

# **The Truth About Kronstadt**

**The Story of the Heroic Struggle of the People of Kronstadt Against the  
Communist Party Dictatorship**

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# THE BEGINNING OF WORKER DISTURBANCE IN PETROGRAD

In the end of February, 1921, serious worker unrest began in Petrograd. The fuel crisis, railroad crisis and food crisis had reached an extreme. The situation was so difficult that the Soviet press itself, taking all matters into account, did not consider it necessary to hide the truth. Preparing its readers for the worst, it directly declared to the populace, "the Constituent Assembly will not save the country, nor even God, and not free trade alone."

It was plainly visible that it was not possible to continue thus, and that radical change was necessary. However, the Bolsheviks, while recognizing the inescapable nature of the situation, at the same time did not wish to make any concessions.

At this time, the situation was becoming worse. Many factories and plants were closed, and the idled workers gathered at meetings. The atmosphere, clearly hostile to Soviet power, poured out in speeches, and in resolutions passed by the meetings. At many factories, political resolutions were moved, demanding the introduction of democracy. Before long the demand for introduction of "free trade," which had been one of the main slogans at the beginning of the Petrograd movement, had dropped to second position.

The intransigent, pitiless and cynical authorities, unable to put right the economic life of the country, called for the political rebuff of the working mass.

Worker organizations demanded a fundamental change of power, some by way of freely elected soviets, and others by immediate convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

"The matter here is not one of separate hitches and breakdowns, but of a large and general flaw in our state mechanism, which won't be set right with darning and patches, but must be truly fixed," says a resolution of the Petrograd Committee of Social-Democrat Mensheviks.

The Socialist Revolutionaries and Social-Democrat Mensheviks suffered harsh persecution.

On February 22nd, meetings occurred in all the factories. On the 24th, the Trubochny, Laferme, Patronny and Baltic Factories went on strike. On February 25th, the Bolsheviks formed a Defense Committee in Petrograd, under the presidency of Zinoviev. Its purpose was the struggle with the new movement.

Before long, worker ferment had developed into open disorder. Part of the Petrograd garrison declared that it would not suppress the workers, and was disarmed. In the session of the Petrograd Soviet of February 26th, Lashevich, a prominent Communist and member of the Defense Committee and the Revolutionary War Council of the Soviet Republic, gave a report on the situation. He declared that the Trubochny Factory on Vasili Island had stepped forward as the vanguard of open action against Soviet power, and that the workers of the factory had passed a resolution pointedly opposed to Soviet power. In accordance with the decree of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, the factory was closed.

On the morning of February 24th, when a reregistration of the workers was undertaken at the Trubochny Factory, approximately 200-300 workers set off for the Laferme Factory, and from

there for the Kabelny and Baltic Factories, to take the workers out on strike. A crowd of 2000-2500 workers gathered on Vasili Island. Officer cadets were sent, and clashes occurred between the troops and the unarmed crowd. Worker meetings were dispersed by troop units.

On February 25th, the ferment spread through the entire city. Workers from Vasili Island set out for the Admiralty workshops and Galernaia Gavan, and took workers from the factories. Crowds of workers gathered everywhere, and were dispersed by troops. The atmosphere was tense, and it was possible to expect momentous actions. A significant portion of the garrison was caught up in the ferment.

At the same meeting of the Petrograd Soviet, Kuzmin, Commissar of the Baltic Fleet, reported on worrisome signs in the mood of the warship crews.

The conduct of authority pushed the workers to ever more openly political actions. "Fundamental change of the entire policy of authority is necessary, and first of all, the workers and peasants must have freedom. They don't want to live by petty Bolshevik edicts; they want to decide their own fate. Comrades, support revolutionary order. Demand persistently, and in an organized fashion: Freedom for all arrested socialists and non-party workers; the repeal of martial law; freedom of speech, press and assembly for all laborers; free elections to factory committees, trade unions and soviets. Call meetings, move resolutions, send delegates to the authorities, and achieve the realization of your demands," reads a workers' proclamation from February 27th.

The Bolsheviks answered these resolutions and proclamations with arrests, and by crushing worker organizations.

On the 28th, a proclamation of the working socialists of the Nevsky region was posted. It finishes with the words, "We know who is afraid of the Constituent Assembly. It is those who will not be able to steal, but instead will be brought to answer before the people's representatives for fraud, theft and all criminality. Down with the hated Communists! Down with Soviet power! Long live the All-National Constituent Assembly."

At that time, Petrograd was already flooded with select Communist units, brought in from the provinces and fronts. The workers' movement in Petrograd was suppressed with utmost cruelty, and before long, had been crushed.

# BEGINNING OF THE MOVEMENT IN PETROGRAD

Kuzmin, reporting to the Petrograd Soviet about the unsettled mood of the sailors, was not mistaken. The Petrograd events, and the suppression of the workers by cadets, made a huge impression on the revolutionary-minded sailors. They, like the Petrograd workers, understood very well that the question was not of free trade or other independent changes in the Soviet mechanism, but of the Communists, and the uncontrolled, irresponsible dictatorship of the Communist Party.

Many, having themselves been in the villages, learned there how cruelly Bolshevik power treats the peasants, how inimical it is to the countryside. In their own homes, their native villages, the sailors saw that the Bolsheviks take by force the peasants' last grain and cattle, and pitilessly destroy all who do not unquestioningly obey. They destroy with the aid of executions, arrests, secret police... By their own experience and that of their relatives, the Kronstadt sailors were convinced that the Bolsheviks, who in word call themselves the "peasant power," in deed show themselves to be the most malicious enemies of the peasants; they are enemies of the peasants, and of the workers.

The movement of sympathy and support for the Petrograd workers began among the sailors of the battleships *Petropavlovsk* and *Sevastopol*, docked in Kronstadt. In 1917, these two ships, together with the *Respublika*, were the primary hotbeds of Bolshevism. This movement quickly captured the entire fleet, and the crews of the warships began to move resolutions of political character. In these, however, they did not oppose the Soviets, but called for their reform, insisting primarily on the absolute necessity of free voting in elections. Before long, the movement had spread from the ships' crews to the army units in Kronstadt.

On February 28th, on the *Petropavlovsk*, joined by the *Sevastopol*, a general resolution was passed. The main demand of this resolution was new elections to the Soviets. "If the Soviets would have been elected anew," said one of the leaders of the movement, a common sailor [Petrichenko in "Zritel," No 188, p. 2], "on the basis of the Constitution (Soviet), that is to say by secret ballot, then, we thought, the Communists would not have gone through, and the achievements of the October Revolution would triumph..." The sailors' movement was thus completely peaceful in character, and did not in any way express itself violently.

On the first of March, Kalinin, President of the All-Russian Executive Committee and Kuzmin, Commissar of the Baltic Fleet arrived in Kronstadt. Kalinin was met with military honors, music and banners. After this, a previously scheduled meeting took place on Anchor Square. An announcement of this meeting had been published in the official newspaper of the Kronstadt Soviet. About 16 thousand sailors, soldiers and residents of the town gathered at the meeting. It proceeded with Vasiliev, a Communist and President of the Kronstadt *Ispolkom* [Executive Committee], presiding. With the report of the crew representatives sent to Petrograd for clarification of the situation there, the resolution passed by the *Petropavlovsk* on the 28th of February was

read. Also, Kalinin and Kuzmin made speeches against the resolution. Their speeches did not meet with success.

The assembly was officially the General Meeting of the 1st and 2nd Battleship Brigades. After the speeches by Kuzmin and Kalinin, the *Petropavlovsk* resolution was moved to a vote by the sailor Petrichenko, and passed unanimously by the entire huge assembly. "The resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority of the Kronstadt garrison. The resolution was read at a general town meeting March 1st in the presence of about 16,000 citizens and passed unanimously. Vasiliev, President of the Kronstadt *Ispolkom* and Comrade Kalinin vote against the resolution." Thus did Kuzmin, Commissar of the Fleet note the results of the voting in his journal.

The text of this historic document is as follows:

## **RESOLUTION OF THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE CREWS OF THE 1ST AND 2ND BATTLESHIP BRIGADES, occurring March 1st, 1921**

Having heard the report of the crew representatives, sent to Petrograd by the General Meeting of ships' crews for clarification of 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, to immediately hold new elections to the Soviets by secret ballot, with freedom of pre-election agitation for all workers and peasants.
2. Freedom of speech and press for workers and peasants, anarchists and left socialist parties.
3. Freedom of assembly of both trade unions and peasant associations.
4. To convene not later than March 10th, 1921 a non-party Conference of workers, soldiers and sailors of the city of Petrograd, of Kronstadt, and of Petrograd province.
5. To free all political prisoners of socialist parties, and also all workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors imprisoned in connection with worker and peasant movements.
6. To elect a Commission for the review of the cases of those held in prisons and concentration camps.
7. To abolish all *Politotdels* [Political Departments], since no single party should be able to have such privileges for the propaganda of its ideas and receive from the state the means for these ends. In their place must be established locally elected cultural-educational commissions, for which the state must provide resources.
8. To immediately remove all anti-smuggling roadblock detachments.
9. To equalize the rations of all laborers, with the exception of those in work injurious to health.

10. To abolish the Communist fighting detachments in all military units, and also the various guards kept in factories and plants by the Communists, and if such guards or detachments are necessary, they can be chosen in military units from the companies, and in factories and plants by the discretion of the workers.
11. To give the peasants full control over their own land, to do as they wish, and also to keep cattle, which must be maintained and managed by their own strength, that is, without using hired labor.
12. We appeal to all military units, and also to the comrade cadets to endorse our resolution.
13. We demand that all resolutions be widely publicized in the press.
14. To appoint a travelling bureau for control.
15. To allow free handicraft manufacture by personal labor.

The resolution was passed by the brigade assembly unanimously with two abstentions.

Petrichenko, President of the Brigade Meeting

Perepelkin, Secretary

With passage of the resolution by the General Meeting, Kalinin, President of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, departed for Petrograd without anyone's interference.

Together with this, it was decided at the meeting to send deputies to Petrograd. The Kronstadt representatives, 30 in number, were to go to the capital to explain to the army units and factory workers what the people of Kronstadt wanted. They were also to call for the dispatch of non-party delegates from Petrograd, to be acquainted at the source with the mood and demands of the sailors and garrison. The delegation set off, but was arrested in Petrograd, and its further fate was unknown to Kronstadt.

Since the period of authority of the Kronstadt Soviet had expired, it was resolved at the meeting to call a Conference of Delegates for March 2nd, at which to discuss procedures for the new election to the Kronstadt Soviet. The Conference was to consist of representatives from ships, units, organizations, workshops and trade unions.

# FORMATION OF THE KRONSTADT PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE

On March 2nd, at the House of Education in Kronstadt (The former Engineering School), delegates gathered from all listed organizations. Elections for the Conference took place on the basis of an announcement in the official newspaper. Moreover, in accordance with established custom, among those speaking on the tasks and goals of the Conference were... Communists, elected with the others to the body of delegates. They were, however, in the minority in the Conference, the majority consisting of non-party delegates.

The assembly was opened by the sailor Petrichenko. Then, elections to the Presidium of the Conference took place, by way of open voting.

One member of this Presidium recounted, "The Conference consisted exclusively of sailors, soldiers, workers and employees of Soviet organizations. No kind of general, colonel or any kind of officer was even thought of. The 'Soviet' character of the meeting sprung to the eye..."

The first orators at the assembly were, once again, Vasiliev, President of the Kronstadt *Ispolkom*, and Kuzmin, Commissar of *Baltflot* [The Baltic Fleet]. The day's main topic was the question of new elections to the Kronstadt Soviet on fairer foundations. This was all the more important as the authority of the old Soviet, composed almost entirely of Communists, had already expired. The speeches by Kuzmin and Vasiliev not only did not pacify the Conference, but on the contrary, poured oil on the fire.

Kuzmin assured the delegates that all in Petrograd was calm, tried to frighten them with danger from Poland, spoke about dual power, and so forth and so on. At the end of his speech he declared that the Communists would not withdraw from power voluntarily, and would fight to their last forces.

Vasiliev's speech was in the exact same spirit and tone.

These statements showed the Conference that Kuzmin and Vasiliev could not be trusted, and that it was imperative to restrain them, having first removed them from the assembly. This was all the more urgent as the order to take weaponry away from the Communists had still not been given, the soldiers were frightened by the commissars, and the latter still had telephones at their disposal.

Kuzmin and Vasiliev were removed from the assembly. But all the other Communist participants were allowed to remain, and to continue in the work of the Conference. They were recognized as the same empowered representatives of their units and organizations as the other delegates.

Following this, by proposal of Petrichenko, the resolution adopted at the previous day's meeting was read, and was also adopted by the Conference with an overwhelming majority of votes.



After this, the Conference had intended, on the basis of the resolution, to enter into substantive work. This was primarily intended to be the development of conditions for correct and free elections to the Soviet, for even the Communists themselves pointed out that the authority of the Kronstadt Soviet had ended.

But at that time, information of a disturbing character was received. It was reported that a substantial number of Communists, with small arms and machine guns, were supposedly occupying buildings and moving toward the location of the Conference. In fact, by the testimony of one of the authoritative leaders of the Kronstadt Movement, at that very time the cadets of the Higher Political School were leaving Kronstadt and, with Dulkis the *chekist* in command, heading for Krasnaya Gorka.

Because of the rumors, a very nervous atmosphere arose, and the Conference, remembering the threats of Kalinin, Kuzmin and Vasiliev, decided to form a Provisional Revolution Committee. In view "of the lack of time to define the structure of the Committee, it was decided that the Presidium and President of the Conference would take on themselves the duties of the Revolutionary Committee and its President."

This decision was passed unanimously, and the Presidium, with Petrichenko as head, became the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, which was also assigned to attend to arranging elections to the Soviet. The Committee selected as its provisional place of residence the battleship *Petropavlovsk*, on which were also housed Kuzmin and Vasiliev, who had been restrained.

It is necessary to note that just after the meeting on the first of March, the Kronstadt Communists began preparing for military action and actively arming themselves, demanding that the artillery magazine issue rifles, cartridges and machine guns to the Communist cells. These demands, signed by Novikov, Commissar of the Fortress, were fulfilled unquestioningly. Therefore, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee's caution was fully understandable.

The truth is, of two thousand Communists listed in Kronstadt, "the majority were," by the words of one of the members of the Prov. Rev. Com. [Petrichenko in "Zritel," No 188, p. 2], "'paper Communists,' who had joined the party for advantage."

"When the first events occurred," said the same member of the Rev. Com., "the main mass forsook the Communist ringleaders and joined us. The ringleaders themselves, with a small quantity of cadets, couldn't hope for the possibility of gaining the upper hand against us. Therefore, they abandoned the thought of armed struggle, and crossed to the forts. They moved from one fort to another, but didn't meet with any sympathy. The cadets who were in Kronstadt crossed over together with the Communists, first to the forts, and then to Krasnaya Gorka. Some of the Communist ringleaders simply fled, and along with them the Commander of the Kronstadt Fortress."

# KRONSTADT TAKES MEASURES OF SELF DEFENSE

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.

In the fortress itself, power passed into the hands of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee without a single shot, by the unanimous decision and vote of the representatives of the sailors, soldiers, workers and Soviet employees.

And none the less, the Bolshevik authorities had already issued against Kronstadt a blatantly provocative order, signed by Lenin and Trotsky. This order of March 2nd calls the Kronstadt movement "a mutiny by the former general Kozlovsky." The order begins with the assertion that the mutiny was supposedly created by the hands of "French counter-intelligence." "On February 28th," says this shameless document, "a Black Hundred/SR [Socialist Revolutionary] resolution was passed (on the vessel *Petropavlovsk*)."

"On March 2nd," asserts this report by Lenin and Trotsky, amazing in its cynicism, "by morning, the group of the former general Kozlovsky (Commander of the Artillery) had already appeared openly on the scene. The former general Kozlovsky and three officers, whose names have not been determined, openly acted in the roles of mutineers."

"With this," said Lenin and Trotsky, "the meaning of events is fully explained. Behind an SR cover stands yet again a tsarist general. In view of all this, the Soviet of Labor and Defense declares: 1) the former general Kozlovsky and his associates to be outlawed; 2) the town of Petrograd and Petrograd Province to be in a state of siege; 3) all power in the Petrograd consolidated region to be placed with the Petrograd Defense Committee."

In its turn, the Defense Committee published an order throughout Petrograd Province, ending with the words, "in event of street gatherings, troops are ordered to act with armed force. Opposition is to be answered with execution on the spot."

Lenin and Trotsky were not greatly bothered by the fact that the former general Kozlovsky, like all the other generals, had been in service with the Bolsheviks. While he was with them, they didn't notice that he was a tsarist general. Kronstadt had to revolt for the Bolsheviks to discover a tsarist general in their very own "*spets*".

There were very few *spetsi* at all in Kronstadt, and by the words of Kozlovsky himself, no one listened to their opinions and they played no role. The Bolsheviks needed all these lies solely in order to discredit the Kronstadt movement in the eyes of workers, as being supposedly "counter-revolutionary." Later, after the fall of Kronstadt, a correspondent of a Russian socialist newspaper asked members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, "What role, in fact, did General Kozlovsky play?" Several people answered almost in one voice, "You saw him!" and all broke out laughing.

General Kozlovsky himself related the following about his role ["Zritel," No 195, p. 2]. "The Communists used my name in order to represent the uprising in Kronstadt in the light of a White

Guard conspiracy only because I was the single 'general' located in the fortress. Along with me, they made reference to my aide in the artillery defense of Kronstadt, the officer Burkser, and others of my aides, like Kostromitinov and Shirmanovsky, one of whom was a simple draftsman. They, by their own individual qualities, were unable to play any kind of role in the movement."

It is not superfluous to add to this, that when the Provisional Revolutionary Committee was formed, the Commander of the Fortress, a Bolshevik, fled. By the existing regulations, his duties were to be fulfilled by the Commander of the Artillery, that is, by General Kozlovsky. In view of the fact that he declined, considering that since the Revolutionary Committee was now in control the former regulations were no longer valid, the Committee, having considered the matter, named from among the body of officers Solovianov as Commander of the Fortress. Kozlovsky was assigned to direct only the technical work of the artillery, as a specialist.

This then was the role of Kozlovsky, whom the Bolsheviks, moving against Kronstadt with all the "*spetsi*" inherited by them from the tsarist structure, tried to represent as "leader of the mutiny." Particularly comical was the reference by Lenin and Trotsky to "three officers," whose names they couldn't even give...

Soon after this order declaring the Kronstadt rebels outlawed, threats began to rain down from Trotsky and the Defense Committee, "to shoot them like grouse," and so on and so forth.

Kronstadt was required to take measures for self defense. In the presence of threats by the Bolshevik authorities, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee instructed military specialists to come to the *Petropavlovsk* on March 3rd at 4 P.M., for discussion of measures necessary for defense of the fortress. At that conference it was decided that the Committee would move to the "House of Soviets," and the staff of the defense to the fortress headquarters. In the last several days there had been several other joint sessions of the Prov. Rev. Com. with military specialists, a Military Soviet of Defense was selected, and a plan established for the defense of the fortress.

To all recommendations by the military specialists to go on the offensive, open military action and use the convenient moment of initial Bolshevik confusion, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee [Petrichenko in "Zritel," No 187, p. 2] answered with decisive refusal. "Our uprising was founded on the basis that we didn't want to spill blood. Why draw blood, when even without that everyone will understand that our cause is correct. However the Bolsheviks attempt to deceive the people, all will now know that if Kronstadt has risen, it means it is for the people's causes, and it means it is against the Communists. All know that it cannot be otherwise, for under the Communists there are rights only for Communists, and not for the people."

Members of the Prov. Rev. Com. declared this later. This entire unusual "uprising" rested on the deep faith of the sailors that they were supported by all Russia, and first of all by Petrograd.

The movement blazed up spontaneously. Had it been the result of an earlier prepared plan, it would not of course have begun in the first days of March. At the cost to the people of Kronstadt of waiting a bit longer, Kronstadt, liberated from the surrounding ice, would have become an unapproachable fortress, possessing also a powerful fleet, a terrible threat to Petrograd. There was no uprising, as we are accustomed to understand that word. There was a spontaneously ignited movement of peaceful character, catching an entire town, garrison and fleet.

Kronstadt answered the Bolshevik ultimatum to, "give up the instigators," retract its demands and so on with refusal. Then the Bolsheviks declared the people of Kronstadt to be outlaws, and began to concentrate troops. Kronstadt was forced either to submit, or to defend itself. It chose the latter.

And just at this point began that which is called "the Kronstadt Uprising."

Trotsky and the Defense Committee actively pulled in, from all directions, the most trustworthy officer cadets and Communist regiments. The command of all forces destined to act against Kronstadt was given to Tukhachevsky, Commander of the 7th Army [and a former lieutenant in the tsarist army (Avrich, p. 149)]. All the "*spetsi*," all the famous figures of the tsarist structure, now serving the Bolsheviks, feverishly worked on the formation of a plan of siege and attack on Kronstadt.

The defenders of Kronstadt, slandered by their cynical adversary, had at their disposal the insignificant Kozlovsky, who played no role, and a few third-rank, unnoticed specialists.

## KRONSTADTERS AND BOLSHEVIKS

Meanwhile, authentic revolutionary enthusiasm ruled in besieged Kronstadt. At the same time that the Provisional Revolutionary Committee was formed, its organ *Izvestiia* began publication. Kronstadt lived a tense and exuberant life. Full order was established, and power was in the hands of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

On March 4th, at 6 P.M., there occurred a session of the Conference of Delegates from the military units of the garrison and from trade unions, for by-elections to the Prov. Rev. Com. 202 deputies were present at this assembly. The majority arrived straight from work.

Twenty candidates were nominated and the following ten elected: Vershinin, Perepelkin, Kupolov, Ososov, Valk, Romanenko, Pavlov, Boikov, Patrushev and Kilgast.

A report by Petrichenko on the work being carried out by the Prov. Rev. Com was met with stormy approval by the Conference.

"On the question of arming the workers, the Conference mandated the universal arming of the working masses," says *Izvestiia* of the Prov. Rev. Com.' "This was done to the loud approval of the workers themselves, and exclamations of 'Victory or Death.' The workers were assigned the internal guard of the town, as sailors and soldiers are bursting for active work in the combat units."

Next, it was decided to newly elect the administrations of all unions within three days, and also that of the Soviet of Unions. The latter was the leading organization for workers, and would be in constant contact with the Prov. Rev. Com.

All the forts came out in support of Kronstadt, with the exception of *Krasnoflotskii* (formerly Krasnaya Gorka), which had been captured by the *chekists* who fled there from Kronstadt on March 2nd.

As was shown above, the people of Kronstadt left almost all the Communists at liberty in the first days. The only ones restrained were those who attempted to flee Kronstadt or were captured by patrols, and also Kuzmin, Commissar of Baltflot, Vasiliev, President of the *Ispolkom*, Batis, head of the *Politotdel* of *Baltflot*, and several other persons.

Despite this complete nobility of conduct by the people of Kronstadt, the Petrograd Defense Committee arrested as hostages a mass of people in Petrograd, among whom very many were completely non-participant in the movement. And besides this, the Petrograd families of Kronstadters were arrested.

The Defense Committee brought this all to Kronstadt's attention by means of leaflets thrown from airplanes. "The Defense Committee," it says in these leaflets, "declares all those arrested to be hostages for those comrades restrained by the mutineers in Kronstadt, and in particular for N. N. Kuzmin, Commissar of *Baltflot*, for Comrade Vasiliev, President of the Kronstadt Soviet, and for other Communists." "If even one hair falls from the heads of the restrained comrades," declared the Bolshevik Defense Committee in Petrograd, "the named hostages will answer for this with their heads."

To this declaration, disgraceful in its cruelty, 'Izvestiia of the Prov. Rev. Com.' made the following elucidation. "This is the spite of the powerless. Jeering over innocent families will not add new laurels to the comrade Communists. In any case, not by this path will they hold the power which is being torn from their hands by the workers, sailors and soldiers of Kronstadt."

"Considering for various reasons why a person became a Communist," a prominent member of the Prov. Rev. Com. [Petrichenko in "Zritel," No 189, p. 1] later said, "in the great majority of cases we left them at their work. We even allowed them to organize their group of Communists. May they be organized for action, and may they learn how their comrades in confinement are fed and cared for."

"The truth is," he added, "it should be said that despite our attitude toward the Communists, they, remaining in Kronstadt, aided the *chekists*. We declared, and took as our slogan, the equal rights of all citizens, independent of their political beliefs. Be a person a Communist or of other beliefs, he must have the right to vote. And we fulfilled that."

"Under us, not one Communist was executed," the people of Kronstadt proudly declared.

# COMPOSITION OF THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE

In Kronstadt itself at this time, morale was rising ever higher. The basic demand, moving through all articles of the leading publication, through all resolutions passed by individual units and forts, remained exactly the same, "the establishment of genuine power of freely elected Soviets," and liberation from under the "Communist yoke." Every day, a great number of repentant letters from individual Communists and entire groups were printed in *'Izvestiia of the Prov. Rev. Com.'* with admissions of their errors and declarations of departure from the Communist Party.

Besides this, the besieged did not wish to believe that Bolshevik power could open military action against them. Numerous letters from rank and file Communists who were leaving the party, speak with horror of this possibility, difficult for them to conceive.

In these days, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee addressed radio appeals exclusively to the workers, soldiers and sailors of Russia. In these, it refuted the lies about Kronstadt which were spread by the Bolsheviks. It told its listeners, "All power in Kronstadt is exclusively in the hands of revolutionary sailors, soldiers and workers, and not of White Guards with some General Kozlovsky at head, as the slanderous broadcasts from Moscow would have you believe."

"Do not delay, comrades. Lend your support, and enter into firm contact with us. Demand that your non-party representatives be allowed through to Kronstadt. Only they will tell you the entire truth, and dispel the provocative rumors of bread from Finland and plots by the Entente. Long live the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry! Long live the power of freely elected Soviets!"

At the same time, *'Izvestiia of the Prov. Rev. Com.'* printed all the declarations, appeals and broadcasts by the Soviet authorities, full of lies and slander against the Kronstadt movement. *Izvestiia* printed these broadcasts, ultimatums and appeals as an example of how the Bolsheviks were deceiving not only soldiers and sailors, but also members of the Petrograd Soviet.

The Bolsheviks particularly insistently broadcast the lie that generals and Black Hundreds were leading the uprising. The people of Kronstadt placed against this the following "Appeal to Workers, Soldiers and Sailors."

"On March 2nd, we, the people of Kronstadt, threw off the damned Communist yoke and raised the red flag of the Third Revolution of laborers. Soldiers, seamen and workers, Revolutionary Kronstadt calls You. We know that they lead You into delusion and don't tell the truth about events here, where we are all ready to give our lives for the holy cause of worker and peasant liberation. They try to convince You that White generals and priests are with us. In order to put an end to this once and for all, we bring to Your attention that the Provisional Revolutionary Committee consists of the following fifteen members.

1. Petrichenko—a senior clerk on the battleship *Petropavlovsk*;

2. Yakovenko—a telephone operator at the Kronstadt Regional Communications Service;
3. Ososov—a machinist on the battleship *Sevastopol*;
4. Arkhipov—a head machinist;
5. Perepelkin—an electrician on the battleship *Sevastopol*;
6. Parushev—a senior electrician on the battleship *Petropavlosk*;
7. Kupolov—a senior doctor’s assistant;
8. Vershinin—a seaman/combatant on the battleship *Sevastopol*;
9. Tugin—an artisan in the Electro-Mechanical Factory;
10. Romanenko—a watchman in the repair docks;
11. Oreshin—Director of the Third Labor School;
12. Valk—an artisan in the Sawmill;
13. Pavlov—a worker in the Mine Workshops;
14. Boikov—Director of the Transport String at the Admin. of Construction of the Fortress;
15. Kilgast—an ocean navigator.

These are our generals: Brusilov, Kamenev and the rest, and it is the gendarmes Trotsky and Zinoviev who hide the truth from You. Comrades, look about and see what they have done to You, what they are doing to Your wives, brothers and children. Are You really going to suffer and perish under the yoke of the oppressors?”



## THE BOLSHEVIK ATTACK ON KRONSTADT

Thus, the people of Kronstadt did not desire the beginning of military action. They left the Communists at liberty. They decisively rejected any aid from the "non-left socialist parties." They chose a Provisional Revolutionary Committee for the organization of new elections to the Kronstadt Soviet of Workers, Sailors and Soldiers, the authority of the latter having already run out. They called for the dispatch of a delegation from Petrograd, chosen by workers, sailors and soldiers, that it might learn the true goals of the Kronstadt movement, and be convinced of the lies raised against the people of Kronstadt by the Bolshevik Defense Committee.

In answer to these demands, the Bolsheviks declared a blockade of Kronstadt, and concentrated a large quantity of troops in Petrograd, its outskirts, and also Oranienbaum, Krasnaya Gorka and other coastal locations. The Prov. Rev. Com. reports that on the March 7th, "at 6:45 P.M., the Communist batteries in Sestroretsk and Lisy Nos opened fire first on the Kronstadt forts. The forts accepted the challenge, and quickly forced the batteries to become silent. Following this, Krasnaya Gorka opened fire, receiving worthy answer from the battleship *Sevastopol*."

On this sinister day of the opening of military action, besieged Kronstadt and its leaders did not forget that the day of its first bombardment was, at the same time, the Day of Working Women! "Today is a worldwide holiday, the Day of Working Women," says besieged Kronstadt's broadcast to the working women of the world. "We, the people of Kronstadt, under the thunder of cannons, under the explosions of shells sent at us by the enemies of the laboring people, the Communists, send our fraternal greetings to you, the working women of the world."

"We send greetings from rebellious Red Kronstadt, from the Kingdom of Liberty. Let our enemies try to destroy us. We are strong; we are undefeatable."

"We wish you fortune, to all the sooner win freedom from all oppression and coercion."

"Long live the Free Revolutionary Working Woman."

"Long live the Worldwide Social Revolution..."

This call, greetings from bombarded Kronstadt, was completely characteristic for the rebels. No less characteristic is the following address by the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, printed in No 6 of *Izvestiia* of the Prov. Rev. Com. under the title, "May all the World Know!"

"And so, the first shot has rung out. Bloody Fieldmarshal Trotsky, standing to his waist in the fraternal blood of laborers, opened fire first on Revolutionary Kronstadt, risen against the Communist government for the establishment of true Soviet power. Without a single shot, without a drop of blood, we, soldiers, seamen and workers of Kronstadt, threw down the Communist dominion, and even spared their lives. They desire to once again, under threat of bombardment, tie us to their authority."

"Not wanting bloodshed, we proposed that non-party delegates be sent from the Petrograd proletariat, that they might learn that there is a struggle for power in Kronstadt. But the Communists hid this from the Petrograd workers, and opened fire. Such is the usual answer of the sham worker-peasant government to the demands of the laboring people."

"May all the world of workers know that we, protectors of Soviet power, stand guard over the victories of the Social Revolution. We will be victorious, or die under the ruins of Kronstadt, struggling for the bloody cause of the laboring people. The workers of all the world will judge. The blood of innocents is on the heads of the Communist beasts, who are drunk with power."

"Long live Soviet power!"

The lead article in *'Izvestiia of the Prov. Rev. Com.'* from March 8th makes the following analysis of this fateful "First Shot." "They began the bombardment of Kronstadt. Well, so be it; we're ready. We will measure our strengths."

"They rush to act, and yes, they are forced to hurry. The laborers of Russia, despite all the Communist lies, understand what a great endeavor of liberation from three years' slavery is being created in revolutionary Kronstadt. The butchers are unnerved. The victim of their shameless bestiality, Soviet Russia, is slipping from their torture chamber, and with her, dominion over the laboring people is slipping finally from their criminal hands."

"The Communist government will send an SOS. The weeklong existence of free Kronstadt is proof of their powerlessness. One moment more and the worthy answer of our glorious revolutionary ships and forts will sink the ship of the Soviet pirates. They are forced into battle with revolutionary Kronstadt, which has raised the banner 'Power to Soviets, and not Parties.'"

It is important to spend as much time as possible on the exposition of the psychology of the Kronstadt garrison and its elected leaders in those first moments, those first days of the war which had begun between the Bolshevik authorities and Kronstadt. *'Izvestiia of the Prov. Rev. Com.'* alots its columns almost entirely to the exposition of the goals for which Kronstadt struggled. The newspaper contains practically no information on the violent struggle already begun. On the day of the bombardment, there is practically no chronicle of it. All is dedicated to the burning theme, "We and They," that is "we" of Kronstadt, and "they" the Bolsheviks.

In those days it was as if Kronstadt was hurrying to show its true face, to clearly outline the people's movement which had risen there pure and unmixed. In its articles and appeals is felt the sailor's speech, sailor turns of phrase and comparisons.

And over all this feverish revolutionary atmosphere hung the great, all-forgiving spirit of the age old Russian liberation movement. Kronstadt was great spirited. It was proud that in it, executions did not occur, that there was no coercion, that it rested on the freely expressed will of the entire laboring populace. Under the thunder of the bombarding cannons, it sent greetings to laborers, and called the entire proletariat and peasantry to solidarity.

And Bolshevik authority attempted to portray these people as "servitors of Capital," "lackeys of the Entente," and so on and so forth!

And only then, when the Kronstadters were forced to argue against the completely unbelievable lies and slander of an enemy which had decided to wipe them from the face of the earth, did they speak sharply, not sparing fully weighted and juicy definitions of the hated Bolshevik authority.

In this moving argument of victim with torturer, Kronstadt tried fervently to expose its true wishes, its true, cherished aspirations.

## **”THE THIRD REVOLUTION”**

In those days, the people of Kronstadt defined their struggle with the Communists as a struggle for the Third Revolution.

The word has been found. Henceforward, it will enter into the consciousness of those masses, which until now still followed the Bolsheviks, believing that the October Revolution was the ”Second Revolution.”

”Here,” they declare in the article ’What We Are Fighting For,’ ”a great new revolutionary step has been taken. Here has been raised the banner of a rebellion for liberation from the three year violence and oppression of Communist dominion, which has eclipsed the three-hundred year yoke of monarchism. Here in Kronstadt has been laid the first stone of the Third Revolution, which is breaking the last fetters from the laboring masses, and opening a wide new path for socialist creativity. This new revolution stirs the laboring masses of both East and West. It is an example of the new socialist construction, opposed to bureaucratic Communist ’creativity.’ It convinces the laboring masses abroad, by the testimony of their own eyes, that everything created here until now by the will of workers and peasants was not socialism.”

The people of Kronstadt did not develop the programs of this new socialist ”construction,” but they wanted to lay its first cornerstone. They emancipated the people, and expressed their will. And they came to this emancipation by the path to which they were most accustomed after three years of Soviet power, by freely elected Soviets.

”The present Revolution gives the laborers the possibility to finally have their own freely chosen Soviets, working without any and all coercive party pressure, and to reform the bureaucratic trade unions into free societies of workers, peasants and the laboring intelligentsia. At long last the police stick of the Communist autocracy is broken.”

This then is the most immediate program, these are the goals, for which at 6 hours 45 minutes in the evening on March 5th, 1921, the Bolshevik authorities began the bombardment of Kronstadt...

# THE STORM OF KRONSTADT

Following the bombardment which had been opened on the March 7th from the batteries of Sestroretsk and Lisy Nos, there came an attempt by the Bolsheviks to storm the forts of the fortress. The attack came from both South and North. The Commander of the Northern Group, Kazansky, in conversation with a Bolshevik correspondent declared that, "the first attack by troops took place already on March 8th. The group consisted exclusively of cadets. Fort No 7 was taken in battle, but our related losses were so significant, and the group itself so small, that the adversary succeeded in driving us from the fort."

But in No 8 of *'Izvestiia* of the Prov. Rev. Com.,' these first horrifying Bolshevik attempts to throw Communists dressed in white shrouds (of a color protective on snow) across the ice to storm Kronstadt were described in the following manner. "We did not want to spill fraternal blood, and we did not fire a single shot until they forced us to do so. We were forced to defend the rightful cause of the laboring people, and to fire. We were forced to fire at our own brothers, sent to certain death by Communists who feast on the people's bill. And at that time, their ringleaders, Trotsky, Zinoviev and the rest, were sitting on soft chairs in the warm, lit rooms of tsarist palaces, discussing how the quicker and better to cover rebel Kronstadt in blood."

"To your misfortune a snowstorm arose, and an impenetrable night approached. None the less, taking nothing into consideration, the Communist butchers drove you across the ice. They drove you from behind, with detachments of machine gun armed Communists. Many of you perished that night, on the huge, icy expanse of the Gulf of Finland. At sunrise, when the snowstorm had quieted, only pathetic remnants reached us, hungry and exhausted, barely moving your feet, dressed in white shrouds. By early morning about a thousand of you had already been gathered, and by afternoon, a countless number. You paid dearly with your blood for this venture. And after your failure, Trotsky rolled off back to Petrograd, to once again drive new sufferers to the slaughter. Our worker-peasant blood is obtained for him cheaply enough...!"

## HOPES OF THE KRONSTADTERS

Trotsky continued to pull in ever new forces. Select units - cadets, *chekists* and alien divisions - were brought in from all directions.

The garrison of the fortress did not increase of course. In the fortress and forts, the entire garrison was 12-14 thousand people. About 10 thousand of these were sailors. This garrison was required to defend a huge front, and a mass of forts and batteries spread across the boundless ice field of the Gulf of Finland. The Kronstadt batteries were designed for battle against an enemy coming from the sea, and in no way for one from the Russian shores. By the calculations of the military specialists, to one Kronstadt combatant, there were about five *sazhen* of front... [1 *sazhen* is equal to 2.134 meters] From the general mass of the garrison, it was possible to detail no more than three thousand bayonets for performance of active operations.

Repeated attacks by the Communists, who brought in ever new troops, insufficiency of provisions, constant sleeplessness in the cold, and unrelieved guard duty all sapped the strength of the garrison. And none the less, the people of Kronstadt not only did not lose hope of victory, but believed in it. They believed in it because they believed in the aid of Petrograd and of all Russia. To them, it seemed impossible that Petrograd, for the defense of which they had risen in rebellion, would not support them, and that Russia would not respond to their call.

One of the members of the Prov. Rev. Com. [Petrichenko in "Zritel," No 187, p. 2] later said, "We did not act for ourselves. We acted for the people, for the laborers. When they say 'yes,' we also say yes, and when 'no,' then no. It was not we who said, 'down with the Communists,' but the laborers, and not only Kronstadt, but all Russia. Only in Russia do *chekists*, bought with gold, harrass the people, but of course, gold won't last for long. It isn't possible to take any more. I have been about Russia a lot. I've seen the people in towns and in villages. Laborers everywhere hate the Communists."

And was there not before their eyes the worker unrest in Petrograd? Did they not know from the Soviet press itself of peasant uprisings in Siberia? In Tambov and the central provinces? In the Ukraine? They believed that this movement would spread, that the Kronstadt Uprising would shine through all Russia with a bright flame, hearten the people's masses, push them onto the path of rebellion, organize the entire dissatisfied nation... And did they not have the hope of holding out at least until icebreak on the Gulf of Finland?

These considerations were also not unknown to the Soviet authorities. They, continuing to bring in ever new echelons of troops, understood that the battle occurred not only on the ice of the Gulf of Finland, on the tragic approaches to Kronstadt, but also in the streets and factories of Petrograd and Moscow. And, bombarding Kronstadt, throwing bombs from airplanes on the peaceful populace of the besieged town, the Bolsheviks attempted to defame and slander their great-spirited adversary. They attempted to undermine the faith of the people's masses in him, to frighten the masses with the Kronstadt movement. For Kronstadt's calls possessed a powerful strength...

"In Kronstadt there is neither Kolchak, nor Denikin, nor Yudenich. In Kronstadt are laboring folk," says the 'Appeal to Comrade Workers and Peasants' in No 9 of 'Izvestiia of the Prov. Rev. Com.' And, refuting the lies and slanders of the Bolsheviks, the appeal ends with the call, "Comrades, the people of Kronstadt have raised the banner of rebellion, and are certain that tens of millions of workers and peasants will answer their call. It cannot be that the dawn which has appeared here has not become clear for all Russia. It cannot be that the Kronstadt explosion has not made all Russia, and first of all Petrograd, shake and arise. Our enemies have filled the prisons with workers, but there are still many daring and honest ones at liberty. Arise comrades, to battle with the Communist autocracy..."

And there came response to this Kronstadt explosion. The people of Kronstadt learned of it first of all from confused Bolshevik broadcasts, in which reports of uprisings in all parts of Russia were incidentally reported among the lies and slander. They knew of it from deserted army units, escaping to Kronstadt, and from the stories of Communist prisoners, saved from death on the ice of the Gulf of Finland...

Every extra hour of Kronstadt's existence, every shot from its batteries, raised ever new enemies against the Bolsheviks. The Communists remained alone. Trotsky had to form units from cadets, *chekists*, and anti-smuggling detachments, and to bring in Chinese and Bashkir units.

That is why the Bolsheviks authorities so doggedly, so furiously, drove ever new battalions across the Gulf ice to certain death. They needed, come what may, to destroy Kronstadt as quickly as possible. Otherwise, Kronstadt would have blown them apart. That is why all means were acceptable to the Soviet authorities. That is why it spared no means, no violent acts, to defame and slander Kronstadt.

## LIES AND SLANDER OF THE BOLSHEVIKS

It has already been shown above how the Bolsheviks used the name of the harmless Kozlovsky, who had served them faithfully and truly for three years. It has been shown how, having formed their staff nine-tenths of generals and colonels from the tsarist structure, and with their aid bombarded a revolutionary town, they spread shameless lies about "tsarist generals" supposedly located in Kronstadt.

The truth is that, in this matter, the Bolsheviks were aided not a little by the Russian emigrant and foreign press, especially the reactionary press. *Krasnaia Gazeta*, *Izvestiia*, *Pravda*, *Kommuna* and so on greedily reprinted all possible rubbish from reactionary Russian and foreign newspapers. 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. It was used to portray the people of Kronstadt, cut off from the entire world by ice, as marionettes, by means of whom, after the inevitable "Mensheviks and SR's," "sneak in supposed *Kadets* [Constitutional Democrats], then Monarchists and, finally, the greedy and clutching Entente..."

In their lies, the Bolsheviks came even to the foolish assertion that the pretender to the throne, the former Great Prince Dmitri Pavlovich, was supposedly coming to Kronstadt!

The people of Kronstadt were simultaneously indignant with and amused by these absurd, and for them evident, lies. For the Red Army, and the workers of Russia, however, this grandiosely performed falsehood, this fraud, could not fail to have a corrupting influence, could not fail but to undermine trust in Kronstadt.

'*Izvestiia* of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee,' was a thousand times correct in its description of Kronstadt's attitude toward the undesired joy of Russian reactionaries at the movement which had burst out there, given in the article "'Sirs' or 'Comrades.'" "You, comrades, now celebrate a great and bloodless victory over the Communist dictatorship, and your enemies celebrate with you. But your motives for joy and theirs are completely opposed. You are inspired with a burning desire to build true Soviet power, and by the noble hope of granting the worker freedom of labor and the peasant the right to control his own land and the produce of his work. They are driven by the hope of raising anew the tsarist whip, and the privilege of generals. Your interests are not the same, and your path is not theirs!"

And the article finishes with the following call. "Be vigilant. Do not allow wolves in sheep's clothing close to the helmsman's bridge..."

## KRONSTADT'S SLOGANS

Kronstadt's slogans were straightforward. They led to the realization of democracy. The truth is, that the people of Kronstadt pictured the achievement of this democratic ideal by degrees, by way of new elections to the soviets, and Russia's liberation from the Communist yoke in that image. And when, after the fall of Kronstadt, a staff member of a socialist newspaper ["Zritel," No 196, p. 2] asked members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee why the Constituent Assembly was not among Kronstadt's slogans, "Ha ha ha," answered almost all of those present. "It's like this; if there are elections to the *Uchredilka* [slang, Constituent Assembly], then that naturally means there will be 'lists.' It can't be otherwise."

"And once you have lists, that means 'Communists.'"

"If there are lists, then the Communists will certainly push their own through."

"But of course you can have secret balloting," I noted.

"Ha ha ha..." my interviewees again broke out laughing.

"In three and a half years we didn't see a white bread bun or a secret ballot. They just promised us all that. In fact, they didn't give a thing."

"We want to throw the Communists out. We want the Soviets to be elected by secret ballot in every region. The people on the spot know themselves who should be elected and who shouldn't. With Soviets in the localities it's possible to avoid those machinations which the Bolsheviks currently perform on most elections."

For three years, by the use of "lists," the Bolsheviks succeeded in thus perverting the very idea of free elections. Such public voting under threat of bayonets, for lists of official, ruling Communist party candidates, unknown even to the voters, brought the workers naturally to an idea. They were convinced that new elections to the Soviets, held universally, beginning with the villages, and the winning of the Soviets away from the Communists, was the first expedient step up in the struggle for complete democracy. They feared that otherwise, with Communist domination in the Soviets, even the Constituent Assembly, elected by Communist methods, would be not a constituent assembly, but a new variety of commissarocracy...

The main slogan was the demand for "freely elected Soviets." However, the best of all Kronstadt's slogans may be judged by those printed in the banner headings of *Izvestiia* of the Prov. Rev. Com. during those combative days. "Trotsky's First Shot is a Communist SOS," is printed in huge letters across the entire width of the front page of *Izvestiia* No 6, and on the opposite side, "Soviet Power Will Free the Laboring Peasantry From the Communist Yoke."

"A Bomb Thrown at Kronstadt is a Signal For Uprising in the Communist Camp," and "The Communist Throne Has Begun to Tremble," read the banner headlines in No 8 of *Izvestiia*.

"All Power to Soviets, and Not Parties," "Down With Counterrevolution of the Left and Right," and "Long Live Red Kronstadt and the Power of Free Soviets;" these are typical calls from No 9 of *Izvestiia*.



# THE BLOODY STRUGGLE

At that time, great-spirited, heroic Kronstadt was set afire by the enthusiasm of the struggle for all Russia, for the entire laboring people. Under the thunder of a cannonade, it sent its appeals and broadcasts to the workers of all the world, and to socialist parties. It rejoiced with the anniversary of the Great Revolution. It was joined in a single comradely family, creating a great miracle of the rebirth of the human spirit. And at the same time, Trotsky's troops, driven forward by *chekist* machine guns, came ever onward. They came dressed in white shrouds to attack this town which was demanding true Soviet power.

"Over the course of the entire night of the March 10th," reads the Summary of Operations, "the Communist artillery bombarded the fortress and forts with intensive fire from the southern and northern shores, meeting from our side an energetic repulse. Around 4 A.M., from the southern shore, Communist infantry made the first attack, but was repulsed. Communist attempts to attack continued until 8 A.M., but all were repulsed by the artillery and small arms fire of our batteries and garrison units."

These short lines raise to the eyes a terrible picture of night and early morning attacks, by units driven by the Communists to slaughter on the ice of the Gulf of Finland.

The day of March 11th passed quietly. "Thick fog interfered with firing," says the summary for the 11th. All the same, in exchanges of artillery fire that day, Kronstadt retained superiority. On that day, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee published a touching order, "to all comrade sailors, soldiers and workers, participating in the repulse of Communist attacks from March 8th through 12th."

This order reads, "Show the world of laborers, dear warriors, that however difficult may the great of struggle for freely elected Soviets become, Kronstadt has always stood, and stands now, a vigilant watch on guard of the laborers' interests."

Saturday the March 12th was the day of celebration of the Great Revolution of 1917. '*Izvestiia* of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee,' went out under the banner headline: "Today is the Anniversary of the Overthrow of Autocracy, and the Eve of the Fall of Commissarocracy." And in the wonderful article, "Stages of Revolution," the people of Kronstadt advanced their favorite idea, the Third Revolution.

Having presented a clear picture of the corruption of the Soviet system, *Izvestiia* finished thus. "It had become stifling. Soviet Russia had turned into all-Russian *katorga* [hard labor prison regime]. Worker unrest and peasant uprisings testified that patience had come to an end. A toilers' uprising approached. The time to throw down the commissarocracy has arrived. Kronstadt, vigilant guard of the Social Revolution, has not overslept. It was in the first ranks of February and October. It first raised the flag of rebellion for the Third Revolution of Laborers."

The "Third Revolution of Laborers," that is Kronstadt's slogan. And these people, whom the Bolsheviks accused at that time of having dealings with the reaction and the Entente, said, "autocracy fell. The *Uchredilka* has passed into the land of legend. Commissarocracy too will collapse. The time has come for true power of laborers, for Soviet power..."

The people of Kronstadt formed a clear concept for themselves of the character of their uprising. They were not confused by the fact that in Petrograd itself the workers were demanding a Constituent Assembly, that around Moscow and Peter [colloquial, Petrograd] rose the glow of uprisings carrying the slogan of a new Constituent Assembly, or that in far Siberia, that slogan had already become life...

In their bricked-up fortress, surrounded by ice, they, in their own way, defended the right of the people to self-government and self-regulation. They wished to advance, and were already advancing, toward that people's self government by different paths. Their goal, however, was one and the same, the emancipation of the people. Because of this, independent of how they clothed the demand for, "power of the people," the entire Kronstadt movement possessed a great attractive force. It was, moreover, selflessly pure... It is shown as such in the pages of *'Izvestiia of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee'*...

In the night from the 12th to the 13th, the Communists attacked from the South. Again the night attacks, again the white overalls, and again was repulsed the wild storm of fresh units, ever newly arrived from provincial officer academies, from Communist regiments, from selected alien detachments.

On the 14th, Kronstadt was, as before, cheerful, strong and self-assured. And this despite the terrible, sleepless nights, when it was necessary to repulse the attacks of enemy forces, moving like specters in white shrouds over the snowbound ice surrounding the fortress and forts.

Guard duty on the ice. Rounds, patrols, pickets on the ice. In storm and blizzard, and horrible cold. What a terrifying picture...

And there on the shore, "Bloody Fieldmarshal" Trotsky and Commander of the Army Tukhachevsky gathered ever new units. They exchanged the unreliable red army soldiers for the devoted cadet *oprichnina*, for specially selected detachments, for Bashkir and alien regiments. There on the shore were woven thick nets of lies and deceptions, intended to separate Kronstadt from the entire world. In important centers abroad, Riga, London, Rome and Warsaw, Soviet agents stooped to any abasement, any concession, in order to gain the aid of the Entente governments. And they wished to use this aid, from the very Entente with which the Bolshevik authorities accused Kronstadt of having relations, to blockade a free town, and prevent food from being brought it...

Kronstadt, a handful of heroes, a town lost in ice in the middle of the sea, was none the less strong and cheerful. It believed in its own rightfulness, and in the inescapability of a gigantic, all-Russian explosion. "We are the shock troops of the Revolution," it said.

And it felt a wave of energy and cheerfulness go out from itself in all directions, like a gigantic electric discharge.

# THE END OF KRONSTADT

Finally, Trotsky had dug up a huge mass of troops. Unreliable units had been removed, exchanged for faithful ones. Mutinies among the soldiers (as occurred in Oranienbaum) had been suppressed. The people of Kronstadt, cheerful of spirit, had been brought to the final degree of physical exhaustion. Scattered among the forts and batteries, they had to defend giant Kronstadt, spread over the boundless ice besetting it from all sides, across which the terrible enemy might attack from South, North and East. And their weaponry was designed for defense only against... the West. There was not even an icebreaker to open the ice around the island...

Here it is imperative to point to yet one more legend dreamed up by the Bolsheviks. The Communist press frightened the populace of Petrograd, saying that Kronstadt, a peaceful and great-spirited town, had supposedly decided to bombard... the former capital.

Having opened fire first, from all sides, on the forts and on Kronstadt, the Bolsheviks didn't hesitate to send airplanes to bombard the besieged town. And at the same time, lied and slandered against it.

As was already pointed out above, the very defense system of the fortress was disadvantageous for the people of Kronstadt and advantageous for the Bolsheviks. In fact, Kronstadt's natural purpose was to be defender of Petrograd against foreign enemies attacking from the sea. Moreover, in view of the possibility of the fortress falling into the hands of an external enemy, the shore batteries and forts of Krasnaya Gorka were calculated for battle, in such event, with Kronstadt. Its rear was intentionally, with foresight to such a possibility, unfortified.

Who could ever have thought that against worker-sailor Kronstadt would advance not hostile squadrons from the West, but troops mustered by the supposed Russian Worker-Peasant Power? On the strength of these considerations alone, the rumors spread by the Bolsheviks were blatant lies. And to the question, "Why did you not succeed in forcing Krasnaya Gorka to silence?" the *'spets'* Commander of the Kronstadt Artillery Defense [Kozlovsky in "Zritel," No 195, p. 2] answered, "Because we were closer to them, and they farther from us. They were on a hill, and we at the bottom. We had to shoot 'at a mountain,' and this was meaningful over long distance. You know of course that even their rounds only flew to Kosa in Kronstadt; that means we hadn't the faintest chance of hitting them. Besides, we could only shoot in clear weather, and there was always fog. They also had firing records, left from the battle during Yudenich's attack. We had absolutely nothing."

Such were the results of the battle with Krasnaya Gorka, placed ahead and to the Southwest, but all the same located under the fire of the Kronstadt forts. The distance between Petrograd and Kronstadt was one and a half times greater than between Krasnaya Gorka and Kronstadt. It is enough to glance at a map of the Gulf of Finland to understand the complete impossibility of Kronstadt firing on Petrograd. And never the less, the Bolsheviks lied, and with that lie frightened the populace of Petrograd.

The attack on Kronstadt from the rear was carried out by the Bolsheviks with stern conformation to a prepared plan. "The battle plan," said Dybenko, former Bolshevik Commissar for Naval

Affairs, and appointed dictator of Kronstadt, in an interview with representatives of the Soviet press, "was worked out down to the finest details, according to the orders of Tukhachevsky, Commander of the Army, and in the field staff of the Southern Group. The brigade commanders took part in development of the plan, and then all unit leaders, starting with regimental commanders, were acquainted with it in great detail."

In a word, this entire tsarist general staff was not on the side of the Kronstadt sailors. There was the whole lot of them, helping the Dybenkos to destroy their former comrade sailors. "On the 16th began the artillery preparation for the battle," said another butcher of Kronstadt, General Kazansky. "Firing was carried on by our side with an account, and as was later shown, the hit percentage was good. With the fall of night, we made our approach to the numbered forts. White overalls, which made us almost invisible on the mantle of snow, and the courage of the cadets, allowed us to move in columns."

From all sides, North, South, and East, cadet detachments advanced on small handfuls of Kronstadters, spread in the dark of the winter night among separate forts lost in the ice.

By morning a number of forts were taken. Through Kronstadt's weak point, the Petrograd Gates, cadets burst into the town. Local Communists, shown mercy by the people of Kronstadt, now betrayed them, arming and acting from the rear. Kuzmin and Vasiliev, released by the *chekists* who had burst into Kronstadt, took part in the "liquidation" of the "mutiny." Still, the rebels' desperate resistance, and the merciless massacre, continued until late in the night of the 18th.

The enemy exceeded the Kronstadters many many times in strength. Those who could, left for Finland, and over the revolutionary fortress again rose the flag of oppression. The merciless Dybenko, appointed commandant of the town which had yesterday still been free, set out for reprisal. The town where in fifteen days of uprising not one drop of human blood had spilled became a center of shootings, lynchings, and murders.

And in Petrograd, for the freedom of which Kronstadt had risen, a "court" hastily met. With its own unjust trial, selecting 13 heroes from among those being shot, it "judged" those who had shown mercy on hundreds and hundreds of Communists.

And having taken into account all the "circumstances" and "faults," it resolved:

"Denier, 24 y., Aide to the Commander of the battleship *Sevastopol*, former midshipman, of the former hereditary nobility of Petrograd Prov.; Mazurov, 28 years, artilleryman of the same ship, former lieutenant, of the hereditary nobility of Petrograd Prov.; Bekman, 23 years, navigator, former midshipman, of the hereditary nobility of Perm Prov.; Levitsky, 35 years, tower commander, former senior captain, of the hereditary nobility; Sofronov, 27 y., platoon commander, former midshipman, of the hereditary nobility of Tver Prov.; Timonov, 37 y., assistant manager, former priest, from the bourgeoisie of Seva District, Orel Prov.; seamen and members of the ship committee: Sugankov, 25 years, from the peasantry of Gomel Prov., Chernigov District, Stavinsk Region, village Staraja Kamenka; Stepanov, 33 years, from the peasantry of Novgorod Prov., Starorussky District, Vysotsk Region, village Pestovo; Efremov, 29 years, from the peasantry of Petrograd Prov., Iamburg District, Moskovskaia Sloboda; Steshin, 30 years, from the peasantry of Bryansk Prov., Karbachev District, Dragunsk Region, Collective Farm *Bratstvo*; and Chernousov, 23 years, Commander of the Military Plant, of the peasantry of Minsk Prov., Igumensk District, Ustdensk Region, village Zabolotie, to execute."

"The sentence will be carried out without appeal; it is subject, in light of the current situation in Kronstadt of establishment of revolutionary order, to immediate completion."

The memory of these pure, great-spirited hero/martyrs remains, forever sacred to mournful, suffering humanity, struggling for freedom and a better future. Glory to them, and to Kronstadt, and to the unknown heroes, perished in the struggle...

# CONSEQUENCES OF THE KRONSTADT UPRISING, AND ITS MEANING

Kronstadt fell...

It fell before the arrival of support from the Petrograd workers, not having received active aid from boundless, agitated Russia, not having survived even until liberation from the ice of the Gulf of Finland.

The Bolsheviks breathed easier. Kronstadt's execution fell together with their new "victories" in Europe. Specifically, the Bolsheviks bombarded a town which demanded freely elected Soviets, calling its defenders "servitors of the Entente," and "compromisers with capitalism." And they themselves, in those very days, concluded agreements with the capitalists, the Entente, and the Polish imperialists.

The crash of the cannonade had still not died away, and the piles of bodies still not been removed from the ice of the Gulf, when the Soviet authorities, under the sound of the executions of the Kronstadt heroes, were already signing agreements composed by the dictate of the capitalist world.

In those tragic days, an English-Russian trade agreement was signed by the Bolsheviks, opening a broad, uncontrolled road into destroyed Russia for the most powerful capital, English. In those same days, the Treaty of Riga was signed by the Bolsheviks, by which they conceded to Poland 206,837 square kilometers (about 200,000 square *verstas* [1 *versta* is equal to 1.06 km.]) with a non-Polish population of twelve million souls, violating the rights and will of the populace.

In those same days, the Bolshevik authorities, together with the Turks, completed the destruction of the Caucasian republics, and gave the Turkish monarchy the most important regions and fortresses of *Zakavkazie*. So long as Kronstadt's guns thundered, so long as the capitalist and imperialist governments were uncertain of the victory of the Soviet authorities, they did not make the final decision on this robbery of Russia.

Kronstadt fell.

But the thunder of its guns, by Lenin's expression, forced the ruling Communist Party to "think again." The Kronstadt Uprising forced the Communists to renounce their own economic policy, that is, the very Communism for which they supposedly carried out the October Revolution, spilled seas of blood, and destroyed Russia.

For what then was Kronstadt executed?

For what? The list of unsatisfied demands clearly shows for what. For the demand for Democracy, for the demand for freely elected Soviets. The Communists stooped to the renunciation of Communism, but would not agree to allow discussion of the question of power, even discussion only by the peasants, workers, sailors and soldiers, as the people of Kronstadt demanded, and not by the entire nation. The Communists preferred to eliminate food requisitioning, to restore

trade, to make concessions to foreigners and to concede Russian land and Russian population to Poland, than to give, if even just to socialist parties, the right of free speech, press, assembly...

That is what Kronstadt was executed for...

Its uprising showed that Communism, and the victories of the October "Revolution," for which they had begun a terrible civil war, and which they so easily renounced, were not dear to the Bolsheviks. It showed, rather, that only power was dear to them, only power, power irregardless of the workers and peasants, power over the proletariat, power against the will of the entire people.

At the present moment, it is even impossible to define the great impact which Kronstadt has already had on the psychology of the people's masses. And the more the real truth about Kronstadt, hidden so thoroughly by the Bolsheviks, is discovered, the more terrible will be the consequences of this unusual "uprising" for them.

The Kronstadt Uprising showed that the Russian people was opposed to Bolshevism, but did so at the moment most advantageous for the Bolshevism. It appeared at the moment when the Intervention had ended, when western countries were concluding agreements with the Bolsheviks and when the reactionary forces had been broken. It showed that in the people, and only in the people, there is a huge life-force, and that it and it alone may, in the center, shake loose and overturn the Bolsheviks.

Thanks to the Kronstadt Uprising, the Western-European socialists and working masses began to think, and to think deeply. For them, the rebellion of Kronstadt was a thunderstrike. For the first time, they came to see clearly and distinctly that the Bolshevik authorities are hated in Russia by the people themselves, by the workers and peasants who are the support of the Revolution.

Earlier, when Denikins and Wrangels attacked the Bolsheviks, western socialists knew that their own imperialist bourgeois governments gave aid to these adventurers and reactionaries. But here Kronstadt arose, and workers and sailors arose. And those lies about Kronstadt which the Bolsheviks spread in Russia could have no meaning in the West. For the European socialist parties well knew and saw that it was the Bolsheviks, not Kronstadt, who colluded with Imperialism in those days. They saw that their governments, at that moment, were speaking not with the people of Kronstadt but with Krasin, Litvinov, Gukovsky and Ioffe. They saw that their governments gave aid not to Kronstadt, abandoned on the ice for certain death by the whole world, but to the Bolsheviks. They saw that the Bolsheviks were executing sailors and workers, and at the same time making every concession and every agreement with capitalism.

Kronstadt was an explosion, sending a powerful blow in every direction. It broke a huge breach in the Bolshevik structure. Kronstadt struck a blow to the very heart of Bolshevism. And however long and painful may be the death agony of Bolshevism, Kronstadt, the first completely independent attempt by workers, sailors and peasants to topple the Bolshevik structure and begin the Third Revolution, will remain a landmark, visible from afar, on a turning point of Russian history.

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Stepan Petrichenko  
The Truth About Kronstadt  
The Story of the Heroic Struggle of the People of Kronstadt Against the Communist Party  
Dictatorship  
1921

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mhuey/TOC/TOC.TheTruth.html>

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