**TRIAL OF THE CENTURY: SACCO AND VANZETTI**

**The Accused**

Nicola Sacco was an Italian immigrant, the husband of a pregnant wife, and the father of a young boy. He worked in a factory in eastern Massachusetts where he made a decent living for himself. The oppressive working conditions in the factory turned Sacco against the American system of capitalism. He often claimed people like him did not work in America they worked under America. Sacco’s dislike of American capitalism turned him towards the philosophy of Anarchism. He believed the government was responsible for conditions of the poor, and hence the only way to create an equal and harmonious system was to remove the government from the equation. Sacco was associated with the Galleanisti Group. This group, led by Italian Anarchist Luigi Galleani, was associated with a series of bombings in 1919.

Bartolomeo Vanzetti was an Italian immigrant who lived in eastern Massachusetts. After initially working in a factory, he found a living for himself as a street side fish seller. Vanzetti also grew to dislike American capitalism and joined Galleani’s Anarchist group. The quote below from Vanzetti’s letters displays his philosophy: *"I champion the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the simple and the persecuted. I maintain that whosoever benefits or hurts a man benefits or hurts the whole species. I sought my liberty in the liberty of all, my happiness in the happiness of all. I wanted a roof for every family, bread for every mouth, education for every heart, and light for every intellect."*

**The Crime and Arrest:**

On December 24th, 1919, an attempted robbery failed in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. The attempted robbers were able to drive away without being stopped.

On April 15, 1920, at the Slater & Morrill shoe factory in South Braintree, Massachusetts, the paymaster, Frederick A. Parmenter, and his guard Alessandro Berardelli, were shot and killed by two men who escaped with $15,773. Police arrested two Italian immigrants, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti regarding their radical activities and as suspects for the crime. Vanzetti was a suspect for both the failed Christmas Eve robbery in Bridgewater and the South Braintree robbery and murder. Sacco was a suspect for the South Braintree robbery and murder.

**The Evidence**

* Both men were armed at the time of the arrest. Sacco was armed with loaded pistol while Vanzetti carried a loaded revolver and shotgun shells.
* Upon being arrested, both men lied and gave contradictory statements to the police.
* Vanzetti and Sacco’s ties to the radical Galleanisti Anarchist group were confirmed by multiple sources.
* The gate controller reported that he witnessed Vanzetti driving the getaway car. He identified Vanzetti by his thick mustache.
* Two office workers reported seeing Sacco leaning out of the getaway car.
* Carlos Goodridge reported seeing Sacco drive by. He reported that Sacco pointed a gun at him.
* Luis Palister identified Sacco and the license plate number of the getaway car.
* 6 Pistol bullets were found at the scene of the crime.

**The Judge:**

* Sacco and Vanzetti were tried by Judge Webster Thayer. Thayer detested foreigners and had a venomous hatred towards radicals.

**The Trial:**

* It is an Italian tradition for families to eat eels on Christmas Day. Being a fish seller, Vanzetti was very busy on Christmas Eve. 14 people testified that they purchased eels from Vanzetti on Christmas Eve. Some of these people estimated purchasing the eels during the time of the robbery.
* **The gate controller reported that he witnessed Vanzetti driving the getaway car.** Vanzetti did not own a car or know how to drive a car.
* **Two office workers reported seeing Sacco leaning out of the getaway car**. Both of the workers were looking out of a second story window when they saw Sacco.
* **Carlos Goodridge reported seeing Sacco drive by and point a gun at him**. Four additional witnesses testified that Goodridge ducked inside the pool hall immediately after hearing gun shots. Goodridge told these witnesses that he did not see anything.
* **Luis Palister identified Sacco and the license plate number of the getaway car.** Three witnesses testified that Palister ducked under a bench after hearing the sound of gun shots.
* **6 Pistol bullets were found at the scene of the crime.** One of these pistol bullets did match Sacco’s gun. The weapon that fired the other 5 bullets was never found.

**The Decision:**

* Sacco was convicted of murder in connection to the South Braintree Robbery
* Vanzetti was convicted of attempted robbery in the Bridgewater case. He was convicted of murder in connection to the South Braintree Robbery.

**After the trial/ Appeals; Attempt to reopen the case and prevent Sacco and Vanzetti from receiving the death penalty:**

* Carlos Goodridge changed his testimony. Reports that he did not see Sacco.
* Luis Palister changed his testimony. Reports that he did not see Sacco.
* Portuguese criminal and Morelli gang member Ceslestino Madeiros tells authorities he was involved in the South Braintree crime and that Sacco and Vanzetti were not. He described the process of the robbery and correctly identified the vehicles involved.

**The Execution:**

* Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti spent the next 6 years in prison as appeal after appeal was rejected. Finally, on August 23rd 1927, they were both executed by electrocution at the Charlestown State Prison in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Last words/note:**

* Moments before entering the electric chair, Vanzetti gave these last words: *“I wish to say to you that I am innocent. I have never done a crime, some sins, but never any crime. I thank you for everything you have done for me. I am innocent of all crime, not only this one, but of all, all. I am an innocent man. I now wish to forgive some people for what they are doing to me.”*
* This is the last letter that Sacco wrote to his young son Dante: “*If nothing happens, they will electrocute us right after midnight. Therefore here I am right with you, with love and with open heart, as I was yesterday. Don't cry, Dante, for many, many tears have been wasted, As your mother's tears have been already wasted for seven years, And never did any good. So, son, instead of crying, be strong, be brave, So as to be able to comfort your mother.*