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EMMA GOLDMAN

Biographical Sketch

By

CHARLES A. MADISON

Author of

CRITICS AND CRUSADERS

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"CRITICS AND CRUSADERS"

by **CHARLES A. MADISON**

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IN MEMORIAM

The Libertarian Book Club
has published this pamphlet as
a tribute to the memory
of our brave comrade
EMMA GOLDMAN

[Pg 3]

died May 13, 1940
to commemorate the twentieth anniversary
of her death

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EMMA GOLDMAN
1869 1940

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EMMA GOLDMAN

ANARCHIST REBEL

The hanging of several anarchists in 1887 as a consequence of the Haymarket bombing in Chicago caused many Americans to sympathize with the gibbeted radicals. Youths swathed in bright idealism, men and women rooted in equalitarian democracy, workers trusting in the rectitude of their government—all doubted the guilt of the condemned prisoners and were deeply perturbed by the egregious miscarriage of justice. Many of them for the first time became aware of the state's ruthless arrogation of power, and scores upon scores remained to the end of their lives inimical to government and apprehensive of all forms of authority.

Emma Goldman was one of these converts. Resentment against the restraints of authority was no new experience for this spirited girl. As far back as she could remember she had hated and feared her father, a quick-tempered and deeply harassed Orthodox Jew who had vented his emotional and financial vexations on his recalcitrant daughter. Unable to get from him the love and praise she craved, she had refused to submit to his strict discipline and had preferred beatings to blind obedience. Consequently she grew up in an atmosphere of repression and acrimony. "Since my earliest recollection," she wrote, "home had been stifling, my father's presence terrifying. My mother, while less violent with her children, never showed much warmth."

At the age of thirteen she began to work in a factory in St. Petersburg, and her life became doubly oppressive. She soon learned of the revolutionary movement and sympathized with its agitation against Czarist autocracy. To escape from the tyranny of her father, the irksomeness of the shop, and the repressive measures of the government, she fought with all her stubborn strength for the opportunity to accompany her beloved sister Helene to the United States. Early in 1886 the two girls arrived in Rochester to live with their married sister, who had preceded them to this country.

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Like other penniless immigrants, the seventeen-year-old Emma had no alternative but to follow the common groove to the sweatshop. Paid a weekly wage of two dollars and a half for sixty-three hours of work, she naturally resented the social system which permitted such exploitation. Together with other immigrants she had dreamed of the United States as a haven of liberty and equality. Instead she found it the home of crass materialism and cruel disparity. This disillusionment was deepened by the hysterical accounts of the trial in Chicago. She was quick to conclude that the accused anarchists were innocent of the charge against them; and the vilification not only of the prisoners but of all radicals merely hardened her hatred against the enemies of the working poor.

It was easy enough for her to believe John Most's claim in *Die Freiheit* (which chance had brought her way) that Parsons, Spies, and the other defendants were to be hanged for nothing more than their advocacy of anarchism. What this doctrine was she did not quite know, but she assumed it must have merit since it favored poor workers like herself. When the jury found the men guilty, she could not accept the reality of the dread verdict. Her thoughts clung to the condemned anarchists as if they were her brothers. In her passionate yearning to do something in their behalf she attended meetings of protest and read everything she could find on the case; and she sympathetically experienced the torment of a prisoner awaiting execution. In her

autobiography, *Living My Life*, she wrote that on the day of the hangings "I was in a stupor; a feeling of numbness came over me, something too horrible even for tears." The very next day, however, she became imbued with a surging determination to dedicate herself to the cause of the martyred men, to devote her life to the ideals for which they had died.

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In the meantime, discouraged and lonely, she had welcomed a fellow worker's show of affection. She felt no love for him and, as a result of an attempted rape at the age of fifteen, she still experienced a "violent repulsion" in the presence of men, but she had not the strength to refuse his urgent proposal of marriage. She soon learned to her dismay that her husband was impotent and not at all as congenial as she had thought. However, the very suggestion of a separation enraged her father, who had recently come to Rochester. After months of aggravation she did go through the then rare and reprehensible rite of Orthodox divorce, but she had to leave town to avoid social ostracism. When she returned some months later, her former husband again pursued her, and his threat of suicide frightened her into remarrying him.

Emma now felt herself thwarted and trapped. Twenty years old and yearning to make life meaningful, she chafed at the very thought of her drab and dreary existence. Her anxiety to elude her father's abuse, to free herself from a loveless marriage, to escape the dullness of her oppressive environment, only intensified her longing for freedom and affection. Consequently she began to nurture her dream of dedicating herself to the ideal championed by the Chicago martyrs. One day in August 1889 she broke relations with her husband and parents and left for New York with money supplied by her ever-devoted sister Helene.

In the metropolis Emma felt herself gloriously free. For the first time in her life she was completely independent. On the teeming East Side a new and wonderful world emerged before her, and she embraced it with passionate abandon. Alexander Berkman, a determined doctrinaire at eighteen, made her acquaintance the day she arrived and the pair at once established an intimate comradeship which endured through many vicissitudes to the day of his death. John Most, the impetuous anarchist leader, became her lover as well as her mentor and opened new and fascinating vistas of the mind. "Most became my idol," she wrote. "I adored him." Under his tutelage she read seminal books and learned about significant men and ideas. Anarchism assumed definite meaning; the struggle by the many in want against the few in power, then so pathetically feeble, became to her a war unto death; the goal of social freedom appeared tangible and alluringly near. For months her voracious hunger for knowledge seemed insatiable, her capacity for emotion inexhaustible. This tremendous release of energy was in truth the expression of long-pent-up zeal. She threw herself into the radical movement of the East Side with the enthusiasm of an inspired visionary.

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Her first years in New York were a period of preparation. Along with her work in sweatshops, which she had to do to earn her living, she found time to familiarize herself with the latest libertarian literature and to spend hours on end in intellectual discussion. Nor was she able to remain a passive onlooker even during her early apprenticeship. With John Most's helpful guidance she went on her first "tour of agitation" only a few months after reaching New York. She addressed several meetings in as many cities on the eight-hour day, then a timely topic, and discovered that she was able to hold the attention of an audience and to think quickly while facing its inimical questioning.

That winter the newly formed Cloakmakers' Union called its first general strike. Emma immediately "became absorbed in it to the exclusion of everything else." Her task was to persuade the timid girl workers to join the strike. With prodigious energy she exhorted them at meetings, encouraged them at dances and parties, and thus influenced many to partake in the common effort to improve working conditions in the sweatshops. The strike leaders were greatly impressed by her dynamic qualities as an organizer and public speaker.

Emma's association with John Most became strained to the breaking point when she perceived that he esteemed her more as a lover than as a fellow anarchist. His arrogance irritated her and, much as she admired his impassioned eloquence and incisive mind, she could not accept the acquiescent role he had assigned her. When his high-handed behavior resulted in a factional split, she sided with those who rejected his domination. Some time later, when Most derided Berkman's attempt to kill Henry C. Frick and disavowed the theory of "propaganda of the deed" of which he had been the chief exponent, she came to hate him. At the first opportunity she lashed him with a horsewhip at a public meeting and denounced him as a renegade. Nor did time bring about a reconciliation.

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Emma, Alexander Berkman, and a youthful artist were living together in congenial intimacy. They worked at their menial tasks during the day and devoted their evenings to agitation. Because the progress of anarchism in this country was too slow for them, the news of increased revolutionary activity in Russia filled them with a romantic nostalgia for their native land. They decided to engage in some business until they should have saved enough money for the journey back. In the spring of 1892 chance brought them to Worcester, Massachusetts, where they were soon operating a successful lunchroom.

The bloody consequences of the lockout at the Homestead plant of The Carnegie Steel Company inflamed the minds of these youthful idealists. The plan to return to Russia was abandoned with little regret. They agreed it was their duty to go to the aid of the brutally maltreated workers. Berkman insisted that their great moment was at hand, that they must give up the lunchroom and leave at once for the scene of the fighting. "Being internationalists," he argued, "it mattered not to us where the blow was struck by the workers; we must be with them. We must bring them our great message and help them see that it was not only for the moment that they must strike, but for all time, for a free life, for anarchism. Russia had many heroic men and women, but who was there in America? Yes, we must go to Homestead, tonight!" Taking with them the day's receipts and their personal belongings, they left immediately for New York. Berkman, eager to emulate the Russian nihilists who were then fighting hangings with assassinations, determined to make Frick, the dictatorial general manager, pay with his life for the death of those who had worked for him. Unable to perfect a bomb, he decided to use a pistol. Emma wanted to accompany him to Pittsburgh, but remained behind for the lack of railroad fare. A few days later the resolute youth of twenty-one made his way into Frick's office, discharged three bullets into his body, and stabbed him several times before being overpowered and beaten into unconsciousness.

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Prior to the attempt on his life Frick had been severely criticized for harsh and arbitrary treatment of his employees. His determination to break their union and his reckless use of Pinkertons had antagonized even those who normally favored the open shop. Berkman's attack, so alien and repugnant to our democratic mores, completely changed the situation. Frick became the hero of the day. Journalists and public men vied in praise of the victim and execration of the assailant. The fact that the latter was of Russian birth and an anarchist only served to strengthen his guilt. Although Frick recovered from his wounds with extraordinary rapidity and was back at his desk within a fortnight, and although the law of Pennsylvania limited punishment for the crime to seven years, the defendant was tried without benefit of legal counsel and sentenced to twenty-two years' imprisonment.

The ascetic youth was thoroughly dismayed by the calamitous turn of events. He regarded Frick as "an enemy of the People," a cruel exploiter of labor who had to be destroyed as a concrete warning of the oncoming revolution. He gloried in this opportunity to serve the American workers in the manner of the Russian nihilists. It pained him therefore to think that he owed his failure to kill Frick to the interference of the very workers for whom he was ready to die. The attack upon him by John Most was distressing enough, but the scornful repudiation by the strikers and the coolness of labor everywhere cut him to the heart. Suffering the anguish of a living death in one of the worst prisons in the United States, he sought comfort in the thought that he was a revolutionist and not a would-be murderer. "A revolutionist," he later explained, "would rather perish a thousand times than be guilty of what is ordinarily called murder. In truth, murder and *Attentat* are to me opposite terms. To remove a tyrant is an act of liberation, the giving of life and opportunity to an oppressed people." Some years afterwards he came to believe that even such shedding of blood "must be resorted to only as a last extremity." It was this faith in the ideal for which he was prepared to die that kept him alive through fourteen years of physical torture and mental martyrdom. One need only read his *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, a work of extraordinary acumen and power, to appreciate the high purpose that had motivated him and the strength of character that enabled him to turn his prison trials into spiritual triumphs.

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Emma, his lover and accomplice, from the very first defended him with passionate abandon. To her he was "the idealist whose humanity can tolerate no injustice and endure no wrong." The excessive punishment dealt to him by the state struck her as barbarous and cowardly. "The idealists and visionaries," she asserted years later, "foolish enough to throw caution to the winds and express their ardor and faith in some supreme deed, have advanced mankind and have enriched the world." At the time, however, she grieved to think of her noble companion doomed to waste the best years of his life in execrable confinement.

Unable to lighten his suffering, she resolved to double her effort towards the realization of their common ideal. A physical breakdown, however, forced her to seek rest and medical care. Her sister Helene welcomed her back and helped her to regain strength. But the aggravation of the unemployment crisis in 1893 caused her to disregard the doctor's warning and to return to her post on the East Side. "Committee sessions, public meetings, collection of foodstuffs, supervising the feeding of the homeless and their numerous children, and, finally, the organization of a mass-meeting on Union Square entirely filled my time." As the main speaker at this large gathering she excoriated the state for functioning only as the protector of the rich and for keeping the poor starved and enslaved, like a giant shorn of his strength. Commenting on Cardinal Manning's dictum that "necessity knows no law," she continued: "They will go on robbing you, your children, and your children's children, unless you wake up, unless you become daring enough to demand your rights. Well, then, demonstrate before the palaces of the rich; demand work. If they do not give you work, demand bread. If they deny you both, take bread. It is your sacred right." For this speech she was arrested, charged with inciting to riot although the meeting was peaceable, and sentenced to one year in Blackwell's Island Penitentiary.

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She went to prison in a defiant mood. She was now the avowed enemy of the corrupt minions of the state and she knew they would stop at nothing to keep her from agitating for a better world—the world for which she and Berkman were then in jail. She resolved to fight back and fight hard. So long as breath remained in her lungs and strength in her body, she would deliver her message to the oppressed masses! No amount of torture in prison or persecution outside would deter her in the struggle against the state and the powerful rich!

While in prison Emma learned the rudiments of nursing. She liked the work better than sewing, and upon her release she persuaded several doctors to recommend her as a practical nurse. Wishing to qualify herself, she accepted the aid of devoted friends in order to study nursing in the Vienna Allgemeines Krankenhaus, a hospital of very high repute. While in Europe she lectured in England and Scotland and met the leading anarchists in London and on the Continent. She also made first-hand acquaintance with the contemporary social theater, on which she was later to lecture and write with penetrating insight. In the summer of 1896 she returned to this country, qualified as a nurse and midwife.

Once back in New York, she immediately resumed her anarchist activity. Her first concern was to promote an appeal for Berkman's pardon, and keen was her sorrow and resentment when it was refused. More than ever eager to further their common ideal, and greatly moved by the sporadic attacks upon the more aggressive workers, she undertook her first continental lecture tour.

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Everywhere workers were slain, everywhere the same butchery!... The masses were millions, yet how weak! To awaken them from their stupor, to make them conscious of their power—that is the great need! Soon, I told myself, I should be able to reach them throughout America. With a tongue of fire I would rouse them to a realization of their dependence and indignity! Glowingly I visioned my first great tour and the opportunities it would offer me to plead our Cause.

Her opportunities fell far short of her expectations, but her words of fire ignited the hearts of many who came to scoff.

For the next twenty years she devoted most of her time to lecturing. She spoke wherever there were comrades enough to organize a meeting; and in scores of cities, from Maine to Oregon, there were libertarians ready to suffer great inconvenience for their cause. At first most of her talks were given in Yiddish and German; later, as she attracted more Americanized audiences, she spoke mainly in English. Her topics ranged widely in content. She expounded the doctrine of anarchism whenever possible, but her lectures dealt mainly with current social problems and the modern European drama. Shortly before World War I she discussed birth control with a frankness that sent her to jail for a fortnight. She usually keyed her talks to the intelligence of her auditors, and always she spoke with clarity and enthusiasm.

Throughout her years of agitation she exercised extraordinary tact and exceptional physical courage. No other woman in America ever had to suffer such persistent persecution. She was arrested innumerable times, beaten more than once, refused admission to halls where she was to speak. Often the police dispersed her audience. Intimidated owners frequently refused to rent her meeting places or cancelled contracts at the last minute. On various occasions she was met at the train and compelled by sheer force to proceed to the next stopping place. In 1912 she and Ben Reitman, at that time her manager and lover, were driven from San Diego and the latter was tarred and tortured.

It must be said that the lawbreakers and defilers of liberty were not Emma Goldman and her harassed followers but the sworn guardians of the law and leading local citizens. The latter and not the anarchists were guilty of violating the rights of free speech and free assembly, of beating their victims without cause and of jailing them without warrant. It was after one such instance of unprovoked brutality that Emma wrote:

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In no country, Russia not exempt, would the police dare to exercise such brutal power over the lives of men and women. In no country would the people stand for such beastliness and vulgarity. Nor do I know of any people who have so little regard for their own manhood and self-respect as the average American citizen, with all his boasted independence.

The newspapers abetted the police in the lawless treatment of Emma and her fellow rebels. They sometimes perverted a grain of truth into columns of muck and made "Red Emma" a symbol of all that was dangerous and despicable. The rank injustice of this abuse caused the staid New York *Sun* to protest on September 30, 1909: "The popular belief is that she preaches bombs and murder, but she certainly does nothing of the kind. Bombs are very definite things, and one of the peculiarities of her doctrine is its vagueness. The wonder is that with a doctrine so vague she managed to strike terror into the stout hearts of the police."

Nor were the police and the press the only perpetrators of this modern witch hunt. President Theodore Roosevelt expressed the attitude of many persons of privilege and respectability when he blustered: "The Anarchist is the enemy of humanity, the enemy of all mankind, and his is the deeper degree of criminality than any other." When William Buwalda, a soldier in the United States Army and the recipient of a medal for bravery, shook hands with Emma Goldman at one of her lectures in 1908, he was courtmartialled and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. It was only as a consequence of numerous public protests that Buwalda was pardoned after he had served ten months. The Red Hysteria of 1917-21 merely climaxed decades of ill-treatment of a militant minority in a nation founded on the principles of human rights and individual liberty.

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If this ugly chapter in recent American history was the work of men of property and of public officers, there were numerous other Americans, less powerful but of greater probity, who

cherished the fundamental freedoms of our Founding Fathers. These liberals spoke out forcefully against the violation of rights guaranteed by the Constitution. They gladly gave of their time and money to the defense of the harassed radicals. Because Emma Goldman suffered most from police brutality and because her dynamic personality attracted those who came in contact with her, she was befriended by scores of Americans in every part of the country. These Jeffersonian liberals admired her courage and sincerity and helped her to organize her lecture tours and to finance her propagandistic and literary ventures.

Emma reached the nadir of her career during the aftermath of President McKinley's assassination. With the memory of Alexander Berkman's fate still festering in her heart, she said: "Leon Czolgosz and other men of his type ... are drawn to some violent expression, even at the sacrifice of their own lives, because they cannot supinely witness the misery and suffering of their fellows." Even before her attitude was known, she was arrested as an accomplice of Czolgosz and treated with extreme savagery before being released for lack of evidence.

Even more painful to her was the obtuseness of those anarchists who condemned Czolgosz's act as wanton murder. Ironically enough, even Berkman wrote from prison to disapprove of the shooting and to differentiate it from his own attack upon Frick; in his opinion the killing of McKinley was individual terrorism and not a deed motivated by social necessity. Emma was shocked by this argument, since to her both acts were inspired by the same high idealism and spirit of self-sacrifice. Unlike Berkman, who had come to see the futility of terrorism in a country like the United States, she was more interested in the incentive than in the effectiveness of an assassination. She was ostracized for her loyalty to Czolgosz and, as a consequence of his execution, suffered severe depression.

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Once Emma Goldman had mastered the English language, she was not long in wishing to establish a periodical that would carry the message of anarchism to those whom she could not reach in person. Outbreaks of strikes in this country and increased revolutionary activity in Russia only made her more eager for a magazine of her own. In 1905 she was serving as manager and interpreter for Paul Orleneff and Alla Nazimova, who had come to the United States for a theatrical tour. When Orleneff learned of Emma's ambition to publish a periodical, he insisted on giving a special performance for her benefit. Although a pouring rain kept the audience to a fraction of the expected number, the receipts sufficed to pay for the first issue of *Mother Earth*.

The scope and purpose of the new monthly, which began to appear in March 1906, were explained at the outset:

Mother Earth will endeavor to attract and appeal to all those who oppose encroachment on public and individual life. It will appeal to those who strive for something higher, weary of the commonplace; to those who feel that stagnation is a deadweight on the firm and elastic step of progress; to those who breathe freely only in limitless space; to those who long for the tender shade of a new dawn for a humanity free from the dread of want, the dread of starvation in the face of mountains of riches. The Earth free for the free individual.

Emma Goldman edited the monthly throughout its eleven years of existence. In all this time it reflected her views, her interests, her dynamic liveliness. Her fellow editors at one time or another were Max Baginski, Hippolyte Havel, and Alexander Berkman, but the character of the periodical underwent no change as a consequence. Each issue contained at least one poem, brief editorials on the events of the month, articles on current aspects of anarchism, comments on labor strikes and radical activities the world over, reports by Emma on topics of interest to her or on her frequent lecture tours, and finally appeals for money. Many prominent libertarians contributed essays of a philosophical or hortatory nature. It emanated a youthful vigor and an exuberance not found in any other contemporary periodical. Its several thousand readers were devoted to it and supported it with their limited means until the postal censor put an end to the monthly shortly after the declaration of war in 1917.

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Mother Earth was not Emma Goldman's sole publishing activity. A firm believer in the efficacy of educational propaganda, she printed and sold a long list of inexpensive tracts. Her table of literature became a prominent feature at all her meetings. When no commercial publisher would accept Berkman's *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, she collected funds and issued the book herself. The volume has since become a classic in its field, and stands to this day as a living reminder of the dominance of a keen and determined mind over all physical obstacles. Emma also brought out her own collection of lectures, *Anarchism and Other Essays*. She was able, however, to find a publisher for her impressive volume of lectures on *The Social Significance of the Modern Drama*, which deals incisively with the European plays that dissect the common failures and fallacies of bourgeois society.

Face to face with an audience, Emma Goldman was a forceful and witty propagandist. Frequently she lifted her rapt hearers to heights from which they envisioned a world wholly free and completely delightful. In cold print, however, her lectures reveal little of her dynamic appeal. They are primarily the work of a forceful agitator: clear, pointed, spirited, but without originality or intellectual rigor.

The faithful disciple of Bakunin and Kropotkin, Emma perceived civilization as "a continuous

struggle of the individual or of groups of individuals against the State and even against 'society,' that is, against the majority subdued and hypnotized by the State and State worship." This conflict, she argued, was bound to last as long as the state itself, since it was of the very nature of government to be "conservative, static, intolerant of change and opposed to it," while the instinct of the individual was to resent restriction, combat authority, and seek the benefits of innovation.

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Her definition of anarchism first appeared on the masthead of *Mother Earth* in the issue of April 1910: "The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestrained by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary." In her oft-repeated lecture on the subject she warmly described the benefits to ensue from social revolution:

Anarchism stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth; an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations.

To the end of her life Emma avowed the soundness and practicality of her doctrine. As late as 1934 she declared in *Harper's Magazine*: "I am certain that Anarchism is too vital and too close to human nature ever to die. When the failure of modern dictatorship and authoritarian philosophies becomes apparent and the realization of failure more general, Anarchism will be vindicated." It was her belief that sooner or later the mass of mankind would perceive the futility of begging for crumbs and would take power into its own hands. Since she scorned political means, she expounded the validity of direct action. This method she defined as the "conscious individual or collective effort to protest against, or remedy, social conditions through the systematic assertion of the economic power of the workers." Once the state and capitalism were destroyed, anarchism would assume the form of free communism, which she described as "a social arrangement based on the principle: To each according to his needs; from each according to his ability." It must be stressed that although the wording is common to all forms of communism, that of Marx and Lenin implies strict centralized authority, while that of Kropotkin and Emma Goldman envisions complete decentralization and the supremacy of the individual.

No man who has pondered the concept of the good life will fail to appreciate the ideal propounded by the anarchists. And one who has observed the results of modern dictatorship cannot but sympathize with a vision of the future in which the individual is the prime beneficiary of all social activity. Yet life often makes mock of man's noblest dreams. Emma may have been "the daughter of the dream"; her doctrine remains as utopian as it is alluring. There is no gainsaying the fact that modern conditions still favor national and industrial centralization. The philosophy of anarchism appears less tenable today than ever.

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Though in no sense a pacifist, Emma Goldman was intensely opposed to wars between nations. The very idea of human slaughter on the battlefield appeared to her as barbaric and criminal. And to her the culprit was the state. Without governments to lead their subjects to battle wars would be as unthinkable as duels are now. "No war is justified unless it be for the purpose of overthrowing the Capitalist system and establishing industrial control for the working class."

Her first contact with war occurred in 1898, when the United States attacked Spain. While she abominated the medieval monarchy which oppressed the Cubans, she did not want our politicians and industrialists to use the liberation of that island as a pretext for their imperial aggrandizement. She therefore agitated against the war at every one of her lectures, and did not cease to expose our imperialist intentions until the end of the fighting. Fortunately for her, the liberties of the people were not curbed as a result of the war, and the police did not consider her lack of patriotism more provoking than her advocacy of anarchism.

In 1914, when war broke out in Europe, she immediately perceived its catastrophic nature and condemned its instigators as monstrous criminals. Alexander Berkman, who had been enjoying uneasy liberty since 1906 and who worked closely with her despite their intermittent personal and ideological differences, at once joined her in the attack. Both did their utmost to rouse the people against our involvement. It was a hard and increasingly thankless fight against deep-seated prejudices. Consternation struck their hearts when they learned that Peter Kropotkin and other eminent anarchists had embraced the cause of the Allies and were participating in the propaganda campaign against Germany. Resolved to retain their sanity in a world gone mad, they repudiated all "warmongers" regardless of their previous professions and intensified their efforts to keep the United States out of the European holocaust.

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When events moved us in the direction of belligerency, the government sought feverishly to regiment the nation for the war struggle. Emma, Berkman, and numerous other radicals resisted this martial hysteria with all the force at their command. *Mother Earth* blasted the proponents of preparedness in issue after issue and denounced the government for trampling upon the Bill of Rights in its hypocritical pretence of making the world safe for democracy. Emma denounced the capitalist basis of war before crowds of enthusiastic sympathizers. As late as March 1917 she wrote:

I for one will speak against war so long as my voice will last, now and during the war. A thousand times rather would I die calling to the people of America to refuse to be obedient, to refuse military service, to refuse to murder their brothers, than I should ever give my voice in justification of war, except the one war of all the peoples against their despots and exploiters—the Social Revolution.

She and Berkman organized the No-Conscription League for the purpose of encouraging conscientious objectors to resist induction into the army. Writing in behalf of the League, Emma explained: "We will resist conscription by every means in our power, and we will sustain those who, for similar reasons, refuse to be conscripted." At several mass-meetings she and Berkman expressed these sentiments, knowing that government agents were taking notes on their speeches. On June 15, 1917, both were arrested and charged with "conspiring against the draft."

The two rebels did not flinch from the ordeal awaiting them. "Tell all friends," Emma wrote shortly before their trial, "that we will not waver, that we will not compromise, and that if the worst comes, we shall go to prison in the proud consciousness that we have remained faithful to the spirit of internationalism and to the solidarity of all the people of the world." In court they conducted their own defense with a facility and frankness that gained the admiration of even their detractors. They shrewdly used the courtroom as a forum. In addressing the jury they were eloquently polemical.

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It is organized violence on top [Emma asserted] which creates individual violence at the bottom. It is the accumulated indignation against organized wrong, organized crime, organized injustice, which drives the political offender to his act.... We are but the atoms in the incessant human struggle towards the light that shines in the darkness—the ideal of economic, political, and spiritual liberation of mankind!

The dramatic trial was in a sense another re-enactment of the age-old tragedy in which the rebellious idealist is condemned by the gross guardians of society. The obdurate defendants were each given the maximum penalty of two years in prison and a fine of ten thousand dollars.

Time passed in dreary monotony for Emma in Jefferson City and Berkman in Atlanta. The war was fought and won, the millions of American soldiers were back from Europe, and peace again prevailed over the earth. But to conservatives the specter of Bolshevism had replaced the ogre of Prussianism as the enemy of established society. In this country Attorney-General Mitchell Palmer, a Quaker and God-fearing man, led the manhunt against those who were suspected of sympathy with the Russian Revolution. Thousands of men and women were made the victims of an Anti-Red hysteria, and hundreds were deported as undesirable aliens. When Emma and Berkman were released, they also became subject to expulsion. Although she had long been a naturalized citizen by virtue of her marriage to a citizen, the Department of Labor ruled otherwise. On the night of December 21, 1919, the two rebels together with 247 other undesirables were hurried aboard the ancient troopship *Buford* for passage to Russia.

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Thirty years of struggle and suffering on this side of the Atlantic had so Americanized Emma and Berkman that they could not think of themselves as belonging to another country. The ignominy of expulsion and the loss of their friends wounded them deeply. Yet they were comforted by the thought of the adventure that lay ahead. As the battered *Buford* plowed its billowy way to the shores of Finland they reflected on the ironic turn of events which had transformed Czarist Russia into a land of revolution and converted the free United States into a citadel of reaction. While still in jail they had approved the Bolshevik coup as a necessary safeguard of the revolution. They believed that Lenin and his fellow leaders, while Marxists and therefore advocates of a strong centralized government, were devoted to the principles of freedom and equality and therefore deserved the support of all workers and libertarians. Now, outcasts from the capitalist stronghold, they longed to join their Russian comrades in the defense of the revolution. When she reached the Soviet border, Emma later wrote, "my heart trembled with anticipation and fervent hope."

Dismay darkened their days throughout the twenty months of their sojourn in Russia. Their official welcome quickly spent itself. They began to look about for themselves, to speak privately with fellow anarchists, and to seek explanations of events and practices not to their liking. The twin demons of inefficiency and stupidity—judged by their American and anarchist standards respectively—leered at them wherever they went; the black walls of bureaucracy rose before them at every turn. Perverse cruelty on the part of the government came to their attention with distressing frequency. All their early efforts at rationalization failed to excuse the needless hunger, the mass arrests, the arbitrary executions. They discussed these events with prominent Bolshevik leaders, including Trotsky and Lenin, in the hope of persuading them to mitigate conditions injurious to the revolution. In each instance the response was either enigmatic or equivocal. Angelica Balabanova, then secretary of the Third International and later as disaffected an exile as herself, told Emma that life was "a rock on which the highest hopes are shattered. Life thwarts the best intentions and breaks the finest spirits." Alexandra Kollontay, the hard-headed diplomat, chilled her with the advice to stop "brooding over a few dull gray spots." Even Lenin impressed her and Berkman as callous and unsympathetic.

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Time only deepened their perturbation. After eight months of life in Russia, Emma began to doubt the revolution itself. "Its manifestations were so completely at variance with what I had conceived and propagated as revolution that I did not know any more which was right. My old values had been shipwrecked and I myself thrown overboard to sink or swim." The climax of her

quarrel with the Bolsheviki came a year later during the attack upon the mutinous Kronstadt sailors. That hundreds of true sons of the revolution should be shot down for sympathizing with striking workers seemed to her a crime worse than any committed by the Czarist regime. Neither she nor Berkman could any longer stomach such ruthless authoritarianism and both left the country as soon as they were able to obtain visas.

Once past the Soviet border, the hapless pair became true Ishmaelites, without either home or country. No government offered them asylum, and few were willing to provide them with even temporary visas. Devoted friends had great difficulty in getting Swedish officials to permit the two refugees a long-enough stay in Stockholm to procure visas for a sojourn in Germany.

Their one great mission now became the unmasking of the Bolsheviki, and their attacks were more virulent and hysterical than those of the most extreme reactionaries. Berkman's *The Bolshevik Myth* and Emma's *My Disillusionment in Russia* and *My Further Disillusionment in Russia* (the book was published in two separate volumes as a result of an inadvertent misunderstanding) are charged with fanatic hatred. Both insisted that Lenin and his monstrous crew were perverting the Russian Revolution to their own sinister purposes and must be destroyed at all costs. They made no effort to view the situation objectively.

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In 1924 Emma was permitted to make her home in England. At once she busied herself with plans to rouse the people against the Bolsheviki, but found herself either snubbed or scorned. The liberals refused to support her for fear of endangering Soviet Russia's precarious relations with Great Britain; the radicals insisted on the need of bolstering the Bolsheviki during the period of revolutionary experimentation. Her lectures were poorly attended; her audiences failed to be impressed. After two years of discouragement she decided to leave England altogether. Shortly before her departure she married James Colton, an old rebel, for the convenience of British citizenship.

A vacation in France preceded a lecture tour through Canada. Again on American soil, she resumed the old pattern of agitation. But the Dominion did not provide sufficient scope for her seething energy. And when friends, who had long urged her to write her autobiography, provided her with funds for that purpose, she returned to France.

Living My Life appeared in 1932. It is a lively story, palpitating with strong feeling and epitomizing the blazing years of her anarchist activity. The writing is vivacious, forceful, exciting. The narrative is colorful and wholly uninhibited. Emma's strong personality stamps every page. She was as dynamic in her numerous amours as in her work for human freedom, and she discusses both with equal zest. Her unrepressed egotism prompts her to relate personal incidents which have little bearing on her own development and none on that of anarchism—incidents that sometimes reveal petty malice and that might better have been left unrecorded. The final impression, however, is of her generous character, her profound devotion to the ideal of liberty, her extraordinary energy, her great courage, and her successful insistence on living her life in her own way.

When Emma had completed her long book and was ready to resume her role as lecturer and agitator, the menace of fascism drove the Bolshevik betrayal from the forefront of her mind. A tour through Germany and other parts of Europe convinced her that the Nazis were the greater threat to freedom and must be fought without let. Late in 1933 she returned to Canada and addressed large audiences on such topics as "Hitler and His Cohorts," "Germany's Tragedy," and "The Collapse of German Culture." With Cassandra-like foresight she argued that England and Germany's neighbors were blind to the danger confronting them and that if the Nazis were not ousted from power they would destroy civilization.

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In January 1934 she was granted permission to visit the United States for ninety days. Friends arranged for a two-month lecture tour. Her audiences were large, though a good percentage came more out of curiosity than to pay homage to her anarchist leadership. Some hotels refused to admit her, and detectives and policemen were as conspicuous within the halls as in former times. Communists heckled her, but there was comparatively little of the excitement and defiance of her previous "tours of agitation." In truth neither Emma nor her hearers bothered much about the doctrine of anarchism. The immediate menace had become not the capitalistic state but fascist authoritarianism (to Emma, Bolshevism was "only left-wing fascism"); and she attacked it not as the apostolic anarchist but as the passionate libertarian. The end of April came all too soon, and again she had to depart from the land in which she had spent her best years. Nor did the fact that she was an old woman without roots elsewhere make leavetaking any easier.

The following year she sojourned in Canada, lecturing, writing, hoping in vain for readmission to the United States. In the spring of 1935 she went to France. Berkman was already there, and the two old friends again saw much of each other. The day after her sixty-seventh birthday their lifelong intimacy was abruptly ended by his suicide; he had been ill for some time and characteristically preferred death to a wretched old age. The tragic event oppressed her grievously.

The Spanish Civil War, beginning shortly after, provided her with much-needed distraction. With energies renewed she at once went to Spain. Her previous friendly association with Spanish anarchists made her a welcome addition to their ranks. For the next two years she devoted herself to bolstering the cause of the Loyalists. Since England's sympathy was of crucial importance, she went to London to work in behalf of the Spanish government. The callous and undiscerning attitude of the ruling Tories deprived her of the last atom of hope. She returned to

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Spain in 1938, wishing to stand beside her comrades during their final futile efforts to hold back the fascist inundation.

Early in 1939, with darkness rapidly enveloping the whole of Europe, Emma returned to Canada. There she died on May 13, 1940, clinging tenaciously to the shreds of her revolutionary ideal until her last gasp.

Emma Goldman was unquestionably the most active and audacious rebel of her time. An idealist to the core of her being, cherishing liberty as the most precious of human possessions, completely dedicated to the full and free life for all mankind, she early became the object of concentrated contumely and brutal abuse on the part of the defenders of the status quo. Her threat to society lay not so much in her revolutionary doctrine as in her attacks upon the abuses of capitalism. B. R. Tucker and other individualist anarchists were equally opposed to authority, but they were not molested so long as they did not concern themselves with economic exploitation. Emma, however, had made it her duty to fight against injustice toward the worker and the nonconformist. Consequently she organized mass-meetings and marches against unemployment; she became a picket-leader and fund-raiser, and protested openly and persistently against violations of free speech and against police brutality. This activity, especially effective because of her untiring zeal and bold eloquence, gave her pre-eminence as a dangerous enemy of capitalism and subjected her to persecution by the authorities until she was driven out of the country.

Quite a few Americans, however, respected her for her honest idealism and valued her as a goad stinging the social conscience of our complacent public. One of them, William Marion Reedy, called her "the daughter of the dream" after a meeting with her in 1908 and added: "She threatens all society that is sham, all society that is slavery, all society that is a mask of greed and lust." Floyd Dell spoke for many in the blithe year of 1912 when he wrote: "She has a legitimate social function—that of holding before our eyes the ideals of freedom. She is licenced to taunt us with our moral cowardice, to plant in our souls the nettles of remorse at having acquiesced so tamely in the brutal artifice of present-day society."

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For all her courage and iconoclasm, she was deeply feminine in outlook and behavior. Her strongest attribute was of an emotional rather than intellectual nature: she felt first and thought afterwards. She had an extraordinary capacity for believing whatever suited her ideological or personal purposes. Rationalization and ratiocination merged in her mind very readily. Thus in her autobiography she was punctilious in recording the details of her love affairs, presumably in the belief that everything she did and felt affected her revolutionary development. Yet at all times she was ready to sacrifice her own happiness for the good of anarchism.

On her fiftieth birthday, while in prison for obstructing the draft, she took stock of her past. "Fifty years—thirty of them on the firing line—had they borne fruit or had I merely been repeating Don Quixote's idle chase? Had my efforts served only to fill my inner void, to find an outlet for the turbulence of my being? Or was it really the ideal that had dictated my conscious course?" She had not the slightest doubt, however, that her life had not been lived in vain. She had fought valiantly, and was to remain on the firing line for another twenty years. And while it is in the very nature of an ideal to fail of achievement, its mere existence gives life its impetus and its reward. Emma's quotation from Ibsen, made while waiting for deportation in 1919—"that it is the struggle for the ideal that counts, rather than the attainment of it"—may well be her epitaph.

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