

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Between 1900 and 1920 women were responsible for much of the social and political activity in the United States. Recent work by feminist historians has revealed that women were interested in a broad range of issues at the turn of the twentieth century. The American Left addressed such issues as workers' rights, labor conditions, birth control, suffrage, and socialism. Mother Jones, Kate Richards O'Hare, Margaret Sanger, and Emma Goldman were among the most prominent women in the Left. They found that the Left provided them with forums as writers, speakers, and demonstrators.

Jones was critical of women who worked outside the home, although their income often was necessary for the family's survival. Jones did not support woman suffrage, yet she bemoaned the plight of female workers who needed the ballot to improve their working conditions. Like Jones, Kate Richards O'Hare believed that a woman's responsibility was to remain at home with her children. However, O'Hare supported woman suffrage because she believed that women's votes could help usher in socialism. O'Hare supported the Socialist party unflinchingly. Margaret Sanger began her political career as a brash radical. When Sanger no longer found the Left

useful in her fight for accessible birth control, she sought out influential conservatives to support her work. Emma Goldman devoted her life to political and social causes. Goldman's primary interest was anarchism, but she also supported such causes as accessible birth control. Goldman's activities brought her into contact with Sanger and O'Hare.

As the American Left splintered over the United States' entry into the war, Jones, O'Hare, Sanger, and Goldman women found that many of their opinions changed. A careful examination of speeches, personal letters, essays, and autobiographies reveals how their opinions, activities, and tactics developed and changed during the first two decades of this century.

Exiles and Rebels:  
Women in the American Left 1900-1920

by

Katherine H. Cummings

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Associate Professor of History in charge of major

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Professor of History in charge of co-field

**Redacted for Privacy**

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Director of Women Studies in charge of co-field

**Redacted for Privacy**

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Chairman of department of History

**Redacted for Privacy**

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Dean of Graduate School

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
MOTHER JONES.....	6
KATE RICHARDS O'HARE.....	14
MARGARET SANGER.....	24
EMMA GOLDMAN.....	36
CONCLUSION.....	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	59

## EXILES AND REBELS: WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN LEFT 1900–1920

### INTRODUCTION

The fight to end slavery in the United States concluded in 1865. While legally free, blacks were essentially without any of the guaranteed rights white men enjoyed. The struggle to free all blacks from the hideous institution of slavery was also the beginning of the struggle for women's freedom. White women learned a hard lesson in their abolition work: they had no rights of their own. The first wave of American feminism began during the abolition era and culminated in many ways in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Many people believe that the most important issue to early twentieth century women was suffrage. The suffrage movement, dominated by white middle and upper class women, lent itself to substantial coverage by the press and interest from politicians. Yet not all of this socio-economic group was united in support of woman suffrage. Nor was suffrage the only issue important to women.

There was concern about working conditions in factories as well as cottage industries. The number of women working for pay was steadily increasing, and their labor activities reflected this change. Women began to organize unions as their male counterparts had. Women looked to their unions for better working conditions, improved pay, and leadership during strikes.

As more women began to work for pay they had less time to devote to their families. Many women and men felt they could support a limited size family, yet securing birth control to do this was illegal in most cases.

The physical and economic conditions of their lives prompted many

women to become openly interested in politics. Initially, it seems that women found greater acceptance in liberal political groups. The American Left during the early part of the twentieth century is generally considered to be those people who wanted to fundamentally change America's economic, political, and social structures. The Socialists, who wanted to change from a capitalist dominated economy to one controlled by workers, and anarchists, who advocated dissolving social structures and the government, comprised a majority of the American Left. The Left addressed such issues as birth control, suffrage, labor rights, and the economic problems of the poor and working class.

At the turn of the century Mother Jones, Kate Richards O'Hare, Emma Goldman and Margaret Sanger were four of the most prominent women in the American Left. Although very different women, they found that the Left focused on problems which affected them personally. These women were active during the first two decades of this century, a time when women were first finding acceptance in politics. The tactics they chose and the results they obtained shaped decisions the public made concerning political, economic, and social problems. Mother Jones, Margaret Sanger, Kate Richards O'Hare, and Emma Goldman represent a variety of opinions and issues which dominated the Left.

Within the last fifteen years there has been a new interest in women's history. Before, historians treated women's history in a superficial manner, perhaps in part because there was little information available. Recently historians such as Philip Foner, Gerda Lerner, and Mari Jo Buhle have begun to study the American Left and the opportunities it offered women. Much of the current work on Jones, O'Hare, Sanger, and Goldman has been published in the form of primary documents which include speeches, newspaper articles, letters, and their own publications. Usually Mother

Jones and Kate Richards O'Hare received no attention from historians. Recent publications on Goldman and Sanger have included letters and interviews which provide new perspectives on these women.

Mother Jones became interested in labor unions, working conditions, and socialism following the Chicago fire of 1871. While Jones was a fervent supporter of the Socialist Party of America, she was also fiercely independent and did not hesitate to voice her criticism of union and socialist leaders. Jones spent most of her time working for the miners' unions, although she also supported other union efforts. She would travel anywhere to organize workers, often rallying them together at night for greater secrecy.

Curiously enough, Jones was not particularly supportive of women unless they were miners' wives. She did occasionally speak out for unionized women on strike. Jones supported the waistmakers' strike in 1909, which helped build the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union into a major union organization.<sup>1</sup> Philip S. Foner argues that Jones was supportive of women, but feminist historians such as Susan Estabrook Kennedy hold a different opinion.

Kate Richards O'Hare was brought to socialism after hearing Mother Jones speak, but O'Hare lacked the bravado that Jones had. O'Hare was entrenched in the middle class lifestyle, which is probably one reason she was so popular: she looked like a refined woman and behaved that way. O'Hare strictly followed the Socialist party's positions, which meant that she supported woman suffrage and improved working conditions for blacks and minorities, as long as they did not compete with white workers. She also placed women in a domestic framework, reflecting the Party's opinion that 99 out of 100 women preferred remaining at home with children instead of

outside employment. Many of her opinions changed after her conviction under the Espionage Act of 1917.

Margaret Sanger spent most of her time working for accessible birth control. She was introduced to politics through left wing discussion groups which included Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman. When she found the Left no longer useful for advancing her cause, she simply turned her back and denied any connection with them. As an activist for available birth control, Sanger's efforts did at least bring the question before the public, but perhaps not in the most enhancing light. In her autobiography Sanger portrays herself as the only birth control activist, but this is hardly the case. Sanger also neglects her ties to the Left, where she was very active through most of the first two decades of this century.

Emma Goldman made her political identification in 1886 with the Haymarket Affair. She was committed to the cause of anarchism and devoted the rest of her life to writing, speaking, and protesting for a society free of capitalism and governmental regulation. She met Margaret Sanger when Sanger first became active in politics, and Goldman influenced her greatly. While in prison Goldman became friends with Kate Richards O'Hare. They found their political differences were secondary when faced with prison life. Goldman is primarily known for her support of anarchism. However, she also worked for accessible birth control and published a monthly magazine for ten years. Goldman was also respected for her analysis of drama.

The American Left was interested in a variety of issues at the turn of this century. In part it was appealing to women because they had very few opportunities for political and union activities. While the Left, like the mainstream parties, primarily placed women in the home, it did give women an opportunity to express themselves and work

for the changes they thought would improve American society.

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<sup>1</sup>Philip S. Foner, *Mother Jones Speaks: Collected Writings and Speeches*, p. 136

## MOTHER JONES

Mary "Mother" Jones was a labor organizer for most of her life. She won the respect of all types of workers, while she angered many labor and social leaders. Mother Jones worked ceaselessly for workers but is criticized by feminist historians Priscilla Long and Susan Estabrook Kennedy because the majority of her efforts were for male workers.

Mary Jones dates her birth in Cork, Ireland, in 1830, but this is not certain, as Jones was never precise about dates. It is generally agreed that she was born in the early 1830s.<sup>1</sup> She emigrated to the United States as a child. Mary Jones was trained as a dressmaker and teacher. She met her husband in Memphis, Tennessee, while teaching school; they married in 1861. Her husband was an iron moulder and an active member of the Iron Moulders' Union.

The yellow fever epidemic of 1867 claimed Jones' husband and four children. After nursing the sick, Mother Jones moved to Chicago and began a dressmaking business with a partner. The contrast between the lifestyles of those she worked for and the people she lived among shocked Mother Jones. The Chicago fire of 1871 destroyed both her home and business. Jones found refuge in a church and attended a meeting of the Knights of Labor which was held in a vacant lot next door. She decided that becoming active in the labor struggle would be the most productive means of helping the lower class.

Mary Jones worked directly with laborers, and the nickname "Mother" resulted from her concern and care about their lives. She spent a great deal of time in West

Virginia and Colorado with miners. By 1880 she was spending all her time on labor issues.

Jones has been severely criticized by feminist historians Long and Kennedy for her opinions on women. Philip Foner believes that while some of the criticism is appropriate, much of it is unjustified. Foner writes that Mother Jones fell between the women's rights movement (political and legal equality) and the women's emancipation movement (financial and cultural independence, self-determination of lifestyle) as defined by Gerda Lerner.<sup>2</sup> He argues that she supported elements of each movement. Study of her letters and speeches reveals that in fact she did little to directly support women at a time when women were struggling for both political and economic power.

Foner defends Mother Jones' work with miners (all male) because she would often go where no one else would. In many cases the miner's family had no other source of income, so support of a strike for better wages and working conditions would benefit women and their families. Mother Jones viewed women as crucial to the success of strikes:

Women win all strikes! Women support all strikes. They keep their husbands in good standing in the union; they give them the courage to fight.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup>There were occasions when Mother Jones used women to turn back scabs. She also told women to make sure their husbands were sober and not carrying guns.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, many strikes probably would have failed had Mother Jones not rallied women together for support.

In *Mother Jones Speaks*, Foner argues that Mother Jones looked at issues from a class, not gender, perspective. She did little in support of women workers, yet these women were not only struggling as a sex, but as members of a class. Essentially Jones relegated women to a domestic role, which may have greatly influenced Kate Richards

O'Hare, with whom she worked closely in 1902. O'Hare, however, was able to support suffrage because she believed women could use the ballot to advance themselves. Jones did not agree. In an interview with the *New York Times* on June 1, 1913, Mother Jones stated:

I am not a suffragist. In no sense of the word am I in sympathy with woman's suffrage. In a long life of study of these questions I have learned that women are out of place in political work. There already is a great responsibility upon women's shoulders—that of rearing rising generations.

....If women had been really industrious in their natural field they might have warded off some horrors of the time. They can begin now to be more useful than they have been by studying these problems and helping toward industrial peace.

The average working woman is unfitted for the ballot. She will rarely join an organization of the industry she works in. Give her the vote and she'll neglect it. Home training of the child should be her task, and it is the most beautiful of tasks. Solve the industrial problem and the men will earn enough so that women can remain home and learn it.<sup>6</sup>

On the same day the *New York Times* published its interview with Mother Jones, the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle* quoted her as saying:

The only way for workers to gain advantages in a situation like that in West Virginia is to keep their heads level. I am opposed to violence, and am always trying to show the men that the way to get relief is with the ballot.<sup>7</sup>

However, three years earlier, in 1910, Jones had said of striking female workers:

Exploited by the brewers! Insulted by the party bosses! Deserted by the press, which completely ignored me and gave no helping hand to these poor girls' cause. Had they had a vote, however, their case would likely have attracted far more attention from all sides.<sup>8</sup>

Surely Mother Jones knew that if male workers needed the ballot then female laborers needed it just as badly. Perhaps Jones' anti-suffrage position is reflective of her opinion that women should remain in the home. While many Socialists felt that women did not belong in the workplace (or were there only because of economic

necessity), the Socialist party believed that women could use the ballot to improve working conditions and solve social problems.

Because she believed that women were responsible for children's well-being, Jones could have supported suffrage in hopes that women would use their votes to improve child labor conditions. Jones supported child workers as passionately as she did coal miners. On July 7, 1903, Jones began a march with industrial children from Philadelphia to Oyster Bay, New York, Teddy Roosevelt's summer home, to demonstrate the horrible effects of child labor. The group was called "Mother Jones' Crusaders" and "Mother Jones' Industrial Army." Along the way Jones spoke about working conditions, showing children who had lost fingers, limbs, and been maimed by machinery. When they reached Roosevelt's home, the President refused to receive them. However, Jones' effort was a success because the crisis of child labor received a great deal of attention in the press.<sup>9</sup>

Jones' claim that women neglected the unions open to them is unfounded. Women were joining unions and relying on them to improve working conditions. In fact, the Knights of Labor, which introduced Jones to socialism and union activities, had a large and active female membership.<sup>10</sup>

One issue that Mother Jones did not discuss at length was race. In her autobiography she writes about a young boy housed with 16 blacks, some of whom had venereal disease, in a cramped, poorly ventilated jail cell.<sup>11</sup> While Jones is critical of the general conditions in the jail, she also disapproves of housing the boy (one assumes he is white), with blacks. However, when criticizing union leaders, Jones describes "humiliated, cringing colored servants"(see below), which seems to show sympathy for their situation.<sup>12</sup> Jones decried the strikebreaker, who was often black,

but she never addressed that problem in racial terms. Her position on blacks cannot be determined from the information available at this time.

By the second decade of this century Jones was beginning to have serious disagreements with the Socialist party. Because Jones considered women's rights to be a problem of its own, and unrelated to class, she still refused her support to women.<sup>13</sup> Women in the factories were striking for better working conditions. Instead of supporting these women Jones chose to criticize wealthy women who demonstrated with the striking women workers. Jones opposed all upper and middle class women because large numbers of their classes exploited the working class.<sup>14</sup> Jones did not discuss the fact that women of both the upper and working classes were brutally beaten in city strikes.<sup>15</sup> While the general circumstances of these strikes were far better than those of the coal mines, these women were doing everything they could, with the support of the unions and Socialist party, to improve their working conditions. When men did this Jones considered it to be a class problem; when women struck, it was a gender issue.

Much of Jones' criticism of the upper levels of the Socialist party and unions was well placed. Writing to Thomas H. Morgan, Jones criticized the Socialist party:

Comrade Morgan you will agree with me that a party is rotten to the core that send[s] a junketting [sic] party composed of eight members, not any of them of the working class to Copenhagen to represent the working man[']s movement.<sup>16</sup>

Jones continued her disapproval in her autobiography:

Never in the early days of the labor struggle would you find leaders wining and dining with the aristocracy; nor did their wives strut about like diamond-bedecked peacocks; nor were they attended by humiliated, cringing colored servants.<sup>17</sup>

Jones was also critical of the Industrial Workers of the World ("Wooblies," I.W.W.) which she helped found in 1905. She objected to its opposition to political

action. The I.W.W. became notorious for calling strikes without sufficient funds. In 1907 the Western Federation of Miners withdrew from the I.W.W., and coupled with the radical element within the I.W.W., Jones felt little reason to continue her support.<sup>18</sup>

Mother Jones' position on World War I was inconsistent. In January 1916 she said the war was pointless for the working class.<sup>19</sup> Later, like many Socialists, Jones found it impossible not to support the United States after its entry into the war in 1917. At the United Mine Workers convention in 1918 Jones was in full support of the war at the expense of the workers. She said there should be no strikes during the war.<sup>20</sup> Foner argues that the war was a means to suppress labor (management said strikes would hurt the war effort) and Jones should have known this.<sup>21</sup>

Jones did support the Bolsheviks after their rise to power. In a speech to striking steelworkers and their wives on October 23, 1919, Jones declared, "If Bolshevik is what I understand it to be, then I'm a Bolshevik from the bottom of my feet to the top of my head."<sup>22</sup> Jones' support of the Bolsheviks, coupled with her pro-war stance, further clouds her position on the war. The Wilson Administration supported the March Revolution but was steadfast in its opposition to the Bolsheviks.

In her autobiography Jones briefly mentions World War I without stating her position on the war between 1917 and 1919. Jones wrote that in 1919 she believed the war had made capitalists richer while it had been the workers' war.<sup>23</sup> Jones supported the United States after 1917, despite the fact that the war was a terrible blow to those in the army and the workers at home. Instead of striking, workers continued to labor under dangerous conditions and for low wages in order to support the war effort.

While Foner is correct in arguing that Mother Jones was an enthusiastic, courageous labor leader, criticism from feminists is not unjustified. Jones strongly

opposed woman suffrage, although she admitted it would have helped striking workers, both male and female. As for Foner's claim that Jones was ready to support women, it was not as women workers. She did rally women together, but to support male mine workers. As noted earlier, improved wages and working conditions for miners did improve women's lives, but Jones usually did not offer support for female workers. She held steadfastly to the middle class attitude that placed women in the home.

Mother Jones was a fearless labor leader, unafraid to pass armed "company men" to rally workers together for better labor conditions. She maintained her support of workers until her death on November 30, 1930, at one hundred years of age. However, Jones' speeches, writings, and activities make it clear that her priority was male workers. She gave little support to women's political, legal, and economic advancement.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>There is very little information available on Mother Jones. When Jones is discussed by feminist historians it is usually with criticism for her opinions and activities. Perhaps because feminist historians are so critical of Jones, she is rarely discussed in their work. Until Philip S. Foner edited Jones' speeches and writings and compiled biographical information there was no significant publication on Jones' activities. For that reason this section relies heavily on Foner's work.

<sup>2</sup>Philip S. Foner, *Mother Jones Speaks: Collected Writings and Speeches*, p. 25

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 139

<sup>4</sup>Mary "Mother" Jones, *Autobiography of Mother Jones*, p. 236

<sup>5</sup>Mary "Mother" Jones, *Autobiography of Mother Jones*, p. 236

<sup>6</sup>Philip S. Foner, *Mother Jones Speaks*, p. 509

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 498

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 467

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 100-104

<sup>10</sup>There were 113 women's "assemblies" in the Knights of Labor in 1886, their largest membership year. Gerda Lerner, *The Female Experience: An American Documentary*, pp. 293

<sup>11</sup>Mary "Mother" Jones, *Autobiography*, p. 206

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 241

<sup>13</sup>Philip S. Foner, *Mother Jones Speaks*, pp. 568-69

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 27-28

- <sup>15</sup>Philip S. Foner discusses strike conditions in *Women and the American Labor Movement* vol.I (New York: the Free Press, 1979).
- <sup>16</sup>This letter is dated August 1, 1910. Philip S. Foner, *Mother Jones Speaks*, p. 569
- <sup>17</sup>Mary "Mother" Jones, *Autobiography*, p. 241
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 117-20, 499-500
- <sup>19</sup>Philip S. Foner, *Mother Jones Speaks*, p. 283
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 295
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 292
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 318
- <sup>23</sup>Mary "Mother" Jones, *Autobiography*, p. 222

## KATE RICHARDS O'HARE

Kate Richards O'Hare was drawn to socialism because of her personal experiences on a farm and in a machine shop. She was born in 1876 on her family's farm in Ottawa, Kansas, outside Kansas City. Her father lost the farm and was forced to leave his family to find work in Kansas City. When the family joined him, Kate managed to get a job and gain acceptance into the International Association of Machinists, despite its all-male membership policy.

O'Hare does not specify a date, but she identifies her commitment to socialism beginning with a speech she heard by Mother Jones. In 1901, following her introduction to socialism, she enrolled in a training school for Socialist party workers in Girard, Kansas. On January 1, 1902, Kate married Frank P. O'Hare.

Both of the O'Hares worked for socialism, with Kate becoming the better known. She worked intensively in the Plains and West, and was a frequent contributor to the *National Rip-Saw*, an independent socialist publication. As a Socialist speaker she was extremely popular, second only to Eugene Debs.<sup>1</sup>

O'Hare was active in the Socialist party during the first two decades of this century when several important issues were addressed by this group. While O'Hare felt it important to focus on a large scheme, she did feel that the question of women's rights, and those of blacks, were fundamental to the success of socialism. Her opinions on women and blacks reflected the convictions of many Americans.

Like many Socialists, O'Hare supported suffrage for women. Voting was considered a necessary tool for the implementation of socialism. As well, workingwomen could use their votes to address the problems of capitalism. Socialists

believed there was little use in recruiting women if they could not advance the Party by voting.<sup>2</sup> These Socialists felt that working with suffrage groups was acceptable as long as their goals were differentiated.

O'Hare described women in two ways in relation to suffrage:

1. women were subservient to men with no means of self-defense
2. women bore primary responsibility for the home<sup>3</sup>

She believed that without suffrage women lived in servitude. Yet at the same time, O'Hare's position placed women in a domestic framework, making them dependent on men. O'Hare believed that with the vote women could support workers, protect the home, and address consumer and health problems.<sup>4</sup>

In "Shall Women Vote?", published in the *National Rip-Saw*, O'Hare delineates her views on women and support of suffrage:

Home is the logical location of womanly activity; biology and the natural division of labor have placed her there, and all of the ologies and isms can never remove her from the home...<sup>5</sup>

She continues her argument for suffrage by saying it is not a threat to men:

It is idiotic to presume that we wish to or can upset the natural order of life and compel men to forsake their own vocations to assume the duties of women, simply because the industries of home have left the four walls of a cabin and gone to a factory and workshop.

Cooking, cleaning, and clothing, sewage and smoke, dirt, disease and death have always been and still are women's problems and must be dealt with by women. Men have problems of their own to solve.<sup>6</sup>

While O'Hare mentions the problems of women in the workplace, she stresses the role of women in the home. Her views on women are reflective of the Socialist party's position. Some Socialists could not decide if a female labor force was a positive development. Others argued that women should not be confined to the home. Those Socialists who did not object to women in the labor force did think that 99 out of 100 women would choose to stay home if they did not need to contribute to their family's

income. Socialists did agree that the party should recruit and organize housewives since the majority of women were unpaid home workers.<sup>7</sup>

Even within the ranks of female Socialists there was a lack of unity. It has been argued that part of this problem was due to geography. The women in the Midwest and California were the first to organize. The Midwestern and Californian women's unyielding belief in Socialism as the key to women's emancipation was reflective of the nineteenth century, and seemed somewhat dated in the early 1900s. These women were "visionary, moralistic, and militantly Protestant as well as class-conscious revolutionaries."<sup>8</sup>

Urban women were slower to unite because of ethnic and generational differences. The Socialists were attempting to unify older, established immigrants and their daughters, second generation native-born women, and recent immigrants. Like the rural groups, urban women adopted the nineteenth century legacy of loyalty to the party. They also believed it was important to bring women into the Socialist mainstream.<sup>9</sup>

This was an important point of difference between these groups. The Midwest and California women felt that ultimately they must be committed to their sex rather than other political leanings.<sup>10</sup> Urban women were highly suspicious of independent women's groups.<sup>11</sup> The debate of whether Socialist women's groups were autonomous exposed some grievances to the public. A woman in San Francisco reported that a prominent man resigned from an *ad hoc* committee because he refused to allow his name to stand with that of a woman.<sup>12</sup> Other women complained that they were offered the least appealing work in projects, such as fundraising, and were accorded little respect or equality. The result was the Women's National Socialist Union's decision to organize women but not necessarily recruit them into the Party.<sup>13</sup>

By 1919 this attitude had not changed. At the first Feminist Congress, Crystal Eastman spoke for many women when she said feminists should not wait for a Socialist revolution to obtain their goals. They felt socialism and feminism were complementary, but socialism was not the only solution to their problems. Mari Jo Buhle argues that this independence severely weakened the Socialist women's movement because it stressed the individual over the collective and the private over the public.<sup>14</sup>

Suffrage was not the only issue which divided Socialists at the turn of the century. The question of race and ethnicity produced a variety of opinions within the party.

A resolution adopted at the founding of the Socialist Party of America in July 1901 contained the most thorough examination of the role of blacks by a political group. Philip Foner and C. Vann Woodward concur that the party's stand was significant because it did not address blacks only as tokens. The convention addressed: socialism v. "Southernism," racism within trade unions and unorganized workers, and the question of whether blacks were specifically discriminated against or just a large part of an exploited class.<sup>15</sup> The Socialist party seemed to believe that the economic situation of blacks needed to be addressed in its own right, but there was little interest in the political or civil rights of blacks.

While the Socialist party initially addressed the problems blacks faced, it did little to correct them. Foner believes that Socialists wanted to be integrated into the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) and eventually gain A.F.L. support of a Socialist program. Most Socialists failed to address constitutional or ritual clauses which prohibited black membership in the A.F.L. Foner writes that the general record of Socialists in the trade unions did little to impress blacks and harmed Socialist appeals

against strikebreaking. They also ignored the fact that strikebreaking was often the only opportunity blacks had to gain industrial employment.<sup>16</sup>

The independent socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason* stated that under socialism, majority rule would determine who worked with whom. Therefore, whites would not vote in a black worker, and vice versa. A socialist society would be completely segregated. The Party press stressed a black interest in political and economic equality, but not in social equality.<sup>17</sup>

In 1908 the question of immigrant workers was raised at the Socialist convention. George Washington Woodbey, a prominent black minister who had joined the party, spoke against immigration limitations which Socialists supported. Woodbey felt there should be no discrimination against other workers, while most Socialists feared that the increase in number of Asian immigrants would reduce the wages of American (i.e. white?) workers. Woodbey did not address racism against blacks.<sup>18</sup>

Kate Richards O'Hare agreed with Woodbey's position. She also did not want to exclude immigrant membership in the party. By 1912 O'Hare made her position on blacks emphatically clear in the *National Rip-Saw*. In an article titled "Nigger Equality" O'Hare argued that Socialists wanted equality of opportunity, which meant, "SOCIALISTS WANT TO PUT THE NEGRO WHERE HE CAN'T COMPETE WITH THE WHITE MAN."<sup>19</sup> She continued:

We Socialists simply want the negro to have his opportunity to have access to the means of life, so he can quit competing with the white man, not because we love or hate him, but in order that he may not be used to keep down our wages.<sup>20</sup>

What O'Hare seems to be advocating is a continued system of competition as it exists under capitalism, but one which would only involve whites. While O'Hare clearly stated that she had no desire to associate with blacks on terms of social equality,

her suggestion that the country be divided with a section for blacks to use as they chose indicates that she did not want any type of equality or competition between whites and blacks.<sup>21</sup>

While the Socialist party issued brave written support of blacks, it did little to act on this. O'Hare's racism is reflective of a majority of whites in the party, at least in her desire to remain socially superior to blacks. The rapid changes in American production at the turn of the century created problems for all workers. Yet O'Hare and other Socialists were primarily interested in protecting the position of whites, much to the detriment of the party. Had the Socialists recognized the power they could have gained with the organization of blacks and immigrants, their goals might have been more readily realized.

While woman suffrage and the rights of blacks were serious issues for the Socialists, the United States' entry into World War I was much more divisive within the party. Americans were keenly interested in Europe, and the war was a major issue in the 1916 presidential election. The Socialist party, meeting the day after the United States' declaration of war, announced its 'unalterable opposition' to the war and attributed the conflict to the capitalist class and "munition makers in particular."<sup>22</sup> Socialists called for propaganda, mass protests, and demonstrations against the war.

Many Socialists left the party, including Upton Sinclair. Others, such as Eugene Debs and Allan L. Benson, the party's anti-war presidential candidate in 1916, came out in support of the war. Others felt betrayed by the party's later support of the war and left to form their own communist party. O'Hare chose to stay with the reformists in the Socialist party.

In a speech titled "Socialism and the World War," which O'Hare delivered numerous times in the first seven months of 1917, O'Hare voiced her support for suffrage and opposition to the war:

Democracy is a principle big enough and noble enough to live for; to fight for; to die for. Real democracy is all we women have ever desired when we demanded the vote. But we cannot deny that we women could give more loyal and more whole-hearted support to a war for democracy in Germany, if we had a little of it at home.<sup>23</sup>

In "Socialism and the World War," O'Hare stated that women were producing future generations for war and that the capitalist governments viewed life cheaply. O'Hare gave this speech in Bowman, North Dakota, on July 17, 1917. Soon afterwards O'Hare was indicted under the Espionage Act of 1917 for trying to interfere with conscription, and was convicted on December 14, 1917.<sup>24</sup> The sentence was to run five years but she was freed on bail until her conviction was upheld in October 1918. She entered the Missouri State Penitentiary, the only federal facility for women, on April 15, 1919, and served 14 months.

The time in prison greatly changed O'Hare's views. Because she was very popular in the Midwest, O'Hare was able to use political connections for prison improvements such as painting the cells and increased outdoor exercise. In a letter dated June 8, 1919, O'Hare wrote

You know that I have never been a particularly rampant feminist; I have always felt that the 'woman question' was only part of the great 'social problem' but my two months here have changed my views materially, and I know now, as never before, that 'women bear the heaviest burdens and walk the roughest road' and that this is true in all walks of life, and becomes more damnably true as you descend the social scale, until it reaches the very extreme here in prison. I am wondering if Suffrage, which is now practically an accomplished fact, will have any effect. Let us hope it does. However, I am not particularly optimistic concerning the average middle class woman.<sup>25</sup>

O'Hare joined Emma Goldman in prison, who had also been convicted of anti-conscription activity. O'Hare's supporters feared that O'Hare and Goldman's political differences would lead to serious arguments, but this was not the case.<sup>26</sup> On June 15, 1919, O'Hare wrote from prison:

So many of the comrades are concerned over how Emma Goldman and I reconcile our differences. Of course, the differences exist. Emma is an anarchist and I am a political Socialist, and I presume that the two are as far apart as the poles, but somehow theories don't seem very important here. The brutal, naked tragedies of life crush them out. When one lives with wrecked lives broken hearts and sick souls, abstract theories somehow lose force. So far as Emma and I are concerned, the shades of Marx and Bakunine [sic] can rest in peace. All of our time and energy is consumed in feeding hungry stomachs and supporting faltering spirits. Instead of arguing theories, we discuss such vital matters as which has the greatest amount of nutriment, two pounds of peanut butter or one of the cow variety, at the same price. Instead of hurling anarchist texts at me Emma raps on the wall of the cell and says, 'Get busy Kate, it's time to feed the monkeys, pass the food down the line.' I think it would be a godsend if a lot of theoretical hair splitters and hobby-riders went to prison; it might teach them some of the big, vital lessons of life.<sup>27</sup>

Prison life did change O'Hare's life markedly. When she was released after 14 months the Socialist party was seriously divided and diminished in influence. O'Hare was now interested in prison reform. Many marriages initially based on socialist activity dissolved, and in 1928 the O'Hares were part of this group. Kate O'Hare married an engineer, Charles C. Cunningham, the same year and moved to California. She worked for prison reform within the state, obtaining the position of assistant director of the Department of Penology. She died in California in January 1948.

O'Hare became a popular political figure at a time when most women had few opportunities to participate in such activities. Perhaps this was the case because she was not particularly radical. The Socialist party was dominated by middle class men who believed that women belonged in the home, a position O'Hare supported. Reflecting the party line, O'Hare did not speak out or write about "radical" issues such

as birth control. The Socialist party offered little support for blacks, and O'Hare definitely followed the party on this issue. She did not even focus forcefully on such accepted issues as suffrage or union membership. Unlike most Midwestern women who placed the advancement of their gender over party lines, O'Hare was foremost in her support of socialism as the ultimate solution to women's problems.

In fact, it was not until O'Hare was in prison, with a splintered Socialist party outside, that she began to view her positions differently. She had managed to live a very middle class political existence with little discrimination against her because of her gender. Perhaps O'Hare believed that the Socialist party could correct all wrongs because it offered her an opportunity to actively participate in politics at a time when few women had that choice.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup>Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism 1870-1920* , pp. 246-248 and Philip S. Foner and Sally Miller, ed., *Kate Richards O'Hare: Selected Writings and Speeches*
  - <sup>2</sup>Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, vol.I p. 274
  - <sup>3</sup>Philip S. Foner and Sally Miller, ed., *Kate Richards O'Hare*, p. 9
  - <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9
  - <sup>5</sup>O'Hare's article appeared in the July 1914, August 1914, and October 1914 editions of the *National Rip-Saw* . Philip S. Foner and Sally Miller, ed., *Kate Richards O'Hare*, p. 97
  - <sup>6</sup>Philip S. Foner and Sally Miller, ed., *Kate Richards O'Hare*, p. 98
  - <sup>7</sup>Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, vol. I p. 273
  - <sup>8</sup>Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism 1870-1920*, p. 108
  - <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 135
  - <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 108
  - <sup>11</sup>Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, p. 135
  - <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 137
  - <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 137
  - <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 295-96
  - <sup>15</sup>Philip S. Foner, *American Socialism and Black Americans*, pp. 94-100
  - <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 102
  - <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 108
  - <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 167
  - <sup>19</sup>Philip S. Foner and Sally Miller, ed., *Kate Richards O'Hare*, p. 45
  - <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 47-48
  - <sup>21</sup>This analysis concurs with Foner's in *American Socialism and Black Americans*, pp. 222- 23

<sup>22</sup>Philip S. Foner and Sally Miller, ed., *Kate Richards O'Hare*, p. 35

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 137

<sup>24</sup>The indictment resulted from a political conflict in Bowman, N.D. The postmistress was reported to have approved of O'Hare's speech. The postmistress was related to two Non-Partisan League leaders who were opposed by the former postmaster of Bowman, a powerful Democrat. Foner and Miller write that O'Hare "happened to be handy and useful for the local anti-league faction." Philip S. Foner and Sally Miller, ed., *Kate Richards O'Hare*, p. 20

<sup>25</sup>Philip S. Foner and Sally Miller, ed., *Kate Richards O'Hare*, pp. 218-19

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 221-22

## MARGARET SANGER

Margaret Higgins Sanger misrepresented herself in many ways during the fight for accessible birth control, yet her commitment to women's health was genuine. Born in 1879, Sanger was raised in Corning, New York, by parents of Irish descent. Sanger's father, an artist and liberal philosopher, adhered to Catholic doctrine concerning traditional gender roles, yet vehemently rejected the Church as an institution. There were eleven children in her family and Sanger's mother constantly suffered from poor health, in part a result of frequent pregnancies. Margaret attributed her mother's early death to the numerous children she bore and the near poverty level conditions the Higgins family endured.

Margaret hoped to attend medical school but decided on nursing. Sanger never finished high school, and admission to nurse's training required less than medical school. In 1900 she was accepted into a pre-requisite program for nursing school in White Plains, New York. In 1901 Margaret met William Sanger, an architect who was immediately and totally devoted to her. In June 1902 she married Sanger and decided to end her nurse's training.<sup>1</sup>

Sanger never completed her nurse's training and was not a trained nurse, although she called herself one. Despite her lack of a degree, Margaret would take on patients as a private "nurse." She became actively interested in birth control while caring for women who were physically and emotionally overwhelmed by frequent pregnancies. These women were desperate to learn how to limit the size of their families but Sanger was unable to help them. It was illegal to provide birth control information or devices. Although thousands of impoverished women continued to have many children, middle and upper class women obtained birth control devices and information to safely limit

the number of children they bore. Birth control activists in the early 1900s did not discuss the issue of birth control as a class question, but clearly the health and happiness of the poor and working classes were secondary to that of the middle and upper classes. If the middle and upper classes had been without birth control information and devices, the issue of accessible birth control might have been resolved sooner. Sanger became convinced that birth control must be made widely available after she lost a patient following a second suicide attempt to avoid pregnancy.

In her autobiography, Sanger writes that she began to work for birth control immediately after leaving Hastings, New York, and returning to New York City in 1911. According to Sanger's biographer Madeline Gray, Sanger did not begin her work at this time.<sup>2</sup>

The Sangers left Hastings largely because Margaret was not enchanted with her life as a housewife and mother of three children. Her disaffection was deepened when the house Bill Sanger had designed for them burned. As well, architecture was not what really interested Bill Sanger. He was drawn to left wing politics and art. The move back to New York was intended to satisfy both of them.

At first Margaret was not interested in the political discussion groups her husband attended, but with his encouragement she began to formulate and voice her own opinions. The Sangers were part of a group which held "parlor" discussions, and included radicals such as Bill Haywood, Emma Goldman, and Alexander Berkman.

Sanger's biographer Madeline Gray believes that Sanger gained many of her ideas about "free love" (the freedom to have love affairs beyond a "monogamous" relationship) from Goldman and Berkman.<sup>3</sup> Gray also thinks that Emma Goldman gave Sanger her first concrete ideas about birth control. Goldman was able to distribute birth control pamphlets because "They just didn't expect me to be bothering with such things."<sup>4</sup> Bill Sanger tried to keep Margaret away from Goldman because he felt

Goldman was determined to destroy the institution of marriage.<sup>5</sup> Goldman introduced Margaret to the writings of Havelock Ellis, an Englishman who wrote extensively on sexual freedom outside monogamous relationships.<sup>6</sup>

While Margaret participated in the parlor discussions in 1911, she had also become active in the Socialist party. In 1912 she addressed striking laundry workers and called for political action rather than repeated strikes. A worker responded that changing legislation would be too slow. This criticism hurt Sanger's feelings, and she left Socialism, giving up her editorial column in the "Women's Sphere" section of the Socialist paper *New York Call*. Soon afterwards she joined the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.). The I.W.W. appealed to Sanger because it was opposed to the Church. By 1913, however, Sanger said she was fed up with politics: "Socialism, anarchism, syndicalism, progressivism—I was tired of them all."<sup>7</sup> She took her children and moved to Provincetown, Massachusetts, for the summer.

Cape Cod had become a summer "resort" for many political leftists. Bill Haywood was there recovering from the Paterson strike and he encouraged Sanger to go to France for more birth control information. Sanger writes in her autobiography that not only could she advance her own work, but her husband could pursue his painting in Paris.<sup>8</sup> While Margaret was correct in stating the obvious opportunities available in Paris, she neglects to mention that she had taken a lover in Provincetown. Gray credits Bill Sanger with the motivation to go to Paris, and in October of 1913 they did.

Sanger learned a great deal about birth control while she was in Europe. Both birth control information and devices such as the diaphragm were readily available. She studied and conducted interviews. At the end of 1913 Sanger returned to New York to begin active work and organizing for accessible birth control in the United States.

Sanger turned to such feminists as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Crystal Eastman for support. However, she was disappointed in their response:

It seemed unbelievable they could be serious in occupying themselves with what I regarded as trivialities when mothers within a stone's throw of their meetings were dying shocking deaths.

Who cared whether a woman kept her Christian name—Mary Smith instead of Mrs. John Jones? Who cared whether she wore her wedding ring? Who cares about her demand for the right to work? Hundreds of thousands of laundresses, cloakmakers, scrub women, servants, telephone girls, shop workers would gladly have changed places with the Feminists in return for the right to have leisure, to be lazy a little now and then. When I suggested that the basis of Feminism might be the right to be a mother regardless of church or state, their inherited prejudices were instantly aroused. They were still subject to the age-old, masculine atmosphere compounded of protection and dominance.<sup>9</sup>

Sanger belittled feminist concerns about issues other than birth control as unimportant, yet at the same time she considered feminists to be her "natural allies."<sup>10</sup>

Next Sanger turned to socialist, trade union, and anarchist publications for support. She ran subscription requests in *Mother Earth* (Emma Goldman's paper), the *Call*, *The Masses*, and other papers. Enough advance subscriptions at the rate of one dollar a year were paid to begin publishing *Woman Rebel*, a monthly magazine.<sup>11</sup>

The first edition of *Woman Rebel* appeared in March 1914. The masthead read: "The Woman Rebel No Gods No Masters." On the back page Sanger wrote: "The *Woman Rebel* A Monthly Paper of Militant Thought." She also wrote: "A Woman's Duty To look the whole world in the face with a go-to-hell look in the eyes; to have an ideal; to speak and act in defiance of convention." This edition also included an essay by Emma Goldman entitled "Love and Marriage."

Part of the first mailing of *Woman Rebel* was stopped by the postal service, which acted under the regulations of the Comstock Laws. Anthony Comstock, head of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, had drafted legislation passed by Congress in 1873 which prohibited the publication of information on a variety of subjects including birth control and pornography. Sanger learned that only the first half of the March edition was stopped by the postal authorities, so the April issue was

mailed out in small bundles all over New York. The April publication included on the last page: "A Woman's Duty TO BREED LARGE FAMILIES—IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 211 OF THE CRIMINAL CODE AS AMENDED BY THE ACT OF MARCH 4, 1911."

Sanger contends in her autobiography that she did not break the law because it did not restrict the discussion of birth control, only advice on contraception.<sup>12</sup> However, at this same time she was trying to publish "Family Limitation," a pamphlet concerning contraception.

According to Sanger her legal problems stemmed from her insistence on publishing birth control articles. She mentions in her autobiography that people were "turning up with articles on every possible subject and defying me to publish them in the name of free speech. I printed everything. For the August issue I accepted a philosophical essay on the theory of assassination, largely derived from Richard Carlile.<sup>13</sup> It was vague, inane, and innocuous, and had no bearing on my policy except to taunt the Government to take action, because assassination also was included under Section 211."<sup>14</sup>

The article in question, "A Defense of Assassination," written by Herbert Thorpe and published in the July 1914 edition of *Woman Rebel*, included:

My idea is that if during an industrial crisis such as a strike or lockout, where sometimes the way to a settlement is blocked by the stubborn selfishness of a single man, it might prove a good lesson to the employing class if such an obstacle were promptly and effectively removed.

Sanger writes that in her first court appearance for violating Section 211 the judge remarked that she did not look "like a bomb thrower or an assassin."<sup>15</sup> She continues that the assistant district attorney alluded to her efforts to publish "Family Limitation."

Mari Jo Buhle argues, in *Woman and American Socialism 1870-1920*, that Sanger was calling for all types of radical action:

Taunting Socialist women to send rifles instead of letters of sympathy to striking miners in Colorado, Sanger revealed her own confusion between tactics and bravado; she displayed what Max Eastman described accurately as 'rebellion for its own sake.'<sup>16</sup>

Eastman offered both praise and criticism of Sanger in *The Masses*, which she reprinted in the September—October issue of *Woman Rebel*:

We must thank Margaret Sanger for speaking out clearly and quietly for popular education in the means of preventing conception...and if she goes to court in the fight, we must go too and stand behind her and make her martyrdom—if martyrdom it must be—the means of the very publicity she is fighting to win. There is no more important stand, and no stand that requires more bravery and purity of heart than the one she is making... And if the virtue that holds heros [sic] up to these sticking points must needs be united with the fault of a rather unconvincing excitedness and intolerance — all right we will hail the virtue and call it a bargain at the price. [emphasis added]

In August, just the day before her trial, Sanger left New York for Canada and then went on to England. Buhle believes that if birth control campaign had relied solely on Sanger, it would have dwindled when she left the country. However, Sanger's absence allowed for a more successful effort at developing a working-class constituency. She had been unable to develop an organized, reasonable plan to promote the discussion and legalization of birth control. Sanger's work, as her contemporaries and historians believe, was chaotic and all but disruptive to the struggle for birth control. As well, Sanger saw herself as the central, if not the only figure in this struggle, which was not the case.<sup>17</sup>

While Sanger was out of the country "Family Limitation," was printed underground. During the first months of 1915 I.W.W. locals, anarchists, Socialists, and other supporters circulated approximately 100,000 copies. When Bill Sanger, now estranged from Margaret, was arrested for distributing "Family Limitation," the campaign for birth control intensified.<sup>18</sup>

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Eugene Debs, Emma Goldman, and other politically active people increased their speaking and writing about birth control. Kate Richards O'Hare wrote that the *National Rip-Saw* was inundated with requests for information. She felt that Socialists were too busy fighting the larger problems of capitalism and urged people to write their legislators. Several Socialist legislators did promise support.<sup>19</sup>

As a result of increased activity, a group of liberals, not radicals, formed The Birth Control League of America. Sanger claims credit for founding the group in her autobiography, while historians David Kennedy and Madeline Gray present it differently.

Without fanfare Sanger notes the founding of "a little society, grandly titled the National Birth Control League" (N.B.C.L.) between January and March of 1914.<sup>20</sup> According to Sanger the N.B.C.L. was formed in part to provide moral support for her forthcoming publication *Woman Rebel*.

Kennedy's research on the birth control movement dates the founding of The Birth Control League of America in March, 1915. This group was later called the National Birth Control League. Madeline Gray states that Mary Dennett help organize the N.B.C.L. after Sanger left the country because Dennett thought Sanger would not return.<sup>21</sup> According to Kennedy, Sanger did not think the group would survive in her absence, but the league prospered under the leadership of Mary Dennett.<sup>22</sup> The league members worked for the repeal or amendment of laws and statutes which restricted birth control and treated it as 'purely scientific' issue.<sup>23</sup> The group included activists Lincoln Steffens and Jessie Ashley, but no such radicals as Emma Goldman.

With so much evidence to the contrary, it is not clear what group Sanger organized in early 1914. Kennedy and Gray date the League's founding after Sanger was out of the country. As well, the N.B.C.L. membership was comprised of liberals, while Sanger was still working with political radicals.

While in Europe, Sanger received letters of support and news about the growing interest in birth control. In September 1915 Sanger returned to face the charges against her. Her case was delayed until February, when the district attorney asked that the charges be dropped for lack of conclusive evidence.<sup>24</sup>

Following this episode several things happened which changed Sanger's work and tactics. Margaret and Bill Sanger, although still separated, argued with Emma Goldman. Margaret began to turn her back on Goldman, and according to Goldman's biographer, Sanger was "acting as if birth control were her own personal crusade and denying her debts to the radicals as she herself grew increasingly conservative."<sup>25</sup>

During the fall of 1916 Sanger opened a birth control clinic in Brownsville, a suburb of New York City. The clinic managed to remain open when physicians testified that avoiding pregnancy was sometimes necessary to prevent disease and death. The physicians avoided jail while Sanger, her sister Ethel, and Fania Mindell, an assistant, were arrested in late 1916.

At this same time a birth control bill introduced in Congress by New York Socialists failed to pass. The bill, supported by the National Birth Control League (N.B.C.L.), was deemed too progressive for the times.

This legislative defeat, perhaps coupled with her other activities marked a decided change for Sanger. While she did not sever her ties with the N.B.C.L., Sanger helped found another organization, the New York Birth Control League (N.Y.B.C.L.). Sanger wanted an organization which would support her work through fund raising.<sup>26</sup> Kennedy dates the group in December 1916, while Gray dates it on March 20, 1917. Its goals were to:

1. help Sanger with her legal battle over the Brownsville clinic
2. change state and federal laws to allow doctors to give information on birth control
3. promote birth control as a means of improving maternal and infant health and social welfare<sup>27</sup>

The N.Y.B.C.L. wanted to change state laws in order to set up clinics, while the N.B.C.L. was more concerned with changing federal law.

In January 1917 the trial for the Brownsville charges began, with each woman tried separately. Ethel's trial was held first and she was sentenced to 32 days in jail for distributing contraceptives in violation of section 1142 of the criminal code.

In response Ethel went on a hunger strike. On the tenth day of the hunger strike Sanger and Mrs. Amos Pinchet, a wealthy and influential activist, met with New York governor Charles Whitman about setting up a commission to study the need for birth control. Because Ethel was receiving front page attention, Whitman naturally asked about her. He offered to issue a pardon conditional on Ethel's promise to stop promoting birth control, which Ethel refused. A letter from the governor did permit Sanger to see her sister.

Sanger was shocked at her sister's condition. She writes in her autobiography:

Her life was all that mattered to me now. I had to eat humble pie, and said to the matron that she was too ill to accept the conditions of the pardon for herself, but I would promise on her behalf. I was told that he [the governor] had already signed the pardon...<sup>28</sup>

Sanger is not forthright about Ethel's pardon. If the pardon had been issued with the rejection of the previous conditions, then what did the pardon require? Gray states that in fact Sanger did promise that Ethel would no longer work for birth control. (It is clear in her autobiography that Ethel's publicity, which preceded her own trial, made Margaret jealous.) Gray writes that Sanger made sure Ethel did no more birth control work, and Sanger does not mention Ethel again in her autobiography after commenting

that it took her a year to recover from the hunger strike. Ethel lived into her seventies.<sup>29</sup>

Shortly following Ethel's release Sanger was sentenced to 30 days in her own trial. By this time the N.B.C.L. had reduced its financial support of Sanger. Before going to jail Sanger prepared the first issue of *Birth Control Review*, which was more restrained than *Woman Rebel*. The first issue of *Birth Control Review* was published in February 1917.

The N.B.C.L. and N.Y.B.C.L., coupled with *Birth Control Review*, were unable to work together. No doubt Sanger personally was responsible for much of the divisiveness. By March 1917 Sanger was referring to birth control as 'her cause.'<sup>30</sup> In the spring of that year Frederick Blossom, managing editor of *Birth Control Review*, quit, and took with him subscribers' names, money, and account books. Kennedy believes Blossom wanted to dominate the movement.<sup>31</sup> Sanger writes that they disagreed about a pacifist editorial she wrote in the *Review*.

Sanger went to the district attorney with her complaint against Blossom, which the radicals viewed as "high treason."<sup>32</sup> She was persuaded to withdraw her charges and go to the Socialist Aldermanic Committee (governing council). This marks Sanger's break with the Left. She felt she needed financial and influential support which radicals could not provide. The radicals had been able to supply plenty of supporters but the war in Europe was depleting and dividing their ranks. Sanger's biographer Madeline Gray writes that the Socialists formally threw Sanger out of the party.

Both Gray and Emma Goldman's biographer accuse Sanger of deserting her radical friends. She was not the only person in the Left to change her views. The war in Europe and its implications for the United States were a great strain on the American Left. The war climate seems to have provide the opportunity Sanger needed. She writes in her autobiography:

...during this feverish period [World War I], neither public praise nor public blame affected me very much, although the type of criticism that came from friends was different. Just because they were friends and I wanted them to understand, I was unhappy if they did not. But, since persons one likes can have great influences and friendships take time, I refrained from making new ones.<sup>33</sup>

Sanger was deluding the truth. During the war she did desert the radicals who had supported her for years. She saw herself as the birth control movement incarnate, and those who would not support her unreservedly were abandoned. Sanger did want friends in high places, and she was willing to separate herself from her past to obtain her goals.

In 1922 Sanger married J. Noah Slee, who owned among other investments Three in One Household Oil. He is mentioned only twice in Sanger's autobiography. Sanger wanted to present herself as much younger than she was, and apparently her love affairs continued late into her life. Eventually she became addicted to demerol as a result of angina. She had to be placed under the guardianship of her son Stuart, a successful doctor. By this time she had all but squandered the five million dollars left to her by Slee. In September 1966 Sanger died of leukemia in Tucson, Arizona.

Margaret Sanger did accomplish a great deal for the birth control movement. She brought the issue of birth control beyond the concept of pornography in the media and courts. While her work was almost frantic and shocking simply for the value of shock, Sanger did make birth control an issue that the Socialists, radical groups, and eventually mainstream political parties, felt they must address.

It is unfortunate that Sanger offers so little recognition to those who worked equally hard. In her autobiography Sanger mentions people she had contact with, and she does note briefly that Goldman was arrested for speaking on birth control. Historians, with the aid of letters, documents, publications, and interviews with Sanger's two sons, learned how hard she worked to present herself as the only activist

of the birth control movement. In reality her success was part of a much larger picture, one that was filled with radicals.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup>Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger: A Biography of the Champion of Birth Control*, pp. 26-32
  - <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37, and pp. 53-55
  - <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 58-59
  - <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 39-40
  - <sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 58-59
  - <sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 39-40
  - <sup>7</sup>Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, p. 94
  - <sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 95-96
  - <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 108-9
  - <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 108
  - <sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 109
  - <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111
  - <sup>13</sup>Sanger is mistaken about the August publication date; it appears in the July issue
  - <sup>14</sup>Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, p. 114
  - <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 115
  - <sup>16</sup>Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism 1870-1920*, p. 275
  - <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 274-276
  - <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 276
  - <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 276-77
  - <sup>20</sup>Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, p. 108
  - <sup>21</sup>Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger*, p. 114
  - <sup>22</sup>David Kennedy, *Birth Control in America*, p. 76
  - <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 76
  - <sup>24</sup>Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger*, p. 119
  - <sup>25</sup>Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life*, p. 212
  - <sup>26</sup>Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger*, p. 144
  - <sup>27</sup>David Kennedy, *Birth Control in America*, pp. 90-91, and Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger*, p. 144
  - <sup>28</sup>Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, p. 233
  - <sup>29</sup>Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, p. 234 and Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger*, p. 134
  - <sup>30</sup>Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger*, p. 141
  - <sup>31</sup>David Kennedy, *Birth Control in America*, pp. 91-94
  - <sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 92
  - <sup>33</sup>Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography*, p. 255

## EMMA GOLDMAN

Emma Goldman's life centered around political activity in the United States, Europe, and Russia. She spent most of her time writing, speaking, and protesting for her belief in a society free of capitalist exploitation and government restrictions. Not only was she part of radical activities in the early 1900's, Emma Goldman frequently was its focal point.

Along with her sister Helene, Goldman emigrated to the United States in December, 1885, when she was 16 years old. Upon arriving she joined another sister, Lena, in Rochester, New York. Because she had only three and one-half years of formal education in Russia, Goldman hoped for educational, as well as personal opportunities, in the Jewish community of Rochester. Goldman found work as a seamstress. Through her job Goldman met her husband, Jacob Kerschner, also a Russian Jew. The marriage was a failure, which Goldman blamed on Kerschner. They divorced and remarried, and it is not clear whether the second marriage ended in divorce or separation.

In 1886, at the age of 17, the Haymarket Affair marked a turning point in Goldman's life. She closely identified with those accused of the Chicago bombing. In 1889 Goldman left Rochester for New York City in hopes of meeting other anarchists. Here she met Alexander Berkman, another Russian immigrant, who became her lover for several years and was her lifelong friend.

At this same time Goldman found the niche she had sought. She came under the tutelage of Johann Most, who was highly respected among anarchists. She became active as a speaker in the anarchist movement and also published in Yiddish.

In 1892 Goldman helped Berkman plan the assassination of Henry Clay Frick, who had represented management in the Haymarket strikes. Berkman fashioned himself as a martyr and insisted on carrying out their plans alone. Goldman desperately wanted to accompany him, but acquiesced.

They first planned to use a bomb, and Goldman explained their attempts to make one in a tenement house occupied with children as a case of the end justifying the means.<sup>1</sup> After a failed test explosion, Berkman decided to shoot Frick. Goldman feigned illness in order to borrow money from her sister to help finance the assassination.

Berkman managed to wound Frick and failed to kill himself as he had planned. When the news of the attempt reached New York, Johann Most severely criticized Berkman's actions. A division among the anarchists ensued. Goldman felt that Most considered Berkman a rival, and resented their activity in another anarchist group.<sup>2</sup>

Goldman and Most pursued their disagreement over Berkman's actions in the anarchist press. Finally Most retracted his arguments supporting violence and criticized Berkman's motives. Goldman decided to confront Most publicly. When Most rose to address a group, Goldman leapt from her front row seat and demanded that Most prove his claims against Berkman. When he did not reply, Goldman pulled a horsewhip from her cloak and struck Most several times across the face and neck. Goldman's friends saved her from Most's supporters.

Berkman was sentenced to 22 years in prison for his attempt on Frick's life. This crime legally called for a seven year sentence.<sup>3</sup> Even Johann Most publicly declared Berkman's sentence unreasonable.

Not long after Berkman was sentenced Goldman fell in love with an Austrian anarchist, Ed Brady. She claims not to have fallen out of love with Berkman ("Sasha"). This illustrates Goldman's philosophy of "free love," which essentially

allowed her to fill Berkman's place as she was "free" to be involved with any number of people.

While recovering from a bout with tuberculosis, Goldman decided she must aid the workers of New York, who were suffering under high unemployment. In a Union Square speech she accused the State and Church of crushing the poor and working classes, which agitated the crowd. The next day Goldman travelled to Philadelphia to organize the unemployed. She was arrested and extradited to New York. In October 1893 Goldman was sentenced to one year at Blackwell's Island for inciting to riot.

This time in prison greatly shaped Goldman's life. She was exposed to English more than she had been in anarchist circles and her fluency improved considerably. After a few weeks rheumatism sent Goldman to the sick ward. At the end of a month's rest the doctor asked her if she would accept responsibility for the ward, assuring her that she would be taught the necessary nursing skills.

Goldman left prison feeling that she could rely on herself. The weeks immediately following her release were difficult. Ed Brady wanted her to become pregnant, but she refused. They found an apartment and Goldman began to work as a practical nurse. After a failed attempt to operate an ice cream parlor in Brownsville, Goldman decided she wanted to become a trained nurse.<sup>4</sup>

At Brady's insistence, she decided on a program in Vienna which included midwifery. She left New York on August 15, 1895. After a year's study Goldman graduated with two degrees: one in nursing, the other in midwifery. She returned to New York and resumed her relationship with Brady, along with unsuccessful efforts to have Berkman's sentence reduced.

Goldman found her degree worthwhile. She assisted Dr. White, the prison physician who had introduced her to nursing, along with taking private cases. Her midwifery skills were used to help poor, usually non-Anglo-Saxon women. These

cases were important for Goldman's future political activities. She was frustrated because she could only offer help during childbirth: "I refused to perform abortions and I knew no method to prevent conception."<sup>5</sup> Her professor had instructed his students about the danger of unsafe abortions, and Goldman refused to take such a risk. Doctors with whom she worked believed the high birth rate among the poor was due to self-indulgence and the woman's failure to use her brain, which would restrict her reproductive ability.<sup>6</sup>

In the fall of 1900 Goldman left to give a series of lectures in Europe. Following her lectures in England she went to France with her lover, Hippolyte Havel. She attended a neo-Malthusian conference which was held underground, as French laws prohibited public meetings of that type. Goldman was greatly impressed with the information and was supplied with literature and contraceptives for her work in New York.

Upon returning to New York Goldman was able to see Berkman for the first time in nine years. She financed her trip in part by representing Ed Brady's business, which sold products to stationary businesses. In St. Louis on September 6, 1901, she learned that President McKinley had been shot in Buffalo, New York.

The following day newspapers were filled with accusations against Goldman. Friends in Chicago were held until she was arrested. A young man named Leon Czolgosz had shot McKinley, and while he did not implicate Goldman, a reporter learned that Czolgosz had asked her for reading material. Goldman went to Chicago and surrendered. The district attorney for the city of Buffalo failed to produce evidence necessary for extradition and Goldman was released.

Because Czolgosz had been interested in anarchism the country was outraged. Goldman failed to understand why no one would speak out in Czolgosz's defense, at least in support of his human rights. Anarchists were avoiding the focus of the press

and police. Czolgosz was assigned two attorneys who publicly admitted his guilt. On October 29, 1901, Czolgosz was put to death in the electric chair.

In March 1903 Congress addressed the problem of anarchists with legislation prohibiting immigration to anarchists or those belonging to groups with anarchist beliefs.<sup>7</sup> Goldman found that her public speaking requests increased greatly.

At this same time she was also carrying a heavy load of private nursing cases, which included women of 14 different professions. She wrote:

Most of these women claimed to be emancipated and independent, as indeed they were in the sense that they were earning their own living. But they paid for it by the suppression of the mainsprings of their natures; fear of public opinion robbed them of love and intimate comradeship. It was pathetic to see how lonely they were, how starved for male affection, and how they craved children. Lacking the courage to tell the world to mind its own business, the emancipation of the women was frequently more of a tragedy than traditional marriage would have been. They had attained a certain amount of independence in order to gain their livelihood, but they had not become independent in spirit or free in their personal lives.<sup>8</sup>

Goldman was correct in stating that these women did lose a lot despite their gains. Most women were accused of working for "pin money" and taking jobs from men. Often these women lived in dingy apartments and barely subsisted on poor diets with no money left for savings, leisure, or medical expenses. However, to argue that these women lost more than could be gained in a traditional marriage is unfair to those single women who struggled in their independence.<sup>9</sup> Marriage often entailed outside employment, full responsibility for the home along with raising children, and little money left after necessary expenses. As for herself, Goldman usually received little money from her lectures and business ventures. She ended more than one relationship over her refusal to have a child, and had several "marital" relationships, while rejecting her own advice to marry.

During the early 1900s Goldman was frequently depressed. Her mood changed in March 1906 with the first issue of *Mother Earth*. Goldman was disappointed that *Mother Earth* did not completely satisfy all anarchists. Her critics, Goldman claims, felt that *Mother Earth* was not revolutionary enough, and treated anarchism as a liberating ideal rather than as a dogma.<sup>10</sup> Goldman did want to address literature, art, and drama, as well as political and economic issues, but her inflexibility left many unwilling to contribute articles.

The publication quickly took all of Goldman's time. She closed her massage business, as she had accumulated some savings.<sup>11</sup> While Goldman was absorbed with the magazine, she also was anticipating Berkman's release in May. Understandably Berkman had a difficult time adjusting and disappeared for a few days while contemplating suicide. Goldman's arrest under the Criminal Anarchy Law (she was attending a meeting but had not spoken) shifted Berkman's attention outward. After repeated delays the charges against Goldman were dropped.

Berkman managed *Mother Earth* while Goldman lectured coast to coast. Upon her return she found him depressed again. They fought often, and Goldman decided Berkman fared better when she was away.

With that in mind, Goldman agreed to represent her American comrades at an anarchist congress to be held in Amsterdam. When Goldman and Max Baginski, her American travelling companion, arrived in London after attending the congress, the press was filled with stories about the United States' plan to refuse her re-entry under the four year old Anti-Anarchist Law. Goldman believed the stories to be untrue, as she had married an American. Soon afterward letters arrived from attorney friends which confirmed the stories. Scotland Yard began surveillance, and with the help of non-active anarchists, Emma and Max left London for Canada. They tipped the Canadian train porter and were not disturbed when crossing the border.<sup>12</sup>

In March 1908 Goldman arrived in Chicago where she was to speak. The police were intimidating landlords, who then refused to rent Goldman meeting halls. Finally Dr. Ben L. Reitman, a physician who gave medical attention to hobos and the unemployed, came forward. He made a vacant store available to Goldman.

Goldman found herself intensely attracted to Reitman, and after a faltering start, Reitman joined her on the lecture tour. Their relationship from the outset was complex. Reitman was very devoted to his mother, and began calling Goldman "Mommy." He was also attracted to other women and confessed to other liaisons.<sup>13</sup> Goldman realized that Reitman's presence disturbed some of her friends. Although Goldman wanted a monogamous relationship with Reitman, she could not trust him to be faithful. Yet she also could not turn him away. She felt that Reitman could accept her as a woman with emotional and physical needs and as an activist. His desire to help in any way when she lectured was essential to Goldman, although the physical aspect of their relationship was their primary interest.

The first three years of their relationship found Goldman immersed in *Mother Earth* and lecturing. The magazine was not self-supporting, so Goldman's speaking tours were crucial to its survival. In January 1911, as she and Reitman were preparing for a tour, Goldman's first book, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, appeared.<sup>14</sup> She was especially pleased with this work because it contained lectures which the police had prohibited her from making. Goldman credited Reitman with the inspiration for the book, but Berkman was credited with the critical assistance of editing and proofreading.

This collection covered issues which Goldman would continue to address. She wrote about birth control in "The Hypocrisy of Puritanism": "Prevention, even by scientifically determined safe methods, is absolutely prohibited; nay, the very mention of the subject is considered criminal."<sup>15</sup>

Then Goldman focused on the problem of unwanted pregnancies:

Thanks to this Puritanic tyranny, the majority of women soon find themselves at the ebb of their physical resources. Ill and worn, they are utterly unable to give their children even elementary care. That, added to economic pressure, forces many women to risk utmost danger rather than continue to bring forth life. The custom of procuring abortions has reached such vast proportions in America as to be almost beyond belief. According to recent investigation along this line, seventeen abortions are committed in every hundred pregnancies. This fearful percentage represents only cases which come to the knowledge of physicians. Considering the secrecy in which this practice is necessarily shrouded, and the consequent professional inefficiency and neglect, Puritanism continually exacts thousands of victims to its own stupidity and hypocrisy.<sup>16</sup>

Goldman, like Margaret Sanger, knew that numerous pregnancies overwhelmed poor women. Both women also knew that "the secret" was available to women who could afford it.

In "Woman Suffrage" Goldman explained her views on voting:

Needless to say, I am not opposed to woman suffrage on the conventional ground that she is not equal to it. I see neither physical, psychological, nor mental reasons why woman should not have the equal right to vote with man. But that can not possibly blind me to the absurd notion that woman will accomplish that wherein man has failed.<sup>17</sup>

Alice Wexler writes in *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life* that Goldman did not support woman suffrage because she felt that with the vote women would be open to attack from their husbands and the government. In fact Mother Jones said that women in Colorado had not used the ballot wisely, and they should work to influence their husband's votes.<sup>18</sup> This was the type of criticism Goldman feared women would receive.

The United Mine Workers of America, which Mother Jones tirelessly supported, invited Goldman to address them at their convention in Columbus, Ohio, when she arrived there on tour in 1911. Union leaders acquiesced to the militant left wing and sent Goldman an invitation with a post script that the county commissioners refused to

let her speak. She had already been stopped from making her scheduled lecture. On the appointed day the union members were locked out of the hall as well. They marched to the hall Goldman had rented and heard her speak about the importance of the general strike.<sup>19</sup>

While on tour in 1914 U.M.W. leaders again scorned Goldman. She responded to the massacre of coal miners in Ludlow, Colorado, by offering to send money from her current lecture tour. The union replied they could not afford to have her publicly associated with them but they would accept the money privately.

When Goldman reached Butte, Montana, a city dominated by the Western Federation of Miners, she found an open atmosphere. She was very pleased with the number of women attending lectures, particularly the one on birth control. Women who earlier hesitated to ask privately about birth control now publicly admitted their unhappiness with household routines and repeated childbirth.<sup>20</sup>

In late 1915 Goldman made an important decision about the birth control movement. Goldman had discussed birth control as a general topic because she feared arrest on other issues. Following Margaret Sanger's problems with mailing *The Woman Rebel* and Bill Sanger's arrest for distributing "Family Limitation," Goldman decided she must either stop speaking about birth control or "do it practical justice."<sup>21</sup> She wrote of her decision:

Neither my birth-control discussion nor Margaret Sanger's efforts were pioneer work...The matter of priority, however, in no way lessened the value of Margaret Sanger's work. She was the only woman in America in recent years to give information to women on birth-control and she revived the subject in her publication after many years of silence.<sup>22</sup>

Goldman chose to discuss birth control fully when invited to address the Sunrise Club, a liberal New York group. She was not arrested and believed that because the Sunrise Club members probably had contraceptives, Comstock was not interested. Yet

at her own Sunday meeting, which was filled by Columbia University students, Goldman was not arrested.<sup>23</sup>

In early 1916 Goldman argued with the Sangers. She felt that Margaret was making birth control her own personal movement, while at the same time ignoring the support she had received from the New York radicals.<sup>24</sup> Despite their differences Goldman was determined to be arrested, if only because she felt Bill Sanger's arrest and conviction had been unjust. She was finally arrested after lecturing to a group of Yiddish women on the East Side.<sup>25</sup>

Her trial was held April twentieth. After speaking for an hour about the necessity of contraceptives, Goldman was found guilty. She was sentenced to a one hundred dollar fine or fifteen days in jail. She chose jail, and spent the time reading and preparing lectures. Reitman held the regular Sunday meeting in Goldman's absence. He gave out pamphlets on birth control and was arrested. His sentence was for 60 days because the Special Sessions judges felt Reitman had knowingly acted in defiance of the law.<sup>26</sup>

In December Goldman was again arrested for distributing birth control pamphlets. When she went to trial on January 8, 1917, in New York, the judge dismissed the case for lack of evidence.<sup>27</sup>

Later in Cleveland Reitman was arrested on the same charge. He was found guilty, and Goldman placed much of the blame on Margaret Sanger:

The result of the trial was due mainly to the absence of proper publicity. Margaret Sanger had lectured in the city a short time previously, and it had been expected that she would take note of the situation and urge her hearers to rally to Ben's support. Her refusal to do so had incensed our friends at the inexcusable breach of solidarity,...

It was not the first occasion on which Mrs. Sanger had failed to aid birth control advocates caught in the meshes of the law. While my trial in New York was pending, she was touring the country and lecturing at meetings arranged by our comrades, largely at my suggestion. Strange to say, Mrs. Sanger, who had begun her birth-control work in our quarters on One Hundred and Nineteenth Street, would not even

mention my approaching trial. Once, at a meeting in the Bandbox Theatre, she was called to account for her silence by Robert Minor. She upbraided him for daring to interfere with her affairs. In Chicago Ben Capes had to resort to questions from the floor during a meeting to compel Mrs. Sanger to refer to my work...From numerous places friends wrote me that Mrs. Sanger had given the impression that she considered the issue as her own private concern. Subsequently Mr. and Mrs. Sanger publicly repudiated birth-control leagues organized by us, as well as our entire campaign for family limitation.<sup>28</sup>

By this time Goldman felt ready to move on to other issues. She wrote:

We felt that we had reason for some satisfaction with our share in the campaign. We had presented the ideas of family limitation throughout the length and breadth of the country, bringing knowledge of methods into the lives of the people who needed them most. We were ready now to leave the field to those who were proclaiming birth-control as the only panacea for all social ills. I myself had never considered it in that light; it was unquestionably an important issue, but by no means the most vital one.<sup>29</sup>

Now Goldman's attention turned towards the United States' anticipated entry into the war in Europe. She also was watching developments in Russia, as the czar had been overthrown. Berkman and Goldman decided to stay in the United States where they felt their anti-war work was more urgent. On April 16, 1917, Wilson decided to enter the war.

Goldman was disappointed that many war opponents changed their position with the United States' entry into the war. Such prominent leaders as Gompers and Mother Jones spoke out for the war effort. Previously these same people had argued that fighting such a war meant being duped by capitalists.

Goldman helped organize a No-Conscription League and prepared a statement on her position. Because her gender disqualified her from the draft, Goldman felt she could not advise people on the matter. She believed whether or not to fight was a matter of personal conscience, and as an anarchist Goldman could not make this decision for others. She did promise to stand by anyone who refused to participate in the war.<sup>30</sup>

On June 15, 1917, the day after they held a large anti-conscription meeting, Goldman and Berkman were arrested. Their trial began on June twenty-seventh, Goldman's forty-eighth birthday. She and Berkman chose to defend themselves. On July ninth both were found guilty after thirty nine minutes of jury deliberation. They were sentenced with the maximum penalty of two years in prison and a 10,000 dollar fine.

Goldman was sent to the penitentiary in Jefferson City, Missouri. After two weeks, Harry Weinberger, an attorney who supported Goldman and Berkman, convinced Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis to sign an appeal application. Both Goldman and Berkman were returned to "the Tombs" in New York City. While Goldman was released on bail, Berkman was held because he was now indicted for murder in a 1916 bomb explosion.

The incident had occurred on July twentieth during a Preparedness parade in San Francisco. Goldman and Berkman's plans to speak there on that day had been postponed. They were relieved that their change of plans had kept them out of the city, therefore avoiding implication. Two men, Thomas Mooney and Warren Billings, had been found guilty, with Mooney receiving the death sentence. Berkman worked to expose the prosecution's witnesses as perjurers, and Goldman felt the district attorney was determined to have a death sentence against him.<sup>31</sup>

Goldman worked feverishly to rally support for Berkman. Several trade unions came out for him (Mooney had opposed the open shop). Support even came from Russia when exiles returned there. There were protests at the American Embassies in Petrograd and Kronstadt.

The *New York Times* carried an article on April 25, 1917, datelined April twenty-third, Petrograd, about the demonstration which was led by Lenin. The *Times* did not

comment on his return to Russia. *The New Republic* responded to the report in its May 5, 1917 edition:

Is it not a remarkable commentary upon the attitude of the American press toward labor that one of the most significant and dramatic events should have come to the attention of American newspaper readers through a meeting in the *Nevsky Prospect*?<sup>32</sup>

The protest in Kronstadt so unnerved the American ambassador that he wired to President Wilson, who in turn contacted New York Governor Whitman about Berkman's extradition. Finally the San Francisco district attorney replied that he would not press for extradition.<sup>33</sup>

During this time the pro-war movement had not faltered. The Espionage Act and other laws empowered the Postmaster General to strictly censor the mail. *Mother Earth*, Berkman's monthly *Blast*, as well as other liberal and left wing publications were banned. Goldman sent out a letter informing subscribers of the demise of the ten year old forum. Then she decided to publish *Mother Earth Bulletin* with Reitman's help. They made a final break, and Goldman proceeded without him.

Goldman was disappointed that *Mother Earth Bulletin* was a much smaller publication than its predecessor, but she was soon able to fill it with her opinions on the Bolsheviks' use of power in Russia. While not in agreement with Lenin as a governmentalist, she did support Marxist economic doctrine.

Goldman complained that support of the Bolsheviks fell to the anarchists. Philip Foner offers a more accommodating view of the situation:

In short for the first time in the history of American radicals, all radical groups had a similar stand on a single issue: support of the Bolshevik revolution. To be sure each group interpreted the revolution to fit into its own theory of revolutionary struggle and the nature of the future society. To be sure, the amount and intensity of support for the revolution varied from group to group. To be sure, this coincidence of view proved temporary and some of the early supporters of the Bolsheviks were to become their bitterest enemies. But in the months following the October revolution practically all radicals were in

sympathy with the Bolsheviks and regarded the revolution as shedding 'the first ray of hope upon an otherwise hopeless world.'<sup>34</sup>

Goldman continued to lecture while she waited for her appeal. At the end of January 1918 the Supreme Court refused the appeal and set February fifth as the day she and Berkman would re-enter prison.

Goldman returned to Missouri and was joined by Kate Richards O'Hare in April 1919. They had first met when O'Hare visited the prison in July 1917. Goldman was not impressed with O'Hare's "dogmatic manner" or belief that the Supreme Court would make an exception in her case.<sup>35</sup> However, the confines of prison changed the situation. They became friends out of necessity.

Because O'Hare had important political connections it seemed that she probably would serve a commuted sentence. In her autobiography Goldman reveals her own hypocrisy:

I myself had declined the offer of friends to gain clemency for me. But it was different with Kate, who believed in the political machine. I hoped, however, that in her appeal would also be included the other political prisoners.<sup>36</sup>

But Goldman considered herself a political prisoner. As well, Goldman admits that O'Hare was able to instigate changes for such improvements as better meals and library privileges, which had earlier been rejected. O'Hare's political popularity made these changes possible, although Goldman does not identify it as such.

At the end of August 1919 Goldman had served 20 months of the two year sentence, earning four months for good behavior. Because she could not pay the 10,000 dollar fine, an extra month had to be served. After twenty-one months Goldman was technically free, but now she was facing questions from the Immigration Bureau.

It is important to understand why the Immigration Service was so interested in Berkman and Goldman. The Wilson Administration welcomed the February Revolution and the new democratic government in Russia. When the Bolsheviks withdrew Russia from the war, Wilson was infuriated. The problem was more serious than the war effort. The Bolshevik commitment to revolution and rejection of capitalism greatly concerned Wilson and others in his administration. Not only were the Bolsheviks embarking on a non-capitalist form of production and government, they were encouraging the exportation of their ideas and actions. Letters and memorandums written by some members of the Wilson Administration create the impression that capitalism had been kept a secret, and the Bolsheviks were going to expose it to the American public.<sup>37</sup>

Wilson found an excuse to intervene in Russia. Czecho-Slovak troops which had fought against Germany were moving to France to resume their war efforts. The Bolsheviks demanded that they surrender their arms before proceeding, as there was fear that the White Army might seize the artillery. The Czecho-Slovaks refused and fighting ensued, but not because the Czecho-Slovaks opposed Bolshevik politics. This did not matter to Wilson; the Czecho-Slovak troops were allies and they needed outside military assistance.<sup>38</sup>

Anti-Bolshevik propaganda proliferated. Foner comments that finally the press began to question itself:

It did not matter that these stories were exposed as lies; they continued to appear in one form or another. No wonder *The New Republic* asked wearily in November 1919 'Is the case against the Bolsheviks so weak that it has to be sustained by lies?'<sup>39</sup>

The country was frantic about the Bolsheviks. A Congressional committee was investigating Bolshevism in the United States. The government was desperate to expel

those who were considered threatening, so the Immigration Service developed a case against Goldman and Berkman.

On October 27, 1919, Goldman's hearing began. Berkman had refused to participate in his hearing at the Atlanta penitentiary because he felt that an inquisition was being held, but Goldman wanted to know why the government had rescinded her citizenship in 1909. (The loss of her citizenship had not been a problem until this time, which may explain why Goldman had not contested it.) At the hearing publications, letters, and old speeches were presented. Because the Federal government had not objected to them in the past, Goldman decided to remain silent throughout the proceeding. Her attorney, Harry Weinberger, argued that Goldman was a citizen because Kershner's posthumous denaturalization was illegal.<sup>40</sup> During the summer of 1919 Goldman's friend Harry Kelly had offered to marry her, but Weinberger advised against it. Goldman accepted his advice although she thought the country was rife with suspicion of foreigners and no court would overturn Kershner's denaturalization.<sup>41</sup> Goldman wanted to fight to the very end because she thought it would prove the United States to be like czarist Russia.

At the end of the hearing Goldman presented a written statement about the 1918 Anti-Anarchist Law. This law allowed for the deportation of unnaturalized immigrants belonging to groups which advocated sabotage or revolution. Goldman saw it as an effort to suppress labor protest and said :

If the present proceedings are for the purpose of proving some alleged offence committed by me, some evil or antisocial act, then I protest against the secrecy and third-degree methods of the so-called 'trial'. But if I am not charged with any specific offence or act, if— as I have reason to believe—this is purely an inquiry into my social and political opinions, then I protest still more vigorously against these proceedings, as utterly tyrannical and diametrically opposed to the fundamental guarantees of a true democracy. Every human being is entitled to hold any opinion that appeals to her or him without making herself or himself liable to persecution...

The free expression of the hopes and aspirations of a people is the greatest and only safety in a sane society. In truth, it is such free expression and discussion alone that can point the most beneficial path for human progress and development. But the object of deportations and of the Anti-Anarchist Law, as of all similar repressive measures, is the very opposite. It is to stifle the voice of the people, to muzzle every aspiration of labour. That is the real and terrible menace of the star-chamber proceedings and of the tendency of exiling those who do not fit into the scheme of things our industrial lords are so eager to perpetuate.

With all the power and intensity of my being I protest against the conspiracy of imperialist capitalism against the life and the liberty of the American people.

Emma Goldman<sup>42</sup>

In late November Berkman and Goldman launched a quick tour to speak out against the government. On the twenty-sixth Berkman received his order for deportation. Goldman's followed three days later.<sup>43</sup>

They reported to Ellis Island on December fifth. On December eighth Harry Weinberger presented another case for Goldman's citizenship. By now the government had proof that Kershner was alive when he was denaturalized, and Goldman's case was thrown out. Goldman could find no means to remain in the country. Wexler is particularly critical of Weinberger, arguing that instead of focusing on Kershner's denaturalization, he should have advised Goldman to marry Harry Kelly.<sup>44</sup>

When a writ of habeas corpus was rejected for Berkman but allowed for herself, Goldman decided to end the fight. She felt that if "Sasha" had to leave, she would go as well.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps because she had missed her chance to be a martyr in the attempt on Frick's life, she insisted on accompanying Berkman this time. On December 21, 1919, in early morning darkness, Goldman and Berkman were loaded on a boat with 247 other deportees for Soviet Russia.

Goldman found that the revolution had not brought the changes she envisioned, at least not quickly enough. In 1921 she moved to Western Europe. She filled the remainder of her life with writing (*My Disillusionment in Russia* in 1922 and *Living*

*My Life* in 1931), lecturing on drama, and political activity. She was permitted to return to the United States for a lecture tour on drama in 1934.

Between 1936 and 1939 Goldman worked in England as a propagandist for Spain's revolutionaries. She died May 14, 1940, in Canada assisting refugees from fascist Italy and Spain. Goldman's body was returned to Chicago for burial with the Haymarket martyrs.

Emma Goldman's life was filled with theatrics, much of her own making. She was devoted to the cause of anarchy, but one of her own personal definition. She had little patience with those who differed with her, and at the same time she expected their support.

Like many politically active women of this time, Goldman eventually embraced causes she initially rejected. Her commitment to easily accessible birth control has been overshadowed by Margaret Sanger, which in part is the result of Sanger's and some of her biographers' efforts.

While she did not campaign for woman suffrage, Goldman did identify with many feminists by the time it was approved in 1919. Goldman's emphasis was on the large scale picture, with some attention to particular issues. While the situation in Russia following the revolution was disappointing, Goldman did not abandon her commitment to anarchism.

Her numerous arrests taught her a great deal about working through the system. Although she never admits it, Goldman's prison experience with Kate Richards O'Hare did show her that change could be accomplished by political influence and towing the line.

Emma Goldman's beliefs and activities filled her life with excitement. They also caused her a great deal of pain and loneliness, but throughout she remained committed to anarchism and the promise of freedom she believed it could bring.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I p. 88
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol. I pp. 97-99
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., vol. I p. 109
- <sup>4</sup>Goldman, Ed Brady, and Claus Timmerman ran an ice cream parlor in Brownsville near the race tracks for three months. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I p. 161
- <sup>5</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I p. 186
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., vol. I p. 187
- <sup>7</sup>Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life*, p. 116 and Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I p. 335
- <sup>8</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I p. 371
- <sup>9</sup>The living and working conditions of women in the early twentieth century are documented in Gerda Lerner's book *The Female Experience: An American Documentary*. (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1977)
- <sup>10</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I p. 395
- <sup>11</sup>Goldman opened a facial and scalp massage business in early 1905. It was one of the most successful business undertakings Goldman had. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I. pp. 365 and 382.
- <sup>12</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I p. 411
- <sup>13</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I p. 425 and Candace Falk, *Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman*, pp. 74-77
- <sup>14</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I p. 474
- <sup>15</sup>Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, p. 178
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 178
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 204
- <sup>18</sup>Philip S. Foner, *Mother Jones Speaks*, p. 490
- <sup>19</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I pp. 475-76
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., vol. II p. 539
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., vol. II p. 553
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., vol. II p. 553
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., vol. II p. 554
- <sup>24</sup>Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman*, p. 212
- <sup>25</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. II p. 569
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., vol. II p. 572
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., vol. II pp. 588-89
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., vol. II pp. 590-91
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., vol. II p. 591
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., vol. II p. 598
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., vol. II p. 630
- <sup>32</sup>Philip S. Foner, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, p. 16
- <sup>33</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. II pp. 638-39
- <sup>34</sup>Philip S. Foner, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 27-28, quoting Emma Goldman *Living My Life*, vol. II p. 644. Goldman felt that the revolution was the "first ray of hope" in a world filled with violence and oppression.
- <sup>35</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. II p. 677
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., vol. II p. 678
- <sup>37</sup>*Foreign Relations, The Lansing Papers*, vol. II, p. 353
- <sup>38</sup>*Foreign Relations, Russia, 1918*, vol. II, pp. 263 and 287

<sup>39</sup>Philip S.Foner, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, p. 29

<sup>40</sup>Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman*, p. 266

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 267-68

<sup>42</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. II p. 704

<sup>43</sup>Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman*, p. 271

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 272

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 272

## CONCLUSION

Between 1900 and 1920 women were responsible for much of the social and political activity in the United States. Some issues, such as woman suffrage, had taken several decades to resolve. Until recently suffrage was considered the primary issue that women were interested in at the turn of the twentieth century. Recent work by feminist historians has revealed a broader perspective among women at that time.

Women found as their lives changed and expanded beyond the home that they wanted to participate more directly in decision and policy making. Women were involved in a tremendous amount of labor and political activity. Women like Kate Richards O'Hare and Mother Jones supported the working class in its efforts to change from a capitalist society to one controlled by workers. At the same time, they supported the white workers, but not blacks or minorities. Although white workers faced problems in the workplace, blacks and other workers found they had even fewer choices about jobs and working conditions. While Mother Jones decried the strikebreaker, she failed to realize that strikebreaking was often the best job available to blacks. While O'Haré thought it was unfair to place immigration restrictions on workers, she disregarded them after their arrival. O'Hare also wanted to divide the country along black and white lines so that these workers would not compete against each other.

Jones and O'Hare also placed women only in a domestic framework. Jones did not even support the ballot as a means for women to improve society for the children whom she charged them with rearing. She criticized those women who left the home for paid employment, even though their income usually was necessary for the families'

survival. O'Hare, like most Socialists, was able to support suffrage because she thought that women could use their votes to advance the party. However, after a short time in prison, O'Hare had bleak hopes for the ballot's ability to help women.

While Goldman tacitly supported suffrage because she thought every woman was entitled to vote, she did not see it as the ultimate solution to society's problems. Sanger supported the ballot, but never made any particularly strong statements about it.

When Sanger finally settled on the issue of birth control, she felt that she was its only means of advancement. She did learn a lot about "radical" issues from Goldman, but Sanger lacked the intellectual and political maturity which Goldman developed. Sanger started off widely, writing about any issue that was radical, but without well-reasoned thought. Sanger lived in a world of self-delusion, beginning with her career as a "nurse," and ending as the prima donna of the birth control movement.

Goldman was interested in a wealth of different issues. Because Goldman thought politics affect all aspects of life, she addressed such issues as workers' rights and economic problems. Like Sanger, Goldman was also interested in accessible birth control, but she gave credit to those activists who had preceded her. On the other hand, Goldman was extremely critical of those who differed from her views. She managed to support Lenin after the revolution, but left Soviet Russia when she found that changes did not come fast enough or that results did not suit her.

Each of these women worked in areas which were at the forefront of American society at the turn of the century. Initially each of them supported the working class, although Sanger's work evolved beyond the issue of birth control as a class problem. (In fact, Sanger gladly turned away from radical politics and married a very successful capitalist. However, her autobiography fails to explain that this was the reason she could travel extensively and give financial support to friends.) In many ways, these

women foresaw problems which could not be resolved in a short time or in simple ways. They realized and agreed with the Socialists' argument that the working class faces a long struggle if it is to overcome the domination of capitalism. Jones, O'Hare, Sanger and Goldman were active at a time when workers first began to demonstrate their ability to organize and gain improved wages and working conditions.

For many different reasons these women were rebels and exiles. Perhaps this was the case because they were active at a time when few women spoke out. They did and said things that women had never hazarded before. They were living in a society that was changing quickly, and often they were influencing which path it took.

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