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Anarchistic Perspective on Kronstadt Uprising

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The anarchistic perspective on Kronstadt uprising

Master thesis

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Introduction

Following the October Revolution in 1917, the ascent of the Bolsheviks to power marked a pivotal moment in Russian history. Initially, they appeared as the promising agents of Marxist-based communism, holding the potential to guide Russia and subsequently the Soviet Union towards the esteemed "dictatorship of the proletariat." However, these aspirations were swiftly shattered as the ruthless reign of the Bolsheviks, spearheaded by Vladimir Lenin, unfolded. The subsequent implementation of war communism ushered in a period of repression, famine, and brutal requisitions, plunging the populace into a state of dire scarcity.

By the outset of the 1920s, the civil war that culminated in the triumph of the pro-Bolshevik Red forces neared an inexorable conclusion. The nation grappled with profound economic and social challenges, prompting growing dissent among the populace, which found expression through protests and demonstrations.

The focal point of this research centres on the Kronstadt uprising, an event that unfolded in March 1921 on the island of Kronstadt, a small city and naval base located in the Gulf of Finland near St. Petersburg (referred to as Petrograd during the described events). Preceding the uprising, unrest and strikes had already erupted in Petrograd in February 1921. The sailors stationed on the island subsequently joined the general tumult. In early March, the sailors formulated a program comprising 15 points, later recognized as the Petropavlovsk Resolutions or simply the Kronstadt resolutions. These demands encompassed principles such as freedom of speech, re-elections to the soviets, equitable remuneration, and the release of all political prisoners.

Predictably, the Bolsheviks, who had by this time initiated a comprehensive campaign aimed at eliminating political adversaries, responded to these demands in a manner devoid of conciliation. After a brief period of threats and superficial negotiations, the Kronstadt uprising was ruthlessly suppressed. Its leaders were compelled to seek refuge in Finland, while the participants faced sentences of exile, and some were even subjected to capital punishment.

Over the course of one hundred years, the study of historical events typically reaches a point of established facts, as posited by Andrey Kalyonov.¹ At first glance, it appears that this is indeed the case with the Kronstadt events, as a comprehensive historiography outlining the details exists. The

1 Andrey Kalyonov, "Who Were the Kronstadt Rebels? A Russian Anarchist Perspective on the Uprising," *Crimethinc*, March 16, 2021, <https://pl.crimethinc.com/2021/03/16/who-were-the-kronstadt-rebels-a-russian-anarchist-perspective-on-the-uprising>.

consensus among "Western academics" regarding the occurrences in Kronstadt, including the factors that triggered the uprising and its historical significance, seems predominantly aligned. These prevailing theories will be expounded upon in subsequent sections. Nevertheless, what has been gradually eroded over the course of a century is the diversity of voices, particularly the perspectives put forth by various political factions and ideological streams. Among these voices, the anarchistic viewpoint on the Kronstadt uprising has been notably marginalized or overlooked.

The enduring association between anarchists and the remembrance of Kronstadt finds historical precedent. Prominent anarchist intellectuals, namely Emma Goldman (1869 – 1940) and Alexander Berkman (1870-1936), were present in Petrograd during the mutiny, actively engaging the Bolshevik government and beseeching it to cease the escalating violence. Additionally, Stepan Petrichenko (1892-1947), the Chair of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, maintained affiliations with the anarcho-syndicalist movement. Furthermore, anarchists were among the earliest proponents to disseminate publications that covered the Kronstadt events.

The present research endeavours to address a fundamental question: What is the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt uprising and how did it evolve? To elucidate this question, the thesis undertakes a comprehensive analysis of two primary categories of sources. Firstly, it scrutinizes significant anarchist literary works authored during the period from 1920s to 1940s, which provide invaluable insights into the ideological underpinnings and intellectual perspectives of anarchists during this period. Secondly, it examines the corpus of anarchistic press releases within a one-year time frame following the Kronstadt events. This dual-pronged analysis aims to illuminate the multifaceted reactions that emanated from the anarchist community, ultimately contributing new insights into this pivotal historical juncture.

The organization of sources and findings in the present study necessitates further elaboration. The sources from the 1920s to the 1940s provide the most comprehensive body of material elucidating the anarchistic perspective on the events under consideration. When scholars like Victor Popov, renowned for his notable historiographical work on the Kronstadt events², reference anarchists and their viewpoints on the Kronstadt mutiny, they primarily draw upon the positions scrutinized in this chapter. Consequently, this book serves as a pivotal resource in comprehending what has come to be recognized as the anarchistic perspective. Conversely, the subsequent chapter delves into an analysis of newspaper issues, which present significantly less content pertaining to Kronstadt. By examining them

² Victor Popov, *Kak pishetsja istorija: Kronshtadtskie sobytija 1921 goda* (LitRes: Samizdat, 2020).

separately, subsequent to the introduction of the most significant works, we are able to highlight the contrasting nature between mature opinions grounded in a broader historical perspective and the initial responses characterized by a lack of cohesiveness. This approach affords us the opportunity to demonstrate that the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt events underwent evolution over time and did not manifest immediately following the uprising. Moreover, it facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the divergences among various factions of anarchists prevalent during the examined period.

The focal point of this research revolves around eight key works penned by anarchists, constituting the primary sources for analysis: *The Truth about Kronstadt*³ (1921) authored by Stepan Petrichenko, who was one of the leaders of the uprising, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*⁴ (1922) by Alexander Berkman, influential anarchistic activist, who was in Petrograd during the uprising, *Anarchisty v rossijskoy revolutsii*⁵ by Anatolii Gorelik, probably the most radically anarchistic position on the list, *Kronstadt in Russian Revolution*⁶ (1923) composed by Efim Yarchuk, a book that gives a broader picture of significance of Kronstadt during the revolution, *My disillusionment in Russia*⁷ (1923) and *My further disillusionment in Russia*⁸ (1924) written by Emma Goldman, recognized anarchist and feminist who was in Petrograd together with Berkman, *The Kronstadt Commune*⁹ (1938) authored by Ida Mett, a work that explains the diversity of initial responses to the uprising in great details, and *The Unknown Revolution*¹⁰ (1947) by Volin, one of the creators of recognizable Nabat organization aiming into unification of all anarchists fractions.¹¹ These works, while influenced to varying extents by one another, draw information from common sources. This issue is further analyzed in chapter 2 of this work. However, it is important to recognize that each author's unique involvement in the Kronstadt events imparts a distinctive personal dimension to their respective positions. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis of these works not only allows for the synthesis of a general conclusion

3 Stepan Petrichenko, *The Truth About Kronstadt*, 1921, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/stepan-petrichenko-the-truth-about-kronstadt>.

4 Alexander Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion* (Berlin: Der Sindikalist, 1922), <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alexander-berkman-the-kronstadt-rebellion>.

5 Anatolij Gorelik, *Anarchisty v Rossijskoy Revolutsii* (Argentina: Golos Truda, 1922).

6 Efim Yarchuk, *Kronshtadt v Russkoj Revoljucii* (New York: Izdanie Ispolnitel'nogo Komiteta Professional'nyh Sojuzov, 1923).

7 Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (New York: Doubleday, 1923), <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-my-disillusionment-in-russia>.

8 Emma Goldman, *My Further Disillusionment in Russia* (New York: Doubleday, 1924), <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-my-further-disillusionment-in-russia#toc7>.

9 Ida Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune*, Active Distribution, Croatia 2021 (Paris, 1938).

10 Volin, *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921*, 2019 PM Press, Oakland (Paris, 1947).

11 For additional information regarding the aforementioned authors, readers are directed to Appendix 2 of this work.

regarding anarchistic discourse on Kronstadt but also highlights the individual significance of the March events for these prominent anarchist thinkers.

The second group of sources encompasses a diverse range of publications, comprising both national and immigrant press outlets. These include *Svobodnoe Obshestvo*, *Cherez Sotsializm k Anarcho-Universalizmu*, *Golos Truzhennika*, *Klich Anarchistov*, *Pochin*, *Universal*, *Volna*, and *Volnaya zhyzn*.¹² This collection of anarchistic periodicals provides valuable insights into the contemporaneous discourse surrounding the Kronstadt events. By examining these publications within the time frame of one year following the uprising, this research aims to elucidate the nuanced perspectives and varied ideological responses put forth by the anarchist community during this critical period. It is noteworthy to acknowledge that the newspapers subjected to analysis in this study were published both within Russia and within the circles of Russian anarchistic immigration abroad, predominantly in America. This inclusion of sources from diverse geographical locations enhances the scope and breadth of the investigation, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the dissemination and reception of anarchistic perspectives on the Kronstadt events across different contexts.

Early historiography on the Kronstadt uprising can be broadly categorized into two distinct groups. The first comprises publications authored by individuals and organizations sympathetic to the rebellion, while the second consists of works aligning with the perspectives of the Bolsheviks. This dichotomy is a recurring feature in historical analyses of events such as rebellions and mutinies. It is unsurprising that within the Soviet Union, the prevailing narrative favored the Bolsheviks and emphasized the suppression of the revolution. Among the corpus of significant works, two stand out and warrant particular attention: Alexandr Slepko's *Kronshtadtskiy myatezh*¹³ (Kronstadt Uprising, 1928) and Stalin's *Kratkiy kurs istorii*.¹⁴ (Short Course on History, 1938)

The Soviet interpretation of the Kronstadt events not only exhibited unequivocal support for the Bolshevik cause but also propagated the notion that the Kronstadt uprising constituted a counter-revolutionary movement. This perspective attributed responsibility for the mutiny to various groups and organizations. Among the prevalent accusations, one widely circulated theory alleged that the uprising had been orchestrated by White Forces. Some authors pointed to the presence of ex-White general Alexander Kozlovsky on the island during the uprising, positing him as the mastermind behind the actions. Others contended that the rebellion had been organized by undisclosed international forces,

12 The complete list of available issues of these newspapers can be found at the end of this work.

13 Alexander Slepko, *Kronshtadtskiy Myatezh* (Moscow: Moskovskij rabochij, 1928).

14 Josef Stalin, *Kratkiy Kurs Istorii VKP(b)*, 1938, http://www.lib.ru/DIALEKTIKA/kr_vkpb.txt.

substantiating their claims by referencing an alleged prediction of the uprising published in the French newspaper *La Matin*. Present-day scholarship, however, has debunked both of these theories as spurious.

Nevertheless, the Soviet approach towards the Kronstadt rebels remained largely unchanged over the decades. Among the subsequent significant works, one notable example is Sergey Semanov's extensively titled publication, *Likvidacija antisovetskogo Kronshtadskogo mjatezha*¹⁵ (Liquidation of the Anti-Soviet Kronstadt Rebellion, 1973). Semanov, much like the early writings, accused the sailors of betraying the ideals of the revolution. He argued that the uprising primarily stemmed from internal issues within the fleet and was not a response to the dire socio-economic conditions prevailing in the country.

On the contrary, the Western narrative regarding Kronstadt prominently aligned with the perspective of the Kronstadt sailors. In addition to early anarchistic works that frequently occupy influential positions, it is crucial to mention the book *Pravda o Kronstadtie*¹⁶ (The Truth about Kronstadt), published in 1921 in Prague by the editorial board "Volya Rosii," which was predominantly composed of Socialist Revolutionary (SR) members. Generally, the pro-rebel positions describe the uprising as a spontaneous movement driven by a populace weary of the harsh rule imposed by the Bolsheviks. However, divergences arise when examining the emphasis placed on the political and economic reasons underlying the uprising.

Consequently, this portrayal of the Kronstadt uprising as an anti-Soviet movement persisted throughout the Cold War era. Notably, the renowned work *The Kronstadt Revolt of 1921: A Study in the Dynamics of Revolution*¹⁷ by Robert Daniels espouses similar theories. According to Daniels, the Kronstadt uprising was spurred by widespread discontent with the Bolshevik regime and possessed an inherently anti-Soviet character.

Nonetheless, the Cold War period witnessed the emergence of more moderate viewpoints. Among them, two works extensively utilized during the preparation of the first chapter of this thesis are *Kronstadt 1921*¹⁸ by Paul Avrich and *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy*¹⁹ by Israel Getzler. While both authors still depict Kronstadt primarily as an anti-Bolshevik event, they exhibit

15 Sergey Semanov, *Likvidacija Antisovetskogo Kronshtadskogo Mjatezha* (Moscon: Nauka, 1973).

16 *Pravda o Kronstadtie* (Prague: Volya Rossii, 1921).

17 Robert Daniels, "The Kronstadt Revolt of 1921: A Study in the Dynamics of Revolution," *The American Slavic and East European Review* 10, No. 4, 1951.

18 Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970).

19 Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy*, Soviet and East European Studies (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

greater understanding of the suppression of the mutiny. Avrich explicitly argues that the suppression was an inevitable outcome and, from the Bolshevik perspective, the only feasible course of action. Avrich's work is widely recognized among Western scholars as one of the most significant contributions to the discourse on the Kronstadt uprising.

The trajectory of scholarship surrounding the Kronstadt uprising underwent a significant shift with the notable declassification of documents pertaining to the event. This crucial development culminated in the publication of a comprehensive work entitled *Kronshtadtskaja tragedija 1921 goda dokumenty v dvuh knigah*²⁰ (The Kronstadt Tragedy of 1921: Documents in Two Volumes). This monumental undertaking presented detailed quantitative data regarding the uprising and provided an exact description of the events from the perspective of official Soviet documents. Importantly, it marked a pivotal moment when the world gained access to the official documentation, thereby bridging the gap between Russian historical writing on the events and Western perspectives more than ever before. This convergence was facilitated by the availability of shared primary sources, allowing for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the Kronstadt uprising.

As of the present moment, the available research pertaining to the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt uprising remains insufficient. While a limited number of articles touch upon this subject, one notable contribution is Dimitri Rublev's article titled *Кронштадское восстание: Взгляд российской анархистской эмиграции*²¹ (The Kronstadt Uprising: A View from the Russian Anarchist Emigration). Rublev's article presents a comprehensive analysis that sheds light on several distinctive features characterizing anarchistic publications addressing the Kronstadt narrative.

Rublev highlights the tendency of romanticizing the movement within these publications, emphasizing the significance of anarchism within the context of Kronstadt. Moreover, he underscores the prevalence of political reasoning preceding the mutiny, overshadowing the social motives behind the uprising. Additionally, Rublev draws attention to the myth-building role of the "Third revolution" narrative that emerged surrounding the Kronstadt events.

Furthermore, Rublev delves into the existence of a narrative that categorizes the Kronstadt uprising as an anarchistic movement. Through his analysis, Rublev contributes valuable insights into the broader discourse surrounding Kronstadt from an anarchistic perspective, shedding light on the various interpretive frameworks employed by anarchist publications.

20 *Kronshtadtskaja Tragedija 1921 Goda Dokumenty v Dvuh Knigah* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1999).

21 Dimitri Rublev, "Кронштадское Восстание: Взгляд Российской Анархистской Эмиграции," *Сборник Материалов IV Международных Кропоткинских Чтений. К 170-Летию Со Дня Рождения П.А. Кропоткина*, 2012, 120–29.

Another significant contribution to the understanding of the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt uprising can be found in Victor Popov's book titled *Как пишется история: Кронштадтские события 1921 года*²² (How History Is Written: The Kronstadt Events of 1921). Popov's work offers an overview of the influential historiography surrounding the Kronstadt uprising, including the examination of positions articulated by anarchists. However, Popov's assessment suggests that the significance of the anarchistic movement is relatively marginal in his analysis.

On the other hand, Alexander Herbert provides a different perspective in his proposal entitled *Thinking like an Anarchist: Exploring Anarchist Perspectives of the 1921 Kronstadt Uprising*.²³ Herbert argues that early anarchistic writings form the foundation of the modern Western academic perspective on the Kronstadt events. However, it is worth noting that the brevity of the proposal leaves some room for the presentation of supporting evidence to bolster these claims.

It is worth acknowledging the contributions made by two articles published on the CrimethInc portal, namely *Who Were the Kronstadt Rebels? A Russian Anarchist Perspective on the Uprising*²⁴ and *The Kronstadt Uprising: A View from within the Revolt On the 100-Year Anniversary of the Rebellion*.²⁵ These articles present a compelling argument challenging the anarchistic characterization of the Kronstadt uprising, while also highlighting the anarchists' vested interest in commemorating the Kronstadt events. However, it is crucial to recognize that their publicist nature and format may limit their scholarly utility. While these articles offer interesting insights and perspectives, they fall short of the rigorous research standards associated with academic scholarship, which typically encompasses extensive primary and secondary source analysis, methodological rigour, and a comprehensive examination of the historical context.

The aforementioned sources, though valuable, exhibit a fragmented coverage of the primary research question addressed in this paper. They predominantly rely on prominent publications authored by anarchists, neglecting to consider the significant contribution of the anarchistic press. As a consequence, an evident gap exists within the academic knowledge concerning the reaction of

22 Popov, *Kak pishetsja istorija: Kronshtadtskie sobytija 1921 goda*.

23 Alexander Herbert, "Thinking like an Anarchist: Exploring Anarchist Perspectives of the 1921 Kronstadt Uprising," *Peripheral Histories*, March 13, 2020, <https://www.peripheralhistories.co.uk/post/thinking-like-an-anarchist-exploring-anarchist-perspectives-of-the-1924-kronstadt-uprising?fbclid=IwAR1n8RHgZEi9IWRdeGelHTdYbasqOxplkM4eI6zBXEpvav4TRd38LLHOc-o>.

24 Kalyonov, "Who Were the Kronstadt Rebels? A Russian Anarchist Perspective on the Uprising."

25 "The Kronstadt Uprising: A View from within the Revolt On the 100-Year Anniversary of the Rebellion," *Crimethinc*, March 3, 2021, <https://pl.crimethinc.com/2021/03/03/the-kronstadt-uprising-a-full-chronology-and-archive-including-a-view-from-within-the-revolt#further-reading>.

anarchists to the Kronstadt uprising, particularly regarding the insights provided by contemporaneous anarchistic publications.

Hence, the significance of this research lies in its endeavour to bridge this existing gap in scholarly understanding. By systematically analysing the anarchistic press alongside the larger publications authored by anarchists, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt events. The incorporation of the anarchistic press within the analysis promises to enrich the existing academic discourse and shed light on previously unexplored facets of the anarchists' reaction to the uprising. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field by addressing this notable void in the existing scholarly literature.

This thesis is structured into three chapters, each serving a distinct purpose in the examination of the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt uprising. The first chapter is dedicated to establishing the necessary contextual foundation, encompassing the historical background of the Kronstadt events. Within this chapter, several key aspects are addressed.

Firstly, the chapter provides an exploration of the political and socio-economic climate prevailing in Russia during the relevant period. This entails an analysis of the broader historical context that influenced the events surrounding the Kronstadt uprising. Furthermore, the chapter delves into the position of anarchism within Russia, both among the general populace and the Russian emigration. This examination seeks to illuminate the ideological landscape and shed light on the anarchist presence and influence during that time.

Moreover, the chapter presents a chronological account of the crucial events that unfolded during the Kronstadt uprising. This narrative aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the uprising itself, serving as a backdrop for the subsequent analysis of the anarchistic reaction.

To construct this chapter, a range of authoritative sources have been consulted. Notable works such as *Kronstadt 1921*²⁶ by Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy*²⁷ by Israel Getzler, *Russian Revolution*²⁸ by Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Kronstadt 1921*²⁹ by Victor Naumov, *The Economic Organisation of War Communism 1918-1921*³⁰ by Silvana Malle, and *The Russian Civil*

26 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*.

27 Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921*.

28 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Rewolucja rosyjska* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2017).

29 Victor Naumov, *Кронштадт 1921* (Moscow, 1997).

30 Silvana Malle, *The Economic Organisation of War Communism 1918-1921* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

*War*³¹ by Evan Mawdsley feature prominently as sources of information and analysis. The inclusion of these works ensures the utilization of well-established and respected scholarly perspectives on the subject matter. The literature overview presented thus far has primarily focused on sources that directly address the Kronstadt uprising and the divergent perspectives surrounding it. However, it is important to acknowledge that there exist additional sources that offer insights into the broader context of the revolution, the Soviet economy, and the state of anarchism during that period.

These sources provide valuable information to enrich our understanding of the events leading up to the Kronstadt uprising, the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the Soviet Union, and the ideological landscape of anarchism. By delving into these materials, researchers can gain a more comprehensive perspective on the factors that influenced the motivations and actions of the Kronstadt rebels, as well as the prevailing social, political, and economic dynamics of the time. Exploring these sources offers a broader contextual backdrop against which to analyze and interpret the significance of the Kronstadt uprising within the larger historical narrative.

The second chapter of this thesis is dedicated to an in-depth exploration of the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt events, drawing primarily from the book publications mentioned earlier. The objective of this chapter is to identify and elucidate the common characteristics exhibited in anarchistic writings pertaining to Kronstadt. Special attention is given to three key aspects: the understanding of the anarchistic movement in Kronstadt prior to the mutiny, the underlying reasons that led to the uprising, and the discourse employed in discussions surrounding the rebellion. This analysis encompasses an examination of the specific terminology, narratives, and emotional sentiments present in the analysed texts.

Moving on to the third chapter, it shifts the focus to the anarchistic press of the time. This chapter critically examines the changes observed in the prevalent topics covered within the anarchistic press during the period surrounding the Kronstadt uprising. Additionally, it investigates the ideological manifestos that align with the Kronstadt resolutions, shedding light on the ideological underpinnings and aspirations expressed in these publications. Finally, this chapter delves into the coverage of the mutiny itself within the anarchistic press, providing insights into the perspectives, narratives, and sentiments surrounding the uprising as presented in these sources. Through the analysis of the anarchistic press, this chapter contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted reaction of anarchists to the Kronstadt events.

31 Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, Fistr Pegasus Book Edition 2007 (New York: Pegasus Books LLC, 1987), <https://archive.org/details/russiacivilwar00evan/page/n3/mode/2up?view=theater>.

Furthermore, this thesis includes an appendix that features pertinent documentation essential for a comprehensive discussion of the Kronstadt issue. This includes the original list of Petropavlovsk resolutions, providing a valuable primary source for understanding the demands and aspirations of the Kronstadt rebels. Additionally, the appendix includes biographies of authors whose works have been analysed, along with their affiliations and connections to the anarchistic movement, thereby providing further insight into the backgrounds and perspectives of these authors. Finally, a comprehensive list of the press issues consulted during the research is also included, ensuring transparency and facilitating further investigation into the sources utilized.

The significance of this research lies in the continued relevance and ongoing commemoration of the Kronstadt events, both within Russia and abroad. Notably, anarchist circles have displayed a particular investment in the remembrance of Kronstadt. Understanding the diverse perspectives on the Kronstadt uprising is essential for evaluating the development of new history-based narratives, particularly in the context of current political events in Russia.

In terms of the commemoration within Russia, the government's sponsorship of a new monument to mark the 100th anniversary of the uprising is of paramount importance.³² The personal presence of President Vladimir Putin during the unveiling ceremony underscores the enduring memory of Kronstadt among the Russian population. Given the current political climate, the remembrance of Kronstadt may serve as a foundation for constructing new historical narratives. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the diverse perspectives surrounding the Kronstadt events becomes all the more crucial for critically assessing the emerging official Russian narrative.

Moreover, in 2021, an international scientific conference titled "Kronstadt as Revolutionary Utopia 1921-2021" took place. This significant event provided a platform for scholarly discussions on various aspects related to the Kronstadt uprising and its commemoration. Perspectives explored during the conference ranged from an examination of propaganda and its implications to the contemporary significance of the Kronstadt experience in countries like Syria, as well as the anarchistic viewpoint on the events. This conference facilitated interdisciplinary dialogues that shed light on the multifaceted dimensions of Kronstadt's legacy and its continued relevance in the modern world.

The press has also demonstrated a continued interest in the Kronstadt uprising, with various articles published in 2021 aiming to uncover the true causes and significance of the events. An example

32 "V Kronshtadte Otkryli Pamjatnik Zhertvam Vosstaniya 1921 Goda," *NOVOSTI Kronshtadtckogo Rajona Sankt-Peterburga*, December 3, 2021, <http://www.news-kron.ru/news/2021-12-03/v-kronshtadte-otkryli-pamyatnik-zhertvam-vosstaniya-1921-goda/#ad-image-0>.

of such coverage is the article titled *Recovering the Anarchism of the 1921 Kronstadt Rebellion*³³ published by the anarchist magazine “Roarmagazin”. Similar analyses can be found on Russian anarchist websites such as “Avtonom.” On the other hand, the conservative communist publication “Chinaworker” released an article titled *1921: The Kronstadt Revolt – an Anti-Bolshevik Myth Turns 100*³⁴ which is in line with the old pro-Bolshevik narrative surrounding the uprising.

Furthermore, the portal “Anarkismo” published an international anarchist statement on the centenary of the 1921 Kronstadt Uprising. In this statement, they express their inspiration from the rebels of Kronstadt and emphasize their ongoing commitment to working for new revolutions of the working and popular classes worldwide, while advocating for the fullest direct democracy within these movements. This demonstrates that anarchists continue to actively participate in the ongoing discussion surrounding the Kronstadt uprising and its historical significance.³⁵

Taken together, these examples highlight the continued relevance and vitality of the discourse surrounding the Kronstadt events. The active involvement of anarchists in this discussion underscores the importance of further researching the development and evolution of the anarchistic perspective on the events of 1921 in Kronstadt. Such research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the varied interpretations and enduring significance of the Kronstadt uprising.

It is important to note that all quotations translated from languages other than English within this thesis are the property of the author of this paper, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

Chapter 1 – The history of Kronstadt uprising

Historical background

The world changing impact of the October Revolution of 1917 cannot be overstated. It was responsible for sparking one of the most significant conflicts ever witnessed – the Russian Civil War – as it was prompted by intense disappointment felt by Vladimir Lenin’s Bolshevik regime towards

33 Alexander Herbert, “Recovering the Anarchism of the 1921 Kronstadt Rebellion,” *Roarmag*, March 1, 2021, <https://roarmag.org/essays/1921-2021-kronstadt-rebellion-anarchism/>.

34 Marcus Hesse, “1921: The Kronstadt Revolt — an Anti-Bolshevik Myth Turns 100,” *Chinaworker.Info*, May 24, 2021, <https://chinaworker.info/en/2021/05/24/29637/>.

35 “100 Years Since the Kronstadt Uprising: To Remember Means to Fight!,” *Anarkismo*, March 1, 2021, <https://www.anarkismo.net/article/32189>.

Tsarist autocracy; they aimed at increasing suppleness into their own ranks while eradicating opposition altogether – all while adhering strictly to socialist principles. Consequently, a fierce battle arose between two diametrically opposed groups: those supporting the cause championed by the Red Army (the Bolshevik Party's armed soldiers) in favour of a socialist revolution and those advocating the cause of provisional government under the White Army.

The October Revolution occurred in November 1917, following the February Revolution that had resulted in the deposition of Tsar Nicholas II and the installation of a provisional government earlier that year. Dissatisfied with the limited extent of change achieved by the February Revolution, Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks perceived an opportunity to seize power and implement their revolutionary agenda. Viewing the provisional government as an impediment to their ideological aspirations, the Bolsheviks resolved to overthrow it, propelling Russia into a state of profound political and social turbulence.

The October Revolution marked a crucial turning point in Russian history, as it inaugurated a prolonged and bitter struggle for control of the nation's destiny. The Red Army, fervently loyal to the Bolshevik cause, embarked on a relentless march to consolidate their authority, promulgating their vision of a classless society. Conversely, the White Army emerged as a diverse amalgamation of groups fiercely opposed to Bolshevik rule, rallying behind the banner of the provisional government and seeking to restore order and stability.

The Russian Civil War, which ensued from the October Revolution, unfolded over a period of five years, from 1918 to 1923, claiming millions of lives and plunging the nation into unprecedented turmoil. The conflict encapsulated a myriad of ideological, political, and socio-economic fault lines, transforming the very fabric of Russian society. Regional disparities, ethnic tensions, and the struggle for supremacy between competing factions further exacerbated the already volatile situation.

By 1921, the Russian Civil War was in a state of gradual cessation. The conclusion of 1920 witnessed notable triumphs by the Red Army, notably in November when General Wrangler's forces were compelled to withdraw and ultimately annihilated. Anton Denikin's formidable march towards Moscow, which appeared unstoppable just over a year earlier, had become a distant memory by the close of 1920. Similarly, the violent Polish-Bolshevik conflict spanning from 1918 to 1920 had reached its conclusion. Simultaneously, hostilities on the Eastern front persisted until 1924. Nevertheless, in

1921, the triumph of the Red Army and the complete consolidation of power by the Bolsheviks became inevitable.³⁶

The military triumphs achieved during this period were not commensurate with the dire socio-economic conditions prevailing in the country. While diplomatic relations were gradually normalizing and peace was being established, the tragic socio-economic state of post-revolutionary Russia did not align with the significant military and diplomatic successes. The Bolsheviks, unprepared for governance, particularly in a country ravaged by economic turmoil, aimed to establish true communism.³⁷ To achieve this objective, they implemented a series of radical measures collectively referred to as war communism.

From the perspective of the Kronstadt uprising, a crucial element of the war communism policy was the implementation of *prodrazverstka*, which involved the requisitioning of surplus grains from the provinces. In order to meet the substantial food demands of the army, the Bolsheviks enforced mandatory food deliveries starting in January 1919, which remained in effect until the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in March 1921.³⁸ Theoretically, it was the responsibility of the villages to provide the specified amount of grain to support the military's needs. In practice, these requisitions often took the form of violent raids, leaving peasants with barely enough food to sustain themselves.

The situation in both urban and rural areas of Russia was equally dire, with severe shortages of essential goods such as food, fuel, and clothing. These circumstances reached a critical point in early 1921. International trade had virtually ceased, leaving the country reliant solely on its domestic production. However, due to fuel scarcity, the transportation of supplies was inefficient, exacerbating the issues of hunger and lack of resources. Consequently, diseases like typhus and cholera spread rapidly. In search of better living conditions, many people fled the cities and moved to the countryside. According to Paul Avrich, during this period, approximately one-third of the population relocated to villages.³⁹

In order to maintain operations in struggling factories, Trotsky implemented stringent control measures in workplaces. This policy resulted in an increase in white-collar workers, which was met with resentment from the labour force. Petitions, protests, strikes, and riots began to emerge across the country, with Petrograd experiencing the most significant accumulation of unrest. The breaking point

36 Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, 219–70.

37 Fitzpatrick, *Rewolucja rosyjska*, 100–116.

38 Malle, *The Economic Organisation of War Communism 1918-1921*, 396–465.

39 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 7–34.

occurred when bread rations were reduced, a decision announced on January 22. However, the most serious strikes commenced on February 24 on Vasil Island. In response, Zinoviev, the head of the Petrograd party, declared martial law on the same night.⁴⁰ These events marked the beginning of the unrest that eventually culminated in the Kronstadt uprising.

Kronstadt

Kronstadt, situated on a small island in the Gulf of Finland, served as a military fleet base and played a significant role in the social revolution. The naval forces stationed on the island had a long-standing history of involvement in revolutionary activities, with the first outbreak occurring as early as 1905. Throughout this period, the sailors' protests were driven by social concerns rather than political ideologies, focusing on issues such as access to food, dignity, and adequate clothing.

Kronstadt maintained a politically ambiguous stance during the pre-revolutionary era, with the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) party being the most popular among its residents. The military population of the island primarily consisted of industrial workers, while only approximately 25% hailed from a peasant background.⁴¹ Importantly, the sailors exhibited a higher level of literacy compared to the regular army. Therefore, it is not surprising that this educated, socially conscious, and non-politically aligned group of sailors joined the October revolution in 1917, aligning themselves with the communist cause.

The sailors of Kronstadt emerged as highly dedicated and influential participants in the revolutionary movement that resulted in the Bolshevik seizure of power. This sentiment is aptly captured by Trotsky, who referred to the Kronstadt sailors as "a pride and glory of the revolution." Ironically, it was Trotsky himself who would later order the suppression of the Kronstadt uprising in 1921.

Despite their active involvement in the revolution, the relationship between the Kronstadt sailors and the Bolshevik government was fraught with difficulties. This stemmed from the sailors' belief in power being decentralized and vested in local soviets rather than a centralized party. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, they still held hope in the Bolsheviks. However, as time passed, they began to harbour serious doubts upon witnessing the party consolidate its monopoly on power.

⁴⁰ Avrich, 35.

⁴¹ Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921*, 10–12.

Characterizing the Kronstadt sailors as anarchists would be an exaggeration. However, it is important to acknowledge that anarcho-syndicalists, anarcho-communists, and proponents of ideologies combining elements of both held significant influence in Kronstadt around revolution period. Consequently, anti-centralization beliefs had a deep-rooted history among the sailors.⁴² In practice, Kronstadt stood out as a remarkably independent entity, characterized by a strong democratic foundation and a deep trust in their local soviet. This naturally clashed with the Bolsheviks, who, by 1921, sought to consolidate control over all aspects of governing the country and viewed Kronstadt's self-organization with disfavour. Nonetheless, for a considerable period, the situation in Kronstadt remained tolerable. However, this changed rapidly in the early days of March 1921.

The outbreak of the mutiny

It comes as no surprise that news of the unrest in Petrograd quickly reached Kronstadt. Due to its high level of independence and its crucial role in safeguarding the borders against Finland, the economic situation on the island was comparatively better than in the city itself. Rations in Kronstadt were larger and more stable, and the fuel crisis had a lesser impact on the naval base. However, for many sailors, the end of the civil war provided them with the first opportunity in years to visit their home cities and villages. Those who returned brought back accounts of the dire living conditions that people were experiencing.

In response to growing concerns, the alarmed sailors of Kronstadt made a significant decision on February 26. They elected to send an official delegation to Petrograd to investigate the situation in the city. Two days later, the delegation returned to Kronstadt, confirming the grim rumours that had been circulating. Petrograd was plagued by hunger, cold, and the oppressive rule of the governing party. Workers were mobilizing, organizing strikes, and expressing their discontent. As a direct response to this distressing situation, the Kronstadt sailors convened a meeting aboard the Petropavlovsk and formulated a list of 15 resolutions. These resolutions would serve as the ideological foundation for the upcoming uprising.⁴³

It is worth noting that the Petropavlovsk resolutions were not inherently radical in their nature. According to Avrich, the socio-economic aspects of these resolutions would not have posed a major issue for the Bolsheviks, who were already paving the way for the introduction of the more radical New

⁴² Getzler, 56–57.

⁴³ Appendix 1.

Economic Policy (NEP).⁴⁴ The real challenge lay in the points that directly challenged the Bolsheviks' monopoly of power, such as the calls for re-elections of Soviets and the demand for freedom of speech and press. These demands posed a direct threat to the Bolsheviks and could not be tolerated.

Consequently, on March 1, a large meeting took place where two Bolshevik delegates, Kuzmin and Kalinin, were sent to address the sailors and urge them to withdraw their demands. However, their appearance was met with jeers and interruptions from the sailors, who did not allow them to complete their speeches. As a result, in another attempt to persuade the sailors to back down on March 2, the Bolshevik delegates, Kuzmin and Vasiliev, were arrested.

The tense atmosphere prevailing in Kronstadt on the first day of March is exemplified by an incident that occurred during the same meeting. At some point, while speeches were being delivered, it was announced that Bolshevik military forces were advancing towards Kronstadt, prepared to suppress any rebellion before it even began. Although this information turned out to be false, it greatly disturbed the meeting, causing a disruption that required effort to restore order and resume discussions. The widespread unrest and evident animosity from the Bolsheviks prompted the sailors to establish the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, which played a leading role in the uprising. Stepan Maximovich Petrichenko, a sailor associated with the anarcho-syndicalist movement, was chosen as the chair of this committee.

It is significant to note that, initially, the Kronstadt sailors did not intend to escalate the conflict in a military manner. They still held hope that the Bolsheviks would be willing to negotiate and avoid any further violence. However, in the following days, it became evident that the Bolshevik party was not open to negotiations and was preparing to resolve the Kronstadt issue by any means necessary. This attitude was clearly expressed by Lenin on March 5 when he denounced the Kronstadt movement as counterrevolutionary. On the same day, Trotsky issued an ultimatum, demanding that the sailors abandon their fight if they wished to have any hope of mercy.⁴⁵

The first overt military attack on Kronstadt occurred on March 7, with the island being bombarded by artillery from Sestroretsk and Lisy Nos.⁴⁶ However, during the initial week of the siege, the Bolshevik attacks were relatively limited in scale. The troops sent to suppress the uprising were initially hesitant to attack their fellow comrades in Kronstadt. The first full-scale assault took place on March 15, and the following day, General Tuchachevsky organized a force of approximately 50,000

44 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 75.

45 Avrich, 144.

46 Petrichenko, *The Truth About Kronstadt*.

men to launch a major offensive against the island.⁴⁷ Finally, on March 17, Kronstadt was seized by the Bolshevik forces.

The information war

As the Bolsheviks employed military measures to quell the mutiny in Kronstadt, they also launched a propaganda campaign aimed at undermining the ideological significance of the uprising. However, true to their characteristic approach, the narrative they presented was far from consistent.

One of the key elements of their narrative was labelling the Kronstadt uprising as a plot orchestrated by White forces. The fear of counter-revolutionary Whites attempting to seize control of the country was still fresh in people's minds. Interestingly, during the uprising on Kronstadt Island, there happened to be an ex-White general named Alexander Kozlovsky present. However, sources indicate that Kozlovsky did not play a significant role in the planning or execution of the mutiny. Some even suggest that the Provisional Revolutionary Committee was reluctant to entertain his suggestions or contributions.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it was convenient for the Bolsheviks to shift blame onto Kozlovsky, as he found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Simultaneously, the Bolsheviks portrayed the Kronstadt sailors as misguided and unaware of the consequences of their actions. They depicted the mutiny as a political plot orchestrated by enemy forces, with different versions pointing to Mensheviks, Western powers, or vague anarchistic forces. According to this narrative, the sailors were mere pawns manipulated by those who harboured hostility towards the Bolsheviks. To support these claims, the Bolsheviks pointed to an article in the French magazine *La Matin*, which purportedly predicted the uprising before it occurred. However, it was later revealed that the article was just one of many speculative pieces discussing the potential for violent outbreaks due to the dire socio-economic situation in the country.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks effectively utilized it as a propaganda tool.

On the opposing side, the rebels established communication with the outside world through their newspaper, *Izvestja Vremennogo Revoljuconnogo Komiteta Matrosov, Krasnoarmejcev i Rabochih Goroda Kronshtadta* ("News of the Temporary Revolutionary Committee of Sailors, Red Army Soldiers, and Workers of the City of Kronstadt"). This daily publication was issued from March

47 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 202.

48 Popov, *Kak pishetsja istorija: Kronshtadtskie sobytija 1921 goda*.

49 Popov, 36.

3 until the end of the uprising on March 17. The sailors used this newspaper as a platform to express their reactions and provide commentary on the ongoing events, as well as to explain the ideological foundation of their movement.

Izvestja VRK holds particular significance as many narratives that later shaped the historiography of Kronstadt originated from its pages. For example, the idea of Kronstadt as a "Third revolution," which was widely adopted by anarchists in later years, can be traced back to this newspaper. It served as a primary source for much of the early historical writing on the Kronstadt issue, especially for those who did not align themselves with the Bolsheviks.

Anarchism in Russia and in Kronstadt

Russia's historical anarchist movement traces its beginnings to the emergence of *narodniki* movement during 1870s 1880s⁵⁰. Key individuals such as Mikhail Bakunin and Piotr Kropotkin played a crucial role; they were instrumental not just for Russian anarchist philosophy but also impacted broader European thought. Whereas Bakunin supported extreme or Revolutionary forms of Anarchism Kropotkin developed an alternative theory based on mutually beneficial support between individuals within society. However, despite these influential figures, anarchism struggled to gain a significant following in Russia during the initial decades of its existence.

Although anarchism encompassed certain core beliefs, such as opposition to centralized governance and any form of legal coercion, as well as a rejection of hierarchical structures, it was by no means a homogeneous ideology. The movement gave rise to multiple factions that often held conflicting views. During the period under consideration in this study, two dominant anarchist factions existed in Russia: anarcho-communists and anarcho-syndicalists. The primary distinction between these factions lies in their respective goals and approaches. Anarcho-communism sought the complete abolition of the state, advocating for the transfer of power to small autonomous entities known as communes. Anarcho-syndicalism, on the other hand, was more concerned with the labour movement and the critical role that trade unions performed.

Subsequently, following the events at Kronstadt, a third faction known as the anarcho-Bolsheviks emerged in Russia. This particular group held the belief that compromising with the ruling

50 Jason Garner and José Benclowicz, "A Failure of Praxis? European Revolutionary Anarchism in Revolutionary Situations 1917-1923," *Left History* 24, no. 1 (n.d.): 16.

party was the only viable means for anarchism to endure.⁵¹ It is important to emphasize, however, that the term "anarchists" in this study largely refers to either anarcho-communists or anarcho-syndicalists.

The internal divisions within the anarchist movement hindered the establishment of a unified and influential organization capable of wielding significant political power. Nevertheless, numerous attempts were made towards this end. One noteworthy endeavour was the formation of the Nabat Confederation of Anarchist Organizations in 1917. Spearheaded by the anarcho-syndicalist Volin, Nabat aimed to unite the various anarchist factions existing in Russia during that period. This initiative took place in Kharkov, as the Ukrainian territory served as a focal point for the anarchist movement due to the repressive conditions prevalent in major cities such as Moscow or Petrograd. Regrettably, the Nabat project failed in its goal to unite anarchists. Ironically, it was the anarcho-syndicalists who declined to join the organization, fearing subjugation by the numerically superior anarcho-communists.⁵²

The dynamic between anarchists and Bolsheviks was highly intricate, characterized by shifting sentiments and actions. During the 1917 revolution, anarchists generally displayed support for the Bolshevik cause, perceiving it as an initial step towards realizing their desired social transformations. It is plausible that, at that stage, anarchists did not perceive the Bolsheviks as a significant threat. However, the landscape swiftly changed after the October revolution, as the Bolsheviks embarked on a campaign to eliminate any potential political opposition. This period marked the onset of repressions specifically targeting anarchists. The newly established Cheka organization spearheaded the mass arrests and executions of anarchists, while stringent measures were imposed to suppress the freedom to publish and express anarchist views.

Within this historical narrative, a fascinating chapter unravelled during Nestor Makhno's leadership, representing a final attempt at a relatively harmonious coexistence between anarchists and Bolsheviks. Ukrainian anarchists orchestrated the formation of a partisan army, which proved to be a formidable force in the Western front's defeat of the White forces during the turbulent civil war. In an expression of gratitude and acknowledgement for the anarchists' invaluable contributions, the Communists extended amnesty to all anarchists, on the condition that they abandoned their aspirations of violently overthrowing the Soviet government.

Regrettably, the fragile stability and trust that had momentarily developed in the anarchist-Bolshevik alliance were tragically short-lived. With the Bolsheviks consolidating their power as the

51 Garner and Benclowicz, 22.

52 Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 1967, <http://www.ditext.com/avrich/russian/anarchists.html>.

sole governing authority in the country, they swiftly reneged on their previous commitment to Makhno and his anarchist allies, designating them once again as outlaws. This sudden policy reversal marked the beginning of a new wave of repressive measures, characterized by heightened brutality and ruthlessness, specifically aimed at obliterating the anarchist movement. The scale and severity of these subsequent repressions far surpassed their earlier counterparts, thrusting the anarchists into a perpetual state of vulnerability and persecution.⁵³

It is worth noting that the repressions targeting anarchists were not confined to Russia alone. Similar sentiments emerged throughout Europe in the aftermath of World War I. Consequently, Russian anarchists often opted for emigration, choosing to reside in countries such as the United States, France, and Germany. The relatively unrestricted freedom of publication abroad resulted in the majority of texts analyzed in this research being published outside of Russia. Following the Kronstadt uprising, repressions against anarchism in Russia intensified even further. The movement lost whatever remnants of political influence it had left and failed to fully regain it. Nevertheless, despite the Bolsheviks' determined efforts, Russian anarchism was never completely eradicated.

The precise role played by anarchism within the context of the Kronstadt uprising remains somewhat ambiguous. While it is undeniable that anarchistic views had garnered popularity among sailors during the 1917 revolution, by 1921, the majority of the crew stationed on the island had been replaced. The new sailors displayed a greater inclination towards non-partisanship and exhibited no discernible interest in any form of organized anarchistic movement. However, despite the shifting composition of the Kronstadt crew, the influence of anarchism as an ideology is evident in the organizational structure of Kronstadt itself.

The power dynamics within the local Soviet of Kronstadt exhibited anarchistic characteristics. It would be an exaggeration to label Kronstadt as an explicitly anarchistic entity, akin to a commune. However, disregarding the influence of anarchism within this context would be an oversight. The organization and functioning of Kronstadt reflected elements of anarchism, although not to the extent of constituting a fully-fledged anarchistic society.

53 Avrich.

Chapter 2 – The anarchistic perspective in books

This chapter aims to examine the anarchistic viewpoint regarding the Kronstadt uprising, drawing upon authoritative publications such as books and brochures. The analysed perspectives originate from anarchists who were contemporaneous with the mutiny and actively engaged in their ideological pursuits during that period. In a sequential manner, this discussion will present the following positions: *The Truth about Kronstadt*⁵⁴ (1921) authored by Stepan Petrichenko, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*⁵⁵ (1922) by Alexander Berkman, *Anarchists in Russian Revolution*⁵⁶ by Anatolii Gorelik, *Kronstadt in Russian Revolution*⁵⁷ (1923) composed by Efim Yarchuk, *My disillusionment in Russia*⁵⁸ (1923) and *My further disillusionment in Russia*⁵⁹ (1924) written by Emma Goldman, *The Kronstadt Commune*⁶⁰ (1938) authored by Ida Mett, and *The Unknown Revolution*⁶¹ (1947) by Volin.

The prominence of these books as primary sources cannot be overstated in the discourse surrounding the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt uprising. In fact, they play a pivotal role in providing a comprehensive understanding of the issue, as each of these books explicitly focuses on Kronstadt as a central or one of the principal themes. This chapter intends to meticulously examine various facets intrinsic to the anarchistic viewpoint as a collective, while also highlighting discernible divergences among the perspectives offered by the analysed authors.

The initial aspect that necessitates attention pertains to the sources utilized by anarchists to document the Kronstadt uprising. It is an established fact that in the immediate aftermath of the uprising, access to reliable information was severely constrained. The Kronstadt rebels themselves relied on their daily newspaper, *Izvestiya Vremennogo Revolyutsionnogo Komiteta Matrosov, Krasnoarmeitsev i Rabochikh Goroda Kronshtadta*, as their primary means of communicating with the outside world. Conversely, the Bolsheviks were notably active in propagating their own narrative of events through the newspaper *Petrogradskaya Pravda*. Any governmental records associated with the uprising remained inaccessible to the public. Regarding international coverage of the events, Popov observes:

54 Petrichenko, *The Truth About Kronstadt*.

55 Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*.

56 Gorelik, *Anarchisty v Rossijskoy Revolutsii*.

57 Yarchuk, *Kronshtadt v Russkoj Revoljucii*.

58 Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*.

59 Goldman, *My Further Disillusionment in Russia*.

60 Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune*.

61 Volin, *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921*.

A characteristic feature of the foreign press during the Kronstadt events can be considered the almost complete absence of reliable information, unconditional support for the sailors' movement, disregarding the actual causes of the events, and paying little attention to the details.⁶²

Confronted with a dearth of reliable information, the anarchists encountered significant limitations in their selection of sources, which, in general, were consistent across the discussed books. Notably, Stepan Petrichenko's work, *The Truth about Kronstadt*, stands apart due to his personal involvement as one of the leaders of the Kronstadt uprising. Consequently, his book draws upon first-hand information and recollections, offering a perspective primarily rooted in the experiences of the rebels themselves. In the case of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, their accounts of Kronstadt bear a more personal nature as well, as they were present in Petrograd during the mutiny. Although their level of direct involvement was considerably less extensive than Petrichenko's, neither having set foot on the island, they did engage with the Bolshevik government and advocated on behalf of the sailors. Nevertheless, both authors can be considered, to some extent, eyewitnesses of the Kronstadt events. Conversely, the remaining authors under consideration had to rely on available sources beyond their personal experiences.

The primary source of information for anarchists revolved around the newspaper *Izvestiya Vremennogo Revolyutsionnogo Komiteta*. Across the analysed books, this source emerged as the most frequently referenced. Its significance becomes particularly evident in the writings of Ida Mett, specifically in her work *The Kronstadt Commune*. Mett heavily relies on direct quotations extracted from the rebels' newspaper, accentuating its pivotal role in shaping her perspective and analysis. As a result, the stance of anarchists aligns closely with the viewpoint espoused by the rebels themselves on numerous aspects. This convergence of perspectives gives rise to a complex situation where one could argue that, ideologically, there existed a significant consistency between the Kronstadt sailors and anarchists.

Moreover, it is worth noting that anarchists drew inspiration from one another in their writings. Even during the later period, as an increasing number of publications concerning Kronstadt emerged, the prevailing narrative within the Soviet Union remained aligned with the version crafted by the Bolsheviks during and immediately after the mutiny. The Soviet perspective on Kronstadt was largely

⁶² Popov, *Kak pishetsja istorija: Kronshtadtskie sobytija 1921 goda*, 55.

shaped by works such as Alexandr Slepko's *Kronshtadtskiy myatezh*⁶³ (1928) and Stalin's *Kratkiy kurs istorii*⁶⁴ (1938). Consequently, even for authors who published their books decades after the uprising, finding alternative sources beyond the originally utilized ones posed a challenge. Consequently, anarchists found inspiration from their fellow anarchists whom they trusted in terms of judgment. As a result, there exists a notable degree of similarity and unity in anarchistic writings pertaining to Kronstadt.

Opinions about the rebellion

A shared conviction among all anarchistic writings is the profound belief that the Kronstadt uprising stemmed primarily from political motivations rather than socioeconomic factors. This distinction becomes even more apparent when comparing anarchist books with other analyses of the Kronstadt rebellion from the same time period, such as the notable early publication *Pravda o Kronstadtie*⁶⁵ published by the Social Revolutionary-owned newspaper "Volya Rossii." Anarchists recognize the dire state of the Russian economy, which was largely a result of the policies of War Communism. However, they view this situation as merely a catalyst that inspired workers in Petrograd to take to the streets and initiate strikes, consequently leading to the Kronstadt mutiny. From an anarchist standpoint, the rebellion in Kronstadt primarily represented a movement against the Bolsheviks' monopolization of power. For example, in his analysis of the events, Berkman launches strong accusations, stating, "Bolshevik centralization, bureaucracy, and autocratic attitude toward the peasants and workers were directly responsible for much of the misery and suffering of the people."⁶⁶

Likewise, Mett emphasizes that the fleet, which had actively supported the Bolshevik cause during the revolution, gradually became disillusioned with the centralized governance model.⁶⁷ The Kronstadt mutiny represented a tipping point resulting from accumulated political disappointment. These accusations are further accentuated in books that place the Kronstadt uprising within a broader historical context. Goldman asserts, "Then came Kronstadt. It was the final wrench. It completed the terrible realization that the Russian Revolution was no more."⁶⁸ Consequently, the Kronstadt uprising is perceived as a pivotal moment, yet the conflict between the Bolsheviks and the working-class people

63 Slepko, *Kronshtadtskiy Myatezh*.

64 Stalin, *Kratkiy Kurs Istorii VKP(b)*.

65 *Pravda o Kronstadtie*.

66 Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*.

67 Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune*.

68 Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*.

that led to it had been brewing long before. Similar beliefs appear to be shared by Anatolii Gorelik and Efim Yarchuk, who dedicated entire chapters to elucidating the development of the conflict between the Bolsheviks and the Kronstadt sailors since 1917. This narrative often intertwines with accounts of repressions against the anarchist movement.

In general, anarchists firmly believed that the Kronstadt uprising represented the culmination of mounting anti-Bolshevik tensions within society, stemming from the Bolsheviks' attempts to monopolize power entirely. This perspective gives rise to another notable observation: anarchists were convinced that the Kronstadt uprising was a spontaneous movement of the masses. This viewpoint contradicts the Bolsheviks' narrative, which aimed to persuade the public that the mutiny in Kronstadt was orchestrated and premeditated by hostile external forces or members of other political parties, primarily the Socialist Revolutionaries (SR) and the Mensheviks.⁶⁹ Conversely, the theory positing Kronstadt as a spontaneous event aligns with the version supported by *Izvestiya Vremennogo Revolyutsionnogo Komiteta*. Berkman articulates this viewpoint, stating, "The Kronstadt movement was spontaneous, unprepared, and peaceful. That it became an armed conflict, ending in a bloody tragedy, was entirely due to the Tartar despotism of the Communist dictatorship."⁷⁰ Similarly, Volin argues that Kronstadt was entirely spontaneous.⁷¹ He supports this claim by noting that the rebellion occurred when the sea between Kronstadt and Petrograd was still frozen. If the uprising had been planned, the sailors would have likely waited for the ice to melt to reduce the risk of mutiny suppression. Similar assertions are echoed in Petrichenko's writings as well.⁷²

Anarchists also commonly held the belief that the Kronstadt rebellion was peaceful in nature. Petrichenko explicitly states, "The peaceful character of the Kronstadt movement was not in any doubt or question. Kronstadt advanced its demands in the spirit of the Soviet Constitution."⁷³ Similarly, Berkman expresses the same sentiment.⁷⁴

The appeal made by anarchists to the Bolshevik government, in which Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman actively participated, further supports the claim that anarchists believed in the non-violent nature of the uprising from its inception. Goldman explains how her perspective towards the mutiny evolved over time – initially, she had trust in the Bolsheviks and was sceptical of any "counter-

69 Popov, *Kak pishetsja istorija: Kronshtadtskie sobytija 1921 goda*, 40.

70 Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*.

71 Volin, *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921*, 191.

72 Petrichenko, *The Truth About Kronstadt*.

73 Petrichenko.

74 Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*.

revolutionary" movements. However, the violent suppression of the entirely peaceful Kronstadt movement served as her breaking point, ultimately shaping her subsequent anti-Bolshevik stance.⁷⁵

According to the anarchists' claims, the Bolsheviks made every effort to portray the Kronstadt uprising as a dangerous counter-revolutionary movement. However, the rebels themselves sought to avoid bloodshed at all costs. Anarchists emphasize in their writings that the communist captives held by the sailors were treated with respect and were not harmed throughout the entire mutiny. The non-violent nature of the Kronstadt sailors appears to be a significant point for anarchists. This topic is further discussed in positions that examine the broader historical context, such as Yarchuk's book. During the uprisings that occurred in 1917, Kronstadt sailors killed many officers stationed on the island. However, as Yarchuk claims, the sailors spared the lives of officers who had not been cruel to the soldiers before⁷⁶. A similar humane attitude was intended to prevail during the 1921 uprising. Killing was never the sailors' objective; they regarded it as a last resort rather than a desirable course of action.

As a result, the anarchists hold radical views, asserting that the brutal suppression of the mutiny was an act of terror perpetrated by the Bolsheviks. The Kronstadt sailors had hoped for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and for the Bolsheviks to acknowledge their demands. In fact, some anarchists point out that the Bolsheviks' response to the uprising was disproportionate considering the relatively moderate nature of the sailors' demands. Ida Mett, for example, compares the sailors' views with those of Rosa Luxemburg.⁷⁷ She argues that despite Luxemburg's significantly more radical perspectives, she was not accused of spreading counter-revolutionary ideology at the time.

The stark dichotomy between the Bolsheviks and the sailors is indeed a prominent feature in early writings on the Kronstadt uprising. The scarcity of sources and the lack of reliable information favoured more radical positions. Furthermore, existing political tensions facilitated a portrayal of one side as good and the other as bad without deeper analysis. Modern analyses of the conflict tend to provide more nuanced perspectives on both sides. For example, Paul Avrich, a leading expert in the field, argues that the Bolsheviks saw the suppression of the mutiny as unavoidable, given their perspective. While the sailors may not have intended for a military escalation of the situation, they could not be tolerated by the government.⁷⁸

75 Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*.

76 Yarchuk, *Kronshtadt v Russkoj Revoljucii*, 10.

77 Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune*.

78 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 6.

For anarchists, the situation was more straightforward: the Bolsheviks were in the wrong, while the sailors were right in their demands for a better system of governance. This dichotomy is characteristic of anarchist writings, with their inherent radicalism. At certain points, the prevailing anti-Bolshevik sentiment becomes so pronounced that it may impact the apparent objectivity of the anarchist analysis of the situation. This issue will be further explored in later sections of this chapter.

The myth of Kronstadt

The anarchist writings on the Kronstadt uprising often employ comparisons to other historically significant events, contributing to the construction of a myth around Kronstadt and adding additional layers of meaning to the event. The narratives commonly found in anarchist books draw parallels between the uprising and the Paris Commune, the movement led by Nestor Makhno, and emphasize the significance of the Third Revolution theory.

The Paris Commune, which emerged in Paris from March 18 to May 28, 1871, represented a revolutionary socialist government that arose in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of Napoleon III. This historical event was characterized by its radical political and social movements, driven by the objective of establishing a novel governmental framework rooted in principles of direct democracy, workers' control, and social equality. The leadership of the Paris Commune predominantly comprised individuals from the working class, encompassing artisans, labourers, and radical intellectuals.

Despite the relatively nascent stage of the anarchist movement in 1871, anarchists played a role in the establishment of the Paris Commune, an event that would later become a cornerstone of European anarchist mythology. Coincidentally, the Kronstadt rebellion unfolded almost precisely on the 50th anniversary of the Paris Commune, prompting anarchists to draw parallels between these two historical occurrences.

Alexander Berkman provides extensive commentary on the similarities between the Kronstadt rebellion and the Paris Commune in his writings. According to Berkman, the reasons for the downfall of Kronstadt mirror those that led to the defeat of the Paris Commune—an overly passive approach in the face of governmental threats. Berkman asserts, "When the course of the struggle forced them to recognize the necessity of abolishing the Thiers regime not only in their own city but throughout the entire country, it was already too late. In both the Paris Commune and the Kronstadt uprising, a

propensity for passive and defensive tactics proved fatal."⁷⁹ Furthermore, Berkman draws a parallel between the two events by stating, "On March 18, the Bolshevik Government and the Communist Party of Russia publicly commemorated the Paris Commune of 1871, which was brutally suppressed by Gallifet and Thiers. Simultaneously, they celebrated their 'victory' over Kronstadt."⁸⁰

According to anarchists, the significance of the Kronstadt uprising and the Paris Commune lies not only in the parallels between their political demands but also in the meaning of these events. Both the Paris Communards and Kronstadt sailors fought for fundamental rights, and both movements were brutally suppressed by hostile political powers. The true similarity between the two events is seen in the unnecessary bloodshed that marked their end.

A similar comparison is made between the Nestor Makhno movement and the Kronstadt uprising. The Bolsheviks tolerated Makhno's partisan army only as long as it served their interests in the fight against the White forces. As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, the story of Nestor Makhno is one of broken promises by the Bolsheviks and the violent suppression of the movement. Ida Mett explicitly draws a parallel between these events and the Kronstadt mutiny, suggesting that the sailors of Kronstadt may have been inspired by Makhno.⁸¹ Similarly, Volin discusses the Makhno movement and the Kronstadt uprising together, considering them as two of the most significant anti-Bolshevik movements in history.⁸²

The comparisons made by anarchists between the Kronstadt uprising, the Paris Commune, and the Nestor Makhno movement not only highlight the significance of the Kronstadt events but also serve to connect the uprising to the broader anarchist movement. The Paris Commune holds a prominent place in anarchist mythology as a prime example of a genuine revolutionary movement. Nestor Makhno himself was an anarchist, and while his movement was politically diverse, it is acknowledged that the core ideological beliefs of his followers were deeply rooted in anarchism. By drawing parallels between these events and the Kronstadt uprising, anarchists effectively claim the uprising as their own. This interpretation may sometimes overstate the actual role played by anarchists during the Kronstadt events, but it underscores the ideological alignment and the symbolic importance of the uprising within the anarchist narrative.

Anarchist discourse frequently engages with the notion of the third revolution, which is understood as a transformative process aimed at establishing genuine democratic principles within the

79 Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*.

80 Berkman.

81 Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune*.

82 Volin, *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921*, 168.

country. While the February and October revolutions set the stage for desired social changes, anarchists contend that the Bolsheviks' consolidation of power did not fulfil the aspirations of the masses. The term "third revolution" often encompasses the broader anti-Bolshevik movements of peasants and workers that transpired between 1918 and 1921, but it also carries specific connotations related to the Kronstadt uprising.

For instance, Volin argues: "Kronstadt was the first entirely independent attempt of the people to liberate itself from all yokes and achieve the Social Revolution, an attempt made directly, resolutely, and boldly by the working masses themselves without political shepherds, without leaders or tutors. It was the first step towards the third and social revolution."⁸³ In a similar manner, Yarchuk claims: "Here in Kronstadt, the first stone is laid for the third revolution, breaking the last chains off the working masses and opening up a new wide path for socialist creativity."⁸⁴ Claims like these can be also found in the books by Berkman and Petrichenko.

Ida Mett draws attention to the fact that the term "third revolution" originated from the rebels themselves, as seen in one of the issues of "Izvestia."⁸⁵ However, anarchists played a significant role in amplifying and further disseminating this sentiment.

The works of Berkman and Petrichenko also echo these claims, underscoring the significance of Kronstadt as a catalyst for the third revolution. Anarchists, therefore, actively promote the notion that Kronstadt marked a significant milestone in the struggle for comprehensive social change, devoid of political tutelage, and leading towards the establishment of a genuinely democratic society.

The emotional nature of anarchist writing about Kronstadt is a notable characteristic. Anarchists often adopt a personal and highly emotional tone in their writings. This can be observed in Petrichenko's book, where an ostensibly objective narrative, based on dates, names, and events, is suddenly disrupted by personal comments. For example, the remark "Every kind of idiocy by the half-intelligent Burtsev, sending his unasked for greetings to the people of Kronstadt, every 'donation' by the financial bigshots in Paris, all the dreams of the Guchkovs, and the foolish rumors of the foreign press, all was used by the Bolsheviks."⁸⁶ This emotional tone is a result of the dichotomy that underlies anarchist writing, portraying the Bolsheviks as "bad" and the Kronstadt sailors as "good." This distinction is clearly reflected in the language used to describe the Kronstadt events, with the demands

83 Volin, 223.

84 Yarchuk, *Kronshtadt v Russkoj Revoljucii*, 62. orig. "Здесь в Кронштадте, положен первый камень третьей революции, сбивают последние оковы с трудовых масс и открывающий новый широкий путь для социалистической творчества."

85 Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune*.

86 Petrichenko, *The Truth About Kronstadt*.

of the rebels being described as "modest" and "righteous," while the actions of the Bolsheviks are characterized as "thrusting" and "foolish."

The anarchists' usage of terms such as "Communists", "revolution", and "Bolsheviks" reflects their varied perspectives and lack of consensus. Different authors approach these terms differently when referring to the Bolshevik government. For instance, Goldman draws a clear distinction between Bolsheviks and the Revolution, emphasizing that the Bolsheviks are not representative of the revolution itself.⁸⁷ Similarly, Ida Mett refers to the government forces as the Bolshevik Party or the Communist Party, intentionally avoiding any terms related to the revolution or even the term Communists itself.⁸⁸ In contrast, Berkman treats the terms Bolsheviks and Communists as interchangeable synonyms.⁸⁹ This divergence in terminology highlights the diversity of anarchist viewpoints and their nuanced understanding of the Bolshevik government and its relationship to the broader revolution.

The distinction between anarchists and Bolsheviks in terms of ideology and identity was significant for anarchists due to their strong pro-uprising and anti-Bolshevik sentiment. Anarchists did not want to be associated with Lenin's government and saw Bolsheviks as betrayers of the communist ideology. While anarcho-communists considered themselves communists, they believed that the Bolsheviks deviated from the true path of the social revolution. This ideological tension is evident in anarchist writings about Kronstadt, where the question of identity and alignment becomes complex.

Goldman, for example, expresses her initial hesitation towards the Kronstadt movement, primarily driven by her reluctance towards anything that could be perceived as counter-revolutionary⁹⁰. This struggle with defining their own position and reconciling it with the events unfolding in Kronstadt underscores the complexity of the anarchist perspective.

Furthermore, the observation gains significance when compared to the official Bolshevik publication *Izvestiya of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee*, where Bolsheviks are consistently referred to as Communists. This contrast in terminology reflects the divergent views and narratives surrounding the Bolshevik government, highlighting the nuanced and complex nature of the anarchist-Bolshevik relationship during the Kronstadt uprising.

87 Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*.

88 Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune*.

89 Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*.

90 Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*.

The background and meaning of Kronstadt

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the anarchist perspective on the Kronstadt events, it is imperative to delve into the wider contextual backdrop as interpreted by anarchists. An underlying characteristic found in much anarchist literature is the conviction that anarchism wielded significant political and ideological influence within Kronstadt prior to the uprising. This viewpoint is notably exemplified in the writings of Anatoly Gorelik, who emphasizes the inestimable role of anarchists in the Russian revolution. Gorelik contends that anarchists assumed leadership positions within the spontaneous revolutionary movements that emerged in Kronstadt in 1917, positing that the sailors themselves were, in fact, adherents of anarchism.⁹¹

In a slightly less radical vein, Yarchuk also underscores the significance of anarchism in Kronstadt during the period from 1917 to 1919. Concurrently, Yarchuk argues that the burgeoning support for anarchism was intertwined with the waning endorsement of the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) party among the sailors⁹².

Yarchuk further highlights the fact that in 1918, when repressive measures against anarchists intensified in Russia, the Kronstadt sailors were among the first to voice their protest and defend the cause of anarchism.⁹³ It is noteworthy to observe that even in the Petropavlovsk resolutions, which address the issue of freedom of the press, anarchists are accorded primary mention. Volin, too, provides a broad commentary on the sway exerted by anarchists in Kronstadt before 1921, citing the protests instigated by anarchist groups as evidence of their influence.⁹⁴

It is noteworthy to acknowledge that anarchists themselves do not universally label the Kronstadt uprising as an explicitly anarchistic movement. Anatolij Gorelik stands as the sole exception, as he appears to espouse the belief in the anarchistic nature of the mutiny.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the construction of the narrative surrounding the history of Kronstadt tends to closely associate the anarchistic movement with the uprising. When examining the works of authors who provide a broader historical perspective on the events, the repressive actions perpetrated by the Bolsheviks against anarchists and the conflict between Kronstadt sailors and the Bolsheviks are often presented in close

91 Gorelik, *Anarchisty v Rossijskoy Revolutsii*, 9.

92 Yarchuk, *Kronshtadt v Russkoj Revoljucii*, 35.

93 Yarchuk, 47.

94 Volin, *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921*, 172.

95 Gorelik, *Anarchisty v Rossijskoy Revolutsii*, 59.

proximity, depicting them as two facets of the same phenomenon—the Bolsheviks' endeavour to suppress any form of opposition.

The spontaneous and non-violent character of the Kronstadt uprising bears a resemblance to the principles espoused by anarchistic ideology. This notion is suggested by Emma Goldman, who quotes her conversation with Maxim Gorky to support this claim:

"You ought to visit the Baltflot [Baltic Fleet]. The Kronstadt sailors are nearly all instinctive Anarchists. You would find a field there." I smiled. "Instinctive Anarchists?" I said, "that means they are unspoiled by preconceived notions, unsophisticated, and receptive. Is that what you mean?" "Yes, that is what I mean," he replied.⁹⁶

The significance of this observation becomes apparent when we consider that the narrative asserting the anarchistic nature of the Kronstadt uprising originated from the Bolsheviks themselves. As quoted by Gorelik, the Bolshevik newspaper *Novyj put'* from March 19, 1921, claimed that "The majority of Kronstadt sailors are anarchists. They are not on the right, but on the left wing – more radical than communists."⁹⁷ In this manner, the Bolsheviks sought to brand the sailors as anarchists, thereby implicating them as counter-revolutionary forces. Interestingly, in response to these accusations, the anarchists themselves affirmed their association with the movement by asserting, "Yes, this movement does belong to us."

Although seldom explicitly stated, the connection between the Kronstadt uprising and anarchism appears to be inseparable within anarchist writings. The sailors champion the interests of anarchism, while anarchists advocate for the protection of the rebels. The ideology of the third revolution posits that Kronstadt represents the initial step towards a genuine social revolution, one that ultimately leads to the abolition of the state and the establishment of anarchism. Ida Mett presents a slightly more moderate viewpoint, suggesting that anarchists were supportive of the ideology embraced by the Kronstadt rebels, albeit adopting a more passive stance. Mett acknowledges that the resolutions put forth by Kronstadt were aligned with anarchist doctrine, but also notes their resonance with various other political movements that existed during that time.⁹⁸

Undoubtedly, anarchists hold the conviction that the Kronstadt mutiny was a profoundly significant event for the socialist movement. Emma Goldman, using dramatic language, refers to

96 Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*.

97 Gorelik, *Anarchisty v Rossijskoy Revolutsii*, 51.

98 Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune*.

Kronstadt as a "breaking point"⁹⁹ that completely shattered her faith in the Bolshevik party. Volin characterizes the uprising as a singular event, unprecedented in its nature¹⁰⁰. Similarly, Berkman claims:

Kronstadt is of great historic significance. It sounded the death knell Bolshevism with its Party dictatorship, mad centralization, Tcheka terrorism and bureaucratic castes. It struck into the very heart of Communist autocracy. At the same time it shocked the intelligent and honest minds of Europe and America into a critical examination of Bolshevik theories and practices. It exploded the Bolshevik myth of the Communist State being the "Workers' and Peasants' Government". It proved that the Communist Party dictatorship and the Russian Revolution are opposites, contradictory and mutually exclusive. It demonstrated that the Bolshevik regime is unmitigated tyranny and reaction, and that the Communist State is itself the most potent and dangerous counter-revolution.¹⁰¹

In a certain sense, anarchists have constructed a mythos around the Kronstadt uprising. They perceive it as a moment of hope, representing the potential for the eventual eradication of the Bolsheviks' monopoly on power. Simultaneously, the suppression of the mutiny is seen as a betrayal of the revolution perpetrated by the Bolsheviks. It is evident that, on the whole, anarchists were supportive of the Kronstadt movement, even though initial reluctance may have been present in some quarters. However, it is important to note that the relatively cohesive narrative presented in anarchist writings is not the sole perspective on the Kronstadt uprising. The anarchist press, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, displays a lesser degree of unity in its portrayal of the Kronstadt events. Additionally, as will be explained, it may contradict certain findings discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 – Kronstadt in anarchistic press

The significance of anarchist newspapers in the discourse surrounding the Kronstadt uprising tends to be egregiously disregarded. Admittedly, these publications offer a significantly smaller body of information compared to more prominent outlets discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. At first glance, one might argue that anarchists displayed minimal interest in the Kronstadt uprising during the initial months following its occurrence.

Delving into research on the anarchistic press during this period reveals another notable challenge. The repression targeting anarchists and anarchist publications resulted in irregular issuance

99 Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*.

100 Volin, *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921*, 223.

101 Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*.

of newspapers, with publications appearing and disappearing sporadically. Moreover, many articles lack continuations, and numerous issues have not survived to the present day. Consequently, the available information regarding anarchistic press is notably incomplete. It is important to acknowledge that until the conclusion of 1921, no substantial articles pertaining to the Kronstadt uprising were found within the anarchist press during the analysed period.

Nevertheless, anarchists did make occasional references to the Kronstadt uprising, albeit with limited focus on the events themselves. These references, however, furnish valuable insights into the evolving perspectives on the Kronstadt events within different factions and the development of viewpoints documented in more expansive publications.

This chapter extensively examines multiple Russian-language anarchist newspapers published in 1921. A comprehensive list of these newspapers, along with a brief explanation of their anarchistic affiliations, can be found in the additional materials of this thesis. It is noteworthy that only three of these newspapers explicitly reference the Kronstadt uprising: *Golos Truzhennika*, *Svobodnoye obshestvo*, and *Volna*. However, it is important to mention that not all issues of the newspaper *Golos Truzhennika* from 1921 have been preserved to this day. Consequently, a complete understanding of the newspaper's evolving stance towards the Kronstadt uprising remains elusive.

It is noteworthy that a significant shift in the overall sentiment of the anarchistic press, particularly towards the Bolsheviks and their governance, occurred at the beginning of 1921. During this period, publications such as *Golos Truzhennika*,¹⁰² *Volnaya zhyzn*,¹⁰³ *Svobodnoye obshestvo*,¹⁰⁴ and *Volna*¹⁰⁵ began disseminating texts that openly expressed an anti-Bolshevik stance. In fact, many of these publications explicitly called upon individuals to organize and take action against the oppressive government.

Curiously, despite the prevailing anti-Bolshevik rhetoric, no substantial reports of anti-Bolshevik strikes or rebellions were documented within these newspapers. The anti-Bolshevik narrative primarily remained theoretical in nature, often referring to historical events while avoiding direct commentary on ongoing issues. Interestingly, the newspapers extensively covered strikes and uprisings occurring in various parts of the world, with *Golos Truzhennika* even dedicating a special column to such events.¹⁰⁶

102 M Kaminiev, "Kommunism v Rossii," *Golos Truzhennika*, January 8, 1921.

103 V Almazov, "My i Bolsheviki," *Volnaya Zhyzn*, January 1921.

104 V. C. O., "Anarchism i Bolshevism," *Svobodnoe Obshestvo*, February 1921.

105 Rucel's, "Koye Shto o Revolyutsionnykh Sobytyah v Rossii," *Volna*, March 1921.

106 For instance: "Po Svetu," *Golos Truzhennika*, January 29, 1921.

The anti-Bolshevik sentiment within the anarchistic press displays a lack of coherence. For instance, while *Volna* reports on cases of widespread hunger and a dire economic situation throughout Russia, *Golos Truzhennika* asserts that the country's economy is rapidly improving. Furthermore, the anarchistic press attempts to assign blame for the issues afflicting Russia, identifying various groups and individuals as potential culprits. These targets of blame include unidentified counter-revolutionary movements both within and outside of Russia, figures such as Lenin and Trotsky themselves, the White forces seeking to regain political significance, and even other factions within the anarchist movement (such as anarcho-syndicalists pointing fingers at anarcho-communists, and vice versa).

Furthermore, despite the prevalence of certain topics in the anarchistic press during that period, such as the anniversary of the Paris Commune (which should not be regarded as a metaphorical reference to the Kronstadt event), the commemoration of Peter Kropotkin's death in February 1921 (a prominent figure in Russian anarchism), the challenging situation of anarchists in exile, and broader discussions on anarchist principles, the Kronstadt uprising appears to be notably absent.

There could be several reasons for this absence. Firstly, as previously emphasized, access to reliable information during the discussed period was severely limited. In an issue of *Svobodnoye obshchestvo* from April-May 1921, one of the readers' letters briefly mentions: "According to the Russian newspapers, in Petrograd, in Kronstadt all the workers stopped working and they demand from the government salaries equal to the ones of the commissars."¹⁰⁷ This fragmentary mention indicates that the available information about the events in Kronstadt was significantly incomplete. Although strikes in Petrograd cannot be entirely dissociated from the Kronstadt uprising, they should not be considered as an integral part of it. The demand for equal payment was indeed found among the sailors' resolutions, but the term "commissars" does not appear in the sailors' demands.

A noteworthy observation can be made regarding the approach taken towards the Kronstadt events as reflected in *Golos Truzhennika*, a publication of significance during the time period. The earliest explicit mention of these events can be traced back to the March 26, 1921 issue, wherein a concise statement asserts that any reports regarding the Kronstadt uprising posing a genuine threat to Soviet Russia are merely propagandistic fabrications disseminated by the bourgeois press.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the newspaper posits that information about the uprising had been pre-emptively published in "a French newspaper" prior to its actual occurrence, implying that the Kronstadt uprising had been meticulously orchestrated and coordinated by counter-revolutionary forces operating on an international scale. In

107 A. S., "Libava, 1921-Go Goda, Marta 10," *Svobodnoye Obshchestvo*, April 1921, 30.

108 "Vostaniya v Rossii," *Golos Truzhennika*, March 26, 1921.

addition to France, the article references Finland as another implicated party. Intriguingly, this narrative aligns surprisingly well with the version propagated by the Bolshevik press, while also resonating with the apprehensions expounded upon by Emma Goldman in her seminal work *My Disillusionment in Russia*. Notably, in the immediate aftermath of the uprising, anarchists found themselves grappling with the challenging task of discerning whether the mutiny was indeed imbued with counter-revolutionary intentions, thus underscoring the complexities surrounding the event.

Furthermore, *Golos Truzhennika* exhibits a fluctuating stance towards the Kronstadt event, displaying a lack of consistency in its narrative. In the March 12, 1921 issue, the newspaper outright denies the existence of any riots taking place in Russia.¹⁰⁹ This is particularly notable considering that anarchistic ideals often advocate for the abolition of the state, making such a patriotic stance unusual within anarchist publications.

Subsequently, *Golos Truzhennika* undergoes yet another shift in its narrative approach. On June 9th, 1921, the Kronstadt uprising is once again referenced, this time characterizing the sailors as having been "tricked by the white forces."¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the newspaper fails to present a cohesive explanation of the events surrounding Kronstadt. Various authors, predominantly anonymous, contribute to the newspaper's coverage, rendering it impossible to trace their individual perspectives. Nevertheless, a common thread emerges wherein Kronstadt is depicted as a conspiracy against Soviet Russia orchestrated by unknown hostile forces, presumably connected to the white forces abroad. However, the newspaper does not provide a more extensive elucidation of this perspective. In general, *Golos Truzhennika* evades addressing internal issues in a radical manner. While some criticism of Lenin and Trotsky does appear within its pages, the prevailing content depicts post-revolutionary Russia in predominantly positive terms, employing superlatives to convey this sentiment.

In stark contrast, *Volna* adopts a markedly different stance in its coverage of the Kronstadt events. While the newspaper does not dedicate extensive articles specifically discussing the events, the tone employed suggests a presumption of reader familiarity with the subject matter. Notably, *Volna* aligns itself with and lends support to the Kronstadt mutiny, employing a rhetorical style reminiscent of the impassioned tone found in anarchistic literature previously explored in the scholarly discourse.

For instance, the May 1921 issue of *Volna* characterizes the Kronstadt events as an "uprising of the hungry and deprived, an uprising of the oppressed."¹¹¹ This portrayal evokes a sense of sympathy

109 "Kampanija Lzhy," *Golos Truzhennika*, March 12, 1921.

110 G Alsberg, "Rossiya: Cherez Zakopchennoe Steklo Ili Zhe Rozowye Ochki," *Golos Truzhennika*, June 9, 1921.

111 M. S. V., "Ravenstvo, Bratstvo i Lubov," *Volna*, May 1921.

towards the motives and grievances underlying the uprising. Similarly, the June 1921 issue contends that the Kronstadt uprising represented a movement of the people against Lenin himself, posing a tangible threat to the Bolsheviks' monopolization of power.¹¹² These accounts reflect the newspaper's endorsement of the mutiny and its perception of the Kronstadt events as a genuine challenge to the Bolshevik regime.

Overall, *Volna* exhibits a distinct and supportive position in its coverage of the Kronstadt events, aligning with the sentiments expressed in anarchist literature and emphasizing the significance of the uprising as a resistance movement against Lenin and Bolshevik authority.

The divergent stances observed in different newspapers can be attributed to various factors. Firstly, the limited availability of reliable information from Russia could have influenced the perspectives of publications issued abroad, such as *Golos Truzhennika*. Due to delays in receiving information and the constrained freedom of correspondence, the American newspaper may have been more prone to disseminating later-discredited reports as factual. The challenging and protracted process of emigration between Russia and the United States further contributed to these limitations. However, the pro-Kronstadt position taken by *Volna* presents a contradiction to this theory. Although also published in the United States, *Volna* seemingly assumes that its readers are already acquainted with the Kronstadt events. This discrepancy may be attributed to the fact that mentions of Kronstadt in *Volna* appeared later than those in *Golos Truzhennika*. However, it is worth noting that *Svobodnoe obshchestvo*, which eventually merged with *Volna*, exhibited less confidence in its stance towards Kronstadt.

Additionally, an intriguing observation arises from the absence of any mention of Kronstadt in the newspapers published within Russia. This omission likely stems from the oppressive censorship imposed on the anarchist press during that period. It further implies that the flow of information within Russia was severely restricted during the discussed time-frame.

Overall, the varying positions adopted by different newspapers can be attributed to factors such as limited access to reliable information, censorship, and the temporal sequence of events, highlighting the complexities surrounding the coverage of the Kronstadt events.

Another plausible explanation for the divergent approaches towards Kronstadt among different anarchist groups is the ideological divide between them. *Golos Truzhennika* represents the radical anarcho-syndicalist faction, whereas both *Volna* and *Svobodnoe obshchestvo* are publications associated with anarcho-communism. Despite sharing many similarities in their programs, these factions often

¹¹² "Nelza Molchat," *Volna*, June 1921.

harboured hostility towards one another. It is worth noting that two influential anarchists, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who later played a significant role in shaping the anarchist perspective on the Kronstadt uprising, were prominent figures within the anarcho-communist camp. Their presence in Petrograd during the events may have provided the anarcho-communist faction abroad with better access to information about the uprising.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these explanations remain speculative due to the complexities and limited available information surrounding the historical context. Factors such as ideological differences, personal affiliations, and individual experiences can all contribute to the varying approaches taken by different anarchist groups and publications.

Conclusions

It can be argued that a relatively cohesive anarchist perspective on the Kronstadt events exists, as evidenced by the significant number of anarchist publications that have commented on the mutiny in the decades following its occurrence. As expounded upon in Chapter 2 of this thesis, there are notable similarities in the narratives put forth by various anarchists.

Foremost, anarchists tend to openly align themselves with the rebels, asserting that the Kronstadt uprising represented a popular movement aimed at ousting the Bolsheviks, who were perceived to have betrayed the ideals of the October Revolution and consolidated power in their own hands. This dichotomy between the rebels and the Bolsheviks is prevalent across anarchist writings. Even those with a seemingly more moderate stance ultimately concede that the demands of the rebels were justified and that the subsequent rule of the Bolsheviks proved detrimental to the revolutionary aspirations of the people.

This shared perspective among anarchists underscores their criticism of the Bolshevik regime and their support for the Kronstadt mutiny as an embodiment of the broader disillusionment with Bolshevik governance. It highlights their belief that the Bolsheviks' monopolization of power hindered the revolution's ability to serve the interests of the populace.

Overall, the existence of a cohesive anarchist perspective on the Kronstadt events is discernible through the alignment with the rebels and the critique of Bolshevik rule, emphasizing the perceived betrayal of revolutionary principles by the Bolsheviks and the consequential failure of the revolution to fulfil the aspirations of the people.

According to anarchists, the Kronstadt uprising was a spontaneous movement driven by people seeking to fight for their dignity and basic needs. Anarchists view it as a peaceful initiative that escalated into a violent conflict solely due to the actions of the Bolsheviks, particularly Leon Trotsky. They consider the demands of the Kronstadt sailors to be natural for all members of the working class and in line with anarchist principles.

Furthermore, there exists a significant amount of myth-building surrounding the Kronstadt events. Anarchists draw parallels between the mutiny and other historically significant events such as the Paris Commune. They assert that the Kronstadt uprising ranks among the most significant anti-Bolshevik movements in history, alongside the Makhno movement that occurred shortly before Kronstadt in present-day Ukraine. Anarchists tend to believe that Kronstadt represented an attempt to initiate the third revolution, a movement that would ultimately bring an end to the transitional period and establish the ideal dictatorship of the proletariat.

The aforementioned factors highlight the close association between the Kronstadt uprising and anarchistic beliefs and movements. However, it is important to avoid characterizing the Kronstadt uprising as an exclusively anarchistic movement, as such a characterization would be an exaggeration. Nevertheless, the presence of anarchistic writings suggests that anarchism played a significant role in inspiring the mutiny. This perception of significant anarchistic elements within the Kronstadt uprising has endured until the present day.

In contemporary Western academia, numerous elements characteristic of the anarchistic perspective can be observed when examining the Kronstadt uprising. Undoubtedly, the significance of the uprising as an anti-Bolshevik movement that held the potential to alter the trajectory of Soviet Russia, which was then dominated by the Bolsheviks, owes much to the influence of anarchistic writings.

As explicated in this research, the consistent anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt events gradually took shape over time. In the initial period following the uprising, the anarchistic press displayed minimal interest in the event. The national press completely ignored the Kronstadt events, and among emigration newspapers, only three explicitly mentioned them. Even within this limited coverage, perspectives were far from unified, with certain newspapers adopting a hostile stance towards the rebels while others openly supported the movement.

This divergence between the perspectives found in books and newspapers underscores the fact that what is referred to as the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt uprising was formulated and

influenced by a relatively small number of anarchistic thinkers and activists who authored books and articles on the subject. However, it should be noted that the existence of anarchistic groups during the uprising does not necessarily imply active support for the movement. The development and dissemination of the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt uprising resulted from the intellectual discourse and analysis conducted by these individuals, contributing to the formation of a coherent narrative surrounding the events.

Therefore, while the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt uprising is discernible and has endured over time, it is essential to recognize that it does not imply unanimous backing or direct involvement of anarchistic groups during the actual events. Rather, it signifies the influence of anarchistic thought in shaping interpretations and understandings of the Kronstadt uprising, particularly in relation to its potential to challenge the Bolshevik-dominated history of Soviet Russia.

The significance of the anarchistic perspective in shaping the broader Western understanding of the Kronstadt events has had detrimental consequences for the anarchistic perspective itself. While early anarchistic works are acknowledged as influential, the distinctiveness of the anarchistic viewpoint has been overshadowed by the prevailing pro-rebel stance. This research highlights that the Kronstadt uprising has become a myth for anarchists, standing alongside the Paris Commune as a historical movement aligned with anarchist principles. However, this myth-building process occurred much later, as during the actual uprising, Russian anarchists were divided and unable to reach a consensus on their position. Furthermore, the contemporary unification and globalization of anarchism also contribute to overlooking the evolution of the anarchistic perspective on the Kronstadt uprising.

In general, gaining a better understanding of the various perspectives on the events, beyond the dichotomy of the pro-Bolshevik and pro-rebel narratives, can enhance our comprehension of the historical events and, subsequently, draw greater lessons from the Kronstadt experience. By examining the development and evolution of the anarchistic perspective, this research aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the Kronstadt uprising and its enduring significance.

Appendix

1. The Kronstadt resolutions

Having heard the report of the representatives sent by the general meeting of ships' crews to Petrograd to investigate the situation there, we resolve:

- 1. In view of the fact that the present soviets do not express the will of the workers and peasants, immediately to hold new elections by secret ballot, with freedom to carry on agitation beforehand for all workers and peasants;*
- 2. To give freedom of speech and press to workers and peasants, to anarchist and left socialist parties;*
- 3. To secure freedom of assembly for trade unions and peasant organizations;*
- 4. To call a non-party conference of the workers, Red Army soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Constant, and Petrograd province, no later than 10 March 1921;*
- 5. To liberate all political prisoners of socialist parties and mills. Should such guards or detachments be found necessary, they [are] to be appointed in the army from the ranks and in the factories and mills at the discretion of the workers;*
- 11. To give peasants full freedom of action in regard to the land, and also the right to keep cattle, on condition that the peasants manage with their own means, that is, without employing hired labor;*
- 12. To request all branches of the army, as well as our comrades the military cadets, to endorse our resolution;*

13. *To demand that the press give all our resolutions wide parties, as well as all workers, peasants, soldiers, and sailors imprisoned in connection with the labor and peasant movements;*

6. *To elect a commission to review the cases of those being held in prisons and concentration camps;*

7. *To abolish all political departments, since no party should be given special privileges in the propagation of its ideas or receive the financial support of the state for such purposes. Instead cultural and educational commissions should be established, locally elected and financed by the state;*

8. *To remove all road block detachments immediately; [Armed squads which confiscated food that was illegally purchased from the peasantry.]*

9. *To equalize the rations of all working people, 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 Communist guards kept on duty in factorublicity;*

14. *To appoint an itinerant bureau of control;*

15. *To permit free handicrafts production by one's own labor.*

*PETRICHENKO, Chairman of the Squadron Meeting. PEREPELKIN, Secretary*¹¹³.

2. **Dramatis personae**

1. **Alexander Berkman** (1870-1936) emerged as a significant figure in the realm of Russian-born anarchism and political activism. His arrival in the United States in 1887 precipitated his immersion into radical political circles, where he fervently advocated for the cause of the Haymarket Bombing defendants. Notably, Berkman cultivated a profound partnership with Emma Goldman, a fellow immigrant and activist, and together they embarked on collaborations

113 Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*, 73–74.

pertaining to anarchist publications, notably the esteemed periodical *Mother Earth*. In a striking turn of events, Berkman's indignant sensibilities impelled him to orchestrate an assassination attempt on Henry Clay Frick, a prominent steel magnate complicit in the egregious mistreatment of striking workers. Consequently, Berkman confronted a sentence of 22 years' imprisonment, though he ultimately experienced release in 1906. Following his release, Berkman doggedly persisted in his pursuit of activism, particularly manifesting in his unwavering opposition to the horrors of World War I, thereby incurring renewed periods of incarceration. The pivotal juncture of 1919 witnessed Berkman and Goldman's expulsion to the Soviet Union, yet the profound disillusionment subsequently experienced by Berkman vis-à-vis the realities of the Soviet regime compelled him to seek refuge in France. It was within this geographical context that he penned seminal critical works, most notably "The Bolshevik Myth," which critically examined the nature of the Soviet state. As Berkman's health waned and financial constraints mounted, the tragic culmination of his life materialized with his self-inflicted demise in 1936, occurring in close temporal proximity to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. In the enduring annals of anarchist literature, Berkman's written corpus, including his influential "Prison Memoirs," continues to resonate as a testament to his enduring legacy and ideological contributions.¹¹⁴

2. **Grigory (Anatoly) Gorelik** (1890-1956) was born in Genichesk, Melitopol District of Taurida Governorate, into a modest bourgeois family. From the age of 10, he worked as a delivery boy in a grocery store. He became an anarchist at the age of 14 and, starting from 1904, participated in the activities of anarchist-communist groups in Ukraine and Southern Russia. He was arrested several times until he went into hiding abroad in 1909. He was one of the organizers and editors of the first Russian-language publications of the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army (IRA), the weekly newspapers "Rabochaya Rech" (1915-1916) and "Rabochiy" (1916-1917). Both newspapers conducted anti-war agitation, which led to the closure of "Rabochiy" and the arrest of its editors in March 1917 when the United States entered the war. In May 1917, Gorelik was expelled from America to Russia. Upon arriving in Vladivostok, he was once again arrested as a "defeatist." The arrest lasted only three days, after which he and his comrades were released at the demand of the Vladivostok garrison soldiers. He turned out to be the most

114 "Alexander Berkman (1870-1936)," in *Anarchy Archives*, n.d., http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/berkman/bio.html.

prominent representative of the Ukrainian anarchist faction that categorically rejected all forms of "violent and destructive activities" during the Civil War, from terror and expropriations to insurrection, although he was briefly associated with the Makhnovist movement, serving as the secretary of the Mariupol anarchist group "Nabat." A few months later, he was sentenced as an "anarchist propagandist" and "anarchist counterrevolutionary" to three years in a labor camp. However, he did not end up in the camp and was inexplicably left in Taganka Prison. In July 1921, a collective hunger strike by anarchist prisoners took place here, led by Grigory Maximov, Vsevolod Volin, Mark Mrachny, and Anatoly Gorelik. The hunger strike almost caused a scandal at the congress of the Red Profintern held at that time when representatives of European anarchist-syndicalist organizations participating in the congress made an ultimatum to release their Russian comrades. The decision was made at the level of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). The Leninist leadership decided to release the hunger strikers on the condition of their deportation abroad. In 1940, Anatoly Gorelik suffered a stroke, which left him bedridden for the rest of his life. He spent his final years in a hospital in Buenos Aires, where he passed away on November 15, 1956.¹¹⁵

3. **Efim Zakharovich Yarchuk** (1882(?)-1937), also known as Khaim Zakharev, emerged as a noteworthy figure within the anarchist milieu during the early 20th century. Born into a Jewish community in Berezna, Ukraine, circa 1882 or 1886, Yarchuk actively participated in the formation of the Chernoe Znamia (Black Banner) group in Bialystok prior to 1905. This group, distinguished by its synthesis of worker agitation and armed assaults against autocratic authorities, distributed leaflets to factory workers and orchestrated gatherings in cemeteries or wooded areas to feign mourning. Following the quelling of the 1905 revolution, Yarchuk faced exile to Siberia for a duration of five years before resettling in the United States in 1913. Notably, he became intricately involved in various anarchist movements, notably aligning himself with the Union of Russian Workers and contributing to the *Golos Truda* newspaper. Furthermore, Yarchuk participated in the Anarchist Red Cross in New York. In the wake of the February Revolution, he returned to Russia in 1917, assuming an active role in the influential anarchist movement centered in Kronstadt. His engagement extended to the July Days, a prelude to the October Revolution, wherein Yarchuk served as an editor for *Volyni Golos Truda*.

115 Artur Beroev, "Pamjati Anarhista — Kommunista Grigorija Gorelika," *Budka Glasnosti*, n.d., <https://vipdis.ru/pamyati-anarhista-kommunista-grigoriya-gorelika/>.

Later, he assumed the role of Treasurer within the executive bureau of the Anarcho-syndicalist Confederation. Nevertheless, Yarchuk confronted recurrent apprehensions by the Bolshevik authorities, undergoing multiple arrests, including in Kharkhov in November 1920 and by the Moscow Cheka. The constraints of his confinement precluded his involvement in the Kronstadt insurrection. Moreover, Yarchuk partook in a hunger strike alongside fellow anarchists incarcerated in the Taganka prison during the Conference of the Red Trade Union International. Eventually liberated and deported in January 1922, he endured the hardships of scurvy during his imprisonment. Subsequently, Yarchuk relocated to Berlin, where he collaborated with Gregori Maximov and Schapiro in publishing *Rabochii Put* (Worker's Way) in 1923. Subsequent to his time in Berlin, he settled in Paris, composing the notable work *Kronstadt in the Russian Revolution*, published in New York in 1923 under the auspices of the Union of Russian Workers. This publication relied on testimonies provided by comrades from within Russia and abroad. In 1925, taking advantage of the "law of return" and encouraged by his acquaintance Bukharin, Yarchuk ventured back to Russia, affiliating himself with the Communist Party. Tragically, he became ensnared in the purges and show trials orchestrated by Stalin, leading to his execution in 1937.¹¹⁶

4. **Emma Goldman** (1869 – 1940) - a prominent figure in the realms of anarchism, feminism, and political activism. Throughout her life, she ardently advocated for various causes, including women's equality, free love, workers' rights, and universal education. Having migrated to the United States in 1885, Goldman's initial optimism was dampened by the repressive treatment endured by labor activists. Consequently, she aligned herself with the German anarchist movement and cultivated a reputation as a compelling orator, renowned for her acerbic wit. While Goldman maintained a theoretical defense of political violence, she rejected its practical application, attributing its existence to the oppressive machinery of the state. In her pursuit of propagating anarchist ideas, she established the influential publication *Mother Earth* and endured a two-year imprisonment for her opposition to conscription during World War I. Following her deportation to Soviet Russia in 1919, Goldman grew disillusioned with the course of the communist experiment, consequently unmasking its deleterious realities. Subsequently residing in exile in France, she penned her memoir, "Living My Life." In her final

116 Nick Heath, "Yarchuk, Efim, 1882 or 1886-1937," in *Libcom*, n.d., <https://libcom.org/article/yarchuk-efim-1882-or-1886-1937>.

years, Goldman ardently opposed fascism in Spain, albeit witnessing its eventual triumph. Emma Goldman's demise in 1940 marked the conclusion of a life dedicated to radical activism and an unwavering dedication to the pursuit of freedom and social justice¹¹⁷.

5. **Ida Mett** (1901-1973), born Ida Gilman, was a Jewish anarchist and writer originating from Russia. Following her medical studies in Moscow, she engaged with anarchist communities and incurred arrest by the Soviet authorities due to her involvement in subversive activities. At the age of 23, she successfully escaped from Russia with the aid of Jewish smugglers and established residence in Paris. Within the Parisian setting, Mett contributed to the editorial efforts of *Dielo Trouda*, a periodical founded by Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno and Russian Peter Arshinov. Subsequently, she experienced a rupture within the group and embarked on collaborative ventures with Nicolas Lazarevitch, jointly overseeing the publication of *La Liberation Syndicale*. Their endeavors involved mobilizing campaigns to address the challenges faced by the working class in Russia. Expelled from France in 1928, Mett and Lazarevitch took up residence in Belgium until 1936, intermittently spending brief periods in both France and Spain. Mett actively participated in anarchist and antimilitarist circles while resuming her medical studies. Noteworthy contributions to the literary realm include her works such as "The Kronstadt Commune" (1938), "The Russian Peasant in the Revolution and Post Revolution" (1968), and "Medicine in the USSR" (1953). Mett's life came to a close in Paris in 1973.¹¹⁸

6. **Stepan Maximovich Petrichenko** (1892-1947) occupies a significant position in the annals of Russian history as a notable revolutionary figure and anarcho-syndicalist politician. His pivotal role in the Third Russian Revolution cannot be overlooked, particularly his leadership of the Soviet Republic of Soldiers and Fortress-Builders of Nargen. The zenith of his influence came in 1921 when he assumed de facto leadership of the Kronstadt Commune, spearheading the Kronstadt Rebellion. Born into a peasant family in Nikitenka, Kaluga province, Petrichenko commenced his revolutionary journey by enlisting in the Russian navy, where he actively participated in the February Revolution while stationed in Nargen. His resolute opposition to the Bolsheviks and his instrumental role in facilitating the evacuation to Kronstadt exemplify

117 "Emma Goldman," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Emma-Goldman>.

118 Nick Heath, "Mett, Ida, 1901-1973," in *Libcom*, n.d., <https://libcom.org/article/mett-ida-1901-1973>.

his commitment to his ideals. Notably, Petrichenko's brief association with the Russian Communist Party was followed by his subsequent resignation, marking a distinct ideological shift toward aligning himself with Nestor Makhno. In the aftermath of the rebellion's suppression, Petrichenko found refuge in Finland, continuing his unwavering opposition to the Bolshevik regime. However, his support for Soviet groups during the Winter War precipitated his expulsion to the Soviet Union, culminating in his arrest and subsequent internment in a prison camp where he ultimately succumbed to his fate. The life and exploits of Stepan Maximovich Petrichenko offer valuable insights into the tumultuous period of Russian history and the diverse ideological currents that shaped its revolutionary landscape.¹¹⁹

7. **Vsevolod Eichenbaum** (1882-1945), widely known as **Volin**, emerged as a prominent Russian anarchist within the revolutionary milieu of his time. Born into a privileged Jewish family, he deviated from his academic pursuits to focus on educating and organizing workers through study circles. Actively engaged in the events of the 1905 revolution, Volin played a pivotal role in establishing the first soviet. He aligned himself with the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, demonstrating his commitment by donating his inheritance and participating in the Kronstadt insurrection. Following his escape from Siberian imprisonment, Volin sought sanctuary in France, where he fully embraced anarchism in 1911 and became an active participant in diverse anarchist circles and publications, steadfastly opposing militarism. Returning to Russia in 1917, he assumed the role of editor for the anarchist paper *Golos Truda*, vocally criticizing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and later joining anarchist units against General Denikin's forces. Volin co-founded the Nabat Confederation of Anarchists in Ukraine, advocating for the unification of various anarchist tendencies, including anarchist-communists, anarcho-syndicalists, and individualists. Enduring imprisonment and subsequent release, he was expelled from the Soviet Union and settled in Germany, where he remained deeply involved in anarchist organizations, translation work, and documenting his experiences in Russia. Relocating to France, Volin actively participated in the Synthesis movement, which sought to foster the coexistence of diverse anarchist ideological currents. Despite his political disagreements with Makhno, Volin sustained his commitment to activism, vehemently condemning Soviet repression. Amid World War II, he joined the clandestine *Groupe Anarchiste International* and made contributions to La

119 "Stepan Petrichenko," in *En-Academic*, n.d., <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/2611893>.

Raison. Despite declining health, Volin steadfastly dedicated himself to the reconstruction of the anarchist movement until his passing in 1945, leaving an enduring legacy in the realms of anarchist theory and activism.¹²⁰

120 Nick Heath, "Volin (Eichenbaum, Vsevelod Mikhailovich) Aka Voline, 1882 -1945," in *Libcom*, n.d., <https://libcom.org/article/volin-eichenbaum-vsevelod-mikhailovich-aka-voline-1882-1945>.

List of newspaper issues¹²¹

1. *Cherez sotzializm k anarkho-universalizmu* – the newspaper of “Organization of anarcho-syndicalists.” Published in Moscow in 1921.
 - April 1921, no.1
 - May 1921, no.2
 - June 1921, no.3
 - July 1921, no.4
 - August 1921, no.5

2. *Golos truzhennika* – the newspaper of Russian section of “Industrial workers of the World.” Published in Chicago in the years 1918-1927.
 - 01.01.1921, no.128
 - 08.01.1921, no.129
 - 29.01.1921, no.132
 - 12.02.1921, no.134
 - 19.02.1921, no.135
 - 05.03.1921, no.137
 - 12.03.1921, no.138
 - 26.03.1921, no.140
 - 23.04.1921, no.144
 - 30.04.1921, no.145
 - 07.05.1921, no.146
 - 09.07.1921, no.155
 - 06.08.1921, no.159
 - 13.08.1921, no.160
 - 27.08.1921, no.162
 - 10.09.1921, no.164

¹²¹ Information about anarchist issues comes from: A. V. Dubovik, “Periodicheskie Izdaniya Anarhistov v Rossii i v Jemigracii. 1917-1963,” accessed June 19, 2023, https://socialist.memo.ru/books/biblio/periodika_posle_1917.htm.

3. *Klich anarkhistov* – the newspaper of Russian anarchists in the U.S.. The issue from May 1921 is the only one released. Published in New York.
 - May 1921

4. *Pochin* – the newspaper of anarcho-collectivists. Published in Moscow in the years 1919-1922.
 - August 1921, no.1

5. *Svobodnoe obchestvo* – the newspaper of Russian anarchists in Canada. Published in the years 1920-1921 in Ottawa.
 - January-February 1921, no.3
 - March-April 1921, no.4

6. *Universal* – the newspaper of the Moscow section of anarcho-syndicalists. Only three issues were released.
 - February-March 1921, no.1-2
 - April-May 1921, no.3-4
 - November-December 1921, no.5-6

7. *Volna* – the newspaper of the “federation of Russian anarcho-communist groups in the U.S. and Canada”. Published in Detroit in the years 1920-1924
 - January 1921, no. 12-13
 - February 1921, no.14
 - March 1921, no.15
 - April 1921, no.16
 - May 1921, no.17

- June 1921, no.18
- July 1921, no.19
- August 1921, no.20
- September 1921, no.21
- October 1921, no.22
- November 1921, no.23
- December 1921, no.24

8. *Volnaya zhyzn* – the newspaper of “Russian federation of anarcho-communists.” Published in the years 1919-1922 in Moscow.

- January 1921, no.9
- February 1921, no.10
- March 1921, no.11-12
- April 1921, no.13-14

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