



Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*

Volume Two

CHAPTER XLV



We finally decide to fight

Assistant United States District Attorney Harold A. Content, their Prussianism carefully hidden, like wrinkles on a woman's face, under the thick paint of Americanism, were in their appointed places. Surrounding them were the lesser stars in the play about to be staged. In the background was a mob of soldiers, State and Federal officials, court attendants looking like hold-up men, and a contingent of reporters. American flags and bunting added to the high spots of the scene. Only a few of our friends had been admitted.

I moved for postponement on the grounds that my co-defendant, Alexander Berkman, suffering from an injury to his leg, was unable to stand the strain of a prolonged trial. As we had been released on bail only a few days, we had had no time to familiarize ourselves with the indictment, I also declared. Attorney Content protested, and Judge Mayer denied my motion.

Thereupon I said that, in view of the evident intention of the Government to turn the prosecution into persecution, we preferred to take no part whatever in the proceedings. His Honour had apparently never heard of such a thing before. He looked puzzled. Then he announced that he would appoint counsel to defend us. "In our free United States even the poorest are accorded the benefit of legal defense," he said. Upon our refusal the Court ruled that our trial should proceed after the noon recess. During luncheon we conferred with Harry Weinberger and other friends and returned to court in fighting trim.

June 27 happened to be my forty-eighth birthday. It marked twenty-eight years of my life spent in an active struggle against compulsion and injustice. The United States now symbolizing concentrated coercion, I could not have wished for a more appropriate celebration than to meet its challenge. It gave me much joy to feel that my friends had, in the excitement of the moment, not forgotten the event. On my return to court they presented me with flowers and gifts. The demonstration of their love and esteem on this special occasion moved me profoundly.

Active participation in our trial having been thrust upon us, Sasha and I determined to use it to best advantage. We decided to wring from our enemies every chance to propagate our ideas. Should we succeed, it would be the first time since 1887 that anarchism had raised its voice in an American court. Nothing else was worth considering in comparison with such an achievement.

I had known Sasha twenty-eight years. As far as one human being