024-037 Engelsk - Dansk (old book 23-31 Cotton and tobacco)  
  
Vincents text DeepL Pros oversættelse Min gamle bog

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| 24  On my way to Florida in the winter, I discovered where this fear and hostility, which blossomed into my terrifying encounter in the Northern streets, had its roots. Few blacks today pick cotton, but meeting those still trapped behind the cotton curtain, in the midst of the affluent society of the 1970s, seemed so surreal that I immediately felt thrown back in history—smothered by the cotton whose white tyranny once shrouded all black life in the South.  When I worked in the cotton fields, I discovered the reality was quite different from the one suggested in the historical photos and caricatures I recalled of smiling, almost childishly happy cotton pickers. The smiles in this picture were in fact the only ones I saw on the cotton plantations—when one of the pickers couldn’t figure out how my camera worked.  29  It took me a long time to overcome their hostility and fear of me as a white, but in the end I got to stay with Martha and Joe in return for giving them all the cotton I picked. Though I toiled from morning to night and was aching all over, I never succeeded in picking more than four dollars’ worth a day. The others were more experienced and could make over six dollars a day. This was relatively the same as today, where I see Martha and many of the others working for Walmart and still unable to pull themselves up by the bootstraps. We worked on a piecework basis and were paid four cents a pound. The white landowner then resold it on the market for 72 cents a pound. I began to understand how the landlord could afford to live in a big white mansion while his black pickers lived in shacks.  At quitting time the son of the landlord arrived to weigh the cotton and pay us on the spot. We were exhausted and there was no joy in receiving the money, which could hardly be stretched to cover kerosene for the lamp at home in the shack, which was probably no bigger or better than the ones the slaves originally lived in. How can these people be called free, when everything around them reminds them of the old master-slave relationship?  33  *Slave driver*  *The tables are turned now*  *catch a fire*  *you’re going to get burned now.*  *Every time I hear the crack of the whip*  *my blood run cold*  *I do remember on a slave ship*  *how they brutalized my very soul.*  *Today they say*  *that we are free*  *only to be chained in this poverty!*  *Good God*  *I think it’s illiteracy*  *it’s only a machine that makes money.*  A century earlier, whites had believed it their “natural right” to invest in human beings as private property. Hour after hour, in an updated version of this belief, well-to-do Northerners swept past us in the cotton fields in their big motorhomes on their way to sunny Florida. (Many of the northern universities where I later spoke, such as Harvard, were once financed by slavery.) Today each of their rolling homes burns up as much gas in an hour as we could buy after a whole day of picking cotton. Why are paper-shufflers in New York and Massachusetts, who already have huge homes, able to have these motorhomes while the cotton pickers don’t have even a waterproof shack to live in?   34  In the tobacco fields also, I saw that whites owned and directed everything, while blacks had to trail after them, both in the spring, when the tobacco was planted and unemployed women watched from their shacks, and in August, when it was picked. “It’s real nigger-work,” I heard whites say. “They’re already black so the tar doesn’t stick to them as much.” By law the workers are guaranteed a minimum wage, but it’s only 1/3 of Denmark’s. Worse, since tobacco picking is seasonal work and there’s not much work the rest of the year, it was indeed a meager income they scraped together. These people, who could’ve gained equality and freedom if they received just a couple of cents per packet of cigarettes sold, wore facial expressions as they worked only a slave could wear.  37  Later in the summer, the tobacco was dried and sold at auction. In few other places do we so visibly and forcibly continue to imprint the master-slave relationship on the consciousness of blacks. Wherever I go, I see white buyers from the tobacco companies who walk in front, giving quick discreet signals with pointed fingers and wagging heads, while the blacks rush behind them packing the tobacco bundles. The whites drive right into the auction hall in big flashy cars. They eat plate-size steaks for lunch at indoor tables, while the blacks have to eat their brown-bag lunches outside.  Today, most blacks have abandoned the tobacco fields to underpaid, illegal immigrants from Latin America. |  |  |