

*Erich Mühsam*

## Articles

1927–1930

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## “Sacco and Vanzetti”, *Fanal*, Vol.1, No.8 (May 1927), pp.125–6

### “Sacco and Vanzetti”

In these parts the judges are called Jürgens, Nieder or Vogt, in the U.S.A the workers delight in their kin, who go by names like Thayer, for example. Mr. Thayer is thirsting for blood – or rather for electricity, since in modern America (unlike us) they no longer chop off heads if they seethe with unpopular views of life. For seven years now the anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti have been sitting in prison, condemned to death for robbery-murder. Seven years long they have been waiting from day to day for the repealing or the carrying out of the sentence. Throughout seven years proof upon proof has been piling up which have long ago destroyed any possibility that the two strike leaders could have had the slightest thing to do with the robbery-murder which has been laid at their feet. The man who in fact committed the murder has been tracked down and has confessed to the deed. No matter: Mr. Thayer has conclusively confirmed the death sentence in his judgment on this final appeal, and each new dawn leaves us in doubt whether or not our comrades Sacco and Vanzetti are still among the living. In November it will be 40 years since comrades Parsons, Spieß, Schwab, Fischer and Singg [*sic*: Lingg] were dragged to the gallows; those who reached this judgment and had it carried out knew just as well that those anarchist strike leaders had nothing to do with tossing the bomb in the Chicago Haymarket, as Mr. Thayer knows today that Sacco and Vanzetti should do penance for a crime that they have not committed. But should the responsible authority make no use of its right of pardon, then even so things will turn out just as in Chicago 40 years ago: it will be regrettably determined that the innocence of the executed could, unfortunately, be proven after the fact, and that the means of reviving the dead has unfortunately not yet been discovered. But the augurs will grin because the anarchists erroneously executed as robbers and murderers will organize no more strikes in the future, just as the Chicago victims omitted to do after their deaths. The representative of the land of the free and the brave in Berlin, Ambassador Schurmann, refused to receive a deputation of the peace federation, namely the pacifists Ludwig Quidde, Helmut v. Gerlach and Helene Stöcker, who were to communicate to him that the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti would be looked upon by every decent person as a heinous judicial murder. Mr. Schurmann shows his solidarity with Mr. Thayer; let us show our solidarity with Sacco and Vanzetti.

**“Save Sacco and Vanzetti!” *Fanal*, Vol.1, No.9  
(June 1927), p.144**

**“SAVE SACCO AND VANZETTI!”**

The lives of the comrades Sacco and Vanzetti, condemned to death 7 years ago, are in the greatest danger! Unless the revolutionary world-proletariat prevents it, the sentence will be carried out in early July! Workers! Use the means available to you to fight against the intended crime of America capital! Boycott the United States! Don't buy any goods imported from North America!

## “American Import”, *Fanal*, Vol.1, No.10 (July 1927), pp.155–6

### “American Import”

Two American sportsmen have proven to the Royal-Prussian Minister of Finance Oskar Hergt, currently Attorney General of the German republic, that his opinion expressed in 1917, that “the Americans can’t swim, they can’t fly, they won’t come!” – was inaccurate. In the next war they won’t just swim over, like the last time, but fly over as well, and the German cities will be smashed or incinerated by certified American bombs with certified American poison gas. It was all cheerful celebration as Messrs. Chamberlin and Levine demonstrated the new achievement by example of their trans-oceanic flight. There wasn’t a delicacy they weren’t fed, even Herr Noske was served up to them in Hannover in person, for mutual admiration. From what we are told, they want to visit Munich, as well – or had they already there? – , where the financial sponsor and passenger on the undertaking will likely have to assume a pseudonym. It will take a while before any streets are named after him, at any rate: there will be a Leviné Street in Munich later anyhow, once the future and then final Bavarian Soviet Republic remembers deeds and heroes whose significance is greater than any ever so impressive sporting act of bravery. (Is it, by the way, generally well known in the German Republic at whose expense the firing squad execution of comrade Eugen Leviné occurred, ordered by the Social Democratic government of Hoffman-Schneppenhorst-Segitz? Well, the expenses for the execution were recovered from the widow of the man they had murdered on the spot; she had to pay for the bullets with which they killed her husband). Yes, thus leads an accidental identity of names to all sorts of reminiscences, and it is just a shame that Mr. Chamberlin is an ‘a’ too poor to compare with the famous family, of which several members have already professionally employed the possible practical applications of technical inventions in means of transportation for the purpose of mass murder.

Incidentally: the Norwegian workers have proposed boycotting every American import from the United States, in protest against the miscarriage of justice that’s been carried out against comrades Sacco and Vanzetti for 7 years now and to avert their murder by the State. It now seems that the affair is to be reexamined by a special committee. The lives of the revolutionaries have been likely extended thereby, but by no means saved. The suspicion that this committee will orient itself according to the same bought witnesses and informants as the previous

courts, and that the whole reexamination will be a mere farce, in order to quiet the uproar with proof that anarchists are simply robbers and murderers, — this suspicion appears now quite justified, especially when one knows the traditions of political justice in general, particularly in America. The boycott of North American imports is precisely now more imperative than ever. This boycott should not be limited to the import of goods, but be extended to the entry of persons. The proletarians of Berlin, however, spurred on by the drunken enthusiasm of the *Vorwärts*, roared their cheers and hurrahs upon the arrival of the two aviators at the tops of their lungs alongside the militarists, the petty bourgeois and the sporting industrialists. If they had to be present for the arrival of the trans-Atlantic flight, then they should have greeted Judge Thayer's fellow countrymen with the menacing cry of "Sacco and Vanzetti!", rather than with cheers and good wishes. Wherever they eat breakfast and stand at attention, wherever they drive up and are sung to, the names of the two men slanderously condemned to death out of political infamy must ring in their ears. Let war speculators and those who worship world records celebrate their Chamberlin and Levine; it is appropriate for the working class to remember their comrades Sacco and Vanzetti — and to let the bourgeoisie take note of it!

## “Cultural Highpoints”, *Fanal*, Vol.1, No.11 (Aug. 1927), pp.173–174

### “Cultural Highpoints”

Once again the cursed lack of space prevents treatment of a number of cultural highpoints worthy of attention. In Germany one can confidently skip over Harry Domela and proceed to the order of the day. We already knew that counts, students, officers, hoteliers, judges and lackeys of all sorts hereabouts hurl themselves after food like Ludendorff at the Munich Officers’ Hall as soon as things start to smelling Hohenzollerish, and it’s hardly surprising that a petty con artist can easily surpass all the pillars of society in intelligence, without thereby himself needing to be all too intelligent. — What’s more painful is not being able to dedicate an extended treatment to the bone finds in the Ulap territory. I must limit myself to stating that it appears to me to be absolutely proven that these human remains have their origin in the Noske murders of 1919. Even if it were true that no boots or clothing were found on them (wherefore the *Vorwärts* in its enthusiasm indicates that the dead succumbed to their wounds in 1813 in the French hospital and died as well 60 years later from cholera), it should perhaps be remembered that the White Guards, for example in Munich, slaughtered hardly a comrade from whom they didn’t rob not only watch and finger rings but also suits and shoes. Such requisitions were known to go unpunished (my own claims for compensation for that which was plundered after my arrest during a ‘house search’ — the lawmen didn’t leave me and my wife a single sock behind — were rejected with the justification that the robbery was committed by government troops on duty, wherefore the state and the city are not required to provide compensation); so the nakedness of the bones, on which nevertheless were found remnants of field-gray fabric and individual sailors’ buttons, is no more astonishing. It’s only astonishing that the Marloh trial seems to be already completely forgotten. Otherwise, the attempted denial of any possibility that 8 years ago in Berlin unknown corpses had been dispensed of in secretly dug mass graves would be too ridiculous to be tried. The living can be temporarily silenced in the prisons, but — the *Vorwärts* might take note — no Noske can forbid the dead to speak any more. And their speech testifies loud and clear to the culture of our time.

Sacco and Vanzetti, too, will let their voices ring out over the world, louder still from the grave than from prison, if the American executioners should really dare to murder them. Will they? Today it is said that the condemned have been transferred to the death cells, tomorrow, that new exonerating evidence has come

to light, — and now we hear that Vanzetti has gone on hunger strike. At the same time, August 10<sup>th</sup> is given as the date on which the electric chair is to go into operation. What is true? It is true that American culture presents the spectacle of the greatest judicial infamy known thus far from any era and any from country. For a full 7 years now they have been playing with lives of two people just as an eight year-old boy would likely play with the life of a fly for half-an-hour: you must die, you murderers, you bandits — you will die next week. Now, it's true, we don't yet know exactly whether you are murderers and bandits or just anarchists; so we want to let you live another couple of weeks. So, next month you'll definitely buy it; well then, we're going to give you another postponement. It's been going on like this for seven years now! If humanity had just a shred of imagination, then no people in the world would tolerate a government in their country that continued to maintain any form of relations with the United States, then no worker anywhere would volunteer to load or unload an American ship, then every European would avoid personal contact with American vacationers as if they were lepers and would demand that they prove what they have already done to protest the slow murder of two revolutionaries in their own country, before anyone should offer them a piece of bread to eat and a chair to sit in. Yes, if people had imagination . . .



## “The Lessons from Boston”, *Fanal*, Vol.1, No.12 (Sept. 1927), pp.178–184

### “The Lessons from Boston”

Sacco and Vanzetti have fallen for the Proletariat. Their names live. The harvest that they have sown will rise up. Woe to the murderers! . . .

The world revolutionary situation which 13 years ago became acute with the Vienna ultimatum to the Belgrade government has in the racing transformation of its modes of appearance reached a phase which shows the battle energy of the reaction at its highest intensity, while at the same time, however, it visibly suggests the renewed high tide of revolutionary destructive power. We contemporaries of the tremendous events from which the history of the next centuries will take its entire content tend, at the ebbing away of that swell of intense struggling by the one or the other side, to the resigned opinion that now for a long time victory and defeat have been decided. We are too excitedly preoccupied with the experiences of the hours and days to be able to discern the racing tempo of the fateful march of time by the standards of historical perspective. Yet how unjustified, even laughable, is the skeptical mode of reasoning: Mussolini’s sham economy in Italy has prevailed now for over five years already, which is proved by the continual consolidation of the fascist terror, — becomes immediately apparent when for comparison one consults the chronological sequence of well-known historical occurrences from the distant past. The events of the great French Revolution appear to us like a cataract of sudden precipitous eventualities, and yet it took from the storming of the Bastille (July 14, 1789) over three years until the Republic was even proclaimed (September 21, 1792). The aim herein was merely the removal of the symbol characterizing the feudal regime which had already collapsed into ruins, whereas Fascism is the new, ambitiously conceived attempt to maintain the capitalist economy (which though not yet crushed is staggering about with multiple lesions) by the primitive methods of the ancient tyrants, modernized only in terms of technical procedure.

Through 7 years the servants of American justice tortured in prison the two anarchists slandered as robbers and murderers, over 6 years long hung the Damocles sword of the final death sentence over their heads, until it was carried out. But even in the country which has so far remained almost entirely directly unaffected by the disruptions to the foundations of society caused by the world revolution now underway, the traditional brutality, unscrupulousness and swaggering arrogance of the democratic billionaires’ functionaries retreated again and again over

the course of years before the protest of the entirety of laboring humanity. Do these 7 years not show perfectly clearly that nothing which moves or excites us, which disheartens us or gives us hope, nothing which today is history, can be regarded as concluded and stabilized? The Sacco and Vanzetti case is older than all of fascism.

Since the death of the two men was decided upon, who had won for themselves at strikes the trust of the Massachusetts workers, who had uncovered and made the object of revolutionary demonstrations the scandalous deeds at the court jail in New York City, the physical torture and murder of their comrade Salsedo; since the dastardly outrage was undertaken, to doom these fighters to the electric chair for their views like highway robbers, the social world outlook has changed a hundred times over in all countries and corners of the globe. Wars have been waged in Russia and the Balkans, in Poland, Syria and Marokko, revolutions have been carried out, colonial peoples have risen up; the effects of the World War assumed unanticipated forms: the currencies failed, entire peoples, above all the German, let themselves be cleaned to the bone by individual big-time hustlers, profiteering schemes of insane dimensions sprouted up, then collapsed, corruption, murderous betrayals, the unleashing of all brutality and insanity illustrate everywhere the social and political situation. Alienated from the truth and blind to reality one celebrates the paper assurances of a constitution strung together from paragraphs of criminal code, pale with fear of revolution, which must serve to conceal capital's most odious violations against the proletariat. Pre-March [*Vormärzlich*: i.e. the historical period from 1815 to the March revolution of 1848] conditions are to be newly consolidated through elimination of jury courts, reintroduction of censorship, depriving the youth of their rights, handing over the schools to the church, limiting and endangering the right to strike and unionize, imposition of military influence on the public educational institutions, and every form of most audacious reaction and fear mongering, and since this has lasted now a while already, — at any rate a part of the time that Sacco and Vanzetti had to await the execution of their sentence — , the whole world believed that the conflict had been settled, the League of Nations was the foundation of eternal relations between states, the storm had settled and God had ordained that the day after tomorrow was to be the day before yesterday once again. Bucharin himself 2 years ago already fatalistically acquiesced and conceded to the Communist parties that capitalism is to be regarded as provisionally stabilized and that they were to act accordingly, which in truth they faithfully did. Actually, this error bordering on madness only accomplished that the structure of capitalism, ripe for collapse, was propped up again by Russia, while the communists in other countries who are directed from there concerned themselves with the fresh wallpapering of the building's interior.

The tragedy of Boston is, considered in the context of the world revolutionary ferment, of immeasurable significance. The American rulers are (this they have proven countless times, ever since they have sensed the mere stirring of self-defense among the proletariat) without the slightest moral scruple. In Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, *Jimmy Higgins*, *100%: The Story of a Patriot*; in Jack London's *The Iron Heel* one gets to know the gentlemen quite well. The murder of the 5 anarchists in Chicago on November 11, 1887 despite all world-wide protest, the use of torture in judicial examinations, the crass acts of violence even against foreign populations which resist being bled dry by dollar capital — the mass murder with aerial bombs in Nicaragua just within the last few weeks provides an example — and the infamous torment of Sacco and Vanzetti, who for 7 years weren't informed whether or not they would be allowed to see the next week, prove the land of the highest technical civilization to be simultaneously the land of the lowest ethical culture in the world. This excess of moral depravity, however, finally accomplished with the extreme hideousness of its cunning a moral triumph of humanity which is without parallel in modern history. The work force of all the world's nations, regardless of political points of view, and in their train broad circles of the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals gathered into a wild uproar of outrage against a barbarity which people could not tolerate who think not only materially, but concede a share in decision making to feeling and conscience. This act of world solidarity with two revolutionary proletarians is an unspeakably consoling event in a time which cannot find the natural path toward workers' liberation only because the freedom movement in itself is almost hopelessly splintered and the vast majority of active revolutionaries is in the embrace of a false and fatal theory which replaces solidarity with discipline, initiative with the command of centralized authority, free will with compulsion. For the first time we have experienced an actual unity among those who generally perceive value in their very disunity; but the unity arose from the only place it can arise: not from science and materialist insight, which for various temperaments are always an object of contention, but rather from the natural human feeling of people united in distress and outrage.

The American rulers have nonetheless paid no attention to the unified voice of humanity. It is certain that they had fully intended to carry out the judicial murder already on August 10<sup>th</sup>. But if the postponement had been the capitulation of barbarism to humanity, then it would have expressed itself in a different form than that 40 minutes before the appointed time the victims, already prepared for the executioner, were returned from the death cell to their prison hole, without even rescinding the death sentence, just with a new date set for 12 days later. No, the thugs of the land of the free and the brave won't let themselves be moved by

appeals and protests to abstain from committing a crime. I have the certain conviction that the postponement to which they once again consented was occasioned by no other feeling than fear. In particular, it was the fear of the rich American bourgeoisie which tripped up the executioner, the fear for their lives and safety. As the fate of their friends appeared finally sealed, Sacco and Vanzetti's comrades turned to the last available tactic, that of organized terror. Bombs in subways, bombs in churches, bombs in court buildings — and the exploding of these bombs, mingled with the outraged cry of protest of the whole humanly feeling world — that extended the anarchists' lives a couple of days.

It is an old Social Democratic custom to dismiss every act of individual terror as the work of provocateurs. The members of the Communist Party appear in this to want to obey the Social Democratic masters. In their papers can be read on the one hand that the police improvise bomb attacks to arouse antipathy towards Sacco and Vanzetti, on the other hand that the propertied public throughout all America is running about white as ghosts, smelling dynamite everywhere. The meaning of the attacks is so clear that one would have to be almost embarrassed to give further explanations. The comrades who turned to such means obviously intended to intimidate the authorities and the public. A bomb tossed amidst these excited circumstances speaks such a clear language that it has no need of an interpreter. It says: comrades Sacco and Vanzetti are still alive, they can still be saved; hear how I threaten, see how I destroy — take care! If you kill the anarchists anyhow, you will thus learn that there are weapons more terrible still, still more devastating means, to blow apart your rotten order. What is happening now is a revolutionary warning — take care not to commit deeds which compel revolutionary vengeance! . . . The murder has been committed! Woe to the murderers!

The whole proletarian world has correctly understood the bombs, only the German Marxists remain skeptical, pedantically raise their finger and say: provocateurs or lunatics! We reject individual acts of terrorism, they further lecture, for only red mass-terrorism is justified. It is hardly worth it to refute the nonsense which lies in the distinction between individual- and mass-terrorism. Is the atrocity committed against Sacco and Vanzetti by the American system of class-justice individual- or mass-terrorism? Individual organs of class carry it out in the name of class. It is no different with the bombings in New York and Philadelphia. To generally contest the effectiveness of separate terrorist acts, however, is no less absurd when it comes from supporters of the Russian revolution, which never would have occurred without the terrorist preparations since the 70's, just as it is absurd when it happens in Germany, where the national reaction never would have been able to regain power even temporarily, had not the O.C. and other

terrorist organizations effected the most thorough intimidation first of the proletariat, then of the republicans, through individual murders (which, committed in the name of their class, were naturally acts of mass-terrorism as well).

The United States of North America gave with their entry into the World War the decisive final impulse to the outbreak of world revolution in the sense of open civil war. The case of Sacco and Vanzetti drew the United States into the realm of civil war, and the bombs of the anarchist friends of the condemned were the expression of the will not to surrender the initiative in this war to the counterrevolution alone. As in all countries, the Yankee reaction used the justice system as its primary weapon in the civil war against the claims of the exploited to a right to life and freedom. But the thorough and shamelessly excessive abuse of the justice system in the case of Sacco and Vanzetti opened the eyes of exploited humanity, and so began the counterattack with the cry for justice which filled the world, accompanied by the thunder of exploding bombs.

When in Vienna on July 15<sup>th</sup> the defrauded and downtrodden proletariat, its sense of justice offended and its most basic rights threatened, went out into the streets, then flashed the warning light of the central courthouse torch over the thrones of the world's rulers: you disgrace justice in order to secure your power as slave holders. See then that not only hunger creates and brings forth revolutions. You call upon justice against us, so we reach for righteousness and go into battle under its banner. The Austrian proletariat faces hard days ahead. The humiliating betrayal which the German worker had to endure already in 1919, has over there only just now come to completion. But the hard days will not last forever. The torch [*Fanal*] of July 15<sup>th</sup> cannot be extinguished again, and history has reached a furious pace. The struggles in Vienna and the world-wide appeal to Boston show — in spite of everything — the revolution of the proletariat on the march. Their battle cry, however, — bourgeoisie, dictators, exploiters, rulers, judges, heed the warning — their battle cry is not bread and not money; their battle cry is righteousness!

## “Proletarian Theater”, *Fanal*, Vol.2, No.1 (October 1927), pp.23–4

### “Proletarian Theater”

The Piscator Theater has opened. One of the best directors in German performing arts has been given the opportunity to develop his craft, and he is not the type who wishes to set art to the side as self-satisfied and divorced from life, but rather, like an agitator, he wishes to exploit it as a means to improved and elevated life, what's more, in the sense of proletarian revolutionary tendency. A great many reasons to actively promote and support Erwin Piscator, and, I confess, when asked whether I would like to belong to the theater's dramaturgical advisory board, I very gladly accepted. I only hope that we dramaturges of the Collective soon get more to do, instead of, as up to now, seeing ourselves used as merely decorative bearers of program-heralding names and held responsible for sins of deed and omission, during the commission of which we had not been consulted at all.

One of our sort can undertake what he will: it is always wrong. So, I will once again be accused of something like betrayal of the proletariat, of the revolution and of who know what else, because I did not refuse Piscator my cooperation. This is no proletarian theater, therefore I am to keep my hands out of it. Do we not want to first entirely withdraw from capitalist society, before we at all dare to touch anything, anywhere? Little brother, I know myself that the Piscator Theater is no proletarian theater. I know just as well as any of you that private capitalist money made it possible to play comedy at Nollendorfplatz, that there rent, salaries, furnishings, management, duties and all sorts of other things must be accounted for, that therefore the prices are just as high as elsewhere, that also in Piscator's agreement with the Volksbühne, by which anyhow attendance by workers, too, is made possible, nothing extra-proletarian can be discerned that other Berlin stages could not offer just as well.

A proletarian theater presumes the theater attendee's right to determine the repertoire and conditions of attendance, furthermore the exclusivity of proletarian influences, that is, those oriented towards class-objectives. A later task of the proletarian theater would be integration of the stage and the pit, creation of mass theater in reconnecting to the stagecraft of the Greeks. The amateurish attempts by workers] theater groups in this direction are to be much welcomed; however, they naturally do not come close to fulfilling their purposes, and they cannot fulfill them, as long as the entire work, including that which requires the abilities

of a qualified expert, weighs on the shoulders of amateurs. The proletarian theater, born by the proletariat alone, from the proletariat alone, through the proletariat, working for the proletariat, is unrealizable within the capitalist environment. What can be achieved today is piece-work towards the preparation of future mass art.

Such piece-work can on the one hand be achieved by proletarian theater associations through collective invention of an effective agitatorial chorus, practice in speaking and moving choruses, working over gripping scenes from dramatic skits already extant or invented with the collaboration all participants, open-air rehearsals and the like. A different part of such piece work, however, falls to the professional artists who by disposition belong to the revolutionary proletariat. They can pursue their craft outside of capitalist conditions just as little as any of us. So they will have to make use of the capitalist opportunities which present themselves to them. That is what Piscator is doing with the socialist and communist actors and assistants of his theater. For this those of us who he has gathered about himself as advisors make ourselves available.

Technically and directorially, the first performance presented much, very much, from which the proletarian theater will have to learn. It has become clear that dramatic art – and this goes, as Meisel's music also confirms, for every art – by the media of which it avails itself, is compelled to dispense with characters mirroring the fates of individuals and to become the reflection of lived experience which has become welded together. Industrial technology has become an indispensable medium of art, which limits the path of all art to those forms of expression which correspond to the momentary social conditions. Technology as an organ of artistic spirit forces the spiritualization of technology through art. To have recognized this reciprocal relationship and as director to have brought it to living representation is Piscator's artistic and paedogogical merit. The creation of a synthesis of art and life will be denied his efforts in a capitalist theater establishment just as much as it will be that proletarian theater making ever so valuable piece-work. That is utopia, which will become reality when there is no longer any proletariat, when the creative power of culture-generating artistic individuals has melded into a unity with the creative power of the culture-generating collective spirit. For myself, since I do not know how one can withdraw from capitalist society, I intend to dedicate my revolutionary passion to smashing capitalist society and in the meantime to using my love for art and the theater so that, as I suppose, I can thereby promote revolutionary spirit and prepare future human existence. Whoever enlists my help to that end, I will help him.

**“A Sacco-Vanzetti Archive”, *Fanal*, Vol.2,  
No.7 (April 1928), p.163**

**“A Sacco-Vanzetti Archive”**

Hamburg anti-authoritarian comrades want to collect all material relating to the case of Sacco and Vanzetti. They are looking for flyers, meeting announcements, newspaper notices and articles, totally regardless of political direction or organization, which have to do with the affair. They are interested in achieving an objective archive. They would also like information about any brochures, newspaper articles and flyers there are, especially from the early days of the judicial crime. The Hamburg comrades expect that they will be informed of or receive all available material. The address is: Willi Schumann, Hamburg, Detmerstraße 12III.

It is to be hoped that the comrades' wishes will be met by all and that in this way an archive will be assembled which will facilitate the task of revolutionary historical research in making the most disgraceful deed ever committed by capital against the proletariat serve the enlightenment of future generations.



## “Memorial Days”, *Fanal*, Vol.2, No.11 (August 1928), pp.248–9

### “Memorial Days”

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In August the workers of the world commemorate the outbreak of the World War, which should have led them to understand the state as the instrument ensuring capitalism's ability to make its competitive struggle for the distribution of markets and economic spheres of interest between staked out borders as a struggle for divine goods. As long as there are states from which the workers ever hope to draw advantage, whatever the reform in bureaucratic methods, it will always be popular for the imperialists to wage national wars. Therefore, aside from all deeper reasons of piety, offended human dignity, revolutionary class solidarity, the proletarians of all countries have special reason to closely connect the memory of the War's insane mass murder with the memory of the historically most significant murder thus far committed against the proletariat in the class war. On August 23<sup>rd</sup> is the anniversary of the completion of the crime against our comrades Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Here capitalism felled two revolutionary workers who sought to harm its privileges. For their destruction it used the state with its moral prerogatives in monopolized role as guardian and avenger of human life and guarantor of property and law. Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists; they recognized in the state the weapon of wealth against poverty. Therefore they had to be assailed as criminals against man's naturally inborn morality, therefore they were made out to be common robbers and murderers; therefore the state in the service of capital played itself up in their case with special pathos as guardian of the most sacred human right, the peaceful life of its citizens; therefore they were dragged through the torments of a terrible seven-year physical and spiritual agony, therefore despite all world protest roasted alive on the electric chair. The struggle against capitalism, exploitation, poverty, war and every sort of public injustice was directed against the place where all institutions of the current social order culminate, moreover against the only place which is immediately open to attack and explosion, against the state. Therefore the state was used in order that with one of its institutions of privilege, the judiciary, it might carry out the defense that alone was sufficient to protect American dollar interests from the danger of anarchism, the extermination of the lives of two active anarchists under the pretext of the necessary security which even the majority of the proletariat still wishes to believe legitimately guaranteed

by the state. The state mania of the labor parties has been answered in the Sacco and Vanzetti case. May all the commemorative celebrations on August 23<sup>rd</sup> be conducted from the standpoint which guided the two murdered comrades in their entire life's struggle: the state is the enemy!

The state is the enemy, — and whether we attack class justice or war mongering, exploitation or reaction in any form whatever, — war on injustice or war on war: revolutionary struggle of the proletariat can only be — war on the state!

## “Murderer State”, *Fanal*, Vol.3, No.3 (Dec. 1928), pp.60–65

### “Murderer State”

Don't worry, Mr. Prosecutor — this time we're not referring to your Jacobowski-State; naturally I'm only referring to America. Still, authorities which think it worthwhile to maintain their monopoly on the right to kill people might humbly ask themselves whether the examples of political judicial murders (of which here only a couple, due to class malice intentional, miscarriages of justice will be selected) could suggest also to European critics comparisons and increased vigilance closer to home. In Germany, at any rate, in the years 1919, 1920 and 1921 there were not a few proletarian revolutionaries sentenced to death and executed by Ebert's special courts, whose actions would appear in light of objective examinations essentially different from how monarchist, counterrevolutionary, anti-Semitic, anti-labor officers and jurists, in unappealable proceedings, saw fit to regard as proven. Nevertheless, there still sit in German prisons today masses of condemned from such surrogate courts, and the republic on its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday (which its Social Democratic Chancellor completely forgot to officially celebrate) saw no occasion to amnesty the victims of this political special judiciary, not even to investigate whether their deeds or better yet their state beatings were worthy of punishment. May the inmates of the German prisons be convinced that that which the state leaves out is capable of private operation; the memory of Herr Friedrich Ebert will live on not only in monuments which the beneficiaries of his revolutionary betrayal wastefully erect to him, it should also be preserved in documents which will make clear to posterity what he wished to have understood by unity and justice and freedom. — But this is America's turn.

On November 11<sup>th</sup> 41 years had gone by since Chicago was the scene of that vile act of state which, until August 23, 1927, the day of Sacco and Vanzetti's death, was considered by the working world to be the archetype of political murder by the instrument of state justice. If something violent should happen during a political clash or rally, then the state uses its laws which assign to it the punishment of those convicted of committing illegal acts, in order to convict and condemn not the actual culprits but where possible the visible prominent representatives of an undesirable idea. Thus, in 1887 the authorities, contrary to their better knowledge, simply accused the best known agitators from the anarchist movement of the bomb explosion during a demonstration in the Chicago Haymarket, and effected their murder. The Spanish parson's justice [*Pfaffenjustiz*] used the same procedure

against the pioneer of the modern school system, the anarchist Francisco Ferrer, who was accused of originating the acts of violence which occurred during the revolutionary unrest in Barcelona in the summer of 1909 and in November of same year was shot dead on Monjuich. We have seen this method applied in Germany in the case of Max Hoelz. The only act of violence during the Middle German Uprising (the Mitteldeutscher Aufstand of March 1921) to which a bourgeois fell victim was attributed to the military commander of the proletarian armed engagements personally, manslaughter converted during a tumultuous hearing into murder and the death penalty against Hoelz in fact requested. The threat of a general strike by the Berlin proletariat saved his life. The shooting of Hess was considered a mortal blow, and with this mortal blow the life sentence to penal servitude for Hoelz justified. — In the War period fell the similar business of San Francisco 1916, which became known in Europe only much later and placed the names of our anarchist comrades Thomas Mooney and Warren Billings at the center of a revolutionary protest movement. I touched on the case several times in my Sacco-Vanzetti drama “Reasons of State” [*Staatsräson*]. It became known to wider circles when in the last months new calls by their American friends went out to the international working class to help these victims of the American class-justice expediency who had been “reprieved” to a life in prison to finally to return to the light after 12 horrific years. At one of the numerous demonstrations which had to prepare America’s entry into the War, and which in California assumed forms which were especially vile and hostile to workers, a bomb had been tossed. Mooney and Billings were the best known and most active promoters of the anarchist idea in the Californian war-resisters’ movement. They were therefore charged with the deed using faked films and witnesses bribed to perjury and naturally condemned to death. The execution would have doubtless followed, if the then President Wilson, much in contrast to the behavior of his successor Coolidge in the case of Sacco and Vanzetti, full of outrage at the details related to him by trustworthy individuals about how the verdict was reached, had not beseeched the Governor of California to prevent this crime for the sake of the honor of all America. Wilson never received an answer from the honorable Governor to multiple letters on the matter; his urgent requests to reverse the judgment remained unconsidered, — but Mooney and Billings are at least still alive, and we have hope to see them again still living return to their comrades, thanks to the energetic efforts of their defenders and friends, who the brave fighter against state injustices, Karin Michaelis, has now joined with all the warmth of her passionate human heart.

The atrociously disgraceful act committed against the revolutionary workers Sacco and Vanzetti represents not only a peak in the series of nefarious deeds of the sort favored in all the cases cited, of falsely accusing politically known

people with acts of political violence, — it discovered for this process the infamous innovation that unpolitical crimes are laid at the door of undesirable political activists in order to be able to massacre them for self-serving robbery-murder and at the same time besmirch their revolutionary cause before the proletariat. After seven years of inconceivable torment, the two anarchists fell victim to this system of state intrigue, of state purchase of perjured witnesses, of state abetting of the true robber-murderers, of state forgery of documents and mishandling of evidence and of state slander and were burnt to death on the electric chair in honor of the American dollar oligarchy, without it having been possible here or in any of the other depicted cases in America or Europe for the state to manage to convince any unbribed contemporary of the guilt of its object of vengeance.

In all cases in which the state, making criminal use of its judicial apparatus, has destroyed revolutionaries, the revolutionary friends of its victims have managed to prove that a serious investigation of the cases brought to judgment would have made possible the conviction of the true culprits. The executed anarchists of Chicago were famously later completely vindicated. The proof that Ferrer had absolutely nothing to do with the violent actions in Barcelona could be drawn out into the minutest detail. In the case of Max Hoelz, during the course of the subsequent investigation by his defenders and friends a comrade incriminated himself as Hess's shooter and his statements have held up against a review of the facts. (In my opinion, though, Friehe's confession was meaningless for exculpating Hoelz. Hess was hit by so many bullets, that the act of single individual is entirely out of the question here. In the excited confusion of events a whole bunch of Red Guardists shot, Friehe as well surely among them. But what is certain is that precisely Hoelz, who was condemned as the killer, on psychological and technical grounds cannot have been any of these shooters.) Yet we know how it was done at the time: after the military leader of fighting had already been arrested, a competition was announced for witnesses who could make incriminating statements against him, which means the same thing as the statement of a judge which was picked up a listening device by Mooney and Billings' defenders just before their trial: "Whether guilty or not, Mooney must be rendered harmless." A great many similar declarations made by judicial figures of their attitudes became known in the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

This year, however, in the Mooney-Billings affair — I quote now Karin Michaelis *verbatim* — "something has transpired which certainly stands unique in the legal history of all nations: All judges, all police officials, all lawyers who were involved in the case have come together in order to admit openly and honestly that they had been duped: in the name of their conscience and their country's honor, as well as in the interest of faith in justice which has suffered so severely, they seek a pardon for the two men condemned to life in prison." It should be noted that

according to California law it is impossible to reopen proceedings which have been definitively closed, so that only a “pardon” can help, a state of “justice” which likely still finds its equivalent only in the efficacy of the Bavarian “People’s Courts” [*Volksgerichte*]. In her reports, which first appeared in the “Frankfurter Zeitung” (from September 16 of this year), Karin Michaelis related precise information about how the conviction came about, how the chief witness for the prosecution committed perjury in order to make money by his testimony and himself bribed people in order to gain support for his perjury. When the jury foreman who had announced the verdict against Mooney had convinced himself of the villainy of the chief witness, he, again entirely differently from later the scoundrel Thayer who condemned Sacco and Vanzetti, stepped to the forefront of those demanding the reopening of the proceedings. But the Governor of California, Richardson, in whose hands the fate of the two anarchists rests, appears to be a worthy brother in office to Governor Fuller of Massachusetts. Perhaps it will become necessary to unleash a world-wide movement of the sort we experienced on behalf of our comrades Sacco and Vanzetti, only stronger, so strong that even the foundations of American dollar-justice will be devastated by it.

But hardly had we absorbed the enormous shock of the fact that, 12 years after their crime, those guilty of Mooney’s and Billing’s fate are showing remorse and asking the murderer state to free them from the burden of their guilt, — there falls another bright beam of light into the already long since illuminated chamber of horrors in which the state murder of Sacco and Vanzetti, no longer to be made good, was committed. It is well known that Sacco and Vanzetti were prosecuted for a robbery-murder committed together in South Braintree, convicted and after 7 years executed. This robbery-murder, which the two anarchists first learned of from the newspapers, had been committed on April 15, 1920. On December 24, 1919 in Bridgewater a similarly conceived robbery took place for which, before the joint trial with Sacco, Bartholomeo Vanzetti alone was hauled before Judge Thayer and on August 16, 1920 sentenced by him to 15 years incarceration. On November 18, 1925, over 4 years after the death sentence was pronounced, almost 2 years before it was carried out, the Portugese Celestino Madeiros confessed to having taken part in the robbery-murder in South Braintree and at the same time stated that Sacco and Vanzetti were completely uninvolved. The state’s attorneys were thereby faced with a completely transformed legal situation. They did what the reasons of state demanded of them, they paid no attention at all to the statement of the confessing culprit and upheld the death sentence against the anarchists. Now it turns out that the trial against Vanzetti stemming from the Bridgewater attack was held at a time when Thayer and his people already knew who they should have brought before the court, had they wanted to avenge the crime and not murder anarchists. A certain Jimmy Mede already had knowledge of the true

course of the robbery attempt at the time of the trial against Vanzetti and, himself an inmate of the jail, wanted to get Vanzetti discharged. Judge Thayer's chauffeur prevented him from doing so with the threat that he would lose out on his own pardon if he did not keep his mouth shut. Later, Mede attempted to prevent Sacco's and Vanzetti's execution by visiting Governor Fuller shortly before and telling him what he had to say. He intimated to him that he should not carry his information to the state police, as well, the effect of such explanations would only bring embarrassment. Mede kept fighting for the truth after the anarchists' death and has now brought things to the point that one of the participants in the Bridgewater crime, Frank Silva, has confessed his crime and named three further participants. It is now established then that Thayer and the Prosecutor Katzmann, with the premeditated intention of committing a judicial murder, engineered both trials out of political reasons and conducted them contrary to their own knowledge of the facts up to double murder of the revolutionary workers. My supposition that the Bridgewater trial had been held first in order to afterwards be able to have one of the two comrades appear as an already previously punished felon, and thus to create documents which would make it credible that Sacco and Vanzetti were capable of every common crime, is thus after the fact proven to have been correct (compare "Reasons of State" [*Staatsräson*], 3<sup>rd</sup> Scene, closing conversation between Katzmann and Thayer). Never has the state been so manifestly exposed as an assassin than in this case. For anarchists, the exposing of the murderer state is no surprise. To the murdered, however, let us pledge what John Henry Mackay cried in 1887 to the anarchists of Chicago:

Know: not in vain as pathbreakers  
Did you open the doors to the future!  
Know: We the living will be the avengers  
Of your sanctified deaths.

Henry G. Alsberg, et al. *Alexander Berkman sixtieth birthday celebration, November twentieth, nineteen thirty, Central Opera House, New York City.* New York: Martin Press, 1930 [n.p.]

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*We print a few of the many letters received by the Committee. Lack of space prevents printing more.*

...

Alexander Berkman was forced to leave his native Russia because he loved Liberty;

Alexander Berkman was forced to leave his adopted America because he loved Liberty;

Alexander Berkman was hunted down, persecuted, driven from pillar to post in many countries because of his love for Liberty.

But Alexander Berkman not only loves Liberty; Liberty also loves him.

His home is the hearts of all the peoples everywhere, although he is not persona grata with the rulers and governors of the States.

Every human who loves Liberty loves him.

We celebrate Alexander Berkman's sixtieth birthday because we are the comrades of his ideology and the admirers of his work and his great soul.

There will come a time when humanity will celebrate this brave man, Alexander Berkman, as the pioneer and great champion of its happiness;

A time in which all mankind will come to admire and love him.

That time will be when Liberty has become Truth, the time of Anarchy.

Erich Mühsam.

*Berlin, Germany.*

[NB! There is no indication in the original publication that Mühsam's letter was translated from the German. After a 13-page introduction by Henry Alsberg, there are reproduced (in the following order) letters from Errico Malatesta, Max Nettlau, Erich Mühsam, Augustin Souchy, and Bertrand Russel.]



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Erich Mühsam  
Articles  
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