

Title: Personalizing Revolutionary History: Revelations of an Early Soviet Handmade Textbook
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Abstract:

The material shortages and hardship that hindered book publishing in the fledgling Communist state after 1917 are well known. For early Soviet readers unable or unwilling to gain access to a sufficiently comprehensive book on a particular subject, one solution, of course, was to create it independently, as exemplified by a handmade book from this period which I purchased some years ago from a *bukinist* in Moscow. Sometime in 1928 or shortly thereafter, an unidentified reader of Russian revolutionary history removed the pages from a copy of Alphons Thun's *Istoriia revoliutsionnykh dvizhenii v Rossii* (1883); added between the original page sections a collection of clippings and page fragments gleaned from numerous other Soviet print media; and then rebound the entire compendium. Viewed as a whole, the newly bound entity represents a personally "expanded" version of Thun's *History*, one that supplements the original (translated) edition not only with new, Soviet-era illustrations, but also with a substantial number of complementary texts, presumably selected by the bookmaker. Superficially resembling a scrapbook of printed memorabilia, this rebound, expanded presentation of Thun's narrative likely served its reader simultaneously as an instructional album and a personal commemoration of Russia's revolutionary movement.

My proposed presentation at AATSEEL will explore some possible functions of this personalized edition of Thun's *History*, both as a customized Soviet textbook whose narrative clearly diverged in significant ways from official Soviet norms, as well as a cultural artifact reflecting certain reader interests and values of its time. It will thus cross from the territories of Soviet literature and revolutionary historiography into the realms of material culture and book art.