

Super-Excellent (and Truly Awesome) Guide #7 The Revolution & Early Soviet Russia

Awe-Inspiring Timeline

- 1917 March February Revolution: Collapse of tsarism, creation of Provisional Government
Georgian clergy declares Georgian Church (Orthodox) autocephalous.¹
Aug Russian Orthodox Church convenes church council
month? Orenburg Assembly changes name to Central Spiritual Admin. of Muslims
Nov Bolshevik seizure of power (the "October Revolution")
Bolsheviks abolish all religious privileges in Russia
Orthodox Patriarch restored by Council: Tikhon (Bellavin) elected.²
Church Council declares Bolshevik Rev as "descended if the anti-Christ"
Dec Bolsheviks transfer all education under church control to secular authority
- 1918 Jan Bolshevik decree on separation of church & state.³
Bolsheviks replace Julian character with Gregorian.⁴
Feb Patriarch Tikhon orders resistance to Bolshevik seizure of church property
May Beginnings of civil war in Russia, lasting until early 1921
Aug Bolsheviks seek more aggressively to implement the goals of separation
- 1920 June Bolshevik party creates Agitprop (Agitation & Propaganda Department)
- 1921 Feb End of civil war; famine begins to effect countryside (esp. Volga region)
month? Creation of Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Church
- 1922 Feb Bolsheviks order the seizure of all church valuables as anti-famine measure
March Violent confrontations over seizure of property in town of Shuia
Lenin begins shift towards agitation/propaganda, rather than repression
May Renovationists (pro-Bolshevik clergy) remove Tikhon, create "Living Church"
Dec Appearance of newspaper The Godless [Bezbozhnik]⁵
- 1923 April "Living Church" convenes council & adopts pro-Soviet program
Bolshevik Party Congress affirms emphasis on agitation over repression
June Bolsheviks withdraw support for Renovationist "Living Church"
Patriarch Tikhon released from prison after issuing public statement of loyalty.⁶
month? Creation of Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, in Serbia.⁷
- 1925 April Death of Patriarch Tikhon; Metropolitan Sergii serves as successor
June Creation of the League of the Godless
- 1927 May Metropolitan Sergii (head of church) issues statement of loyalty to Soviet regime

¹ Just as Russian Orthodox believers had sought (unsuccessfully) to convene a church council in 1905-06, Georgian Orthodox clergy had sought autocephaly at that time as well. There were no real contacts between the Russian and Georgian churches between 1917 and 1943.

² Title = Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'

³ This decree secularized oaths, marriage, and civil registration; removed religious symbols from public buildings; denied religious associations the status of juridical persons; but also left religious (and non-religious) propaganda legal. The Orthodox Synod declared the decree "an open act of persecution."

⁴ The Gregorian calendar had been introduced in the West in the 1580s by the instruction of Pope Gregory. The Julian calendar, retained in Russia, was roughly two weeks behind the Gregorian by the early twentieth century. With Bolshevik adoption of the Gregorian calendar, those two weeks disappeared in February of 1918. Talk about "springing ahead"!

⁵ This was one of a series of anti-religious publications. See Husband, 60-61.

⁶ Tikhon had earlier been placed under house arrest (1922) and then sent to prison (April, 1923).

⁷ These were bishops and faithful who had fled the Bolshevik regime into exile. They rejected any statements of loyalty to the Bolsheviks and thus broke with the official church inside Soviet Russia.

Terms, Concepts & People

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| Bolsheviks (Communists) | Vladimir Lenin | Joseph Stalin |
| NEP (New Economic Policy) | <i>Sobor</i> (church council) | Patriarch Tikhon (Bellavin) |
| Julian & Gregorian calendars | Agitprop | Shuia incident |
| Renovationists (Living Church) | Komsomol | "The Godless" (newspaper) |
| League of (Militant) Godless | Metropolitan Sergii | E. Yaroslavskii (Iaroslavskii) |
| Marxism | | |

Curious Triads (For Consideration)*

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| Atheism Agitation & propaganda Repression | Science & materialism Religion Communism |
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* Be sure, as always, to consider the *range* of readings at our disposal – thus not just Husband, but also the articles in Bolshevik Visions.