

A Southern Reformatory for Negro Boys

By ANGELO HERNDON

EDITOR'S NOTE: When Angelo Herndon sat for 26 long months in Fulton Tower prison in Atlanta, there were among his companions many men who had served sentences on the infamous Georgia chain-gang. The stories these men told, Herndon wrote down.

We print here, for the first time, a story taken down in Fulton Tower by Herndon. There is no more harrowing description of what awaits this young leader of the unemployed. Remember that the jail described here is a "reformatory" for young Negro boys, and that it is supposed to be far more "humane" than the chain-gang to which Herndon has been sentenced.

Read this story — then act to save Herndon. Send telegrams and resolutions to the U. S. Supreme Court in Washington, D. C., demanding a rehearing of the case, and freedom for Angelo Herndon.

IN ADAMSVILLE, GEORGIA, eleven miles northwest of Atlanta, is the Fulton County Industrial Reformatory, for young Negro boys ranging in age from seven to eighteen. These boys are forced to do the work of men. They use pick and shovel, dig ditches, and build roads.

At any moment, the warden may come with a long hickory stick, and beat the boys unconscious. In 1926, Warden Glenn Lee, head of the rolling squad, dynamited a young Negro, aged 17. The prisoners were blasting stumps, and set the dynamite to explode at a certain time. The dynamite didn't go off fast enough for Warden Lee, so he sent this Negro boy to find out what was

wrong with it. By the time the boy arrived at the dynamite, it exploded, and tore him into rags.

Warden Lee was discharged from service, but was immediately reinstated elsewhere. In 1928, he killed another Negro prisoner, aged 16. This prisoner was called "Foots." "Foots" was working with a squad. Warden Lee thought he wasn't working hard enough. He walked over to him and banged him across the head with a hickory, knocking him unconscious for several hours. Then "Foots" was taken back to the Reform Camp, where the officials refused to permit him to enter a hospital. After two weeks of agony, "Foots" died, and was buried in the Reform Cemetery.

Brutal Whippings

All the boys at this place are forced to work from 6:30 a. m. to 4:30 p. m. If any of the prisoners get sick on the job, and are unable to work, the warden calls them out and beats them severely. At night, when the prisoners are taken back to the Reform Camp, any who complain of being sick are called out and marched to the dormitory of the building. They are forced to pull off all their clothes, and catch hold of a door-knob. If any prisoner refuses, he is knocked down by one of the wardens. Then another warden puts his feet on the prisoner's neck, while still another lashes him with a ten-pound braided leather strap. The prisoners who are beaten are forced to go back to work next day.

The entire building where the prisoners live is only large enough to hold 200, but it is always congested with from 400 to 500 prisoners. For sick prisoners, there is a little cage that is only large enough to hold four. This also is always overcrowded. No matter what kind of contagious diseases the prisoners may have, they are thrown together

with the others, eat and drink out of the same plates and cups.

Wormy, Rotten Food

The building is entirely unheated, except for the part occupied by the officials.

The prisoners are fed three times



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a day. For breakfast, they get black molasses and biscuits. These biscuits are made without shortening, in a big tin tub. The flour is emptied directly from the sack into the tub, and a large quantity of soda and salt are added. With this mess, the prisoners are given a tiny slice of fatback.

For dinner, the prisoners get boiled peas, beans, and turnips, and corn pone made of clear water and salt. After the turnips have finished cooking, there are three or four inches of sand left in the bottom of the pot. For supper, the prison-

ers get plain boiled rice and corn pone. The food is always full of bugs, roaches and worms.

If the conduct of a prisoner while eating should displease the warden, he will go over and knock that prisoner from the table, have him carried upstairs and whip him.

But the officials always eat the best food, such as steaks, fried pies, pork chops and so on. When a hog is killed, the officials eat the best of it and give the prisoners the scraps of left-over fat.

Prisoners Strike

In November, 1929, the prisoners called a strike against the inhuman treatment. They had been sitting in the mess hall and some of them were talking. The wardens heard but couldn't find out who was doing the talking. So at bed-time, when the prisoners were on the way to their sleeping quarters, the wardens called out eighteen men, and told them to stay in the hallway, so they could be sent to "hold the knob"—that is, to be beaten. But the eighteen refused to wait in the hallway. They carried sticks and iron pipes to bed with them.

Later on in the night, Jim Wallace, ring-leader of the lynch-gang of wardens, went to the prisoners' sleeping quarters and yelled: "All you niggers I told to stay in the hallway, come on out before I come and get you."

The prisoners replied: "All right, come on and get us."

Then all the prisoners sprang to their feet, and the wardens rushed out of the building to get their guns. When the wardens returned they threatened to shoot the prisoners, but the prisoners paid no attention.

Men Shackled

Superintendent E. J. Wate called the county police, who came with sawed-off shot-guns and black-jacks. They entered the prisoners'

room and began beating them over the head. The prisoners defended themselves as best they could. The battle lasted for more than an hour. A number of prisoners were brutally beaten.

The day after the strike, Assistant Superintendent Albert Shane and Wardens Gilbert Terrell and William McCullough put double shackles around the prisoners' necks and legs. They took the prisoners upstairs, made them pull off their clothes, and "hold the knob." One of the prisoners refused to "hold the knob" and was knocked unconscious. The wardens jumped on his face, and beat him with sticks. When the beating was over, the prisoner had a long scar over his eyes, extending from one side of his face to the other. He was totally blind for over two months.

Dearborn Police Order Preview of 'Chapayev'

DEARBORN, Mich., June 5. — A special showing of the Soviet film "Chapayev" has been ordered by the police here before they will allow the picture to be shown to the public. The Italian Branch of the International Workers Order has arranged a midnight showing of the picture at the Fordson Theatre on Saturday, June 8.

The owner of the Fordson Theatre was threatened with the loss of his license if the picture was shown. Later after protests from workers here the special showing was ordered.

WRITERS' UNION RE-ELECTS BLACK

Ivan Black, poet and author, has been re-elected executive secretary of the Writers' Union, Local No. 1, New York City.