

Orthodox Outlet for Dogmatic Enquiries

Historical topics - Atheism

Church Leader's Brilliant 1918 Letter to Lenin speaks the Truth about the Revolution



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" ... rivers of the blood of our brothers, pitilessly murdered at your rallying, cry out to heaven and force us to tell you the bitter truth."

" ... you have given them a stone instead of bread, and a serpent instead of a fish."



(All statues of Lenin were later torn down by the peoples that had suffered under his regime)

Patriarch Tikhon was head of the Russian church during the revolution, and courageously condemned what he saw as a demonic attack on a Christian civilization. Previously he was a bishop in the US, from 1898 - 1907, where he was a very successful missionary.

The first Bolshevik government, which consisted mostly of atheist Jews, tolerated

the popular Patriarch for a while, realizing that if they martyred him, it would only increase the church's influence, but eventually they pushed him out, put him under house arrest, and demonized and harassed him until his death in 1925. The Russian church declared him among the saints in 1989.

This remarkable letter survives as a testimony of what was really happening in Russia at the time, and to the extraordinary courage of this man to speak the truth, knowing it would cost him his life.

It is all the more important because the accounts to the West that came out of Russia at the time, and subsequent histories, were mostly written by left-leaning sympathizers who cheered the revolution on, having little idea what it really was. This obfuscation continues to this day.

Take a few minutes to read this passionate and poetic condemnation of evil. Its startling clarity comes down to us through the years with great force. We highlighted a few of the more moving lines, but honestly, almost every sentence is gripping.

This view of what actually happened during the revolution is as important today as it was 100 years ago. The 100 year commemoration of the Russian revolution shows starkly divergent views of what it was continue to our own day.

This excellent translation is by Nun Cornelia Rees.

We address this prophecy of the Savior to you, the current makers of our Fatherland's fate, who call yourself "the people's" commissars.

For an entire year, you have been gripping the power of the government in your hands, and you are already preparing to celebrate the anniversary of the [October revolution](#); but the rivers of the blood of our brothers, pitilessly murdered at your rallying, cry out to heaven and force us to tell you the bitter truth.

You have traded the Fatherland for soulless internationalism, although you yourselves know perfectly well that when it comes to defending the Fatherland, the proletarians of all countries are those countries' faithful sons, and not their betrayers.

Having seized power and called the people to entrust themselves to you, what promises have you given them, and how have you kept these promises?

Truly you have given them a stone instead of bread, and a serpent instead of a fish (cf. Matt. 7:9-10). To a people worn out by a bloody war you promised to give peace "without annexation or contribution".

What victory could you have turned down, you who have led Russia to a shameful truce, with humiliating conditions that even you did not resolve to make fully public? Instead of "annexations and contributions" the great Motherland is conquered, diminished, dismembered; and as pay for the tribute placed on it you secretly transport to Germany gold that you yourself did not amass.

You have taken away from the soldiers everything for which they had valorously fought. You have taught them, only recently brave and invincible, to leave off protecting the Motherland and to run from the field of battle.

You have extinguished in their hearts the inspiring consciousness that there is no greater love than should one lay down his life for his friends (Jn. 15:13).

You have traded the Fatherland for soulless internationalism, although you yourselves know perfectly well that when it comes to defending the Fatherland, the proletarians of all countries are those countries' faithful sons, and not their betrayers.

... the freedom you have given consists in all manner of indulgence to the lowest crowd instincts, in murder and theft with impunity.

And although you have refused to protect the Motherland from external enemies, you are

ceaselessly gathering armies.

Against whom will you lead them?

You have divided the entire nation into warring camps and cast it into a fratricide unprecedented for its cruelty.

You have openly exchanged love of Christ for hatred, and instead of peace you have artificially fomented enmity between the classes. And there is no end in sight to the war you've generated, since you aim to deliver triumph to the phantom of world **revolution** with the hands of Russian worker and peasants.

I will not speak of the collapse of a once great and mighty Russia, of the total fracturing of our railroad, of unprecedented agricultural devastation, of hunger and cold that threatens death in the cities ...

It was not Russia who needed the disgraceful peace with its external enemy but you yourselves, who have plotted to irreparably destroy Russia's internal peace.

No one feels safe; everyone lives in constant fear of searches, robbery, eviction, arrest, and execution.

Hundreds of defenseless people are seized, then languish for whole months in prisons, are often executed without investigation or trial, even without going to the court you have simplified.

Not only those who are somehow guilty before you, but even those who are in no way guilty, but were taken only as "captives"—these unfortunate people are killed to answer for crimes committed by persons who not only are not of one mind with them, but very often your own followers or those with convictions similar to yours.

Bishops, priests, monks and nuns who are guilty of nothing are executed simply because of some wild accusations of vague and indeterminate "counterrevolution". This inhuman execution is made even more onerous for the Orthodox because they are deprived of the final consolation before their deaths—the Sacraments—and the bodies of the slain are not given to their families for a Christian burial.

Isn't this the height of aimless cruelty on the part of those who pretend to be the benefactors of mankind and who themselves supposedly suffered from cruel rulers?

But it's not enough for you that you have reddened the hands of the Russian people with their brother's blood; hiding behind various names—contributions, requisitions, and nationalization—you have pushed them into the most barefaced and wanton thievery.

At your hinting were plundered or seized lands, mansions, factories, houses, farm animals, money, personal things, furniture, clothing.

First the wealthy, whom you've called "bourgeois", were robbed; then under the epithet of "kulaks" were the more well-off and industrious peasants also plundered, thus increasing the number of paupers—although you cannot but recognize that with the impoverishment of a great multitude of individual citizens the wealth of the nation as a whole is lost, and the country is impoverished.

Tempting uneducated and ignorant people with the opportunity for easy and unpunished gain, you have fogged their consciences and muffled in them the awareness of sin; but no matter what names you hide this evil-doing behind, murder, violence, and robbery will ever remain serious sins and crimes that cry out to heaven.

You promised freedom.

Freedom is a great good, if it is properly understood—like freedom from evil, not oppressing others, not turning into lawlessness and willfulness.

But you have not given that freedom; the freedom you have given consists in all manner of indulgence to the lowest crowd instincts, in murder and theft with impunity. All manifestations of both truly the civilian and higher spiritual freedom of mankind have you mercilessly crushed.

Is it freedom when no one can bring home food or rent an apartment without special permission, when families, and sometimes all the inhabitants of whole buildings are evicted and their possessions are thrown into the street, and when citizens are artificially divided into ranks, certain of which are consigned to hunger and being plundered?

Is it freedom when no one can speak his opinion openly without fear of being accused of counterrevolution?

Where is freedom of speech and press, where is freedom for preaching in church?

Many bold preachers have already paid with their martyrs' blood; the voice of social and governmental discussion and criticism is being stifled; all press, other than the narrow Bolshevik press, has been completely strangled.

Especially painful and cruel is the violation of freedom in matters of faith.

Not a day goes by when the most monstrous slanders against Christ's Church and Her servants are not published in the agencies of your press, along with malicious blasphemy and mockery. You deride the servants of the altar, force bishops to dig trenches, and send priests to do dirty work. You have raised your hand against the Church's inheritance gathered through many generations of the faithful, and have given no thought to violating their posthumous will.

You have closed a large number of [monasteries](#) and churches without any excuse or reason. You have blocked access to the [Moscow Kremlin](#)—that sacred inheritance of the faithful people. You are destroying the ancient form of church community—the parish; you destroy brotherhoods and other charitable and educational Church institutions, close and rout diocesan meetings, and interfere with the Orthodox Church's internal government.

By banishing sacred images from schools and forbidding the teaching of faith to children there, you deprive them of the spiritual food necessary for an Orthodox upbringing.

What else can I say? The time fails me (Heb. 11:32) to describe all the catastrophes that have stricken our Motherland.

I will not speak of the collapse of a once great and mighty Russia, of the total fracturing of our railroad, of unprecedented agricultural devastation, of hunger and cold that threatens death in the cities, and of the lack of everything needed for maintaining a household in the villages. This everyone can see.

Yes, we are experiencing terrible times in our reign, and it will not be erased from the peoples' soul for a long time, having darkened the image of God in it and stamping in it the image of the beast. The words of the prophet have been fulfilled:

Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. (Is. 59:7).

We know that our rebukes will evoke only anger and indignation in you and that you will look for an excuse in them for accusing us of opposition to the authorities, but the higher your "column of wrath" rises, the more proven will be the testimony to the truth of our rebukes.

It is not our business to judge earthly authorities; all authority, allowed by God, would attract our blessing if it were truly "God's servant" for the good of its subjects, and *not a terror to good works, but to the evil* (Rom. 13:3).

Now to you, who are using your authority to persecute your neighbors and decimate the innocent, we extend our word of instruction: celebrate the anniversary of your coming to power by freeing the prisoners, putting a stop to the bloodshed, violence, devastation, and persecution of faith; turn not to destruction but to the establishment of law and order, give the people their desired and deserved rest from civil war.

Otherwise all the righteous blood you have spilled will be required of you (cf. Lk. 11:50), and you who took sword in hand will yourselves die of the sword (cf. Matt. 26:52).

November 7, 1918



After 300 years of rule, the Romanov reign ended in 1917 following the Bolshevik revolution, when Tsar Nicholas II gave up his crown. The royal family was exiled to the city of Yekaterinburg and held captive by the Ural Soviets. Fearing a rescue from the family's supporters, Bolshevik executioners killed the tsar, his family, and four of his staff via firing squad on 17 July 1918.

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