



Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*

Volume Two

CHAPTER XLV



Bill Shatoff organizes Russian refugees

group in particular redoubled its efforts, and I was kept feverishly busy travelling between New York and nearby cities, speaking and organizing the campaign.

A contingent of Russian exiles and refugees was preparing to leave for their native land, and we helped to equip its members with provisions, clothing, and money. Most of them were anarchists, and all of them were eager to participate in the upbuilding of their country on a foundation of human brotherhood and equality. The work of organizing the return to Russia was in charge of our comrade William Shatoff, familiarly known as Bill.

This revolutionary anarchist, compelled to take refuge in America from the tyranny of the Russian autocracy, had during his ten years' sojourn in the United States shared the life of the true proletarian and was always in the thick of the struggle for the betterment of the workers' condition. Having worked as a labourer, longshoreman, machinist, and printer, Bill was familiar with the hardships, insecurity, and humiliation that characterize the existence of the immigrant toiler. Many a weaker man would have perished spiritually, but Bill had the vision of an ideal, an inexhaustible energy, and a keen intellect. He devoted his life to the enlightenment of the Russian refugees. He was a splendid organizer, an eloquent speaker, and a man of courage. These qualities enabled him to gather into one great body the various small groups of Russians in America. He was eminently successful in helping to weld into a powerful and solidaric organization, known as the Union of Russian Workers, which embraced the United States and Canada. Its aim was the education and revolutionary development of the vast numbers of Russian workers whom the Greek Catholic Church in America sought to ensnare, as it had done at home. Bill Shatoff and the comrades active with him had for years worked to awaken their dark Russian brothers to their economic situation and to enlighten them on the importance of organized cooperation. Most of them were unskilled men, labouring long hours and ruthlessly exploited at most arduous toil in mines and mills and on the railroads. Thanks to Bill's energy and devotion, these masses were gradually united into a strong body of rebels.

Shatoff was also for a time manager of the Ferrer Center, and in that capacity his intelligence and enthusiasm proved as efficient as in everything else he undertook.