The Bureaucracy of Revolution: Lenin, *The Soviets at Work*, and the Russian Civil War

JEREMY KILLION

With the centennial of the Russian Revolution rapidly approaching, scholars of European history will undoubtedly devote much of their time and effort in attempting to understand this pivotal event that changed the course of European history through the twentieth century and beyond. Lenin, in particular, would likely be a subject of scrutiny, due to his lead role in the revolution that swept across Russia, as well as his prolific writings on the subjects of communism and revolution. The Soviets at Work, published shortly after the outbreak of the Revolution in 1917, is one of these writings. This 45-page manifesto, published by the Rand School of Social Science in at least five editions in the few years following the revolution, was written chiefly about the problems that the new soviet system faced, and how to overcome them. Lenin's first and foremost concern in this piece, evidenced by the numerous references he makes throughout, is the management of labor in all of its forms throughout Russia and what steps the Bolsheviks needed to take to effectively manage Russian labor capital. Lenin's *The Soviets at Work* is vital for historians of Russian and European history, due to its behind-the-scenes, in-depth look at Bolshevik bureaucratic management following the upheaval of the revolution.

The Russian Revolution is nearly impossible to understand without knowing the struggle hidden in its background. After all, the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 was hardly the first period of social unrest in Russian history. By the 1900s, Russians had experienced more than their share of wars, famines, and conquests; and the twentieth century did not promise to be any easier. The first major challenge came in the form of a disastrous war with Japan in 1905 that led to an embarrassing defeat and a need for Russia to reassert its power on the world stage. In the midst of this defeat, a large group of workers marched to the Czar's palace in order to petition him for aid and protection, as the

Written for Dr. Jules Gehrke's HIST 367: History of Europe 1914-1945
Author's Major: History
Minors: Public Administration and Public History