

## BOOK REVIEW

### LET MY PEOPLE LIVE

*LET ME LIVE, An Autobiography by Angelo Herndon. Random House, \$2.50.*

THE autobiography of Angelo Herndon is more than the story of the life of one young man. It is the story of a whole people, the Negro people struggling for freedom against the tyranny and oppression of the white ruling class so vividly described by Comrade Herndon. This book under review gives the life experiences of the Negro people, and Comrade Herndon is a symbol of the struggle of his people for liberation and for the emancipation of all humanity.

In this sense, the theme of the book is "Let My People Live". It is a challenge to all those who seek to fetter and enslave the Negro people as part of their scheme to keep all America in chains. We Communists are proud that Angelo Herndon, in his life and in the struggles that he has led, symbolizes the role and program of the Communist Party for the Negro people. He symbolizes the unceasing struggle of the Party for Negro liberation, for unity of black and white workers; for a united Negro people as part of the American People's Front; against reaction and fascism. The Communist Party has produced the basic theory which will guide the Negro people out of serfdom and oppression. And in Angelo Herndon it has produced a Negro Communist who will guide his people out of bondage and who has challenged the ruling class with his ringing slogan of "Let My People Live".

In the past the Negro people have shown great courage in their struggles for freedom and have developed great traditions of militancy. Today the Negro people can reinforce this tradition of struggle and heroism with Communist theory which gives them a clear perspective for the realization of their imme-

diate needs and for ultimate liberation from capitalist oppression and domination.

It is because Angelo Herndon was armed with this theoretical weapon that he began to see clearly that the Negro people do not have to "walk humbly and speak low". Through organization, under the leadership of the Communist Party, they can "break the shackles of economic bondage and social injustice that bind all Negroes in America". This is the significance of Comrade Herndon's book, not only for the Negro people, but for every class conscious worker. Angelo Herndon is the living embodiment of Karl Marx's principle that labor in a white skin cannot be free so long as labor in a black skin is enslaved.

His ringing challenge to the oppressors, not only of his own people, but of all who toil, is one which must be taken up if freedom is to be won:

"I can't run away—there is too much at stake. If I run away and you run away and everybody else who loves freedom and truth runs away, who will be left to fight the good battle? I am not afraid. Death itself is not the greatest tragedy that can possibly happen to a man; rather, the greatest tragedy is to live placidly and safely and to keep silent in the face of injustice and oppression."

Angelo Herndon is proud of his people, my people, and this pride runs throughout the entire course of his life. It reminds one of the pride that Comrade Dimitroff had, at the infamous Leipzig trial, in the culture and traditions of his Bulgarian people. This pride is a reflection of the growing realization among the Negro people that the time has come to challenge and uproot the system of oppression which has kept them enslaved for three centuries in this great country of ours. And in the short period of his young

life, Comrade Herndon has gone through the whole life experience of his people and emerged as an invincible fighter who can and will defeat oppression.

The book brings out many aspects of the oppression which the Negro people suffer and to whose ending Angelo Herndon has dedicated his very life. These are: economic oppression as shown in sharecropping and serf-tenancy in the South; great masses of Negro people in the Black Belt are denied land essential to them for economic progress; discrimination is practiced against Negroes in industry, in many trade unions, and in every walk of life; the Negro people are denied the right to live as human beings, they are jimmied and kept from ordinary social life; the Negro people are denied the right to vote, sit on juries, in short, to exercise the rights of citizenship; the Negro people's life is intellectually and culturally stultified.

This is a bird's-eye view of the oppression which every Negro undergoes and which Angelo Herndon pictures so brilliantly in his book. He brings out the basic point that unless the Negro farmers in the South can be organized to fight for land, the fundamental need of the Negro people will not be solved. This is the basis from which the Negro people can advance to win all their aspirations and realize all their dreams.

Facing economic oppression, social hindrances, cultural limitations, racial persecution, the Negro people must unite in a great struggle for the realization of their immediate needs and for their liberation. The struggle for equal rights for Negroes is part of the struggle between the democratic forces of this country and the forces of reaction. Victory for the Negro people will be a victory for democracy and the people of the United States, particularly for the down-trodden masses of the South.

The nullification of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, which guarantee full citizenship rights to the Negro people, is part of the destruction of democratic rights which Wall Street wishes to impose upon black and white alike. There can be no freedom for the white worker, no high standard of living, so long as the Negro people are kept in a condition of slavery. Angelo Herndon's life shows the need for unity of black and white in the South. The great struggle to win his freedom, to save him from a living death on the chain-gang, shows that this unity can be achieved, that larger sections of the white population see that they must fight for their black brothers as well, if they are to beat back reaction and fascism.

At the present time, fascism threatens democracy in America and, above all, it threatens new barbarous attacks against the Negro people. Those people who want to fight fascism must realize that the freedom of the Negro people is one of the guarantees which must be established in the struggle to defend democracy and defeat reaction.

The spirit of Angelo Herndon is the spirit of that unity which will defeat fascism, win liberation for the Negro people and emancipation for all of humanity. Comrade Herndon's book must spur every Communist to increase his efforts to forge that unity. And, in this connection, let us all remember that it is our solemn duty to wrest Angelo Herndon from the reactionaries who seek his death. Angelo Herndon must be freed, and his freedom will be proof that white and black are marching together, an army of toilers which will defeat reaction and fascism and win greater security and freedom for everyone and ultimately lead to the complete emancipation of all toiling humanity.

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