

WHEN the covid-19 pandemic struck, the term 'mutual aid' unfamiliar except to a few radicals, appeared in popular discourse, describing the neighbourhood support groups, food deliveries, mental health support and other services organised by volunteers to replace the cumbersome capitalist and state services that were incapable of responding to the sudden change in circumstances.

In the early 20th Century the term had been popularised by the Russian anarchist and geographer Peter Kropotkin in his book *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* published in 1902. The book was written partly as a riposte to 'Darwinists' who insisted that competition among individuals strengthened a species and led to its improvement.

This pamphlet is the text of the last chapter of that book, where Kropotkin, after previous chapters discussing his own observations of mutual aid in animal life in Siberia, discusses mutual aid in human society of the time, mostly referring to examples in Britain where he was living in exile and in his homeland of Russia.

There is little dry or dated about Kropotkin's writing, it remains a relevant and passionate defence of the desire and ability of ordinary people to do extraordinary things to organise their own lives and to support those around them.

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Mutual aid amongst ourselves

Peter
Kropotkin



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