

Preface

This collection of political works by Peter Kropotkin is intended to make some of his most representative writings on anarchism and revolution more accessible. The material contained in this book consists of essays and letters which either have not been previously translated or which have been out of print since their original publication. While the entire scope of Kropotkin's political thinking cannot possibly be projected in a single volume, it is hoped that many of his most fundamental conceptions have been exemplified in the following pages.

The essays have been selected to provide an understanding of Kropotkin's interpretation of the role of anarchism in modern history, his criticism of capitalism, his conception of revolution and his views on the ideals to be realized in the postrevolutionary society of the future. The articles dealing specifically with Russia supplement these theoretical writings by supplying the reader with a concrete analysis of a society confronted by an authentic revolutionary opposition. This analysis can be followed to its conclusion in the section on Kropotkin's meeting with Lenin and his letters to the Bolshevik leader after the 1917 revolution. The letters to Nettlau, Steffen, and Brandes present

additional concerns which are closely related to the large themes of anarchism and revolution described in the essays.

The material has been arranged chronologically in order to stress the development of Kropotkin's ideology. All of the essays and letters have been reproduced in their entirety. Explanatory notes have been incorporated into the text, although these have been limited as much as possible. Kropotkin's essays were meant to be read directly, without the distractions from the issues at hand which scholarly footnotes frequently produce. For this reason, biographical data on the numerous personalities mentioned by Kropotkin—statesmen, scholars, and revolutionaries—have been placed in a glossary of names at the end of the book. Kropotkin's own notes have been retained in the text.

I wish to express my gratitude to Vernon Richards of the Freedom Press for his cooperation in the preparation of this anthology and also to Professor Richard Wortman of the University of Chicago for his astute criticism of the introduction to this volume. Needless to say, the errors that may remain are due solely to my own intransigence and not to the critical comments I have received. I am especially grateful to my wife Ylana, who has been of great aid in the various stages of the preparation of this book. Finally, concerning Russian transliteration, I have adopted a slightly modified variant of the Library of Congress system (names most familiar in English have not been systematized strictly: hence, Peter, instead of Petr, Kropotkin) and Russian dates are in the old style (the Julian calendar used in Russia until February 1918 was twelve days behind the Western calendar in the nineteenth century and thirteen days behind in this century).

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