

Harlem Firm Against Provocations of Cops

Negroes Roused by Bombing Cities and by Ethiopian Gains Are Attacked—But Nationalists Fail to Recognize White Anti-Fascist Allies

By Cyril Briggs

Mass indignation against Italian Fascism's slaughter of Ethiopian women and children by aerial bombs and the provocative acts of Mayor LaGuardia's police, mingled with exultation over the news of Ethiopian gains on three fronts, swept Harlem Tuesday night. For a time it looked as if there would be a serious clash provoked between workers and the police army of occupation thrown into the Negro community by Mayor LaGuardia following the March 19 outbreak and greatly increased last week with the invasion of Ethiopia by Mussolini's Black Shirts. Fierce resentment was expressed by speakers and auditors at an open air meeting at the northeast corner of 132nd St. and Lenox Ave. against an attack by police earlier in the evening on a Defend Ethiopia rally on the southwest corner of Lenox and 132nd Street.

Police Break Up Meeting

Scores of policemen, led by the Negro police lieutenant, Samuel Battle, had broken up the meeting and dispersed a flying column of Negro workers bent on closing the Italian stores in the district. The action against the Italian shopkeepers, some of whom fled the horrors of Italian Fascism and are opposed to Mussolini's regime, was organized by a group of Negro nationalists led by Ira Kemp. In sharp contrast to the policy of Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, in seeking allies wherever they can be found, Kemp and his lieutenants lump together Italian Fascism and its anti-Fascist opponents in Italy and elsewhere as "enemies" of the Negro people.

Police had also attempted to break up an Ethiopian defense rally 15 blocks away, at 117th St. and Lenox Ave., almost precipitating a riot.

Police Denounced

At 132nd Street the workers, driven from the southwest corner, reassembled on the northeast corner in a militant protest against the police tactics.

Waving the green, yellow and red flags of Ethiopia, they cheered as Ira Kemp denounced the police attacks and the Fascist invasion of

Ethiopia. They cheered again when he called for the moving of the meeting back to the southwest corner, but Kemp made no attempt to carry this out, declaring instead that he would "consult an attorney tomorrow" and taking up a collection for that purpose. He later promised that, his attorney willing, he would challenge the police ban on the holding of meetings on the southwest corner on Wednesday night. The militant workers grumbled at this delay.

Kemp charged that the Negro National Guardsmen of the 362nd Regiment had been disarmed on their return from camp "for fear they would shoot down white men with army guns." Again he lumped, by implication, the ruling class enemies of both Negro and white workers and the white fighters for Ethiopia in the same camp.

Negro Workers Welcome White Aid

He attacked the Roosevelt embargo against export of arms to Ethiopia and Italy. The embargo, as the Daily Worker has pointed out repeatedly, is directed against unarmed Ethiopia, and permits shipment of raw material needed for the manufacture of munitions to Fascist Italy, while banning arms shipments for Ethiopia, which has no munition factories.

Despite the presence of an army of cops, distributed on all four corners and on roof tops overlooking the meeting, the workers held their ground until the meeting closed, shortly after 11 o'clock. That the Negro workers at the meeting were guided by Haile Selassie's policy of welcoming allies, rather than by Kemp's narrow nationalism, was shown in their fraternization with white workers who joined in their protest against police provocation and the Fascist attack on Ethiopia.