

# F R E E D O M B U L L E T I N

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## WHO SHALL HOLD THE WHIP?

That is the issue at the coming General Election. We shall hear much talk—oceans of it—about Conservatism, Liberalism, Labourism, Socialism, and Communism, but at bottom the struggle will be as to who shall hold the whip with which the masses are kept in subjection. All the parties who ask you for your votes have one faith in common—that the people have not sufficient intelligence to manage their own affairs, and that they must be governed by a superior class who know what is best for them.

The Conservatives, who represent the landed and aristocratic class who regard their rule as a divine right exercised through many generations, will tell you that they alone are competent to look after your interests. They provide the heads of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Church, and all those parasites who crawl at the foot of the Throne. They regard with contempt the industrial class, while willing to share in the millions which that class extracts from the workers. The basis of their rule is the ownership of vast portions of this country, by means of which they draw fortunes from those who work by hand or brain.

The Liberals, in the main, represent the industrial or capitalist class, generally termed the captains of industry. Since the Reform Act of 1832 they have shared in the privileges until that time monopolised by the landed class. They think the workers were provided by Providence to do the hard work of the world and, incidentally, to provide fortunes for those who control the industries of the British Empire. They granted votes to the masses because they thought it would help them in their struggle with the landed class, but they are as determined as the latter that those votes shall never be used to break their domination. The relationship of master and man, employer and employed, must be maintained at all costs. They are willing to let representatives of Labour help them to regulate that relationship, but those representatives must never be allowed to presume on this collaboration and step over the line which divides the exploiter from the exploited.

We can lump the Labour and Socialist parties together, as in their desire to get into power they have sunk their differences and now sail under one flag at Transport House, Westminster. They are a mixed crowd, including men and women of both classes, exploiters and exploited. They believe in the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of the Labour Party. They know all the evils of the present system but are afraid or unwilling to abolish the system at one fell swoop in case the heavens fall. They try to persuade the workers that their one aim and hope in life is a revolution in thought and deed which will

sweep away all the injustice and misery which is the workers' lot at present; but when their programme is examined it is found that they would merely perpetuate exploitation under another name—nationalisation. Landlords must not be allowed to monopolise the land, but they propose to buy them out at a price which will allow the landlords to retain their present incomes drawn from the land. It is wicked to let individuals control whole industries, with armies of workers at their beck and call. The Labour Party propose to buy them out on the same terms as the landlords and then allow the captains of industry to manage them on behalf of the State. Their scientific knowledge and their organising ability will be so useful in extracting from the workers the money with which they will buy up the industries.

Then they will nationalise the banks, but pay them all they ask, as it would be so unkind to rob the poor widows and orphans who evidently own all the bank shares. And, just as the Labour Government did in Australia, they will put bankers in charge of the State Bank, as the delicate fabric of credit must not be jeopardised.

It is marvellous to think of the sweeping changes the Socialists are going to make in our industrial system, but to us Anarchists it seems that the more they change it the more it will be the same—for the workers. They will do all the work as before, and the rich will get their incomes as before. The only difference to the workers will be that their bosses will be State officers and they themselves be State employees. The whip of the ownership and control of the means of life will have changed hands, and probably it will have longer thongs than before.

Last and least of the parties is the Communist Party. But they will never cut any ice, as they always have to wait for instructions and cash from Moscow. A man with his ear to a long-distance telephone can never be expected to do much.

Now we have summed up all the parties, we repeat the question at the head of this article: "Who shall hold the whip?" For that is really the only question to be decided at the General Election, whatever may be the programmes of the parties who appeal for your votes. Are you really interested in deciding that question?

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## A TRAVESTY OF BAKUNIN \*

By M. NETTLAU

Bakunin's fair name, like everybody else's, is dear to all of us, and it has been cleared by most careful research from all the Marxian and other aspersions shovelled upon it in fanatical party strife. It has now become his lot to be defiled from another side, by the book of an Italian author, Riccardo Bacchelli, which has been translated into English. I have not seen this book, but from what I have heard from various sides it purports to deal with events, partially private, in Bakunin's life during the years 1872-1874. Now, these events have been illustrated and explained by a large quantity of letters, private papers, and personal unrestricted statements of some of the most intimate participants of these events. This has been partly put in print or in polygraphic reproduction many years ago; partly it is produced and dissected in works not yet in print, but not unknown nor inaccessible to those who have a serious interest in this question, which, to the general public as well as to the Anarchist public, is of minor interest indeed, and interests only the intimate historical students of that period.

All this material Bacchelli, from all one hears, does not consult, so what he produces cannot concern the real Bakunin, but only an imaginary mannikin of his own creation. As historical novels in our time are usually based on the most thorough documentation obtainable, the public ought to be made aware then that this novel is quite an exception to this.

This is very openly stated by Dr. Luigi Bakunin, a grandson of Michael Bakunin, in a letter printed—during his stay in Argentina—in the large Buenos Aires literary review, *Nosotros*, No. 235, December, 1928, pp. 416-418, which is an outburst of indignation

against Bacchelli's proceedings. I will extract only these lines, not because I am mentioned in them, but because they state the facts as, from all I know, they appear to be, unfortunately:—

"I like to believe, for the dignity of the man and the author, that Bacchelli operates with full good faith, but let him accept advice and it is this, that before writing a historical novel he should attentively read history and give to this several hours of study every day. In the present case, he would have done well to read the history of the 'International,' by James Guillaume, and the biography of 'Michael Bakunin,' by Max Nettlau, if not the writings of Bakunin himself. Let him read these, it is still time; let him think them over, and he will see what an offence he has inflicted on truth, and he will certainly be the first to regret this."

This will be sufficient to warn the English comrades against being influenced by this book, which they can repudiate by a sound instinct, but which they cannot control and verify as to assertions purporting to be facts, as the books and documents necessary for this do not exist in English editions. There is an abundance of real research work on Bakunin available now, mainly in French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Russian, but indeed nothing at all in English. It is a bitter irony of fate that the publishers should first be attracted by the mannikin which Bacchelli dubs with the name of Bakunin; but things are managed like this in this best of all possible best worlds.

March 23rd, 1929.

\* "The Devil at the Long Bridge." By Riccardo Bacchelli. 7s. 6d. London: Longmans, Green & Co.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "DORA" CAPTURING THE STATE MACHINE

Following an extraordinary and injudicious statement by the Home Secretary, to the effect that individual liberty must not be looked for in the twentieth century, several of the daily newspapers have been devoting considerable space to a denunciation of "Dora"; in other words, of certain regulations concerning the buying and selling of various commodities introduced during the War under the ambitious title of the Defence of the Realm Acts, and also of similar regulations made or confirmed subsequently, the most recent of which is the Shops (Early Closing) Act of 1928. Those who have attacked "Dora" have derived her origin from a desire on the part of busybodies and neo-Puritans for general interference with other people: those defending have hailed her as the champion of shop assistants' health and leisure. Neither side has fully grasped the significance of the various regulations and prohibitions, and the issue has been confused by an attempt to reduce the discussion solely to the Shops (Early Closing) Act of 1928.

The Nonconformist element has been largely responsible for the creation of the war-period and post-

war period regulations, particularly of those regarding the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages and Sunday trading. But to pretend that the Nonconformist element alone is responsible is to make a serious mistake. The large stores and shops and the multiple-shop firms, which desire to conduct their business with the minimum of competition from small shops (largely represented by the "one-man shop," which figures in the deleted Clause 2 of the Shops (Early Closing) Act of 1928), must bear a large proportion of the responsibility for many of the shopping regulations. There is at present in existence a Bill known familiarly as the "Grocers' Bill"; this is of the real "Dora" type, and it is mainly, if not wholly, supported by tradesmen.

The part played by vested interests of different trades and classes of tradesmen in the creation of the "Dora" regulations was enormous; and while the various organisations and associations representing trade interests still function, these interests will fight hard to preserve the privileges and monopolies they have already secured through Parliament and to secure further privileges and monopolies in the future.

The nature of the State has undergone a vast change since its early days. Created by small bands of adventurers, its scope has been extended and its mechanism perfected, and it now provides whoever can seize control of it with a powerful means of obtaining their ends. The origin of the "Dora" regulations shows how Puritanism and trade interests have to-day got hold of the State machine to secure their particular ends, at the expense of the individual and of competitive traders.

All that need be done to-day is to convince enough people with voting or financial or other influence of the expediency of the idea, and the most insane and the most destructive work can be transformed into an Act of Parliament, enforceable by the whole strength of judiciary, police, military, army, and air force. There is every reason to expect that the use of the State machine for the private interests of various groups of men and women, not necessarily of large groups, will be made much more extensively than has been done until now. The agitation in favour of any Bill is nearly always numerically insignificant compared with the number of people who will be affected by it, but the agitation is active and insistent, and the opposition passive, so that Bills are forced through Parliament without even the false democratic justification that right resides in the desire of the majority.

Each Act of Parliament requiring the individual to do or desist from doing some action is progressively harmful, because, by sapping the resistance of the individual, it makes it even easier for the next Act to be brought into force. It may not matter very much whether birdseed is or is not sold after eight o'clock, but the very fact that the sale of birdseed is prohibited and the prohibition respected is of grave importance. It forms just one more stepping stone towards the absolute control of the individual by the State.

The Home Secretary has said that there will not be twenty candidates standing in the General Election who will undertake to vote for the repeal of "Dora." If "Dora" is accepted as meaning all or most of the war-period and post-war period regulations, he was probably correct in his statement. Parliamentary candidates wheedle votes by promising to make new laws to please constituents interested enough to press for them, not by promising the man who merely wants to leave and be left alone a free field for the prosecution of his own business. And until the latter shows that he is determined not to endure any interference with his own way of living, he will be plagued by as many Acts of Parliament and orders from Ministries as can be packed into the twenty-four hours of the day.

B. B. W.

## IN MUSSOLINI'S PARADISE

The following account of conditions in Italy is taken from a letter received from a friend who travelled through a great part of the country last autumn:—

Now that I have left Italy I may give you a few of my impressions of Fascism. Before entering Italy I was warned by the French and Swiss that I would not be allowed into the country, or at least that I would be worried out of my life by the terrible Carabinieri. From the tales they told me I understood that if I wanted to cross Italy I would have to keep my tongue in my mouth and put up with Fascist arrogance without a murmur. So I was well prepared. I found the frontiers well barricaded with chains, etc., and had to lose an hour to go through various formalities. The police officers who guard the frontiers have big books—black books—with the names of those who are to be turned back or arrested—the latter are in a thicker writing. When you hand over your passport this list has to be carefully consulted. Then the police ask you no end of questions. Having passed this first ordeal, you go through the Custom House. Here I was asked 2d. for a stamp. As I had no Italian money, I offered to pay in Swiss money, which was worth four times as much, namely, about 8d.; but this could not be done, so a gendarme was sent with me on foot to the next village, which was two miles away, in order to change my Swiss into Italian money and give the 2d. in Italian coin! Remember that at frontier villages either coinage is accepted! This was the first bit of red tape I came across.

The next thing I noticed was that most of the boarding-houses, hostels, etc., had their signs obliterated, their licences having been withdrawn in order to facilitate the watching of strangers. Then throughout Italy, whenever you ask for a room, the first question is: "Where is your passport?" To

the information contained therein you must add the name of your father, of your mother, etc. Sometimes the police pay you a visit at the hotel, or a gendarme brutally arrests you on the road to cross-examine you. This happened to me many times, and I was always careful to oppose the sweetest smile to the rudest treatment, which often changed the brute into a devoted servant and helper. Within three days of your stay in Italy you must obtain a permit, which is not always easy to get. As a globe-trotter, however, I managed to secure the precious document.

Last, but not least, you have to see everywhere, in some villages and towns *on every single house*, the ugly face of Mussolini in stencil work and some ejaculation in his honour; propaganda papers for Fascism are stuck everywhere, and so are the Fascist emblems. The years are counted anew from the reign of the "Duce." Thus 1928 is always entered in my book as Anno VI. Half the people wear black shirts or Fascist emblems, either by conviction or by diplomacy. In hotels you are warned by notices that "It is strictly prohibited to talk about politics"; and in post offices, banks, etc., notices warn you that you are to salute "romanesimo," i.e., Fascist fashion. On churches a notice forbids entrance to ladies having bare arms or low necks! When you try to find out something about Fascism, the average Italian answers that the crops sadly need rain, or that Italian bicycles are somewhat different from an English one. To those who believe in it Fascism is much more than a political party, it is a religion, and its devotees are nothing less than fanatics—dangerous fanatics. Apart from these, the Italians are a very lovable people, among whom it is possible to feel more at home than among us Northerners, who are more self-centred and indifferent towards our fellow-creatures.

I have seldom ridden many miles without having a

companion to talk to. Nobody is afraid to speak to you, and as soon as you stop you are surrounded by a group of curious but always sympathetic onlookers and questioners. You will always get more help than you want, and you will never be given time to feel lonely.

## THE LETTERS OF SACCO AND VANZETTI

It is fitting that this collection of letters, written from prison by our Anarchist comrades Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, should be published whilst the details of their trial and execution are fresh in our memories. Those of us who were always convinced of their innocence will not need any further confirmation, but those who thought that perhaps, after all, they may have been guilty would no longer be justified in their doubts after reading these letters in which these two men reveal themselves during their imprisonment from May 5th, 1920, when they were arrested, until their execution shortly after midnight on August 22nd, 1927.

At the time of their arrest these two Italian workers spoke and wrote English indifferently, but friends gave them lessons in prison and helped them to express themselves in our language. Sacco was unable to make very much headway, but Vanzetti learned to write simple and beautiful English, in which he expresses the working of a clear and logical mind. Some of his letters bear traces of the eternal pressure of the four walls of his cell, but in others he writes freely of Anarchism, Socialism, Communism, and especially of books and their authors, as though he were at liberty and without a care in the world. He says, frankly, that he is an Anarchist: "Both Nick and I are Anarchists—the radical of the radical—the black cats, the terrors of many, of all the bigots, exploitators, charlatans, fakers and oppressors." And both of them knew only too well that that was why they would be killed.

Sacco was a great lover of nature and the life of the fields and woods, and many references to this occur in his letters. His finest letter is the one he wrote to his son, Dante, four days before his execution. Here he tells him how to comfort his mother as he used to do, by taking her for "A long walk in the quiet country, gathering wild flowers here and there, resting under the shade of trees." And he goes on: "Remember always, Dante, in the play of happiness, don't you use all for yourself only, but down yourself just one step, at your side, and help the weak ones that cry for help, help the prosecuted and the victim, because they are your better friends; they are the comrades that fight and fall as your father and Bartolo fought and fell yesterday for the

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conquest of the joy of freedom for all, and the poor workers. In this struggle of life you will find more love and be loved." Vanzetti also wrote a letter to Dante the day before his execution, in which he tells him that his father is "One of the bravest men I ever knew."

In addition to these letters there is a story of the case, Sacco's and Vanzetti's speeches to the Court, Vanzetti's letter to Governor Fuller, and Vanzetti's last statement. The book is a valued memento of two men whose seven-year fight for life stirred the whole world and exposed the State as a hideous and insatiable monster.

\* "The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti." Edited by Marion D. Frankfurter and Gardner Jackson. 7s. 6d. London: Constable and Co. [Can be obtained from Freedom Press.]

## TO OUR READERS

The financial position of the BULLETIN is getting very serious. Many accounts are unpaid, subscribers do not pay their subscriptions, and donations to the Guarantee Fund have fallen off. If you are a subscriber, please send your subscription—2s., or whatever you can afford. If you take a bundle, please settle your account, or at least pay something off the account. But in any case one and all should do their utmost to secure the issue of the BULLETIN, even if we cannot re-start FREEDOM.

## "FREEDM" GUARANTEE FUND

The following donations have been received to date (April 9th) since our last issue:—Theodore, 5s.; O. Weik, 16s.; J. Scarceriaux, 4s.; G. Teltsch, 8s. 3d.; Elizabeth, £3 1s. 8d.; E. Richmond, 6s.; A Working Woman, £1; A. E. Lavers, 6s.; J. Wearing, 6d.; Libertarian Group of Cleveland, Ohio, £1 2s. 8d.; N. W. Robinson, 2s.; J. Cosson, 2s. 6d.; G. W. Tindale, 2s.; T. K. Wolfe, 2s.; J. S. R., 2s.

## WM. O. OWEN

We regret to say that owing to our comrade, Wm. C. Owen, having to undergo an operation, he was unable to send his usual article. He is progressing favourably, and we know that all comrades will wish him a speedy recovery.

## NO SHELTER FROM RAIDS TAX

Our conviction that the last war was not the last war grows. According to the reply of the Government to a question by Mr. Thurtle, Labour M.P., on Tuesday, the First Commissioner of Works is having a survey made for underground places suitable as shelters from aerial bombing in the event of war.

Which recalls the delightful example of insanity in municipal taxation furnished at Hackney, London, in 1917, when certain residents of houses in King Edward's Road combined to erect in the back garden of one of them a concrete dug-out in which to take refuge from bombs. The work was done and there ensued a raid for which they had not reckoned: the local council assessed the premises at an increase of £2 upon the previous assessment which, with rates at 7s. 6d. in the £ (they are much higher to-day), meant an annual fine of 15s. for improving the property.—*Commonweal.*