

# Nikolai Pavlov aka Petrov, Petrov-Pavlov

Nick Heath

October 31 2015

Nikolai Ivanovich Pavlov was born in Russia in 1881. He joined the Social-Revolutionary Party in 1901. During the 1905 Revolution he took part in the armed uprising of the soldiers' penal battalion in Bobruisk. He was subsequently arrested four times and sentenced to death, spending five years in prison. In 1910 he escaped abroad where he became an anarchist-communist.

In 1917 he was one of the leading lights of the Petrograd Federation of Anarchist Communists, and subsequently the Union of Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda -Voice of Labour . He was an active participant in the July and October uprisings against the Provisional Government of Kerensky. He wrote the famous and well known statement Why I Am An Anarchist on 23rd October 1917 in the paper Vol'nyi Kronshtadt. During the Civil War, he was a leading light in the Moscow bakers union, a member of the Secretariat of the Russian Anarcho-Syndicalists (1918) and of the Secretariat of the Moscow Workers' Union of Anarchists (1920-1922), and of the Provisional Executive Bureau of the Russian Confederation of Anarchist-syndicalists(1920-1921). He and other Moscow anarchist-communists and anarcho-syndicalists united to set up the Moscow Union of Anarcho-Syndicalists-Communists in early 1919.

Pavlov was repeatedly elected by workers to the Moscow City Soviet. When the Communist regime attempted to replace delegates to the bakers' union with their own appointees, the bakers revolted and threatened to stop work. When the Cheka attempted to arrest Pavlov, the elected candidate, the bakers surrounded him, allowing him to get home safely. They subsequently issued an ultimatum which meant that the authorities backed off from deposing their choice of Pavlov.

The Moscow bakers union was a stronghold of anarchism, along with similar sections in Kiev and Kharkhov. It heavily criticised the official Communist unions as controlled by the State and operating to police workers. Alongside the anarchists and working closely with them were SR-Maximalists. Maximalists like Nyushenkov were also elected as delegates by the bakers, as well as one Left SR, I. Steinberg. The bakers worked in two large cooperatives (artels), Freedom of Labour and Anthill.

Writing about the Freedom of Labour cooperative in the anarchist paper The Initiative Pavlov wrote: "There was a developed charter that puts forward the following objectives: the most complete and fair satisfaction of the vital needs of its members. This goal is achieved through cooperative sustainable use of technical means and the comradely use of manpower in accordance with the basic principles of the socialist system. The artel with the same purpose, puts the problem of raising the cultural level of its members through the device of lectures, courses, schools

and so on. ...Upbringing of the growing generation in the spirit of the new free-communist development. ”

Subsequently the Moscow Trade Union Council, controlled by the regime, made a decision to dissolve the bakers' union on 17th-18th June 1920. Pavlov was arrested, along with Niushenkov and another Maximalist, Kamyshev<sup>1</sup>. Also arrested were two section members Kusnetsov and Viurgov.

A complete report by Melnitschansky , Chair of the Council appeared in No. 125 of Pravda. “The meeting thereupon adopted the following resolution : Due to the systematic abuse and breach of union discipline by the members of the union committee of the Moscow bakers, it was decided to dissolve the section of the Moscow bakers and include the bakers in the union of the foodstuff workers. The members of the former committee of the section of the bakers' union, N. Pavlov, Kamyshev, Niushenkov, Viurgov and Kusnetsov are excluded from the union movement and shall, furthermore, be held to answer before a judiciary board. They lose their right to speak before any assembly and can never more be elected to a responsible post in the unions.” Pavlov was driven from holding positions in the union and of the mandate of delegate to the Moscow Soviet.

Pavlov's home at 18 Bolshoi Cheryshevsky was raided by the Cheka on October 24th , 1920 when a meeting of anarchists took place there. Pavlov was arrested along with Volin who had only just been released from a Cheka prison, and fifty others. Later on December 1st of that year he, Volin and all the participants in a conference of anarcho-syndicalists in Kharkhov were arrested by the Cheka.

On February 8th 1921 , learning of the grave condition of Kropotkin, he went with Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Alexander Schapiro to visit him. Unfortunately the train was delayed and Kropotkin died one hour before they arrived. Pavlov was subsequently heavily involved in the committee to prepare for Kropotkin's funeral. He can be seen in the short film dedicated to the funeral which has recently re-emerged.

Later on June 8th of the same year, Pavlov was arrested with Vasily Lukich Panyushkin,<sup>2</sup> the Kronstadt sailor. He was exiled for a year to the mouth of the North Dvina river.

Pavlov's various spells in prison had severely affected his health, and the constant pressure and recurring arrests forced him to withdraw from the anarchist movement. However this did not stop him from being arrested as an "anarchist underground fighter" in 1930 and exiled to Tashkent in Central Asia for three years, where he soon died on July 29th 1932.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pyotr Dementevich Kamyshev (1879-1938) born at Vyazma in Smolensk province who joined the revolutionary movement in the late 1890s, was a member of the Social Democrats (RSDLP) and then the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and from the end of 1905 was an SR-Maximalist. . in 1918-1922 he was a member of the Central Council of the Union of Socialist Revolutionary-Maximalists. He was a consistent supporter of the alliance with the anarcho-syndicalists. He was repeatedly arrested by the Tsarist police and then the Soviet authorities. He was shot in Krasnoyarsk on July 20th, 1938 along with Sergei Sergeevich Tuzhilkin. The latter born in 1909 was an anarchist from the late 1920s, and first arrested in 1929. From that time he was constantly imprisoned and exiled., and was a member of groups of exiled anarchists in Tashkent and Petropavlovsk. There is a harrowing and poignant testimony by Kamyshev at his trial (in Russian [pkk.memo.ru/letters\\_pdf/000151.pdf](http://pkk.memo.ru/letters_pdf/000151.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> Panyushkin , born in 1887 emigrated to St Petersburg, where he worked as a tool-maker. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1907. He later was drafted into the Navy and was a leading light in the revolt of the Kronstadt sailors in February 1917. He left the Party in disgust in 1921, forming his own Workers and Peasants Socialist Party. After his arrest he was sentenced to two years hard labour. He later rejoined the Communist Party, was again arrested in 1937 and served over 10 years more in prison, dying in 1960.

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)  
Anti-Copyright



Nick Heath  
Nikolai Pavlov aka Petrov, Petrov-Pavlov  
October 31 2015

<https://libcom.org/history/nikolai-pavlov-aka-petrov-petrov-Pavlov>  
A short biography of Russian anarchist Nikolai Pavlov, famous for his statement "Why I Am An Anarchist"

**[usa.anarchistlibraries.net](http://usa.anarchistlibraries.net)**