

Lynching by Law or by Lustful Mob North and South: Red and Black

By LINCOLN STEFFENS

The first time I heard of the now famous Scottsboro case, the narrator told how those colored boys under sentence saw it. And they saw what they saw of it from a rear car. There was some sort of a row—a scrap—or a fight going on in a car so far ahead that they could get glimpses of it only as the train bent around the curves till, by and by, the train stopped. Then they saw a lot of the fighters jump off that front car and run away. They went up forward to hear more about it.

It was later, when the train arrived at its destination, that those witnesses of the incident, were arrested as the scrappers and—rapists. They were so dazed that they never quite recovered from their frightful astonishment.

But you don't have to go by this casual alibi. Take the record of the trials, the speed of them, the ages of the convicted and the circumstances, and one can realize for himself that there was no justice in these cases. There was the opposite. There was righteousness in it.

In Alabama and some parts of the South the more respectable people are yielding to the Northern clamor against lynching. There is lynching in the North, too, but it is not against blacks. It is against the Reds. And it is not by mobs. It is by the police, the courts and juries; and therefore legal, regular, righteous. The righteous people of the South have been gradually waking up to the idea that they can save their face by taking justice out of the rude hands of the mob and putting it in the delicate hands of the lawyers, and judges and a few representatives of the better people in a jury. That is to say, they can lynch their blacks the way the superior North, West and East get their Reds.

Well, now, you can see that the Alabama righteous must feel the Scottsboro case was a perfect example of the new ideal of justice modelled on the great (anti-) Red North. They had some blacks in a jam where the whites might have wreaked their fear of the colored folk by a deeply satisfying lynching. And they did not

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Revolts and Rackets

By LOUIS ADAMIC

In a sense *The Populist Revolt* is a timely book. Its subject is—remotely—of current interest. It deals with the expansion, overproduction, underconsumption, unemployment, misery, falling prices, agricultural and bank failures—the familiar cycle of boom, deflation, depression—which produced or accompanied the so-called Populist Movement of the 'eighties and 'nineties. It tells of its picturesque leaders from the South and West—of "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman of South Carolina, "Sockless" Jerry Simpson and Mary Elizabeth Lease ("the Patrick Henry in petticoats") of Kansas, "Bloody Bridles" Waite of Colorado, Watson of Georgia, Macune of Texas, Weaver of Iowa, Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, and others. Their fantastic movement for farm and labor relief left permanent marks on America's business and political organization.

But this book's timeliness lies in the fact that the

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Southern Gentlemen, White Prostitutes, Mill-Owners, and Negroes

By LANGSTON HUGHES

If the 9 Scottsboro boys die, the South ought to be ashamed of itself—but the 12 million Negroes in America ought to be more ashamed than the South. Maybe it's against the law to print the transcripts of trials from a State court. I don't know. If not, every Negro paper in this country ought to immediately publish the official records of the Scottsboro cases so that both whites and blacks might see at a glance to what absurd farces an Alabama court can descend. (Or should I say an American court?) . . . The 9 boys in Kilbee Prison are Americans. 12 million Negroes are Americans, too. (And many of them far too light in color to be called Negroes, except by liars.) The judge and the jury at Scottsboro, and the governor of Alabama, are Americans. Therefore, for the sake of American justice, (if there is any) and for the honor of Southern gentlemen, (if there ever were any) let the South rise up in press and pulpit, home and school, Senate Chambers and Rotary Clubs, and petition the freedom of the dumb young blacks—so indiscreet as to travel, unwittingly, on the same freight train with two white prostitutes. . . . And, incidentally, let the mill-owners of Huntsville begin to pay their women decent wages so they won't need to be prostitutes. And let the sensible citizens of Alabama (if there are any) supply schools for the black populace of their state, (and for the half-black, too—the mulatto children of the Southern gentlemen. [I reckon they're gentlemen.] so the Negroes won't be so dumb again. . . . But back to the dark millions—black and half-black, brown and yellow, with a gang of white fore-parents—like me. If these 12 million Negro Americans don't raise such a howl that the doors of Kilbee Prison shake until the 9 youngsters come out, (and I don't mean a polite howl, either) then let Dixie justice (blind and syphilitic as it may be) take its course, and let Alabama's Southern gentlemen amuse themselves burning 9 young black boys till they're dead in the State's electric chair. And let the mill-owners of Huntsville continue to pay women workers too little for them to afford the price of a train ticket to Chattanooga. . . . Dear Lord, I never knew until now that white ladies (the same color as Southern gentlemen) travelled in freight trains. . . . Did you, world? . . . And who ever heard of raping a prostitute?

Facts About Scottsboro

By CAROL WEISS KING
(Attorney for Defense)

On March 25, 1931, two white girls, seven white boys and fifteen to eighteen colored boys were hoboing through Alabama on a freight train. As a result of that episode eight of the Negroes, all under 20, have been sentenced to death and the ninth Negro, a boy of 14, is awaiting trial—the jury in his case having disagreed as to whether he should be electrocuted or serve a life sentence.

The uninitiated might suppose that the Negroes had been guilty of some offense warranting the severe penalty which the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Alabama, has decreed. They were, how-

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Christ in Alabama

By LANGSTON HUGHES

Christ is a Nigger,
Beaten and black—
O, bare your back.

Mary is His Mother—
Mummy of the South,
Silence your mouth.

God's His Father—
White Master above,
Grant us your love.

Most holy bastard
Of the bleeding mouth:
Nigger Christ
On the cross of the South.

Notes from Nowhere

Langston Hughes, prominent poet and novelist, is soon to be the guest of the editors of CONTEMPO *** Phillips Russell, of historical and literary biography fame, recently married Cara Mae Green, sister of Paul Green of *The House of Connelly* *** William Faulkner while guest of CONTEMPO was surprised to learn that the University of North Carolina library cannot afford a copy of any of his novels *** And while we are local, a John Reed Club has come, and the Carolina Playmakers are sponsoring a Theatre Guild production of *Elizabeth the Queen* *** When the first version of Archibald Henderson's *Shaw* appeared, Max Beerbohm made cartoons and caricatures out of the illustrations and by changing words cleverly mutilated the text to create idiotic meanings. This copy of the book is now in the hands of the heirs of the late William Archer *** Presidential prospects for 1932 are having a time at getting their new books blurbed in the various literary journals and reviews: they all seem to have memoirs or expose items *** Barrett H. Clark will contribute a regular theatre feature to CONTEMPO *** And now Cape and Smith part the way, but Hal Smith, maker of Cape and Smith in America, is to make a prominent Harrison Smith with such authors as William Faulkner, J. Middleton Murry, Evelyn Scott, Marcus Hindus and Claire Spencer *** We wonder why the

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