to hand over their grain surpluses.[[53]](#footnote-53) Instead, the district food-supply committees sent soldiers to the *volosts* to work with the local committees to register grain. The impending June Military Offensive created a sense of urgency about procuring food to keep the front well-supplied. Penza officials were determined that a surplus of one million *puds* had to be collected and believed the peasants had to be educated about the importance of procurement work.[[54]](#footnote-54) Since the majority of soldiers were peasants themselves, procurement officials believed that they understood the needs of the Army and garrison towns would be more motivated than local peasants to conduct a proper determination of grain surpluses.[[55]](#footnote-55)  Indeed, Sarah Badcock contends that “the transformation of soldiers into soldier-citizens in 1917 made them an imposing presence in civilian life.” [[56]](#footnote-56)

Soldiers were mostly sent to *volosts* in groups of two to five. In one case, two soldiers worked alone on the grain registration while the *volost* committee did little to help them determine the extent of the local surplus. In one village, the soldiers registered 600 *puds* of surplus rye, but until the *volost*-wide registration results were known and villagers were satisfied that they would be losing no more grain than other villages, the grain was to remain with its owners.[[57]](#footnote-57) The historical record does not provide clarity on if or how these soldiers conducted the registration process. Was it likely that two soldiers managed to inventory and register the grain of every household in the village by themselves? In the nearly two decades since the Tsarist state first sought to investigate peasant households in order to assess and collect direct taxes, there had been no real state apparatus sufficient to acquire such detailed household information. In practice, local officials (elders) continued to employ local custom, apportioning obligations to households according to the number of shares of land allotments or the number of eaters. Since village elders faced no consistent outside pressure to assess individual households, local custom persisted.[[58]](#footnote-58) In all likelihood, the soldiers sent to locate surplus grain came to an agreement with the village officials about how much grain could be made available. Local officials would be inclined to provide some grain to keep outsiders from becoming more assertive yet try to minimize this amount considering the near certainty of a bad rye harvest.

Indeed, across the Volga region, the 1917 harvest was estimated to be roughly half of the 1909-1913 average gross harvest.[[59]](#footnote-59) Moreover, provincial and local authorities faced considerable harvest-yield variation, which heightened anxiety about self- provisioning until the next harvest in certain districts and *volosts*. In normally grain-producing Mokshan district, rye yields on peasant lands fell to between 20 and 45 *pud*s per *desiatina* while estate land produced between 50-70 *pud*s per *desiatina*.[[60]](#footnote-60) In parts of perennial grain-deficit Gorodishch district rye yields fell to catastrophic levels of 10-12 *pud*s per *desiatina*.[[61]](#footnote-61) And across six *volosts* in grain-consuming Insar district, peasant lands yielded between 15-25 *pud*s per *desiatina* while rye yields on estate land ranged from 29-43 *pud*s per *desiatina*.[[62]](#footnote-62) Moreover, drought had left rye grains too thin and brittle to be suitable for sowing of the fallow fields. Indeed, the bad 1917 harvest in numerous localities across Penza province threatened to prolong the food-supply crisis well into the coming year.

*Volost* food-supply committees prepared for the rye sowing by focusing on obtaining good quality seeds. Local officials already had allotted fallow estate fields to peasants, many of whom previously possessed either very little, or no land of their own. In Ladsk *volost* (Saransk district) for example, estate land covered an area three time greater than the land held by communal peasants.[[63]](#footnote-63) For local peasants the poor rye harvest resulted in insufficient seed stores to sow private lands turned over to them. A similar situation emerged in Issii *volost* (Insar district) where peasants who benefitted from the distribution of estate lands also lacked seeds.[[64]](#footnote-64) In Kostylev *volost*, where the harvest was somewhat better than in Issi, 1,000 *puds* of grain left over from the 1916 harvest was taken from the Vlasov estate by soldiers’ wives (*soldatki*) who had been given land, but had no seed to plant since they had been landless previously.[[65]](#footnote-65) District committees planned to redistribute surpluses from localities with higher harvest yields to peasants needing seeds, yet *volost* committees refused to allow surplus grain to be taken. Saransk district officials, together with representatives of 20 *volost* food-supply committees, declared such refusals unacceptable and dispatched soldiers to verify the extent of unshipped surpluses in those *volosts*.[[66]](#footnote-66)

As district officials struggled to erect a functioning redistribution mechanism, their *volost*-level subordinates turned to local estates in their search for to seeds. On July 4, the Cherkassk *volost* food-supply committee, with 1,660 *desiatinas* of land to be sown, needed 15,000 *puds* of rye seed which could not be provided from the poor-quality rye harvest on peasant land. The *volost* committee asked Kerensk district officials for permission to take higher quality rye from local estates.[[67]](#footnote-67) Elsewhere, *volost* committees did not wait for permission to take control of estate grain to maintain rye sowings at a high level. On July 9, Dolgorukov *volost* (Nizhnilomov district) food-supply authorities decided to requisition higher quality grain from the Golovkina-Saltykova estate for the fixed price in order to provide peasants with seeds for sowing communal and unsown estate land. In order to sow the fields left uncultivated by Golovkina-Saltykova, the committee took seed grain from the estate’s reserves as a loan until the 1918 harvest.[[68]](#footnote-68) The Vasersk *volost* food-supply committee (Mokshan district) arranged for peasants to replace their drought-stricken rye with higher quality grain from the Shakhovskii estate. The Vasersk committee requisitioned estate grain for the fixed price and exchanged it for peasant grain on a *pud* for *pud* basis plus a charge of 10 kopeks per *pud.*[[69]](#footnote-69)

Meanwhile central officials found themselves caught between concern over the rapid increase in rural disregard for property rights and their sense of urgency about the use of all available land to maximize food production. The former was seen as hindering the flow of grain from rural areas to consumers while the latter had serious implications for provisions for 1918 and beyond. Despite apprehension about the role of *volost* food supply committees in preventing the harvesting and sowing of privately owned land, a July 18 Food Supply Ministry directive sought to both establish institutional order and increase cultivation for the 1918 harvest.[[70]](#footnote-70) The Ministry reinforced the authority of *volost* committees by requiredthem to take appropriate measures to ensure both the harvest of crops and the sowing of winter rye fields.[[71]](#footnote-71) Across Penza, in the weeks before and immediately after the 1917 harvest, *volost* committees increasingly asserted more control over local resources to address the significant obstacles peasants faced in ensuring their short-term and long-term access to food.[[72]](#footnote-72)

**From Resistance to Appropriation: Grain Registration and the Dispersal of Authority in a Grain-Consuming Province, August-September, 1917**

On July 5, central authorities released the official list of provinces impacted by a bad harvest and Penza was among those provinces freed from the requirement of exporting grain to the front.[[73]](#footnote-73) Despite the poor Volga harvest, central officials concluded that Russia’s overall harvest was average and that grain redistribution from surplus to consuming areas could prevent starvation.[[74]](#footnote-74) Grain redistribution in the post-harvest period rested on registration of the grain supplies and new consumption norms set by the Food Supply Ministry officials at one *pud* of rye per person per month until August 1, 1918, 25% lower than those previously used in Penza.[[75]](#footnote-75)Provincial authorities focused on local redistribution from surplus districts and *volosts* to deficit areas and ordered that registration begin with inventories of the large estates and then move on to the private farmsteads (*khutors*). Only when the grain on these larger farms was registered should they turn attention to the grain reserves held by communal peasant households.[[76]](#footnote-76) As the fledgling procurement apparatus and deteriorating railroad operations significantly hampered the state’s effort to redistribute grain to consuming provinces, local officials in Penza took action in response to worsening circumstances to maintain control over local resources.[[77]](#footnote-77)

The food supply situation was a major topic at the Third Provincial Peasant Congress (August 7-8) and the resulting resolution accepted the basic premise of the state grain monopoly. The congress decided that surplus grain needed to be procured by local officials and redistributed to areas of shortage.[[78]](#footnote-78) Though no archival record of either the discussion for or against this resolution or the voting on it has survived, the decision to accept grain registration comes as no surprise since only three of the ten districts in Penza province were perennial grain-producers. Moreover, delegates from drought -impacted *volosts* within producing districts hoped to benefit from a grain redistribution plan for the province. In published reports, provincial officials underscored their complete reliance on *volost* officials to obtain and relay information on local grain reserves. They believed rapid completion of grain registration essential to guarding grain supplies against speculative selling and the distilling of *samagon* (moonshine). The congress’ resolution also called for fixed prices for all commodities, not just grain needed by the state, since current prices for consumer goods were out of reach for peasants selling their grain for 2.43 rubles per *pud*.[[79]](#footnote-79)

District officials in Penza faced the considerable challenge of managing the grain registration and redistribution among their *volosts*, numbering from 16 to 30, with a wide range of provisions circumstances.[[80]](#footnote-80) On one hand, were grain-producing *volosts* that might have deficit villages and on the other hand were grain consuming *volosts* that had a couple of grain-producing villages. In both cases, tensions arose about the potential for uneven burden sharing, as surplus-holding villages, anxious about their own food supply until August 1918, were resistant to turning over their grain. Significant in this calculation was that prospects for normally occurring resupply from outside the provinces appeared quite dim. District officials sought a completed registration to provide a clearer sense of the scale of redistribution needs and called for *volost* officials to get out of their offices and work on determining the extent of any surpluses and local deficits. In Nizhnilomov district, the harvest was well below average and district officials expected a 1.5 million *pud* overall grain shortage for the year. In Ashinev *volost*, for example, the harvest yield was perilously low. Nizhnilomov officials ordered *volos*t committee leaders to work personally on the grain registration in the villages to determine local needs precisely.[[81]](#footnote-81) On August 13, Narovchat district officials ordered *volost* committees to disperse to the villages to ensure quick completion of the threshing to prevent peasants from concealing unthreshed sheaves in haystacks during registration.[[82]](#footnote-82) Some district committees decided to transfer *volost* officials from impoverished areas where grain deficits had been discovered relatively quickly to other “more difficult” *volosts* to complete the grain registration.[[83]](#footnote-83) District officials hoped that outsiders from needy areas would provide the motivation needed to find grain surpluses that locals wanted to conceal.

The impact of drought as well as proximity to urban markets greatly influenced local efforts to establish control over grain movement. Where grain surpluses existed, *volost* officials argued that as long as the registration of peasant grain was in progress, it was not known whether grain reserves constituted *volost* surplus or merely what was needed for local distribution among needy peasants. In one typical example, as registration work started the Salov *volos*t, (Penza district) food-supply committee decided to ban the shipment of grain out of the *volost*. In addition, the committee enacted anti-*samogon* and anti-speculation decrees, and established guidelines for requisitioning surpluses for local redistribution.[[84]](#footnote-84) Rising concerns about food supplies in the city of Penza had prompted district officials to overlook the need to complete the grain registration in their efforts to gain control of estate grain for the provincial capital. In response, the Kazano-Por-Arkhangel’sk *volost* assembly (Penza district) prohibited grain shipments from the *volost* until officials could determine local needs.[[85]](#footnote-85) Increasingly, *volost* committees asserted their political authority to maintain control of surpluses until registration in every *volost* in the district was completed so that no *volost* had to give up a disproportionate share of their grain reserves. Now in the fourth year of the war, peasants were increasingly motivated to counter the potential for unfairness in the distribution of burdens associated with the state’s demand for local resources.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Rather than a narrative of late-summer dissent into rural anarchy, local officials took rational, pragmatic measures to protect local resources amidst growing anxiety about local food supplies. Instructions issued by the provincial authorities indicated that local committees start with grain registration on estates and *khutors* as well as peasant stocks. *Volost* food-supply committees increasingly took control of registered estate grain to ensure none left the *volost* before determining the extent of local needs. The grain registration process and results became the justification by which *volos*t food-supply officials claimed control over grain supplies at local estates to provide poorer peasants with consumption norms. Mikhailov *volost* food-supply officials decided on August 19 that grain from the Rusinov estate was needed by the local population and could not be shipped out of the *volost,* against the demands ofthe Mokshan district committee.[[87]](#footnote-87) In another case, the Ramzai *volost* committee, citing preliminary registration results indicating a 172,000 *pud* deficit, asked the district authorities for permission to use estate grain for distribution among those without land and peasants with small allotments. Ramzai officials went further and established a grain embargo until the registration was completed, thus halting shipment of 2,000 *puds* of grain intended as a loan to the city of Penza, per order of the Penza district committee.[[88]](#footnote-88) In late August, Insar district officials turned to local estates to obtain a four-month supply of rye for the city of Insar, yet local peasants refused to allow grain to leave the *volost*s.[[89]](#footnote-89) Peasants in Nizhnilomov district maintained control of local estate grain too, leaving district town residents threatened with hunger.[[90]](#footnote-90)

Grain registration produced an unintended narrowing of the channels of grain supply, prompting district officials to turn to armed coercion. As in Nizhnilomov, v*olost* resistance to the shipment of estate grain to district centers increasingly prompted authorities to mobilize armed force to regain control of estates. A central order of August 20, 1917 called for local officials to use armed force and “wholesale requisitioning, starting with the large holders of grain and with villages closest to the railways.”[[91]](#footnote-91) In late August, the Insar district officials requested a unit of soldiers from the local garrison to move throughout the localities and obtain grain from local estates for the town population.[[92]](#footnote-92) Likewise, Nizhnilomov district officials requested that soldiers from the near-by garrison be sent to take control of local estates and their grain reserves.[[93]](#footnote-93) The district committee concluded that it could obtained a two-month supply (12,000 *puds*) of estate rye for the town of Nizhnilomov only by military force.[[94]](#footnote-94) District authorities resorted to deployment of soldiers with increasing frequency as the summer wore on, but were able to establish their authority over neither their *volost* subordinates nor local resources.[[95]](#footnote-95)

Amidst the crisis, the Provisional Government resorted to doubling the fixed price for grain on August 27 in an effort to hasten the pace of grain procurement. Given the state’s reluctance to establish fixed prices for consumer goods, this measure was aimed at improving the terms of trade for peasant grain producers, yet it merely reinforced local intent to hold on to grain reserves.[[96]](#footnote-96) For peasants with low harvest yields and no off-farm income, the doubling of the fixed price was potentially devasting. They grew more anxious about the prospects for maintaining their subsistence until the next harvest having to pay higher prices to obtain enough food until then.[[97]](#footnote-97) An increasing number of *volost* committees petitioned their superiors about restoring the fixed price to its previous level and in the meantime kept the previous price in place.[[98]](#footnote-98) The Kazano-Maidan *volost* (Narovchat district) food-supply committee registered 6,752 *puds* of grain on the Kolpashnokov estate and distributed 1,180 *puds* of this to the local population for 2.82 rubles per *pud*, well under the new fixed price.[[99]](#footnote-99)

Having failed to counter *volost* committee control over local grain reserves, district officials reverted to calling on provincial superiors to obtain grain shipments from outside the province. By early September, nine out of ten district committees in Penza petitioned the provincial committee to be sent grain shipments from outside the province in order to prevent localized starvation.[[100]](#footnote-100) Food Supply Ministry and provincial officials remained convinced, however, that Penza would have to rely on grain reserves within the province. Ministry agent Zubrick told a congress of district food-supply officials (September 3-4) that force should be used to redistribute grain within the province and within the districts. According to Zubrik, consumption had to be reduced in “surplus” areas in order to find grain to redistribute to hungry areas nearby. He insisted that to conduct an accurate registration in one *volost*, representatives of other *volosts* had to participate. To counter *volost* prohibitions on grain exports, the Congress of District Food Supply Officials decided to ship out estate grain quickly, even before the registration was completed.[[101]](#footnote-101)

Despite Zubrick’s urgings and the congress’ resolutions, *volost* committees’ control over local grain supplies persisted. Throughout Penza province, the transport of food from the countryside to the towns was interrupted for over a month by local control over grain supplies.[[102]](#footnote-102) On September 21, the Mokshan district food-supply committee informed provincial authorities that it would not be able to ship out 70% of the estate grain ordered from the district until the registration was completed. Due to a perceived grain deficit, the local population would not permit grain to leave the area. Caught between provincial redistribution plans and peasant bans on grain shipments until the grain registration process was complete, the district committee, in frustration, resigned en masse.[[103]](#footnote-103) With pressure from the towns for grain shipments mounting through September and October, in many *volosts* registration results indicated that the extent of local rye deficits necessitated taking control of the rye reserves on local estates. Though district officials requested armed force to guard estates and commandeer the grain, local officials secured control over the grain well before force could be deployed, as was the case at the Shteiman and Orlov estates in Saransk district.[[104]](#footnote-104) In late fall, Chertkov *volost* authorities (Chembar district) decided that grain supplies on local estates should be sold to the needy population for 2.43 rubles per *pud* of rye and 2.4 rubles per *pud* of oats.[[105]](#footnote-105) In Beketov *volost* (Penza (district), peasants adopted a resolution calling for the requisitioning of grain from the Grachev estate for a fixed price of 2.25 rubles per *pud*.[[106]](#footnote-106)

Reporting to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Penza Provincial Commissar, F.F. Fedorovich, noted that local officials started the registration process and imposition of consumption norms too late, when fears of hunger that followed the bad harvest left peasants unwilling to part with their grain surpluses.[[107]](#footnote-107) *Volost* committees sought to keep control of surpluses until registration in every *volost* in the district was completed, so that it could establish the most viable claim to consumer status and make sure that it would not give up a grain reserves that could not be easily replaced later. District committees turned to estates for grain and peasant resistance to the shipment of estate grain to district centers increasingly prompted authorities to mobilize armed force to regain control of estates. Provincial officials, pessimistic about the prospect for receiving grain shipments from other provinces, encouraged district officials to take a tougher, more resolute action against peasants and *volost* officials resisting the grain monopoly. Yet by mid-October, the Food Supply Ministry conceded that it had lost control over the provinces and “had little impact on local affairs.”[[108]](#footnote-108) Even before the Bolsheviks’ takeover in Petrograd in late October, district and provincial officials in Penza saw their authority in the province fade away as *volost* control over local affairs and local estates became widespread.

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The Provisional Government pursued an ambitious effort to simultaneously transform the Russian state and resolve the pervasive food crisis. Yet, food policy implementation in 1917 was a multi-tiered process with various levels in the state apparatus facing different political pressures. Central policies aimed at increasing sown area and the registration of grain surpluses contributed to the dispersal of political authority from provincial and district to *volost* committees during the course of 1917, where the latter increasingly used their authority to take action to resolve what they understood as an overlapping national and local food supply crisis. Facing no effective monitoring or institutional discipline from above, v*olost* food-supply committees adjusted their approach to grain registration in response to local contingencies and the poor 1917 harvest prompted a shift from quiet resistance to active appropriation of grain registration in the effort to establish official claims to consumer status. The state grain monopoly rather than help reconstitute central political authority in 1917 Russia contributed to the very dispersal of that authority that seriously undermined the Provisional Government well in advance of the Bolshevik take over in late October.

The dispersal of authority within the state apparatus was hastened by Penza’s series of provincial peasant congresses which exhibited a predilection for openly accepting central decrees and goals, while also pushing forward with practical, often temporary measures to resolve urgent local resource issues. The empowerment of *volost* food-supplycommittees from above and below that began in April reached its zenith in August. Once *volost* committees accepted the necessity of grain registration, they sanctioned grain embargos until the process was completed there and in neighboring *volosts*. Neighboring *volosts* were challenged to do the same to establish claims to consumer status and protect local grain supplies for local consumption. District officials’ saw grain registration result in a collapse of their control over grain supplies that they might obtain from peasants or estates for local redistribution and the provisioning of towns. Provincial officials lost all practical authority to redirect grain supplies from districts with surpluses to those with deficits, prompting its shift from persuasion to the use of armed force, however minimal or late in coming.

The evolution of grain registration in Penza suggests a significant degree of continuity between the late tsarist period and 1917. The first months of revolution enabled and perpetuated a reformist vision of a modern state, penetrating into the village and into peasant households, first with taxation and then grain registration. The events of summer-early fall 1917 indicate the continued inability of state institutions to either implement such a vision or marshal the coercion necessary to overcome local unwillingness to comply strictly with state instructions and obligations. The Provisional Government possessed neither carrots nor sticks.After October 1917, when the next stage of the revolution commenced while the grain monopoly continued, peasants and their local officials in Penza were prepared and determined to engage with the Bolsheviks over civil war procurement burdens.

1. Sarah Badcock, “Talking to the People and Shaping the Revolution: The Drive for Enlightenment in Revolutionary Russia” in *The* *Russian Review*, 65 (October 2006) 617-636; Aaron Retish, *Russian Peasants in Revolution and Civil War: Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914-1922* (Cambridge, 2008), 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This paper builds on a number of important works on peasant engagement with the state prior to and during WWI including Judith Pallot, *Land Reform in Russia, 1906-1917: Peasant Responses to Stolypin’s project of rural transformation* (Oxford, 1999); Mark Baker, “Rampaging *Soldatki*, Cowering Police, Bazaar Riots” in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* vol 35(2-3) 2001, 137-155; Corinne Gaudin, “Rural Echoes of World War I: War Talk in the Russian Village” in *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, Neu Folge, Bd. 56, H.3 (2008), 391-414; Colleen Moore, “Land for Service: Russian Peasant Views of a Postwar Land Settlement during World War I,” in Lindenmeyr, Read, and Waldron eds. *Russia’s Homefront in War and Revolution, 1914-1922. Book 3. National Disintegration and Reintegration* (Bloomington, 2018), 297-320. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lars Lih, *Bread and Authority* *in Russia, 1914-1921* (Berkeley, 1990), 57-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Central Producing Region’s (CPR) 1915-16 bumper harvest resulted in the build-up of peasant reserves and ample exports to northern consumers. While the 1916 harvest was 10% lower than the pre-war average this did not significantly impact the provisioning of consuming regions. Peter Gatrell, *Russia’s First World War*: *A Social and Economic History* (Oxfordshire, 2005), 166, 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Badcock, “1917 in the Provinces” in Daniel Orlovsky ed., *Companion to the Russian Revolution* (Hoboken, 2020), 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Liudmila Novikova argues that provincial studies have reshaped our understanding of the revolution in the provincial setting. *Novikova,* “The Russian Revolution from a Provincial Perspective” *Kritika*, vol 16, no 4, 769-785. These works include Donald Raleigh, *Revolution on the Volga: Saratov 1917 (Ithaca, 1986)*; Orlando Figes*, Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga countryside in Revolution, 1917-1921* (Oxford 1989)*;* Sarah Badcock, *Politics and the People in Revolutionary Russia: A Provincial History* (Cambridge, 2007)*;* Retish, *Russian Peasants.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. N.D. Kondratiev classified Penza as producing province with a net pre-war grain surplus of 7.05 million *puds**.* Kondratiev, *Rynikh xlebov i ego regulierovania vo vremia voiny i revolutsii (Moscow, 1991)*, 95-96; Located in the CPR, Penza experienced a prolonged pre-war decline in per capita grain production of grain. Stephen Wheatcroft, “Crises and the Condition of the Peasantry in Late Imperial Russia,” in Kingston-Mann & Mixter eds. *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 1800-1921* (Princeton, 1991), 128-172. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Regular poor harvests made Penza’s exportable grain quite variable. In 1914 across the CPR the harvest was poor, but consumption was not jeopardized because grain was imported from the Southern Producing Region and Eastern Producing Region and peasants relied on reserves left from the bumper 1913 harvest. Gatrell, *Russia’s First World War*, 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Figes, *Peasant Russia*, 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Military experience and an acceleration of household partitioning enhanced the role of younger male peasants in the village. Orlando Figes, “The Russian Revolution of 1917 and Its Language in the Village” *The Russian Review* vol.56(3) 1997,” 336-337. R*azdel* often left a young nuclear family economically vulnerable due to its limited labor capacity. Robert Johnson, “Family Life Cycles and Economic Stratification: Case study in Rural Russia” *Journal of Social History*, Spring 1997,” 724. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Sarah Badcock, “Structures and Practices of Power: 1917 in Nizhegorod and Kazan’ Provinces,” in *Russia’s Homefront in War and Revolution, 1914-1922. Book 1. Russia’s Revolution in Regional Perspective* (Bloomington, 2015), 355-382; Alistair Dickins, “Rethinking the Power of the Soviets: Krasnoiarsk, March-October 1917.” Journal of Modern Russian History and Historiography 9, no. 1 (2016), 223-250; Daniel Orlovsky, “What was Power in 1917” in Russia’s Home Front in War and Revolution 1914-1922 Book 4: The Struggle for the State (2018), 177-198; Michael Hickey, “’Who Controls these Woods?’ Forests and *Mnogovlastie* in Smolensk in 1917”, in *Revolutionary Russia,* vol. 32(2) 2019, 197-225. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Hickey, “’Who Controls these Woods?’”, 210-211. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Figes, *Peasant Russia*, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Provincial officials’ aspirations and frustrations with registration of household surpluses were nothing new. Late-tsarist tax assessment goals envisioned the “most detailed intervention’ in the village.” However, the state failed to develop the capacity to “hold peasants individually accountable.” Yanni Kotsonis, “’Face-to-Face’: The State, the Individual, and the Citizen in Russian Taxation, 1863-1917,” *Slavic Review* 63, no. 2 (Summer 2004), 239-240. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Alaistair Dickins argues that this experience “framed visions of local autonomy within a “state’ context.” Dickins, “Rethinking the Power of the Soviets,” 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The provincial zemstvo estimated the average rye yield was 63 *pud*s per *desiatina*, slightly above average. *Materialy po voprosy ob ustanovlenii tversdykh tsen na khlebnye produkty do urozhaia 1917* *goda* Chast’ II, p. 146. Fall rains significantly damaged spring prompting peasants to substitute rye for oats for fodder. RGIA f. 457, op. 1, d. 1053, l. 5. Kugushev’s data show pre-war rye exports from Penza ranged from 8.989 million *puds* in 1908 to 3.369 million *puds* in 1911, the average being 5.526 million *puds* of exported rye in 1912. RGIA f. 457, op. 1, d. 1053, l. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Shipments of wheat flour from mills in Simbirsk province halted when wheat shipments did not arrive from suppliers in Tobolsk. RGIA f. 456, op. 1, d. 124, l. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. On the interregional food-supply breakdown see Kimitako Matsuzato, “Interregional Conflicts and the Collapse of Tsarism: The Real Reason for the Food Crisis in Russia after the Autumn of 1916,” in M.S. Conroy, ed. *Emerging Democracy in late Imperial Russia (Boulder, 1998)*, 281-292 and Gatrell, *Russia’s First World War*, 166-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGIA) f.456, op. 1, d. 110, l. 108; RGIA f. 456, op. 1, d. 124, l. 10. On the Rittikh *razverstka* see Lih, *Bread and Authority*, 48-56 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Chernozem*, February 22, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Chernozem*, February 24, 1917. Anthony Heywood suggests that freight traffic declined in January and February 1917 compared to 1916 due to abnormally cold weather. Heywood, “Imperial Russia’s Railways at War, 1914-1917,” in Read, Waldron, and Lindenmeyr eds. *Book 3 National Disintegration*, 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Chernozem*, February 22, 1917. Published *razverstka* totals indicated that Penza authorities purchased 3.923 million *pud*s of rye and flour or 101% of the assigned rye quota and exported a total of 2.27 million *pud*s, 90% of which was sent to the army. Kimitako Matsuzato, “*Prodrazverstka* A.A. Rittikh,” *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, tom XIII (Saporo, 1995), 178; RGIA f. 456, op. 1, d. 124, l. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Chernozem*, February 24, 1917. While embargo power was confined to grain-producing provinces near the front initially they were extended to interior provinces where governors increasingly employed them to halt shipments out of their jurisdiction to the dismay of norther consuming provinces. Gatrell, *Russia’s First World War*, 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. On March 20, the post of land captain was abolished, leaving increasingly peasant-elected committees to manage local affairs. Robert Browder, and Kerensky, A. eds. *Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*, vol. II (Stanford, 1961), no. 466, 524. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Browder and Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government vol. II,* no. 534, 618-621. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Gatrell, *Russia’s First World War*, 162-163, 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Graeme Gill, *Peasants and Government in the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1979), 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Lih, *Bread and Authority*, 91; *Ekonomicheskoe poluzhenie Rossii nakanune Velikoi Oktiabrskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Revolutsii: dokumenty i materialy* Chast III, 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. During the war, the marked decline in agricultural labor and the shortage of machinery resulted in reduced sown area on private lands. Gatrell, *Russia’s First World War*, 155-158. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Evgeny Finkel et al, “(Good) Land and Freedom (for Former Serfs): Determinants of Peasant Unrest in European Russia, March-October 1917” *Slavic Review*, vol 76 (3) 2017, 719-720. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. *Izvestiia Penzenskogo Soveta Soldatskykh, Rabochykh, i Krest’ianskykh Deputatov* (Hereafter IZVP) no.9, 1917 cited in *Podgotovka i pobeda Velikoi Oktiabr'skoisotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii v Penzenskoi gubernii: sbornik dokumentov* (Penza, 1957), no. 21, 57-61. Hereafter Podgotova. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Broshiur "Krestianskii soiuz v Penzenskoi gubernii" (Nizhnilomov, 1917), 17-20, cited in *Podgotova*, no. 17, 52-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. “The Law on the Protection of Crops.” Browder and Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government vol. II*, no. 536, 621-622. Also see Lih, *Bread and Authority*, 91. Gill suggests that the urgent April 11 decree resulted in confusion about the respective responsibilities of the land and food-supply committees. Gill, *Peasants and Government*, 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *Den’* no. 36, April 17, 1917 in Browder and Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government vol. II*, no. 538, 623-624. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Lih, *Bread and Authority*, 93-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Penzenskoi Oblasti (GAPO) f. r -979, op. 1, d. 1, 11. 143-144, published in *Podgotovka*, no. 35, 78-80. Fallow tillage for the winter rye crop had to occur after hay mowing late May and before the rye harvest in early July. David Kerans, “The Workhorse in Peasant Agriculture: An Exploration,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, vol 27, no. 3 (Fall 2000), 251-283, 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. IZVP no. 21, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Gill, *Peasants and Government*, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Figes discusses the Samara peasant congress in detail and while he asserts that the Penza peasant congress was radical it fell far short of defying the Provisional Government. Figes, *Peasant Russia,* 43-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. IZVP no. 21, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Provincial officials set the norms at four *pud*s of rye per person until the new harvest (1.33 *pud*s per month) and 18 *pud*s of rye per horse, since there were barely enough oats for the spring sowing. VSTP no. 8, May 3, 1917 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. *Vestnik Penzenskago Gubernskago Ispolnitel’nago Komiteta i Komissariata* (Hereafter VSTP) no. 26, 1917. Established in early May, the Food Supply Ministry was not fully separate from the Agricultural Ministry until July. N. V. Beloshapka, *Vremennoe Pravitel’stvo v 1917: mekhaniazm formirovaniia i finktsionirovania* (Moscow, 1998), 139. Administration of food-supply remained controlled by Shingarev in the Finance Ministry until June 1. Gill, *Peasants and Government*, 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Badcock, “Structures and Practices of Power,” 372. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Gill, *Peasants and Government*, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *Narodnoe Prodovol' stvie: Gazeta Penzenskogo Gubernskago Prodovol’stvennago Komiteta* no. 2, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. *Narodnoe Prodovol'stvie* no. 2, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Narodnoe Prodovol'stvie* no. 3, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *Narodnoe Prodovol'stvie* no. 1, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *Narodnoe Prodovol' stvie* no. 2, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. *Narodnoe Prodovol' stvie* no. 2, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Gatrell, *Russia’s First World War*, 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Spring drought resulted in inadequate grazing of livestock in June, typically prompting peasants to keep more of their grain for fodder. Kerans, “The Workhorse,” 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Aaron Retish, “Peasant Dreams and Aspirations in the Russian Revolution,” in Daniel Orlovsky ed., *Companion to the Russian Revolution* (Hoboken, 2020), 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. *Narodnoe Prodovol'stvie* no. 3, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. VSTP no. 80, 1917; Badcock, “Talking to the People,” 626. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Badcock, “1917 in the Provinces,” 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. *Narodnoe Prodovol 'stvie* no. 2, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Yanni Kotsonis, *States of Obligation: Taxes and Citizenship in the Russian Empire and Early Soviet Republic* (Un. Toronto Press 2014), 257-292. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Figes, *Peasant Russia,* 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 4, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 14, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 9, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 9, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 20, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 20, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 10, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 5, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 12, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no.12, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Gill, *Peasants and Government*, 83-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Browder and Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government* vol. II,no. 489, 563-565. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. While there was considerable regional variation, peasants in some provinces cultivated more land in 1917 than in 1916. Gatrell, *Russia’s First World War*, 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. GAPO f. r-9, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 105-109. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. IZVP, no 92, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 24, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 21, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Anthony Heywood suggests that freight traffic declined through the spring and summer of 1917 due to the decline in labor productivity in the aftermath of the February Revolution. “Imperial Russia’s Railways,” 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. IZVP no. 91, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. IZVP no. 91, 1917. On August 4 the state announced that fixed prices would be lowered if peasants delayed in depositing their surplus grain or if grain was requisitioned. Gill, *Peasants and Government*, 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. With the post of land captain abolished, district officials had an no intermediary official to monitor five or six *volost* committees. Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government* vol. II, no. 466, 524. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 19, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 24, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 19, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. VSTP September 7, 1917.. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. VSTP November 2, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Gaudin, “Rural Echoes,” 399. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 24, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 20, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. IZVP, no. 107, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. VSTP September 14, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. K. I. Zaitsev and N. V. Dolinskii, “Organization and Policy,” in Struve, ed. *Food Supply in Russia during the War* (New Haven, 1930), 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. IZVP, no. 107, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. VSTP September 14, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. VSTP September 21, 1917

    [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Badcock finds a similar dynamic began a month earlier in Kazan province. “Structures and Practices of Power,” 379. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Lih, *Bread and Authority*, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. For a discussion of the impact of a reduced harvest on rural laborers who must purchase their subsistence see Sen, A. *Poverty and Famines: an essay on entitlements and deprivation* (Oxford, 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. VSTP November 2, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 24, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 24, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 24, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Owen, *The Russian Peasant Movement, 1906-1917*, 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. *Narodnoe Prodovol’stvie* no. 25, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. VSTP October 26, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. VSTP December 14, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. VSTP December 9, 1917. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. GAPO f. R-979, op. 1, d.45, 11. 25-29, published in *Podgotovka* no. 78, 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. S. E. Rudneva, *Predparliament Oktiabr’ 1917 goda: Opyt istoricheskoi rekonstruktsii. (Moscow, 2006)*, 174-175. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)