



Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914-1921 (Studies on the History of Society and Culture)

Lars T. Lih

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Between 1914 and 1921, Russia experienced a national crisis that destroyed the tsarist state and led to the establishment of the new Bolshevik order. During this period of war, revolution, and civil war, there was a food-supply crisis. Although Russia was one of the world's major grain exporters, the country was no longer capable of feeding its own people. The hunger of the urban workers increased the pace of revolutionary events in 1917 and 1918, and the food-supply policy during the civil war became the most detested symbol of the hardships imposed by the Bolsheviks.

Focusing on this crisis, Lars Lih examines the fundamental process of political and social breakdown and reconstitution. He argues that this seven-year period is the key to understanding the Russian revolution and its aftermath. In 1921 the Bolsheviks rejected the food-supply policy established during the civil war; sixty-five years later, Mikhail Gorbachev made this change of policy a symbol of perestroika. Since then, more attention has been given both in the West and in the Soviet Union to the early years of the revolution as one source of the tragedies of Stalinist oppression.

Lih's argument is based on a great variety of source material—archives, memoirs, novels, political rhetoric, pamphlets, and propoganda posters. His new study will be read with profit by all who are interested in the drama of the Russian revolution, the roots of both Stalinism and anti-Stalin reform, and more generally in a new way of understanding the effects of social and political breakdown.

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