Kropotkin, Petr Alexeevich (December 9, 1842- February 8, 1921)

Petr Alexeevich Kropotkin was a prominent Russian anarchist thinker of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Very much a polyglot, Kropotkin’s intellectual endeavors included contributions to a variety of fields in the humanities and sciences. The core of his world-view was a belief in the natural tendency toward mutual aid among members of a particular species, an idea that he began to develop during his geographical expeditions to Asia in the mid-1860s, and that is perhaps best developed in his *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902). This position, inspired by both his personal observations and thinkers such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, was very much at odds with a competition-based understanding of human nature, such as the “Social Darwinism” espoused by many of his contemporaries. The Tsarist police arrested Kropotkin in 1874 because of his radical affiliations and, after escaping and fleeing Russia in 1876, he spent more than thirty years in exile in Western Europe. Kropotkin returned to Russia following the February Revolution of 1917, but found his activity suppressed by the Bolshevik-led government that seized power later in October. Because of Kropotkin’s popularity among a variety of political parties, critics of the Soviet government later used his denunciation of Lenin and the Bolsheviks to discredit the Soviet government.

Bibliography:

<http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/kropotkin/kropotkinbiblio.html>

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