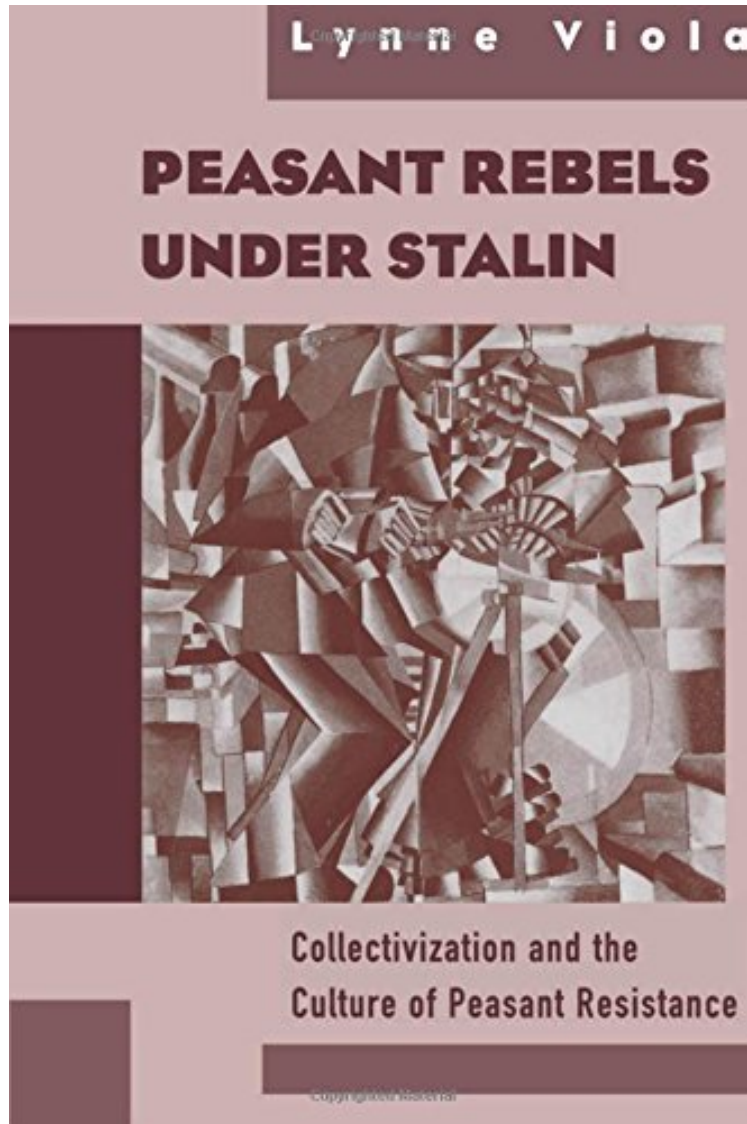


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# Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance

Lynne Viola

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**Lynne Viola : Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. New twist on an old taleBy R. L. HuffMs. Viola has done an

excellent job fleshing out the archaeology of village Russia in a pivotal era. While peasant society has been well-plowed regarding the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, its response to the "third revolution from above" has been murkier. But it was not the terra incognita as some might suggest. The essentials of this story were known from the beginning. Ms. Viola is right on stating, on page 235: "Collectivization encapsulated the original fault lines of the Bolshevik revolution, between a minority class in whose name the Communists professed to rule and the majority peasantry whose very reality appeared to block the revolution." But the Manichean world of Red/White was already well-established under Soviet rule, city and country both. Collectivization would not otherwise have been possible. I also take some issue with a statement on p. 238, when she writes that the peasant rebellion of the first collectivization drive was "the most serious episode in popular resistance experienced by the Soviet state after the Russian Civil War." This is so \*only if\* the line is drawn prior to WW II. The upsurge in nationality-based violence - from both state and ethnic minorities - in the wake of the Nazi advance was surely equal to the class-induced turmoil of the collectivization period. Her conclusion - that peasants made the collective farm their own tool of support - is spot on. Post-Soviet decollectivization was initially resisted by the very class who'd first fought the system. There were numerous reasons for this, which Ms. Viola enumerates: outmigration, education, military service, improved rural-urban contact, upward mobility (for some), the introduction of private plots and produce markets, and the social benefits and improved working conditions of the kolkhoz. Let me also add that Great Russian patriotism during WW II helped transfer peasant resentments into acceptable channels against an outside (and arguably worse) aggressor. Outsiders - whether Nazi generals, cold war planners, or Western academics - have consistently floundered in such matters when concocting schemes for reform and liberation of the Soviet countryside. The collective farm, like the Soviet regime itself, became *nashi* - "ours." Not, to be sure, without reservations and ambivalence: much like Americans when defining their society as a democracy. 11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. *New Insights on Peasant Rebellion* By A Customer In an original new work of social history on the early Stalinist era, Lynne Viola examines an aspect of Soviet collectivization hitherto unconsidered, namely that of intense peasant resistance to the policy. Historians traditionally conceived of Stalin's policies in the countryside in purely totalitarian terms. These focused primarily or even entirely on an overbearing regime whose subjects were simply regarded as victims. Viola, in a superb example of historical revisionism, allows for the possibility of resistance by those once thought to have played little if any role during these years. In Viola's countryside the traditional victims of collectivization, the peasants of Ukraine, the Russian Volga, the Northern Caucasus, and other regions were just as influential in the events as those making and enforcing collectivization policies. Viola focuses on nearly all aspects of peasant revolt during the years of collectivization, from the seemingly irrational mass destruction of livestock to apocalyptic rumor mongering to the more everyday forms of rebellion like undermining Soviet grain collection efforts. Very few segments of rural society are left untreated, and perhaps the most thoroughly considered are women. Women were the agents of much peasant resistance precisely because Soviet authorities gave them more leeway due to their perceived political ignorance and naivete. In other words, those who are traditionally seen as the most vulnerable were in many ways among the most influential. For those wishing to strengthen their traditional conceptions of Stalinist society, Viola's landmark study will prove to be a serious disappointment, for it confirms very little of what was previously thought about the process of collectivization. Instead, her work challenges us with an entirely new vision. Viola meticulously utilizes an impressive collection of archival materials to fashion her arguments, and at the same time she remains open to the worthiest contributions in the fields of peasant, gender, and religious studies. Those interested in these fields as well as in Soviet history in general will gain an important perspective from one of the twentieth century's most important episodes. Viola, a leader among Western scholars of the early Soviet era, has made a most invaluable contribution to its literature.

The first book to document the peasant rebellion against Soviet collectivization, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin* retrieves a crucial lost chapter from the history of Stalinist Russia. The peasant revolt against collectivization, as reconstructed by author Lynne Viola, was the most violent and sustained resistance to the Soviet state after the Russian Civil War. Conservative estimates suggest that over the course of the 1920s and early 1930s, more than 1,100 people were assassinated, more than 13,000 villages rioted, and over 2.5 million people participated in this active struggle of resistance. This book is about the men and women who tried to preserve their families, communities, and beliefs from the depredations of Stalinism. Their acts were often heroic, but these heroes were homespun, ordinary people who were driven to acts of desperation by cruel and brutal state policies. This is a study of peasant community, culture, and politics through the prism of resistance. Based on newly declassified Soviet archives, including previously inaccessible OGPU (secret police) reports, Viola's work documents the manifestation in Stalin's Russia of universal strategies of peasant resistance in what amounted to a virtual civil war between state and peasantry. This book is must reading for scholars of Soviet history, Stalinism, popular resistance, and Russian peasant culture.

"An important contribution to the social history of collectivization, the Soviet peasantry, and peasant resistance in general." --Choice "This is an impressively researched and well written study that will surely become a standard work

on Soviet collectivization and peasant revolt. It is a book steeped in the comparative literature of peasant studies as well as in Soviet archival materials, and social historians outside the Russian field should find it no less engrossing and valuable than their colleagues in Russian/Soviet history."--Journal of Social History"Viola merits praise for drawing new attention to the question and for recovering lost voices who nearly drowned in the cataclysms of recent times."--Agricultural History"Viola documents each of her major themes in a meticulous and compelling way thereby making Peasant Rebels under Stalin an impressive scholarly achievement. Her work breaks new ground..."--Canadian Slavonic Papers"Peasant Rebels Under Stalin will undoubtedly become the standard work for understanding the stages and wide variety of responses to the Soviet party-state's violent assault on the countryside and rural culture generally."--Slavic About the AuthorLynne Viola is Professor of History and a member of the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Toronto. Her previous books include *The Best Sons of the Fatherland* (OUP, 1987), *A Researcher's Guide to Sources on Soviet Social History* (co-editor, 1990), and *Russian Peasant Women* (co-editor, OUP, 1992).