

## Book Review:

Anarchist Communism

By Peter Kropotkin

(London, UK: Penguin Books, 2020)

Reviewed by Jennifer Rose

Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) is considered one of the fathers of anarchism, along with other European revolutionary theorists of the 19th century, like fellow Russian, Mikhail Bakunin; and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Anarchist Communism, first published in book form in French as "La Conquête du Pain" (1892), and in English as "The Conquest of Bread" (1906), was first published in Penguin Classics 2020 (using the Revised Edition 1913 text).

"Anarchist Communism" sets forth the insurrectionary anarchist writings of Kropotkin, beginning in Chapter 1 "Our Riches" where he succinctly states

"there is not even a thought, or an invention, which is not common property, born of the past and the present." (p. 8).

In Chapter 2 "Well-Being for All" exhorts: "let us have the courage to recognize



that well-being for all, hence for world possible, must be realized." (p. 32)

In Chapter 3 "Anarchist Communism", he goes on to proclaim his theory, which is summed up in this nutshell:

"It is anarchist Communism, Communism without government - the Communism of the Free. It is the synthesis of the two ideals pursued by humanity throughout the ages - economic and political liberty" (pp. 43 - 44).

"We can already catch glimpses of a world in which the bonds which bind the individual are no longer laws, but social habits - the result of the need felt by each one of us to seek the support, the cooperation, the sympathy of his neighbors." (p. 46).

In Chapter 4 "Expropriation", Kropotkin notes, "Everywhere you will find that the wealth of the wealthy springs from the poverty of the poor." He then explains what is meant by expropriation and



Revolution:

"...this is what the people mean by revolution. As soon as they have made a clean sweep of the government, they will seek first of all to ensure to themselves decent dwellings and sufficient food and clothes - free of capitalist rent." (p. 72)

In Chapter 5 "Food", Kropotkin explains the failure of past revolutions to prioritize the needs of the people for food, housing, and other necessities over the questions of political organization of a "free society".

"It has always been the middle-class idea to harangue about 'great principles' - great lies rather! - the idea of the people will be to provide bread for all!"

The book ends with a bibliography of a hundred different titles of books by the great thinkers, pioneers, radicals & visionaries whose ideas have inspired debate, dissent, war and revolution! (A)