

The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793

Peter Kropotkin • Introduction: David Berry

The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793 is Peter Kropotkin's most substantial historical work. In it he presents a people's history of the world-shaking events of the Revolution and shows the key role the working men and women of the towns and countryside played in it. Without the constant pressure of popular organisations and activity, the politicians would never have created a Republic, nor been able to survive the counterrevolutionary forces internally or externally.

Focusing on such mass movements—and especially the peasant majority—rather than on the few great men beloved of bourgeois accounts, this is a groundbreaking account of the period and a seminal work of “history from below.” Later research may have corrected some factual details and opened new avenues of scholarship, but Kropotkin's text remains an exemplar of anarchist history-writing, challenging both bourgeois republican and Marxist interpretations of the Revolution.

Yet it is more than a history: Kropotkin uses the experience of the French Revolution to aid us in our current struggles and to learn its lessons in order to ensure the success of future revolutions. This book raises issues which have resurfaced time and again, as well as offering solutions based on the self-activity of the masses, the new, decentralised, directly democratic social organisations they forged during the Revolution, and the need to transform a political revolt into a social revolution which seeks to secure the well-being of all by transforming the economy from the start.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) was the foremost theorist of the anarchist movement. Born a Russian Prince, he rejected his title to become a revolutionary, seeking a society based on freedom, equality, and solidarity. Imprisoned for his activism in Russia and France, his writings include *The Conquest of Bread; Fields, Factories, and Workshops; Anarchism, Anarchist-Communism, and the State; Memoirs of a Revolutionist; and Modern Science and Anarchism*. New editions of his classic works *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* and *Words of a Rebel* will be published by PM Press to commemorate his life and work on the centennial of his death.

David Berry taught French, history and politics at Loughborough University, where he was a member of the Anarchism Research Group, for over thirty years. Among other things, he has published *A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917–1945* (AK Press, 2009); *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism: The Individual, the National and the Transnational* (CSP, 2010), coedited with Constance Bantman; *Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Black and Red* (PM Press, 2017), coedited with Alex Prichard, Ruth Kinna, and Saku Pinta, and edited *For a Libertarian Communism* (PM Press, 2017) by Daniel Guérin. Recently retired from wage slavery, he is currently putting the finishing touches to *A Life in the Service of Revolution: Daniel Guérin, 1904–1988*.

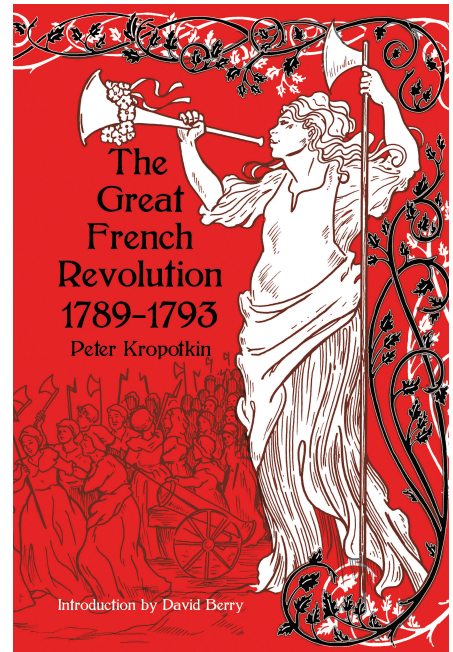
ACCOLADES

“In this classic text, Kropotkin demonstrates how even struggles that falter can lay the groundwork for subsequent upheavals. The French Revolution may have succumbed to reaction, but it also gave birth to ideas that would define revolutions to come. A must-read for anyone struggling to put insurgency on the agenda once again.”

—AK Thompson, author of *Black Bloc, White Riot*

“Kropotkin's *The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793* is an essential work of history from below, giving a nuanced account of one of the most important upheavals from the perspective of the masses of ordinary people who made it happen. It's great to see it back in print.”

—Working Class History



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