

LETTERS

Sacco and Vanzetti

I was surprised, enthusiastic, and encouraged when I read Neil Proto's superb article on the Sacco and Vanzetti case, published in your September 1996 issue of *Italian America*. Surprised because, as Mr. Proto states in the prelude to his article, "... this story is told so rarely in America." Enthusiastic because the saga of Sacco and Vanzetti is one that I, as an Italian American and a human being concerned with justice for all people, hold dear to my heart despite the fact that America, sadly, has made abiding efforts to distance her heart and soul from it. And, finally, I am encouraged because Mr. Proto has tenaciously blown the dust from the shelves of this near-forgotten case in an admirable effort to retrieve it from the long-term storage of our memory banks and, once again, bring it to the forefront of our collective consciousness.

I hope to read more articles such as that which Mr. Proto has written on Sacco and Vanzetti. I believe such articles provide an extremely important service to the Italian-American community in helping us piece together the fragments of our personal, as well as collective, history. Such articles challenge us to confront our complacency, calling on us to make every effort to understand its origins. And when our understanding enables us to break the code of silence, may we be motivated into action. In the process of our evolution, both personally and as a community, may we find confidence, validation, justice for all Americans irrespective of ethnic background. And in our struggle to achieve these assets, may we find our voice — and project it with volume."

Laurel Colao-Akhund, Bowie, Md.

I am 82 years old and have been connected to OSIA through my parents. Back in the early 20s Mom and Dad were very active.

The article on Sacco and Vanzetti made my heart pound. I felt as if I was living it all over again. I remember my parents talking about it, and [they] were so angry. I enjoyed the *Italian America*.

Palma Testa, Mamaroneck, N.Y.

I was delighted to receive the magazine. I have read it with great interest, particularly, of course, the article on Sacco and Vanzetti. It was good to have this matter brought to the surface again because it has raised many doubts in recent years.

Maxwell M. Rabb, New York, N.Y.
Former U.S. Ambassador to Italy

After reading the article on Sacco and Vanzetti, which appeared in the September 1996 edition of *Italian America*, I was struck by the author's opening line. It is strange that this story of injustice is told so rarely in America. In contrast to the demeaning stereotypes that are so prevalent in Hollywood's portrayals of Italian Americans, one would think that this compelling human drama would receive creative attention.

As the 70th anniversary of the execution approaches, perhaps your organization could lead an effort to ensure that the memory of this dismal failure of our criminal justice system is not forgotten.

Suzanne D. Cartwright, Washington, D.C.

I have just read Neil Proto's "Sacco and Vanzetti, An Unfinished American Injustice" in the September 1996 issue of *Italian America*. I find Proto's account of Sacco and Vanzetti compelling for reasons that endure to this day. For his is a story of the dignity and humanity of the Italian immigrant experience in America. Set in an atmosphere of racial hatred, [their] story is accurately characterized by Proto as the story of "...Italian Americans then and now [who]...value the integrity of the individual and [who]...participate in and insist on social justice in our communities..."

This is the meaning of Sacco and Vanzetti that has survived the prejudices and injustice of their time to ours. The substance of the trial...stands as a shame in the history of American injustice. However, Proto's account stands as a monument to the children of all Italian American immigrants, signaling the values and strengths of a people that are timeless.

John DeStefano, Jr.
Mayor, New Haven, Conn.

Sacco/Vanzetti Hits Home

Your article, "An Unfinished American Injustice" (September 1996) touched me to tears, since it brought back memories of my life in Stowe, Pa., during [the years] 1929 through 1935.

My father...suffered a similar injustice as Sacco and Vanzetti. It was not about a robbery or anything illegal; it was about being Italian. I'll never forget my father coming home with an armful of scrap lumber from a house being constructed on the "other side" of town. He was brutally beaten by the workers for collecting scrap wood from a pile of debris. This wood was used to heat the house for me, my mother, and my four brothers. [My father] was bleeding from the beating by the gang of anti-Italians. Yes, bleeding, but smiling, saying, "I'm-a alright, non-ja worry," in the best English he could speak. This was only one of the many incidents suffered by the Italians in our section of town.

In reference to the Sacco/Vanzetti injustice, I am writing with the hope that this letter touches the offspring of the anti-Italians evident during the trial... I am sure that many of the sons and/or daughters...are still living. I would hope they...do the best they can to make amends for the part their ancestors played in the murders of Sacco and Vanzetti...

Pasquale Iachetti, Lansdale, Pa.

I read, with great interest, your article on Sacco and Vanzetti. I am pleased to know this history and regret I was uninformed until I read your very excellent article. Italians were certainly not without large amounts of discrimination, as were many other immigrants in this great nation. It is amazing we are as tolerant as we are and yet can be hard and cruel to foreigners as they move into our society.

Thank you for writing such a fine article for our Italian heritage. Maybe some justice will be accomplished.

Dennis DeConcini, U.S. senator, retired

I just wanted to take a moment to tell you how much I enjoyed the article on the Sacco and Vanzetti case by Neil Proto in *Italian America*. What happened in 1927, and unfortunately what happens in some parts of our country today, should serve as a stern warning against all kinds of discrimination toward fellow Americans.

Allan Watson, Ph.D.
President, Alliance for Higher Education, Dallas, Texas