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PAUL AVRICH

## KROPOTKIN IN AMERICA

It is a well-established fact that foreign immigrants and visitors played a major role in the emergence of American anarchism. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European-born artisans and peasants – Germans and Czechs, Italians and Spaniards, Russians and Jews – constituted the mass base of the movement, while its intellectual leadership included well-known speakers and writers from diverse countries, who came either as permanent settlers or on extended lecture tours.

Among the Russians, Michael Bakunin spent nearly two months in the United States after his flight from Siberia in 1861.<sup>1</sup> Stepniak (S. M. Kravchinsky) went there to lecture in 1891, N. V. Chaikovsky to join a utopian community and again to raise funds for the Russian revolutionary movement. The flood of Russian immigrants before and during the First World War included V. M. Eikhenbaum (“Volin”), Efim Yarchuk, Aaron and Fanny Baron, Boris Yelensky and William Shatoff, not to mention Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who had arrived in the 1880’s. After the Bolshevik consolidation of power came such figures as Gregory Maximoff, Abba Gordin and Mark Mratchny, who recently died in New York, the last of the Russian anarchists with an international reputation. (Maximoff died in Chicago in 1950 and Alexander Schapiro in New York in 1946, a refugee from Hitler’s invasion of France.)

Of all the Russian visitors, however, it was Peter Kropotkin who made the greatest impression. The leading figure in the international anarchist movement since Bakunin’s death in 1876, Kropotkin was a founder of both the British and Russian anarchist movements, and exerted a strong influence on anarchists throughout the world. What is comparatively little known is his influence on the movement in America, especially as a result of his visits in 1897 and 1901. To describe these visits and their impact is the purpose of the present article.

<sup>1</sup> See Paul Avrich, “Bakunin and the United States”, in: *International Review of Social History*, XXIV (1979), pp. 320-40.

## I: 1897

Kropotkin, as David Hecht has noted, had an “active and abiding interest in the United States” which, strengthened by his knowledge of English, extended over a forty-year period.<sup>2</sup> Like Bakunin before him, he was an admirer of American federalism, extolling the American Revolution and Declaration of Independence as landmarks in the struggle for human freedom.<sup>3</sup> He was well versed in American literature, praising the poetry of Longfellow and the prose of Bret Harte, as well as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* for its role in the emancipation of the slaves.<sup>4</sup> Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were among the writers he held in high esteem; and in calling for the expropriation of land he was indebted to Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty*, which provoked an “outburst of socialist feeling in England”.<sup>5</sup> Abreast of American scholarship in both the natural and social sciences, Kropotkin invoked the anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan and the sociologist Franklin H. Giddings in support of his theory of “mutual aid”.<sup>6</sup> And in *The Conquest of Bread and Fields, Factories and Workshops* he paid tribute to American economic progress, citing advances in agriculture and especially industry, “aided as it is by a wonderful development of technical skill, by excellent schools, a scientific education which goes hand in hand with technical education, and a spirit of enterprise which is unrivalled in Europe”.<sup>7</sup>

Yet Kropotkin was not blind to the defects of American society. On the contrary, he was sharply critical of the capitalist system and of government abuses of power. He condemned the persistence of child labor and the “travesty” of American democracy, which he claimed was in fact a “plutocracy”. He hailed the railroad strike of 1877 as a sign of rising revolutionary consciousness among the workers. “Its spontaneity”, he wrote, “its simultaneousness at so many distant points, the aid given by the workers of different trades, the resolute character of the uprising from the beginning, call forth our sympathies, excite our admiration, and awaken

<sup>2</sup> David Hecht, “Kropotkin and America”, in: *Bulletin of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages*, September 15, 1952, pp. 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> See P. Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793* (London, 1909), pp. 21-22, 141-42.

<sup>4</sup> *id.*, *Russian Literature* (New York, 1905), pp. 4, 223-24.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (Boston, 1899), p. 440.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, ed. by Paul Avrich (London, 1972), pp. 25, 70, 89.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*, *The Conquest of Bread*, ed. by Paul Avrich (London, 1972), p. 120; *id.*, *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (London, 1899), pp. 62, 147-57.

our hopes.”<sup>8</sup> Nearly twenty years later, when Eugene Victor Debs was jailed during the Pullman strike, Kropotkin sent him an inscribed volume of his writings in token of solidarity and support.<sup>9</sup>

Kropotkin, moreover, took an active part in protests against the trial of the Haymarket anarchists in 1886 and 1887. Describing the Chicago affair as “a retaliation upon prisoners taken in the virtual civil war that was going on between the two classes”, he drafted a letter to the American press objecting to the death sentences imposed on the defendants and addressed a mass rally in London, together with Stepniak, William Morris and George Bernard Shaw, against their impending execution. A year after the hangings he declared that “the commemoration of the Chicago martyrs has almost acquired the same importance as the commemoration of the Paris Commune.” The integrity and courage of the hanged men, he said a decade later, “remain a lesson for the old, an inspiration for the young.”<sup>10</sup>

Deeply moved by the Haymarket tragedy, Kropotkin followed the development of American anarchism with special interest. Long before his visits, he corresponded with American anarchists, read their books and journals, and sent them messages of support. He was familiar with the writings of both the individualist and collectivist schools, mentioning Josiah Warren, Lysander Spooner and Benjamin Tucker, together with Albert Parsons, August Spies and Johann Most, in his well-known *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on “Anarchism”. For his own part, Kropotkin exerted an increasing influence on American anarchists, not to speak of socialists, Single Taxers and other reformers. During the 1880’s and 1890’s, his articles appeared in all the leading anarchist journals, including Tucker’s *Liberty*, Parsons’s *Alarm* and Most’s *Freiheit*. Tucker, in spite of their philosophical differences, counted Kropotkin “among the most prominent anarchists in Europe” and praised his paper, *Le Révolté*, as “the most scholarly anarchist journal in existence”.<sup>11</sup> Apart from translating Kropotkin’s “Order and Anarchy” and “Law and Authority” for *Liberty*, Tucker published news of Kropotkin’s activities in Europe, including his expulsion from Switzerland in 1881 and his trial at Lyons in 1883 (lamenting “the cruel fate of Kropotkine and his comrades”, sentenced to

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Lillian Symes and Travers Clement, *Rebel America: The Story of Social Revolt in the United States* (New York, 1934), p. 152. Cf. Kropotkin’s reference to the 1877 strike in “L’Expropriation”, in: *Le Révolté* (Geneva), December 23, 1882.

<sup>9</sup> Harry Kelly, “Reminiscences and Reflections on Peter Kropotkin”, in: *Centennial Expressions on Peter Kropotkin, 1842-1942* (Los Angeles, 1942), p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> *The Commonweal* (London), October 22, 1887; *Freedom* (London), December 1898; Henry David, *The History of the Haymarket Affair* (New York, 1936), p. 534.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in James J. Martin, *Men Against the State*, revised ed. (Colorado Springs, 1970), pp. 219-20.

long terms in prison). Tucker also published Sophie Kropotkin's story "The Wife of Number 4,237", based on her own experience with her husband at Clairvaux prison.<sup>12</sup>

Of all Kropotkin's early writings, however, it was *An Appeal to the Young* that had the greatest impact, making numerous converts in America as in other parts of the world.<sup>13</sup> "Thousands and hundreds of thousands had read that pamphlet", remarked Anna Strunsky Walling, "and had responded to it as to nothing else in the literature of revolutionary Socialism."<sup>14</sup> For Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Kropotkin's *Appeal to the Young* "struck home to me personally, as if he were speaking to us there in our shabby poverty-stricken Bronx flat: 'Must you drag on the same weary existence as your father and mother for thirty or forty years? Must you toil your life long to procure for others all the pleasures of well-being, of knowledge, of art, and keep for yourself only the eternal anxiety as to whether you can get a bit of bread?'"<sup>15</sup>

By the 1890's the anarchist movement in America had become predominantly Anarchist-Communist in orientation, owing to Kropotkin's influence. "He was a prominent figure in the realm of learning", wrote Emma Goldman in her memoirs, "recognized as such by the foremost men of the world. But to us he meant much more than that. We saw in him the father of modern anarchism, its revolutionary spokesman and brilliant exponent of its relation to science, philosophy, and progressive thought."<sup>16</sup> No wonder that she and her comrades should have repeatedly urged him to visit America. As early as 1891, he was invited by both the Autonomie group and the Pioneers of Liberty, German and Jewish anarchists in New York; but though he had long wanted to tour the New World, he was forced to decline because of poor health, impaired by five years in Russian and French prisons, and because of the conflict then raging between the Autonomists (followers of Josef Peukert) and the Mostians.<sup>17</sup> In 1893 and in 1896 it was reported in the anarchist press that Kropotkin was preparing to voyage to America, but ill health and continuing divisions in the movement, compounded by the controversy over Berkman's *Attentat* of 1892

<sup>12</sup> Liberty (Boston), October 29, 1881; June 10ff., 1882; February 17ff., 1883; March 6ff., 1886.

<sup>13</sup> The first American translation, by Marie Le Compte, appeared in the San Francisco Truth from January 5 to 26, 1884. Afterwards there were numerous pamphlet editions in a variety of languages.

<sup>14</sup> Anna Strunsky Walling, "Three Contacts with Peter Kropotkin", in: Mother Earth, December 1912.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Rebel Girl: An Autobiography* (New York, 1973), p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (New York, 1931), p. 509.

<sup>17</sup> I. Rudash, "Peter Kropotkin's Two Visits to America", in: *Man!* (San Francisco), March 1935.

(which the Autonomists defended and the Mostians condemned), caused Kropotkin to delay his trip.<sup>18</sup>

It was as a delegate to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, holding its 1897 meeting at Toronto, that Kropotkin finally came to North America. In fragile health when he received an invitation from the organizing committee, he was reluctant to accept it. But his friend James Mavor, whom he had known since settling in England in 1886, induced him to participate. A former member of William Morris's Socialist League, Mavor was now Professor of Political Economy at the University of Toronto and an authority on both Russia and Canada.<sup>19</sup> For Mavor it was a "great pleasure" to have Kropotkin as his guest when the conference convened in the latter part of August.<sup>20</sup> Kropotkin delivered two papers, "On the Āsar of Finland" (August 20) and "On the Direction of Lines of Structure in Eurasia" (August 24).<sup>21</sup> After the conference, an excursion to the Pacific coast was arranged by the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Kropotkin took advantage of this opportunity to see the country, recording his impressions in a still unpublished diary and in an interesting article for the well-known London magazine *The Nineteenth Century*, to which he was a regular contributor.<sup>22</sup>

On the journey to the coast, which led him over the Rockies to Vancouver, Kropotkin observed many "striking analogies between the structure and the geological growth" of North America and Eurasia.<sup>23</sup> The trip was "thoroughly beautiful", he wrote to his friend Patrick Geddes, the Scottish biologist and social thinker, the prairies and forests and rugged mountains reminding him of Siberia, where he had served as an officer in his youth.<sup>24</sup> Kropotkin again recalled Siberia while crossing the plains of

<sup>18</sup> See *Il Grido degli Oppressi* (New York), June 14, 1893; *Solidarity* (New York), July 29, 1893; *The Firebrand* (Portland), October 4, 1896. It was hoped in 1893 that Kropotkin might attend an International Anarchist Conference in Chicago, and there were erroneous reports the same year that he attended the unveiling of the Haymarket monument in Chicago's Waldheim Cemetery.

<sup>19</sup> Mavor's *An Economic History of Russia* (2 vols; London and Toronto, 1914) remains a standard work on the subject.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*, *My Windows on the Street of the World* (2 vols; London and Toronto, 1923), I, p. 371.

<sup>21</sup> Report of the Sixty-Seventh Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Held at Toronto in August 1897 (London, 1898), pp. 648-49, 722-23.

<sup>22</sup> P. Kropotkin, "Some of the Resources of Canada", in: *The Nineteenth Century*, March 1898, pp. 494-514. The diary is preserved among Kropotkin's papers in the Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii, Moscow.

<sup>23</sup> Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, op. cit., p. 277.

<sup>24</sup> Kropotkin to Geddes, November 27, 1897, Geddes Papers, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince*

Manitoba on the way back to Toronto. Visiting the Mennonite settlers, who had left Russia to avoid military service and other encroachments of the Tsarist state, "one is at once transported to Russia", he wrote, and for the inhabitants the name of Tolstoy is "a subject of deep reverence".<sup>25</sup>

When Kropotkin's description of Canada appeared in *The Nineteenth Century*, it was read by a member of the Tolstoyan Committee, who, moved by the sympathetic account of the Mennonites, suggested to Kropotkin that the Canadian prairie might provide a haven for the Dukhobors as well. Kropotkin agreed. Encountering the Dukhobors on the Amur some thirty years before, he had been struck by their integrity and spirit of mutual aid, and now he was anxious to help them. In August 1898 he wrote to Mavor suggesting that the Canadian government be approached on their behalf. In due course an agreement was reached, and thousands of Dukhobors left Russia and Cyprus, and settled in Western Canada, where many of their descendants still live.<sup>26</sup>

Kropotkin was greatly impressed by the agricultural abundance throughout the Canadian Northwest, and especially by the experimental farms in the area, which he visited with their director, Dr William Saunders. "How rich mankind could be", he thought, "if social obstacles did not stand everywhere in the way of utilising the gifts of nature." At the same time, he feared that Canada was "making rapid strides towards the building up of the same land monopolies which now drive the European peasants out of Europe".<sup>27</sup>

Returning to Toronto, Kropotkin was met at the railroad station by a student sent by Mavor to conduct him to his home. On the way, they discussed the merits of communal land ownership, which the student, a staunch individualist and future Conservative member of the Canadian parliament, vigorously opposed; and while he respected Kropotkin's knowledge and decency, his national pride was stung when Kropotkin referred to Western Canada as "a little Siberia".<sup>28</sup> Kropotkin spent three weeks with Mavor, during which he wrote his article for *The Nineteenth*

(London, 1950), pp. 273-75. See also Kropotkin's Canadian diary, August 5, 1897, quoted by Natalia Pirumova, Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin (Moscow, 1972), p. 157. A Soviet edition of Kropotkin's memoirs contains a sketch he made of a Canadian landscape on September 5, 1897, *Zapiski revoliutsionera*, ed. by V. A. Tvardovskaia (Moscow, 1966), p. 472.

<sup>25</sup> Kropotkin, "Some of the Resources of Canada", loc. cit., pp. 494-96, 503-04.

<sup>26</sup> George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumović, *The Doukhobors* (New York, 1968), pp. 130-32; Mavor, *My Windows*, op. cit., II, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Kropotkin, "Recent Science", in: *The Nineteenth Century*, November 1897, pp. 799-820; Kropotkin, "Some of the Resources of Canada", p. 514.

<sup>28</sup> *When the Iron is White* (Toronto, 1943), p. 5. I am grateful to Ahrne Thorne, editor of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, for calling my attention to this anonymous pamphlet.

*Century*. To supplement his personal observations, he made use of Mavor's excellent library, which "contains everything about Canada", he told Patrick Geddes, its history, economy and ethnology. He drew, moreover, on Mavor himself, "a living encyclopedia of Canadian economics".<sup>29</sup>

Kropotkin thoroughly enjoyed his ten-week sojourn in Canada. Though ill when he departed from England, he wrote that the trip across the continent had raised his spirits and "given me a new lease on life". Wherever he went he had received "the most friendly welcome" and was treated "with the utmost cordiality and hospitality". Struck by the degree of freedom enjoyed by Canadian citizens, especially as compared with that of his own countrymen, he concluded that "the only possible solution for Russia would be frankly to acknowledge the Federalist principle, and to adopt a system of several autonomous Parliaments, as we see it in Canada, instead of trying to imitate the centralized system of Great Britain, France, and Germany." If the federalist principle should be accepted, he added, "then Russia will be able to join the family of civilized nations as a new member which will bring with it some precious elements of national life; namely, a nationalized soil, the village community, popular co-operation for all possible purposes, and local industries closely connected with agriculture."<sup>30</sup>

In the middle of October Kropotkin left Toronto for the United States. Crossing the border at Niagara Falls, he traveled to Buffalo to call on Johann Most, the German anarchist firebrand, who had taken up temporary residence in that city following years of persecution in New York. By making a special detour to see Most, Kropotkin gave the lie to stories that the two anarchist leaders were sworn antagonists, representing irreconcilable schools of thought. "With a few more Mosts", Kropotkin afterwards remarked, "our movement would be much stronger." Most, for his part, writing of the visit in his journal *Freiheit*, called Kropotkin the "celebrated philosopher of modern anarchism" and "one of the greatest scientists of this century". It was a pleasure, added Most, "to look into his eyes and shake his hand".<sup>31</sup>

From Buffalo Kropotkin went to Detroit to attend the annual meeting of

<sup>29</sup> Kropotkin to Geddes, November 27, 1897; Kropotkin, "Some of the Resources of Canada", p. 495.

<sup>30</sup> Kropotkin to Georg Brandes, June 28, 1898, *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, ed. by Paul Krüger (2 vols; Copenhagen, 1952-56), II, p. 122; id., "Some of the Resources of Canada", p. 494; id., "On the Present Condition in Russia", in: *The Outlook* (New York), January 8, 1898, p. 117.

<sup>31</sup> A. Levin, "A derinerung vegn Pyotr Kropotkin", in: *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (New York), April 10, 1936; Johann Most, "Peter Krapotkin", in: *Freiheit* (Buffalo), October 30, 1897.



the American Association for the Advancement of Science. What he witnessed at the meeting so stirred his enthusiasm that he predicted the United States would soon surpass Europe in scientific discoveries. He was equally impressed by American economic and technical advances. "America", he told a reporter, "possesses all the possibilities for happiness. Its agriculture is admirably developed, and agriculture is the foundation of all well being. It is bound, too, to become a great manufacturing country."<sup>32</sup> Before leaving Detroit, Kropotkin called on Joseph A. Labadie, the well-known American anarchist who later founded the Labadie Collection of radical literature at the University of Michigan. A member of the Detroit Water Board, Labadie conducted his visitor — "a small man with a large head, bushy hair and whiskers", as he describes him — through the engineering room of the city water works, in which Kropotkin took a lively interest. Kropotkin, according to Labadie, "talked English very well, and his movements were quick, as tho surprised."<sup>33</sup>

Kropotkin journeyed next to Washington, D.C., where he addressed a conference of the National Geographic Society on October 22nd. From Edward Singleton Holden, the noted American astronomer and a delegate to the conference, he had "the pleasure of hearing an appreciative estimate" of the research performed by his brother Alexander while a political exile in Siberia. During his stay in the American capital, Kropotkin, like many another sightseer, visited the Smithsonian Institution, rode to the top of the Washington Monument, and looked at the outside of the White House (but did not go in). After a crowded but pleasant visit, he departed by train for New York on the morning of October 23rd.<sup>34</sup>

That afternoon Kropotkin's train was met in Jersey City by two of his American comrades, Harry Kelly, who had called on him in London in 1895, and John H. Edelman, a respected architect and frequent contributor to anarchist journals.<sup>35</sup> Also awaiting his arrival was a group of newspaper reporters, who asked Kropotkin for a statement. "I am an anarchist", he told them, "and am trying to work out the ideal society, which I believe will be communistic in economics, but will leave full and free scope for the development of the individual. As to its organization, I

<sup>32</sup> New York Herald, October 24.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Laurance Labadie, Suffern, N.Y., March 22, 1975; note entered by Jo Labadie on his copy of the San Francisco Truth of August 1884, which bears a portrait of Kropotkin.

<sup>34</sup> Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, p. 490; Harry Kelly, "Roll Back the Years: Odyssey of a Libertarian", ch. 8, p. 1, Tamiment Library.

<sup>35</sup> Harry Kelly to Joseph J. Cohen, October 18, 1943, Cohen Papers, Bund Archives; id. to John N. Beffel, July 7, 1948, Beffel Papers, Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

believe in the formation of federated groups for production and consumption.” Kropotkin distinguished the anarchist position from that of the Social Democrats: “The social democrats are endeavoring to attain the same end, but the difference is that they start from the centre – the State – and work toward the circumference, while we endeavor to work out the ideal society from the simple elements to the complex.” Finally, as in Canada, he praised the federalist system. “I am a strong federalist”, he declared, “and I think that even under the present conditions the functions of government could be with great advantage decentralized territorially. Your theory of home rule in America I consider a distinct step in advance of the European centralized state, and it ought to continue in all directions.”<sup>36</sup>

The reporters were favorably impressed. For in appearance and behavior Kropotkin belied the newspaper stereotype of the wild-eyed, depraved anarchist. “Prince Krapotkine”, wrote one, “is anything but the typical anarchist. In appearance he is patriarchal, and while his dress is careless it is the carelessness of the man who is engrossed in science rather than that of the man who is in revolt against the usages of society. His manners are those of the polished gentleman, and he has none of the bitterness and dogmatism of the anarchist whom we are accustomed to see here.”<sup>37</sup>

As soon as Kelly and Edelmann could get Kropotkin away from the reporters, they conducted him to Edelmann’s apartment on 96th Street and Madison Avenue, where he was to stay during his New York visit. There, Kelly tells us, they spent a long evening talking of mutual acquaintances and of events in America and Europe. No doubt they also discussed the lecture on “Socialism and Its Modern Development” which Kropotkin was slated to deliver the following evening. While still in Toronto, Kropotkin had written to Kelly and his comrades about a speaking engagement in New York. To work out the necessary arrangements, a meeting had been held in Justus Schwab’s saloon on East First Street, where anarchists and other radicals congregated. In advance of Kropotkin’s arrival, tickets were put on sale (at twenty-five cents a piece) at Schwab’s and other locations around the city.

The lecture was held at Chickering Hall, a fashionable auditorium on lower Fifth Avenue, which seated about 2,000. A steady rain fell all day. Kropotkin, accompanied by Kelly and Edelmann, took the Third Avenue Elevated to Fourteenth Street, “the heavy drops pelting against the car

<sup>36</sup> New York Herald, October 24, 1897.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

windows". The hall was filled to capacity and the lecture well received, but Kropotkin was disturbed because the entrance fee made it too expensive for poorer workers to attend. To Harry Kelly it seemed that a large proportion of the audience, prosperous in appearance, had come "to *see* the Prince rather than to *hear* the Anarchist".<sup>38</sup> At all events, noted a reporter, "every seat was filled, there was not a foot of standing room to spare and hundreds were turned away because there was no room for them."<sup>39</sup> Elegantly dressed listeners rubbed shoulders with workers and immigrants for whom the price of admission was "a real sacrifice". Three women wearing red shirts and neckties, and one in a red sweater, occupied seats in the front row. At opposite ends of the platform sat Justus Schwab and Edward Brady (Emma Goldman's then companion), both powerfully built and dressed in grey with red carnations in their lapel.

Presiding was John Swinton, the veteran labor reformer who, in the opinion of Benjamin Tucker, was "the best after-dinner speaker in the city of New York".<sup>40</sup> Though Swinton was nearly seventy, his voice was still strong and carried to every corner of the hall. Swinton introduced Kropotkin, who was "loudly applauded" and addressed the "enthusiastic house" on the lessons of the Paris Commune, the evils of prison, and the dangers of state socialism. As one reporter described him, "he wore a patriarchal beard and beamed on his audience from behind a pair of spectacles like an old fashioned clergyman looking over a familiar congregation."<sup>41</sup>

From all accounts Kropotkin was not a dynamic speaker. He was not of the flamboyant school of orators, of whom Most was a leading example, who overwhelm their listeners with tirades of venom and irony. He spoke, rather, in a quiet voice with a heavy Russian accent. His words, thought one reporter, come "tumbling out in any order", and yet "his evident sincerity and his kindness hold the attention of his audience and gain its sympathy."<sup>42</sup> Steadily building his argument, he was an intense figure on the platform. As his friend Stepniak once noted, "He trembles with emotion; his voice vibrates with that accent of profound conviction, not to be mistaken or counterfeited, and only heard when it is not merely the mouth which speaks, but the innermost heart. His speeches, although he cannot be called an orator of the first rank, produce an immense

<sup>38</sup> Kelly, "Roll Back the Years", ch. 8, pp. 1, 6.

<sup>39</sup> New York Herald, October 25.

<sup>40</sup> Liberty, September 3, 1881.

<sup>41</sup> New York Times and New York Herald, also The World (New York), October 25, 1897.

<sup>42</sup> New York Herald, October 25.

impression; for when feeling is so intense it is communicative, and electrifies an audience.”<sup>43</sup>

Such was the effect of Kropotkin on his Chickering Hall listeners. The meeting, according to one member of the audience, was “a great success in every way”. Returning from a visit to Europe a few days later, Voltairine de Cleyre, the American anarchist poet, found her New York comrades “jubilant” over the lecture, which had given their movement a badly needed lift.<sup>44</sup> Kropotkin, however, did not remain long in New York. On October 25 he left for Philadelphia to address a meeting in Odd Fellows’ Temple sponsored by the Jewish anarchists of that city. As in New York, the house was packed and the lecture, followed by a reception for the speaker, a great success. Some 2,000 people attended, one of whom, many years later, told Kropotkin’s biographers that “the audience was extremely attentive and sympathetic”. With the exception of one or two “yellow journals”, as Voltairine de Cleyre remarked, the press was “fair to our gentle revolutionist”, particularly the staid old *Philadelphia Ledger*, which gave “an excellent and uncolored report” of the meeting.<sup>45</sup>

The 1890’s was a period of bitter industrial strife in America, and Kropotkin’s indignation was aroused by a recent massacre of workers at Hazleton, Pennsylvania. It occurred on September 10th, six weeks before his visit to Philadelphia, when a column of protesting strikers, Polish and Czech miners, was fired on by a detachment of police led by the local sheriff, who hated the foreign workmen and resolved to teach them a lesson. Twenty-one were killed and forty wounded. Outraged by the unprovoked slaughter, Kropotkin dispatched an article to the leading French anarchist journal, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, alerting his European associates to the labor struggles in America. “Nothing, nothing but war, war without mercy, will lead to any solution in the United States”, he concluded. “And the war will be terrible, for the limit of the workers’ patience has long since been surpassed.”<sup>46</sup> Back in London in January 1898, Kropotkin referred to the Hazleton incident while speaking at Memorial Hall. The labor movement in the United States, he declared, “is full of youth and force, and [. . .] happily the differences between ‘Americans’ and the Bohemians, Poles, Hungarians and other ‘strangers’ are gradually fast disappearing. When in the strike at Hazelton such ‘strangers’ were massacred recently it produced

<sup>43</sup> Stepniak, *Underground Russia* (London, 1883), p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> Rudash, “Kropotkin’s Two Visits”, loc. cit.; Voltairine de Cleyre, “American Notes”, in: *Freedom*, February 1898.

<sup>45</sup> *Free Society* (San Francisco), December 17, 1897; *Freedom*, February 1898; Woodcock and Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince*, op. cit., p. 275.

<sup>46</sup> P. Kropotkin, “La tuerie de Hazleton”, in: *Les Temps Nouveaux*, October 9-15, 1897; Woodcock and Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince*, p. 276.

such an indignation in New York that the 'American' Trade-unionists called a great meeting and told the police who were there present such things as to what would happen if they, the 'Americans,' were attacked as the poor Bohemians had been, that not one single paper of the middle class cared to report it."<sup>47</sup>

From Philadelphia Kropotkin proceeded to Boston, where he stayed about two weeks and delivered seven or eight lectures, two of them (on "Savages and Barbarism" and "The Medieval City") at the famous Lowell Institute, to which he was to return in 1901. His opening lecture, however, was sponsored by the Workingmen's Educational Club and took place before a large audience in the Columbia Theatre, the subject being "Socialism and Its Modern Development", the same as in New York. The progress of mankind, he told his listeners, "points in the direction of less government of man by man, of more liberty for the individual, of freer scope for the development of all individual faculties, for the greatest development of the initiative of the individual, for home rule for every separate unit, and for decentralization of power."<sup>48</sup>

Kropotkin also spoke before the Woman's Industrial Club of Cambridge on "Siberia, the Land of Exile", and before the Prospect Union of Cambridge, an organization of Harvard students and local workers, on "The Socialist Movement in Europe". Two more lectures, on "Christianity" and "Morality", were delivered in churches where Kropotkin had been invited to speak. Although the audiences were large and enthusiastic, and Kropotkin was satisfied with the meetings from the standpoint of propaganda, they brought little money into the anarchist coffers. Fortunately, Kropotkin wrote to Geddes, the lectures at the Lowell Institute and Harvard were "very well paid", for the rest "barely covered expenses".<sup>49</sup>

There were, however, other compensations. For one, Kropotkin was impressed by a cooperative dining room organized by less affluent Harvard students, which he saw as an example of "mutual aid", the theme of his Lowell Institute lectures and of his celebrated book of that title.<sup>50</sup> He

<sup>47</sup> P. Kropotkin, "The Development of Trade-Unionism", in: *Freedom*, March 1898.

<sup>48</sup> "Kropotkin in Boston", in: *Free Society*, November 14, 1897, quoted from the *Boston Herald*.

<sup>49</sup> S.C.B., "Boston Letter", in: *Free Society*, December 12; Kropotkin to Geddes, November 27. Because of his crowded schedule, Kropotkin declined an invitation from his old friend William Bailie to speak before the Central Labor Union of Boston, Kropotkin to Bailie, November 5, Bailie Papers, New York. Bailie, a former member of the Manchester branch of the Socialist League, had emigrated to America in 1892 and joined the circle around Tucker's *Liberty*.

<sup>50</sup> P. Kropotkin, *Kommunizm i anarkhiia* (St Petersburg, 1906), p. 11; *Mutual Aid*, op. cit.

had the pleasure, moreover, of making a wide circle of new acquaintances, including a number of Harvard professors who were to invite him to return on his next visit. Among them was the noted literary scholar, Charles Eliot Norton, who was quite charmed by Kropotkin, “the mildest and gentlest of anarchists” as he described him in a letter to a friend. Norton was especially delighted by a remark of Kropotkin’s regarding metaphysics: “Yes, your metaphysician is a blind man hunting in a dark room for a black hat which does not exist.”<sup>51</sup>

In the middle of November, Kropotkin returned to New York for a final round of lectures before departing for England. Staying again with John Edelman, he received a steady stream of visitors, among them Saul Yanovsky, editor of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, and Benjamin Tucker, editor of *Liberty* and the foremost Individualist Anarchist in the United States.<sup>52</sup> Some of Kropotkin’s callers, however, were not as welcome as Yanovsky and Tucker. One afternoon, a prominent New York banker stopped by to invite the Russian prince to dinner. Edelman told him that Kropotkin had not been feeling well and had gone to Central Park for some air. Just as the banker left, two anarchist workmen arrived to pay their respects to their teacher. Kropotkin emerged from an adjacent room and warmly embraced them, explaining that he did not care to receive bankers but was delighted to see his young comrades, with whom he spent a few hours conversing in their native Yiddish.<sup>53</sup>

To publicize Kropotkin’s forthcoming lectures, Edelman, at Yanovsky’s suggestion, arranged a press conference in his apartment. Kropotkin, who had always been reluctant to grant interviews because of the distortions that invariably resulted, was nevertheless pleased by the session. “But his joy was short-lived”, recalls Yanovsky. “That same afternoon there appeared in the ‘Evening Journal’ the news that Prince Kropotkin ran along the street asking for a cigarette. I laughed at this idiotic anecdote which was printed. But I never saw Kropotkin so wrought up and irritated as then. ‘How can one be such a liar?’ This roused him to such a pitch that he and Edelman went to the offices of the ‘Evening Journal’ and they succeeded in getting a denial of this idiotic incident the following

<sup>51</sup> Norton to S. G. Ward, November 28, 1897, Letters of Charles Eliot Norton, ed. by Sara Norton and M. A. DeWolfe Howe (2 vols; Boston, 1913), II, p. 255.

<sup>52</sup> Max Nettlau to Benjamin R. Tucker, March 22, 1937, Tucker Papers, New York Public Library.

<sup>53</sup> Levin, “A derinerung vegn Pyotr Kropotkin”, loc. cit. Apparently Kropotkin understood Yiddish from his knowledge of German and his contacts with the Jewish anarchists of London.

morning, but hidden in an obscure corner and printed in their very smallest type.”<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, Chickering Hall was again chosen as the site of Kropotkin’s next lecture, arranged for Friday evening, November 19th, by the Friends of Russian Freedom, a group of influential liberals and reformers including clergymen and jurists as well as labor leaders and scholars, Professors Robert Erskine Ely and Franklin Giddings among them. Presiding was Ernest Howard Crosby, a former judge on the International Court and now Tolstoy’s leading American disciple, who gave his impressions of Russia as he had seen it a few years before. Then, for more than an hour, Kropotkin spoke on “The Struggle for Freedom in Russia”, with an “earnestness and conviction” that won the sympathy of his listeners, who gave him an enthusiastic reception. Yet Kropotkin, who always preferred the company of ordinary workingmen to that of the upper classes into which he himself had been born, thought the meeting a “complete fiasco”, with its “chic-très” well-to-do sponsors.<sup>55</sup>

The next day he found himself in happier surroundings when, at the request of his anarchist comrades, he delivered a lecture in Russian on “The Philosophic and Scientific Bases of Anarchism”. Admission was fifteen cents and, after expenses were paid, a balance of \$125 was forwarded to a Russian group in Switzerland for the publication of anarchist literature.<sup>56</sup> The following afternoon Kropotkin attended a private gathering at the home of Hillel Solotaroff, a leading Jewish anarchist and physician, where the Dreyfus case and other important questions of the day were discussed. In the evening he attended a banquet in his honor arranged by the Russian Students’ Club, and was drawn into a debate by Doctors Hourwich and Ingerman, socialist intellectuals whose knowledge, he felt, was limited “to what Karl Marx has uttered”.<sup>57</sup>

In spite of his crowded schedule, Kropotkin found time to cross the Hudson and lecture to his comrades of Paterson, New Jersey, a militant anarchist center with an immigrant working-class population. On November 22nd, the eve of his departure for Europe, he delivered his final address in New York on “The Great Social Problems of Our Century”. To his comrades who arranged the farewell gathering, he insisted on a low

<sup>54</sup> S. Yanovsky, “Kropotkin as I Knew Him”, in: Peter Kropotkin: The Rebel, Thinker and Humanitarian, ed. by Joseph Ishill, Berkeley Heights, N.J., 1923, pp. 131-32.

<sup>55</sup> Sturmvoegel (New York), November 15, 1897; New York Tribune, November 20; Kropotkin to Geddes, November 27.

<sup>56</sup> Rudash, “Kropotkin’s Two Visits”. This group, located in Geneva, issued pamphlets by Jean Grave, Elisée Reclus, Johann Most, and Kropotkin himself. See Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton, 1967), p. 38.

<sup>57</sup> Rudash, “Kropotkin’s Two Visits”.

admission fee, "so that ordinary workers would be able to attend". Accordingly, only five cents was charged, and the Great Hall of Cooper Union, where Abraham Lincoln had spoken, was filled to capacity. It was probably the largest meeting Kropotkin ever addressed, with more than 5,000 people in attendance, according to one estimate.<sup>58</sup> Trade-unionists had been invited, and workers of all nationalities were present, not to mention such men of letters as Professor Ely of the Friends of Russian Freedom and Walter Hines Page, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. Ernest Howard Crosby was again in the chair. According to Harry Kelly, the meeting was a magnificent demonstration of "love and appreciation for a great man and a great revolutionist".<sup>59</sup>

Kropotkin himself was overwhelmed by the "grandiose" reception, as he termed it.<sup>60</sup> He was especially pleased when a representative of the trade unions read a short message, unanimously adopted, for him to bring back to Europe. "I was much prouder of carrying it", Kropotkin characteristically remarked, "than I would have been of carrying any political message of any importance, which, in fact, I would not have accepted at all."<sup>61</sup> The message read as follows.

Go back, Kropotkine, to the workers of England, of Europe, and tell them that you have fashioned another link in the brotherly bond that binds the toilers of all lands.

Tell them that, notwithstanding our Immigration Commissioners, the poorer they are and the more radical they are the better we love them.

Tell them that we possess an international code that tyrants cannot understand, and a wide-flowing standard they cannot haul down.

Tell them we rejoice in their achievements and suffer in their defeats, as they do themselves; and tell them, Kropotkine, to fight no battles except their own against the common enemy.

Tell them we want no agreement, arbitration or otherwise, with their rulers any more than we do wars with which to slake their thirst in the blood of the toilers.

Tell them, finally, we recognise the same causes, the same effects, the same despots, and the same workers the world over, and stand ready at all times to render to the latter such assistance as is within our power.<sup>62</sup>

The following day Kropotkin left for England on the RMS *Majestic*. His trip to North America, lasting nearly four months, had been a resounding success. He had traversed the Canadian continent, making valuable

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*; Woodcock and Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince*, p. 276.

<sup>59</sup> *Centennial Expressions*, op. cit., p. 27. See also the *New York Times*, November 23, 1897.

<sup>60</sup> Kropotkin to Geddes, November 27.

<sup>61</sup> *Freedom*, March 1898.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, February.



observations of its geographic and agricultural features. He had attended three scientific conferences (in Toronto, Detroit and Washington), addressing two of them and exchanging ideas and information with his colleagues. He had visited other American cities, including New York, Buffalo, Paterson, Boston and Philadelphia. Far from leaving him exhausted, his travels had revived his spirits. Moreover, his physical health had improved. That in itself, noted the London *Freedom*, “is an immense gain”.<sup>63</sup>

Looking back at his American journey, Kropotkin recalled with pleasure the warmth with which he had everywhere been received. On board the *Majestic* he wrote of “the fine impression of this beautiful continent” and of the people he had encountered. In both Canada and the United States he had made many friends, and met anarchists of diverse national backgrounds and economic persuasions, including Johann Most and Benjamin Tucker, the leading spokesmen of the collectivist and individualist wings of the movement. In general he had found the Americans “very sympathetic” and regretted not being able to visit the Western states, whose inhabitants, he said, constituted “a different race from the New Englanders”. Indeed, had it been possible to do so, he would have liked to spend a whole year in America, traveling from place to place, recording his impressions and conducting anarchist propaganda.<sup>64</sup>

While particularly impressed by the economic and scientific progress of North America, Kropotkin had also had an opportunity to study the federalist system at first hand, acclaiming it as a model for Russia and Europe to follow. At the same time, however, he was disturbed by the political atmosphere in the United States. He found it, despite the advantages of representative democracy, “corrupting and enervating”. As he told an American reporter, “Men who are elected to office to do the fighting for the masses against the rule of the few are every time, or with insignificantly few exceptions, bought over by the enemy, so that to secure full liberty by the people for the people the American nation is beginning to realize that the traditional forms of government are entirely inadequate.” Kropotkin took comfort in the emerging labor movement, citing the large number of strikes in America as a sign of growing resistance to exploitation. “The Socialist sentiment in the United States was never in a more flourishing condition than it is today”, he declared. “The growth of the feeling is steadily on the increase, and particularly in such cities as New York and Chicago.”<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, January.

<sup>64</sup> Kropotkin to Geddes, November 27, 1897.

<sup>65</sup> *The World*, November 22.

To guide this sentiment into libertarian channels was one of the chief objects of Kropotkin's visit. And, to some extent at least, his efforts were not wasted. Financially, Kropotkin admitted, the voyage had been a "complete fiasco",<sup>66</sup> for the money taken in at most of his lectures had barely covered expenses. Yet the two big meetings in New York — at Chickering Hall in October and Cooper Union in November — had netted a handsome \$500. The greater part of this sum Kropotkin handed over to John Edelmann to revive his journal *Solidarity*, which had suspended publication in 1895 for lack of funds.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, Kropotkin had "left a most gratifying impression", noted Emma Goldman, and the proceeds of his lectures had injected "new life into our movement".<sup>68</sup> In Boston and New York, as the London *Freedom* observed, "the meetings were especially large, enthusiastic and in every way successful, the farewell meeting in the Cooper Hall being the finest he ever addressed." *Freedom* predicted that Kropotkin's tour "will give an immense impetus to the Anarchist movement in the States. The demand for Anarchist literature from America during the past months goes to prove the truth of this."<sup>69</sup>

In the wake of Kropotkin's visit, a flood of his speeches and essays appeared in the American anarchist press. One journal alone, *Free Society* of San Francisco, whose editor, Abe Isaak, was a Russian Mennonite turned anarchist, printed such important works as "Land and Authority", "Anarchist Morality", "Revolutionary Government", "The Wage-System", and "Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal." *Free Society* had been launched in November 1897, and Kropotkin read the first issue while lecturing in New York. Favorably impressed, he had but one serious criticism, which he expressed in a letter to the editor after returning to England. "I should advise you", he wrote, "to leave alone the sexual question, which the *Firebrand* [*Free Society's* predecessor] devoted so much attention to. Free men and women will better find the ways for arranging their mutual relations than we can even foresee now. This is to be a result of the free work of an evolution of free life, in which any newspaper guidance is as illusory as it is in most cases wrong."<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Kropotkin to Geddes, November 27.

<sup>67</sup> John H. Edelmann, "Solidarity", in: *Solidarity*, July 15, 1898; Kelly to Beffel, July 7, 1948. *Solidarity*, however, was able to publish only eight additional numbers before running out of money again. Edelmann died two years later at the age of forty-eight.

<sup>68</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, op. cit., p. 252.

<sup>69</sup> *Freedom*, January 1898. Contrast Martin A. Miller, *Kropotkin* (Chicago, 1976), p. 171. According to Miller, who cites a letter from Kropotkin to Peter Lavrov, Kropotkin had a mixed reception in America and his lectures in New York and Boston were poorly attended. This, however, conflicts with all other available evidence.

<sup>70</sup> *Free Society*, January 16, 1898.

Two years later, when Emma Goldman visited Kropotkin in the company of Mary Isaak, the wife of *Free Society's* editor, he once again broached the subject. "The paper is doing splendid work", he said, "but it would do more if it would not waste so much space discussing sex". Emma Goldman emphatically disagreed, and a heated argument ensued. According to her account, she and Kropotkin "paced the room in growing agitation, each strenuously upholding his side of the question. At last I paused with the remark: 'All right, dear comrade, when I have reached your age [she was then thirty, Kropotkin fifty-seven], the sex question may no longer be of importance to me. But it is *now*, and it is a tremendous factor for thousands, millions even, of young people.' Peter stopped short, an amused smile lighting up his kindly face. 'Fancy, I didn't think of that', he replied. 'Perhaps you are right after all.' He beamed affectionately upon me, with a humorous twinkle in his eye."<sup>71</sup>

Among the most important results of Kropotkin's trip to America was the publication of his autobiography, which in a short time became a classic. According to James Mavor, it was he who induced Kropotkin to undertake the task. Through Robert Erskine Ely, who was a friend of Mavor's, arrangements were made for publication in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Ely, together with the magazine's editor, Walter Hines Page, impressed upon Kropotkin the importance of writing his story; and once Kropotkin had agreed, Page persuaded the reluctant board of managers to go along with the project.<sup>72</sup> Written in elegant English, Kropotkin's reminiscences appeared as a series of monthly articles from September 1898 to September 1899, prefaced with an introduction by Ely, who called Kropotkin "one of the most remarkable men of this generation".<sup>73</sup>

When the first instalment reached him at Bromley, Kropotkin was greatly displeased by the title, "The Autobiography of a Revolutionist", assigned by the magazine's editors. He at once dispatched a telegram asking them to change it in subsequent issues to "Around One's Life", but his request went unheeded.<sup>74</sup> An expanded version of the articles was published in book form by Houghton Mifflin of Boston in 1899, under the

<sup>71</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 253. Yet when young Will Durant called on Kropotkin in 1912, he was scolded for "lecturing so much about sex", *Mother Earth*, October 1912.

<sup>72</sup> Mavor, *My Windows*, II, p. 93; Roger N. Baldwin, "The Story of Kropotkin's Life", in: *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets* (New York, 1927), p. 25.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Erskine Ely, "Prince Kropotkin", in: *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1898, pp. 338-446. At Kropotkin's suggestion, Page solicited an article on China from the anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus, which appeared in the same issue.

<sup>74</sup> Kropotkin to Brandes, September 22, 1898, *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, II, p. 132. *Autour d'une vie* became the title of the French edition.

title *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, which equally displeased the author.<sup>75</sup> The introduction this time was by the Danish critic Georg Brandes, a friend of Kropotkin's since 1895. According to James Mavor, who took "great satisfaction" in the book's appearance, there did not exist "a more charming series of autobiographical sketches or any more vivid account of the social movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century".<sup>76</sup>

## II: 1901

Kropotkin's second visit to the United States took place in 1901. The previous fall he had been invited by the Lowell Institute, where he had spoken in 1897, to deliver a series of lectures on Russian literature. He accepted the invitation and, towards the end of February, made his second westward crossing of the Atlantic. Docking at Boston, he remained in Massachusetts for more than a month, staying at the Colonial Club in Cambridge and renewing many friendships of his earlier visit.<sup>77</sup>

Kropotkin labored long and hard over his Lowell lectures, correcting and revising them up to the last minute. "To tell the truth", he wrote to Charles Eliot Norton of his opening speech, "I feel nervous for it. Such as I wrote it, it is too long, and may be too dull. So I rewrite it entirely, and so long as it is not done, I feel quite nervous. So I sit now, and write, and will work till late at night."<sup>78</sup> His fears, however, proved groundless. For the series, as Harry Kelly noted, was an "unqualified success".<sup>79</sup> Roger Baldwin tells us that the audiences were "large and alert, plying him with questions at the close of each address. He spoke from notes in an English strongly accented, in a professorial but very earnest style." There were eight lectures in all, which Kropotkin afterwards expanded and published in book form.<sup>80</sup>

During his prolonged stay in Boston, Kropotkin delivered a number of other lectures. He spoke, for example, at Wellesley College and also at Harvard, where, in addition to Professor Norton, he was warmly received by two pioneers of Slavic studies in the United States, Professor Leo Weiner, whose *Anthology of Russian Literature*, published the following

<sup>75</sup> Elisée Reclus suggested still another title, "Memoirs of an Anarchist", Reclus to Kropotkin, August 28, 1898, *Correspondance d'Elisée Reclus* (3 vols; Paris, 1911-25), III, p. 213.

<sup>76</sup> Mavor, *My Windows*, II, p. 93.

<sup>77</sup> Kropotkin to Brandes, March 28, 1901, *Correspondance de Georg Brandes*, II, p. 171.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Woodcock and Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince*, p. 284.

<sup>79</sup> Harry Kelly, "American Notes", in: *Freedom*, July 1901.

<sup>80</sup> Kropotkin's *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, op. cit., p. 26; Kropotkin, *Russian Literature* (New York and London, 1905), later re-issued as *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*.

year, Kropotkin considered an “excellent” work, and Professor Archibald Cary Coolidge, for whom the history of Russia was his “first love” and who put at Kropotkin’s disposal a “valuable collection” of materials, which Kropotkin used in preparing his Lowell lectures.<sup>81</sup> Beyond this, the Reverend Edward Everett Hale invited Kropotkin to speak in his church, but though Kropotkin had addressed Boston church groups in 1897, he declined, says Roger Baldwin, because of his antipathy to organized religion, though he was finally persuaded to speak in the church’s lecture room.<sup>82</sup>

Kropotkin’s largest meeting took place, appropriately enough, in Paine Hall, the home of Boston’s freethinking community. Organized by the Boston Anarchist Group, the meeting was opened by A. H. Simpson, a British-born follower of Benjamin Tucker. The chairman, Edward D. Mead, introduced Kropotkin as “the most valiant, courageous and noble champion of freedom in our time”. The audience, noted a Boston reporter, presented “a most cosmopolitan, picturesque and enthusiastic gathering”, with many women present, all demonstrating their affection for the “grand old man” of their movement. When Kropotkin entered the hall, another reporter observed, “a storm of applause broke out. The chorus of Italian ‘comrades’ sang the ‘Marseillaise,’ the audience applauded again and Kropotkin smiled, shook hands with the people who flocked about him and seemed happy.” From their seats members of the audience called out greetings in Russian, French, German and Italian, and Kropotkin answered each in his own language.<sup>83</sup>

Kropotkin spoke on “Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal”, severely criticizing state socialism, which, he argued, would entail unprecedented concentration of power and lead inevitably to slavery. He called instead for a free, voluntary, spontaneous and decentralized society, with “absolute home rule and the highest individual freedom”. He then went into what one reporter called “a learned yet lucid and impressive enunciation of anarchism, its literature, its philosophy and ideal”. He spoke of the growth of the anarchist movement all over the world. Twenty years earlier, he noted, only a handful of anarchist journals were being published, but now there was an enormous literature — books, pamphlets, periodicals — in all languages. Ten years before, he added, such a meeting as he was now

<sup>81</sup> Leo Weiner, *Anthology of Russian Literature* (2 vols; New York and London, 1902); Archibald Cary Coolidge: *Life and Letters*, ed. by H. J. Coolidge and R. H. Lord (Boston and New York, 1932), p. 45; Kropotkin, *Russian Literature*, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>82</sup> Kropotkin’s *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, p. 26.

<sup>83</sup> “Comrade Kropotkin at Boston”, in: *Free Society*, March 17, 1901; Harry Kelly, “Kropotkin in America”, in: *Freedom*, March-April, based on accounts in the *Boston Post and Boston Transcript*.

addressing could not have been possible, for the mere word “anarchism” would have been enough to keep people away. At the close of his speech Kropotkin defended those anarchists who used violence against coercive authority, describing “the countless cruelties and brutalities of kings, rulers, and all governments, practiced upon the poor, oppressed, starving defenseless people”. He spoke of the government persecutions that he had himself experienced and described how the Spanish anarchists had been tortured, then said: “It is we who have the right to speak of violence, not they.”<sup>84</sup>

During the course of his “fervid” speech, as the *Boston Post* described it, Kropotkin was repeatedly and “vociferously applauded”, and was “listened to with the greatest attention by all present”. His manner on the platform was striking and intense. “Here was no longer Kropotkin, the lecturer on Russian literature before the Lowell Institute, where he does quite well but is not at home — for literature is not his forte; here was Kropotkin, the enthused and enthusing agitator; the stirring, inspiring champion of his cause, the idolized leader of his movement, who feels and lives every word he utters.”<sup>85</sup> This was Kropotkin’s last major appearance in Boston. He left for New York on March 29th. On the eve of his departure, a farewell gathering was held at Phoenix Hall on Washington Street. He was given a warm send-off, proving, said Harry Kelly, that “the spirit of Emerson, Philips, and Garrison is not dead but has been sleeping — may this visit help to awaken it.”<sup>86</sup>

When Kropotkin arrived in New York, he spoke to a group of reporters at the Hotel Gerard, where he was staying. The conversation turned to his native country, whose secret police, the *Okhrana*, kept track of him throughout his tour. He spoke of the disturbances in Russia’s universities, calling the Tsar, Nicholas II, “an irresponsible, not very clever, young man”. He was convinced, however, that Russia had entered on the path of constitutional reform, which he hoped would give it a federalist government on American lines.<sup>87</sup> A full schedule of lectures had been arranged for Kropotkin, by Emma Goldman on behalf of the anarchists and by Robert Erskine Ely, who had been so helpful to Kropotkin on his previous trip. While still in England, Kropotkin had written to Emma Goldman about his impending journey, offering to speak for the movement if the

<sup>84</sup> Free Society, March 17; Freedom, March-April. For the printed text of Kropotkin’s lecture, which differs in many details from the newspaper summaries, see Kropotkin’s *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, pp. 114-44.

<sup>85</sup> *Boston Post*, quoted in Freedom, March-April.

<sup>86</sup> Freedom, July.

<sup>87</sup> Kropotkin’s *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, p. 26; *New York Times*, March 30.

comrades wished it. "We were enthusiastic over the prospect", Emma Goldman recalls. "I had missed the lectures of our dear comrade on his previous tour [she had been lecturing on the West Coast at the time]. In England I had had no opportunity to hear him. We all felt that Peter's lectures and gracious personality would be of inestimable value to our movement in the United States."<sup>88</sup>

In a single week Kropotkin lectured half a dozen times, on Russian literature and on anarchism, as in Boston. His first appearance, on March 30th, was before the Educational League for the Study of Political Economy, a middle-class organization of which Professor Ely was chairman. Of Ely, however, Emma Goldman had a low opinion. "An extremely timid man, he seemed for ever in fear that his connexion with anarchists might ruin his standing with the backers of the League for Political Economy", was her uncharitable judgment. "I felt that to Ely the *prince* was the most important feature about Kropotkin. The British have royalty and love it, but some Americans love it because they would like to have it. It did not matter to them that Kropotkin had discarded his title in joining the revolutionary ranks."<sup>89</sup>

The lecture, at all events, was a great success. Kropotkin was greeted with enthusiasm, recalls a member of the audience which crammed the Berkeley Lyceum. According to the *New York Times*, "every seat was filled, extra chairs brought in, and people stood in the rear of the theatre, upstairs and down." "Turgenev and Tolstoy" was Kropotkin's topic. "He spoke an hour and a half easily and pleasantly, but with an accent which at times made it difficult for those who were out of range of his voice to understand." An anarchist who was present encountered no such difficulty: "To hear an old teacher talk of his countrymen, was a never-to-be-forgotten treat, especially so when telling us of the manner in which the populace greeted Tolstoy, by patting him on the back and accosting him with endearing terms of affection and fraternal love."<sup>90</sup>

The following afternoon, a Sunday, Kropotkin addressed a mass meeting arranged by his anarchist comrades at the Grand Central Palace, one of the largest auditoriums in the city. This, says Harry Kelly, was the biggest and most successful anarchist meeting ever held in New York, apart from

<sup>88</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 287; Hippolyte Havel, "Emma Goldman", in: Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York, 1911), pp. 29-30. Among those who assisted Emma Goldman was the Austrian anarchist Rudolf Grossmann, who later became well known as "Pierre Ramus". Grossmann to Joseph Ishill, January 3, 1924, Ishill Papers, Harvard University.

<sup>89</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 361.

<sup>90</sup> I. Ulman, "Kropotkin in New York", in: *Discontent* (Home, Wash.), April 24, 1901; *New York Times*, March 31.

Kropotkin's address at Cooper Union three and a half years before. People came from all parts of town, in spite of the high admission fee of twenty-five cents, and the hall, with a seating capacity of 4,000, was "packed to the doors".<sup>91</sup> The anarchist bookseller, Max Maisel, set up a stand in the vestibule and displayed his wares, aided by the pioneer libertarian educator Alexis C. Ferm.<sup>92</sup>

In the chair was Dr George D. Herron, the well-known Christian Socialist, who had met Kropotkin four years earlier as a student at the London School of Economics. "He did not at all approve of my way of looking at things at that time, either sociologically or religiously", Herron remembered, "but he was always so kindly and so reasonable in his admonitions and arguments, that I found him a vastly better teacher than the Fabian professors of political economy who constituted the faculty of the School of Economics."<sup>93</sup> Now Herron felt highly honored to be chairing the immense gathering. He had presided at many meetings, he told the audience, but would always look back to this one as the happiest of his life because the speaker was "like unto a host in the cause of human freedom". Herron added that he considered Kropotkin's writings "a veritable bible", and that he was "immensely indebted to him for the light he had shed on the social darkness prevalent up to his time".<sup>94</sup>

Kropotkin spoke on "Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal", the subject of his Paine Hall lecture in Boston. Again the reporter from the *Times* had trouble making out his words ("he spoke so rapidly and with such a patois that it was almost impossible to understand him"), while the anarchists hailed the address as a model of eloquence and clarity. "Comrades", wrote one, "it was truly glorious! I have been to many meetings, have spoken at some of them myself, where the audience aggregated greater in number, but I never witnessed in all my life so impressive a reception as the one accorded to the grand man of the Socialist movement. Kropotkin's excellent address was listened to most attentively and was received with great eclat, and everyone was of the opinion that it was by far the most successful lecture and meeting ever held in this city."<sup>95</sup>

Over the next few days Kropotkin delivered a number of additional lectures. One evening he spoke in Russian to a Russian audience at "the famous and notorious Tammany Hall".<sup>96</sup> He also spoke at several colleges

<sup>91</sup> Freedom, July; Ulman, "Kropotkin in New York", loc. cit.

<sup>92</sup> Alexis C. Ferm to Sasha Hourwich, May 23, 1951, Modern School Collection, Rutgers University.

<sup>93</sup> George D. Herron, "Kropotkin as Scientist", in: *Mother Earth*, December 1912.

<sup>94</sup> Ulman, "Kropotkin in New York".

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*; *New York Times*, April 1.

<sup>96</sup> Freedom, July.



in the city on "Work As It Should Be". All told, some \$750 was collected at these meetings, over and above expenses, and sent to the London *Freedom*, to *Les Temps Nouveaux* in Paris, and to *Free Society*, now located in Chicago. In between lecture engagements, Kropotkin received a host of visitors and himself called on old and new acquaintances. A day or two after his arrival, he met with Johann Most, whom he had visited during his 1897 journey. Their meeting took place at the Hotel Gerard, after Kropotkin, through some misunderstanding, had gone looking for Most at the offices of *Freiheit* on Gold Street. When Most finally caught up with Kropotkin at his hotel, the men embraced very warmly and talked for an hour over tea, mainly about the anarchist movement in Europe and America.<sup>97</sup> On another occasion, strange to relate, Robert Ely took Kropotkin to call on the widow of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy during the Civil War. During the interview, which Mrs Davis had requested, Booker T. Washington, who was in search of Professor Ely, was announced as being in the lobby, and Mrs Davis expressed a desire to meet him. Thus Kropotkin, as Roger Baldwin has observed, was the unwitting means of bringing together two persons as little likely to meet as any in the country, and the anarchist prince, the black educator and the widow of the slave-owning president "sat politely and conversed as if it were a most ordinary occasion".<sup>98</sup>

Apart from his lectures and visits, Kropotkin spent much time at private gatherings with anarchist and liberal friends. After the Grand Central Palace meeting, for instance, a small group of anarchists, Emma Goldman among them, dined with "our beloved teacher".<sup>99</sup> The following evening, April 1st, a large reception was held for him at the Labor Lyceum, featuring refreshments, entertainment and discussion. Kropotkin, who stayed and chatted till nearly midnight, was greeted with a warmth and respect that bordered on veneration. "To see his beaming, kindly face, aglow with true benevolence, his intellectual brow, and, most remarkable of all - for one who has passed through so much and has lived so strenuous a life - his mild, soft eyes, is an inspiration and a tonic", wrote an anarchist who attended the reception. "No wonder that men and women spontaneously embraced him with brimming eyes and high-beating hearts." Though

<sup>97</sup> Johann Most, "Eine Stunde mit Peter Kropotkin", in: *Freiheit* (New York), April 13. See also Rudolf Rocker, *Johann Most: das Leben eines Rebellen* (Berlin, 1924), pp. 396-99.

<sup>98</sup> Kropotkin's *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, pp. 26-27; Woodcock and Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince*, p. 285. According to Kropotkin's daughter, it was her father who induced Booker T. Washington to write his memoirs. Interview with Alexandra Kropotkin, New York, March 10, 1965.

<sup>99</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 287.

deeply touched by their affection, Kropotkin tried to discourage such adulation on the part of his followers. Thus, when the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, the principal Jewish anarchist paper in America, made plans to publish a group of Kropotkin photographs as a supplement, he put a stop to it, refusing, he told the editor, to be made into “an icon”.<sup>100</sup>

The last such private gathering took place on Saturday evening, April 6th, when a small dinner was arranged on Henry Street on the Lower East Side. That afternoon, the *Weekly People*, organ of the Socialist Labor Party, had published a sneering report of Kropotkin’s Grand Central Palace meeting. Written by the editor, Daniel De Leon, who apparently hated anarchists even more than capitalists, it displayed sharper hostility than accounts in the regular press, which was generally fair in its treatment of Kropotkin. With withering contempt De Leon derided the “Prince’s retinue”, among whom he named “Do-Unto-Others Herron”, “poor old John Swinton”, and Emma Goldman, “with her severe little pug face and glistening spectacles”. Kropotkin himself, wrote De Leon, had “a mental apparatus that is a prize collection of intellectual junk. His English is very poor. As to ideas or information he had nothing new to say – the same long, disjointed, incoherent anarchistic ramble, touching about everything under the sun, except the working class and the capitalist class.”<sup>101</sup> Kropotkin, for all his reputation for benign saintliness, was capable of great fits of wrath and moral outrage. At such moments, his features would grow tense, his eyes flash with indignation, his face grow flushed and angry. Such was the case at the Henry Street dinner when Jacob Gordin, the famous Jewish playwright, happened to mention De Leon’s article. Kropotkin began to tremble, so violently that the table shook (Yanovsky, sitting next to him, could feel the vibrations), and, interrupting Gordin, would not allow him to spoil the dinner with “such filth”.<sup>102</sup>

Both emotionally and physically, Kropotkin’s crowded schedule proved too much of a strain on his fragile constitution. Exhausted by the excitement and by the endless speeches and receptions, he came down with influenza, which kept him in bed for over a week. By the middle of April, however, he had recovered sufficiently to leave for the Midwest, where a

<sup>100</sup> Ulman, “Kropotkin in New York”; S. Yanovsky, “Kropotkin kakim ia ego znal”, in: P. A. Kropotkin i ego uchenie: Internatsional’nyi sbornik posviashchennyi desiatoi godovshchine smerti P. A. Kropotkina, ed. by G. P. Maksimov (Chicago, 1931), p. 216.

<sup>101</sup> “A ‘Real Revolutionist’”, in: *Weekly People*, April 6, 1901.

<sup>102</sup> Yanovsky, “Kropotkin kakim ia ego znal”, loc. cit. According to Woodcock and Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince*, p. 278, the two men had actually met when Kropotkin wandered into De Leon’s office while looking for Johann Most’s *Freiheit*, and they had a pleasant and cordial conversation.

further series of lectures had been arranged, primarily in Chicago. On the way to Chicago, Kropotkin made a special stop at Pittsburgh to visit Alexander Berkman, the Russian-born anarchist who was serving a twenty-two-year prison sentence for his attempt on the life of Henry Clay Frick, manager of the Carnegie Steel Company. Having himself spent five years in prison, Kropotkin felt a special sympathy for Berkman, whose act he had defended in 1892. "Berkman", he had written, "has done more to spread the anarchist idea among the masses than the reading of any journal or newspaper. [. . .] He has shown that our Chicago martyrs were not the last Mohicans of the anarchist movement in America."<sup>103</sup> Three years later, when Emma Goldman visited Kropotkin in London, he had asked her about Berkman. "He had followed the latter's case", she writes, "and he knew every phase of it, expressing great regard and concern for Sasha." And when Kropotkin came to New York in 1897, he had declined an invitation from Andrew Carnegie to visit his mansion on Fifth Avenue. "Because of your power and influence", he had written, "my comrade Alexander Berkman received twenty-two years of prison for an act that the state of Pennsylvania punishes with a maximum of seven years. I cannot accept the hospitality of a man who assisted in condemning another man to twenty-two years."<sup>104</sup>

When Kropotkin arrived in Pittsburgh, Berkman was being held in solitary confinement after an unsuccessful attempt to tunnel his way to freedom, and Kropotkin was refused permission to see him. A few days later Berkman received a letter from Kropotkin, who had written on the envelope, beneath Berkman's name, "Political Prisoner". The warden was furious. "We have no political prisoners in a free country", he shouted at Berkman, tearing up the envelope. "But you have political grafters", Berkman retorted. "We argued the matter heartily", Berkman told a friend, "and I demanded the envelope. The Warden insisted that I apologize. Of course I refused, and I had to spend three days in the dungeon."<sup>105</sup> Thwarted in his efforts to see Berkman, Kropotkin went on to Chicago, his principal destination in the Midwest. At Englewood, two stations from Chicago, he was met by the Isaaks, Abe, Mary and their son Abe Junior, publishers of *Free Society*, who wanted to greet him and talk to him "before he was swamped by an admiring crowd in the city". Also

<sup>103</sup> Die Autonomie (London), September 24, 1892. Cf. Solidarity, October 8.

<sup>104</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 169; id., "Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin", in: P. A. Kropotkin i ego uchenie, op. cit., p. 226. For a different version see Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets, pp. 25-26.

<sup>105</sup> Alexander Berkman to Carl Nold, August 18, 1902, in id., *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (New York, 1912), p. 442. Cf. *Mother Earth Bulletin*, February 1918, where Emma Goldman refers to this incident.

waiting were a reporter and a newspaper artist, “but the newspapermen were kindly invited to call at another time, while he received the comrades. The Anarchist movement and the comrades are always his first consideration.”<sup>106</sup>

On reaching Chicago, Kropotkin was taken in charge by Jane Addams, a disciple of Tolstoy who was also influenced by Kropotkin’s social and ethical teachings. Miss Addams took Kropotkin to her famous social settlement, Hull House, where he stayed during his week-long visit. For the occasion, says Emma Goldman, the rooms were decorated with Russian folk art, and Miss Addams and her staff wore Russian peasant costumes. Of all her Russian guests, Miss Addams considered Kropotkin “the most distinguished”.<sup>107</sup> According to Dr Alice Hamilton, who was living at Hull House at the time, “we all came to love him”, as did the Russian refugees who flocked to the settlement to see him. “No matter how down-and-out, how squalid even, a caller would be, Prince Kropotkin would give him a joyful welcome and kiss him on both cheeks.”<sup>108</sup> On his first evening at Hull House Kropotkin agreed to meet with the Chicago press, whose writers, says Abe Isaak, Junior, were “pretty fair, as compared with their usual misrepresentations of Anarchists”. After the reporters had left, Kropotkin spoke privately with the elder Abe Isaak on the state of the anarchist movement in Europe. Though especially pleased with the progress of libertarian ideas within the labor unions of Spain, Italy and France, he was also much interested in the trade-union movement in America and “urged that Anarchists join and agitate more among them”.<sup>109</sup>

It was at Hull House, on April 17th, that Kropotkin delivered the first of his five lectures in Chicago. Speaking before the Arts and Crafts Society, he presented a digest of his “remarkable book” (as Jane Addams called it) *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, stressing the value of work as a form of art and the importance of practical learning to supplement education from books. On April 18th and 19th he addressed the Twentieth Century Club

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Grace Umrath (a granddaughter of the Isaaks), New York, September 24, 1974; Abe Isaak, Jr, “Kropotkin in Chicago”, in: *Free Society*, May 5, 1901.

<sup>107</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, pp. 375-76; Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (New York, 1910), p. 402. As late as 1932, Edmund Wilson saw in the polygon room a portrait of Kropotkin among the “patron-saints and heroes of Hull House”, Wilson, *The American Earthquake* (Garden City, N.Y., 1958), p. 449.

<sup>108</sup> Alice Hamilton, *Exploring the Dangerous Trades* (Boston, 1943), p. 86. Dr Hamilton was a leading authority on industrial poisons.

<sup>109</sup> *Free Society*, May 5, 1901. Kropotkin remained a devotee of *Free Society* until it ceased publication in 1904, and kept in touch with Abe Isaak, whom he sent inscribed copies of his writings. He was especially impressed with C. L. James’s “History of the French Revolution”, serialized in *Free Society* in 1901 and published in book form the following year.

on “Medieval Cities” and the High School Teachers’ Club on “The Law of Mutual Aid and the Struggle for Existence”, drawing on both occasions from his forthcoming book, *Mutual Aid*.

On the afternoon of April 20th, a Saturday, Kropotkin, accompanied by a group of Chicago anarchists, visited the Waldheim Cemetery and placed flowers at the tomb of the Haymarket martyrs, Parsons, Spies, Lingg, Fischer and Engel, whose cause he had championed from the time of their arrest in 1886. The same morning a group of society women, led by Mrs Potter Palmer, had invited him to lunch. Mrs Palmer, the wife of one of Chicago’s “richest and ‘hardest’ businessmen”,<sup>110</sup> was a financial supporter of Hull House. “You will come, Prince, will you not?”, she pleaded. “I am sorry, ladies, but I have a previous engagement with my comrades”, Kropotkin excused himself. “Oh, no, Prince; you *must* come with us!”, Mrs Palmer insisted. “Madame”, Kropotkin replied, “you may have the Prince, and I will go to my comrades.”<sup>111</sup> Kropotkin, however, could not escape the attentions of Chicago high society any more than of Boston or New York. A Russian nobleman from a distinguished family, a scientist of international renown, he was tirelessly pursued by America’s upper crust. One time he accepted an invitation to a social gathering, expecting to meet his anarchist comrades, only to find himself “among vulgar bourgeois women who pestered him for his autograph”, writes Emma Goldman’s associate, Hippolyte Havel. “The irony of it! The man who gave up gladly his position at the Russian court to go to the people being entertained by the porkocracy of Chicago!”<sup>112</sup>

Yet there were some prominent Chicagoans whom Kropotkin was more than happy to meet, above all John Peter Altgeld, the former Illinois Governor who had pardoned the Haymarket anarchists in 1893. The meeting was arranged by Graham Taylor, founder of the Chicago Commons settlement house, who was present at the occasion. The conversation turned to Russia, where student disorders and government repressions had culminated in the assassination of the Minister of Education. “When asked by me whether nothing short of violence could deliver the Russian people from oppression”, Taylor recalls, Kropotkin replied that “the despotic bureaucrats could be overcome only by being blown off the face of the earth”. Altgeld, for his part, “filed exceptions to any justifications for such conclusions in America”.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> James W. Linn, *Jane Addams: A Biography* (New York, 1935), p. 197.

<sup>111</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 361. Cf. Fernand Planche and Jean Delphy, *Kropotkin* (Paris, 1948), p. 108, where the incident is misdated as November 11th, the anniversary of the Haymarket hangings.

<sup>112</sup> Hippolyte Havel, “Kropotkin the Revolutionist”, in: *Mother Earth*, December 1912.

<sup>113</sup> Graham Taylor, *Pioneering on Social Frontiers* (Chicago, 1930), p. 317.

On the evening of April 20th, following his pilgrimage to Waldheim Cemetery, Kropotkin met with students and professors of the University of Chicago, where he spoke on "Science and the Social Question" and started a movement to protest the treatment of Russian students by the Tsar.<sup>114</sup> To arouse American opinion against the Russian government, Kropotkin published articles in two leading periodicals, *The Outlook* and *The North American Review*, blaming the disturbances on the repressive policies of the authorities and on the general atmosphere of reaction in which all efforts to achieve greater liberty were ruthlessly crushed.<sup>115</sup> Kropotkin cited a protest of Harvard students, during his recent stay at Cambridge, against the "mutton monotony" of their dining-room food. "What", he asked, "would the Americans say if President McKinley had ordered the Harvard students [. . .] to be sent to the Philippines? The country would certainly rise in indignation; that is what happened in Russia." Arguing that Russia had outgrown its autocratic government, Kropotkin again called for a parliamentary system on decentralist and federalist lines. Nicholas II, he wrote, "will soon be brought to realize that he is bound to take steps for meeting the wishes of the country. Let us hope that he will understand the proper sense of the lesson which he has received during the past two months."<sup>116</sup>

Kropotkin's article in *The North American Review* brought a rejoinder from Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Procurator of the Holy Synod and chief advisor to the Tsar, whose name was synonymous with reaction. Calling Kropotkin "a professional apostle of anarchy and socialism", Pobedonostsev defended the Russian political and educational systems. Kropotkin, he declared, "does not know Russia, and is incapable of understanding his country; for the soul of the Russian people is a closed book to him which he has never opened." And even if we were to admit that autocracy is outmoded, "God forbid we should seek for the amelioration of this form of government in the remedy proposed by Kropotkin."<sup>117</sup> Kropotkin replied, in what was the last article in the series, praising the efforts of Russian liberals to achieve a constitution. Not that he had abandoned his antistatist views. "If I speak of the coming Constitution, it is not because I see in it a panacea", he wrote. "My personal ideals go far beyond that. But whether we like it or not, it is coming. The colossal blunders of the ministries, and

<sup>114</sup> Free Society, May 5, 1901.

<sup>115</sup> P. Kropotkin, "Russia and the Student Riots", in: *The Outlook*, April 6, 1901, pp. 760-64; id., "The Present Crisis in Russia", in: *The North American Review*, May, pp. 711-23.

<sup>116</sup> Kropotkin, "The Present Crisis in Russia", pp. 717, 723.

<sup>117</sup> Konstantin Pobedonostsev, "Russia and Popular Education", in: *The North American Review*, September 1901, pp. 349-54.

their increasingly frequent assumption of the right, under the shelter of the Emperor's signature, of modifying by mere decrees the fundamental laws of the Empire, render it unavoidable."<sup>118</sup>

On Sunday April 21st, Kropotkin addressed his biggest meeting in Chicago, sponsored by the local anarchist groups. Paying twenty-five cents a ticket, more than 3,000 people packed the Central Music Hall to hear him hold forth on "Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal". All the anarchists were there – Hippolyte Havel, the Isaaks and their comrades – as well as society people, attracted by the prospect of seeing an authentic prince. On every seat there was a copy of *Free Society*, put there by the Isaaks' daughter Mary and her friend Sonia Edelstadt, a niece of the Jewish anarchist poet, David Edelstadt. The chairman was Clarence Darrow, the celebrated lawyer, who was then a Tolstoyan like Jane Addams. He introduced Kropotkin with the remark: "In Russia they exile their prophets. In this country we hang them" – a reference to the Haymarket affair which caused a stir in the assembly.<sup>119</sup>

On April 22nd Kropotkin took the train to Urbana to speak at the University of Illinois on "The Modern Development of Socialism". His address was warmly received, the student newspaper finding it "of especial value in clearing up the haze of erroneous impressions which surrounds the subject of anarchists and anarchism". The next day he traveled to the University of Wisconsin at Madison and spoke on "Turgenev and Tolstoy", the lecture being reported "a success from every point of view".<sup>120</sup> On April 24th he was back in Chicago to attend a farewell reception arranged by the Industrial Art League. Declaring that his visit to America would remain one of the most pleasant recollections of his life, he expressed the hope that the land of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman would take a leading part in the socialist and anarchist movement. After his departure, the *Chicago Chronicle*, one of the leading dailies in the city, held a symposium on the effect of his visit. Only one contributor (Lucy Parsons) was an anarchist, yet nearly all agreed that Kropotkin's influence had been constructive and for the good.<sup>121</sup> Kropotkin returned to the East through Indiana and Ohio, collecting data on American farming, as he had done while crossing Canada in 1897. He stopped for two days in Buffalo, where his friend James Mavor had come down from Toronto to meet him.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Kropotkin, "Russian Schools and the Holy Synod", *ibid.*, April 1902, pp. 518-27. See also James W. Hulse, *Revolutionists in London* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 169-70.

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Sonia Edelstadt Keene, December 9, 1974; Hutchins Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto* (New York, 1902), p. 149. See also *Lucifer* (Chicago), April 27, 1901, and *Freiheit*, April 27.

<sup>120</sup> Woodcock and Avakumović, *The Anarchist Prince*, pp. 286-87.

<sup>121</sup> *Free Society*, May 5 and 19, 1901.

Then he proceeded to New York, sailing back to England in early May.

By all indications, Kropotkin's second American tour had been as successful as the first. According to Jane Addams, he had been "heard throughout the country with great interest and respect". As Abe Isaak, Junior, put it, he had given anarchist propaganda "a lively impetus", while gaining for himself "the honor and esteem of all intelligent people, and the love and friendship of all comrades". Writing in a similar vein, Harry Kelly called Kropotkin's visit a "triumphal procession", with "one continuous ovation from the day he landed till the day he sailed". Traveling as far west as Chicago and Madison, he had addressed half a dozen universities as well as numerous educational and cultural groups. "Add to all this propaganda the countless number of people Kropotkin met and discussed with privately", noted Kelly, "the articles written and interviews granted to newspapermen and it will convey a fair idea of the work this one man did in the two months of his stay in America."<sup>123</sup>

But the journey had taken its toll. In contrast to his first visit, Kropotkin's health had been adversely affected. In New York, as we have seen, he had contracted influenza, and he returned to England in a weakened condition. In November 1901 he suffered a severe heart attack, from which, he told the Swiss anarchist James Guillaume, he "nearly died", attributing much of the blame to "my trip to America", with its crowded and exhausting schedule of appearances.<sup>124</sup> Health reasons alone would probably have deterred any repetition of the journey had something else not occurred to rule out future visits. In September 1901, four months after Kropotkin's departure, President McKinley was assassinated by a self-proclaimed anarchist named Czolgosz. Rumors were soon afloat of an anarchist plot hatched by Kropotkin and Emma Goldman, with Czolgosz as their instrument. Hull House was alleged to have been the scene of their "secret, murderous meetings" during Kropotkin's visit. The story was pure fabrication, yet Kropotkin was greatly disturbed, not least because of the repressions suffered by his Chicago comrades, including Havel and the Isaaks, who were thrown in jail and denied counsel until Jane Addams intervened on their behalf, an action which cost Hull House the backing of Mrs Potter Palmer.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Mavor, *My Windows*, II, p. 93.

<sup>123</sup> Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, op. cit., p. 402; *Free Society*, May 5, 1901; *Freedom*, July.

<sup>124</sup> Kropotkin to Guillaume, December 12, 1901, in: *Probuzhdenie* (Detroit), February 1931.

<sup>125</sup> Hamilton, *Exploring the Dangerous Trades*, op. cit., p. 86; Linn, *Jane Addams*, op. cit., p. 219.



After McKinley's death Kropotkin could never again visit the United States, for in 1903 a law was passed by Congress forbidding anarchists to enter the country. Once again, wrote Kropotkin to Emma Goldman, bourgeois society "throws its hypocritical liberties over-board, tears them to pieces — as soon as people use those liberties for fighting that cursed society."<sup>126</sup> Yet the anti-anarchist law, for all his bitter feelings against it, did not destroy Kropotkin's affection for the United States. "Here is my opinion", he wrote Max Nettlau in 1902. "From among a hundred men taken at random in Europe, you will not find as many enthusiasts, ready to set forth on untraveled paths, as in America. The dollar is nowhere given so little importance: it is won or it is lost. In England, one values and worships the pound, but definitely not in America. That is America. *Any village in Oregon is better than the smallest hamlet in Germany.*"<sup>127</sup>

Although Kropotkin never returned to the New World, his influence continued to make itself felt. One by one, his books were published in American editions, and his articles appeared and re-appeared in the anarchist press, making him the most widely read anarchist writer in America. His portrait was hung in anarchist clubs and schools, and a number of anarchist groups and organizations adopted his name. There was a Kropotkin Library at the Stelton colony in New Jersey, a Kropotkin Group in New York composed of Russian immigrant workers, a Kropotkin Branch of the Workmen's Circle in Los Angeles, to cite only three examples.

In December 1912 a Seventieth Birthday Celebration was held in Kropotkin's honor at Carnegie Hall. Sponsored by *Mother Earth* (edited by Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman) in co-operation with the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, it featured musical events and dramatic readings in addition to speeches in English, French, Spanish, Czech and Yiddish. Similar meetings were held in Boston, Chicago and Toronto, all of which Kropotkin had visited during his tours of North America. For the same occasion anarchist journals such as *Mother Earth*, *La Cronaca Sovversiva* and *Golos Truda* devoted special issues to Kropotkin's life and ideas, with tributes by his principal associates, and a Kropotkin Literary Society was organized by Jewish anarchists to publish anarchist and socialist classics, some by Kropotkin himself. Moved by these fraternal gestures, Kropotkin wrote the following in a letter to *Mother Earth*.

<sup>126</sup> Quoted in Richard Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise* (Chicago, 1961), p. 94. Cf. Kropotkin to Goldman, December 16, 1903, Tamiment Library.

<sup>127</sup> "Une lettre inédite de Pierre Kropotkine à Max Nettlau", ed. by Derry Novak, in: *International Review of Social History*, IX (1964), p. 282, English translation in P. A. Kropotkin, *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution*, ed. by M. A. Miller (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), pp. 303-04.

I need not tell you, nor could I word it on paper, how deeply I was touched by all these expressions of sympathy, and how I felt that “something brotherly” which keeps us, Anarchists, united by a feeling far deeper than the mere sense of solidarity in a party; and I am sure that that feeling of brotherhood will have some day its effect, when history will call upon us to show what we are worth, and how far we can act in harmony for the reconstruction of Society upon a new basis of equality and freedom.<sup>128</sup>

Until his death in Russia in 1921, Kropotkin regarded his American comrades with profound affection. When Emma Goldman paid him a visit in 1920, he asked to be remembered to his friends in the States, sending “special love to Harry Kelly”.<sup>129</sup> When Kropotkin died, memorial meetings were held in cities from New York to Los Angeles. In 1923 a gifted anarchist printer in New Jersey, Joseph Ishill by name, put together a beautiful volume in his memory, with contributions by Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Voltairine de Cleyre, Rudolf Rocker, Saul Yanovsky and other anarchist writers.<sup>130</sup> At the same time, anarchists in America, headed by Harry Kelly, raised funds to support the Kropotkin Museum, established in Moscow to house his papers and memorabilia. In 1931, the tenth anniversary of Kropotkin’s death, a memorial volume, edited by Gregory Maximoff, was published in Chicago, while the Detroit *Probuzhdenie* put out a special issue with a selection of Kropotkin letters edited by Max Nettlau. For the same occasion, the Free Society Group of Chicago organized a mass meeting to honor Kropotkin’s memory, with Yanovsky and Clarence Darrow among the speakers.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, on the centennial of Kropotkin’s birth in 1942, a celebration took place in Los Angeles under the auspices of the Kropotkin Branch of the Workmen’s Circle and the Rocker Publications Committee, which issued a brochure of tributes and recollections by Kropotkin’s surviving colleagues.<sup>132</sup>

By his writings and personal example Kropotkin influenced a whole range of well-known figures in American life, anarchist and non-anarchist alike. Alexander Berkman called him “my teacher and inspiration”, while the civil libertarian Roger Baldwin, who edited a collection of Kropotkin’s essays, wrote that Kropotkin’s social philosophy “made an enduring mark

<sup>128</sup> Mother Earth, January 1913. See also Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 510.

<sup>129</sup> Emma Goldman to Stella Ballantine, November 4, 1920, Lillian D. Wald Papers, Columbia University.

<sup>130</sup> Peter Kropotkin: *The Rebel, Thinker and Humanitarian*, op. cit.

<sup>131</sup> P. A. Kropotkin i ego uchenie; *Probuzhdenie*, February 1931; *The Road to Freedom* (New York), March 1931.

<sup>132</sup> Centennial Expressions. Cf. the centennial issue of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* published in December 1942.

on my thinking".<sup>133</sup> From his prison cell Bartolomeo Vanzetti invoked Kropotkin's concept of mutual aid as the basis of the future libertarian society.<sup>134</sup> In a similar vein, scholars and writers such as Lewis Mumford, Will Durant, Ashley Montagu and Paul Goodman expressed their indebtedness to Kropotkin's teachings, as did the muckraking journalist I. F. Stone, for whom "his vision of a voluntary society without police or oppression" has remained the "noblest human ideal".<sup>135</sup>

The social ferment of the 1960's saw a revival of interest in Kropotkin and his doctrines. His major works were republished and new biographies and anthologies of his writings appeared in print. In 1967 a group of New Left anarchists established a Kropotkin House in Duluth, Minnesota. An anarchist group formed in 1974 by students in London, Ontario, dubbed itself the Friends of Kropotkin. In 1975 a Kropotkin Society was started in Evansville, Indiana, with a journal entitled *Equality*. As of this writing, interest in Kropotkin and his work shows little sign of abating. His moral stature and vision of a free society continue to appeal to many young people in North America who are repelled by an increasingly centralized and conformist world. Kropotkin's emphasis on the natural and spontaneous, his criticism of arid ideological dogmas, his distrust of bureaucracy and standardization, his faith in voluntary cooperation and mutual aid, are leaving their mark on a new generation of idealists and rebels.

<sup>133</sup> Alexander Berkman, "Looking Backward and Forward", in: *Mother Earth*, December 1912; *Centennial Expressions*, p. 36.

<sup>134</sup> *The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti*, ed. by Marion Denman Frankfurter and Gardner Jackson (New York, 1928), p. 108. Vanzetti, *ibid.*, pp. 176, 275, also praised Kropotkin's history of the French Revolution and his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on anarchism.

<sup>135</sup> I. F. Stone's *Bi-Weekly*, December 1971; interview with Harold Hayes, Channel 13, New York, February 3, 1975.