



"I have always pinned my **faith**
to that **spirit** which is slowly
coming into its own in **America**."

2008/2009

Dear Friends of the Emma Goldman Papers,

Happy holidays! We are pleased to announce the publication of the updated paperback editions of the first two volumes of our four-volume series—*Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years 1890-1919*—available from University of Illinois Press. Hardbacks, too, are still in stock at the University of California Press.

When Emma Goldman published her two-volume autobiography in 1931, it was during the early years of the last major economic depression. She worried, not only about how the books would be received, but also about whether even her dear friends could afford to buy them. Her nephew, Saxe Commins, New York editor and publisher, wrote to his 'Tanta' Emma on 10 December 1931 about the impact of the Wall Street Crash.:

"Matters are slightly complicated here by the recent panic on Wall Street. The consequences of the sudden debacle are felt everywhere and every activity is being curtailed. One hears of tragedies to men who had placed their life savings in investments only to have them wiped out in a stroke. And now... The Rockefellers are richer, the poor are poorer ...

...Big shops like Brentano's [bookstore] may close, almost any day—simply for lack of customers. Publisher's bankruptcies are too frequent to think about placidly. Our firm happens to have a few best sellers to keep them afloat. As it is, the staff is cut to the bone and everyone has to take a salary cut."

While in exile in the south of France, Emma Goldman had worked steadily from 1927 to 1931 on a memoir chronicling the people and the movement to which she dedicated her life. But, contrary to her expectations, when *Living My Life* was published, the global economic depression not only precluded the likelihood of huge sales, but also made it doubtful that her book would ever reach the broad public she hoped to address. The misfortune of an ill-timed book release paled, of course, compared to the problems of a world deep in crisis. Nonetheless, Emma could not shake her disappointment, nor could she escape the precariousness of her personal finances. (Would that she could have foreseen, in the 1930s, that her book would be re-issued in the 1970s and remain in print to this day, almost 70 years after her death!).

Friends and comrades tried to help Emma understand the harsh impact of an economic downswing on the book trade. Michael A. Cohn, who was part of Emma's close anarchist circle, wrote to her on 29 October 1931: *"As to the selling chances of your story, I must confess that I share your pessimistic opinion. The book market in general is way down to the very abyss, especially a book of close to 1,000 pages in two volumes. Let's hope for the best, however."*

EG complained to her friend, Grace Kimmerling Wellington, 5 October 1931: *"So it is certain the price will be \$7.50. For the life of me I can't see who in the present day America can afford such a sum, I mean among the reading public of worthwhile books."*

A disheartened EG wrote to Ben Reitman, her former lover, road manager, and successful promoter of her *Mother Earth* magazine, 14 December 1931: “[T]he uncertainty of life and the appalling poverty stalking through the world are not conducive to interest in cultural and educational topics.”

EG wrote wistfully to her friend, the attorney, Arthur Leonard Ross, 9 November 1931: “*I wish I were rich. I would send free copies to a great many people.*”

And so it remains. We too wish we could offer free copies of our books. Most of all, we want to complete the series, our labor of so many years, as a monument not just to Emma Goldman, but also to the ongoing struggle to guarantee for all, as she wrote in her autobiography, “freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody’s right to beautiful radiant things.”

Unfortunately, the University of California is a public institution in a state widely known to be teetering on bankruptcy. As many of you also know, financial instability has been all too much a part of the life of the Emma Goldman Papers. In these times, as you can well imagine, our situation is far worse. We must raise our own funds for almost every phase of the work, and now, that includes rent, gas, electric bills and other expenses ordinarily assumed by the colleges, universities and archives hosting research projects like ours. Whether by circumstance or by design—the outlook is not good.

Your tax-deductible contribution (via a check sent to our office, payable to The Regents of the University of California, designated to the Emma Goldman Papers, or, via the secure university on-line giving site

<<http://givetocal.berkeley.edu/browse/?u=Emma%20Goldman%20Papers%20Project>> or by downloading and mailing the gift form on our website:

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/goldman/Emmarabilia/gift_form.html>) would go a long way towards ensuring the completion of our work. Reviews of each of our published volumes have been positive and encouraging: “along with... the larger microfilm collection of Goldman documents [the edition] is a real achievement and a major contribution to the study of the American left. It will, one hopes, inspire scholars, teachers, and undergraduate and graduate students to explore the history of that struggle between free speech and free assembly, on the one hand, and the combined forces of power, prudery, and patriotism, on the other.”[Francis G. Couvares, *Labor History*] The book “shows... better than any work previously published, including Goldman's own autobiography, her splendid achievement during this early decade as an emerging anarchist.”[Dennis G. Dalton, *Forward*] The edition is “recommended for larger public and all academic libraries.”[*Library Journal*], as a “vast sourcebook of fascinating newspaper articles, letters, trial transcripts, and speeches . . . especially instructive in today's climate of constricted civil liberties.”[Chris Dodge, *Utne Reader*]

Like you, we hope for better days are ahead, yet remain grateful for the riches we have in friends, community, and the privilege of meaningful work. We send you our best wishes, and many thanks, whether or not you can make a donation to our Project this year. We’re doing our best to keep on keeping on, and hope you are too!

With appreciation and respect,

