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Anyone researching or studying a subject will quickly conclude that some authors are more reliable than others. However, even the best author makes mistakes and if these chime with the conventional wisdom on a subject then their groundbreaking work in one area can be used to justify repeating their mistakes in others.

Such is the fate of Paul Avrich's *The Russian Anarchists*, an account of the anarchist movement before, during and after the two Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. First published in 1967, its rightly positive reviews hid the awkward fact that it gets many things incomplete or wrong, most obviously the ideas of Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin.

It is an important book and, as such, its reprint by AK Press in 2005 was to be welcomed. However, it is problematic in many aspects, not least that its focus means that the Russian Revolutions appear as backdrops to far less important events such as debates between libertarians. True, these debates reflected important events and social movements but concentrating on (imperfect) reflections will inevitably mean

the significance of the source will be lost – most obviously, the factory committee movement and the struggle it represented over whether capitalism would be replaced by genuine socialism or, as was to be, *state* capitalism.

The account of Russian anarchists and their debates are placed in context by a short introduction to the ideas and lives of its two most famous exiles, Bakunin and Kropotkin. This is the first weakness of the book as these summaries are flawed – they reflect and so reinforce the conventional wisdom about anarchism rather than presenting the accurate account needed to provide a firm foundation for what follows. This means that readers will get their prejudices confirmed rather than challenged. Unsurprisingly, then, Pat Stack of the SWP utilised Avrich's work to write his awful post-Seattle article "Anarchy in the UK?" in *Socialist Review* while libertarian socialist Maurice Brinton proclaimed revolutionaries were right to be "allergic" to Kropotkin thanks to it.[1]

This is unsurprising as Avrich's account of Kropotkin repeats all the clichés associated with him: his "benign optimism"; how his "nostalgic yearning for a simpler but fuller life led him to idealise the autonomous social units of bygone years"; that he "looked backward" to an idealised Medieval Europe; that he envisioned a "spontaneous" and "speedy" revolution; thought "co-operation rather than conflict lay at the root of human progress"; and gave only "qualified support" to syndicalism.

All this is, at best, incomplete or, at worst, simply wrong – as becomes clear if you read Arvich closely enough. He suggests a fundamental difference between anarchism and syndicalism, proclaiming the latter "a curious blend of anarchism, Marxism and trade unionism" and inspired by Marx's "doctrine of class

[1] Brinton's review of *The Russian Anarchists* is reprinted in David Goodway (ed.) *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (AK Press, 2004).

peared. It is, regardless of flaws, a ground-breaking work but others need to produced to create the firm foundation upon which to build our understanding of what really happened in Russia, what went wrong, how do we learn its lessons and what this failure means for all schools of socialism.

struggle." Yet on the same page he (correctly) notes that "the followers of Proudhon and Bakunin in the First International were proposing the formation of workers' councils designed both as a weapon of class struggle against capitalists and as the structural basis of the future libertarian society". Asserting "nor [for Kropotkin] could the trade unions become the nuclei of the anarchist commonwealth" is hardly unconvincing *after* quoting him on the previous page on how unions were "natural organs for the direct struggle with capitalism and for the composition of the future order".

Worse, Avrich fails to mention inconvenient passages from the texts he quotes. Kropotkin's pamphlet which proclaimed unions the "natural organs for the direct struggle with capitalism and for the composition of the future order" is also quoted on the general strike being "a powerful weapon of struggle" but no mention is made of the need for a workers' movement which "wages a *direct,* unmediated battle of labour against capital — not through parliament but directly by means that are generally available to all workers and only the workers" – and so anarchists had "to awaken in the workers and peasants an understanding of their own power, of their determining voice in the revolution and of what they can accomplish in their own interests."[2]

Kropotkin, then, embraced the "doctrine of class struggle" as had Bakunin before him (Avrich writes of Bakunin's advocacy of an "all-encompassing class war") yet Avrich asserts that "the partisans of syndicalism went beyond Kropotkin by reconciling the principle of mutual assistance with the Marxian doctrine of class struggle. For the syndicalists, mutual aid did

[2] "The Russian Revolution and Anarchism", *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (AK Press, 2014), .466–7, 468. This is the first time that Kropotkin's parts of the 1907 pamphlet *Russkaia revoliutsiia i anarkhizm* has been translated into English which is unfortunate as they present an excellent summation of his ideas on many subjects, not least the role of anarchists in a revolution and the labour movement.

not embrace humanity as a whole, but existed only within the ranks of a single class, the proletariat, enhancing its solidarity in the battle with the manufacturers". This is simply false as can be seen from Kropotkin's anarchist writings: "What solidarity can exist between the capitalist and the worker he exploits?... Between the governing and the governed?"[3] As he put in a lengthy article in *Freedom* on the labour movement and which was considered important enough to be reprinted as a pamphlet:

> "We prefer the ameliorations which have been imposed by the workers upon their masters in a direct struggle: they are less spurious... Such concessions as the limitation of the hours of labour, or of child labour, whenever they represent something real have always been achieved by the action of the trade-unions — by strikes, by labour revolts, or by menaces of labour war. They are labour victories — not political victories."[4]

So there is nothing specifically "Marxian" about advocating class struggle. Kropotkin's position on it *cannot* be derived from *Mutual Aid* as that is primarily a work of popular science and *not* a book on anarchism. Yet even that work is hardly silent on the class struggle as it spends most of Chapter 8 on strikes and unions as examples of mutual aid within modern society. He also noted how history showed that some "rose up" to protect and develop institutions of mutual aid while others aimed to "break [them] down" in order "to increase their own wealth and their own powers." Mutual aid, he repeatedly stressed, "represents one of the factors of evolution" and "one aspect only of human relations". History as "hitherto written"

[3] "The Inevitability of Revolution," *Words of a Rebel* (Black Rose Books, 1992), 30.

[4] "Politics and Socialism", *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 378

application. This does not mean that the party was not marked by bureaucracy (it was), simply that in practice its structures were ignored by the rank-and-file and, ironically, by Lenin: "From April to October, Lenin had to fight a constant battle to keep the Party leadership in tune with the masses."[19] The degeneration of the revolution and the party in and after 1918 was marked by the increasing *application* of the principles Avrich falsely assumes existed within it during 1917.[20]

To conclude, this book is not history "from below" as the focus on the anarchist movement inevitably turns the Russian Revolutions into a backdrop to its debates and characters. This means that more important movements – such as the factory committee movement – only get mentioned when they intersect with the anarchist movement and so we only get glimpses of the events that delve into the heart of why the revolution failed. These need further research and this happened, with Avrich's book undoubtedly inspiring Maurice Brinton's classic *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control* which appeared three years later.[21]

It is annoying when an otherwise useful and important work makes mistakes about foundational issues as is the case here. It undermines the good research in other parts of the book and reinforces false impressions about a subject – anarchism – which seems fated to have nonsense inflicted upon it by, at best, well-meaning but uncomprehending liberal intellectuals or, at worst, malicious Marxists seeking to inoculate the party faithful from the virus of liberty. Still, it is far better that this book was written and is easily available than if it had never ap-

[19] Daniel & Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative* (AK Press, 2000), 187

[20] Alexander Rabinowitch's 1968 book *Prelude to Revolution: The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July 1917 Uprising* was the first major work to undermine this image of an "efficient" centralised party.

[21] This essential work is contained in *For Workers' Power* and should be read by all socialists, libertarian or not.

Workers' Opposition" *after* it[18]). Then there are the various hair-splitting debates today between the numerous Marxoid sects, not least on when the Soviet Union finally went beyond reform (was it 1991, 1980, 1968, 1956, 1953, 1936, 1928, 1923, 1921 or, for the best, 1917?) and what is the correct "line" on the pressing issues of the day (such as Stephen Hawking's physics). Some of these grouplets make even the weirdest writings and debates at the fringes of Russian Anarchism seem positively sane.

So Leninism has always been marked by the kind of sectarian in-fighting which Avrich documents within anarchism. The image he presents of the anarchists as inherently disorganised and Bolshevik success guaranteed by an efficient party machine was questionable at the time but subsequent research has destroyed that self-serving myth of Leninism. The Bolshevik party in 1917 was very far from the "democratic centralist" organisation it has subsequently been portrayed – unsurprisingly, given that in 1917 it was flooded by thousands of newly radicalised workers who wanted to *act* rather than debate the finer points of a jargon-riddled ideology or await orders through the proper channels. Section H.5.12 of *An Anarchist FAQ* (volume 2) shows that its success in 1917 lay more in its divergence from the principles of Bolshevism than in their

("To the Workers of the USSR") that summarised the lessons gained from the Russian revolution, namely that "the party of the Bolsheviks proved able to stand out fearlessly against the vacillations within its own class, vacillations which, with the slightest weakness in the vanguard, could turn into an unprecedented defeat for the proletariat." Vacillations are expressed by workers' democracy and so this was rejected: "The dictatorship of the working class finds its expression in the dictatorship of the party." (213, 214)

[18] Leonard Schapiro's *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State: The First Phase, 1917–1922* (Frederick A. Praeger, 1965) is a reliable introduction to these Bolshevik oppositions as well as the right-SRs, the Mensheviks, Left-SRs and the Anarchists. Samuel Farber's *Before Stalinism: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy* (Polity Press, 1990) also discusses these but in less detail.

was "almost entirely a description of the ways and means by which theocracy, military power, autocracy, and, later on, the richer classes' rule have been promoted, established and maintained". Social progress "originated" from "the masses" creating "economical and social institutions" rooted in solidarity rather than by "ruling, fighting and devastating minorities."[5]

So Kropotkin is badly served by Avrich, as is Bakunin who is presented primarily (and falsely) as an advocate of pan-destructive revolution and the syndicalism he championed against Marx in the First International goes unmentioned. Given this it comes as no surprise to see Avrich presenting a chronology that reflected and reinforced the conventional wisdom on anarchism and syndicalism, arguing that the failure of propaganda by deed in the "early nineties… created widespread disillusionment… causing large numbers of French anarchists to enter workers' unions". Yet Kropotkin was advocating "syndicalism" (anarchist involvement in the labour movement, support for unmediated class struggle on the economic arena and unions seizing and running workplaces) from the start: Russia from 1872 until being arrested and imprisoned in 1874, France from 1876 until being arrested and imprisoned in 1882 and, finally, Britain from 1889 onwards.

Rather than dating from the mid-1890s as Avrich asserts, the successful return of anarchists to syndicalism dates from 1889 and the London Dock Strike when Kropotkin, Malatesta and other leading communist-anarchists enthusiastically used it as an example of the importance of the labour movement and anarchist involvement within it as well as how a general strike could start the revolution. It is important to stress *return* as these ideas had been raised by the likes of Bakunin in the 1860s and 1870s in the First International – and was mocked and at-

[5] *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Freedom Press, 2009), 26, 230–1, 181

tacked by Marx and Engels for his troubles.[6] This means that neither Kropotkin's ideas on syndicalism nor that he advocated them from the early 1870s onwards are surprising for what became known as syndicalism had been the defining feature of the so-called "Bakuninist" wing of the First International (something Kropotkin never tired of repeating[7]).

What, then, are the differences between communist-anarchism and syndicalism? These are best sketched by Malatesta at the 1907 International Anarchist Congress, a speech that Avrich recounts but does not understand. Given that Malatesta, like Kropotkin, had been advocating anarchist involvement in the labour movement since joining the First International in the early 1870s – as Malatesta noted in his speech at the Congress[8] – it is untenable to proclaim as Avrich does that he attacked a "naïve fascination with the labour movement" or held "anti-syndicalist views" Malatesta's actual position was that the syndicalists turned the means (anarchist activity in unions) into ends, so overlooking the awkward facts that unions are not *automatically* revolutionary and that anarchists had to organise *as anarchists* to push them to that end. This was a position Kropotkin affirmed:

> "The syndicate is absolutely necessary. It is the only form of working-men's group that permits of maintaining the direct struggle against capital, without falling into parliamentarianism. But evidently it does not take that trend mechanically… The *other* element is necessary, the element of

[6] See my "Another View: Syndicalism, Anarchism and Marxism," *Anarchist Studies* 20:1

[7] It is unfortunate that Avrich repeats Emma Goldman's clumsy statement that Kropotkin had concluded in 1920 "that syndicalism alone could furnish the groundwork for the reconstruction of Russia's economy."

[8] Malatesta's speech and resolution on anarchism and syndicalism can be found in Maurizio Antonioli (Ed.), *The International Anarchist Congress Amsterdam (1907)*, Black Cat Press, 2009.

and how we can apply these policies in a productive manner. Once we have a movement of tens of thousands rather than hundreds then we can start discussing the issues that only become relevant once certain objective conditions are reached.

As Noam Chomsky recently suggested, social change is like a game of chess but too many radicals become demoralised because they cannot reach checkmate in one or two moves. We must recognise this obvious truism and act appropriately. Indeed, a lack of practical activity may explain the ultra-revolutionary rants of some in the Russian movement – it is easy to be completely correct (at least to your own satisfaction!) if your ideas are irrelevant to actual struggles and events. Holding a position so ideologically pure means that any *real* revolution would never be – particularly during its initial periods – sufficient revolutionary to be anything but a disappointment and faced with problems which were previously assumed away ideologically, perhaps it is unsurprising that many of the previously most intransigent ultra-revolutionaries joined the Bolsheviks? This is in stark contrast to the revolutionary realism Kropotkin expressed in his writings and which he summarised in 1920 with his "Message to the Workers of the Western World".

Marxists will undoubtedly gloat at the in-fighting between anarchists Avrich recounts but any smugness forgets that Lenin produced many a turgid page (when not pamphlet or book) writing polemics against numerous heresies within the Russian and European Marxist movements ("Economism", Mensheviks", "Revisionism", "Millerandism", "Liquidators", "Recallism", "God-builders", "Ultimatism", "Machism", "Kautskyite renegades" *before* the seizure of power;[17] "Left-Communists", "Democratic Centralists", "the

[17] For those with nothing better to do Grigorii Zinoviev's *History of the Bolshevik Party: A Popular Outline* (New Park Publications, 1973) can be consulted. This work is only notable for an appendix containing a statement issued in March 1923 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party

futility and waste of a heroic few acting for the many becomes clear. It also raises the question of what would have happened in 1917 if those who died resisting arrest or in the hangman's noose had survived and their energy had been used to push the revolution towards a more libertarian outcome.

So the debates recounted by Avrich do have some lessons for anarchists today, namely that we should be focused on sensible issues relevant to actual working class life. The message that becomes clear from Avrich's book is that anarchism need not mean disorganised and marginalised groups as his account of Nestor Makhno in the Ukraine shows that the right attitude can lead to spectacular results. We must look outwards to the rest of our class as this undermines any tendency towards wasting time, energy and resources in inward-facing polemics over trivial or irrelevant issues.

We need to organise with like-minded people and reject the idea of gathering all anarchists in one organisation (even if we accept the Platform's hope that the "healthy" elements are in the majority and therefore decide policy). Let us organise with those whom we agree and leave the others be – those with the best politics will flourish and grow, the others will remain sects presenting sillier and sillier ideas to a smaller and smaller circle. If we do not grow then it is due to *our* politics and organisation, not because a tiny number of others refuse to join with us. Their ideas are *not* putting people off given the numbers involved and their influence and to suggest otherwise is just avoiding asking awkward questions of *ourselves*.

This does not mean that theoretical or tactical differences should not be discussed – of course they should – but that we must be aware that certain ideas are simply silly, a waste of scare time and resources to bother with. We do not need debates over subjects which are, at worst, crazy ("primitivism") or, at best, not relevant now (such as whether my non-existent workers' resistance group is better than your non-existent syndicalist union). We need to discuss what we have in common

> which Malatesta speaks and which Bakunin has always practised."[9]

It could be objected that the main source of Kropotkin's ideas on the labour movement can be found not in his introductions to anarchism but rather in the articles he wrote for anarchist papers (primarily, but not exclusively, French ones) as well as private letters. Yet this forgets that these better known general works are hardly silent on this subject and that Avrich quotes from articles written by Kropotkin for Russian journals which make the same points. So an account of Kropotkin's ideas which accurately reflected his views on anarchist involvement in the labour movement was possible from the materials Avrich researched for his book.

Needless to say, the other clichés Avrich repeats are no more valid. Space precludes showing how Kropotkin advocated *appropriate* scales of technology and industry based on an analysis of the advanced capitalist economies of his time or providing a detailed account of how he recognised that a social revolution was a lengthy process and how anarchism was needed *because* of how difficult it would be rather than any illusions about its ease.[10]

Brinton, then, should not have been so quick to unquestioningly accept claims which reinforced his "allergic" reactions to anarchist thinkers since he was quick to note Avrich's prejudices as regards workers' control. Avrich suggests that workers' control and self-management are impossible dreams as the lack of hierarchy and centralised control inevitably leads to economic chaos and disruption. Yet there is a distinct lack of supporting material to justify this position. Quoting from texts written by Bolsheviks regurgitating the party line or the self-

[9] quoted by Woodcock and Avakumovic, *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (T. V. Boardman & Co. Ltd., 1950), 295

[10] These issues, and many more, are discussed in my introduction to *Direct Struggle Against Capital.*

serving complaints of capitalists bemoaning being forced to treat their wage-slaves as equals or seeing their industrial empires expropriated is not convincing.

So while recounting how bad the economy was from mid-1917 to early-1918 (which, according to Trotskyists, forced Lenin to introduce one-man management with a heavy-heart), Avrich fails to note (like the Trotskyists) that as workers' control was ended by the imposition of "dictatorial" one-man management and centralist nationalisation by Lenin, the economy became worse. Of course, correlation does not imply causation but it seems a strange co-incidence that as hierarchical, centralised and statist forms of economic management were implemented the economy truly tanked. Subsequent research has shown how the complaints about how bureaucracy and ignorance at the centre produced more waste increased as the "chaotic" workers' participation – along with productive economic activity – decreased.[11] While Avrich notes the creation of *Vesenkha* (the Supreme Economic Council) in December 1917 and the subsequent Bolshevik marginalisation and elimination of the factory committees in favour of "the 'statization' (*ogosudarstvlenie*) of economic authority", he does not link this to increasing economic chaos as he did the rise of workers' control.[12]

In short, the notion that the Bolsheviks reintroducing wage-labour (usually under the previous manager/owner now turned into a state official/bureaucrat) was needed to help the economy is not supported by the evidence presented while there is a lot of against it. Regardless, the net effect of Bolshevik

[11] See, for example, Silvana Malle, *The Economic Organisation of War Communism, 1918–1921* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[12] Perhaps Avrich's assumptions in favour of centralised economic systems reflect the fact that the book dates from the 1960s when the Soviet Union was generally portrayed as a centrally planned economic powerhouse to justify the expenditure on the American Military-Industrial Complex and so the problems associated with central-planning were downplayed.

speech) show this best. Sadly, the repeating and reinforcing of the conventional wisdom on these subjects will mean that those whose faith in the Bolshevik Myth may be undermined by this book will be unlikely to investigate the libertarian alternative due to the "allergic" reaction they will suffer. This unfortunate because not only did Kropotkin predict the problems the Revolution faced he also predicted why the Bolshevik solutions would fail as well as pointing to real answers.

Also, Avrich's book has lessons for anarchists today. He shows the negative impact of individuals wishing to be big fish in small ponds and who put their personal egos above the good of the movement. This points to another issue with the book: Avrich does root through the archives and references many original Russian sources but it is hard to tell if these are representative journals or just one or two colourful characters producing interesting – and immensely quotable – diatribes for a handful of others. The journals quoted during 1917, for example, will be representative but can the same be said of those produced in exile or under Tsarist or Bolshevik repression? Similarly, Avrich utilising Leninist or Stalinist publications seems problematic to say the least, even it is occasionally.

Avrich presents a picture of a movement which, while undoubtedly exaggerated, may be familiar to many anarchists today. Exaggerated, for even in terms of the book's subject matter its approach will cause false pictures to be painted as any work that focuses on a movement will inevitably concentrate on its conflicts as agreement never generates as many words – or as much venom – as disagreements. Similarly, Avrich gives the "terrorists" within the movement an unwarranted amount of space for the obvious reason that this is far more exciting – and easier to find in the archives – than the more mundane ("boring") activities of leafleting, organising meetings and talks, creating unions, encouraging strikes, etc. which build a viable movement. Still, the account of the "terrorists" is useful as the

tive circumstances which in turn increased popular alienation against them which, in turn, resulted in increased state repression of the working class and peasantry, paralysing the popular initiative needed to solve the problems facing the revolution. Combine this with the privileged place ideology and party has within Bolshevism and we have a vicious downward spiral of epic proportions.

That Bolshevik ideology played it role in the failure of the revolution can be seen from Avrich's far too short account of the Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine which, for all its faults, did not like Bolshevism implement party dictatorship – nor proclaim to the world its objective necessity as Zinioviev did at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920. Simply put, the Makhnovists operating within the same objective circumstances as the Bolsheviks show the importance of political theory during a revolution – as should be obvious, as the Bolshevik leadership were not operating on autopilot but rather making decisions deeply influenced by their ideology, its assumptions and prejudices as well as their new social position.[16] The prevailing Bolshevik view that the bureaucratic deformations affecting their regime could only be solved by increasing the centralisation which to non-Bolshevik eyes clearly produced them in the first place is one obvious example of how bad theory produces bad practice. There are many, many more.

The flaws in Avrich's book do not mean that it is not worth reading, far from it. It simply means that it must be read critically and with care, that it needs to be supplemented by other texts. His incorrect account of Kropotkin's ideas and the relation between syndicalism and anarchism (exemplified by his incomplete and so misleading account of Malatesta's 1907

[16] see "The Role of Bolshevik Ideology in the Birth of the Bureaucracy" by Cornelius Castoriadis (*Political and Social Writings*, volume 3, University of Minnesota Press, 1993)

economic policies was to create *state*-capitalism and lay the groundwork for the rise of Stalinism.

These critical events and debates are mentioned but only within the context of the anarchist movement and its factions. So what should be the focus, namely history "from below" (what Russian anarchist Voline called "The Unknown Revolution"), becomes the mere backdrop to something else of lesser importance. As Nicholas Walter noted in his review of Avrich's book when it initially came out in 1967:

> "the 1905 Revolution was objectively an anarchist revolution. The military mutinies, peasant risings and workers' strikes (culminating in a general strike), led to the establishment of soldiers' and workers' councils (the famous soviets), and the beginning of agrarian and industrial expropriation – all along the lines suggested by anarchist writers since Bakunin. This aspect of 1905 is mentioned by Avrich, but he… tends to concentrate on the sectarian affairs of the conscious anarchists rather than on the unconscious anarchism of the popular disturbances…
>
> "An anarchist analysis of the 1917 Revolutions leads to… the political revolutions – that is, both the February and October Revolutions – [being] distinguished from the social revolution. The Marxist analysis concentrates on the transfer of power from one regime to another… whereas the anarchist analysis concentrates on the transfer of power from the state to the people.
>
> "Avrich mentions this aspect of the 1917 Revolutions, but again… follows the anarchists

themselves in tending to concentrate on their own affairs…"[13]

This also means that while Bolshevik repression of the anarchists is discussed, no mention is made of the repression of workers, unions and strikes by the so-called workers state (the decision of early 1918 that trade union "neutrality was… a 'bourgeois' idea, an anomaly in a workers' state" is mentioned in passing). That this, like the repression of the anarchists, started *before* the revolt of the Czech legion in late May 1918 and continued *after* the end of the resulting civil war is of significance.

That may come as a surprise to most Trotskyist readers as will Avrich recounting how Lenin placed certain works by leading French syndicalist Fernand Pelloutier along with Bakunin and Kropotkin on the banned books Index at the beginning of 1921. This censorship may have been driven by the conflict within the party associated with the "Workers' Opposition". Avrich, rightly, mentions this but it should be noted he repeats the usual position on the "Workers' Opposition" as being a democratic alternative. However, as he admitted in a subsequent book, this conventional wisdom is false for the "Workers' Opposition" (like all Bolshevik factions including Trotsky's later "Left Opposition") "sought to preserve the Bolshevik monopoly of power" and "limited their demands to internal party reform"[14] It is then unsurprising that the "Workers' Opposition" went far beyond just verbally "condemning" the Kronstadt revolt – they willingly volunteered to join the troops sent to crush it.

[13] "Anarchism in Russia", *The Anarchist Past and other essays* (Five Leaves Publications, 2007), 122–4. Avrich's work needs to be supplemented by Walter's excellent review – particularly on the embryonic anarchist movement in the late-nineteenth century which *The Russian Anarchists* does not address well.

[14] Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1970), 182–3

The suppression of soviet democracy at Kronstadt in early 1921 was no isolated event and like the repression of anarchists and strikes the Bolsheviks started to pack and disband soviets across Russia in the spring of 1918 *before* the civil war began. Avrich does not mention this and although he notes the assassination of the German Ambassador by Left-SRs in passing, he fails to mention that this was driven by Bolshevik packing of the Fifth All-Russian Soviet Congress that denied the Left-SRs their rightful majority. Anarchist – like left-SR and left-Menshevik – hesitancy about supporting the dictatorial and state-capitalist Bolsheviks against the Whites needs this context in order to be fully understood.

Perhaps this is asking too much of a book with a very specific remit but the dynamics of the Russian anarchist movement cannot be understood in isolation from the wider revolution and the continued rise of Bolshevik authoritarianism. The latter *was* to be expected, given how the Bolsheviks were hardly silent on the need for their party to take state power and that they considered this as identical to workers' and soviet power.[15] Any clash between the party and the workers who interests it claimed to embody could only be resolved in one way – the repression of the latter by the former in the name of their "objective" interests by those actually in charge of the so-called "workers' state" (so confirming Bakunin's predictions, ably summarised by Avrich).

The sources for such a work are many and have generally appeared after Avrich's book but section H.6 of *An Anarchist FAQ* (volume 2) has attempted to collate these disparate works to show how Bolshevik ideology impacted negatively on objec-

[15] As exemplified by the first act of Bolshevik revolution, namely the creation of the Soviet of People's Commissars – *Sovnarkom* – which was a Bolshevik executive body above the soviets in stark contrast to Lenin's *State and Revolution* and its calls for fusing executive and legislative work into one body as per the Paris Commune – see section H.1.7 of *An Anarchist FAQ* (volume 2) for more discussion.