

Russian Revolutions and Civil War Timeline

(Gregorian calendar)

MAIN EVENTS BEFORE 1917

22nd Jan. 1905	"Bloody Sunday": in St Petersburg, Imperial Guard opens fire on peaceful demonstrators, marching to present a petition to Czar Nicholas II. About 1,000 are killed or wounded.
Oct. 1905	Events in St Petersburg provoke public indignation and a series of mass strikes throughout Russia. The Czar eventually promises a new constitution, granting basic civil rights, allowing the formation of political parties, extending the franchise towards universal suffrage and establishing the State Duma as the central legislative body.
26th Nov. 1905	Widespread military mutinies start (211 incidents in the army are reported in one month). Major uprising breaks out in the Black Sea Fleet.
6th Dec. 1905	The Moscow soviet calls a general strike and attempts to transform it into an armed insurrection. But by this time, the government is mobilizing on a massive scale and the attempted insurrection becomes a defensive action. It is defeated by mid-December.
July 1906	The newly elected Duma is dissolved by the Czar when it produces an anti-government majority, even though elected on a narrow franchise.
1907	Elections for the Second Duma are held in February. However, after three months of heated debate, Nicholas II dissolves it again. A Third Duma meets on 14th November; this one runs its full-term of five years.
1911-1914	A new wave of workers unrest ends with the outbreak of the First World War.
23rd July 1914	The "July Ultimatum" of Austria-Hungary is sent to Serbia in response to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Serbia makes an equivocal response. Russia moves into open support of Serbia.
28th July 1914	Russia orders partial mobilization. On 31st July, when the Russian General Staff informs the Czar that partial mobilization is logistically impossible, a full mobilization is ordered.
1st Aug. 1914	Germany declares war against Russia. The German Schlieffen Plan relies on a first quick strike against France however, with only a defensive position on the east front to hold off what forces the Russians could mobilize.
1st Sept. 1914	The name of the capital, Saint Petersburg, is perceived to be too Teutonic and is changed to Petrograd.
2nd Sept. 1914	Battle of Tannenberg: the Russian immediate advance into East Prussia is spectacularly and completely defeated by the Germans.
11th	Battle of Galicia: the Russian invasion of the Austro-Hungarian

Sept. 1914	province of Galicia is completely successful and Lemberg is captured.
2nd Nov. 1914	Russia declares war on the Ottoman Empire after a raid of the German Mediterranean Fleet and a squadron of Turkish warships on the Russian ports of Novorossiysk, Odessa and Sevastopol.
17th Jan. 1915	Battle of Sarikamis: the Ottoman winter offensive against Russian armies in the Caucasus is totally defeated. The Caucasus campaign is then a string of Russian victories in 1915 and 1916.
5th Aug. 1915	"Great Retreat": Warsaw is captured by the Germans and the Russians are forced to withdraw from Poland. At the end of 1915 the main part of the east front reached a line which, in general outline, will not change for two years.
4th June - 20th Sept. 1916	"Brusilov Offensive": Russia launches a major offensive in Ukraine against the Central Powers. Its early success breaks the Austro-Hungarian Army and convinces Romania to enter the war on the side of the Entente. However, a successful German counterattack eventually halts the Russian move. The Russian economy is collapsing under the strain of the war effort.

MAIN EVENTS OF 1917

10th March 1917	"February Revolution" (based on the Julian calendar): after several days of spontaneous demonstrations in Petrograd against the severe shortages of bread, the government orders troops to open fire on the crowds. Police weapons are looted by demonstrators.
13th March 1917	The reinforcements sent in by the government to quell the riots in Petrograd mutiny. Effective civil authority collapses. Red banners appear in the streets. The Czar abdicates, hoping to end the disorders and bring unity to Russia. A new Provisional Government is immediately formed, with support of the Soviet.
18th April 1917	"Milyukov note": Foreign Minister Milyukov declares support of the Provisional Government for fulfilling obligations to the Allies, with Czarist war aims. Anti-governmental demonstrations cause him to retire when the news of his note reach the streets of Petrograd.
3th June 1917	First Congress of Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants Deputies opens. 285 delegates are Socialist-Revolutionaries (agrarian socialists), 248 Mensheviks (moderate Marxist revolutionaries) and 105 Bolsheviks (extremist Marxist revolutionaries).
1st July - 19th July 1917	"Kerensky Offensive": a large Russian offensive is launched in Galicia, in the hope that a victory would gain popular favor and restore the soldiers' morale. It is unsuccessful however; the German counterattack sweeps on through Galicia and Ukraine by 23rd July.
16th July -	"July Days": influenced by the Bolshevik Party, workers and soldiers in Petrograd riot against the Provisional Government,

20th July 1917	demanding immediate transfer of power to the Soviets. Sporadic fighting results. The Provisional Government eventually restores order with loyal troops brought back from the front. Trotsky is arrested. Lenin goes into hiding in Finland.
6th Aug. 1917	"Kornilov affair": the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army, General Kornilov, attempts to establish a military dictatorship. He is, however, stopped from entering the capital and deposed. Prime Minister Kerensky is denounced for complicity in the plot and loses much prestige when he must call on the Bolsheviks to help save the government.
7th Nov. 1917	"Great October Revolution" (Julian calendar): the Bolsheviks seize all major Petrograd facilities with little opposition, overthrow the Provisional Government and give the power to the local Soviets. Imprisoned Bolshevik leaders are released. Lenin returns to Petrograd.
8th Nov. 1917	Second Soviet Congress opens. The delegates elect a Council of People's Commissars as the basis of a new Soviet Government, and pass the Decree on Land (proposing the abolition of private property) and Decree on Peace (proposing an immediate withdrawal of Russia from the war).
13th Nov. 1917	Kerensky attempts to retake Petrograd with loyal troops from the Northern Front, but is defeated by the Bolsheviks at Pulkovo .
22nd Nov. 1917	Ukraine proclaims independence. The small local Bolshevik faction attempts to seize power but fails.
23rd Nov. 1917	A gradual demobilization of the "old army" is announced. On hearing the news, soldiers begin leaving their front-line positions by droves and try to return home.
6th Dec. 1917	Finland proclaims independence.
8th Dec. 1917	Elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly are held (it was empowered to define the new political structure of the state). The result is a clear victory for the moderate Socialist-Revolutionary Party (41%) who polled far more votes than the Bolsheviks (24%). However, the Bolsheviks disperse the Assembly after its first sitting and kill several demonstrators.

MAIN EVENTS OF 1918

9th Jan. 1918	The counter-revolutionary Volunteer Army (the “Whites”) is established in Novocherkassk by General Mikhail Alekseev with approximately 4,000 men.
10th Jan. 1918	3rd Soviet Congress opens. The assembly turns increasingly into pure window dressing for Bolshevik rule.
24th Jan. 1918	Bessarabia proclaims independence as the Moldavian Democratic Republic. Russia’s former empire is disintegrating: the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic proclaims independence too, on 24th Feb. The latter is dissolved when Georgia declares her independence on 26th May. Armenia and Azerbaijan follow on 28th May.
28th Jan. 1918	The Soviet government announces the creation of a new army (the “Red Army”) to be raised on new principles, recruited from class-conscious workers and peasants, on a voluntary basis.
1st Feb. 1918	Russia adopts Western, Gregorian calendar.
10th Feb. 1918	At Brest-Litovsk, Foreign Minister Trotsky denounces the German peace terms as unacceptable and announces Russia’s unilateral declaration of the ending of hostilities, a position summed up as “no war, no peace”.
18th Feb. 1918	The Germans resume military operations and invade Russia. In a fortnight they seize most of Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic countries, encountering virtually no resistance.
5th March 1918	Petrograd’s proximity to the border and enemy armies forces the Bolsheviks to transfer the capital to Moscow.
3rd March 1918	By signing the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Bolsheviks eventually accept an humiliating peace with the Central Powers (in all, the treaty took away a third of Russia’s population, half of her industry and 9/10th of her coal mines). The Socialist-Revolutionaries denounce the peace and leave the government.
15th May 1918	In Finland, the conservative Finns (with direct support of the German army and navy) crush the local pro-Bolshevik army, ending four months of civil war.
25th May 1918	The “Czechoslovak Legion” (former soldiers of Austria-Hungary who had been taken as prisoners of war but who had volunteered to fight the Germans) mutinies against the Bolshevik government. Using the railways they are able to sweep away Bolshevik control from Siberia.
28th June 1918	Worried about the Japanese advancing along the Trans-Siberian railway and the landing of British and French troops at Murmansk, the Soviet government prepares itself for more warfare, and institutes “War Communism”: all major branches of industry are nationalized, industry comes under military discipline, distribution of materials and all trade are centrally organized, and trade union independence is ended. The Soviet attitude toward the Allies passed from distrust to hostility.
5th July 1918	5th Soviet Congress. Socialist-Revolutionaries had expected to deprive Lenin of power and launch a revolutionary war against

	Germany, but the Bolshevik adopt various tactics to be over-represented and win all votes, effectively securing a monopoly of political power in Russia.
9th July 1918	German Ambassador in Moscow, Wilhelm von Mirbach, is assassinated by Socialist-Revolutionaries, to incite a war between Russia and Germany. The murder provides the Bolshevik a fortuitous opportunity to crush the growing Socialist-Revolutionaries political threat however.
17th July 1918	The Czechoslovak Legion extended its gains, capturing Ekaterinburg. Shortly before the fall of the city, the Czar and all his family are executed by the Soviets, ostensibly to prevent them falling into the hands of the Whites.
Aug. 1918	Direct Allied intervention in Russia against the Bolshevik government: Japanese, American, British, Canadian troops disembark in Vladivostok and Archangel. British troops also arrive in the Caucasus in November. French and Greek occupy Odessa and the Crimea in December.
5th Nov. 1918	Germany breaks diplomatic relations with Russia and renounces the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, because of Soviet revolutionary propaganda. Following the German capitulation, the Bolshevik government also annuls the treaty on 13th Nov. 1918.
18th Nov. 1918	Aleksandr Kolchak stages a coup against the unpopular government in Siberia and establishes a counter-revolutionary military despotism.

MAIN EVENTS OF 1919

Jan. 1919	The German Army starts to withdraw its occupying units from the lands gained in the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, leaving behind a power vacuum which various forces subsequently attempt to fill. The Bolshevik government stays firmly in control of the core of Russia, from Petrograd through Moscow and south to Tsaritsyn.
April 1919	The inability to hold their flanks and the collapse of the Whites in Siberia cause the Allies to decide to leave. Only the Japanese decide to stay, primarily due to territorial designs and fears of the spread of communism in Asia.
June 1919	The white Caucasus Army (under command of General Wrangel) attacks north, trying to link up with Kolchak's army. The two white armies are checked by the Reds.
July 1919	The decision of the Bolshevik government to withdraw most Red Army forces from the Ukraine in the face of white Army advances was met with disgust by the troop; 40,000 mutinied, most joining the anarchist Black Army forces of Nestor Makhno.
Sept. and Oct. 1919	General Denikin's southern White forces move to capture Moscow. Trotsky concluded an agreement with anarchist Makhno's Black Army for mutual support however. Makhno then leads his troops against Denikin's extended lines of supply, forcing him to retreat. Denikin is decisively defeated at Orel in October 1919, some 400 km south of Moscow.

Oct. 1919	General Yudenich's White Army, with British support (but the Finnish government refused to intervene) tries to capture Petrograd from Estonia. The city held however, and Yudenich withdrawn to Estonia, where his army was disarmed.
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MAIN EVENTS AFTER 1919

Spring 1920	Most of the remaining White Armies are evacuated by British ships. General Wrangel is the only holdout, his army defending Crimea.
25th April 1920	Polish-Soviet War. Poland invades Russia but a successful Red Army counterattack threw the Polish forces back all the way to the Polish capital.
25th Aug. 1920	The Polish forces achieve an unexpected and decisive victory at the Battle of Warsaw. The Soviets sue for peace and the war ended with a ceasefire in October and the partition of the disputed territories in Ukraine and Belarus.
14th Nov. 1920	Wrangel and the remains of the last White army evacuate Crimea to Constantinople.
26th Nov. 1920	The Red Army immediately repudiated its alliance with Makhno. Most Black Army commanders are arrested and executed. Makhno flees into exile in Romania.
March 1921	Unrest sweeps Russia, fuelled by continued repression by the Bolshevik government to put down peasant and anarchist elements. A naval mutiny erupts at Kronstadt, followed by peasant revolts in Ukraine, Tambov and Siberia. The revolts are crushed with tens of thousands of executions.
21st March 1921	The New Economic Policy is proclaimed that gives the peasants the right to sell their grain surpluses and gives the small businesses the right to reopen for private profit. War Communism ends.
21st Jan. 1924	Lenin dies. Trotsky is defeated by a triumvirate of Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev.

Bibliography and sources of inspiration

Books:

Historical Primary Sources:

A great number of books have been written by the participants of the Russian Civil War: Leon Trotsky, Anton Denikin, etc... These sources are, of course, biased, and should be treated carefully. They contain nevertheless an incredible amount of information.

Historical Secondary Sources:

Several history books are available in English or French:

English books:

A People's Tragedy: Russian Revolution, 1891-1924, by Orlando Figes (Author)
Probably the best book to understand the Russian Revolution and the Civil War. It's extremely well written and readable, a real page turner. The equivalent of James McPherson's Battle Cry of Freedom for ACW readers, but on the RCW

The Russian Civil War, by Evan Mawdsley (Author)
Although the Orlando Figes is very good, it does not go completely in depth for military operations. On this topic, Evan Mawdsley's work is superior. But the gain in military understanding is a loss in political and bigger picture awareness. If you want to read two books about the RCW, choose the Figes and the Mawdsley, and you are set.

Russia's Civil War, by Geoffrey Swain (Author)
Not bad, but not as detailed, and not as entertaining as the two others, in my humble opinion. But it has the big advantage of being much shorter than both. For impatient readers.

Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921, by Edward Acton (Editor), V.I.U. Cherniaev (Editor), William G. Rosenberg (Editor)
This is a collection of articles, by many authors, so they are not all of the same quality, or all like-ably to read. Some are very academic and dry (you have been warned). Nevertheless, on certain topic, it is top notch. And if you want in-depth information about a particular subject, and if it is covered in it, this is a great book to have to complement one of the others.

Warsaw 1920: Lenin's Failed Conquest of Europe, by Adam Zamoyski
An excellent small book, containing a lot of very simple, but very clear and readable maps on this war.

French books:

La Guerre Civile russe 1917-1922, by Jean-Jacques Marie

Probably not as good as the others. I found it was lacking context, and hard to read if you don't know a bit about the revolution beforehand. It is interesting in this that it treats the "Green" as a third force in the war. But there is no maps, no bibliography, and it is probably worth the effort reading one of the other book in English then this one.

Osprey books:

The well-known military collection has published a number of books on the Russian Civil War:

Russian Civil War (1): The Red Army (Men-at-arms 293),
by Mikhail Khvostov (Author), Andrei Karachtchouk (Illustrator)

The Russian Civil War (2): The White Armies (Men-at-arms 305)
by Mikhail Khvostov (Author), Andrei Karachtchouk (Illustrator)

Armored Units of the Russian Civil War: Red Army (New Vanguard 95)
by David Bullock (Author), Andrei Aksenov (Illustrator)

Armoured Units of the Russian Civil War: White and Allied (New Vanguard 83)
by David Bullock (Author), Andrei Aksenov (Illustrator)

Armored Trains (New Vanguard 140)
by Steven J Zaloga (Author), Tony Bryan (Illustrator)

Ukrainian Armies 1914-55 (Men-at-Arms 412)
by Peter Abbott (Author), Eugene Pinak (Author), Oleksiy Rudenko (Illustrator)

The Russian Army 1914-18 (Men-at-Arms 364)
by Nik Cornish (Author), Andrei Karachtchouk (Illustrator)

The Russian Civil War 1918-21 (Essential Histories 69)
by David Bullock (Author)

Order of Battles:

The famous Nafziger collection was donated in February 2010 to the Combined Arms Research Library and is now available online:

<http://www.cgsc.edu/carl/nafziger.htm>

There are a couple of OOB for the White Russians, the Reds, and the Polish-Soviet War of 1920.

Novels:

Doctor Zhivago, by Boris Pasternak

Probably the most famous novel about the Russian Civil War

Tales from the Don & And Quiet Flows the Don, by Mikhail Sholokhov

A monumental work about the life of Cossacks living in the Don river valley.

This epic story earned his writer the Literature Nobel Prize in 1965.

Graphic Novels:

There is a wealth of Graphic Novels published in French, about the Russian Civil War:

Nuit blanche, tome 1 : Les Spectres du tsar

Nuit blanche, tome 2 : Le Rossignol de Kursk

Nuit blanche, tome 3 : Agafia

Nuit blanche, tome 4 : Vladivostok

Nuit blanche, tome 5 : Shangai

Scénario : Yann ; Dessin : Neuray, Olivier

<http://www.bedetheque.com/serie-1911-BD-Nuit-blanche.html>

Sophaletta, tome 1 Des larmes de sang

Sophaletta, tome 2 Le souffle des loups

Sophaletta, tome 3 L'héritage de la putain

Sophaletta, tome 4 Les larmes de la tsarine

Sophaletta, tome 5 L'Ordre Ecarlate

Sophaletta, tome 6 Londres...

Sophaletta, tome 7 Pour sauver Lioubov

Sophaletta, tome 8 La rescapée d'Ekaterinodar

Sophaletta, tome 9 Ta vie commence à Odessa

Scénario : Arnoux, Erik ; Dessin : Hé, Dominique

<http://www.bedetheque.com/serie-1484-BD-Sophaletta.html>

Sibérie

de Attilio Micheluzzi (Scénario & Dessin)

<http://www.bedetheque.com/serie-3239-BD-Siberie.html>

Les Ombres du passé

Crimée 1920

de Crisse (Scénario & Dessin)

[http://www.bedetheque.com/serie-3219-BD-Ombres-du-passe-\(Les\).html](http://www.bedetheque.com/serie-3219-BD-Ombres-du-passe-(Les).html)

L'Ombre des damnés

Unger kahn

de Crisse (Scénario & Dessin)

[http://www.bedetheque.com/serie-1269-BD-Ombre-des-damnes-\(L-\).html](http://www.bedetheque.com/serie-1269-BD-Ombre-des-damnes-(L-).html)

Corto Maltese en Sibérie (1920) de Hugo Pratt (Scénario et Dessin) :

<http://www.bedetheque.com/album-18147-BD-Corto-Maltese-en-Siberie.html>

La jeunesse de Corto Maltese (1904-1905) de Hugo Pratt (Scénario et Dessin) :
<http://www.bedetheque.com/album-18132-BD-La-jeunesse-1904-1905.html>

Matteo : Première époque (1914-1915)
Matteo : Deuxième époque (1917-1918)
de Jean-Pierre Gibrat (Scénario et Dessin)
<http://www.bedetheque.com/serie-18904-BD-Matteo.html>

Svoboda!: Tome -1- De Prague à Tcheliabinsk
Svoboda!: Tome -2- Iekaterinbourg, été 1918
de Kris et Jean-Denis Pendanx (Scénario et Dessin)
<http://www.bedetheque.com/serie-28526-BD-Svoboda.html>

Boardgames:

There is an excellent list of boardgames on the subject, maintained by the user "Desaix" on boardgamegeek:
<http://boardgamegeek.com/geeklist/22041/wargames-on-the-russian-civil-war-1917-1922>

Amongst other:
Rossyia 1917, by F.S. Thomas (1995)
REDS!, by Ted Raicer (2001)
Triumph of Chaos, by D B Dockter (2005)
Orel 1919 & Tsarytsine 1919, by David Beaudlet (2007 & 2008)

Movies:

The most recent movie on the period is "Admiral" from Andrey Kravchuk, but it's not historically accurate at all.

There is a list of movies/TV series on the subject, on Jackson Gamers' website:
<http://www.angelfire.com/games3/jacksongamer/redvideos.htm>

Nine Lives of Nestor Makhno is a 2005 12-part mini-series which aired on ORT Channel in Russia and RTVi (*But there is still no subtitle in English or French at the date of April 2015, welcomed to translation volunteers !*)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_Lives_of_Nestor_Makhno

Internet Resources:

We have broadly classified them into category:

On the Russian Civil war:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_civil_war

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwone/eastern_front_01.shtml

<http://www.answers.com/topic/civil-war-of-1917-1922>

<http://www.onwar.com/aced/data/romeo/russia1918.htm>

http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Russia_war.html

<http://www.angelfire.com/games3/jacksongamer/reds.htm>

<http://pygmy-wars.50megs.com/>

On the Polish-Soviet War:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish-Soviet_War

<http://www.hallersarmy.com/>

<http://york.cuny.edu/~drobnick/russo.html>

Finnish Civil War:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_Civil_War

Armoured Trains:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armoured_train

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_armoured_trains

<http://www.railwaygun.co.uk/>

<http://wio.ru/rr/ww1red.htm>

<http://wio.ru/rr/ww1white.htm>

Civil War Tanks:

<http://www.tankmuseum.ru/tank.html>