



THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION: A PILE OF RUBBISH

Posted on July 1, 2021 by Mikhail Agursky



*This is an excerpt from Mikhail Agursky's book-length study of the impact of the Bolsheviks on Russia. The book, entitled, **Идеология национал большевизма** (The Ideology of National Bolshevism), and published in 1980, in Paris, remains untranslated.*

From the point of view of common sense, everything in Russia after the Bolshevik revolution was as bad as it could be. Bloody chaos reigned all around. The country was falling apart. One after another, Poland, Finland, the Baltic States, Bessarabia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Central Asia fell away – national fringes, where Russians were suddenly in danger. Their legal and property status was upended. Once part of a dominant nation, Russians now suddenly found themselves as the minority in many places and were deeply wounded. Many foreigners appeared as heads of state, and in local jurisdictions, which had never been seen before. Traditional foundations collapsed, anti-religious terror raged, and age-old values were destroyed. Russia was threatened with foreign conquest. At first, the Germans steadily moved eastward and, in the end, occupied the gigantic territories of western Russia. Then foreign expeditionary troops landed in different parts of the country. The overwhelming majority of Russian society, which did not accept Bolshevism, therefore perceived the revolution and the power of the Bolsheviks as an eschatological national tragedy, as a national catastrophe, as the death of Russia.

This perception was largely honed by tragic premonitions that were widespread before the revolution. "The Russian kingdom is vacillating," said Archpriest John of Kronstadt (Sergiev), an outstanding representative of Russian Orthodoxy in 1907. "The Russian kingdom is vacillating, about to fall. If Russia is not be cleansed of the many tares, then it will become desolate, like the ancient kingdoms and cities, erased by the justice of God from the face of the earth for their godlessness and lawlessness." Yet, for John of Kronstadt, such a prospect was conditional. The catastrophe might not have come. But now everything justified this gloomy prediction among traditional circles, which, departing from the conventions of John of Kronstadt, were wholly at the mercy of the darkest eschatology. According to the testimony of F. Stepun, "To the Orthodox consciousness and confession, Bolshevism was not the beginning of history, but its end; not the morning star of the coming kingdom of light, but the dawn of a world entangled in sin." E. Lundberg speaks of the expectation of a world catastrophe among religious circles in December 1917. It was thought of, first and foremost, as the death of Christianity, as the fullness of temptations, as the limit of physical trials and troubles.

The expectation of the end of the world has always appeared and spread during times of great crises and with foreign invasions. After the fall of Constantinople, conquered by the Turks, many works appeared in Byzantium interpreting what was happening as an undoubted sign of the impending end of the world. The end of the world was also expected in Russia at the end of the 19th century. Another outstanding Russian ecclesiastical thinker, Bishop Theophan (Govorov), predicted: "It is pleasant to meet some writers with bright images of Christianity in the future, but there is nothing to justify them... On earth, the Savior himself predicted the reign of evil and unbelief. He warned of the imminent appearance of the Antichrist."

Political events were viewed through the prism of the Apocalypse, as well as various dark prophecies and popular eschatological beliefs. These sentiments sharply intensified in January 1918 after Patriarch Tikhon pronounced Bolsheviks to be anathema.

The pessimistic eschatology of traditional Orthodox circles is not surprising, but the reaction to the Bolshevik revolution among liberal and left non-Bolshevik circles (Mensheviks and part of the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries) was not very different. In their extreme rejection of it. Some, though close to the revolutionary movement, declared Russia a kingdom of evil. The Bolshevik revolution was for them a national catastrophe, a fall into the abyss, from which it was possible to get out only through superhuman effort, repentance, and armed struggle.

In 1918, a group of liberal scientists and publicists, the core of which was made up of former participants in the Vekhi collection of essays (1909), namely, Pyotr Struve, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Alexander Izgoev, Semyon Frank and others, also prepared the collection, *From the Depths* (*De profundis*), which was only published 50 years later and contained a sharp denunciation of Bolshevism. Struve expressed the general opinion of the authors of the collection in these words: "The Russian revolution is a national bankruptcy and a world shame."

Leonid Andreiev, who eagerly welcomed the February revolution, saw in the October coup a riot destroying the beneficial consequences of this revolution. Russia for him was now "heaps of rubble and rubbish without a name, the bloody chaos of a fratricidal war."

Among those who considered the Bolshevik revolution as a national disgrace and catastrophe was also Maxim Gorky (though briefly): "I painfully and anxiously love Russia. I love the Russian people..." he declared in December 1917. "But the practical maximalism of the anarcho-communists and dreamers

from Smolny is pernicious for Russia, and above all for the Russian working class." The People's Commissars, Gorky accuses the Bolsheviks, "treat Russia as a material for experiment. The Russian people for them is the horse that bacteriological scientists inoculate with typhus so that the horse develops anti-typhoid serum in its blood. Commissars make over the Russian people, not thinking that an exhausted, half-starved horse can die."

"The reformers from Smolny," Gorky grew indignant, "do not care about Russia. They coolly condemn it for their dream of a world or European revolution."

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Mikhail Agursky (1933-1991) was a cyberneticist and historian of Bolshevism, who died under mysterious circumstances, in Moscow, in 1991.

The [*featured image*](#) shows, "Former Tsarist officials on forced labor," a watercolor by Ivan Vladimirov, ca. pre-1947.

