

Armed Alabama Thugs Abduct and Slug Negro



This photograph of John Harvey, taken two weeks after he was beaten by armed vigilante thugs in Birmingham, shows the mass of welts and cuts still plainly visible on his body.

Kidnaped While on the Streets of Birmingham, John Harvey, Young Communist, Was Taken to Woods and Beaten—Aid Later Refused Him

By Cyril Briggs

His head, face and body a mass of ugly welts and cuts, John Harvey, militant Alabama Negro youth and a member of the Young Communist League, arrived in New York City last Thursday evening after a narrow escape from lynching at the hands of a gang of Birmingham vigilantes who kidnaped and beat him on the eastern outskirts of the Southern city.

Although the attack on the Negro youth occurred a little over two weeks ago, clear evidence of the savage brutality to which he was subjected is still plainly visible in the numerous welts and scars on his body and face, and the bumps and gashes on his head, as shown in the accompanying photograph taken last Friday in the Daily Worker office.

Seized by Four Men

Harvey was in the company of five other Negro youths on the morning of Aug. 10, when he was attacked, he told the Daily Worker yesterday. "We were sitting on the side of the road just out of Birmingham when a 1935 Ford rolled up, and four white men got out, leaving another white man at the wheel. The four men came over to our group and looked us all over. Then they all four grabbed hold of me, and told me 'get in this car, nigger.'"

When Harvey protested, and asked what "crime" he had committed, one of the gang retorted "your crime is too grave to take you to the jail here. We are taking you to Montgomery to Kilby Prison." It is at Kilby Prison that Haywood Patterson and Clarence Norris, two of the Scottsboro boys, are confined.

All Carry Guns

Harvey was thrown, protesting, into the car by the four men, all of whom were armed with automatic pistols. As the car started off, his captors began questioning Harvey and taking notes of his answers, and finding his answers negative, started beating him up in the car. Among the questions put to him was whether he knew Robert Woods, Birmingham secretary of the International Labor Defense who has been twice kidnaped and beaten by vigilantes in the employ of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, and Beth Mitchell, an I. L. D. organizer. When Harvey refused to give information as to members of the I. L. D., the Y. C. L. and other working-class organizations, he was driven into the woods and savagely beaten.

This time all five men got out of the car, pulled off their coats, pulled Harvey out of the car by his heels and began punching him, kicking him in the face when he fell, continuing the attack, until the young worker was rendered unconscious. On his revival, his tormentors again attacked him, knocking out a front tooth, beating him on his head and face, tearing off his clothes and finally launched a volley of kicks at him.

"They used me as if I were a football," the young worker told the Daily Worker, "kicking me from all sides at once. They told me I was a 'Red' and they would beat me till my body was all red."

Aid Is Refused

After making him stand up and knocking him down several times, they drew their guns and ordered him to run, forcing him deeper into the woods. Finally managing to escape his tormentors, Harvey rested in the woods for a time and then made his way to the nearest highway, where he tried to get a lift back to the city from a white driver. The latter jumped on him with a crank and threatened to kill him. Thinking that this man might return with others, Harvey made his way back to the woods,

where he lost consciousness. When he revived, he went to another highway where while waiting for a car to pass by, he again lost consciousness. This time he revived to find a white man and his wife bending over him. The couple refused to give him a lift, but returned after an hour with eight or ten white men. The Chief of Police of Homewood, a small city near Birmingham, was then notified and arrived on the scene, but not to hunt the kidnapers of the Negro youth but to grill Harvey on the "reason" why the thugs had found it "necessary" to kidnap and beat him: "had he been going with a white girl?" "was he fooling around with 'em Commue-nists?"

Police Take No Action

Harvey was finally taken to the Hillman Hospital in Birmingham, where doctors stitched the worst cuts in his head, applied iodine to the other head cuts but refused to treat the cuts and welts on his body. He was kept in the hospital until the following Tuesday morning, when he was discharged, his body injuries still not treated.

Harvey did not recognize any of the men who kidnaped and beat him, but states he could identify them if given the opportunity. Police, however, made no attempt to arrest any of the gang. Two days after the attack on Harvey, Birmingham papers reported the finding of the body of another Negro worker "who fell off a cliff while walking along Shade Mountain."

The Birmingham Y. C. L., which provided medical care for Harvey after he was discharged from the hospital, sent him to New York City as soon as he was able to travel. Harvey, his militant spirit unbroken by the vicious attack on him, told the Daily Worker yesterday that he was ready to return to the South in the near future to continue his work, or accept any assignment given him by the Young Communist League.

Quotas Set, In Daily Wo

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"City Central Committee of the International Workers Order joins the Daily Worker drive by accepting its quota of \$250. Delegates enthusiastically pledge support. We challenge Pittsburgh City Committee of the I. W. O. to Socialist competition. Loser to buy winner a complete set of Lenin Library."

"N. A. GARFIELD, Sec'y."

The Pittsburgh I. W. O. had better hurry up. The whole Pittsburgh District is in competition with Wis-