

Thousands march in U.S., Canada, Caribbean

May 26 protests hit U.



Merritt College contingent in Oakland, Calif., African Liberation Day action

By BAXTER SMITH

"Even though it is cold, even though it threatened to rain and may rain yet, the fact that we are here at all is testimony to the strength of the movement in this country and all over the world.

"The fact that we are not only here but we are here simultaneously in Washington, in San Francisco, in Los Angeles, in Chicago, all over the Caribbean, all over Canada, is some indication of the fact that Black people in the Western hemisphere are as concerned about and moving just as valiantly in the anti-imperialist struggle as our brothers and sisters in PAIGC, in FRELIMO, in UNITA, in MPLA, in ZANU-ZAPU and in all the liberation movements of southern Africa and Guinea-Bissau."

That's how Brother Mark Smith, of the Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOB) summed up the significance of the May 26 African Liberation Day demonstrations. He was speaking to a rally of 3,000 in New York.

Last year, two African Liberation Day actions were held—one in Washington, D.C., and the other in San Francisco. This year, demonstration organizers called for local actions. Despite inclement weather on most of the eastern seaboard, actions were held in more than 30 cities.

Not since the mobilizations led by Marcus Garvey some 50 years ago have there been actions of such a wide scale on the issue of the African revolution.

In addition to actions held in the U.S., four were reported in Canada, and others were slated in at least three Caribbean islands, London, and on the African continent itself.

In some U.S. cities, the demonstrations—though

of modest size—were the largest Black actions in recent years. In St. Paul, Minn., for example, more than 350 demonstrators turned out. With more than 200 protesters in Denver, it was the largest action held by Blacks in three years.

Most speakers at the demonstrations were local activists. Black elected officials were generally absent. Representatives of liberation organizations in southern and Portuguese-occupied Africa spoke at many actions, as well as African students studying in the U.S. In New York, Africans from their countries' diplomatic corps spoke or sat on the stage, and several other diplomats sent statements of solidarity.

The largest demonstration was held in Oakland, Calif., where organizers estimated the crowd at more than 10,000. *Militant* reporter Phillip Connor said one of the most prominent banners read, "Merritt College faculty and students demand the withdrawal of U.S. corporations from Africa and an end to U.S. support of NATO." Speakers there included D'Army Bailey, a member of the Berkeley city council; Tanya Russell, chairwoman of the Bay Area Africa Liberation Solidarity Committee; Oba Chaka of the Pan-African People's Organization; and others.

Chaka stated that Black people must come together to educate the masses of people and mobilize them in independent action.

The Oakland action, like the one in Los Angeles that drew more than 500, stopped at General Motors plants along the route of march to protest GM's operations in South Africa.

This year, African Liberation Day was dedicated to the memory of Amilcar Cabral. Cabral, the leader of PAIGC, the liberation organization in

Portuguese-Guinea, was slain by Portuguese agents Jan. 20 in the Republic of Guinea. In Chicago, where 1,500 protesters turned out, the nephew of Sekou Toure, president of the Republic of Guinea, spoke on the events surrounding Cabral's death. Lerone Bennett, historian and editor of *Ebony* magazine, and Dick Gregory were among the other speakers.

On a number of the marches, protesters filed past buildings housing U.S. corporations operating in southern Africa, as well as federal buildings and Portuguese, South African, British, French, and Israeli consulates. Speakers indicted these corporations and governments for their role in suppressing the freedom struggles.

In Boston, where 1,400 marched, a representative of PAIGC emptied a bottle of Costa Do Sol wine onto the street in front of the Portuguese consulate to initiate a boycott of Portuguese wines.

The ALSC plans to begin a nationwide boycott of certain Portuguese products, including Lancer's, Costa Do Sol, and Mateus wines; Portuguese sardines; and coffee imported from Angola, a Portuguese colony in Africa.

The ALSC also urges people not to buy Gulf Oil and Polaroid products. Both of these corporations reap tremendous profits by exploiting Black labor in Angola and South Africa.

Many speakers at the demonstrations linked the struggle for African liberation to national and local issues. In Detroit, where 2,500 marched, several speakers linked the struggle against the STRESS police terror unit to the struggle against foreign domination of southern Africa. One speaker said, "We're fighting the same enemy. A strike at STRESS here is a blow against U.S. imperialism in Africa."

Detroit protesters picked up on STRESS in the chants they shouted. "Nixon out of Africa—



Militant/Gene Yzquierdo

STRESS out of the ghetto" and "No more STRESS, No more dope in the Black community."

Several speakers mentioned the significance of Watergate. Mark Smith told the New York gathering: "We'd better start to study America. We better start to understand what Watergate means. If Nixon and them can run around and lie and cheat and steal and try to off people in the Democratic party, stop and think what they'll do to you . . . will do, have done, and are doing."

Pennsylvania State Assemblyman Dave Richardson told the Philadelphia demonstration of 400, "Let's not get confused by Watergate. Nixon only got caught. Corruption is a part of this racist government."

In Houston, several speakers linked Nixon's cutbacks in social programs to U.S. financial support of the Portuguese regime. Seven hundred demonstrated and heard speakers from the Black Panther Party; YOB; a member of the board of trustees of the Houston school district; and Gene Locke, Houston chairman of the ALSC.

Five hundred people demonstrated in Gainesville, Fla. One of the speakers there linked the U.S. struggle to that in the Caribbean, where U.S. corporations control large sugar and oil companies.

Most demonstrations grew as the march pro-



Philadelphia demonstration was led by a contingent of Black children

S. role in Africa



Part of the march of 3,000 in New York

Militant/Baxter Smith

ceeded. In New York, one marcher gestured to a brother leaning out the window of a large apartment building. He later told me, "When he saw all of us marching up the street, he must've done something because the next thing I knew about 20 or 30 dudes came flying out of there and joined us."

At the New Haven demonstration, which drew about 300 Blacks from all over Connecticut, a member of the Attica defense committee read a letter supporting ALD and signed by the 59 men under indictment for the Attica uprising.

Among the speakers at the New Haven rally was John Hawkins, a national committee member of the Young Socialist Alliance. Black members of the YSA and Socialist Workers Party were active builders of the May 26 actions in many areas.

The New York demonstration had a contingent of Puerto Ricans carrying a banner reading "Puerto Rican Student Union Supports African Liberation Day." Several Chicanos reportedly marched alongside Blacks in Houston.

The Washington, D. C., demonstration drew 3,000. Well organized monitors prevented provocative actions by cops from breaking up the demonstration. The speakers included Donald Isaacs, chairman of the local ALSC and president of the student government of Washington Technical Institute. WTI, a predominantly Black school, was the organizing center for the D. C. action.

The demonstration in Newark drew between 3,500 (the police estimate) and 5000 (the figure given by the Congress of African People [CAP]). CAP and the Committee for a Unified Newark were the prime builders. Speakers at the rally included Imamu Amiri Baraka, secretary-general of the National Black Assembly; Lennox Hinds, president of the National Association of Black Lawyers; two Black policemen from the Federation of Afro-American Police Officers; and a Black Newark city councilman.

Their 10-mile march, the longest of all, took them past the Kawaida Towers construction site,

where State Assemblyman Anthony Imperiale led a racist counter-demonstration. Imperiale heads the opposition to Kawaida Towers, which if completed would provide low-income housing for Blacks and Puerto Ricans in Newark.

Media coverage in most areas was generally good, especially from the Black press and radio stations. In at least three areas, D. C., Detroit, and Portland, Ore., where 400 demonstrated, local Black radio stations broadcast the entire rallies live.

Other demonstrations reported included 200 in Knoxville; 100 in Atlanta; 400 in Toronto; 150 in Montreal; and 4,000 in Raleigh, N. C., where Owusu Sadaukai, national chairman of the ALSC, spoke.

Demonstrations were also held in Antigua, West



300 marched in New Haven

Militant/Rob Wright

Indies, despite a government ban on the demonstration; New Orleans; Columbia, S. C.; Columbus, Ohio; Indianapolis; and Nashville.

While some organizers of the actions were hoping for a larger turnout, these actions were quite significant. Even though there are no U. S. troops fighting in southern Africa, there is *already* a growing movement demanding no U. S. support to Portugal or the white-settler regimes in southern Africa.

Blacks win right to strike in S. Africa

MAY 30—"Although it has far from abandoned what its critics think is both an unjust and an unworkable policy, the Government has surprised many of those same critics by trying to make the ideology more palatable." That's one way of describing the recent maneuvers of the South African government. The quote is from the May 29 *New York Times*.

Last week the South African government introduced legislation to grant Blacks "a qualified legal right to strike," as the *Times* put it. Strikes by Black workers were declared illegal in 1942.

The government's move was dictated by the tremendous pressure focused on the white-settler regime, which has reached international proportions since the massive wave of strikes by Black workers in the early part of the year.

South African Blacks are paid one-sixth to one-half of what whites earn for the same work. In 1972, for example, General Electric paid its

unskilled Black workers \$73 a month. This fell below even the government's official minimum-subsistence level. Whites who worked for GE, on the other hand, started at \$186 a month.

Many groups and individuals have been demanding that the government and corporations raise the wages of Blacks. This motion is what forced Pretoria to act.

Granting Blacks the partial right to strike is a major concession by the government, but it by no means marks a fundamental move toward eliminating apartheid. Blacks are still denied trade-union membership and the right to vote.

GE is but one of more than 200 U. S. corporations that comply with the apartheid system and aid in the oppression of the Black population. The demonstrations on May 26 were a step in the right direction toward exposing the role of these corporations and the complicity of the U. S. government.