

# **Kropotkin, Woodcock and Les Temps Nouveaux**

Anarcho

May 15, 2015

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My “Sages and Movements”<sup>1</sup> attempted to fill a gap in our understanding of the contribution of Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) to the anarchist press. As well as discussing the importance of situating important thinkers (“sages”) within their wider movement, the article also included a bibliography of Kropotkin’s works. While incomplete, this bibliography showed that Kropotkin wrote far more than is usually assumed based on his works that are readily available in English. Indeed, the majority of his articles remain “hidden” so to speak from the anarchist movement in archives and, as such, those writing on Kropotkin’s ideas or on anarchism in general have a very incomplete picture of his ideas.

Since the production of that incomplete bibliography, the French National Library has placed all copies of *Les Temps Nouveaux* on line.<sup>2</sup> This is a tremendous boon for both anarchists and researchers on anarchism as it allows easy access to one of the French movement’s most important journals. As will be shown, in the following critique of George Woodcock’s discussion of Kropotkin, access to this material allows a more complete understanding of Kropotkin’s ideas and the issues he considered important while part of the movement. His contribution to anarchism can then be more fully assessed and previous interpretations of the evolution of Kropotkin’s ideas challenged.

George Woodcock (1912–1995) was a Canadian anarchist who became one of the most prolific writers on anarchists and the anarchist movement. His *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (1962) soon became the standard popular introduction to the subject and he wrote numerous articles and books on libertarian thinkers and subjects. With Ivan Avakumović he wrote the first biography of Kropotkin, *The Anarchist Prince*, in 1950<sup>3</sup> which made the claim that “[a]s the 1890’s advance, the note of extreme optimism begins to fade from [Kropotkin’s] writings.” This interpretation was echoed by John Quail in his book on the British anarchist movement where he suggested Kropotkin was “developing his evolutionary views” and how to “nourish the gradual growth of a libertarian society” during his “tranquil” exile in Britain.<sup>4</sup> Like Woodcock, Quail suggests this transformation dates from the 1890s.

While it is true that Kropotkin “retired more and more into the intellectual world where his ideas might play a useful preparatory role” this is not linked to a growing reformist position which allegedly saw Kropotkin arguing that anarchism would arrive via a “mutation in society” rather than by “heroic revolutions on the pattern of 1789, 1848 and 1871.”<sup>5</sup> As will be shown, the evidence provided to support this analysis is weak and the analysis of Kropotkin’s writings for *Les Temps Nouveaux* (*The New Times*), which started publication in 1895 and would reflect any change, also contradicts it. Both confirm that Kropotkin’s revolutionary perspective did not change between his joining the anarchist movement in 1872 and the outbreak of the First World War.

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<sup>1</sup> “Sages and Movements: An Incomplete Peter Kropotkin Bibliography” *Anarchist Studies* 22:1

<sup>2</sup> gallica.bnf.fr

<sup>3</sup> George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince: a biographical study of Peter Kropotkin* (London: Boardman, 1950)

<sup>4</sup> *The Slow Burning Fuse: The Lost History of the British Anarchists* (London: Freedom Press, 2014), 255

<sup>5</sup> Woodcock and Avakumović, 244, 246

## Kropotkin and Revolution

Significantly, Woodcock fails to support his claims with any significant evidence other than a paragraph from the end of Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*.<sup>6</sup> Yet this not only fails to bolster his position, Woodcock also fails to take into account the much lengthier sections of that work in which Kropotkin discusses the International Working Men's Association and its conflicts, where he sides with those – “the Bakuninists” – who argued that the International was “essentially a working-men's organisation, [with] the workers understanding it as a labour movement and not as a political party.” For Kropotkin, the International was the model for the anarchist movement: “The workers of all nations were called upon to form their own organisations for a direct struggle against capitalism; to work out the means of socialising the production of wealth and its consumption; and, when they should be ready to do so, to take possession of the necessities for production, and to control production”<sup>7</sup> As he noted in the “Anarchism” entry for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: “Within these federations developed now what may be described as modern anarchism.”<sup>8</sup>

Woodcock also ignores passages in Kropotkin's *Memoirs* that show his continued commitment to a revolutionary position. A “society in which the workers would have a dominant voice”, Kropotkin wrote, required “a revolution far more profound than any of the revolutions which history had on record.” In such a rebellion “the workers would have against them, not the rotten generation of aristocrats against whom the French peasants and republicans had to fight in the [eighteenth] century – and even that fight was a desperate one – but the far more powerful, intellectually and physically, middle-classes, which have at their service all the potent machinery of the modern State.” He had no illusions that the privileged classes would simply accept their dispossession, for “each time that such a period of accelerated evolution and reconstruction on a grand scale begins, civil war is liable to break out on a small or large scale” and so the question was “how to attain the greatest results with the most limited amount of civil war, the smallest number of victims, and a minimum of mutual embitterment.” To achieve this there was “only one means; namely, that the oppressed part of society should obtain the clearest possible conception of what they intend to achieve, and how, and that they should be imbued with the enthusiasm which is necessary for that achievement.”<sup>9</sup> This is hardly consistent with Woodcock's claims.

Kropotkin stated in his *Memoirs* that *Words of a Rebel* was “the critical part” of his “work on anarchism.” He had, he wrote, “to interrupt” this work when he had been arrested and on release he “began to work out the constructive part of an anarchist-communist society – so far as it can now be forecast – in a series of articles” in *La Révolte*.<sup>10</sup> These were later revised and incorporated into *La Conquête du Pain* (*The Conquest of Bread*) in 1892, an explicitly revolutionary work which was translated into English in 1906 with a second edition in 1913 (significantly, he did not indicate any change in perspective in his prefaces to either edition).

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<sup>6</sup> Woodcock and Avakumović, 246; Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (Montreal/New York: Black Rose, 1989), 467–8.

<sup>7</sup> *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 261, 359

<sup>8</sup> *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (Edinburgh/Oakland/Baltimore: AK Press, 2014), Iain McKay (ed.), 170

<sup>9</sup> *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 270–1.

<sup>10</sup> *Memoirs of Revolutionist*, 463.

As for the retiring into “the intellectual world”, this is supported by the analysis of articles with the nearly half being published in book form. However, this does not imply a change in perspective when we look at those works. While *The State: Its Historic Role* can “in a way be regarded as the final chapter”<sup>11</sup> of *Mutual Aid*, its aim is to discuss the evolution of the State as an instrument of minority rule and the impossibility of using it for popular social transformation. *The Great French Revolution*, like Kropotkin’s numerous articles on the Paris Commune in the 1880s and 1890s, aims to provide anarchists with lessons of this period and show the “true fount and origin of the Revolution — the people’s readiness to take up arms — that the historians of the Revolution have not yet done justice — the justice owed to it by the history of civilisation.”<sup>12</sup> *Modern Science and Anarchism* summarises anarchist ideas and its account of anarchist tactics repeats his previous writings on both militant trade unionism and revolution. None of these “intellectual” works suggests a reformist perspective.

Other factors are at also at play. We must not forget that when *Les Temps Nouveaux* started publication Kropotkin was 52 and when it ended he was 71. Moreover, as Woodcock himself noted, by 1908 “Kropotkin’s concern over his health again became acute” with good reason as he had contracted influenza in New York during 1901 and suffered a severe heart attack on his return to Britain while a speech given in the East End of London in December 1905 resulted in another heart attack. Yet during “the intervals between illnesses, he worked continuously on a great variety of subjects.”<sup>13</sup>

His two trips to North America<sup>14</sup> in 1897 and 1901 may have reflected his scientific (“intellectual”) credentials but both were utilised for holding meetings on anarchism. Significantly, his final article to *Les Temps Nouveaux* before his 1897 trip was on a British Engineers strike and while on it he sent one on the slaughter of strikers in America.<sup>15</sup> This latter article concluded: “Nothing, nothing but war, war without mercy, will lead to any solution for the United States, and the war will be terrible, for the limit of the workers’ patience has long been exceeded.”<sup>16</sup> This is inconsistent with claims of a development of a reformist position.

Then there are the mundane aspects of life like earning a living. Unlike Marx and Engels who lived off the surplus-value exploited out of those toiling in the latter’s factories, he rejected being supported by the movement and he (rightly) noted that a “socialist must always rely upon his own work for his living.”<sup>17</sup> His primary income was his writing as a scientific journalist and the income for the works that were not primarily anarchist and so not published by anarchist groups.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, these works were usually written for English language publishers or based on articles written for English language journals. The exception is *The Great French Revolution* which was also published in French and is by far the most explicitly libertarian – and revolutionary!

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<sup>11</sup> Woodcock and Avakumović, 338.

<sup>12</sup> *The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793* (London: Orbach and Chambers Ltd, 1971), 15.

<sup>13</sup> Woodcock and Avakumović, 297, 259

<sup>14</sup> Paul Avrich, “Kropotkin in America”, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988)

<sup>15</sup> See ‘Grande Grève des mécaniciens’ (17<sup>th</sup> of July 17 1897) and ‘La Tuerie de Hazelton’ (9<sup>th</sup> of October 1897). The Hazelton massacre was mentioned in his lecture on “The Development of Trade Unionism” he delivered in the Memorial Hall on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1898 and which was later published in *Freedom* in March 1898 (included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*)

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Woodcock and Avakumović, 276

<sup>17</sup> *Memoirs of Revolutionist*, 354.

<sup>18</sup> *In Russian and French Prisons* (1887), *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1898), *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1899), *Mutual Aid* (1902), *Russian Literature* (1905) and *The Great French Revolution* (1909).

– in nature. We can then, for example, expect that the period when he was writing the articles for the *Atlantic Monthly* that became *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (September 1898 to September 1899) would see fewer articles for *Les Temps Nouveaux* and that is the case. Likewise, significant research was required for his many articles for the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (the one on anarchism is just the best known).

In terms of the *Modern Science and Anarchism*, three editions of this work were published during this period: the original Russian one in 1901, an expanded English version in 1912 and a book version in French in 1913 which as well as the revised *La Science Moderne et L'Anarchie* also included *Communisme et Anarchie*, *L'État: son rôle historique*, *L'État Moderne* and *Herbert Spencer: sa Philosophie*. The second edition clearly benefited from research required from his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry on Anarchism as shown in his 1911 series entitled 'L'Anarchie' which become part of the revised editions of *Modern Science and Anarchism*.<sup>19</sup> Neither the entry on "Anarchism" nor *Modern Science and Anarchism* rejected the revolutionary communist-anarchist position of militant labour unionism as the key means of struggle nor did they suggest that libertarian communism could be achieved via peaceful, gradual reforms – quite the reverse.<sup>20</sup>

There is another issue with Woodcock's account. Given that most anarchists were now taking Kropotkin's position on involvement in the labour movement, it is questionable to suggest as Woodcock does that other anarchists viewed him as "a man to be respected as a theoretician, but to be disregarded on the question of tactics in the daily struggle from which he lived in retirement".<sup>21</sup> Quite the reverse: as numerous articles for *Freedom* and *Les Temps Nouveaux* primarily focused on issues to do with the workers' movement and the importance of anarchist tactics within it.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that Kropotkin's opinions were still being sought on issues of the daily struggle but with recognition that his age and health precluded him taking a more active role. So, for example, his non-attendance at the 1907 International Anarchist Congress can better be explained by these factors and the attendance of those, such as Errico Malatesta, who shared his views on subjects like syndicalism than, as Woodcock suggests, a change in how the movement viewed him and his writings. It can also be seen from the many libertarian militants – such as Augustin Souchy (FAU: *Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands*), Armando Borghi (USI: *Unione Sindacale Italiana*), Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Nestor Makhno – who visited Kropotkin during the Russian Revolution to seek his advice.

Similarly for Quail: the sole article he referenced – "The Development of Trade Unionism" (*Freedom*, March 1898) – does not support such an interpretation: "Imagine a Trade Union movement not only for increasing wages and reducing hours, but inspired by the grander idea of getting rid of the drones and taking possession of the works". Three years later Kropotkin wrote a "Letter to French and British Trade Union Delegates" which reiterated what was "required now is an *International Federation of all the Trade Unions all over the World*" for "the direct struggle

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<sup>19</sup> A footnote of the first instalment stated: "Our readers remember, perhaps, a series of my articles which were published in *les Temps Nouveaux* in 1903 and which were part of a pamphlet *Modern science and Anarchism*. Anarchy in this pamphlet was treated very briefly; I referred the reader to other works. Now, I fill this gap, and I give highlights of our ideas and their origins." ('L'Anarchie', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 21<sup>st</sup> of January 1911)

<sup>20</sup> Kropotkin's article on "Anarchism" for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and extensive extracts from the expended 1912 edition of *Modern Science and Anarchism* are included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*.

<sup>21</sup> Woodcock and Avakumović, 297

<sup>22</sup> This can be seen by Kropotkin providing a preface to the English translation of the 1909 syndicalist novel *Comment nous ferons la Révolution* written by Émile Pataud and Émile Pouget (included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*)

of *Labour against Capital*.” Both these articles advocate the basic revolutionary syndicalist ideas that he had argued in, say, 1879:

“the expropriation pure and simple of the present holders of the large landed estates, of the instruments of labour, and of capital of every kind, and by the seizure of all such capital by the cultivators, the workers’ organisations, and the agricultural and municipal communes [...] we think that socialists must take advantage of all opportunities which may lead to an economic agitation [...] begun on the basis of the struggle of the exploited against the exploiters [...] We think that the best method of shaking this edifice [of the state] would be to stir up the economic struggle”.<sup>23</sup>

As will be shown, this perspective is repeated by Kropotkin from the start of the 1890s and continues throughout his contributions to *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

## Kropotkin at the start of the 1890s

A talk made in Britain at the end of 1892 to commemorate the Chicago Anarchists is indicative of Kropotkin’s views at the start of the decade when Woodcock claims he revised his ideas in a reformist direction. He spoke of “having had our period of isolation [...] during which period we have elaborated and strengthened our principles”<sup>24</sup> and that anarchists now had to apply their ideas:

“I should say that the chief point to be achieved now is to make the Anarchist ideas permeate the great labour movement which is so rapidly growing in Europe and America; and to do so by all those means, and only by such means, which are in strict accordance with our own principles [...]

“No one can underrate the importance of this labour movement for the coming revolution. It will be those agglomerations of wealth producers which will have to re-organise production on new social bases. They will have to organise the life of the nation and the use which it will make of the hitherto accumulated riches and means of production. They – the labourers, grouped together – not the politicians.”<sup>25</sup>

Thus anarchists had “to bring our ideas into that movement, to spread them, by all means, among those masses which hold in their hands the future issue of the revolution” and to “propagate among the masses the ideas which we consider as the bases of the coming development [...] And it is only in the great working masses — supported by their energies, applied by them to real life — that our ideas will attain their full development.”<sup>26</sup>

Daniel Guérin also noted this, writing of how Kropotkin in “a series of articles which appeared in 1890” affirmed the need to take part in the labour movement and “proposed a return to mass trade unionism like that of which the First International had been the embryo and propagator.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 356, 360, 500–3

<sup>24</sup> “Commemoration of the Chicago Martyrs”, *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 344

<sup>25</sup> “Commemoration of the Chicago Martyrs”, 344

<sup>26</sup> “Commemoration of the Chicago Martyrs”, 344–5

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 78.

However, this reorientation towards the labour movement which became pronounced in 1890 actually dates from the 1889 London Dock Strike<sup>28</sup> and as Caroline Cahm has shown Kropotkin had been keen to re-orientate the French libertarians towards the example of the anarchists in the First International in the early 1880s.<sup>29</sup>

We now turn to *Les Temps Nouveaux* to show that this consistency in Kropotkin's views continued throughout the 1890s and onwards.

## From *The Rebel* to *The New Times*

After becoming an anarchist on a trip to Western Europe in 1872, Kropotkin returned to his native Russia and was arrested and imprisoned for his activism in 1874. Two years later, he escaped from the prison hospital and he went into exile, only returning to Russia after the February revolution of 1917. For a period of over 35 years – from 1877 to his expulsion from the movement due to his support of the Allies in 1914 – he was involved at the heart of the European anarchist movement and contributed to all its debates including championing both libertarian communism and anarchist involvement in the labour movement.

Kropotkin was instrumental in launching and editing one of anarchism's most important and popular journals: *Le Revolté (The Rebel)*. This was launched on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1879 and Kropotkin remained its editor until he was arrested in December 1882. It was suppressed in September 1887 when “[o]ur ‘boy’, ‘Le Revolté’, prosecuted for anti-militarist propaganda, was compelled to change its title-page and now appeared under a feminine name”,<sup>30</sup> *La Révolte (Revolt)*. Due to his imprisonment and subsequent exile in Britain, *La Révolte* was edited by Jean Grave but Kropotkin still considered it “my child”.<sup>31</sup> It, too, was closed by the state on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1894 after Grave was arrested in January 1894 as part of the repressions associated with the “Trail of the Thirty”.<sup>32</sup>

After the jury acquitted the anarchists in the trial, Grave sought to re-launch *La Révolte* but Elisée Reclus “persuaded him to call the proposed paper *Les Temps Nouveaux*”.<sup>33</sup> This journal ran from the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1895 to the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1914 and was issued weekly except for a period between 1909 and 1910 when it was fortnightly. Like its previous two incarnations, it was closed by the state as part of the general repression of the left when the First World War started – ironically, given that Grave followed Kropotkin in urging support for the Allies in the imperialist

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<sup>28</sup> Constance Bantman, “From Trade Unionism to Syndicalisme Révolutionnaire to Syndicalism: The British Origins of French Syndicalism,” *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism: the Individual, the National and the Transnational* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), David Berry and Constance Bantman (eds.), 126–140.

<sup>29</sup> *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism, 1872–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Cahm shows that Guérin was mistaken to present Kropotkin as an early advocate of “propaganda by the deed” (*Anarchism*, 74–5) and that he wrongly attributes “L’Action” (*Le Revolté*, 25<sup>th</sup> December 1880) to him. Carlo Cafiero wrote this article, while Kropotkin at this time “was anxious to revive the International as an organisation for aggressive strike action to counteract the influence of parliamentary socialists on the labour movement.” (Cahm, 139–40, 257)

<sup>30</sup> *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 463

<sup>31</sup> In a letter to William Morris in April 1886 (quoted in Marie Fleming, *The Geography of Freedom: The Odyssey of Elisée Reclus* [Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1988], 137)

<sup>32</sup> Louis Patsouras, *The Anarchism of Jean Grave: Editor, Journalist, and Militant* (Montreal/New York/London: Black Rose Books, 2003), 48–51

<sup>33</sup> Fleming, 174



conflict.<sup>34</sup> Grave sporadically produced a *Bulletin* during the war but attempts to resurrect *Les Temps Nouveaux* after its end failed due the hostility of the majority of the movement for those who betrayed anarchist principles in 1914.<sup>35</sup> As regards Kropotkin, its post-war run from 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1919 to June-July 1921 included a translation of his “Message to the workers of the western world”<sup>36</sup> summarising his views on the Russian Revolution.

Kropotkin later recounted that *Le Revolté* aimed at being “moderate in tone, but revolutionary in substance, and I did my best to write it in such a style that complex historical and economic questions should be comprehensible to every intelligent worker.” Rather than be “mere annals of complaints about existing conditions”, the “oppression of the workers” and describing a “succession of hopeless efforts” to change these which would produce “a most depressing influence upon the reader” which the “burning words” of the editor tries to counteract, Kropotkin thought “a revolutionary paper must be, above all, a record of those symptoms which everywhere announce the coming of a new era, the germination of new forms of social life, the growing revolt against antiquated forms of social life” for it “is hope, not despair, which makes successful revolutions.”<sup>37</sup>

The final issue of *Les Temps Nouveaux* proclaimed itself – as it had for many years – “Ex-Journal ‘La Révolte’” in a sub-title and Kropotkin in 1899 stated that the journal he founded in 1879 “still continues, at Paris, under the title of ‘Temps Nouveaux’”.<sup>38</sup> However, in spite of playing a key role in French anarchism for over 30 years, very little material from its various incarnations is easily available. In terms of *Le Revolté*, Kropotkin’s *Words of a Rebel* was a selection of his articles from 1879 to 1882 published in 1885 when he was in prison (but not translated fully into English until 1992). A similar collection of articles from *La Révolte* appeared as *The Conquest of Bread* in 1892 (and published in English in 1906). No similar collection of articles appeared from *Les Temps Nouveaux* although it did publish pieces by Kropotkin that became books (namely *The State: Its Historic Role, Modern Science and Anarchism* and *The Great French Revolution*).

Given this, the articles “buried” in the journals Kropotkin was intimately involved in (*Le Revolté*, *La Révolte*, *Les Temps Nouveaux* and *Freedom*) are essential to understanding his ideas both in terms of what remained consistent and what changed (and how and when).

## An analysis of Kropotkin articles in *Les Temps Nouveaux*

During the lifetime of *Les Temps Nouveaux* Kropotkin produced 152 articles on a wide range of subjects. His contributions to the journal varied considerably over the two decades of its existence, from a minimum of 3 to a maximum 17 in a year.<sup>39</sup> Many years saw articles which were subsequently published in book form and this is indicated as well in order to indicate how many articles reflected research rather than current events, issues within the labour/socialist movement or debates within the libertarian movement.

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<sup>34</sup> Patsouras, 99

<sup>35</sup> David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917 to 1945* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2009),

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<sup>36</sup> The original English version can be found in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*.

<sup>37</sup> *Memoirs of Revolutionist*, 389–90.

<sup>38</sup> *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 390

<sup>39</sup> Excluding 1914 during which Kropotkin had not contributed any articles by the time it closed in August.

If there is a consistency in Kropotkin's perspective we would expect articles on the labour movement to be a significant part of his writings in *Les Temps Nouveaux*. This requires looking at his articles and grouping them based on their area of concern.<sup>40</sup>

This raises the issue of identifying the focus of an article which can be difficult due to the interwoven nature of certain issues. For example, articles that discuss the failures of Marxism must also be counted as articles on the labour movement due to the domination of Social Democracy within it. Similarly, what could be classed as "historic" articles on the First International and the errors that flowed from following the Marxist path on "political action" rather than militant trade unionism are better classified as discussing the labour movement due to the theme of the article being learning from (relatively recent) past mistakes and applying those lessons today. In terms of articles on current events, these showed his embedded analysis of the state (that is, he recognised that the political and economic systems were interwoven) and so his account of the Modern State as well as war, imperialism and militarism are bound up with his analysis of capitalism as an economic system.

The categories used in **Table 1: Thematic Analysis of *Les Temps Nouveaux* articles** are mostly self-explanatory. The difference between "Anarchism" and "Anarchist Movement" indicates that some articles are about anarchist ideas or anarchist history (the former) while others are contributions to debates between anarchists on issues within the movement (the latter). Most articles cover more than one category. For example, articles on the workers' movement often (but not always) also referred to Marxism while articles on militarism, war and imperialism also by necessity discussed capitalism and the state.

Of the 152 articles, a fifth are on the workers' movement – doubling to forty percent once articles subsequently published as a book are excluded. While most of these are related to discussing the failures of Marxism and contrasting the libertarian alternative of direct action by workers' unions, a third are focused exclusively on the workers' movement and its struggles – including articles on a British engineering strike, a general strike in Holland as well as anarchism and trade unions. As would be expected given the publication of both *The State: Its Historic Role* and *The Great French Revolution*<sup>41</sup> during this period, a significant number of articles focus on historical analysis (nearly 40%) or were subsequently published as a book (nearly 50%).

## Kropotkin, Revolution and *Les Temps Nouveaux*

The articles in *Les Temps Nouveaux* show Kropotkin's focus was very much on the application of anarchist ideas, of applying them in the workers' movement and in analysing society and its history. He was still very much producing works with a revolutionary class struggle perspective throughout that journal's life.

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<sup>40</sup> It should also be mentioned that Kropotkin's writings also appeared in *Les Temps Nouveaux supplément littéraire*. For example, four articles were included in volume III (which covers the period of 1900 [T3, N1] to 1902 [T3, N51]). As would be expected, these do not reflect the day-to-day issues of the anarchist movement and are of a more theoretical nature.

<sup>41</sup> Kropotkin published 26 articles in total between 1903 and 1907 about the French Revolution reflecting the significant amount of time he spent researching this topic. It should also be noted that he wrote about the revolution and the lessons anarchists could draw from it throughout his time in the anarchist movement.

Category	Number <sup>a</sup>	% (total)	% (non-book)	Notes
Book	72	47	0	The books are <i>The State: Its Historic Role</i> (10), <i>Modern Science and Anarchism</i> (36) and <i>The Great French Revolution</i> (26)
Historical	59	39	16	The two articles not subsequently published as a book are about the founding of <i>Le Révolté</i>
Workers Movement	32	21	40	Eleven not on Marxism
Capitalism and the State	29	19	36	Some of these were subsequently included in the expanded 1913 French edition of <i>Modern Science and Anarchism</i> .
Anarchism	23	15	29	Five articles on Herbert Spencer <sup>b</sup>
Other	20	13	25	
Marxism	20	13	25	
Militarism/War/Imperialism	19	13	24	
Anarchist Movement	16	11	20	
Russia	8	5	10	Four articles on the 1905 Russian Revolution
Repression	7	5	9	
				State repression of anarchists, radicals and workers/strikes.

**Table 1: Thematic Analysis of *Les Temps Nouveaux* articles**

<sup>a</sup> Some articles cover more than one category and therefore the numbers exceed 152 and corresponding percentages will not add up to 100%.

<sup>b</sup> Four of these articles are included in the expanded 1913 French edition of *Modern Science and Anarchism*.

His numerous writings on the labour movement in *Les Temps Nouveaux* show that he still saw change as developing from the war of the classes and its strikes and insurrections.<sup>42</sup> This revolutionary position is most obviously seen in “Insurrection et Révolution”<sup>43</sup> but also when that journal was launched in 1895 when Kropotkin contributed a series of articles<sup>44</sup> which explicitly addressed the possibility of reforming capitalism away by means of co-operatives and other “palliatives” and dismissed the notion:

“The struggle, the war against the exploiter, always remains the only weapon of the exploited. [...] While the struggle, by the strike, the war with the machines, the war against the land lord (which takes a thousand different characteristics depending on the location), and revolts against the State, *unites* the workers – these expedients, such as the cooperative, *divides* them. [...] We know that in the social revolution consumer and producer associations will be one of the forms of the emerging society. But not this [kind of] association which has for its goal receiving its [own] surplus-value or profit. And we propagate all our ideas, we fan the whole of our revolt against the world which we are leaving. We propagate our ideas everywhere, in the workers union, in the co-operative as in the unorganized working masses – and by doing that [...] we will end up combining all these partial movements in a great movement – anarchy.”<sup>45</sup>

Kropotkin did indicate an improvement in the co-operative movement in terms of it supporting strikes and the rise of producers’ co-operatives rather than consumer co-operatives hiring wage-workers but attributed this to the general rise of socialist ideas as a result of opposition to “practical” reformist measures which liberate only a few and even those only partially. It was revolutionary intransigence – advocating the direct struggle against capital – that was the source of the change in Kropotkin’s eyes. This does not suggest a growing reformist perspective in spite of his positive comments about the co-operative movement – particularly given the paucity of articles on co-operatives (both relatively and absolutely) in comparison to those on direct action in labour struggles and militant unionism.

Kropotkin’s contributions to *Les Temps Nouveaux* were also impacted by the development of an anarchist movement in Russia and then the 1905 Russian Revolution. He unsurprisingly focused his attention on helping the fledgling Russian anarchist movement with articles and talks at conferences (not to mention writing articles to the mainstream press on state repression of radicals and working people). None of these contributions to the Russian movement can be considered as expressing reformist views and instead are summations of his position on the need to “resurrect the International Working Men’s Association, which wages a *direct*, unmediated battle of labour against capital” and how the “Russian anarchists could be of tremendous use if they understood their own task and helped to awaken in the workers and peasants an understanding of their own power, of their determining voice in the revolution and of what they can accomplish

<sup>42</sup> This is also apparent in his works written in English, most obviously his articles “Politics and Socialism” and “The Coming Revival of Socialism” both of which appeared in *Freedom* in the early 1900s and were considered important enough to be issued as pamphlets (“Politics and Socialism” is in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*).

<sup>43</sup> *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1910 (included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*)

<sup>44</sup> “Les petits expedients” (15<sup>th</sup> of June 1895), “Les Expédients économiques” (13<sup>th</sup> of July 1895), “Coopération et socialisme” (27<sup>th</sup> of July 1895) and “Ou Mènent les Palliatifs” (10<sup>th</sup> of August 1895)

<sup>45</sup> “Coopération et socialisme”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1895

in their own interests.”<sup>46</sup> Given that these contributions aimed at guiding the Russian movement onto the path which Kropotkin considered as best, his stressing of anarchist involvement in the labour and other popular movements must also be considered as indicative of consistency in his ideas.

As would be expected if there is a fundamental consistency in Kropotkin’s position, there is an overlap in the issues he wrote about in all publications he was intimately associated with. Thus Kropotkin contributed articles on anarchist involvement in the labour movement in *Le Révolté* in 1881.<sup>47</sup> *The Conquest of Bread* has “critical” chapters on “The Division of Labour” as well as how workers were exploited under capitalism (“Our Riches”) and the final chapter of *Words of a Rebel* is on “Expropriation”, the defining theme of the “constructive” period and *The Conquest of Bread*. Kropotkin, then, “was presenting the results of research into those concrete developments in the present which constituted elements of a post-capitalist society [...] He was showing how the future was already appearing in the present!”<sup>48</sup> The workers were doing this in their struggles, as suggested by Kropotkin in an article on the 1913 Dublin lockout and workers’ solidarity actions across Britain:

“It is only like that — *by building while we destroy* — will the workers arrive at their liberation. It is necessary that it is seen that the bourgeois is worse than harmful: that it is useless.”<sup>49</sup>

Without an appreciation of these works we cannot understand how Kropotkin thought the libertarian and workers’ movement go from the “critical” aspects of anarchism to its “constructive” ones.<sup>50</sup> It would help answer the key question of how communist-anarchism would come about. Without this, the obvious conclusions would be that he considered revolution just appearing out-of-the-blue, a position he explicitly warned anarchists against while arguing for anarchist participation in working class movements.<sup>51</sup>

There are only so many times you can write critiques of the wages-system and so many times they are needed. As Kropotkin noted, “the extent of that penetration [of communist ideas] has been immense during the twenty-seven years that I have taken an active part in the socialist movement”.<sup>52</sup> Simply put, if your articles on communist-anarchism and revolution are both widely accepted within your movement and are available in pamphlet and book form, there is little need to write new ones. The same cannot be said of current events as well as the labour movement and its struggles nor anarchist approaches to both even if there is a certain repetition on both what went wrong (Social Democracy) and how to fix it (syndicalism).

<sup>46</sup> “The Russian Revolution and Anarchism”, *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 466–7, 468

<sup>47</sup> For example: “Les Ennemis du peuple”, *Le Révolté*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1881; “Le Mouvement Ouvrier en Espagne”, *Le Révolté*, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1881; “L’Organisation ouvrière”, *Le Révolté*, 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> December 1881. All included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*.

<sup>48</sup> Harry Cleaver, “Kropotkin, Self-valorization and the Crisis of Marxism”, *Anarchist Studies* 2:2, 120

<sup>49</sup> “Solidarité Ouvrière”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1913

<sup>50</sup> It is unfortunate that Kropotkin did not, as he indicated in “Les Anarchistes et les Syndicats” (*Les Temps Nouveaux*, 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1907), “make a selection” of his articles on the labour movement “and publish them in a volume” (it was later reprinted in *Freedom – Anarchists and Trade Unions*, June 1907 – and is included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*). This would have been the equivalent of *Words of a Rebel* and *The Conquest of Bread* for *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

<sup>51</sup> “Le Premier Mai 1891”, *La Révolte*, 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1890 (“1<sup>st</sup> May 1891”, *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 333)

<sup>52</sup> *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 467

Simply put, becoming more pessimistic about the likelihood of a revolution breaking out soon and seeking to apply anarchist ideas in everyday life and struggles does not imply a move towards reformism.

## Conclusion

Kropotkin, as would be expected, wrote on many subjects in *Les Temps Nouveaux*. His works in that journal reflected the research he was conducting for such works as *The Great French Revolution* and *The State: Its Historic Role* yet as well as what Woodcock termed “intellectual” work there are many articles on the labour and socialist movements as well as current events and general introductions to anarchism such as *Modern Science and Anarchism* which summarised and defended revolutionary anarchism.

Almost half of his articles for *Les Temps Nouveaux* were part of his research for books (*The Great French Revolution* or *Modern Science and Anarchism*) or lectures turned into books (*The State: Its Historic Role*). Yet while such articles do correspond to Woodcock’s suggestion of Kropotkin retiring from active participation in the movement in favour “of intellectual” work, this is not the whole picture. In addition to these is the regular appearance of articles on the workers’ movement and current affairs (often in the middle of a series of research-style articles). These articles show a thinker still very much part of a movement who is seeking to influence its direction as well as someone engaged with current affairs. It also shows a movement whose members wish to read the thoughts of one of its most respected members on a wide range of subjects – including on the workers’ movement, on the application of communist-anarchist ideas.

*Les Temps Nouveaux*, then, does not show any transformation in Kropotkin’s ideas or concerns as would be the case if Woodcock’s assertions on his growing reformism were valid. There is still a focus on the labour movement as a key area for anarchist involvement and for creating a social revolution. As he wrote to James Guillaume in 1903 about the period covered by *Le Révolté*, *La Révolte* and *Les Temps Nouveaux*:

“In a word, we have worked precisely in the direction which you have indicated and planned since 1869. And – it is to be noted – this, after all, is the tendency which has dominated over the others. You cannot help but approve of the recent syndicalist development.”<sup>53</sup>

This shows that looking at the articles Kropotkin contributed to the anarchist press aids in the understanding of his ideas, his contribution to anarchism and his vision of how a libertarian communist society would be created. A similar analysis and categorisation of Kropotkin’s articles for *Freedom*, *Le Révolté* and *La Révolte* would contribute to the task of rescuing him from the “Anarchist saint” or “utopian dreamer” stereotypes with which he has been afflicted – whether innocently or maliciously – by those with only a superficial (at best) awareness of his works and anarchism.

Such an analysis will show Kropotkin as he really was throughout his time in the anarchist movement: a practical revolutionary communist-anarchist with a clear understanding of what is wrong with society, what should replace it and a means of going from one to the other.

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<sup>53</sup> Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 1995), 278

## **Appendix: Kropotkin in *Les Temps Nouveaux* Bibliography**

This lists all articles by Kropotkin which appeared in *Les Temps Nouveaux* in order of appearance. If the article has been translated in *Freedom* or in a book then this has been indicated (the initial article in the series is marked rather than them all). Articles related to *The Great French Revolution* are not indicated as such due to the number of articles and years covered and because they are easily identified.

Year	Article	Notes
1895	<p>‘L’effet des persecutions’, May 4</p> <p>‘Un temps d’arrêt’, May 25</p> <p>‘Les petits expedients’, June 15</p> <p>‘Les Expédients économiques’, July 13</p> <p>‘Coopération et socialisme’, July 27</p> <p>‘Le Congrès Ouvrier de 1896’, August 3</p> <p>‘Ou Mènent les Palliatifs’, August 10</p> <p>‘Le Pain Gratuit et l’état’, August 24</p> <p>‘Le Pain Gratuit et l’état’, August 31</p> <p>‘L’arrêt et l’issue’, September 7</p> <p>‘Le Crise du socialisme’, October 26</p>	<p>Included in <i>Direct Struggle Against Capital</i></p> <p>Footnote: ‘Les Expédients économiques II’</p> <p>Included in <i>Direct Struggle Against Capital</i></p>
1896	<p>‘Serge Stepniak’, January 11</p> <p>‘Les Congrès internationaux et le Congrès de Londres’, August 15</p> <p>‘Les Congrès internationaux et le Congrès de Londres’, August 29</p> <p>‘Les Congrès internationaux et le Congrès de Londres’, September 12</p> <p>‘Les Congrès internationaux et le Congrès de Londres’, September 19</p> <p>‘Les Congrès internationaux et le Congrès de Londres’, October 10</p> <p>‘L’Etat: son rôle historique’, December 19</p>	<p>Obituary for a Russian anarchist</p> <p>Translation: ‘The State: Its Historic Role’, <i>Freedom</i>, May 1897 to June 1898</p>
1897	<p>‘Les Inquisiteurs de Barcelone’, January 2</p> <p>‘Les désordres Universitaires de Moscou’, January 9</p> <p>‘L’Etat: son rôle historique’, January 16</p> <p>‘L’Etat: son rôle historique’, January 23</p> <p>‘L’Etat: son rôle historique’, January 30</p> <p>‘L’Etat: son rôle historique’, February 13</p>	



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Kropotkin, Woodcock and Les Temps Nouveaux  
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Published in *Anarchist Studies* Volume 23, Number 1 (Spring 2015).

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