



Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*

Volume Two

CHAPTER XLV



Anti-conscription meeting

In the midst of our activities Sasha met with a serious accident. I was living again in the little room behind the *Mother Earth* office in One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street, while Sasha and Fitz had moved the *Blast* to the room on the upper floor, formerly occupied by our friend Stewart Kerr. There was no telephone connexion in the house except in my office, and one day Sasha, hurrying to answer a call, slipped and fell down the whole length of the steep stairway. Upon examination the ligaments of his left foot were found torn, and a physician ordered him to bed. Sasha would not listen to it; with the amount of work on hand and with only a few comrades to look after it, he could not rest, he said. Though in great pain and able only to hop about on crutches, he was bent on attending the meeting at the Harlem River Casino.

On May 18 Fitz and I resorted to every feminine trick we could think to persuade our cripple to remain at home, but he insisted on coming with us. He was helped by two husky comrades down the stairs and lifted into a taxi, and the same performance was repeated later at the hall.

Almost ten thousand people filled the place, among them many newly rigged-out soldiers and their woman friends, a very boisterous lot indeed. Several hundred policemen and detectives were scattered through the hall. When the session opened, a few young "patriots" tried to rush the stage entrance. Their attempt was foiled, because we had prepared for such a contingency.

Leonard D. Abbott presided, and on the platform were Harry Weinberger, Louis Fraina, Sasha, myself, and a number of other opponents of forced military service. Men and women of varying political views supported our stand on this occasion. Every speaker vigorously denounced the conscription bill which was awaiting the President's signature. Sasha was particularly splendid. Resting his injured leg on a chair and supporting himself with one hand on the table, he breathed strength and defiance. Always a man of great self-control, his poise on this occasion was remarkable. No one in the vast audience could have guessed that he was in pain, or that he gave a single thought to his helpless condition if we should fail to carry the meeting to a peaceful end. With great clarity and sustained power Sasha spoke as I had never heard him before.

The future heroes were noisy all through the speeches, but when I stepped on the platform, pandemonium broke loose. They jeered