

**Chapter 1 : Kronstadt Mutiny**

*Fyodor Fyodorovich Raskolnikov was a key Bolshevik activist and a principal organiser amongst the Kronstadt Sailors, who would prove so pivotal in the Bolsheviks' seizure of power. Kronstadt and Petrograd in the memoirs of Fyodor Raskolnikov.*

Sometimes a revolutionary party has to flip its tactics Street demonstration, Petrograd, 18 June The Bolshevik leaders had asked that there be no demonstration. Despite this, the Putilov factory workers and their armed Red Guard, the Machine Gun Regiments of the Petrograd garrison and other units that had made the February revolution and later came over to the Bolsheviks, plus the fiery sailors of the nearby Kronstadt island base "all were ready to march with their arms and go all the way. At least that was their will. They were on the march to demand that the Soviet take power from the capitalists. Or, as one of the thousands of angry workers yelled to a leader of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, Victor Chernov: Yet they still had to answer to the hot, revolutionary fervor of their most ardent supporters among the workers, the soldiers and sailors in and around Petrograd. The Bolshevik leaders had to flip their position at the last minute. They did this to avoid disappointment, disillusionment and discouragement among their supporters or, worse, to leave them disorganized and vulnerable to reactionary attack. One was the Provisional Government, where the pro-capitalist parties took the lead and collaborated with the remnants of the old czarist state "the bureaucracy, the police and courts, and the regular army generals. The Provisional Government acted as the center of capitalist power. The other center was the Petrograd Soviet, an elected body in which the main parties represented the peasants, workers and soldiers. At the time the czar was deposed, none of these poor-people parties, not even the Bolsheviks, had a program calling for a socialist revolution in Russia. The Provisional Government was formed from the old parliament, which had been powerless when the monarchy existed. Kerensky faced a great dilemma: On July 1, Kerensky made his decision. He broke with the Russian masses when he ordered Russian troops to go on the offensive against Austrian lines to capture the city of Lvov, in what is now western Ukraine. The broad Russian offensive disintegrated within five days, eventually collapsing before a counteroffensive. It cost , casualties on the Russian side. This military disaster won even more support within the army for the Bolsheviks and their leader, V. The Putilov munition workers were also angry, armed, organized and pro-Bolshevik. The Kronstadt sailors, for their part, had been ready since March to demand that the Soviet take state power and end the war. Kronstadt sailors Kronstadt leads the way Raskolnikov F. Ilyin , a year-old sailor who was a Bolshevik leader in Kronstadt, wrote in his memoir that in the eyes of the Russian capitalist class: The Bolshevik central leadership was often in the unenviable position of having to hold back the Kronstadt sailors until the rest of the country "or at least the rest of Petrograd " caught up. From the other side, he faced thousands of sailor comrades demanding the Bolsheviks authorize the demonstration and distribute arms. Though he believed in party discipline, Raskolnikov argued with the Bolshevik leaders. He said that the armed demonstration was inevitable. Their only choice was stand with it or stand aside. Still they tried to cool it down, make it peaceful. Petrograd, 4 July Street demonstration on Nevsky Prospekt just after troops of the Provisional Government have opened fire with machine guns. Street clashes The highpoint of the demonstration was on July 17 when 10, armed sailors joined the march through Petrograd. There was sporadic fighting as unidentified reactionaries fired on the masses from hiding. In what every account described as chaotic, the armed but untrained demonstrators fired back. By the third day, forces still obeying orders of the Kerensky government were arresting Kronstadt sailors and Bolshevik leaders. The sailors, for the most part, made it back to Kronstadt, the soldiers to their regiments and the Putilov workers back to the factory. All the Bolshevik leaders, including Raskolnikov and his comrade Semyon Roshal from Kronstadt, Leon Trotsky and others, were sent to prison. Lenin and Zinoviev fled to Finland, where they stayed in hiding for fear of assassination. The Bolshevik headquarters was seized. After a month, another turn in the course of the Russian Revolution reversed this partial defeat and most of the leaders were freed. That gave the Bolsheviks another chance to show, under greatly improved conditions, that any hesitation on their part in July was merely tactical.

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*The Kronstadt rebellion (Russian: Восстание в Кронштадте, 1921, tr. Kronshtadtskoye vosstaniye) was a major unsuccessful uprising against the Bolsheviks in March, during the later years of the Russian Civil War.*

The Kronstadt rebellion Soviet propaganda depicting the Kronstadt rebels as White agents The Kronstadt rebellion was an attempt to instigate an anti-Bolshevik revolution in early It took shape on Kronstadt, an island fortress and military garrison just a few miles from Petrograd. The Kronstadt uprising was sparked by the failure of Bolshevik economic policy, food shortages and worsening conditions. Bad harvests, exacerbated by Bolshevik grain seizures, had caused famine and widespread suffering in both rural and urban areas. By production of most goods had fallen to little more than half pre-World War I levels. Government quotas and interference in factories, strikes, workforce dissent and scarcity of raw materials all hindered production. At the start of a series of strikes and urban demonstrations caused concern for the regime. They were followed by a blow Lenin had not been expecting: The military base at Kronstadt was located just outside Petrograd, encircling a fortress which overlooked the city. The soldiers and sailors garrisoned there were thought to be loyal supporters of the Bolshevik revolution. In reality, the Kronstadt servicemen had a reputation for acting spontaneously; they were stirred more by conditions than ideology. By late February they had experienced enough of Bolshevik political oppression and the economic misery of war communism. Hearing of suffering and deprivation in letters from home many Kronstadters were of peasant origins and seeing it first-hand during their leave in Petrograd, the men of Kronstadt decided to take action. Among these were economic demands: Their political demands were more extensive: The Kronstadters called for the revolution to be placed back into the hands of the workers who it had originally claimed to represent. This document, which bore some similarities to the Gapon petition of , enraged the Bolshevik hierarchy. Trotsky began to organise an immediate military response to crush the Kronstadt rebels. Since there was more than 15, of them, it would need to be a large campaign. Since it was winter the sea around the Kronstadt fortress was frozen solid, and it was important to crush the rebellion before the thaw, which would allow the rebels to use battleships against Bolshevik targets. The first wave of Red Army troops was low in number and poorly equipped, so was driven back by fire from the base at Kronstadt. Trotsky increased troop numbers to 60, equipped them with white camouflage and heavy artillery, and laid siege to the fortress for almost three weeks. Thousands of rebels fled across the ice, north to the nearby border with Finland. Around 2, were captured by Bolshevik forces, marched into forests outside Petrograd and executed. That was the public line, but inside the party there was less agreement and more discomfort about what had taken place. Individuals such as Alexandra Kollontai expressed concern about the conduct of the party leadership. However Lenin might have reacted publicly to the events at Kronstadt, he was astute enough to understand its implications: Content on this page may not be republished or distributed without permission. For more information please refer to our Terms of Use. To reference this page, use the following citation:

**Chapter 3 : Petrograd on the Eve of Kronstadt**

*In winter the usual approach to Kronstadt would be by train to Oranienbaum and then by sleigh over the ice, whereas in summer one could sail direct from Petrograd to Kronstadt. 3. Isvestiya was the organ of the Petrograd Soviet.*

Andrew *â€”*, dedicated to the patron saint of the Russian Navy. It was destroyed under the Soviet regime in 1924. During the winter the Gulf of Finland freezes completely. Under the command of Governor-general Alexander Danilovich Menshikov, workers used thousands of frames made of oak logs filled with stones. These were carried by horses across the frozen sea, and placed in cuttings made in the ice. Thus, several new small islands were created, and forts were erected on them, closing all access to Saint-Petersburg by the sea. Only two narrow navigable channels remained, and the strongest forts guarded them. Kronstadt was thoroughly refortified in the 19th century. The old three-decker forts, five in number, which formerly constituted the principal defences of the place, and defied the Anglo-French fleets during the Crimean War, became of secondary importance. From the plans of Eduard Totleben a new fort, Constantine, and four batteries were constructed *â€”* to defend the principal approach, and seven batteries to cover the shallower northern channel. All these fortifications were low and thickly armored earthworks, powerfully armed with heavy Krupp guns in turrets. The town is surrounded with an enceinte. In summer, the French fleet was officially *â€”* and triumphantly *â€”* received in Kronstadt. It was a first step towards the coming Franco-Russian Alliance. Russian Civil War[ edit ] During the Petrograd now Saint Petersburg riots of the February revolution, the sailors of Petrograd joined the revolution and executed their officers, thus gaining a reputation as dedicated revolutionaries. During the civil war, the sailors participated on the red side, until, when they rebelled against the Bolshevik rule. Kronstadt and the supporting forts and minefields were the key to the protection of Petrograd from foreign forces. Despite this, the cruiser Oleg was torpedoed and sunk by a small motor boat after participating in a bombardment of Krasnaya Gorka fort that had revolted against the Bolsheviks. Kronstadt rebellion In 1919, a group of naval officers and men, together with soldiers and civilian supporters, rebelled against the Bolshevik government in Soviet Kronstadt. The garrison had previously been a centre of major support for the Bolsheviks, and throughout the Civil War of *â€”*, the naval forces at Kronstadt had been at the vanguard of the main Bolshevik attacks. The uprising was thus suppressed. During that time Kronstadt was an important training center of the Soviet Navy. All forts and batteries of the city were under reconstruction. Several hours later the first German aircraft began mining the fairway near Kronstadt. The duty officer First Lieutenant S. Kushnerev ordered anti-aircraft batteries to open fire on the enemy planes; several aircraft were shot down or damaged. Twenty-seven German planes took part at the first attack, and three of them were destroyed by the anti-aircraft guns of the 1st Air Defence Regiment of the Baltic Fleet. This regiment was situated on the southern forts. In August the Luftwaffe began bombing Kronstadt regularly. To prevent an enemy landing, 13 artillery batteries were established in Kronstadt and nine more batteries beyond the city, but on the island Kotlin. The main lookout was located in the Naval Cathedral. The coastal defense of Kronstadt included two infantry regiments. Tallinn, the main base of the fleet, was in danger and a decree to relocate the fleet from Tallinn to Kronstadt was given. By the time the Soviets had decided on a maritime evacuation of Tallinn, over Soviet civilian and military vessels had been assembled in the harbor of Tallinn. After the evacuation of Tallinn, the submarine subdivision had been organized in Kronstadt. By the end of 1918, 82 naval operations were made. Hitler was enraged, because Soviet submarines frequently disrupted military supplies of strategic materials from Sweden to Germany. The Germans tried to block completely the exit from the Gulf of Finland with antisubmarine nets and mines. Despite these efforts, the Soviet submariners continued to attack German ships. In 1918, 29 German vessels were sunk. Submarines cooperated with reconnaissance aircraft in searching for military targets. But the Soviet submarines had broken through the mine barrages in the Gulf of Finland easily in 1918. To keep the Soviet submarine force away from the Baltic shipping stronger efforts were planned. The minefields would be larger and in addition a double submarine net would be laid from Porkkala to Naissaar, Operation "Walross". But in 1918, when Finland made a peace treaty with the Soviet Union where one of the conditions was that the Soviets would receive one naval base in Finland

Porkkala. The submarine warfare in the Baltic Sea reached a new and final stage after peace with Finland. The Baltic Fleet sent more than 100,000 people to serve ashore at the front. Eighty-three thousand people fought directly on the Leningrad Front. For the protection of Leningrad 10 brigades of marines, four regiments, and more than 40 separate battalions and companies were formed in Kronstadt. The Luftwaffe and German artillery brought down thousands of bombs and shells to the Naval Plant and the Arsenal factory. The German air raids in September 1941, damaged the Baltic Fleet ships and infrastructure of the Plant. Several sections of the Plant were destroyed, the docks were showered with falling bombs, and dozens of workers and engineers were killed. Nevertheless, the plant continued its work. In the difficult conditions of the siege, the workers persevered with their work. Often the working day lasted for 18-20 hours. It was thanks to the power of the Kronstadt Fortress that the destruction of Leningrad the main industrial and cultural center of the Soviet Union was successfully prevented. Kronstadt was conferred the status of " City of Military Glory " by the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev on April 27, 2005, for "courage, endurance and mass heroism, exhibited by defenders of the city in the struggle for the freedom and independence of the Motherland".

**Chapter 4 : Kronstadt and Petrograd in " Ch 2**

*Raskolnikov's account of the role played by the Kronstadt sailors is an essential document of the October Revolution. Trotsky, in his own history of the revolution, made repeated references to it. A leader of the sailors, the author was 25 in and a heroic figure in his own right.*

Kronstadt and Petrograd in II. From him and from Comrade V. Molotov I learnt that the following day was to see the publication of the first issue of the post-revolutionary Pravda. The cloudy and vague Liberal-and-SR romanticism of the early days of the February Revolution had to be countered by the clear-cut socialist programme and the uniquely revolutionary tactics of the Bolsheviks. Later in the evening at the conclusion of a meeting of the Petersburg Committee, K. Molotov went off to produce the first issue of Pravda. Konstantin Stepanovich [Yeremeyev] boasted that he had already, by armed force, seized for the purposes of our paper the spacious premises of Selsky Vestnik The Rural Herald. Two days later, after writing an article on the subject of the bourgeois and democratic republic, I took it along to the editorial department of Pravda. Konstantin Stepanovich certainly had something to boast about. It was clear that Selsky Vestnik subsidised by the Government had succeeded in setting itself up rather well under the old regime. It had occupied a huge stone building on the bank of the Moika, splendidly equipped for newspaper work. Within this same building was a large printing press, with rotary machines. From somewhere in the depths one could hear the characteristic heavy sound of these rotaries at work. In the yard, which gave on to the adjoining lane, bales of agricultural literature lay about. Straight from the embankment I mounted the main staircase to the first floor, where the editorial department of our proletarian newspaper was now established. The narrow corridor was tightly blocked by bulky packages of issues of Selsky Vestnik. I approached the first door on the right and heard the familiar voice of Konstantin Stepanovich say: Olminsky, who had recently arrived from Moscow. I handed them my manuscript. Comrade Yeremeyev said that he had just received an article from Maxim Gorky, [1] but that it was absolutely impossible to publish this, because it was permeated from beginning to end with deeply pessimistic sentiments concerning the devastation and killing that had occurred. This depressed mood of the democratic intelligentsia, stunned by the colossal sweep of the mass revolution, subsequently found sharp reflection in the newspaper Novaya Zhizn. Naturally, the article was not published. And they mentioned you specifically. Their conversation revolved around the recent killings at Kronstadt. According to them what had happened was that the wrath of the mob had fallen upon totally innocent persons. The chief blame for these spontaneous settlements of account with the officers was laid, of course, upon the sailors. Together with intransigent bitterness the officers showed personal fear of the fate awaiting them. The bourgeois newspapers, in frenzied exasperation, ascribed the shootings of officers at Kronstadt to our Party and in particular laid responsibility for them upon me. But I arrived at Kronstadt after the phase of spontaneous settlements of account was over. As for our Party, as soon as it had gained control of the Kronstadt masses, it launched a vigorous struggle against lynch-law. The shootings of officers which took place in the first days of March bore an absolutely spontaneous character and our Party had nothing whatsoever to do with them. The sailors, soldiers and workers of Kronstadt, having broken through to freedom, took their revenge for age-old humiliation and insult. But to a surprising extent this movement, which was led by nobody, aimed its blows with remarkable precision. From the elemental rage of the crowd only those officers suffered who had distinguished themselves by most cruel and unjust treatment of the sailor and soldier masses under their command. The first day of the revolution saw the killing of Admiral Wiren, who had won for himself throughout the fleet the reputation of a brute. His entire system was based on harsh repression and insult to the human dignity of the soldier and the sailor. It was not surprising that the universal hatred he had sown should have burst forth at the first possible moment. No less well-known throughout Kronstadt, and even far beyond it, as a harsh and inhuman officer, was the commander of the 1st Baltic Fleet Depot, Colonel Stronsky. It was against Wiren and Stronsky first and foremost that the anger of the revolutionary crowd was directed. Their fate was shared by the myrmidons of these satraps of the old regime who, adapting themselves to the course followed by the state, had implemented a policy of stick and knout.

Officers who had shown themselves just and humane were not merely spared but, as a sign of special trust, were even elected to the highest positions of command. Thus, Senior Lieutenant P. Lamanov was from the first days of the revolution placed at the head of all the naval forces in Kronstadt. To the best of my knowledge there were no guiltless victims in Kronstadt. What happened there was not at all an indiscriminate massacre of officers, but only reprisals against particular individuals who had besmirched themselves under the old regime. In any case, during the subsequent development of the revolution there were no spontaneous shootings. In the first days, however, the February Revolution did develop in violent forms in Kronstadt. By their cowardly indecision, their vacillation between the old and the new, the supreme administrative authorities, the commander-in-chief of the port, Admiral Wiren, and the commandant of the fortress, Admiral Kurosh, merely rendered the situation more acute, pouring oil on the flames. It was known to them already on the morning of February 28 that a revolution had taken place in Petrograd, but they did not believe in its success, did not recognise that it was irreversible: In the afternoon of February 28 they summoned representatives of the officers of the fleet and the garrison to a conference. The question before the conference was: Most of the officers said frankly that they could not be relied on, since, given the feeling prevalent among the masses, the sailors and soldiers would at once unite with the revolutionary forces. But even after the general situation had thus been clarified neither Kurosh nor Wiren took any measures at all to make public announcement of the events which had taken place in Petrograd the day before. Instead, fresh measures of constraint were applied. The sailors with families, who were usually allowed to spend the night at home, were on this day given leave only until 10pm. During the night of February 28 the sound of firing was heard in Kronstadt, from the direction of Oranienbaum. And then *Izvestiya* [3] arrived from Petrograd and from it the sailors and soldiers learnt with intense interest the whole course of the revolutionary events. The night passed in a state of disturbance. In many units nobody slept and the whole night was spent in lively political discussion. The movement started to develop when it was well on into the night. One after another, units, led by their bands, began to come out on to the streets, collecting up the rest of the soldiers and sailors as they went. Among the first to rise was the 1st Baltic Fleet Depot. A great impression was made when the 2nd Fortress Artillery Regiment joined in. The entire regiment, including all its officers, came out on to the street. The regimental commander carried a flag and the band played the Marseillaise. As dawn came, a crowd of sailors approached the house of the commander-in-chief and called for him to come out into the street. Admiral Wiren got dressed and when he had reached the street gave the command: The Admiral then immediately lowered his tone and, appealing to the crowd, invited them to follow him to Anchor Square where, he promised, he would make known everything that had happened in Petrograd. A sailor ran up to the Admiral and tore off his epaulettes. On the way to the Square Wiren began to confess his crimes against the sailors and to beg them to spare his life. When they got to Anchor Square the sailors shot him. This Admiral, a man of very small stature, simply refused to repudiate the old regime and did not humble himself, clinging to his life, as Wiren had done. According to official statements the number of naval and military officers who were killed was In this category were those officers who had been known for their excessive severity, or who had been detected in unscrupulous handling of government funds. When one officer was arrested and was being taken to the preliminary-investigation prison, he started to rage at his captors: It was still too uncertain what the morrow would bring The policemen and secret police agents occupied the Golubev house and held out there with machineguns. A six-inch gun had to be brought up and fired, carrying away the roof and smashing the upper part of the building. After that, the policemen and secret police agents surrendered. Six of them were killed and the other eight arrested. The revolutionaries lost seven men altogether. Processions marched through the streets all day on March 1 while defenders of the old regime were being arrested. On March 2 and 3 the movement began to assume more organised forms. A Kronstadt Bolshevik committee was soon set up and began to play a very important role in the movement. On March 15 the Bolshevik daily newspaper *Golos Pravdy* began to appear. When I reached Oranienbaum I joined with an engineer who happened to be going the same way to hire a sleigh-cab in which to cross the ice to Kronstadt. By a coincidence it so happened that the Naval Economic Society was also nearby. Either way, therefore, this was my destination. After saying goodbye to my fellow-traveller I made my way to the building of the Party Committee. This single storey

house, situated near the Sub-Depot, had previously been the home of the town commandant. Kronstadt is as a revolutionary centre Kronstadt occupies a special place in the history of the October Revolution. All through Kronstadt played an outstanding political role, sometimes focusing upon itself the attention of all Russia and evoking around its name the lying, fantastic concoctions and frenzied, hate-laden curses of the bourgeoisie. In their eyes Kronstadt was a symbol of savage horror, the devil incarnate, a terrifying spectre of anarchy, a nightmare rebirth of the Paris Commune on Russian soil. And this panic fear of the bourgeoisie at the mere thought of Kronstadt was no accidental misunderstanding, caused by the lying inventions of the capitalist press. It was a completely natural fear for their interests, a fear dictated by the class instinct of the bourgeoisie. Quite different, absolutely contrary, were the feelings that Kronstadt inspired in those days among the revolutionary workers, soldiers and peasants. Kronstadt in was the impregnable citadel of the revolution, the safe stronghold against any sort of counter-revolution. Kronstadt was acknowledged by all as the vanguard of the revolution. But what were the causes that thrust Kronstadt so far ahead, what factors made it the vanguard of the revolutionary front?

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Petrograd on the Eve of Kronstadt Petrograd on the Eve of Kronstadt Despite the fact that the population of Petrograd had diminished by two thirds, the winter of proved to be a particularly hard one. Food in the city had been scarce since February and the situation had deteriorated from month to month. The town had always relied on food stuffs brought in from other parts of the country. During the Revolution the rural economy was in crisis in many of these regions. The countryside could only feed the capital to a very small extent. The catastrophic condition of the railways made things even worse. The ever increasing antagonisms between town and country created further difficulties everywhere. To these partly unavoidable factors must be added the bureaucratic degeneration of the administration and the rapacity of the State organs for food supply. Their role in feeding the population was actually a negative one. If the population of Petrograd did not die of hunger during this period, it was above all thanks to its own adaptability and initiative. It got food wherever it could! Barter was practised on a large scale. There was still some food to be had in the countryside, despite the smaller area under cultivation. The peasant would exchange this produce for the goods he lacked: The population of the towns would try and get hold of these commodities in any way it could. They alone had real value. It would take them to the country side. In exchange people would carry back a few pounds of flour or potatoes. As we have mentioned before, the few trains, unheated, would be packed with men carrying bags on their shoulders. En route, the trains would often have to stop because they had run out of fuel. Passengers would get off and cut logs for the boilers. Market places had officially been abolished. But in nearly all towns there were semi tolerated illegal markets, where barter was carried out. Such markets existed in Petrograd. Suddenly, in the Summer of , Zinoviev issued a decree forbidding any kind of commercial transaction. The few small shops still open were closed and their doors sealed. However, the State apparatus was in no position to supply the towns. From this moment on, famine could no longer be attenuated by the initiative of the population. In January , according to information published by Petrokommoun the State Supplies of the town of Petrograd , workers in metal smelting factories were allocated rations of grams of black bread a day; shock workers in other factories grams; workers with A. Black bread was the staple diet of the Russian people at this time. But even these official rations were distributed irregularly and in even smaller amounts than those stipulated. Transport workers would receive, at irregular intervals, the equivalent of to 1, calories a day. There was a great shortage of both clothing and footwear. According to official statistics, working class wages in Petrograd were only 9 per cent. The population was drifting away from the capital. All who had relatives in the country had rejoined them. The authentic proletariat remained till the end, having the most slender connections with the countryside. A few workers were seeking refuge in the countryside. There was certainly no exodus of peasants into the starving towns! It was the famous Petrograd proletariat, the proletariat which had played such a leading role in both previous revolutions, that was finally to resort to the classical weapon of the class struggle: The first strike broke out at the Troubotchny factory, on 23rd February On the 24th, the strikers organised a mass demonstration in the street. The strikers tried to contact the Finnish Barracks. Meanwhile, the strikes were spreading. The Baltisky factory stopped work. Then the Laferma factory and a number of others: The strikers were demanding measures to assist food supplies. Some factories were demanding the re-establishment of the local markets, freedom to travel within a radius of thirty miles of the city, and the withdrawal of the militia detachments holding the road around the town. But side by side with these economic demands. In several big factories, Party spokesmen were refused a hearing. Confronted with the misery of the Russian workers who were seeking an outlet to their intolerable conditions, the servile Party Committee and Zinoviev, who according to numerous accounts was behaving in Petrograd like a real tyrant , could find no better methods of persuasion than brute force. It was composed of three people: Lachevitch, Anzelovitch and Avrov. They were to be supported by a number of technical assistants. Similar Committees were organised in the outlying districts. These were composed of the local Party organiser, the President of the

Executive of the local Soviet and the military Commissar for the District. On 24th February the Committee of Defence proclaimed a state of siege in Petrograd. All circulation on the streets was forbidden after 11 PM, as were all meetings and gatherings, both out of doors and indoors, that had not been specifically permitted by the Defence Committee. A general mobilisation of party members was decreed. Special detachments were created, to be sent to "special destinations". At the same time, the militia detachments guarding the roads in and out of the town were withdrawn. Then the strike leaders were arrested. On 26th February the Kronstadt sailors, naturally interested in all that was going on in Petrograd, sent delegates to find out about the strikes. The delegation visited a number of factories. It returned to Kronstadt on the 28th. The present Soviets no longer express the wishes of the workers and peasants. The new elections should be by secret ballot, and should be preceded by free electoral propaganda. Freedom of speech and of the press for workers and peasants, for the Anarchists, and for the Left Socialist parties. The right of assembly, and freedom for trade union and peasant organisations. The organisation, at the latest on 10th March, of a Conference of non-Party workers, soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt and the Petrograd District. The liberation of all political prisoners of the Socialist parties, and of all imprisoned workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors belonging to working class and peasant organisations. The election of a commission to look into the dossiers of all those detained in prisons and concentration camps. The abolition of all political sections in the armed forces. No political party should have privileges for the propagation of its ideas, or receive State subsidies to this end. In the place of the political sections various cultural groups should be set up, deriving resources from the State. The immediate abolition of the militia detachments set up between towns and countryside. The equalisation of rations for all workers, except those engaged in dangerous or unhealthy jobs. The abolition of Party combat detachments in all military groups. The abolition of Party guards in factories and enterprises. If guards are required, they should be nominated, taking into account the views of the workers. The granting to the peasants of freedom of action on their own soil, and of the right to own cattle, provided they look after them themselves and do not employ hired labour. We request that all military units and officer trainee groups associate themselves with this resolution. We demand that the Press give proper publicity to this resolution. We demand that handicraft production be authorised provided it does not utilise wage labour. Their discontent was caused both by the famine and by the whole evolution of the political situation. The Russian workers were increasingly disillusioned in their greatest hope: Daily they saw the power of a single Party substituting itself for that of the Soviets. A Party, moreover, which was degenerating rapidly through the exercise of absolute power, and which was already riddled with careerists. It was against the monopoly exercised by this Party in all fields of life that the working class sought to react. Point one of the Kronstadt resolution expressed an idea shared by the best elements of the Russian working class. Hence the demand for new elections, to be carried out according to the principle of full equality for all working class political tendencies. Such a regeneration of the Soviets would imply the granting to all working class tendencies of the possibility for expressing themselves freely, without fear of calumny or extermination. Hence, quite naturally, there followed the idea of freedom of expression, of the Press, of Assembly and of organisation, contained in Point two. We must stress that by the class struggle in the countryside had been fought to a virtual standstill. The vast majority of the kulaks had been dispossessed. It is quite wrong to claim that the granting of basic freedoms to the peasants--as demanded in Point three--would have meant restoring political rights to the kulaks. The Kronstadt revolution had the merit of stating things openly and clearly. But it was breaking no new ground. Its main ideas were being discussed everywhere.

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Kronstadt and Petrograd in VII. The July Days 1. On their arrival at the Kronstadt Soviet they were brought to me, as a deputy-chairman of the Soviet. First and foremost I was interested to discover the reason for their visit. Even before this time Anarchists of a great variety of shades had frequently come to Kronstadt. They appreciated very well the exceptional role played by Kronstadt in the revolutionary movement, its militant mood and immense potential of revolutionary action, and they naturally strove to win Red Kotlin over to their side, to conquer this bastion of Bolshevism. I argued relentlessly with the Anarchist leader and his friends, but in general our relations with them were good and comradely. Yarchuk, a tailor by trade, who had only recently returned from America where he lived as an emigrant, was quite favourably disposed towards the Bolshevik Party and always sought to co-ordinate the tactics of his little group with the activities of our Party. Consequently, we were used to the Anarchists, familiar with their methods of political argument and had trained ourselves to combat them. Semyon Roshal was especially good at this: Naturally, the visit of the new semi-Anarchist group came as no surprise to us. But I thought it my duty to warn them that political feeling was excited enough at Kronstadt and it would not do to stir up the masses to still greater excitement as this might lead to a spontaneous, disorganised outbreak. They promised not to give the masses any concrete slogans and assured me that they were far from wishing to bring disorganisation into the political life of Red Kronstadt. As the first target of their efforts the machine-gunners chose the 1st Baltic Depot, the address of which they did not know. I was going that way and set off along with them, conversing on political subjects: When I parted with the visitors I telephoned Petersburg. We had a very good custom whereby I rang Petersburg every day and, asking to speak to Lenin, Zinoviev or Kamenev, reported to them everything that had happened at Kronstadt and obtained the instructions needed for our current work. No other units of the Petrograd garrison had joined them so far, and our Party would not support this irresponsible move. Hardly had I left the apparatus than I was told that a meeting had been called in Anchor Square. It turned out that the initiators of this meeting were the visiting delegates. The Anarchist lecturer, left alone, followed his audience to Anchor Square. The first speaker to address the meeting was one of the visitors. In hysterical tones he described how the Anarchists were being persecuted by the Provisional Government. But the central purpose of his speech was to announce that an action by the 1st Machinegun Regiment and other units of the Petrograd garrison was going to take place the day. Can you refuse to support your comrades, will you not come out in defence of the revolution? After the visiting speaker had finished Comrade Roshal tried to make a speech that would calm the meeting down. When mounted the improvised wooden tribune the whole of Anchor Square was frozen into silence. Everyone wanted to hear what this popular and witty speaker would have to say. This was the first and the last case divergence between Roshal and the masses during his work Kronstadt. As a rule all his speeches enjoyed great success being listened to with profound attention, and if he was interrupted it would only be by applause or by sympathetic laughter. Not surprisingly, this unaccustomed failure deeply up and shook Comrade Roshal. He must not be confused with the Right-SR of the same name "possibly a relation" who was a member of the Constituent Assembly and took part in the Czechoslov adventure. Our Kronstadt Brushvit was at this time quite Left, and had mastered with great talent the colloquial, peasant way of speaking, using jokes and funny catchphrases. The Kronstadters liked to listen to him. Outwardly he had a fairly benevolent attitude towards us Bolsheviks, and in any case for tactical reasons, fearing to damage his popularity, never let himself oppose us in any way. At that time there were not yet any serious differences in tactics between us and the Left-SRs and their agitation usually only made our work easier. On this occasion Brushvit mounted the tribune in order to expound the same views as we had maintained. He too was against the demonstration. But as soon as the audience realised what he was getting at they at once subjected him to the same hostile treatment as Comrade Roshal had received, and literally stopped him from speaking.

Comrade Brushvit, who had a sensitive nature, wiped away tears as he left the tribune. After this some unknown comrades who had never addressed a meeting before came forward to speak. They made inflammatory speeches and called for the sailors to go immediately to the barracks and arm themselves, and then go to the landing-stage, seize all the steamships present there and proceed to Petrograd. The atmosphere in Anchor Square grew more and more tense. Concern for the fate of the Petrograd comrades, who had perhaps already taken to the streets and were even then shedding their blood and in need of support, had a magical effect on the crowd. Everyone burned with desire to go and help as quickly as possible. Their aims were unclear. There was no precise notion of why the machine-gunners were demonstrating in Petrograd. It was enough that a demonstration was taking place. An active feeling of comradeship impelled the Kronstadt masses to take direct action, telling them that at such a moment they should be with their blood-brothers, the workers and soldiers of Petrograd. With such a unanimous collective wave of feeling it was very difficult to go against the stream. However, Party duty obliged me to fight to the last ditch. I clearly appreciated that since our Party did not support the demonstration, we Bolsheviki, regardless of our individual views on the matter, must come out against it, doing all we could to hold our Kronstadt friends back from taking part in it. With this in mind I asked to speak. The audience listened intently. I began by saying that at this moment when revolutionary events were growing, it could only be to the advantage of the Provisional Government and the bourgeoisie standing behind it to arrange for a bloodletting of the working class. It was therefore necessary to approach all problems cautiously and suspiciously. We must not, under the influence of ardent speeches and without being clear about the situation, take decisions of great responsibility which could have tremendous consequences for the course and outcome of the entire revolution. We must first of all ascertain just what was happening in Petrograd, whether the demonstration of which the visitor comrades had spoken was really taking place. At the Soviet we had a direct line to Petrograd, and we ought first to get detailed, thorough information about what was going on there that day. By setting off straightaway without finding anything out beforehand, we might fall into a ridiculous situation. Furthermore, in the event that our participation proved to be necessary, we must ensure that this participation was strictly organised. We must not rush en masse on to the landing-stage and seize the first boats we came upon, but first of all make a survey of all the shipping available and allot the vessels in an organised way: Then, too, we must check on our stocks of weapons, so as to ensure that nobody set off armed with nothing but a stick. In view of this I proposed: To my surprise my entire speech, and the practical proposal which followed from it, were listened to calmly. Moreover the audience, which had now sobered up somewhat, apparently realised how senseless it would be to react immediately to events of which nobody had any serious knowledge. My proposal was adopted. Comrade Roshal, myself and some others were elected to the commission. Complete confidence was shown in the old familiar leader of the Kronstadters, the Bolsheviki Party. To have told the meeting that the demonstration had started, that it was an accomplished fact, would only have poured oil on the flames. Furthermore, I did not consider I had the right to communicate news of this event when I had not yet obtained any information about the nature of the demonstration or the circumstances and consequences associated with it. It might easily have happened that finding themselves without support from other units of the Petrograd garrison, the 1st Machinegun Regiment had been obliged to return to barracks. However, even before the meeting began I had managed to whisper to my comrades on the Kronstadt Committee the news I had received from Comrade Kamenev. After the close of the meeting, when the crowd of many thousands had dispersed and Anchor Square was empty, we made our way to the Soviet building. Our organisational commission at once decided to summon representatives from the units and the workshops so as to establish the closest contact with the masses. The commission went into session at about First of all, the comrade delegates from the units and workshops were asked to report on the situation in their localities. These reports gave us a clear picture. It was obvious that while we had that day succeeded in preventing immediate action, putting it off and gaining time by forming the organisational commission, nevertheless, the action would inevitably take place the next day and we should lose control of the masses. I went straight from the meeting to the telephone room, got myself connected with the Petrograd Soviet, and asked for Lenin, Zinoviev or Kamenev. Comrade Zinoviev came to the telephone. I informed him of the state of feeling at Kronstadt and stressed that the question was not

whether to act or not to act, but was of a different order: In either case the action was quite unavoidable and nothing could avert it. Comrade Zinoviev asked me to hang on. As I learned afterwards this decision by the Central Committee, in favour of a peaceful but armed demonstration, was taken on the one hand under the influence of my report, and on the other under that of a demonstration by workers from the Putilov Works, who came to the Taurida Palace along with their wives and children. In any case I was very glad that the CC had taken this decision. Kronstadt at that time was not a quantity that could be left out of account without regrettable consequences. Kronstadt and Tsaritsyn were the strongest citadels of Bolshevism, where our Party possessed immense ideological influence. Owing however to its proximity to Petrograd and its plentiful supply of arms, the political and military importance of Kronstadt was incomparably greater than that of Tsaritsyn. Consequently, for our Party to have broken with the spontaneous movement of the Kronstadt masses would have struck an irreparable blow at its authority. On the other hand, an armed uprising would have been doomed to certain defeat. We might have seized power with comparative ease but would not have been in a position to retain it. The front was not sufficiently prepared at that time. Despite the intense activity that had been carried on there by a number of our comrades — Nakhimson, Sievers, Khaustov, Dzevaltovsky and many others — our Party had managed through an immense amount of organisational and agitational work to win over only a few isolated regiments which had gained the reputation of being Bolshevik-minded units. Particularly distinguished in this respect were the Lettish regiments of the 12th Army on the Northern front. On the one hand it provided a safety-valve for accumulated political passion: Finally, in the event that the demonstration should succeed and receive sympathetic support from the front, the Party always kept in hand the possibility of transforming this armed demonstration into an armed uprising. In our striving to overthrow the Provisional Government we should have been poor revolutionaries if we had not kept that possibility in view. Nevertheless, the action was conceived and was conducted from start to finish as a peaceful, though armed demonstration.

Chapter 7 : Kronstadt - Wikipedia

*1. July 3. On July 3, at about two o'clock in the afternoon, there came from Petersburg to see us at Kronstadt a group of delegates from the 1st Machine-Gun Regiment, which was apparently under Anarchist influence.*

The sailors there were young and literate. The March Revolution of there had been one of the bloodiest uprisings in Russia, with the sailors massacring hundreds of their officers. In May, about 3,000 sailors had joined the Bolsheviks, but it is important to note that many of the Kronstadt sailors were and remained Anarchists and Social Revolutionaries. The sailors were ordered to call off their action, and they backed down, but it was a sign that they were not unquestioning supporters of the Bolsheviks. The Kronstadt sailors were, however, fanatics. When the Provisional Government tried to close down the Anarchist headquarters in Petrograd in June, 50 armed Kronstadt sailors turned up to defend it.

**Background The Kronstadt Mutiny** It is important to realise that the Kronstadt sailors were not the only people pushed to the limit by War Communism in 1918. On 22 January, the Bolsheviks reduced the bread ration by one-third, and even key workers were given a ration of only 200 calories a day. Anyone who was not a fervent Bolshevik was being pushed to the end of their patience. In Moscow on 23 February, 10,000 angry Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries went on strike; the metal factories and shipyards joined the strike. On 27 February a poster appeared saying: They particularly objected to the way Bolshevik party leaders got special privileges "while they existed on starvation rations, Raskolnikov was living like a lord, with banquets, servants and a chauffeur-driven car. On 28 February the crew of the ship Petropavlovsk mutinied. Because it thus merely asked for a return to true revolutionary principles, rather than for an end to the revolution, all the Kronstadt Bolsheviks joined the mutiny too. As Orlando Figes says: On 1 March a crowd of 15,000 soldiers met in the Anchor Square in Kronstadt and declared a revolution. He knew that he had to act quickly "soon the pack ice would be melting and the naval base would become impregnable the British navy had failed to capture it in 1918. But the first Bolshevik troops to attack Kronstadt were young and the Cheka with machine guns had to be placed behind them to stop them retreating. When they attacked on 7 March across the 5-mile stretch of open ice, the Kronstadt defenders mowed them down. Trotsky continued to bombard the Kronstadt fortress with artillery, and gathered an army of 50,000 crack troops. On 16 March they attacked. In an hour battle, 10,000 Red Guards were killed, but Kronstadt was taken. Hundreds of mutineers were imprisoned: The rest were sent to Siberia.

**Effects** The Kronstadt rebellion had two key effects: Many socialists all over the world lost faith in the Bolshevik revolution, which they now saw as a repressive regime.

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*The Petrograd naval authorities had evidently decided to wash their hands of me and leave me to stew in the juice of Bolshevik Kronstadt, considering this to be the lesser evil, since Reval and Helsingfors enjoyed the very best reputation with the supreme command of the Navy.*

The anarchist Emma Goldman, who was in Petrograd at the time of the rebellion, described in a retrospective account from how "the news in the Paris Press about the Kronstadt uprising two weeks before it happened had been stressed in the [official press] campaign against the sailors as proof positive that they had been tools of the Imperialist gang and that rebellion had actually been hatched in Paris. It was too obvious that this yarn was used only to discredit the Kronstadters in the eyes of the workers. Avrich says this memorandum was probably written between January and early February by an agent of an exile opposition group called the National Centre in Finland. Those debates started at the time of the rebellion. Because Leon Trotsky was in charge of the Red Army forces that suppressed the uprising, with the backing of Lenin, the question of whether the suppression was justified became a point of contention on the revolutionary left, in debates between anarchists and Leninist Marxists about the character of the Soviet state and Leninist politics, and more particularly in debates between anarchists and Trotsky and his followers. It remains so to this day. On the pro-Leninist side of those debates, the memorandum published by Avrich is treated as a "smoking gun" showing foreign and counter-revolutionary conspiracy behind the rebellion, for example in an article from by a Trotskyist writer, Abbie Bakan. Bakan says "[t]he document includes remarkably detailed information about the resources, personnel, arms and plans of the Kronstadt rebellion. Avrich reaches a different conclusion as to the meaning of the "Memorandum": The report notes that "among the sailors, numerous and unmistakable signs of mass dissatisfaction with the existing order can be noticed. Nothing has come to light to show that the Secret Memorandum was ever put into practice or that any links had existed between the emigres and the sailors before the revolt. On the contrary, the rising bore the earmarks of spontaneity Had there been a prearranged plan, surely the sailors would have waited a few weeks longer for the ice to melt The rebels, moreover, allowed Kalinin a leading Communist to return to Petrograd, though he would have made a valuable hostage. Further, no attempt was made to take the offensive Significant too, is the large number of Communists who took part in the movement. The Sailors needed no outside encouragement to raise the banner of insurrection Kronstadt was clearly ripe for a rebellion. What set it off was not the machination of emigre conspirators and foreign intelligence agents but the wave of peasant risings throughout the country and the labour disturbances in neighboring Petrograd. And as the revolt unfolded, it followed the pattern of earlier outbursts against the central government from through the Civil War. Firstly, they failed to deliver aid to the rebels or to get French aid to them. Avrich also notes that the revolt "caught the emigres off balance" and that "nothing First, Krivitsky asked, "Is the Soviet Government a fascist government? From Kronstadt during the Bolshevik Revolution in , the sailors of the Baltic Fleet had steamed their cruisers to aid the Communists in capturing Petrograd. Their aid had been decisive They were the first Communists to realize their mistake and the first to try to correct it. When they saw that Communism meant terror and tyranny, they called for the overthrow of the Communist Government and for a time imperiled it. They were bloodily destroyed or sent into Siberian slavery by Communist troops led in person by the Commissar of War, Leon Trotsky, and by Marshal Tukhachevsky, one of whom was later assassinated, the other executed, by the regime they then saved. Krivitsky meant that by the decision to destroy the Kronstadt sailors, and by its cold-blooded action in doing so, Communism had made the choice that changed it from benevolent socialism to malignant fascism. After describing the actual Kronstadt rebellion, Fischer spent many pages applying the concept to subsequent former-communistsâ€”including himself:

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*Yesterday Petrograd seemed to be enduring a second revolution, with radical workers, soldiers and Kronstadt sailors looking like they were about to overthrow the Provisional Government and hand power to the Petrograd Soviet.*

Peter the Great captured the island from the Swedes in and built it into a naval fortress to protect his new capital. The concentration of heavy armory and sailors on the small island made it a bulwark against foreign invasion, but also a tinderbox in times of internal unrest. During the stormy years several mutinies broke out on Kronstadt. The famous cruiser Aurora , which had bombarded the Winter Palace on October 25, with its famous shot heard round the world , belonged to the Baltic Fleet based in Kronstadt. It was a rude shock to the Bolsheviks when the red sailors of Kronstadt went into open rebellion in March. The sailors saw themselves as loyal to the Soviet cause, if not to the Communist rulers. That bitter winter saw Kronstadt, like most other cities in Russia, hungry and discontented. Anger at material deprivations was compounded by the authoritarian regime the Bolsheviks were building, which seemed to violate the spirit of the revolution that the sailors had helped win. Popular unrest finally grew into strikes, which led to riots, lockouts, arrests. Finally on February 26, local Communist authorities declared martial law. A pattern of sharp protest and response escalated rapidly from here to a state of mutiny. The mutiny was centered on two battleships with revolutionary pedigrees, the Petropavlovsk and Sevastopol , which were frozen in the ice of Kronstadt harbor. A delegation headed by Stepan Petrichenko, chief clerk of the Petropavlovsk , drafted a set of fifteen demands which it presented to the Kronstadt Soviet on February. They included such traditional democratic rights as freedom of assembly and speech; egalitarian measures such as equal rations for all working people; and an end to the Bolshevik monopoly on power. The sailors also demanded an end to the strict economic controls of war communism. The Kronstadt Soviet, run by loyal Bolsheviks, called a public meeting for 1 March in response to the insurgent demands. It was attended by over 16, people, including Mikhail Kalinin, who was shouted off the platform when he tried to speak. The assembly adopted the resolutions unanimously, and elected a Revolutionary Committee chaired by Petrichenko. When Pavel Vasiliev chairman of the Kronstadt Soviet and Nikolai Kuzmin Political Commissar of the Baltic Fleet threatened the committee with retribution the next day, they were arrested and imprisoned. Squads of sailors established control over Kronstadt, under the slogan All power to the Soviets, and not the parties. The discontent had grown into full rebellion. When Kalinin reported back to Lenin and Zinoviev, their response was to isolate the island, order a press blackout, and organize special shipments of clothing, shoes, and meat into Petrograd. In an ultimatum issued on March 5, they branded the insurgents as puppets of the White Army. Lev Trotsky was sent to Petrograd to organize the armed response. He assembled as many loyal troops as he could under the command of Mikhail Tukhachevskii, and on March 7 began the bombardment of the island by the great guns of Petrograd. Over the next ten days three bloody assaults were launched against the fortress. Troops marching across the ice were slaughtered, but they gradually depleted the strength and supplies of the rebels. Though the government forces lost hundreds of dead and thousands of wounded, they numbered about 45, troops by March 16, when the final assault was launched. Clad in white snow capes, and bolstered by hundreds of volunteer delegates from the Tenth Party Congress then proceeding in Moscow, the troops attacked by night from three directions and forced their way into the city. Vicious fighting ensued throughout the city, and by March 18, the revolt was crushed. Many rebels escaped across the ice into Finland; many were killed in the fighting, and many who survived were executed or sent to prison camps. The short-lived uprising had a deep if ambivalent impact on Soviet rule. While it was still in progress, the government announced the abolition of grain requisitions, replacing them with a tax in kind. It is widely assumed that the rebellion inspired Lenin and the regime to announce the New Economic Policy, which answered some of the Kronstadt demands. Liberalization of the economy was not matched by liberalization in the political sphere. Russian anarchists and their Western allies, such as the American Alexander Berkman, correctly saw the party reaction as a decisive moment in their history, though they were not fully justified in considering the rebellion part of their own tradition.