

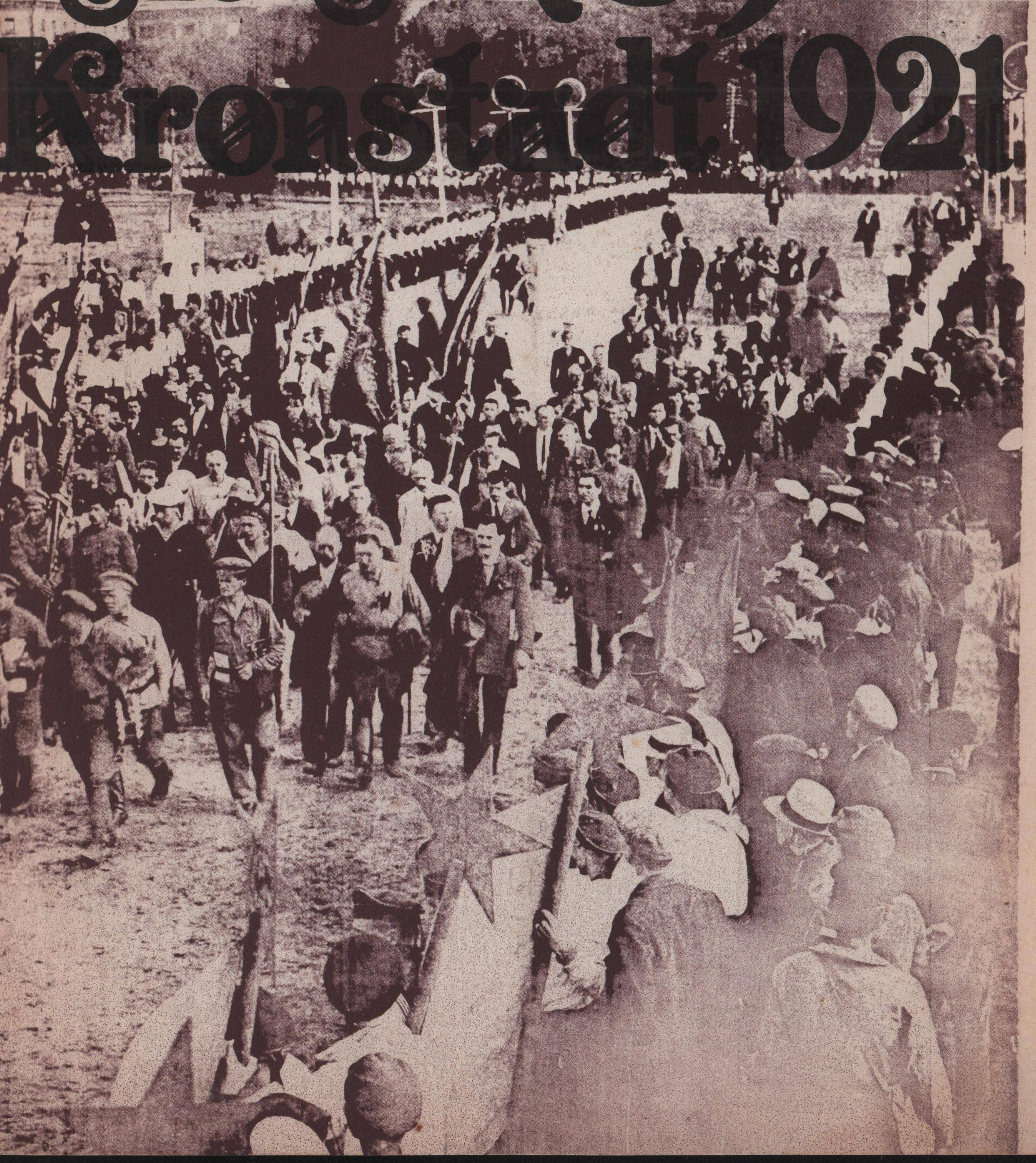
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# ANARCHY 2

# Kronstadt 1921





# ВОЛЬНЫЙ КРОНШТАДТЪ

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## Будемъ готовы!

Всѣ, всѣ и всѣ, кому дороги завоеванія Русской революціи, и интересы угнетеннаго народа, должны быть на стражѣ и готовы. Въ воздухѣ политической атмосферы душно. Разрядъ неизбеженъ. И надо быть слѣпцомъ, чтобы не видѣть того гнуснаго заговора противъ свободы, который творится на глазахъ открыто, съ благословенія шайки государственныхъ авантюристовъ.

Корниловъ споткнулся, — но корниловщина живетъ и готовитъ новый сюрпризъ революціи. Она распускается ядовитыми лепестками вездѣ и всюду, тамъ гдѣ находитъ себѣ сторонниковъ. Маскируясь патриотизмомъ, прикидываясь другомъ свободы, забронировавъ себя предварительно лже-социалистами, эта черная рать, поставивъ все на карту, не останавливаясь даже предъ немѣной народу начинаеть стягивать свои темныя силы, чтобы въ одинъ прекрасный день, однимъ ударомъ, покончить съ необразованней надеждою — Русской революціей. Всѣ средства къ достиженію этой цѣли пушены въ ходъ. И горе, побѣжденнымъ — если зло восторжествуетъ? Ихъ ждетъ участь Парижскихъ коммунаровъ. Пощады не будетъ.

Злато въ союзѣ съ крестомъ и лже-наукой отпразднуютъ кровавую тризну на могилѣ Русской свободы, и повиснетъ опять гнетъ надъ землею на много, много лѣтъ до новаго землетрясенія.

Въ теченіи полугода, — Русская буржуазія старалась покончить съ революціей своими собственными силами — но это ей не удавалось. Чего она добилась — это смертной казни и ареста нѣкоторыхъ лидеров большевизма. И вотъ теперь когда революція расширяется углубляется и начинаеть захватывать собою широкіе слои населенія и грозить смести съ лица земли всю чечистъ паразитовъ, — Русская буржуазія видя свою неизбежную гибель, ставитъ послѣднюю ставку. Уже въ союзѣ съ буржуазіей, враждебныхъ и союзническихъ намъ государствъ выходятъ на арену новой борьбы съ Русской революціей, которая служитъ бѣльмомъ въ глазу, для угнетателей всего міра. Создвая устройство транспорта въ тылу, они добиваются голода, — который мы уже видимъ, играя на фронтѣ, что по нотамъ германскаго штаба, они добились оставленія Тарнополя, Риги, Якобштадта. „Пусть идутъ нѣмцы и наведутъ порядокъ, который намъ нуженъ“. Такъ говоритъ Русская буржуазія, дѣлая свое предательское дѣло.

Отъ этихъ первыхъ ударовъ революція не дрогнула, и это неудовлетворило буржуазію, было задумано болѣе широкое предательство это оставить Даго и Эзель, дать возможность германскому флоту зайти въ тылъ и держать столицу подъ угрозой. Что задумали то и сдѣлали. Въ то время, когда Русскій флотъ доблестно сражается съ неравной силой непріятеля, союзный англійскій флотъ спокойно

флотъ который въ теченіи трехъ лѣтъ задерживалъ большія силы непріятеля, теперь далъ возможность нѣмецкому флоту совершить нападеніе на революціонный Русскій флотъ.

Что-же это значитъ?

А, это значитъ то, что союзную буржуазію больше беспокоитъ Русская революція — чѣмъ внѣшній врагъ.

Что-же остается сдѣлать послѣ этого революціонному пролетариату Россіи? Одно — объявить открыто буржуазіи всего міра войну порвать всѣ грязныя договоры съ союзниками, сильнѣе объединиться всей революціонной массѣ, учеть великую опасность для революціи, учеть силы врага и быть готовымъ. Пусть каждый угнетенный со словами — лучше смерть чѣмъ рабство, рѣшить до послѣдней капли крови защищать то, что ему дорого и свято и Русская революція будетъ жива и не погибнетъ.

И такъ, смѣляе! Черезъ трупы буржуазій всѣхъ странъ къ свободѣ.

## О совѣтахъ

(наши ближайшія задачи).

Сообщаютъ-ли Совѣты Р. и С. Д. запросамъ трудящихся? Отвѣчаютъ-ли они на нужды бѣднаго населенія и что они дѣлаютъ для наступленія царства, справедливости, царства экономическаго и политическаго равенства людей?

Этотъ вопросъ становится у каждого изъ насъ особенно теперь, когда въ воздухѣ пахнетъ новымъ порывомъ революціи. Когда атмосфера достаточно накалена, что готова ежеминутно разрядится и разорвать, смѣшать снова то, что наши новые правители такъ прилежно уготовили для будущаго, — народу.

Мы уже имѣли случай сказать, что революція только такъ и дѣлается: она является слѣдствіемъ ненормальныхъ условий — безпорядка. Но настаетъ моментъ когда массы не могутъ удерживать рвущіяся внаружу силы и вырвавшись, они безпощадно уничтожаютъ все, что попадется имъ на пути; разрушаютъ все что напоминаетъ имъ о старомъ, которое имъ жить не давало и ищутъ новыя формы, которые смогутъ урегулировать настолько лучше жизнь, что не будетъ никакихъ препятствій и тревій для будущаго нормальнаго человеческого развитія.

Въ настоящій моментъ, когда со всѣхъ сторонъ мы слышимъ возгласы „власть совѣтамъ!“ Когда мы не далеки отъ того, чтобы этотъ лозунгъ воплотился въ жизнь и сталъ реальной дѣятельностью, мы задаемъ себѣ вопросъ — сумѣютъ-ли совѣты выполнять тѣ задачи и чинія которыя возлагаютъ на нихъ трудовыя массы? Сумѣютъ-ли они оправдать довѣріе массъ?

Прежде всего мы замѣтимъ, что совѣты до сихъ поръ обладая „полнотою власти“ въ отдѣльныхъ городахъ, не сумѣли ею воспользоваться и ни шагъ не пошли ни впередъ народную революцію, ни за лоту не попытались сдѣлать что либо, для проведенія в ре-

ства, идей социализма, которые обѣщаютъ окончательное освобожденія труда отъ гнета капитала и государства, отъ произвола и насилия, осуществленія на практикѣ, въ жизни, на мѣстѣ въ своемъ городѣ, дѣйствительное экономическое равенство людей, уничтоженія эксплуататоровъ — хозяевъ, созданы свободную коммуны, общины, производителей и потребителей. Сами же Совѣты городовъ изъ всего трудового населенія, — являются, техническими органами выполняющіе особымъ порученіямъ, функциямъ и поддерживающіа отношенія между другими городами.

Къ сожалѣнію то теченіе, которое болѣе энергично другихъ поддерживаетъ этотъ лозунгъ — „власть совѣтамъ“ — имѣетъ кромѣ того еще и свои традиціонныя цѣли — иначе — предразсудки, отъ которыхъ оно еще не успѣло отдѣлаться, — это все что централитическое государство которое оно какимъ то страннымъ образомъ совѣщаетъ съ городскими трудовыми народными Совѣтами.

Мало-ли кажется, уже доказали намъ наши собственныя „государственные“ дѣятеля; власти смѣняющаяся одна за другой, вплоть до честныхъ социалистовъ которые до своихъ теплыхъ министерскихъ креселъ, были яркими интернационалистами — циммервальдистами, но вступивъ только, одной ногой на престолъ власти, они немедленно теряли человеческій обликъ. — Духъ справедливости; духъ добра отлетаетъ отъ нихъ и духъ зла, насажденія, обмана, лицемерія вселяется въ нихъ.

„Власть разаращаетъ“, говорил Бакуинъ, „власть умалетъ, власть подавляетъ человеческую личность. А поэтому — долой всякую власть! Ни экономической, ни политической, ни духовной власти, быть не должно.“

Большевики еще не могутъ отказаться отъ этого предразсудка, отъ этой извы которая на протяжении всей своей исторіи несетъ зло всему человечеству, они хотятъ натворить еще много золь, причинявъ еще много бѣдствій народу, бери тоже орудіе въ руки, противъ котораго они такъ усиленно сами борются — власть.

Большевики добиваются власти, они не хотятъ понять что власть разаращаетъ и они превратятся неминуемо въ такихъ-же какъ и всѣ другіе.

Они добиваются власти и добившись ее возмѣютъ истинной и справедливостью, и будутъ гораздо ожесточеннѣе бороться со своими противниками (идеальными и нондейными) чѣмъ нынешнее правительство.

Если нынешнее правительство оставалось и не успѣло настолько зарекомендовать себя, чтобы смѣло шагнуть на фронтъ и въ тылу, то большевики за счетъ нынѣшней репутаціи и довѣрія массъ сумѣютъ этимъ лучше и быстрѣе воспользоваться.

Мы говоримъ это — въ томъ случаѣ — если большевики кромѣ всего, вестяжутъ отъ министерскихъ портфелей, въ томъ случаѣ если большевики не откажутся отъ лозунга „однороднаго социалистическаго правительства“.

Образованіе большевистскаго интернационалистическаго-социалистическаго пра-

Редакция проситъ товарищей присылать статьи и корреспонденцію не стѣсняясь формой изложенія.

Рукописи должны быть написаны четко и на одной сторонѣ листа.

Большевики, разъ занявъ старое, гнилое мѣсто власти начеетъ разлагаться и превратится въ то же, что и вышшее, язва политиканства, лицемерія, шовинизма и патриотизма, и онъ внесетъ новый элементъ разложенія въ революцію. Онъ остановитъ процессъ революціи, которая должна пойти по пути свободнаго социальнаго переустройства всей жизни самимъ народомъ, такъ какъ революція дѣлается самимъ народомъ а не правительствами.

Большевики, въ интересахъ революціи; въ интересахъ того, чтобы наша революція стала социальной и интернациональной т. е. всенародной, революціей всего міра увѣривать и обещанныхъ, должны отказаться отъ этого пагубнаго пріема — власти, они должны отказаться отъ министерскихъ портфелей. Никакихъ правительствъ, никакихъ портфелей!

Только Совѣты! Каждый въ своемъ городѣ, управляемый совершенно самостоятельно, немедленно объявляя каждый въ своемъ городѣ общественной собственностью всѣ дома, фабрики, заводы, орудія производства и предметы потребленія.

Въ отношеніи же рѣшенія общеполитическихъ вопросовъ касающихся всѣхъ городовъ всѣхъ совѣтовъ — только съѣзды совѣтовъ! Точно такъ-же какъ это дѣлаютъ теперь. Только съѣзды совѣтовъ сумѣютъ рѣшить назрѣвшіе вопросы, но никакое правительство.

Точно такъ-же въ отношеніи вопросовъ о войнѣ и мирѣ — только съѣзды Совѣтовъ городовъ и деревенъ, — иначе, союзъ городовъ или федерация независимыхъ коммунъ, сумѣетъ гораздо успешнѣе рѣшить и этотъ вопросъ.

Пусть же помнятъ большевики если имъ дорога революція; если они хотятъ чтобы революція, стала дѣйствительно социальной и интернациональной!

Никакой власти — ни республиканской, ни социалистической.

Только Совѣты Коммунъ и ихъ свободную Федерацию между собой.

Только съѣзды делегатовъ представителей отъ этихъ коммунъ. Будь это въ Москвѣ, Петербургѣ, въ Кронштадтѣ гдѣ бы они не собрались... А потому, —

Долой всякую власть!  
Да здравствуетъ анархія!  
Долой частную собственность!  
Да здравствуетъ немедленная экспроприация всѣхъ богатствъ въ пользу всего народа!  
Да здравствуетъ Коммуна!

Миллеръ

## Наканунѣ

Подъ адскій грохотъ, все еще продолжающейся четвертый годъ братоубийственной войны народовъ, мы, наконецъ



# ANARCHY 2

Volume 1 Number 2 (Second Series)

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Anarchic contributions are welcomed, either totally unsolicited, or by a forewarning. That goes for articles as well as illustrations or photos.

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RAOUL VANEIGEM: *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations*, 1967.

The world of "isms", whether it envelops the whole of humanity or a single person, is never anything but a world drained of reality, a terribly real seduction by falsehood. The three crushing defeats suffered by the Paris Commune, the Spartakist movement, and the Kronstadt sailors showed once and for all what bloodbaths are the outcome of the three ideologies of freedom: liberalism, socialism, and Bolshevism. . . . The variety of ideologies shows that there are a hundred ways of being on the side of power. There is only one way of being radical. The wall which must be knocked down is immense, but it has been cracked so many times that soon a single cry will be enough to bring it crashing to the ground. Let the formidable reality of the third force emerge at last from the mists of history, with all the individual passions which have fuelled the insurrections of the past! Soon we shall find that an energy is locked up in everyday life which can move mountains and abolish distances. The long revolution is preparing to write works in the ink of action whose unknown or anonymous authors will flock to join de Sade, Fourier, Babeuf, Marx, Lacaenair, Stirner, Lautréamont, Lehautier, Vaillant, Henry, Villa, Zapata, Makhno, the Communards, the insurrectionaries of Hamburg, Kiel, Kronstadt and Asturias—all those who have not yet played their last card in a game we have only just joined: the great gamble whose stake is freedom.

Front cover: The second congress of the Third International at Petrograd July 1921

Inside cover: The front page of the "Free Kronstadt" containing Petrov's article

# Kronstadt 1921



# N. Petrov

## Why I am an Anarchist

The following article appeared in the anarchist journal *Free Kronstadt* in October 1917, on the eve of the Bolshevik seizure of power. It is a brief but eloquent credo by a rank-and-file anarchist—Kronstadt was a libertarian stronghold throughout the Revolution—and is here translated into English for the first time.\*

\*From a documentary history of anarchism in the Russian Revolution by Paul Avrich, to be published by Thames & Hudson.

★ I AM AN ANARCHIST because contemporary society is divided into two opposing classes: the impoverished and dispossessed workers and peasants who have created with their own hands and their own enormous toil all the riches of the earth, and the rich men, kings, and presidents who have confiscated all these riches for themselves. Towards these parasitic capitalists and ruling kings and presidents there arose in me a feeling of outrage, indignation, and loathing, while at the same time I felt sorrow and compassion for the labouring proletariat who have been eternal slaves in the vice-like grip of the worldwide bourgeoisie.

★ I am an opponent of private property when it is held by individual capitalist parasites, for private property is theft.  
The allusion here is to Proudhon's famous dictum, "Property is theft."

★ I am an anarchist because I scorn and detest all authority, for all authority is founded on injustice, exploitation, and compulsion over the human personality. Authority dehumanizes the individual and makes him a slave.

★ I am an anarchist because I subject to unstinting criticism and censure bourgeois morality as well as false and distorted bourgeois science and religion, which shroud the human personality in darkness and prevent its independent development.

★ I am an anarchist because I cannot remain silent while the propertied class oppresses and humiliates the propertyless toilers, the workers and peasants. In such circumstances only corpses can remain silent, but not live human beings.

★ I am an anarchist because I believe in the truth of the anarchist ideal, which seeks to liberate mankind from the authority of capitalism and the deception of religion.

★ I am an anarchist because I believe only in the creative powers and independence of a united proletariat and not of the leaders of political parties of various stripes.

★ I am an anarchist because I believe that the present struggle between the classes will end only when the toiling masses, organized as a class, gain their true interests and conquer, by means of a violent social revolution, all the riches of the earth. Having accomplished such an overturn and having abolished all institutions of government and authority, the oppressed class must proclaim a society of free producers which will endeavour to satisfy the needs of each individual, who must in turn give society his labour and his concern for the welfare of all mankind.

★ I am not deluded by the loud and vulgar "socialist" phrase, "dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry". Dictatorship is a synonym for authority, and authority is something alien to the masses. Authority always and everywhere corrupts the rulers, who play the role of flies on the horns of an ox in pasture, poisonous flies which from time to time bite the ox and contaminate its blood, draining its energy and killing its independent initiative.

★ I firmly believe that authority will disappear with the disappearance of capitalism. The popular masses themselves will conduct their affairs on equal and communal lines in free communities.

★ I am an anarchist because I strive by my own personal initiative to impress upon the masses the idea of anarchist communism. I interpret communism in the full sense of the word, for I shall find my own happiness in the common happiness of free and autonomous men like myself.

N. Petrov, "Pochemu ia anarkhist", *Vol'nyi Kronshadt*, October 23, 1917, pp. 2-3.



# What counts is the 'Kronstadt'

In recent years we have been passing through an era of anniversaries, some of which have been more publicized than others. In 1967, for instance, the Soviet Union celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, and last spring Lenin's hundredth birthday was hailed in Communist countries around the world. But how many will recall that 1969 and 1970 marked the centenaries of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, two of the noblest and most devoted figures of the libertarian movement, who dedicated their whole lives to the struggle for social justice and against the kind of oppression that has evolved in the USSR under Bolshevik rule? And how many will recall that 1970 also marked the centenary of Gustav Landauer, the great German libertarian who was martyred at the hands of the soldiers of emergent totalitarianism? And how many will recall that the present year, 1971, marks the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Peter Kropotkin, and of the crushing of the Kronstadt rebels who laid down their lives in the struggle against Bolshevik tyranny?

The Kronstadt sailors were revolutionary martyrs fighting to restore the idea of free soviets against the Bolshevik dictatorship, and their suppression was an act of brutality which shattered the myth that Soviet Russia was a "workers' and peasants' state". In the aftermath, more than a few foreign Communists—Victor Serge among them—questioned their faith in a government which could deal so ruthlessly with genuine mass protest. In this respect Kronstadt was the prototype of later events which would lead disillusioned radicals to break with the movement and to search for the original purity of their ideals. The liquidation of the kulaks, the Great Purge, the Nazi-Soviet pact, Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin—each produced an exodus of party members and supporters who were convinced that the revolution had been betrayed. "What counts decisively," wrote Louis Fischer in 1949, "is the 'Kronstadt'. Until its advent, one may waver emotionally or doubt intellectually or even reject the cause altogether in one's mind and yet refuse to attack it. I had no 'Kronstadt' for many years."

Others found their "Kronstadt" later still—in the Hungarian uprising of 1956. For in Budapest as in Kronstadt the rebels sought to transform an authoritarian and bureaucratic regime into a genuine socialist democracy. To the Bolsheviks, however, such heresy was a greater menace than outright opposition to the principles of socialism. Hungary, and also Czechoslovakia in 1968, were dangerous not because they were counter-revolutionary but because like Kronstadt their conception of the revolution and of socialism diverged sharply from that of the Soviet leadership. Yet Moscow, as in 1921, denounced them as counter-revolutionary plots and proceeded to suppress them. The subjugation of Budapest and of Prague again showed that the Soviet dictatorship would stop at nothing to crush those who challenge its authority.

Thus one by one the "Kronstadts" of our time have been suppressed. But fifty years after, Kronstadt retains its vitality as the symbol of the revolution betrayed, of the perversion of the libertarian ideal by the wielders of centralized power. And the martyrs of Kronstadt survive in popular memory as the revolution's guiltless children.

Paul Avrich





Petrograd July 1921



Petrograd, January 1922



# The 'Anti-Climax'

## I. My Personal Attitude and Reactions

Since my early youth, revolution—social revolution—was the great hope and aim of my life. It signified to me the Messiah who was to deliver the world from brutality, injustice, and evil, and pave the way for a regenerated humanity of brotherhood, living in peace, liberty, and beauty.

Without exaggeration I may say that the happiest day of my existence was passed in a prison cell—the day when the first news of the October Revolution and the victory of the Bolsheviki reached me in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. The night of my dungeon was illumined by the glory of the great dream coming true. The bars of steel melted away, the stone walls receded, and I trod on the golden fleece of the Ideal about to be realised. Then followed weeks and months of trepidation, and I lived in a ferment of hope and fear—fear lest reaction overwhelm the Revolution, hope of reaching the land of promise.

At last arrived the longed-for day, and I was in Soviet Russia. I came exultant with the Revolution, full of admiration for the Bolsheviki, and flushed with the joy of useful work awaiting me in the midst of the heroic Russian people.

I knew that the Bolsheviki were Marxists, believers in a centralised State which I, an Anarchist, deny in principle. But I placed the Revolution above theories, and it seemed to me that the Bolsheviki did the same. Though Marxists, they had been instrumental in bringing about a revolution that was entirely un-Marxian; that was indeed in defiance of Marxian dogma and prophecy. Ardent advocates of parliamentarism, they repudiated it in their acts. Having persistently demanded the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, they unceremoniously dissolved it when life proved its inadequacy. They abandoned their agrarian policy to adopt that of the Social Revolutionists, in response to the needs of the peasantry. They resolutely applied Anarchist methods and tactics when the exigency of the situation demanded them. In short, the Bolsheviki appeared **in practice** a thoroughly revolutionary party whose sole aim was the success of the Revolution; a party possessing the moral courage and

integrity to subordinate its theories to the common welfare.

Had not Lenin himself frequently asserted that he and his followers were ultimately Anarchists—that political power was to them but a temporary means of accomplishing the Revolution? The State was gradually to die off, to disappear, as Engels had taught, because its functions would become unnecessary and obsolete.

I therefore accepted the Bolsheviki as the sincere and intrepid vanguard of man's social emancipation. To work with them, to help in the fight against the enemies of the Revolution, to aid in securing its fruits to the people was my fervent aspiration.

In that state of mind I came to Soviet Russia. As I had so passionately avowed at our first meeting of welcome on the Russian frontier, I came prepared to ignore all theoretic differences of opinion. I came to work, not to discuss. To learn, not to teach. To learn and to help.

I did learn, and I tried to help. I learned day by day, through the long weeks and months, in various parts of the country. But what I saw and learned was in such crying contrast with my hopes and expectations as to shake the very foundation of my faith in the Bolsheviki. Not that I expected to find Russia a proletarian Eldorado. By no means. I knew how great the travail of a revolutionary period, how stupendous the difficulties to be overcome. Russia was besieged on numerous fronts; there was counter-revolution within and without; the blockade was starving the country and denying even medical aid to sick women and children. The people were exhausted by long war and civil strife; industry was disorganised, the railroads broken down. I fully realised the dire situation, with Russia shedding her last blood on the altar of the Revolution, while the world at large stood by a supine witness and the Allied Powers aided death and destruction.

I saw the desperate heroism of the people and the almost superhuman efforts of the Bolsheviki. Closely associated with them, on terms of personal friendship with the leading Communists, I shared their interests and hopes, helped in their work, and was inspired by



their selfless devotion and entire absorption in the service of the Revolution. Lack of sympathy on the part of other revolutionary elements filled me with grief, even anger. I was impatient of criticism of the Bolsheviks at a time when they were beset by powerful enemies. Refusal of support I resented, condemned as criminal, and I exerted my utmost efforts to bring about better understanding and co-operation between the opposing revolutionary factions.

My closeness to the Bolsheviks, my frank partiality in their favour aggravated my friends and alienated my nearest comrades. But my faith in the Communists and their integrity would not be influenced. It was proof even against the evidence of my own senses and judgment, of my impressions and experience.

Life, reality continuously challenged my faith. I saw inequality and injustice on every hand, humanity trampled in the dust, alleged exigency made the cloak of treachery, deceit, and oppression. I saw the ruling Party suppress the vital impulses of the Revolution, discourage popular initiative and self-reliance so essential to its growth. Yet I clung to my faith. Tenaciously I nursed the hope that back of the wrong principles and false tactics, back of the Government bureaucracy and Party autocracy there smouldered the will to idealism that would sweep away the black clouds of despotism as soon as the Soviet Government would be safe from Allied interference and counter-revolution. That spark of idealism would excuse to me all the mistakes and errors, the monstrous incompetency, the incredible corruption, even the crimes committed in the name of the Revolution.

For eighteen months, months of anguish and heart-rending experience, I clung to that hope. And day by day the conviction kept growing that Bolshevism was proving fatal to the best interests of the Revolution; that political power had become the sole aim of the dominant Party; that the State with its barrack Communism was enslaving and destructive. I saw the Bolsheviks steadily gain momentum on the inclined plane of tyranny; the Party dictatorship become the irresponsible absolutism of a few overlords; the apostles of liberty turn executioners of the people.

Every day the damning evidence was accumulating. I saw the Bolsheviks reflect the Revolution as a monstrous grotesque; I saw tragic revolutionary necessity institutionalised into irresponsible terror, the blood of thousands shed without reason or measure. I saw the class struggle, long terminated, become a war of vengeance and extermination. I saw the ideals of yesterday betrayed, the meaning of the Revolution perverted, its essence caricatured into reaction. I saw the workers subdued, the whole country silenced by the Party dictatorship and its organised brutality. I saw entire villages laid waste by Bolshevik artillery. I saw the prisons filled—not with counter-revolutionists, but with workers and peasants, with proletarian intellectuals, with starving women and children. I saw the revolutionary elements persecuted, the spirit of October crucified on the Golgotha of the omnipotent Communist State.

Still I would not concede the appalling truth. Still the hope persisted that the Bolsheviks, though absolutely wrong in principle and practice, yet grimly held on to some shreds of the revolutionary banner. "Allied inter-

ference", "the blockade and civil war", "the necessity of the transitory stage"—thus I sought to placate my outraged conscience. When the critical period will be past, the hand of despotism and terror would be lifted, and my sorely tried faith justified.

At last the fronts were liquidated, civil war ended, and the country at peace. But Communist policies did not change. On the contrary: more fanatical became repression, red terror grew to orgy, more ruthlessly the Juggernaut of the State spread death and devastation. The country groaned under the unbearable yoke of the Party dictatorship. But no relief would be given. Then came Kronstadt and its simultaneous echoes throughout the land. For years the people had suffered untold misery, privation, and hunger. For the sake of the Revolution they were still willing to bear and to suffer. Not for bread did they cry. Only for a breath of life, of liberty.

Kronstadt could have easily turned its guns against Petrograd and driven out the Bolshevik masters who were frightened and on the verge of flight. One decisive blow by the sailors, and Petrograd would have been theirs and with it Moscow. The entire country was ready to welcome the step. Never before were the Bolsheviks nearer to destruction. But Kronstadt, like the rest of Russia, did not intend war on the Soviet Republic. It wanted no bloodshed, it would not fire the first shot. Kronstadt demanded only honest elections, Soviets free from Communist domination. It proclaimed the slogans of October and revived the true spirit of the Revolution.

Kronstadt was crushed as ruthlessly as Thiers and Gallifet slaughtered the Paris Communards. And with Kronstadt the entire country and its last hope. With it also my faith in the Bolsheviks. That day I broke finally, irrevocably, with the Communists. It became clear to me that never, under any circumstances, could I accept that degradation of human personality and liberty, that Party chauvinism and State absolutism which had become the essence of the Communist dictatorship. I realised at last that Bolshevik idealism was a MYTH, a dangerous delusion fatal to liberty and progress.

## II. The Communist Dictatorship and the Russian Revolution

The October Revolution was not the legitimate offspring of traditional Marxism. Russia but little resembled a country in which, according to Marx, "the concentration of the means of production and the socialisation of the tools of labour reached the point where they can no longer be contained within their capitalistic shell. The shell bursts. . . ."

In Russia "the shell" burst unexpectedly. It burst at a stage of low technical and industrial development, when centralisation of production had made little progress. Russia was a country with a badly organised system of transportation, with an insignificant bourgeoisie and weak proletariat, but with a numerically strong and socially important peasant population. It was a country in which, apparently, there could be no



talk of "irreconcilable antagonism between the grown industrial labour forces and a fully ripened capitalist system".

But the combination of circumstances in 1917 involved, particularly for Russia, an exceptional state of affairs which resulted in the catastrophic breakdown of her whole industrial system. "It was easy," Lenin justly wrote at the time, "to begin the revolution in the peculiarly unique situation of 1917."

The specially favourable conditions were:

(1) the possibility of blending the slogans of the Social Revolution with the popular demand for the termination of the imperialistic world war, which had produced great exhaustion and dissatisfaction among the masses;

(2) the chance of remaining, at least for a certain period, outside the sphere of influence of the capitalistic European groups which continued the war;

(3) the opportunity to begin, even during the short time of this respite, the work of internal organisation and to prepare the foundation for revolutionary reconstruction;

(4) the unusually favourable position of Russia, in case of new aggression on the part of West European imperialism, due to her vast territory and insufficient means of communication;

(5) the advantages of such a condition in the event of civil war; and

(6) the possibility of almost immediately satisfying the demands of the peasantry for land, notwithstanding the fact that the essentially democratic viewpoint of the agricultural population was entirely different from the Socialist programme of the "Party of the proletariat" which seized the reins of government.

Moreover, revolutionary Russia already had the benefit of a great experience—that of 1905, when the Tsarist autocracy succeeded in crushing the revolution for the very reason that the latter strove to be exclusively political and therefore could neither arouse the peasants nor inspire even a considerable part of the proletariat.

The world war, by exposing the complete bankruptcy of constitutional government, served to prepare and quicken the greatest movement of the people—a movement which, by virtue of its very essence, could develop only into a social revolution.

Anticipating the measures of the government, often even in defiance of the latter, the revolutionary masses by their own initiative began, long before the October days, to put in practice their social ideals. They took possession of the land, the factories, mines, mills, and the tools of production. They got rid of the more hated and dangerous representatives of government and authority. In their grand revolutionary outburst they destroyed every form of political and economic oppression. In the deeps of Russia the processes of the Social Revolution were intensively at work even before the October change took place in Petrograd

and Moscow.

The Communist Party, aiming at the dictatorship, from the very beginning correctly judged the situation. Throwing overboard the democratic planks of its platform, it proclaimed the slogans of the Social Revolution in order to gain control of the movement of the masses. In the course of the development of the Revolution, the Bolsheviki gave concrete form to certain fundamental principles and methods of Anarchist Communism, as for instance: the negation of parliamentarism, expropriation of the bourgeoisie, tactics of direct action, seizure of the means of production, establishment of the system of Workers' and Peasants' Councils (Soviets).

Furthermore, the Communist Party exploited all the popular demands of the hour: termination of the war, all power to the revolutionary proletariat, the land for the peasants. This attitude of the Bolsheviki was of tremendous psychologic effect in hastening and stimulating the Revolution.

The latter was an organic process that sprang with elemental force from the very needs of the people, from the complex combination of circumstances which determined their existence. The Revolution instinctively followed the path marked out by the great popular outburst, naturally reflecting Anarchist tendencies. It destroyed the old State mechanism and proclaimed in political life the principle of the federation of Soviets. It employed the method of direct expropriation to abolish private capitalistic ownership. In the field of economic reconstruction the Revolution established shop and factory committees for the management of production. House committees looked after the proper assignment of living quarters.

It was evident that the only right and wholesome development—which could save Russia from her external enemies, free her from inner strife, broaden and deepen the Revolution itself—lay in the direct creative initiative of the toiling masses. Only they who had for centuries borne the heaviest burdens could through conscious systematic effort find the road to a new, regenerated society.

But this conception was in irreconcilable conflict with the spirit of Marxism in its Bolshevik interpretation and particularly with Lenin's authoritative view of it.

For years trained in their peculiar "underground" doctrine, in which fervent faith in the Social Revolution was in some strange manner united with their no less fanatical faith in State centralisation, the Bolsheviki devised an entirely new system of tactics. It was to the effect that the preparation and consummation of the Social Revolution necessitates the organisation of a special conspirative staff, consisting exclusively of the theoreticians of the movement, vested with dictatorial powers for the purpose of clarifying and perfecting beforehand, by their own conspirative means, the class-consciousness of the proletariat.

The fundamental characteristic of Bolshevik psychology is distrust of the masses. Left to themselves, the people—according to the Bolsheviki—can rise only to the consciousness of the petty reformer. The masses must be made free by force. To educate them to liberty one must not hesitate to use compulsion and



violence. The road that leads to liberty was therefore forsaken.

"Proletarian compulsion in all its forms," as Bukharin, one of the foremost Communist theoreticians wrote, "beginning with summary execution and ending with compulsory labour is, however paradoxical it may sound, a method of reworking the human material of the capitalistic epoch into Communist humanity."

Already in the first days of the Revolution, early in 1918, when Lenin first announced to the world his socio-economic programme in its minutest details, the roles of the people and of the Party in the revolutionary reconstruction were strictly separated and definitely assigned. On the one hand, an absolutely submissive Socialist herd, a dumb people; on the other, the omniscient, all-controlling Political Party. What is inscrutable to everyone is an open book to It. There is only **one** indisputable source of truth—the State. But the Communist State is, in essence and practice, the dictatorship of its Central Committee. Every citizen must be, first and foremost, the servant of the State, its obedient functionary, unquestioningly executing the will of his master. All free initiative, of the individual as well as of the collectivity, is eliminated from the vision of the State. The people's Soviets are transformed into sections of the ruling Party; the Soviet institutions become soulless offices, mere transmitters of the will of the centre to the periphery. All expressions of State activity must be stamped with the approving seal of Communism as interpreted by the faction in power. Everything else is considered superfluous, useless, and dangerous.

By its declaration *L'état c'est moi*, the Bolshevik dictatorship assumed entire responsibility for the Revolution in all its historic and ethical implications.

Having paralyzed the constructive efforts of the people, the Communist Party could henceforth count only on its own initiative. By what means, then, did the Bolshevik dictatorship expect to use to best advantage the resources of the Social Revolution? What road did it choose, not merely to subject the masses mechanically to its authority, but also to educate them, to inspire them with advanced Socialist ideas, and to stimulate them—exhausted as they were by long war, economic ruin, and police rule—with new faith in Socialist reconstruction? What did it substitute in place of the revolutionary enthusiasm which burned so intensely before?

Two things comprised the beginning and the end of the constructive activities of the Bolshevik dictatorship: (1) the theory of the Communist State, and (2) terrorism.

In his speeches about the Communist programme, in discussions at conferences and congresses, and in his celebrated pamphlet on the "Infantile Sickness of 'Leftism' in Communism", Lenin gradually shaped that peculiar doctrine of the Communist State which was fated to play the dominant role in the attitude of the Party and to determine all the subsequent steps of the Bolsheviks in the sphere of practical politics. It is the doctrine of a zigzag political road: of "respites" and "tributes", agreements and compromises, profitable retreats, advantageous withdrawals and surrenders—a truly classical theory of compromise.

Compromise and bargaining, for which the Bolsheviks

so unmercifully and justly denounced and stigmatised all the other factions of State Socialism, became the Bethlehem Star pointing the way to revolutionary reconstruction. Naturally, such methods could not fail to lead into the swamp of conformation, hypocrisy, and unprincipledness.

The Brest Litovsk peace; the agrarian policy with its spasmodic changes from the poorest class of the peasantry to the peasant exploiter; the perplexed attitude toward the labour unions; the fitful policy in regard to technical experts, with its theoretical and practical swaying from collegiate management of industries to "one-man power"; nervous appeals to West European capitalism over the heads of the home and foreign proletariat; finally, the latest inconsistent and zigzaggy, but incontrovertible and assured restoration of the abolished bourgeoisie—such is the system of Bolshevism. A system of unprecedented shamelessness practised on a monster scale, a policy of outrageous double-dealing in which the left hand of the Communist Party consciously ignores and even denies, on principle, what its right hand is doing; when, for instance, it is proclaimed that the most important problem of the moment is the struggle against the small bourgeoisie (and, incidentally, in stereotyped Bolshevik phraseology, against Anarchist elements), while on the other hand are issued new decrees creating the techno-economic and psychological conditions necessary for the restoration and strengthening of that same bourgeoisie—that is the Bolshevik policy which will forever stand as a monument of the thoroughly false, thoroughly contradictory, concerned only in self-preservation opportunistic policy of the Communist Party dictatorship.

However loudly that dictatorship may boast about the great success of its political methods, it remains the most tragic fact that the worst and most incurable wounds of the Revolution were received at the hands of the Communist dictatorship itself.

Long ago Engels said that the proletariat does not need the State to protect liberty, but needs it for the purpose of **crushing its opponents**; and that when it will be possible to speak of liberty, there will be no government. The Bolsheviks adopted this maxim not only as their socio-political axiom during the "transition period", but gave it universal application.

Terrorism has always been the **ultima ratio** of government alarmed for its existence. Terrorism is tempting with its tremendous possibilities. It offers a mechanical solution, as it were, in hopeless situations. Psychologically it is explained as a matter of self-defence, as the necessity of throwing off responsibility the better to strike the enemy.

But the principles of terrorism unavoidably rebound to the fatal injury of liberty and revolution. Absolute power corrupts and defeats its partisans no less than its opponents. A people that knows not liberty becomes accustomed to dictatorship. Fighting despotism and counter-revolution, terrorism itself becomes their efficient school.

Once on the road of terrorism, the State necessarily becomes estranged from the people. It must reduce to the minimum the circle of persons vested with extraordinary powers, in the name of the safety of the State. And then is born what may be called the panic of authority. The dictator, the despot is always cowardly.



He suspects treason everywhere. And the more terrified he becomes, the wilder rages his frightened imagination, incapable of distinguishing real danger from fancied. He sows broadcast discontent, antagonism, hatred. Having chosen this course, the State is doomed to follow it to the very end.

The Russian people remained silent, and in their name—in the guise of mortal combat with counter-revolution—the Government initiated the most merciless war against all opponents of the Communist Party. Every vestige of liberty was torn out by the roots. Freedom of thought, of the press, of public assembly, self-determination of the worker and of his unions, the freedom of labour—all were declared old rubbish, doctrinaire nonsense, “bourgeois prejudices”, or intrigues of reviving counter-revolution.

That was the Bolshevik reply to the revolutionary enthusiasm and deep faith which inspired the masses in the beginning of their great struggle for liberty and justice—a reply that expressed itself in the policy of compromise abroad and terrorism at home.

Thrust back from direct participation in the constructive work of the Revolution, harassed at every step, the victim of constant supervision and control by the Party, the proletariat became accustomed to consider the Revolution and its further fortunes as the personal affair of the Communists. In vain did the Bolsheviks point to the world war as the cause of Russia's economic breakdown; in vain did they ascribe it to the blockade and the attacks of armed counter-revolution. Not in them was the real source of the collapse and debacle.

No blockade, no wars with foreign reaction could dismay or conquer the revolutionary people whose unexampled heroism, self-sacrifice, and perseverance defeated all its external enemies. On the contrary, civil war really helped the Bolsheviks. It served to keep alive popular enthusiasm and nurtured the hope that, with the end of war, the ruling Party will make effective the new revolutionary principles and secure the people in the enjoyment of the fruits of the Revolution. The masses looked forward to the yearned-for opportunity for social and economic liberty. Paradoxical as it may sound, the Communist dictatorship had no better ally, in the sense of strengthening and prolonging its life, than the reactionary forces which fought against it.

It was only the termination of the wars which permitted a full view of the economic and psychologic demoralisation to which the blindly despotic policy of the dictatorship brought Russia. Then it became evident that the most formidable danger to the Revolution was not outside, but **within** the country: a danger resulting from the very nature of the social and economic arrangements which characterise the system of Bolshevism.

Its distinctive features—inherent social antagonisms—are abolished only formally in the Soviet Republic. In reality those antagonisms exist and are very deep-seated. The exploitation of labour, the enslavement of the worker and peasant, the cancellation of the citizen as a human being, as a personality, and his transformation into a microscopic part of the universal economic mechanism owned by the government; the creation of privileged groups favoured by the State; the system of labour service and its punitive organs—these are the

characteristics of Bolshevism.

Bolshevism, with its Party dictatorship and State Communism, is not and can never become the threshold of a free, non-authoritarian Communist society, because the very essence and nature of governmental, compulsory Communism excludes such an evolution. Its economic and political centralisation, its governmentalisation and bureaucratisation of every sphere of activity and effort, its inevitable militarisation and degradation of the human spirit mechanically destroy every germ of new life and extinguish the stimuli of creative, constructive work.

The historic struggle of the labouring masses for liberty necessarily and unavoidably proceeds outside the sphere of governmental influence. The struggle against oppression—political, economic, and social—against the exploitation of man by man, or of the individual by the government, is always simultaneously also a struggle against government as such. The political State, whatever its form, and constructive revolutionary effort are irreconcilable. They are mutually exclusive. Every revolution in the course of its development faces this alternative: to build freely, independently and despite of the government, or to choose government with all the limitation and stagnation it involves. The path of the Social Revolution, of the constructive self-reliance of the organised, conscious masses, is in the direction of non-government; that is, of Anarchy. Not the State, not government, but systematic and co-ordinated social reconstruction by the toilers is necessary for the upbuilding of the new society. Not the State and its police methods, but the solidaric co-operation of all working elements—the proletariat, the peasantry, the revolutionary intelligentsia—mutually helping each other in their voluntary associations, will emancipate us from the State superstition and bridge the passage between the abolished old civilisation and Free Communism. Not by order of some central authority, but organically, from life itself, must grow up the closely knit federation of the united industrial, agrarian, and other associations; by the workers themselves must they be organised and managed, and then—and only then—will the great aspiration of labour for social regeneration have a sound, firm foundation. Only such an organisation of the commonwealth will make room for the really free, creative, new humanity, and will be the actual threshold of non-governmental, Anarchist Communism.

We live on the eve of tremendous social changes. The old forms of life are breaking and falling apart. New elements are coming into being, seeking adequate expression. The pillars of present-day civilisation are being shattered. The principles of private ownership, the conception of human personality, of social life and liberty are being transvalued. Bolshevism came to the world as the revolutionary symbol, the promise of the better day. To millions of the disinherited and enslaved it became the new religion, the beacon of social salvation. But Bolshevism has failed, utterly and absolutely. As Christianity, once the hope of the submerged, has driven Christ and his spirit from the Church, so has Bolshevism crucified the Russian Revolution, betrayed the people, and is now seeking to dupe other millions with its Judas kiss.



It is imperative to unmask the great delusion, which otherwise might lead the Western workers to the same abyss as their brothers in Russia. It is incumbent upon those who have seen through the myth to expose its true nature, to unveil the social menace that hides behind it—the red Jesuitism that would throw the world back to the dark ages and the Inquisition.

Bolshevism is of the past. The future belongs to man and his liberty.

ALEXANDER BERKMAN

## From the Kronstadt *Izvestiia*

APART FROM THE FIRST QUOTE, these are all extracts from *Izvestiia*, the daily newspaper published, from March 3 to 16, by the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of Sailors, Soldiers, and Workers of Kronstadt.

A volume of *Izvestiia* in French is available from Freedom Bookshop for 40p (8/-) or \$1.00.

ROSA LUXEMBURG in *Die Rote Fahne*, December 21, 1918.

In all previous revolutions, the opponents faced each other directly: class against class, programme against programme. In the present revolution, the soldiers protecting the old order intervened not under the banners of the ruling class, but under the flag of a "socialist" party.

The rough hands of the sailors and workers of Kronstadt have snatched the rudder from the grasp of the Communists and have taken over the helm. The ship of soviet power will be steered safely and surely to Petrograd, from where the power of rough hands must spread through martyred Russia. But comrades, take care! Double your watches, for the course is full of reefs. One careless turn of the wheel, and your ship, with its precious cargo—social reconstruction—may run upon a rock.

March 6

The oppression of the Communist dictatorship has provoked the indignation of the working masses. In some places this has claimed victims—Communist families have been ostracised or even evicted. This must not happen. We must not take revenge, but simply defend the interests of the working class. It is necessary to act without emotion, and to remove only those who by sabotage, agitation, or slander tend to hinder the restoration of workers' rights.

March 7

The first step has been taken without a single shot, without a single drop of blood. The workers need no blood. They will shed it only in self-defence. Despite all the outrageous deeds of the Communists, we have enough restraint to confine ourselves to isolating them from public life so that their false and malicious agitation will not hinder our revolutionary work.

March 8

Let the workers of the whole world know that we, the defenders of soviet power, are guarding the conquests of the social revolution. We shall win or die in the ruins of Kronstadt, fighting for the just cause of the labouring masses. Let the workers of the world be our judges. Let the blood of the innocents be upon the heads of the Communist fanatics, drunk with power. Long live soviet power!

March 8

Here in Kronstadt we have laid the first stone of the third revolution, struck the last chain from the working masses, and opened a broad new path for socialist creativity.

March 8

Workers' Russia, the first to raise the red flag of the emancipation of labour, is soaked in the blood of those martyred for the sake of Communist dictatorship.

March 8

Lenin has said, "Communism is Soviet power plus electrification," but the people have found that Communism is commissarocracy plus firing squads.

March 9

The glorious emblem of the workers' state—the hammer and sickle—has been replaced by the Communists with the bayonet and prison bars.

March 8

Take away your hands, Communists, your hands red with the blood of the martyrs of freedom who fought the White Guards, the landlords, and the bourgeoisie. Let the peasant labour on the land in peace! And the worker at his machine!

March 8

Listen Trotsky! As long as you avoid the vengeance of the people, you can shoot innocent men by the thousand. But you cannot shoot the truth! It will come through in the end. Then you and your cossacks, you will have to pay the penalty.

March 9

The Soviet Socialist Republic will become strong only when it is administered by the working classes, through renewed trade unions. So let's get to work, comrade workers! Let's create new unions, free from all external pressure: there lies our strength.

March 9

Everywhere that the Communist dictatorship has been established, a new slavery has been created. The peasant has been transformed into a serf in the Soviet economy, the worker has become a mere employee in the state factories. Intellectual workers have been almost eliminated. Those who protest are thrown into the jails of the Cheka. And those who still dare to rebel are simply shot. The air has become unbreathable. The whole of Russia has been turned into an immense concentration camp.

March 12

He was right, that peasant who declared to the Eighth Congress of the Soviets: Everything's fine—the land is ours but the bread is yours, the water is ours but the fish is yours, the forests are ours but the wood is yours.

March 15

In place of the old regime there has been established a new regime of arbitrary power, insolence, favouritism, theft, and speculation; a terrible regime in which you must hold out your hand to the authorities for every piece of bread, for every button; a regime in which you do not belong to yourself, in which you cannot dispose of your own labour; a regime of slavery and degradation. You have lived in this hell for three years. And that is only the beginning!

March 15



# The Kronstadt Revolt

Editorial Introduction from 1942 edition

THE crushing of the Kronstadt "rebellion" in the early part of 1921 is, as Ciliga remarks, of decisive importance. It marks the triumph of the counter-revolution in Russia. The aspirations of the revolutionary workers and peasants found expression in the demands of the Kronstadt sailors which are quoted in the following pages; and the annihilation of the men of Kronstadt marked the final stabilization of the power of the Bolshevik government, the final hardening of that regime of totalitarian absolutism which Lenin set up, and which has been carried on by Stalin.

By 1921 the civil war and the wars of intervention were over, and the Russian workers and peasants were expecting to be released from the rigours to which they had submitted for the sake of internal unity in the face of the enemy without. Meanwhile, as a result of "War Communism", i.e. State control of industry and land, Russian economy was completely disorganised. When therefore Lenin showed no inclination at all towards restoring workers' liberties and control over industry unrest became very widespread.

On the political field, this unrest and dissatisfaction showed itself in the programme of the Workers' Opposition. In Petrograd, the workers' protest meetings were dispersed by the Government so that they were forced to resort to strike action in order to get their demands heard. Like Kronstadt, like the Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine, the actions of these workers have been misrepresented and subjected to the grossest of calumnies by Leninists of all shades. The strikers' demands are, however, well expressed in the following proclamation which appeared on the walls of buildings in Petrograd on February 27th:—

A complete change is necessary in the policies of the Government. First of all, the workers and peasants need freedom. They don't want to live by the decrees of the Bolsheviks: they want to control their own destinies.

Comrades, preserve revolutionary order! Determinedly and in an organised manner demand:

Liberation of all arrested socialists and non-partisan working-men;

Abolition of martial law; freedom of speech, press and assembly for all those who labour;

Free election of shop and factory committees (Zahvkomi), of labour unions and soviet representatives.

Call meetings, pass resolutions, send your delegates to the authorities and work for the realization of your demands!

(Quoted by Alexander Berkman: "The Kronstadt Rebellion", 1922)

Arrests and suppression were Lenin's only answers to these demands. The Government Committee of Defence of Petrograd issued an order: "In case crowds congregate in the streets, the troops are ordered to fire; those that resist are to be shot on the spot."

The Kronstadt sailors were disturbed by the events in Petrograd. Sympathy with the strikers was first expressed by the crews of the warships *Petropavlovsk* and *Sevastopol*, which in 1917 had been in the forefront of the revolutionary struggle. The movement spread throughout the fleet and then to the Red Army in Kronstadt. The Kronstadt sailors and workers had sent delegates to Petrograd to report on the events there, and it was on hearing the very unfavourable report of this delegation that they presented the *Petropavlovsk* resolution to a mass meeting of 16,000 sailors, Red Army men and workers. The resolution was accepted unanimously except for three votes.\*

Lenin's reply to the Kronstadt resolution was to send Trotsky who gave the famous order to the Red Army to "shoot them like partridges". It was only then that the men of Kronstadt prepared to resist by force of arms; only then that the peaceful resolution became a "rebellion against the Soviet Power". Throughout, however, they abstained from taking the offensive, as they could easily have done.

But in addition to the brutal suppression by the Red Army, and subsequently by the Cheka, during which 18,000 workers were killed, Lenin also instituted a campaign of calumny against the Kronstadt workers. The delegates to the Tenth Party Congress which was going on at the same time were assured that "the White generals played a big role", that "it was the work of the Social Revolutionaries and the White Guardists from abroad". The Kronstadt workers had asked that delegates of the workers and soldiers be sent to inquire into these charges. The Petrograd Soviet, under the chairmanship of the Bolshevik leader Zinovieff, refused.

\*Those of Kuzmin, the Commissar of the Baltic Fleet; Vassiliev, the chairman of the Kronstadt Soviet; and Kalinin, later President of the USSR.



Doing their utmost to deceive the mass of the workers and peasants as to the events at Kronstadt, the Bolshevik leaders knew very well what was going on. In the "Krasny Archiv" (Red Archive), a monthly magazine published by the Editorial Board of the Supreme Military Council, and intended for circulation only among the upper reaches of the Communist Party—it was marked "Not for Publication"—there appeared in December, 1921, an article on "The Rebellion of the Kronstadt Sailors", which makes this quite clear. While carrying on the most virulent campaign of vilification, the Bolsheviks were quite cynically aware of the true state of affairs, and were only the more determined to maintain their stranglehold over the Russian workers at any cost, and regardless of the bloodshed involved.

"The Political Department of the Baltic Fleet found itself isolated not only from the masses but also from local party workers, having become a bureaucratic organ lacking any prestige and standing. . . . The Baltic Fleet destroyed all local initiative and brought the work down to the level of clerical routine. . . . From July to November, 1920, 20 per cent. of the members left the Party. . . . The Chief of the Organization Department of the Baltic Fleet pointed out in the middle of February, 1921, that 'if the work goes on as it has been going on until now, a mutiny is likely to break out two or three months from now. . . .' The lack of Party work told heavily upon the organization. At a mass meeting, numbering 15,000 people, which, of course, was also attended by Communists, no one, save Comrades Kalinin, Kuzmin and Vassiliev, voted against the resolution. And this also had its effect in the grievous incidents taking place in the Kronstadt organization; the resignation of 381 members who did not grasp the true meaning of the rebellion and its consequences. Nor did the responsible workers heading the work in Kronstadt understand what was going on, and that is why they failed to take the right measures necessary at the very beginning." ("The Red Archive", No. 9, December, 1921, p. 44.)

(Quoted by G. P. Maximov, "The Guillotine at Work", p. 169.)

This passage makes it clear that the resolution was a protest against conditions in the fleet for which even the writer lays the blame partly at the door of the Party. There is no mention here of "White Guardist generals", "Social Revolutionists" and so on. It is the

clearest denial of the calumnies and lies circulated by the Bolsheviks themselves. The subsequent history of Lenin's regime shows that the Kronstadt workers saw clearly the future—or rather, the death—of the revolution. Their "rebellion" was a spirited and heroic fight against the totalitarian dictatorship of the Party. In the perspective of the Moscow trials and the Stalinist Terror, Kronstadt is clearly seen, as Ciliga points out, as a turning point in the history of the Russian revolution. A turning point, moreover, which was to be almost exactly paralleled, and with the same dire results, in the crushing of the Spanish workers during the May Days in Barcelona in 1937. On both these occasions power passed definitely from the hands of the workers into those of the government, and the revolution was ended.

The revolutionary workers must not only destroy the bourgeois state: they must also guard against the growth of a new apparatus which may wrest power from them. Any political party seeking to centralize control in its own hands, has to set up instruments to ensure that its plans are carried out; to control not only the defeated bourgeoisie, but also the revolutionary workers themselves. Inevitably, conflicts will arise between it and the economic and social organizations set up by the workers. They can only end in the suppression of one power by the other.

Such a conflict may however be masked by certain aims which both the workers and the "revolutionary government" may have in common. Both aim to overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and abroad. In withstanding the counter-revolutionary attacks of the bourgeoisie, the conflict between the workers and the new state is concealed in their common struggle; under cover of which the new state power seeks continuously to entrench itself at the expense of the workers' organizations, until it finally overthrows them altogether.

This consolidation of the power of the governing minority inevitably involves ruthless suppression, and the workers, their liberty lost and deprived of responsibility in the ordering of their lives and economy, sink back into their pre-revolutionary apathy. The revolutionary opportunity has once more been missed. Meanwhile the new state is forced to go further and further down the road to a bleak totalitarianism. To prevent the initial setting up of such a new government power is the lesson which must be learnt from the Kronstadt tragedy.

EDITORS



# The Kronstadt Revolt

by Anton Ciliga

THE correspondence between Trotsky and Wendelin Thomas (one of the leaders of the revolt in the German navy in 1918, and a member of the American Committee of Enquiry into the Moscow Trials) regarding the historical significance of the events in Kronstadt in 1921, has given rise to widespread international discussion.\* That in itself indicates the importance of the problem. On the other hand, it is no accident that special interest should be shown in the Kronstadt revolt today; that there is an analogy, a direct link even between what happened at Kronstadt 17 years ago, and the recent trials at Moscow, is only too apparent. Today we witness the murder of the leaders of the Russian revolution; in 1921 it was the masses who formed the basis of the revolution who were massacred. Would it be possible today to disgrace and suppress the leaders of October without the slightest protest from the people, if these leaders had not already by armed force silenced the Kronstadt sailors and the workers all over Russia?

Trotsky's reply to Wendelin Thomas shows that unfortunately Trotsky still refuses to look at the past objectively. Furthermore, in his article, "Too much noise about Kronstadt", he increases the gulf which he created at that time between the working masses and himself; he does not hesitate, after having ordered their bombardment in 1921 to describe these men today as "completely demoralised elements, men who wore elegant wide trousers and did their hair like pimps".

No! It is not with accusations of this kind, which reek of bureaucratic arrogance, that a useful contribution can be made to the lessons of the great Russian revolution.

In order to assess the influence that Kronstadt has had on the outcome of the revolution, it is necessary to avoid all personal issues, and direct attention to three fundamental questions: (1) In what general circumstances the Kronstadt revolt arose? (2) What were the aims of the movement? (3) By what means did the insurgents attempt to achieve these aims?

## The masses and the bureaucracy in 1920-1

EVERYONE now agrees that during the winter of 1920 to 1921 the Russian Revolution was passing through an extremely critical phase. The offensive against Poland had ended in defeat at Warsaw, the social revolution had not broken out in the West, the Russian Revolution had become isolated, famine and disorganization had seized the entire country. The peril of bourgeois restoration knocked at the door of the revolution. At this moment of crisis the different classes and parties which existed within the revolutionary camp each presented their solution for its resolution.

\*This article was written in 1938, at the time of a new outbreak of purge trials in Moscow.—Ed.

The Soviet Government and the higher circles in the Communist Party applied their own solution of *increasing the power of the bureaucracy*. The attribution of powers to the "Executive Committees" which had hitherto been vested in the soviets, the replacement of the dictatorship of the class by the dictatorship of the party, the shift of authority even within the party from its members to its cadres, the replacement of the double power of the bureaucracy and the workers in the factory by the sole power of the former—to do all this was to "save the Revolution!" It was at this moment that Bukharin put forward his plea for a "proletarian Bonapartism". "By placing restrictions on itself" the proletariat would, according to him, facilitate the struggle against the bourgeois counter-revolution. Here was manifested already the enormous quasi-messianic self-importance of the Communist bureaucracy.

The Ninth and Tenth Congresses of the Communist Party, as well as the intervening year passed beneath the auspices of this new policy. Lenin rigidly carried it through, Trotsky sang its praises. The bureaucracy prevented the bourgeois restoration . . . by eliminating the proletarian character of the revolution.

The formation of the Workers' Opposition within the party, which was supported not only by the proletarian faction in the party itself but also by the great mass of unorganised workers, the general strike of the Petrograd workers a short time before the Kronstadt revolt and finally the insurrection itself, all expressed the aspirations of the masses who felt, more or less clearly, that a "third party" was about to destroy their conquests. The movement of poor peasants led by Makhno in the Ukraine was the outcome of similar resistance in similar circumstances. If the struggles of 1920-1921 are examined in the light of the historical material now available, one is struck by the way that these scattered masses starved and enfeebled by economic disorganisation, nevertheless had the strength to formulate for themselves with such precision their social and political position, and at the same time to defend themselves against the bureaucracy and against the bourgeoisie.

## The Kronstadt Programme

WE shall not content ourselves, like Trotsky, with simple declarations, so we submit to readers the resolution which served as a programme for the Kronstadt movement. We reproduce it in full, because of its immense historical importance. It was adopted on February 28th by the sailors of the battleship *Petro-pavlovsk*, and was subsequently accepted by all the



sailors, soldiers and workers of Kronstadt.

“After having heard the representatives delegated by the general meeting of ships’ crew to report on the situation in Petrograd this assembly takes the following decisions:

1. Seeing that the present soviets do not express the wishes of the workers and peasants, to organise immediately re-elections to the soviets with secret vote, and with care to organize free electoral propaganda for all workers and peasants.
2. To grant liberty of speech and of press to the workers and peasants, to the anarchists and the left socialist parties.
3. To secure freedom of assembly for labour unions and peasant organizations.
4. To call a non-partisan Conference of the workers, Red Army soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt, and of Petrograd province, no later than March 10th, 1921.
5. To liberate all political prisoners of Socialist parties as well as all workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors imprisoned in connection with the labour and peasant movements.
6. To elect a Commission to review the cases of those held in prisons and concentration camps.
7. To abolish all “politodeli”<sup>\*</sup> because no party should be given special privileges in the propagation of its ideas or receive financial support from the government for such purposes. Instead there should be established educational and cultural commissions, locally elected and financed by the government.
8. To abolish immediately all “zagryaditelniye otryadi”.<sup>†</sup>
9. To equalize the rations of all who work with the exception of those employed in trades detrimental to health.
10. To abolish the communist fighting detachments in all branches of the army, as well as the communist guards kept on duty in mills and factories. Should such guards or military detachments be found necessary they are to be appointed in the army from the ranks, and in the factories according to the judgment of the workers.
11. To give the peasants full freedom of action in regard to their land and also the right to keep cattle on condition that the peasants manage with their own means; that is, without employing hired labour.
12. To request all branches of the army, as well as our comrades the military kursanti<sup>§</sup> to concur in our resolutions.
13. To demand that the press give the fullest publicity to our resolutions.

<sup>\*</sup>Political sections of the Communist party existing in the majority of State institutions.

<sup>†</sup>Police detachments officially created to struggle against speculation, but which actually used to confiscate everything that the starving population, the workers included, brought from the country for their own personal consumption.

<sup>§</sup>Cadet officers.

**14. To appoint a travelling commission of control.**

**15. To permit free artisan production which does not employ hired labour.**

These are primitive formulations, insufficient no doubt, but all of them impregnated with the spirit of October; and no calumny in the world can cast a doubt on the intimate connection existing between this revolution and the sentiments which guided the expropriations of 1917.

The depth of principle which animates this resolution is shown by the fact that it is still to a great extent applicable. One can, in fact, oppose it as well to the Stalin regime of 1938 as to that of Lenin in 1921. More even than that: the accusations of Trotsky himself against Stalin’s regime are only reproductions, timid ones, it is true, of the Kronstadt claims. Besides, what other programme which is at all socialist could be set up against the bureaucratic oligarchy except that of Kronstadt and the Workers’ Opposition?

The appearance of this resolution demonstrates the close connections which existed between the movements of Petrograd and Kronstadt. Trotsky’s attempt to set the workers of Petrograd against those of Kronstadt in order to confirm the legend of the counter-revolutionary nature of the Kronstadt movement, comes back on Trotsky himself: in 1921, Trotsky pleaded the necessity under which Lenin was situated in justification of the suppression of democracy in the soviets and in the party, and accused the masses inside and outside the party of *sympathizing with Kronstadt*. He admitted therefore that at that time the Petrograd workers and the opposition although they had not resisted by force of arms, none the less extended their sympathy to Kronstadt.

Trotsky’s subsequent assertion that “the insurrection was inspired by the desire to obtain a privileged ration” is still more wild. Thus, it is one of these privileged people of the Kremlin, the rations for whom were very much better than those of others, who dares to hurl a similar reproach, and that at the very men who in paragraph 9 of their resolution, explicitly demanded equalization of rations! This detail shows the desperate extent of Trotsky’s bureaucratic blindness.

Trotsky’s articles do not depart in the slightest degree from the legend created long ago by the Central Committee of the Party. Trotsky certainly deserves credit from the international working class for having refused since 1923 to continue to participate in the bureaucratic degeneration and in the new “purges” which were destined to deprive the Revolution of all its left-wing elements. He deserves still more to be defended against Stalin’s calumny and assassins. But all this does not give Trotsky the right to insult the working masses of 1921. On the contrary! More than anyone else, Trotsky should furnish a new appreciation of the initiative taken at Kronstadt. An initiative of great historic value, an initiative taken by rank-and-file militants in the struggle against the first bloodstained



"purge" undertaken by the bureaucracy.

The attitude of the Russian workers during the tragic winter of 1920-1921 shows a profound social instinct; and a noble heroism inspired the working classes of Russia not only at the height of the Revolution but also at the crisis which placed it in mortal danger.

Neither the Kronstadt fighters, nor the Petrograd workers, nor the ranks of the Communists could summon, it is true, in that winter the same revolutionary energy as in 1917 to 1919, but what there was of socialism and revolutionary feeling in the Russia of 1921 was possessed by the rank-and-file. In their opposition to this, Lenin and Trotsky, in line with Stalin, with Zinoviev, Kaganovitch, and others responded to the wishes and served the interests of the bureaucratic cadres. The workers struggled for the socialism which the bureaucracy were already in process of liquidating. That is the fundamental point of the whole problem.

#### Kronstadt and the N.E.P.

PEOPLE often believe that Kronstadt forced the introduction of the N.E.P.\*—a profound error. The Kronstadt resolution pronounced in favour of the defence of the workers, not only against the bureaucratic capitalism of the State, but also against the restoration of private capitalism. This restoration was demanded—in opposition to Kronstadt—by the social democrats, who combined it with a regime of political democracy. And it was Lenin and Trotsky who to great extent realised it (but without political democracy) in the form of the N.E.P. The Kronstadt resolution declared for the opposite since it declared itself against the employment of wage labour in agriculture and small industry. This resolution, and the movement underlying it, sought for a revolutionary alliance of the proletarian and peasant workers with the poorest sections of the country labourers, in order that the revolution might develop towards socialism. The N.E.P., on the other hand, was a union of bureaucrats with the upper layers of the village against the proletariat; it was the alliance of State capitalism and private capitalism against socialism. The N.E.P. is as much opposed to the Kronstadt demands as, for example, the revolutionary socialist programme of the vanguard of the European workers for the abolition of the Versailles system, is opposed to the abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles achieved by Hitler.

Let us consider, finally, one last accusation which is commonly circulated: that action such as that at Kronstadt could have *indirectly* let loose the forces of the counter-revolution. It is *possible* indeed that even by placing itself on a footing of workers' democracy the revolution might have been overthrown; but what is *certain* is that it has perished, and that it has perished on account of the policy of its leaders. The repression of Kronstadt, the suppression of the democracy of workers and soviets by the Russian Communist party,

\*New Economic Policy.

the elimination of the proletariat from the management of industry, and the introduction of the N.E.P., already signified the death of the Revolution.

It was precisely the end of the civil war which produced the splitting of the post-revolutionary society into two fundamental groupings: the working masses and the bureaucracy. As far as its socialist and internationalist aspirations were concerned, the Russian Revolution was stifled: in its nationalist, bureaucratic, and state capitalist tendencies, it developed and consolidated itself.

It was from this point onwards, and on this basis, each year more and more clearly, that the Bolshevik repudiation of morality, so frequently evoked, took on a development which had to lead to the Moscow Trials. The implacable logic of things has manifested itself. While the revolutionaries, remaining such only in words, accomplished in fact the task of the reaction and counter-revolution, they were compelled, inevitably to have recourse to lies, to calumny and falsification. This system of generalized lying is the result not the cause, of the separation of the Bolshevik party from socialism and from the proletariat.

In order to corroborate this statement, I shall quote the testimony regarding Kronstadt of men I have met in Soviet Russia.

*"The men of Kronstadt? They were perfectly right; they intervened in order to defend the Petrograd workers: it was a tragic misunderstanding on the part of Lenin and Trotsky, that instead of agreeing with them, they gave them battle,"* said Dch. to me in 1932. He was a non-party worker in Petrograd in 1921, whom I knew in the political isolator at Verkhne-Uralsk as a Trotskyist.

*"It is a myth that, from the social point of view, Kronstadt of 1921 had a wholly different population from that of 1917,"* another man from Petrograd, Dv., said to me in prison. In 1921 he was a member of the Communist Youth, and was imprisoned in 1932 as a "decist" (a member of Sapronov's group of "Democratic Centralists").

I also had the opportunity of knowing one of the most effective participants in the Kronstadt rebellion. He was an old marine engineer, a communist since 1917, who had, during the civil war, taken an active part, directing at one time a Tcheka in a province somewhere on the Volga, and found himself in 1921 at Kronstadt as a political commissar on the warship *Marat* (ex *Petropavlovsk*). When I saw him, in 1930, in the Leningrad prison, he had just passed eight years in the Solovietski islands.

#### The methods of struggle

THE Kronstadt workers pursued revolutionary aims in struggling against the reactionary tendencies of the bureaucracy, and they used clean and honest



methods. In contrast, the bureaucracy slandered their movement odiously, pretending that it was led by General Kozlovski. Actually, the men of Kronstadt honestly desired, as comrades, to discuss the questions at issue with the representatives of the government. Their action, had at first, a defensive character—that is the reason why they did not occupy Oranienbaum in time, situated on the coast opposite Kronstadt.

Right from the start, the Petrograd bureaucrats made use of the system of hostages by arresting the families of the sailors, Red Army soldiers and workers of Kronstadt who were living at Petrograd, because several commissars at Kronstadt—not one of whom was shot—had been arrested. The news of the seizing of hostages was brought to the knowledge of Kronstadt by means of leaflets dropped from aeroplanes. In their reply by radio, Kronstadt declared on March 7th “*that they did not wish to imitate Petrograd as they considered that such an act, even when carried out in an excess of desperation and hate, is most shameful and most cowardly from every point of view. History has not yet known a similar procedure*” (*Izvestia* of the Kronstadt Revolutionary Committee 7th March 1921). The new governing clique understood much better than the Kronstadt “rebels” the significance of the social struggle which was beginning, the depth of the class-antagonism which separated it from the workers. It is in this that lies the tragedy of revolutions in the period of their decline.

But while military conflict was forced upon Kronstadt, they still found the strength to formulate the programme for the “third revolution”, which remains since then the programme of the Russian socialism of the future.\*

\*A comprehensive work on Kronstadt, containing the essential documents on these historic days, has been compiled by Ida Mett. Her publication should supply, in my opinion, a timely contribution to the international discussion which is now developing.

### Balance Sheet

**T**HERE are reasons for thinking that granted the relation between the forces of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, of socialism and capitalism, which existed in Russia and Europe at the beginning of 1921, the struggle for the socialist development of the Russian Revolution was doomed to defeat. In those conditions the socialist programme of the masses could not conquer: it had to depend on the triumph of the counter-revolution whether openly declared or camouflaged under an aspect of degeneracy (as has been produced in fact).

But such a conception of the progress of the Russian Revolution does not diminish in the slightest, in the realms of principle, the historic importance of the programme and the efforts of the working masses. On the contrary, this programme constitutes the *point of departure* from which a new cycle in the revolutionary socialist development will begin. In fact, each new revolution begins not on the basis from which the preceding one started, but from the point at which the revolution before it had undergone a mortal set-back.

The experience of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution places anew before the conscience of international socialism an extremely important sociological problem. In the Russian Revolution, as in two other great earlier revolutions, those of England and of France, why is it that it is from the inside that the counter-revolution has triumphed, at the moment when the revolutionary forces were exhausted, and by means of the revolutionary party itself (“purged”, it is true of its left-wing elements)?

Marxism believes that the socialist revolution, once begun, would either be assured of a gradual and continued development towards integral socialism, or would be defeated through the agency of bourgeois restoration.

Altogether, the Russian Revolution poses in an entirely new way the problem of the mechanism of the socialist revolution. This question must become paramount in international discussion. In such discussion the problem of Kronstadt can and must have a position worthy of it.



KRONSTADT :

## Notes at Random

WE LEAVE HELSINKI quite early in the morning. The sea is calm, and the sky blue and cloudless as we sail eastward along the 60° parallel. The sun is already high, as it is mid-June. Our destination is Leningrad and the USSR, almost 200 miles away at the end of the Gulf of Finland.

For some time we hug the coast to the north. But, as the sea becomes more choppy, we leave the coast of Finland behind us. During the day we pass a few tiny islands, a Russian liner ploughing west and a Polish fishing trawler rolling with the swell. As we travel east, the Gulf begins to narrow; and, quite suddenly, we see a low coastline, first to port and then to starboard. There is, as yet, no land ahead. Small fishing craft and other boats appear. Then, almost as suddenly as before, a short coastline can be seen ahead. "Surely," asks someone, "we're not that close to Leningrad, are we?" We are not. Indeed, we are still about 35 miles from Russia's "Window to the West". The coastline ahead is now much nearer and more distinct. It is also low and flat, and probably less than a mile wide. It is an island. It is, in fact, Kotlin Island. We pass it to the south. Soon, a number of small forts come into view. Altogether there are six of them, set in the sea at intervals, between the south side of Kotlin Island and the north Russian coast, a little to the west of Oranienbaum. There are also seven similar, and two larger, ones to the north of the island, but we cannot see them. We pass between the Peter and Paul forts.

Almost immediately after passing between the forts, we can see on our port side a number of large naval vessels at anchor. It is the famous harbour, drydocks and naval base of Kronstadt, at the east end of the island. Kotlin is less than eight miles long from west to east. This is as near as I will get to either the naval base or the city of Kronstadt behind it. I passed it again some time later; and, on a visit to the town and palace of Petrovovets, I gazed out towards Kotlin Island from the Russian coast opposite. Today, the city of Kronstadt and Kotlin Island are both a "forbidden area", to foreigners and ordinary Russians alike. But they have not always been. Before the first World War and the "Great October Revolution", however, pleasure boats sailed regularly round the island and between St. Petersburg and Kronstadt throughout the summer, and in winter over the "snow road" across the ice. But now the Soviet authorities do not allow such frivolous activities as pleasure boating—not to Kronstadt or around Kotlin Island anyway!

My mind sped back in time. Many years, back to 1921 and the great sailors' rebellion at Kronstadt. On March 5, the Bolsheviks gave the rebel sailors exactly twenty-four hours to surrender. They refused. They were demanding free elections to the Soviets; freedom of speech and the press for the workers and peasants, the socialists and the anarchists; the liberation of political prisoners held in jails and concentration camps, and full freedom for the peasants to manage the farms without employing hired labour. They would not surrender—without a fight.

Conditions were very different on March 7, 1921. The sky was black. A fog was coming up; and it began to snow. Communist batteries opened up from the shore opposite. As the fog and the snow got worse, visibility was reduced to nil. The barrage had to be broken off. Next morning the Communists tried to take the base by storm. In a blinding snowstorm, detachments of the Red Army, military cadets and armed Chekists advanced across the ice towards Kronstadt. They were met by a murderous barrage of artillery and machine-gun fire from the forts and batteries around and on the island. Once again, the Red forces retreated. All was quiet except for the howl of the wind.

Victor Shevchenko, one of those machine-gunners, could relax. He sat down beside his gun and gazed out towards the blinding snow. He came from just outside Kharkov in the Ukraine. He joined the navy in the spring of 1916. He was now one of the veterans at Kronstadt. Shevchenko was not a political activist, though he had taken part in the February Revolution. He had never joined the Party. But he had listened to many a speech on Anchor Square after February. He could remember the fiery little anarchist, Bleikhman, with his open shirt and curly hair, exhorting the workers, soldiers and sailors to overthrow the government—all governments!—and make the land and factories the common property of all. He remembered Bleikhman telling the machine-gunners that they did not need any assistance from political leaders or parties. And he remembered the Bolsheviks' promises of bread, land and peace. Victor Shevchenko's younger brother, Simon, was also a machine-gunner—but not in the navy. He was with Nestor Makhno and the insurgent army, somewhere in the Ukraine no doubt.

As Shevchenko sat beside his gun in the cold and dark, he began to think. Was this what they had struggled and fought for since the beginning of 1917? They had kicked out the Czar and his hangers-on; they had defeated the Whites, and they had chased the Interventionists from their shores.

\* \* \* \*



But now they had starvation rations—though he as a sailor had more rations than the ordinary workers, when they could get them—and real starvation in much of the country, a one-Party dictatorship and thousands of ordinary workers and peasants, socialists and anarchists, in prison, exile and concentration camps. No wonder they had rebelled, he thought. They would—must!—fight on, whatever the consequences. He was almost exhausted with fatigue, but he could not sleep.

\* \* \* \*

#### Petrograd, March 4.

Comrade Zinoviev, Chairman of the City Soviet and of the Defence Committee, summoned a special meeting of the Soviet here today to discuss the grave situation which has arisen at Kronstadt. Representatives from Trade Union, factory committee, youth organisation and Red Army units were also summoned to attend. The Anarchists Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman attended as observers.

Comrade Zinoviev denounced the rebellion as a White Guard plot, supported and encouraged by the Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, Anarchists and similar riff-raff. The Kronstadt sailors, once the pride of the Revolution, he said, were now being misled by a handful of Czarist officers, led by General Kozlovsky. They must surrender immediately. Comrade Kalinin then spoke. He also denounced the rebels as reactionary peasants fighting for the restoration of Czarism.

A delegate from the body of the hall then came to the rostrum. He claimed that it was indifference on the part of the Party that had driven the workers of Petrograd and the sailors of Kronstadt to strike and to revolt. They are guilty of no crime, he said. His remarks were greeted with cries of "Counter-revolutionary", "Traitor" and "Bandit" from many of the delegates. "German spies," shouted one delegate, as he pointed towards comrade Zinoviev. (Much noise and confusion followed.) At that stage, a Kronstadt sailor rose and declared that nothing had changed the revolutionary enthusiasm of his comrades. They were prepared to defend the revolution. It was the Party that was counter-revolutionary, he said. (More shouting from the delegates.) He began to read the "Petropavlovsk" resolution. (Shouting again.)

Comrade Zinoviev, replying, once again demanded the immediate surrender of Kronstadt on penalty of death. "Decide at once, either you are against us and will perish in disgrace and shame together with all the counter-revolutionaries, or you are with us against the common enemy." Comrade Zinoviev's statement was then carried as a resolution, and the meeting was closed.

#### Petrograd, March 5.

On his arrival from Moscow, where he had conferred with comrade Lenin, comrade Trotsky immediately issued an ultimatum to the Kronstadt rebels. Signed also by comrade S. Kamenev, commander-in-chief of the Red Army, and comrade M. N. Tukhachevsky, commander of the Seventh

Army in Petrograd, the ultimatum states that the "Workers and Peasants Government" decrees that Kronstadt and the rebellious ships must immediately submit to the authority of the Soviet Republic, and that all those who have raised their hands against the Fatherland must lay down their arms at once. Only those who surrender unconditionally may count on mercy. "At the same time," said comrade Trotsky, "I am issuing orders to prepare to quell the mutiny and subdue the mutineers by force of arms. Responsibility for the harm that may be suffered by the peaceful population will fall entirely on the heads of the counter-revolutionary mutineers. This warning is final." The Soviet Government, commented comrade Trotsky, cannot allow the fortress that protects Petrograd to fall into the hands of insurgent sailors and reactionary peasants, supported by a few dubious Anarchists and Social Revolutionaries. We will defend our dictatorship, he concluded.

A special leaflet, issued by the Petrograd Defence Committee, has been dropped by airplane over Kronstadt. The leaflet said that the rebels must surrender within twenty-four hours, otherwise they would be shot "like partridges". Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman wrote to comrade Zinoviev proposing that an impartial commission be formed to mediate the dispute, in order to prevent a blood-bath, as they put it. "It was cold and hunger, combined with an absence of outlets for their grievances, that had driven the sailors to revolt," said their letter. Resorting to violence against them would only aggravate matters and serve the cause of the White Guards, argued the two Anarchists.

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It had rained a little in the night, but it was a fine morning. I got up early. Many of Leningrad's workers were, like workers the world over, rushing to "their" offices, shops and factories. Beneath the Nevsky Prospect, the Metro runs swift and sure. It is the pride of the city—better than the Moscow Metro. I stroll past the Admiralty building, along the side of the Neva and then across the bridge towards Viborg, once the stronghold of working-class anarchism in that city.

Life for the workers is far from easy, but it is different in many respects from those far-off days of March, 1921. People are no longer starving, though there are still shortages and, quite often, long queues for many things. Clothes and footwear are plentiful, if not of particularly good quality. Of course, the housing problem never seems to get solved, despite the new blocks of flats ringing the outer suburbs of Leningrad and other cities. The older blocks, with their sordid little courtyards, can still be seen. TV aerials top almost every building and apartment block. Throughout the day, buses and trolleys are frequent. Trucks and taxis speed murderously along the wide thoroughfares. Private cars are less conspicuous, and are used almost exclusively by factory directors, Trade Union officials, Party functionaries, People's Artists and the like. They are for the Top People—the Red Bourgeoisie, as the Polish workers call such types.



Of course, there will soon be more private cars (with the assistance of Fiat) and more, and worse, traffic jams and accidents. . . .

In 1921, the Kronstadt sailors demanded new elections to the Soviets. They did not get them. Today, Leningrad has an imposing City Soviet building, but no real Soviets. They demanded freedom of speech and the press for workers and peasants, left socialist parties and anarchists. The press is not free, but censored. There is no freedom of speech. All the "left socialist" parties are illegal, and the anarchist movement has been completely—or almost completely?—wiped out. The sailors demanded the liberation from prison and concentration camps of all political prisoners. Political opponents still languish in jails and concentration (euphemistically called "labour") camps. The sailors demanded the end of the Party dictatorship. The Party is still there. They wanted the opportunity to remake the bureaucratized Trade Unions into free associations of workers and peasants. They were unsuccessful. Soviet Trade

Unions today exist mainly to discipline the workers into increasing production and productivity, and in running rest homes and sanatoria on the Black Sea coasts for exhausted workers once a year. Kronstadt wanted the workers and peasants of Russia to overthrow the State Capitalism of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. State ownership and control of the land and the means of production, fifty years after, remains. . . . I glanced towards the old fortress of Peter and Paul. I wondered what Bakunin and Kropotkin would have thought of Russia today.

Petrograd, February, 1917.

Kronstadt, March, 1921.

. . . . What next? Freedom? Anarchist-communism?

And when?

As I wandered along, I asked myself these questions.

But in the end, only the workers of Leningrad, the sailors of Kronstadt and the peasants of, perhaps, Guilay Polya will answer that.

Peter E. Newell

## REVIEW

**KRONSTADT 1921** by Paul Avrich. 271 pp. Princeton University Press, \$8.50. Oxford University Press, £4.

HERE AT LAST, after fifty years, is the first full-length scholarly study in English of the Kronstadt rising. Paul Avrich made his reputation in 1967 with *The Russian Anarchists* (reviewed in ANARCHY 81) and maintains it with his second contribution to the Columbia University "Studies of the Russian Institute"; after describing the heroic saga of the libertarian current in the Russian revolutionary movement up to its destruction by the Bolsheviks, he now tells the tragic story of its final manifestation in the rebellion by the Baltic Fleet sailors at the Kronstadt island base against the Bolsheviks in March 1921.

There is of course a considerable amount of libertarian literature about Kronstadt available in English—Alexander Berkman's early article, translated as *The Kronstadt Rebellion* (1922), the relevant passages of his diary in *The Bolshevik Myth* (1925), which were recently reprinted in Irving Louis Horowitz's anthology *The Anarchists* (1964) and in ANARCHY 81; and *The Anti-Climax*<sup>1</sup> (1925); the relevant passages in Emma Goldman's *My Disillusionment in Russia* (1925) and in the fuller *Living My Life* (1931),<sup>2</sup> both books being reprinted in the United States last year, and her pamphlet *Trotsky Protests Too*

*Much* (1938); Anton Ciliga's article of 1938, translated as a *Freedom* pamphlet, *The Kronstadt Revolt*<sup>1</sup> (1942); Ida Mett's *La Commune de Cronstadt* (1938),<sup>2</sup> a slightly abridged translation of which was recently published as a *Solidarity* pamphlet, *The Kronstadt Commune* (1967); Voline's *La révolution inconnue* (1947),<sup>2</sup> the relevant section of which appears in the second volume of the English edition, *The Unknown Revolution* (1955). It is also worth mentioning Victor Serge's *Mémoires d'un Révolutionnaire* (1951), a slightly abridged translation of which was published as *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (1963), for the honest account of a former anarchist turned Bolshevik who sympathized with the rebels and yet sided with his new masters (the relevant section appeared in *Politics* in 1945 and in *Solidarity* in 1961). Avrich does not replace this literature, since he set out to produce a historical record rather than a political text, but *Kronstadt 1921* will from now on be the standard source of information about what happened at Kronstadt.

<sup>1</sup>These publications are reprinted elsewhere in this issue of ANARCHY.

<sup>2</sup>These dates are given wrongly by Avrich.

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The great value of the book is that it gathers in one place all the significant facts about the rising, with full reference to the accessible sources (the Russian state archives, of course, are still closed), and discusses all the important points at issue. This does not mean it is very long or very difficult to read; in fact it is relatively short for an academic book (only about 80,000 words) and quite readable.

Avrich begins by firmly establishing the rising in its various contexts—the crisis of War Communism, the current outburst of peasant risings all over Russia (the Cheka reporting no less than 118 incidents in February 1921 alone); and the tradition of spontaneous revolutionary action at Kronstadt going back to 1905. What happened in March 1921 was simply that all these contexts coincided in one place at one time, and exploded.

It is particularly important to realise that the Kronstadt sailors had played a crucial part in revolutionary affairs for a long time before 1921. There were major outbursts in October 1905 and July 1906; on February 28, 1917, they celebrated the beginning of the revolution by executing their commander and forty other officers; in May they declared an independent commune, six months before the October Revolution, and were never brought back into line by the Provisional Government; in June they



went to Petrograd to help an anarchist group resist eviction from the headquarters it had seized; in July they went again to take part in the abortive rising against the Provisional Government (they nearly lynched the Right Social-Revolutionary leader Chernov, and it was when Trotsky rescued him that he called them "the pride and the glory of the revolution"); in August they went to help crush the Kornilov putsch; in October they went to help bring down the Provisional Government; in January 1918 it was a detachment of Kronstadt sailors who dispersed the Constituent Assembly (of which Chernov was president); and there were many other such instances of their continuing zeal.

The Bolshevik story is that the revolutionary fire had died down by 1921 because the old militants had been replaced by raw recruits; what really happened was that the fire still burnt but the heat was turned against the Bolsheviks—and this began immediately after the October Revolution. Voline tells how the sailors returning from the fighting in Petrograd objected to the form of the new government, fearing that it might betray the revolution, and declared: "In that case, since the cannons could take the Winter Palace, they could just as well take Smolny" (the Bolshevik headquarters). In 1918, before the Civil War began, there was unrest throughout the Baltic Fleet because the new regime replaced the freely elected central committee with an appointed party council, and also because of the terms of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty; and the Kronstadt soviet kept getting into trouble trying to push forward with revolutionary measures on its own initiative. Already within a few months of the Bolshevik seizure of power, Kronstadt, as Avrich puts it, "became a stronghold of primitive anarchic rebellion". In April 1918 the sailors passed a resolution going so far as to call for a rising to get rid of the Bolsheviks and set up a genuinely revolutionary regime; in July some of them joined the Left Social-Revolutionary rising in Moscow; and in October they actually attempted a mutiny against the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and the Bolshevik dictatorship—and though this was suppressed before it got anywhere, it is worth noting that the sailors' demands, as Avrich says, "strikingly anticipated the Kronstadt program of 1921". During the Civil War of 1918-1920, though the Kronstadt sailors were some of the bravest fighters against the Whites, they resented the restoration of military discipline enforced by Trotsky, and they frequently protested against the government's arbitrary measures. During the winter of 1920-1921 there was discontent throughout the Baltic Fleet, and a significant development was that it was joined by many Bolsheviks—Communist

Party membership halved between August 1920 and March 1921.

It is true that by 1921 the social composition of the fleet had changed; instead of being mainly workers from the Petrograd area, the sailors were now mainly peasants from southern Russia. But far from this making them any less revolutionary, their personal links with such areas as Ukraine if anything raised their revolutionary consciousness, and the predominance of Ukrainians in the leadership of the rising was much less important than its overwhelmingly proletarian background. What is impressive is that Kronstadt seems to have changed so little throughout the period from 1905 to 1921. Moreover, the argument of ideological degeneration was used against the sailors as early as the mutiny of October 1918, when it was quite implausible; while on the other hand they were being held up as an example of revolutionary reliability as late as November 1920, when they led the Petrograd celebrations of the third anniversary of the October Revolution.

The point of all this is that the rising began as part of the long tradition of revolutionary activity, when the Kronstadt sailors went to Petrograd yet again, on February 26, 1921, to find out for themselves what was happening in the city, where there was a wave of factory meetings, demonstrations, strikes, and lock-outs resulting from working-class opposition to the hardships of War Communism, which for them meant less and less food for more and more work. The Bolshevik authorities used military cadets against the workers when they demonstrated, deprived them of their rations when they went on strike, and finally declared martial law on February 24. As it happened, by March 2-3 a combination of ruthless repression and skilful concession brought the troubles in Petrograd to an end; but by that time the troubles in Kronstadt had begun.

The sailors reported back to their comrades on February 28, and the result was a mass meeting on the battleship Petropavlovsk which passed a resolution laying down the principles which inspired the whole rising (this resolution is printed elsewhere in this issue of ANARCHY). On March 1 the local Bolshevik commissar and the president of the Soviet Republic attempted to save the situation but were shouted down at a mass meeting in the centre of Kronstadt, the meeting was taken over by the radical leaders, and the Petropavlovsk resolution was overwhelmingly adopted. On March 2 yet another mass meeting elected a five-member Provisional Revolutionary Committee which immediately took over the administration of the whole base (on March 4 it was

increased to fifteen members). The few local Bolsheviks who remained loyal to the regime were unable to hold up events, and either fled from the island or tried to subvert the rising secretly; other Baltic forts and bases joined the rising; propaganda literature was produced and distributed throughout the fleet, in local towns, and even in Petrograd. As Avrich puts it, by the evening of March 2 "Kronstadt had passed the point of no return": the rising had begun.

On March 3 the Provisional Revolutionary Committee (PRC) began a daily paper, which continued until March 16 and provides the best contemporary record of the mood of the rebels. All fourteen issues of this Kronstadt *Izvestiya* (News) were reprinted in *Pravda o Kronshadte* (The Truth About Kronstadt), an account of the rising published by Left Social-Revolutionary exiles in Prague in 1921; a French translation (including the relevant passages from Berkman's diary) was published recently—*La Commune de Cronstadt* (Paris: Béliaste, 1969). Avrich naturally makes considerable use of this source, and two crucial articles are reproduced as appendixes; but it would have been nice if the book could have contained a complete translation of the whole run, since though there are substantial extracts in Voline there is still no full text in English—it would have made the book more expensive, but much more valuable.

The Bolsheviks' verbal reaction to the rising was to denounce it as a counter-revolutionary conspiracy headed by a "White general", Kozlovsky, organised by émigrés in France, and backed by the Entente powers, especially France. Brian Pearce, the conscientious historical expert of the Trotskyists in this country, once claimed that "no pretence was made that the Kronstadt mutineers were White Guards"; but the press and radio used it without any qualification, Kalinin (the head of state) and Zinoviev (the Petrograd party boss) adopted it without hesitation, and even Trotsky and Lenin hinted at it. Isaac Deutscher, the Trotskyist biographer of Trotsky, admitted as much, adding delicately: "The denunciation appears to have been groundless." It was in fact complete nonsense, but it is worth examining, more for what it tells us about the Bolsheviks than about the rebels themselves.

Aleksandr Kozlovsky was one of the many former Tsarist officers kept in the Red Army (by Trotsky) as "military specialists", and in 1921 he was artillery commander at Kronstadt. Avrich makes it clear that he co-operated with the rebels, as did the other officers at the base, but only in their capacity as



military advisers; at the same time he makes it clear that their good advice was ignored, and that none of them took any part in the political conduct of the rising. The Bolshevik accusation is particularly ironical in view of the fact that the man put in charge of crushing the rising was a much more important "White general"—M. N. Tukhachevsky, a professional soldier of noble descent, also a former Tsarist officer, then a leading Bolshevik general, specialising after the Civil War in crushing popular risings (when he had finished with Kronstadt he hurried off to deal with Antonov's rising in Tambov).

As for the anti-Bolshevik émigrés, they did not influence the rising at all, though Avrich makes it clear that they did their best. The Liberals had for some time—especially since the defeat of the last important genuine White general, Wrangel, in November 1920—been considering the possibility of trouble at Kronstadt assisting their cause; and Avrich has unearthed a fascinating document in the Columbia University archives which goes much further than mere speculation. This is a handwritten memorandum to the Liberal National Centre in Paris, unsigned and dated 1921, stating that "information emanating from Kronstadt compels one to believe that during the coming spring an uprising will erupt in Kronstadt", going on to say that this could easily succeed if a small group seized power there, and adding that "among the sailors such a group has already been formed". This memorandum, which is reproduced in full in an appendix, Avrich tentatively attributes to G. F. Tseidler, a Russian Red Cross official in Finland; it must have been written in January or early February, and it was followed by reports in both the Russian émigré and the French national press that a rising had begun at Kronstadt—more than a fortnight before it did!

But all this proves no more than that the Whites would use any stick to beat the Bolsheviks with and that they had a good intelligence system. Above all, the rising came not in the spring, when the ice would have melted and Kronstadt would have been immune to attack from the mainland and open to help from abroad, but in March, when the ice was still frozen and Kronstadt was open to assault and closed to help. But it does go to show that the Bolsheviks had reason to believe that Kronstadt, even if it was not really a White plot, might have been or become one—that, in their jargon, "objectively" it was a White plot—though this explanation wears a bit thin when we learn that Lenin and Trotsky described the Petropavlovsk resolution, breathing revolutionary communism in every phrase, as a "Black Hundred/

Social-Revolutionary" document. It is impossible to prove that there were no links between the rebels and the Whites before the rising, but Avrich shows that there is at least no evidence of any.

There were certainly links after the rising began. The Whites immediately went crazy with excitement, and trying desperately to get supplies through to the rebels, using the Red Cross as a cover. But little contact was actually made. When Chernov sent a message from nearby Reval to Kronstadt offering help on March 3, he got a polite brush-off in reply. On March 13, when the situation was more serious, the rebels asked Liberal émigrés in Finland for food, and on March 16 Baron Vilken, a Liberal representative there, crossed the ice to make the necessary arrangements; but he still had no influence on the course of events, and anyway it was too late, and no help ever reached the rebels from outside. Moreover, the rebels had been perfectly well aware from the beginning that their actions would encourage other opponents of the Bolsheviks, and they made it quite clear all along that they did not want to go back on the October Revolution.

It is of course true that the Whites realised all this, and simply hoped to use Kronstadt as a lever to force the Bolsheviks out of power—exactly as the German government had hoped to use the Bolsheviks themselves in 1917 as a lever to force the Provisional Government out of power and end the war: which, after all, they did. But the fact is that the Whites did not have anything to do with the Kronstadt rising, so far as is known (and it is difficult to believe that the Bolsheviks would have suppressed any evidence of links if they had it). So the Bolshevik line was in fact an early and particularly blatant example of the technique of the amalgam—"Show us who your supporters are," they seemed to say, "and we shall tell you who you are" (as Avrich neatly puts it)—and like all the subsequent examples it comes to pieces when it is pushed too far.

The problem was that in those days the Bolsheviks still had some idea of the truth, and they were not really sure how to view the Kronstadt rebels. Lenin himself admitted that "they don't want the White Guards, and they don't want our regime either", and the worst he could say about them was that they represented "a petit-bourgeois counter-revolution" and that it was "proved" that "White generals played a large part in it"—a remarkable contradiction of reality which Lenin can hardly have been stupid enough to believe himself. Bukharin showed equal contradiction of reality and typical con-

fusion of mind, stating that "the affair was instigated by purely White Guard centres, but at the same time the Kronstadt mutiny was a petit-bourgeois rebellion against the socialist system of economic compulsion", and adding that "we cannot look upon the Kronstadt sailors as our enemies. We love them as our true brothers, our own flesh and blood". Even Trotsky called them "our blind sailor comrades", and described the suppression of the rising as a "tragic necessity".

But on one thing the Bolsheviks had no doubt. Their practical reaction to the rising was to suppress it; no argument was begun and no concession was offered from beginning to end. The authorities began with threats and, faced with the danger of the ice melting and the rebellion spreading, quickly turned to force. A sympathetic rising at Oranienbaum on the mainland was crushed on March 3, and an assault on the island was bound to follow. On March 5 Trotsky, once the favourite of the Kronstadt sailors and now the Commissar for War, came to Petrograd and took charge of the business, ordered the rebels to surrender unconditionally, and gave the orders to attack them. Zinoviev stated that the rebels would be "shot like partridges" (a phrase often wrongly attributed to Trotsky himself), and had their families arrested as hostages. Tukhachevsky was put in command of the armed forces in the area.

Also on March 5, Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, with some other anarchists in Petrograd who had connections abroad, tried to mediate between the rebels and the authorities; on March 6 the authorities did suggest that a delegation from Petrograd should visit Kronstadt, but the rebels reasonably doubted the sincerity of the offer and refused. There was never any room for such manoeuvre. The first assault came on March 7 (the fourth anniversary of the beginning of the February Revolution), and continued on March 8. It was a total failure, and many soldiers defected to the rebels or refused to fight against them.

The authorities made much more determined efforts to prepare a second assault, bringing whole regiments from other parts of the country, and removing regiments which were unwilling to take part; and 300 delegates from the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party, then meeting in Moscow, volunteered to stiffen morale. Further unsuccessful minor attacks were made from March 9 to March 14, then there was a pause before the major attack—filled with the effective announcement of the suspension of food requisitions (the first step in the New Economic Policy). The final assault began on March 16, with about

now turn to page 24



# The Revolutionary Movement

I HAVE RESERVATIONS about the way in which Colin Ward has attempted to group together various politically traumatic situations under the title of the "revolutionary moment". Anarchical they are to a certain extent—spontaneous uprisings of popular feeling, when people feel themselves freed from activist inhibitions, and are moved to direct participation in the course of political events. They are obviously important moments, especially for those who take part in them, and of course the "common sense of the street" that Colin Ward mentions is a powerful and lasting experience. But was it enough during the famous Vietnam demonstration of October 27, 1968, to feel elated at being in control of Charing Cross Road and Oxford Street? No, the most important things about the "revolutionary moment" are what provoke it, and where it leads to. Is the moment for itself a meaningful experience?

What kind of a "revolutionary moment" was the reaction of the Czechoslovak people to the invasion? Closer examination reveals that it was very different in nature from how most western accounts interpreted it.

Undoubtedly many western journalists invested their anti-Soviet and anti-communist feelings in the fact of the invasion. They wanted their hunches confirmed, just as they had throughout 1968 concentrated their attention on the most spectacular, rather than the most profound aspects of the Reform Movement. They wanted to prove that the Czechoslovaks were demonstrating their resistance to an oppressive social and political system, and were by their activity supporting an open-ended experiment which might have seemed to be going through an anarchist phase just before the invasion, but which was heading comfortably in the direction of assimilating bourgeois conceptions. The "revolutionary moment" then, in this mistaken interpretation was primarily an anti-Soviet one.

But I prefer to think of the "revolutionary moment" of the week following August 21, 1968, as being very different from this. It was primarily an expression of support for an already established political situation, the Dubcek Action Programme, and its actually hesitant forward movement, the development of which had been supported since the be-

ginning of 1968 by the huge majority of the Czechoslovak people. Both the Reform Movement itself and the reaction to the invasion were far from being anarchistic, but on the contrary, given the past history of Czechoslovakia, and the political personality of its people, quite predictable.\* Far from expressing a disgust with political organization and leadership, the existing popular reaction to the invasion showed the desire of the Czechoslovaks for a new kind of leadership, and a new kind of organized society led by the Communist Party, because this Party had already proved, as Colin Ward notes, that it was capable of changing and improving the quality of everyday life in Czechoslovakia.

During 1968, there was little incitement to anarchy, either from people or government, or any group. There had been quite enough anarchy in the preceding years, which had often had an arbitrariness and a violence which was quite enough to satisfy the appetite for disorder of any nation! **I see the Reform Movement precisely as a thirst for order, for the establishment of some kind of real political stability after 20 years of fidgeting and chaos.** One has to make the very important distinction between the evolutionary democratic socialist process developing before August 21, and the momentarily accelerated revolutionary spasm which followed it. Anti-Sovietism, which all the journalists had been smelling out since January, and which was perhaps implicit in some few respects of the Reform Movement, did not become explicit until after August 21.

Dubcek has been criticized by certain radicals in the west for having betrayed the "people's revolution" that was developing in CSSR in 1968. And Colin Ward comes perilously near to this extremely harsh attitude when he says that Dubcek was trying to set limits on the spontaneous revolution that was taking place during the early months of 1968, almost as though he were castigating Dubcek for trying to set these limits. When Dubcek and the Presidium ex-

\*Only conservative. Novstnyite communists, opposed to the Reform Movement, described for instance the questioning of the nature of the "leading role of the Party" as an "anarchistic" attitude.

pressed their concern at the extreme position adopted by the authors of the 2,000 Words in June, 1968, saying that it was an inducement to "anarchist acts, to violating the constitutional character of our political reform", it was precisely because they understood that the principle danger to the Reform Movement was that the other countries of the Warsaw Pact and especially of course the Soviet Union, would interpret Czechoslovak developments as anarchical, not because they really thought them anarchical. The peculiar nature of the Czechoslovak Reform Movement is that it is so difficult to understand from the international viewpoint. Dubcek's appeals to the Czechoslovak people before the invasion were fatherly and full of wisdom, for he understood the mind of the Kremlin. His appeals after the invasion are similarly sane: don't resort to anarchy, he says, we may still be able to save something, and that is the only useful position to adopt. Anarchy, or the "revolutionary moment" seems to have little place in the struggle against a totalitarian socialist regime: the only possible successful technique is an eroding one.

The most interesting of the anti-Dubcek critics is probably Hans-Jurgen Krahl, in his article in *New Left Review*, January-February 1969. Krahl, obsessed with the Marxist framework of the conventional class struggle, in which proletariat inevitably struggles against bourgeoisie, sets the stage with Dubcek as the enemy of the working class, and the Reform Movement as an attempt to re-establish the principles of a bourgeois ruling class. "Their own ruling interest," he says of the economic reformers, "drove them to throw overboard all practical reflection on the forward movement of the species towards its emancipation. . . ." And of the reaction to the invasion, which I am mostly concerned with here, he says—

"The experience precisely of the first days of the occupation in CSSR showed that in a country where the state has taken over the means of production, republican liberties can once again provide the proletariat, in a historically quite new way, with the organizational conditions for the pursuit of a revolutionary class struggle inside the socialist camp itself."



In my opinion, Krahl has completely misunderstood the essentials of the reaction to the invasion, which was much more of frustration than of revolutionary ardour. The real revolutionary ardour had occurred in the splendid unity of the country's pre-invasion analysis of itself, which must go down in history as one of the most fundamental self-analyses that a nation has ever undertaken. This is proved by reading the Czechoslovak press. The people, with one mind, rejected the old conception of the class struggle: "there are no more workers and no more bourgeois in Czechoslovakia," they said, "because in 20 years, the Communist Party has succeeded in obliterating the old distinctions. The spectre of the class struggle is now only invoked when it's considered necessary to gag a section of the community which is becoming too vociferous." Article after article in *Literarny Listy* and *Reporter* rejects the old conception of the class struggle. To see Dubcek as a man who instead of compromising in impossible conditions in Moscow, should have been rousing the Czechoslovak workers to the barricades is one of the most naive and laughable misunderstandings of Communist history I have ever come across. The most important thing about the Reform Movement was that it attempted to rephrase the clichéd conceptions of Marxism and to bring them into line with the scientific-technological revolution.

In the sense that the invasion violated the territorial sovereignty of Czechoslovakia, the people's support of their appointed government was one of the most remarkable demonstrations of national unity ever.

But what happened to the "revolu-

tionary moment" after August 21st? How was it possible for such unity to crumble? The answer to this lies partly in the nature of the Reform Movement and partly in the personalities of the Czechoslovak people. Dubcek had in fact no alternative but to save what he could of the reform: any other path would have been suicide. Even at the moment it is possible that Husak is saving what he can of the reforms by tempering the demands made by the Kremlin on the liberal forces to recant. Dubcek was like Gross in Vaclav Havel's allegorical play "The Memorandum", who, having been ousted from his job as boss and relegated to assistant, says: "There was nothing else I could do. An open conflict would have meant that I'd be finished. This way, as the Managing Director, I can at least salvage this and that." The Soviet Union, in order to bring the Czechoslovaks into line, has merely tightened its political control very gradually. The struggle to establish what philosopher Kalidova called "Marxist socialism dialectically created from Stalinism" has failed.

The collapse of the experiment can be blamed very little on Dubcek himself, or on his failure to control the "anarchy" of criticism of the old society. The very nature of the movement was that it should be a rather undisciplined, by previous standards, critique of socialism.

But the collapse of resistance must be related to the fact that the Czechoslovak people are quite used to the idea of being defeated. It is a role which they have learnt to accept by force of circumstance. Czech self-pity is now a very private, specifically Czech kind of emotion.

Perhaps in the end, the collapse of resistance has to be related directly to the

sort of personality which 20 years of deformed socialism has produced. During this period the individual has been consistently devalued as a public force: even the one-man shop was nationalized, and individual criticisms of the methods of the socialist society were dismissed as counter-revolutionary or anti-socialist. Society suffered from the pains of Stalinism. And 1968 was a process of rediscovery of personality. Once again, I have to emphasise that I can't see the post-invasion days as in any way anarchistic—but rather an expression of that new estimation of themselves that the 1968 honest self-criticism had given the Czechoslovaks.

But it was undoubtedly in many ways a naive kind of self-expression. A bit like a beautiful adolescent showing off. The excesses of the Reform Movement, its lack of circumspection, were due in a sense to an absence in the Czechoslovak people of a sense of their own communal bargaining power, *in their new political role*. Perhaps another nation might have staged a general strike following such an invasion. But for the Czechoslovaks, the habit of compromise had already undermined their communal psychology. They were not in the habit of thinking anarchistically.

That is why, at the same time as we in the west have made heroes of them, the Czechoslovaks have had their depression tempered by a certain amount of collective guilt. Sensitive Czechoslovaks are only too aware that their present position would be infinitely better if they had not felt the necessity of expressing their frustrations in the "revolutionary moment".

November 1970

ANDREW RITCHIE

## From the Kronstadt *Izvestiia*

The blood of the workers, reddening the ice of the Gulf of Finland by the will of the madmen defending their power, this blood has opened the eyes of the people.

March 11

We do not wish to return to the past. We are neither servants of the bourgeoisie nor mercenaries of the Entente. We are for the power of all the workers, not for the unbridled and tyrannical power of a single party, whichever one it is.

March 11

Revolutionary Kronstadt is the first to break the chains and bars of this prison. It is fighting for a different kind of socialism, for a workers' Soviet Republic, in which the producer himself will be the only master and will be able to dispose of his produce as he wishes.

March 16



## KRONSTADT 1921

continued from page 21

50,000 men against a garrison of about 15,000. By the time the fortress fell, late on March 17, the Bolsheviks had lost about 10,000, and the rebels about 1,500; about 8,000 rebels fled across the ice to Finland, and 2,500 were captured, of whom several hundred were killed and many others sent to the labour camps being set up in the North. Thirteen obscure sailors were chosen for a secret trial of alleged ringleaders, and shot; at no time was there any public trial of any participants in the rising.

Avrich shows that several Kronstadt refugees did join the Whites in exile—though on the basis of an unequivocal left-wing programme—and that some took part in later underground activity inside Russia. Even this, however, was not so much because of any genuine counter-revolutionary conviction as because of total disillusionment with the Bolsheviks, which seems hardly surprising.

As Avrich says, “a rebel victory is hard to imagine”. The rising had come just when the Bolshevik regime had won the Civil War, and was being accepted as a viable government by its neighbours. The only chance of overcoming military inferiority, by getting help from abroad and becoming a beach-head for a new civil war, was lost because the rising came before the ice melted and the rebels refused to break it with their artillery as the officers advised. And the only chance of circumventing military inferiority, by spreading the rebellion and becoming a detonator of a new revolution, was lost because the Bolsheviks had control of the media and quickly announced the beginning of the New Economic Policy—which Trotsky had suggested a year before, and Lenin had accepted in principle by February (and which had been Menshevik policy all along).

There was no chance of a third revolution after Kronstadt. The victorious Communists reacted to the rising by strengthening the bureaucracy and partially restoring capitalism; the Soviet victors abolished the Kronstadt Soviet and put the base under the command of Dybenko, a former leader of the Kronstadt sailors who had become a prominent Bolshevik staff officer. The slogan in 1917 had been *All power to the Soviets!*—in 1921 it should have been changed to *All power to the Party!* But the Bolsheviks never dared drop their mask. On the day after the fall of Kronstadt they commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Paris Commune, and Berkman wrote bitterly in his diary: “Trotsky and Zinoviev denounce Thiers and Gallifet for the

slaughter of the Paris rebels.” Newspeak is their second language; to this day they still call their dictatorship a Soviet Government and their empire the Soviet Union.

During the rest of 1921 the Bolsheviks tightened their hold on Russia. On the day of Kronstadt's fall, March 17, the Menshevik rulers of Georgia, the last non-Bolshevik administration in the country, fled abroad; the Bolshevik monopoly of government was complete. In May opposition parties were outlawed and driven underground; the Bolshevik monopoly of activity was complete. In March opposition factions within the Communist Party were banned, and by the autumn a quarter of the membership was purged; the Leninist monopoly of power was complete. And by the winter the last peasant risings were suppressed. “Totalitarianism did not yet exist as a word,” said Victor Serge; “as an actuality it began to press hard upon us, even without our being aware of it.” Leninism was triumphant—but already Lenin was seriously ill, and soon the struggle for power within his regime would begin.

This struggle later brought nemesis to many of the victors of Kronstadt. In 1936 Zinoviev was himself shot like a partridge; in 1937 Tukhachevsky (together with most of the top officers of the Red Army) was shot; in 1938 Dybenko, who was a member of the military court which tried Tukhachevsky, was shot; also in 1938 Bukharin, “the favourite of the Party” as Lenin had called him, got a dose of brotherly love and was shot; in 1940 Trotsky himself (who in 1939 was even accused of having a hand in the Kronstadt rising!) had his thick skull smashed in—all victims of Stalin, who took no part in the suppression of Kronstadt, but happened to be the one who treated those who did as they had treated their victims. The lies used against the rebels were turned against the liars, and the murderers and slanderers were murdered and slandered in their turn. Let us waste no time on these false revolutionaries who helped to set up the greatest tyranny in the world and supported the reign of terror they had begun until it devoured them (the only matter for regret is that Lenin and Stalin died in their beds—but perhaps it is true that they were poisoned). Instead let us remember the true revolutionaries who were destroyed at Kronstadt in 1921.

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The most interesting part of *Kronstadt 1921* is the chapter on “The Kronstadt Program”, in which Avrich analyses the ideology of the rebels. It is always tempting to ask who was behind a political movement, but at Kronstadt such a question was clearly meaningless.

The party background of the leaders, so far as it is known, was mixed. Of the fifteen members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, one (the chairman, Petrichenko) was identified as a Left Social-Revolutionary, one (the agitprop expert, Perepelkin) as an anarchist, one as a Populist Socialist, and two as Mensheviks; while the editor of *Izvestiya*, Lamanov, was a Social-Revolutionary Maximalist. Many, including Petrichenko, were former Bolsheviks (as early as 1921, it seems, ex-Communism was a significant phenomenon!), and many are said to have inclined towards anarchism. But the alternative Bolshevik story—that the rising was actually inspired by anarchists (Deutscher even called the PRC “an anarchist committee”)—is, alas, without foundation, though the anarchists still active in Russia naturally supported the rebels. As Avrich says, “the rebellion, in short, was neither inspired nor engineered by any single party or group”. More than that, the rebellion was hostile not just to the Communist Party but to all existing parties—*All power to the soviets but not the parties!* (a frequent headline in *Izvestiya*) was its most characteristic slogan. The rebels were not so much non-party as ex-party and anti-party.

But Avrich surely goes too far in adding that the rebels “possessed no systematic ideology” and that their credo was “vague and ill-defined, more a list of grievances, an outcry of protest against misery and oppression, than a coherent program”. On the contrary, their “kind of anarcho-populism”, as he calls it, which was expressed in the Petropavlovsk resolution and the columns of *Izvestiya*, is quite coherent and adds up to a perfectly clear and positive political position. Avrich shows convincingly that it corresponded closely to that of the SR Maximalists, a group roughly between the Left SRs and the anarcho-syndicalists, and there was nothing unsystematic about their policy. Here Avrich has fallen into the common fallacy, shared by conservatives and liberals on the right and social democrats and communists on the left, of assuming that a political ideology which is not based on complex philosophical arguments and decked out with fine rhetorical phrases is somehow lacking in intellectual qualities.

Avrich will have none of this. His treatment of the rebels’ “language and myths” in the manner of Norman Cohn, which suggests that they belonged to a primitive populist tradition with “a powerful streak of Slavic nationalism”, a “peasant nativism . . . curiously mingled with elements from the European revolutionary tradition”, makes heavy weather of the obvious fact that the rebels were uneducated working-class revolutionaries who happened to be largely



Russian peasants. Nor, in fact, is there much hard evidence for what he suggests. When Avrich examines the rebels' myth "of the centralized state as an artificial body forcibly grafted upon Russian society", he assumes that the myth is both primitive and false; but it was shared by many highly sophisticated Russian intellectuals of both right and left (including Bakunin and Kropotkin), and there are grounds for thinking it true. When he links the rebels' hostility to the Bolshevik rulers, especially Trotsky and Zinoviev, with the traditional attitude of Russian peasant rebels to the "bad boyars" imagined to be responsible for social evils, he seems to be taking a good idea too far; and when he then identifies Lenin as the "good tsar" in this tradition, he seems to be pushing it into fantasy. No doubt the rebels hated Trotsky and Zinoviev more than Lenin, but they had good reason—we don't need to accept the cult of Lenin's personality to agree that he was a much more impressive figure than his colleagues, and he never abused the rebels as the two leaders on the spot did—and even so the rebels did not hesitate to attack him when he attacked them (the *Izvestiya* articles of March 14 and March 15 which Avrich quotes read much more strongly than he implies, and he misses the point that the former specifically set out to refute the belief that "Lenin was different from Trotsky and Zinoviev"), and they never seem to have supposed that he could save the situation.

It happened that both Trotsky and Zinoviev were Jews, and Avrich gives some attention to the place of antisemitism in Kronstadt; its appearance would indeed be a good indication of reactionary and "primitive" peasant sentiments. He states that "there is no question that feelings against the Jews ran high among the Baltic sailors", and that after the destruction of their class enemies "their hostility was now directed against the Communists and Jews, whom they tended to identify with one another" (with some justification, in those early days), but he offers very little evidence for this. He quotes some hair-raising passages from the manuscript memoirs of a sailor who was serving in Petrograd, and refers to the sailor's claim that his views were widely shared by his colleagues in the fleet, commenting that "such beliefs, no doubt, were as prevalent in Kronstadt as in Petrograd, if not more so". That isn't much of an argument, and the only other piece of evidence—the Bolshevik story that one of the first Kronstadt rebels they caught shouted to his captors to "join us and beat the Jews"—is derisory. In view of the powerful tradition of antisemitism in Russia, especially in the south where so many of the Kronstadt sailors came from; in view of the enormous amount

of antisemitic propaganda being directed at Russia by White émigrés, particularly during that period; and in view of the predominance of Jews among the early Bolshevik leaders, including precisely the two mainly responsible for the attacks on Kronstadt—in view of all this, the remarkable thing is that there seems to have been virtually no breath of antisemitism during the Kronstadt rising.

But to pursue all these points would be to lose sight of the Kronstadt programme itself. The important point is that the Petropavlovsk resolution, as Avrich says, "echoed the discontents not only of the Baltic Fleet but of the mass of Russians in towns and villages throughout the country"; only one of its fifteen clauses referred to the sailors' own problems, and the rest sum up very concisely the left-wing objections to the Bolshevik regime. But they do more than that; they represent a particularly clear attempt to return to the soviet communism of the October Revolution—to the hours, as it were, between the disappearance of the Provisional Government and the appearance of the Council of People's Commissars. It did not try to go back beyond that—the rebels had no time for the Constituent Assembly, let alone the Duma or the Tsar—and it offered no encouragement to the Whites. It was the expression of the revolutionary class-consciousness of the Russian proletariat at its peak—not an intellectual consciousness (though it was not anti-intellectual, as Avrich seems to imply), but one derived from the hard, practical experience of working men from all over the country who had fought and suffered for a revolution which they saw snatched from their hands in the moment of victory.

The most significant demands were not the economic ones, some of which were already being met or were about to be met by the authorities, while the New Economic Policy went far beyond them (restoring freedom of trade, for example, which did not occur to the bitterly anti-capitalist sailors). What was significant was the political demands, which would have undermined the Bolshevik regime by destroying the power of the Communist Party. In this connection, it is necessary to make it clear that the Kronstadt programme was quite distinct from those of the left-wing dissidents within the Party, which were at that time grouped in the Democratic Centralists and the Workers' Opposition. All the opposition factions in the Party condemned the rising right from the start, and even joined the assault on it; indeed Aleksandra Kollontai, the most attractive figure in the Workers' Opposition—and a darling of Western leftists, as the author of *The Workers' Opposition* (first published in 1921, republished as a *Solidarity* pamphlet in 1961) and as an early protagonist of revolutionary

women's liberation—proudly boasted that the Workers' Opposition were among the first to volunteer to go and fight the rebels (though Avrich shows that the Democratic Centralists were no less enthusiastic to prove their party loyalty).

Attempts to assimilate Kronstadt to the Workers' Opposition, which were made by the Leninists at the time as part of the amalgam technique of propaganda and which have been made by libertarian Marxists since then as part of a similar technique in reverse, break on the decisive fact that the Workers' Opposition, despite its defiance of the Party leadership and its description by the leadership as "a syndicalist and anarchist deviation", always retained as its fundamental principle the Communist monopoly of power—the structure of the Bolshevik regime was to be changed, but not its basis as a party dictatorship; the fundamental principle of the Kronstadt programme, on the other hand, was precisely the removal of that dictatorship. The essential difference, however, was not in words but in deeds: when it came to a practical choice between Communism and communism, the Workers' Opposition gladly turned their guns on Kronstadt. (Though it must be added that the Kronstadt rising meant the end of the Workers' Opposition; their programmes were superficially similar enough to provide a source of embarrassment for the Leninists and a convenient excuse for the Leninists to suppress all factions once and for all.) It was different with the Bolsheviks of Kronstadt; nearly all of them joined the rising, and hundreds of them openly proclaimed their resignation from the Party.

But if the Kronstadt rebels were not Bolsheviks, neither were they liberals. When they called for freedom of speech and assembly, it was only for "anarchists and left socialist parties" and for working-class organisations, and when they called for the release of political prisoners, it was only for those in the same categories. Such liberalisation would not have affected the position of the Mensheviks and Right Social-Revolutionaries, let alone the really right-wing parties and the bourgeoisie. The rebels were in fact calling for a genuine dictatorship of the proletariat, based on genuine working-class democracy, leaving no room for middle-class liberalism. Nor were the rebels anarchists, since they envisaged a strong administration and wanted a "soviet republic of toilers" based on councils of working-class deputies exercising state power.

The Kronstadt rebels were pure soviet communists, and Ida Mett rightly called the rising "the last upsurge of the soviets". Soviet is of course the Russian for "council", and while the primary tradition of the soviets goes back to the original ones in the 1905 revolution

Rubin a Stalinist but voluntary for the revolution a true hero was a deserter

cf. Lenin's hostility to the party + the party



and beyond them to the *mir* (commune council) of the Russian countryside, it is nevertheless significant that the soviet communism which flourished in Russia in 1917-1921 coincided with the even briefer flowering of "council communism" in Germany, Italy, and other parts of Europe just after the First World War. Ida Mett noted that Rosa Luxemburg's position was relevant to Kronstadt; she might also have mentioned Gramsci, and there are many other figures of that time whose ideas fall into much the same pattern. Looked at in this broader perspective, the syndicalists of the Latin countries and the Wobblies of North America may be seen as predecessors of Kronstadt, and its successors may be found in Barcelona 1936-37, East Berlin 1953, Budapest 1956, Paris and Prague 1968, and so on. These comparisons should not be taken too far, but I would suggest that Kronstadt should be viewed as part of a phenomenon which is much wider in both space and time than is assumed in *Kronstadt 1921* (of all the parallels, Avrich mentions only Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in a single paragraph of his introduction).

Above all, Kronstadt should be related to the Paris Commune exactly fifty years earlier—one parallel which was certainly present in the minds of the rebels (who called themselves "Communards") and their sympathisers. Here we have two examples of a rising by a highly conscious and highly concentrated community, proud of a long revolutionary tradition, cut off from the rest of the country and besieged by its countrymen, struggling against hypocrisy as well as hostility, accused of all sorts of ridiculous crimes, trying to maintain direct democracy in a brief period of emergency, drowned in blood and remembered for ever. And the Kronstadt programme was actually close to that of Paris—much closer than to the Russian jacquerie conjured up by Avrich or to the "primitive rebels" of Eric Hobsbawm's tendentious study. One interesting resemblance is the remarkable gentleness of the Kronstadt rebels. In 1908 Lenin had scorned "the excessive magnanimity of the proletariat" in the Paris Commune—how much more "excessive" was that of Kronstadt, where the sailors hesitated to shoot or even lock up their enemies, where the 300 prisoners they did hold were not killed or even ill-treated right to the end! Marxists and anarchists alike have deplored such scruples, but they seem to be essential to this kind of episode; the same tendency may be observed in France and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and it might well be worth studying.

Of course what would be supremely valuable would be a detailed account of what really happened in the Kronstadt commune during the fortnight of

March 2-17—how the administration was run, how the press and radio were operated, how the various other jobs were done, how the personal and political problems of the situation were dealt with. But if any records of all this survived they are still in Russian hands and are unlikely to be released. As it is we have only glimpses of this crucial aspect of the rising from *Izvestiya* and some unreliable reminiscences, and these inevitably emphasise the fact that the commune of Kronstadt like that of Paris lived in a state of crisis from beginning to end. Thus we learn mainly about the curfew and blackout being imposed, the schools being shut and workers' educational classes being opened, electricity being economised and slush being cleared, food being distributed and other goods being exchanged, and so on.

One of the most interesting things was that, while the Provisional Revolutionary Committee acted as the main administrative organ, there was in almost continuous session throughout the rising a conference of 200-300 delegates, which may be seen as a model of the free soviets which inspired the rising and which was to be the nucleus of the communist society the sailors were fighting for. But even this comes through the brief reports as a shadowy thing—a symbol of the remarkable commune which still inspires us after half a century, like the even more remarkable commune half a century before that.

\* \* \*

The conclusions of *Kronstadt 1921*

## REVIEW

# Triumph of the Spirit

"FIDEL", directed by Saul Lerner.

FIDEL CASTRO IS A HERO and a legend in his own time. The position he has won by force of arms, by the backing of his close friends and by the apparent inertia of the Cuban people is almost that of priest-king. True he is a political (and military) dictator—a caudillo in the "Man on Horseback" tradition, but quite a different type of man to Batista, Franco or Salazar, and even to Stalin. He is, of this there can be little doubt, sincere, sympathetic, even enlightened. He is a man of the people, not exactly from the gutter, but certainly from the

are odd and, I think, unacceptable. In the last sentence of the book Avrich states that the Kronstadt rebels were "enshrined in the memory of the people as the revolution's guiltless children"—a phrase which doesn't seem to mean much and which anyway contradicts the mass of evidence that for fifty years they have been described by the authorities and therefore considered by the people as petit-bourgeois, reactionary, and even counter-revolutionary agents or at best dupes. Above all, they were surely not children, but full-grown men fully aware of what they were doing, deserving no patronage from any of us.

Even odder, Avrich ends his introduction as follows:

Each side behaved in accordance with its own particular goals and aspirations. To say this is not to deny the necessity of moral judgment. Yet Kronstadt presents a situation in which the historian can sympathize with the rebels and still concede that the Bolsheviks were justified in subduing them. To recognize this, indeed, is to grasp the full tragedy of Kronstadt.

But to recognise this is in fact to surrender the possibility of moral judgement and so to abdicate the responsibility of the historian. World history, as Hegel said, is world judgement; the historian is not just a mechanical recorder of facts, but also part of the human process he is investigating. If we sympathise with the Kronstadt rebels and still concede that the Bolsheviks were justified in subduing them—as indeed Victor Serge did—then we can sympathise with any rebels (the Paris





## KRONSTADT 1921

Commune, say, or the plots against Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco) and still concede that any government is justified in subduing them.

Each side in every conflict, after all, behaves in accordance with its own particular goals and aspirations. It is action, more than anything else, which reveals the true nature of human beings. This in fact is the basis for our total condemnation of the Bolsheviks. We are not concerned with the possibility that the success of Kronstadt might have led to chaos, civil war, or counter-revolution, but with the certainty that the failure of Kronstadt did lead to dictatorship, purges, and counter-revolution. The suppression of real communists calling for real soviet power by people who described themselves

as the Communist Party and the Soviet Government destroyed the Bolsheviks' credentials and should have destroyed their credibility. Kronstadt was not an isolated phenomenon or a new departure any more than the forced collectivisation or the great purge or the Nazi-Soviet pact or any other Communist atrocity—it emerged inexorably from the nature of Bolshevism as it was from 1903 and as it is today. The importance of Kronstadt is not that it was a “betrayal of the revolution”, a sudden disease which afflicted Russia in 1921, but that it was indeed a “tragic necessity”, a symptom of the underlying chronic illness of authoritarian socialism—the fact that it is objectively, practically, essentially counter-revolutionary.

“This was the flash which lit up reality better than anything else,” said Lenin, meaning the reality of War

Communism. We agree—but we mean the reality of Leninist Communism. As Bakunin said long before, socialism without liberty is tyranny. As Kropotkin said a few months before, this is how a revolution is *not* to be made. The full tragedy of Kronstadt is that the real enemies of the social revolution are the people who most loudly call themselves revolutionaries. A wider tragedy is that people need a Kronstadt—a sudden flash of light—to see this reality, and cannot catch sight of it for themselves. The tragedy of the libertarian left is that we have not yet found a way of bringing this tragedy to an end; until we do, we shall always be haunted by the memory of Kronstadt—all the Kronstadts—by the failure of the third revolution the Baltic sailors called for fifty years ago.

NICOLAS WALTER



## FIDEL

support of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. His continued loyalty to the Moscow line. Even his obvious betrayal of Che Guevara, whose death he now uses as a further figure to bolster up his regime. But this is apparently not enough as the die-hards of The Left point out as they continue to give nominally “critical” support to his regime, pointing out his achievements in rural development, nationalisation, collectivisation, even the abolition of fares on public transport (“Well don’t you anarchists want the same thing?”). It is here that we anarchists can learn a great deal about The Left as they grasp at every faint resemblance to their ideas to justify these to themselves and their friends, and to anarchists too. It is here that we too can learn which policies are generally anarchic and which are merely alternative patterns of government control—naturally you will have free transport to take the workers to and from work, why duplicate your accounting figures when you also tie up skilled labour as collectors and bureaucrats?

This is not what the film is about. It attempts to show how enlightened this dictator’s rule really is. They show his humanity, his need for contact with the people, and his willingness to listen to criticism—after all he can ignore it if he wishes. Yet how does this change this aging boy scout of socialist realism

or imply his regime is any further enlightened? A journey by jeep to distant provinces gives both the lie and support to suggestions of dictatorial rule.

Fidel Castro is a dictator. He can leisurely journey into the wilderness of Cuba as he wishes, both waving from his jeep and giving audiences to poor peasants as he does so. He can insist on townsmen dirtying their hands with hard physical work in the country around Havana. He can run Outward Bound Schemes till he is blue in the face. He can plead his sincerity by admitting his mistakes. All very fine, but this merely strengthens, it does not dissipate his power. Furthermore the constant presence of well-armed soldiers on his jeep and at every stopping place sets the lie to the suggestion of his total popularity.

To explain further. Admittedly the neighbouring powers would love to chop him down and so he might need an armed escort. But these soldiers carry pistols as well as rifles and sub-machine guns. Anyone with the faintest knowledge of the military knows that pistols are quite useless as a battle-weapon, and Castro is an experienced guerilla fighter too. The function of carrying pistols, in all armies, is to frighten and subdue the individual. That is why they are given to police and army officers—but never combat troops. A pistol is a sign of rank and authority—not of firepower.

This film is pure propaganda and is intended more for the idealist or the convert, certainly not an experienced political activist of different belief. Furthermore it is hardly a film for the general populace. Ordinary people would fall asleep after the first ten minutes. It has poor entertainment value even as a category “B” feature. Connoisseurs of the cinema might enjoy it as an example of political propaganda—it has an affinity with both *Triumph of the Will* and *Fall of Berlin*, and in its quieter moments when Castro soliloquizes with Eisenstein’s *Ivan the Terrible* particularly Part 2, except there is no one there to contradict this immense bore and buffoon of modern leftist politics. Perhaps the film should be left to Women’s Liberation or their female counterparts in IMG and IS. One wonders whether beauty parades would be held at socialist collectives under their brand of socialism or how they would feel about Fidel’s immensely jolly—what a jolly bloke he is—murmurings to women about their duty to provide the next generation of young Cuban socialists.

For anarchists however the film will only reiterate our firm conviction. It hardly matters how the dictator’s glove is worn—a dictator, nice or nasty, pleasant or unpleasant, is by definition and action, a dictator, and should be seen in that light and dealt with accordingly.

PETER NEVILLE



# Aspects of Anarchy :

## 2 EMMA GOLDMAN

IN THE SUMMER OF 1907 Wobbly leader "Big Bill" Haywood was acquitted of the murder of Governor Frank Steunenberg of Idaho. Emma Goldman, with two anarchist-communist comrades, sent a telegram to President Theodore Roosevelt at his summer residence. The message simply read:

UNDESIRABLE CITIZENS  
VICTORIOUS. REJOICE.

The joys and the sorrows of defiance are summed up in that telegram. For Emma Goldman, who has been called the high priestess of anarchism in America, won no wars and lost many battles; yet her life was a consistent struggle against authority and for the inauguration of a libertarian society unencumbered by hierarchy, coercion or violence.\*

Emma gained notoriety and thrived on it. As early as 1892 she was involved with her lover, Alexander Berkman, in the attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick, the symbol of monopoly capitalism who had tyrannized the workers during the Homestead (Pennsylvania) Steel Strike. She was unjustly incarcerated after the murder of President William McKinley in 1901, harassed by the police for her involvement in the beginning of America's free speech movement, jailed for her dynamic role in the birth control movement. Her support of domestic resistance to World War I led to the suppression of her journal, *Mother Earth*, and ultimately to her expulsion from America at the start of the Red Scare of 1919. She was sent to Russia, where she promptly saw through the promises of the statist Bolsheviks and spent the rest of her days wandering through Europe, often hungry and alone, never without a cause. She was an important propagandist for the CNT-FAI in London during the Spanish Civil War. In 1940 she died in Canada and was buried in Chicago's Waldheim Cemetery, near the graves of the Haymarket Martyrs who, as she testifies in her remarkable autobiography, had

\*The occasion of this essay is the recent publication of Emma Goldman's autobiography and chief collection of writings: *Living My Life*, two volumes (New York: Dover Publications, \$3.50 each) and *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Dover Publications, \$2.50).

given her the "burning faith" to become an anarchist.

Emma played many roles other than that of "national bugaboo". A disciple of the dramatic Johann Most, Emma was intellectually the heir of Kropotkin and was the most significant theorist of American anarchism. As a public speaker—on topics ranging from modern drama to direct action—she was without equal. *Mother Earth* was her offspring and with Alexander Berkman she made it a vibrating medium for the defiance of authority. Her essays reflect her omnipresent goal: human freedom:

In destroying government and statutory laws, Anarchism proposes to rescue the self-respect and independence of the individual from all restraint and invasion by authority. Only in freedom can man grow to his full stature. Only in freedom can he learn to think and move, and give the very best in him.

In essays which include such topics as political violence, the prison problem, libertarian education, woman's emancipation and radical theatre, Emma keeps consistently to the theme of breaking the stranglehold of authority in order for the individual to breathe freely with his comrades.

Though Emma had early mastered the art of propaganda, her autobiography, written with the apparent aid of Berkman, is quite candid. Her life was rich and varied and changed with her audiences. She could harangue the plutocrats in Yiddish before a workingman's association or treat Strindberg with power, if not subtlety, before a salon of middle-class intellectuals. Yet stylistic variation did not affect the singleness of her purpose.

Her *Life*, which runs to nearly 1,000 pages, never loses interest. Though she eventually gave up the youthful romanticism that led to her attempt at prostitution to raise money for Berkman's *Attentat* on Henry Clay Frick, she retained her sense of the dramatic. She re-tells with great excitement the tale of her horse-whipping of her mentor, Johann Most, after he repudiated Berkman's deed. She is as free and easy about her many love affairs as she apparently was during them. She communicates the sense of communal togetherness that she had with her colleagues in what they soon realized was

a premature, if not futile, attempt at revolutionizing the American masses.

In some ways, her most depressing essay, "Minorities versus Majorities", is her most compelling. After years of urging, of fighting and of losing, Emma gave up her belief in spontaneous mass action. Convinced that the majority had been beaten into a brutalized docility, she affirmed the significance of "the innumerable giants who fought inch by inch against the power of kings and tyrants". She arrived, with apparent reluctance, at the conclusion that the life of the masses was "uniform, gray and monotonous as the desert". But Emma did not retreat to egoism; she remained an anarchist-communist, continued to work for the revolution though, as *Living My Life* demonstrates, she grew increasingly less sanguine about the possibility of success.

The modernity of Emma Goldman's work is without question. Her vision of a society is a living part of what George Woodcock has described as the "strong underground current" of anarchism, which continually re-emerges "where the cracks in the social structure may offer it a course to run". Today her promotion of libertarian education, especially of the *Escuela Moderna* of Francisco Ferrer, is beginning to be appreciated. Her message to the advocates of woman's liberation is strong. As Richard Drinnon observes in his introduction to *Anarchism and Other Essays*: "Emma's keen sense of the tragedy of feminine emancipation gave her essays on this topic a surprising freshness and contemporary relevance". Today, women—and many other suppressed groups—can see clearly that structural change means continued oppression, that institutional reform does not solve basic problems.

The life of Emma Goldman is testimony to the proposition that individual freedom can be gained in the struggle against authority. Her last wish in her autobiography was:

My Life—I had lived in its heights and its depths, in bitter sorrow and ecstatic joy, in black despair and fervent hope, I had drunk the cup to the last drop. I had lived my life. Would I had the gift to paint the life I had lived.





# Paul Goodman

## Memoirs of an Ancient Anarchist

In essential ways, homosexual needs have made me a nigger. I have of course been subject to arbitrary insult and brutality from citizens and the police. But except for being occasionally knocked down, I have gotten off lightly in this department, since I have a good flair for incipient trouble and I used to be nimble on my feet. What is much more niggerizing is being debased and abashed when it is not taken for granted that my out-going impulse is my right; so I often, and maybe habitually, have the feeling that it is not my street. I don't mean that my passes are not accepted, nobody has a right to that; but that I'm not put down for making them. It is painful to be frustrated, yet there is a way of rejecting someone that accords him his right to exist and is the next best thing to accepting him; but I have rarely enjoyed this treatment.

Allen Ginsberg and I once pointed out to Stokely Carmichael, how we were niggers but he blandly put us down by saying that we could always conceal our dispositions and pass. That is, he accorded to us the same lack of imagination that one accords to niggers; we did not really exist for him. Interestingly, this dialogue was taking place on national TV, that haven of secrecy.

In general, in America, being a queer nigger is economically and professionally less disadvantageous



than being a black nigger, except for a few areas like government service, where there is considerable fear and furtiveness. (In more puritanic regimes, like present-day Cuba, being queer is professionally and civilly a bad deal.) But my own experience has been very mixed. I have been fired three times because of my queer behaviour or my claim to the right to it—and these are the only times I have been fired. I was fired from the University of Chicago during the early years of Hutchins, from Manumit School (an offshoot of A. J. Muste's Brookwood Labor College), and from Black Mountain College. These were highly liberal and progressive institutions, and two of them were communitarian.—Frankly, my experience of radical community is that it does not tolerate my freedom. Nevertheless, I am all for community because it is a human thing, only I seemed doomed to be left out.

On the other hand, my homosexual acts and the overt claim to the right to commit them have never disadvantaged me much, so far as I know, in more square institutions. I have taught at half a dozen State universities. I am continually invited, often as chief speaker, to conferences of junior high school superintendents, boards of Regents, guidance counselors, task forces on delinquency, etc., etc. I say what I think right, I make passes if there is occasion—I have even made out, which is more than I can say for conferences of SDS or Resistance. Maybe such company is square that it does not believe, or dare to notice, my behaviour; or more likely, such professional square people are more worldly and couldn't care less what you do, so long as they do not have to face anxious parents and yellow press.

On the whole, although I was desperately poor up to a dozen years ago—I brought up a family on the income of a share-cropper—I do not attribute this to being queer but to my pervasive ineptitude, truculence, and bad luck. In 1944, even the Army rejected me as "Not Military Material" (they had such a stamp), not because I was queer but because I made a nuisance of myself with pacifist action at the examination centre and also had bad eyes and piles.

Curiously, however, I have been told by Harold Rosenberg and the late Willie Poster, that my sexual behaviour used to do me damage in precisely the New York literary world; it kept me from being invited to advantageous parties. I don't know. What I observed in the '30s and '40s was that I was excluded from the profitable literary circles dominated by Marxists and ex-Marxists, because I was kind of an anarchist. For example, I was never invited to PEN or the Committee for Cultural Freedom. Shucks! (When CCF finally got around to me at the end of the '50s, I had to turn them down because they were patently CIA.)

To stay morally alive, a nigger uses various kinds of spite, the vitality of the powerless. He can be randomly destructive; he feels he has little to lose and maybe he can prevent the others from enjoying what they have. Or he can become an in-group fanatic, feeling that only his own kind are authentic and have soul. There are queers and blacks belonging to both these parties. Queers are "artists". blacks have "soul"—this is the kind of theory

which, I am afraid, is self-disproving, like trying to prove you have a sense of humour. In my own case, however, being a nigger seems to inspire me to want a more elementary humanity, wilder, less structured, more variegated, and where people have some heart for one another and pay attention to distress. That is, my plight has given energy to my anarchism, utopianism, and Gandhianism. There are blacks in this party too.

My actual political attitude is a willed reaction-formation to being a nigger. I act that "the society I live in is mine", the title of one of my books. I regard the President as my public servant whom I pay, and I berate him as a lousy worker. I am more constitutional than the supreme court.

In their in-group band, Gay Society, homosexuals can get to be fantastically snobbish and a-political or reactionary, and they put on being silly like a costume. This is an understandable ego-defence: "You gotta be better than somebody," but its payoff is very limited. When I give occasional talks to the Mattachine Society, my invariable pitch is to ally with all other libertarian groups and liberation movements, since freedom is indivisible. What is needed is not defiant pride and self-consciousness, but social space to live and breathe.

In my observation and experience, queer life has some remarkable political values. It can be profoundly democratizing, throwing together every class and group more than heterosexuality does. Its promiscuity can be a beautiful thing (but be prudent about VD). I myself have cruised rich, poor, middle class, and petit bourgeois; black, white, yellow, and brown; scholars, jocks, and dropouts; farmers, seamen, railroad men, heavy industry, light manufacturing, communications, business, and finance; civilians, soldiers and sailors, and once or twice cops. There is a kind of political meaning, I guess, in the fact that there are so many types of attractive human beings; but what is more significant is that the many functions in which I am professionally and economically engaged are not altogether cut and dried but retain a certain animation and sensuality. HEW in Washington and IS 210 in Harlem are not total wastes, though I talk to the wall in both. I have something to occupy me on trains and buses and during the increasingly long waits at airports. I have something to do at peace demonstrations—I am not inspired by guitar music—though no doubt the TV files and the FBI with their little cameras have probably caught pictures of me groping somebody. For Oedipal reasons I am usually sexually anti-semitic, which is a drag, since there are so many fine Jews. The human characteristics which are finally important to me and can win my lasting friendship are quite simple: health, honesty, not being cruel or resentful, being willing to come across, having either sweetness or character on the face. As I reflect on it, only gross stupidity, obsessional cleanliness, racial prejudice, insanity, and being drunk or high really put me off.

In most human societies, of course, the sexual drive has been one more occasion for injustice, the rich buying the poor, males abusing females, adults using niggers, the adults exploiting the young. But I think this is neurotic and does not give the best satisfaction. It is normal to



befriend what gives you pleasure. St. Thomas, who was a grand moral philosopher though a poor metaphysician, says that the chief human use of sex (as distinguished from the natural law of procreation) is to get to know other persons intimately, and that has been my experience.

A criticism of homosexual promiscuity is that, rather than democracy, there is an appalling superficiality of human contact, so that it is a kind of model of the mass inanity of modern urban life. I don't know if this is generally the case; just as, of the crowds who go to art-galleries, I don't know who are being spoken to by the art and who are being bewildered further. "Is he interested in me or just in my skin? If I have sex with him, he will regard me as nothing"—I think this distinction is meaningless and disastrous; in fact, I follow up in exactly the opposite way, and many of my lifelong personal loyalties had sexual beginnings; but is this the rule or the exception? Given the usual coldness and fragmentation of community life at present, I have a hunch that homosexual promiscuity enriches more lives than it desensitizes. Naturally, if we had better community, we'd have better sexuality.

Sometimes it is sexual hunting first of all that brings me to a place where I meet people—e.g., I used to haunt bars on the waterfront; sometimes I am in a place for another reason and incidentally hunt—e.g., I call on my publisher and make a pass at a stock-boy; sometimes these are both of a piece—e.g., I like to play handball and I am sexually interested in fellows who play handball. But these all come to the same thing, for in all situations I think, speak, and act pretty much the same. Apart from ordinary courteous adjustments of vocabulary—but not of syntax—I say the same say and do not wear different masks or find myself with a different personality. Perhaps there are two opposite reasons why I can maintain my integrity: on the one hand, I have a strong enough intellect to see how people are for real in our only world, and to be able to get in touch with them despite differences in background; on the other hand, I am likely so shut in my own preconceptions that I don't even notice glaring real obstacles that prevent communication.

How I do come on hasn't made for much success. Since I don't use my wits to manipulate, I rarely get what I want; since I don't betray my own values, I am not ingratiating; and my aristocratic egalitarianism puts people off unless they are secure enough to be aristocratically egalitarian themselves. Yet the fact that is not a lot of lies and bullshit to clear away.

I am not phony or manipulative has also kept people from disliking or resenting me, and I usually have a good conscience. If I happen to get on with someone, there

Becoming a celebrity in the past few years seems to have hurt me sexually rather than helped me. For instance, decent young collegians who might like me and used to seek me out, now keep a respectful distance from the distinguished man—perhaps they are now sure that I *must* be interested in their skin, not in them. And the others who seek me out just because I am well known seem to panic when it becomes clear that I don't care about that at all and I come on as myself. Of

course, a simpler explanation of my worsening luck is that I'm growing older every day, probably uglier, and certainly too tired to try hard.

As a rule I don't believe in poverty and suffering as means of education, but in my case the hardship and starvation of my inept queer life have usefully simplified my notions of what a good society is. As with any other addict who cannot get an easy fix, they have kept me in close touch with material hunger. So I cannot take the GNP very seriously, nor the status and credentials, nor grandiose technological solutions, nor ideological politics, including ideological liberation movements. For a starving person, the world has got to come across in kind. It doesn't. I have learned to have very modest goals for society and myself, things like clean air and water, green grass, children with bright eyes, not being pushed around, useful work that suits one's abilities, plain tasty food, and occasional satisfactory nookie.

A happy property of sexual acts, and perhaps especially of homosexual acts, is that they are dirty, like life: as Augustine said, *Inter urinas et feces nascimur*. In a society as middle class, orderly, and technological as ours, it is essential to break down squeamishness, which is an important factor in what is called racism, as well as in cruelty to children and the sterile putting away of the sick and aged. Also, the illegal and catch-as-catch-can nature of many homosexual acts at present breaks down other conventional attitudes. Although I wish I could have had many a party with less apprehension and more unhurriedly—we would have enjoyed them more—yet it has been an advantage to learn that the ends of docks, the backs of trucks, back alleys, behind the stairs, abandoned bunkers on the beach, and the washrooms of trains are all adequate samples of all the space there is. For both good and bad, homosexual behaviour retains some of the alarm and excitement of childish sexuality.

It is damaging for societies to check any spontaneous vitality. Sometimes it is necessary, but rarely; and certainly not homosexual acts which, so far as I have heard, have never done any harm to anybody. A part of the hostility, paranoia, and automatic competitiveness of our society comes from the inhibition of body contact. But in a very specific way, the ban on homosexuality damages and depersonalizes the educational system. The teacher-student relation is almost always erotic; if there is a fear and to-do that it might turn into overt sex, it either lapses or becomes sick and cruel. And it is a loss that we do not have the pedagogic sexual friendships that have starred other cultures. Needless to say, a functional sexuality is incompatible with our mass school systems. This is one among many reasons why they should be dismantled.

I recall when *Growing Up Absurd* had had a number of glowing reviews, finally one irritated critic, Alfred Kazin, darkly hinted that I wrote about my Puerto Rican delinquents because I was queer for them. Naturally. How could I write a perceptive book if I didn't pay attention, and why should I pay attention to something unless, for some reason, it interested me? The motivation of most sociology, whatever it is, tends to produce worse books. I doubt that anybody would say that my observations of delinquent adolescents or



of collegians in the Movement has been betrayed by infatuation. But I do care for them. (Of course, *they* might say, "With such a friend, who needs enemies?")

An evil of the hardship and danger of queer life in our society, however, as with any situation of scarcity and starvation, is that we become obsessional about it. I myself have spent far too many anxious hours of my life fruitlessly cruising, which I might have spent sauntering for nobler purposes or for nothing at all, pasturing my soul. Yet I think I have had the stamina, or stubbornness, not to let my obsession cloud my honesty. I have never praised a young fellow's bad poem because he was attractive, though of course I am then especially pleased if it is good. Best of all, of course, if he is my lover and he shows me something that I can be proud of and push. Yes, since I began this article on a bitter note, let me end it with a happy poem I like, from *Hawkweed*:

We have a crazy love affair,  
it is wanting each other to be happy.

Since nobody else cares for that  
we try to see to it ourselves.

Since everybody knows that sex  
is part of love, we make love;

when that's over we return  
to shrewdly plotting the other's advantage.

Today you gazed at me, that spell  
is why I choose to live on.

God bless you who remind me simply  
of the earth and sky and Adam.

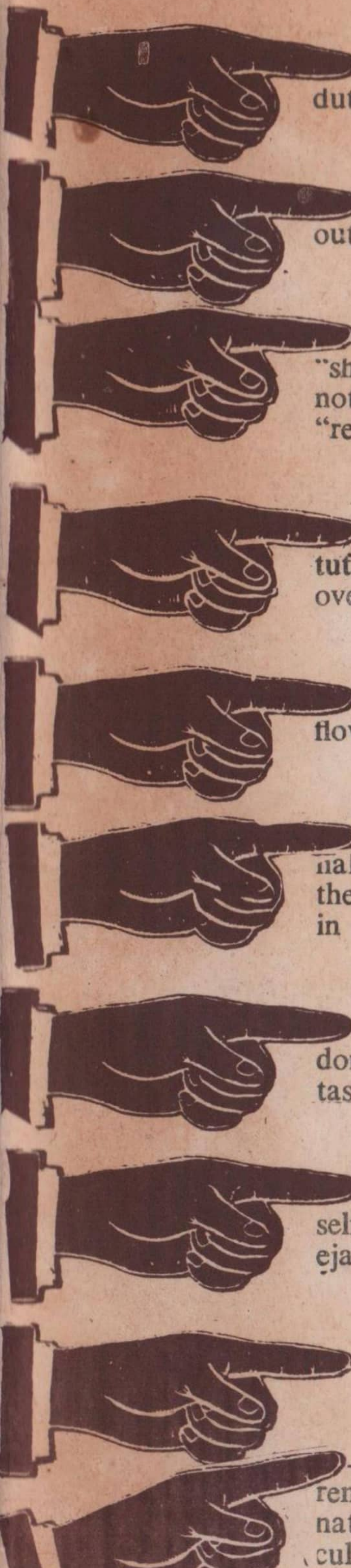
I think of such things more than most  
but you remind me simply. Man,  
you make me proud to be a workman  
of the Six Days, practical.

PAUL GOODMAN.

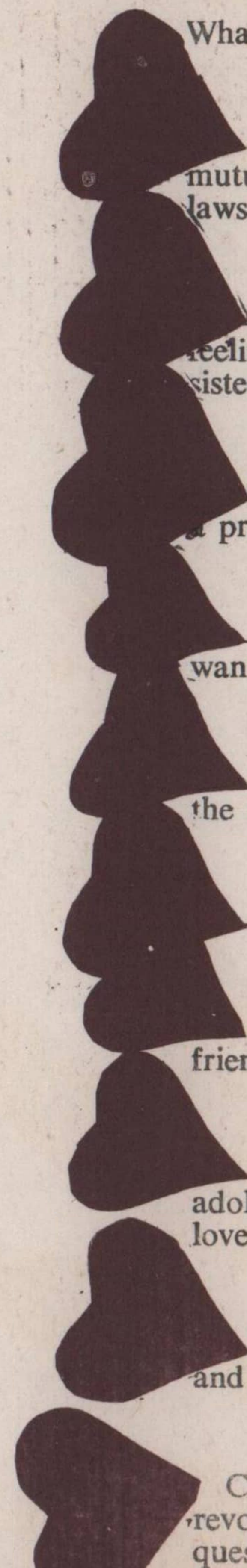


# Reich's Manifesto: Sexpol 1936

What is sexual chaos?

- 
- it's referring to the law on "matrimonial duty" in the matrimonial bed,
  - it's contracting a sexual liaison for life without any previous sexual knowledge of the partner,
  - it's "sleeping" with a working girl because "she's not worth more" while at the same time not asking for "something like that" from a "respectable" girl,
  - it's the lewdness of a life of sordid prostitution, or the excitement, caused by abstinence, over "wedding night",
  - it's making virile power culminate in deflowering,
  - it's mentally pawing the image of a half naked woman up and down avidly at fourteen and then, at twenty, entering the lists as a nationalist in favour of "the purity and honour of women",
  - it's making possible the existence of those who don't function and inculcating their perverse fantasies into thousands of young people,
  - it's punishing the young for the offence of self-satisfaction and making adolescents think that ejaculation causes them to lose spinal marrow,
  - it's tolerating the pornography industry,
  - it's exciting adolescents with erotic films, removing the satisfaction, but refusing them natural love and sexual satisfaction by calling on culture.

What sexual chaos is not!

- 
- desiring mutual sexual abandon through mutual love without worrying about established laws or moral precepts and acting accordingly,
  - liberating children and adolescents from feelings of sexual guilt and letting them live consistently with the aspirations of their age,
  - not marrying or making durable ties without a precise sexual knowledge of the partner,
  - not bringing to the world children until one wants them and can bring them up,
  - not asking someone for the right to love and the right to sexual abandon,
  - not killing the partner because of jealousy,
  - not having relations with prostitutes, but with friends from one's own milieu,
  - not making love in entrance ways like the adolescents of our society, but desiring to make love in clean rooms without being disturbed,
  - finally, not maintaining an unhappy marriage and drudging because of moral scruple, etc., etc.
  - Cultural gab isn't going to end and the cultural revolutionary movement will not win if these questions aren't answered.

with love from Wilhelm Reich



