

In sum, *Politics and Production* is a useful and well-researched book which could, nevertheless, have been strengthened by the adoption of a more ambitious comparative approach and a more rigorous analytical framework.

Neville Kirk

CAHM, CAROLINE. *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism 1872–1886*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Port Chester 1989. xii, 372 pp. £ 35.00.

It would be difficult to find a book on anarchism in which the work of Peter Kropotkin is not dealt with, or at least referred to. Seventy years after his death historical research on this most widely read of all anarchists, one who, more than anyone else, shaped anarchist ideas, is still very limited. Caroline Cahm, who has already published some work on Kropotkin, has researched in great detail the development of Kropotkin's ideas in the crucial period 1872 to 1886.

This period is crucial because Kropotkin was at that time an organizer and agitator in the revolutionary movements in Russia and Europe and not yet the theorist and writer he was later to become. Cahm's study is based on an extensive reading of the literature and the sources in nineteen archives in western and north-western Europe, Russia and the United States. The footnotes and notes take up eighty-six pages, but they are unfortunately not incorporated into the index, nor are the names of the authors who are the subject of Cahm's polemics (Fleming, d'Agostino). In addition to a short introduction and a closing chapter which summarizes her conclusions, the book is divided into three parts. The first considers the development of the theory of anarchist communism and the part played in that by Kropotkin. The second focuses on the development of anarchist ideas of revolutionary action by individuals and small groups. The third part of the book concerns the development of anarchist views of collective action.

In the first section Cahm concludes that Kropotkin did play an "important part" in this development, but that communist anarchism developed in various countries "largely independently of each other" and "spontaneously" (p. 64). This conclusion supports that of Max Nettlau. "Propaganda by deed" (a term with which Kropotkin himself appears to have been unhappy) plays a central role in the second part of Cahm's book which contains chapters on the London Congress (1881) and the Lyon trial (1883). In the third part Cahm considers the meaning which Kropotkin gave to syndicalism. She rightly emphasizes that by "action" – individual as well as collective – Kropotkin meant *social* action, never political.

Although Cahm does unearth much important information, her study is not entirely satisfactory. "I have attempted", she writes in her Preface (p. x), "to supplement the general biographical works with a more searching study of Kropotkin's development situated firmly in the historical context of the development of the European anarchist movement". Her "historical context" is not so much the development of the movement, as the reaction to events in the anarchist press. It would have been useful to have a chapter giving an overall view of the movement

and Kropotkin's role in it. There are references to many individuals but Cahm tells us little about them and they remain for the most part just names. In fact it is not so much *the* movement which plays a central role as certain members of the "inner circle" which had formed around Bakunin and remained active after his death.

The separate treatment of the subjects dealt with in parts two and three is unfortunate. It leads to the same questions being considered too often, while other aspects are insufficiently considered. More serious, however, is the loss which results to the unity and cohesion of Kropotkin's ideas. The relationship between secret and non-secret organization, of such considerable importance for the inner circle and Kropotkin's attitude towards syndicalism, is repeatedly mentioned, but never really explained. The conclusions Cahm draws from real events (the Mano Negra conspiracy in Spain, attacks in Germany, for example) are in general rather arbitrary. Furthermore, it is to be doubted whether J. Most should be mentioned in the same context as the police spy A. Serraux (p. 276)!

There is also the fundamental question of the importance of "action theories" in the totality of anarchism. When spontaneity, solidarity and "Act for yourselves" play such a central role, ideas about revolutionary action are connected far more closely to time and place than Cahm realizes. In December 1886, at the end of the period dealt with by Cahm, Kropotkin wrote: "Action must be dictated by the needs of the moment" (*Act for Yourselves*, p. 30).

In the Conclusions, which is certainly of some interest, Cahm agrees with the critical judgement made by Kropotkin's sympathizers Malatesta and Nettlau. The relevant parts of Nettlau's *Geschichte des Anarchie* are mentioned in the bibliography, but Cahm tends to refer to the unreliable French compilation *Histoire de l'anarchie*, which does less than justice to Nettlau's *Geschichte*. More than her own study, Nettlau's book is the "in-depth examination of Kropotkin's development" which Cahm found lacking in the existing biographies (by G. Woodcock and J. Avakumovic, 1950; by N. M. Pirumova, 1972; and by M. Miller, 1976).

*Rudolf de Jong*

KRIEDEL, ANNIE. *La Grève des Cheminots: 1920*. Armand Colin, Paris 1988. 255 pp. F.fr. 149.00.

Annie Kriegel's *La grève des cheminots: 1920* is an autonomous reprinting of the second section of the author's *thèse de doctorat d'état, Aux origines du communisme français*, originally published in 1964 and long out of print. It retains a certain power which is undiminished by time, even if one of its claims appears dated. *La grève des cheminots* is an exhaustive political and ideological history of one event, the May 1920 general strike of French railway workers. The author uses this single moment of great crisis to illuminate larger issues revolving around it, wherein lies the importance of this work. This strike involved fully three protagonists, the state, the employers, and the workers, in a genuine social struggle which played itself out in the political arena. Its outcome destroyed revolutionary syndicalism, demonstrated