



Members of the African Liberation Support Committee head the march at this year's African Liberation Day in Detroit, hitting at imperialism and national oppression both in Africa and the U.S.

"Get the Home Fires Burning"

ALD: Support African Peoples' Struggles

On Saturday, May 27th, the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) and the African Liberation Day Coalition (including besides ALSC the National United Workers Organization, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the Iranian Student Association, the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade) held African Liberation Day demonstrations in Detroit and three cities on the West Coast. The Association of Eritrean Students in North America and members of the Ethiopian Students Union of North America, including the Chicago chapter, together with other forces around the country, also worked to build these demonstrations.

The main slogan for ALD was "Fight Imperialism and National Oppression from USA (Union of South Africa) to USA (United States of America)!" The others were: "Victory to the African

Peoples' Just Struggles!"; "Down With White Minority Rule!"; "U.S. Out of Africa; Superpowers Hands Off!"

In Detroit, the site of the main ALD demonstration and the headquarters of some of the biggest exploiters of the African and U.S. people, the Big Three auto companies, 750 people marched and rallied on May 27. At the same time, the ALD march through Los Angeles' westside Black community was greeted by enthusiastic support, and grew to 250 people as it entered a local park for a rally. In East Oakland, up to 200 marched and 100 or so more gathered around in San Antonio Park for the rally. 125 demonstrated in Seattle.

Detroit March

The marchers began forming up at Grand Circus Park in downtown

Detroit. The ALSC contingent took its place at the front of the march. Autoworkers, steel workers, coal miners, garment workers of the National United Workers Organization contingent lined up right behind. Indeed, the organized presence of workers at the demonstration stood out sharply as an important feature of this ALD march. Next were contingents of Vietnam vets, foreign students, members of the Medical Committee for Human Rights and the RCYB. One participant in past African Liberation Days said, "While this might not be the biggest ALD march ever, it sure as hell is the most powerful."

The demonstration began to move down Detroit's main street, stretching for blocks. Chants of "Ghettos here, Bantustans there, Fight Imperialism Everywhere!" and "African People Fighting to be Free, Striking Blows at our Common Enemy!" rang off the

buildings. Many shoppers and bystanders stopped to check out the march. A number of people who saw the march came to the rally later.

The power of the march was first and foremost its political line—sharply pinpointing the imperialist ruling class as the common enemy of the African and U.S. people. It targeted imperialism as the source of national oppression, from the Sowetos and bantustans of Azania to the oppressed Black communities of the USA. And it called on the American people to support the African peoples' slave revolt against these same slavemasters.

Reflecting this line, the strong multinational character of the march caught people up sharp. It reflected both the desire and potential for multinational unity among the masses. Like one ALSC member said, "Seeing people of all nationalities united to fight the common enemy was a hell of a thing. I think that's what people on the street noticed."

The march headed toward the Renaissance Center, a luxury complex of hotel and office buildings, which stand as an ugly monument to the tremendous wealth and power accumulated by the capitalist class in the midst of ever worsening conditions for the masses. The biggest single investor in the Center was Henry Ford II, who recently swore Ford Motor Co. would never leave South Africa.

Constructed like a fortress, with bunkers and machine gun turrets, the capitalists billed it as the "rebirth" of Detroit—an outrage to the people of Detroit. Targeting the Center as a symbol of the imperialist system, ALSC put out its call to "March on the Renaissance Center." This target was very unpopular with the capitalists and their Detroit city government, who were hell bent on protecting their "image of rebirth."

As the march neared the Renaissance Center the police scurried to put on riot gear and mounted police suddenly appeared. As the march went by 750 strong on the one side and the police readied themselves on the other, the lines were clearly drawn between the masses of people fighting from Africa to the USA and the small handful of imperialists. After marching through the downtown area for another mile the march poured into Kennedy Square as loud and powerful as when it started.

Rally

It was clear from the revolutionary thrust of the march and rally why Detroit's rulers were so uptight. The first speaker, from the African Liberation Support Committee, put it straight when he said, "Africa 1978 is an Africa is flames. What we are saying today is that we hope these flames continue to spread and we're gonna do all we can to get the home fires burning!"

Speakers from struggles against national oppression like the fight to Free the Wilmington 10 in North Carolina, and the Cinco de Mayo Moody Park rebellion in Houston, as well as representatives from the Auto Workers United to Fight (AWUF) and the National United Workers Organization (NUWO), brought out how the masses of people in the U.S. are learning a rich lesson from the revolutionary struggle of the African peoples—that the only way to get these imperialist thieves off our backs is to stand up and fight them to the bitter end.

The daughter of the late Fred Ahmed Evans, who fought all his life for the liberation of Black people, gave a moving speech to the crowd. And letters of support for ALD signed by hundreds of workers were read off, including from several UAW plants in Southwest Ohio, Buffalo Ford Stamping, and from steel workers at Bethlehem's Sparrows Point shipyards in Maryland.

A member of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) spoke about the armed struggle in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) to liberate the country, and there were powerful statements of solidarity and internationalism from the Iranian Students Association, the Association of Eritrean Students in North America, and the Chicago chapter of the Ethiopian Students Union of North America.

Houston Fight Continues

Support Grows For Moody Park 3

The fight in support of those arrested in the May 7th rebellion at Moody Park is developing into a struggle of national significance. The bourgeoisie in Houston, shaken by the most important uprising of the Chicano people in a number of years, has arrested over 50 people who now face heavy charges ranging from assault to "attempted capital murder on a police officer." The struggle to free those arrested is aimed straight at the heart of the bourgeois system of "justice" which the capitalists use to enforce their rule over the masses of working and oppressed people.

Three of those arrested in connection with the rebellion are members of People United to Fight Police Brutality, an organization which has consistently led the fight against police repression in Houston. The capitalists have singled out these fighters for special attack in an attempt to crush the political leadership of the movement in Houston against police brutality and murder. The Houston-Moody Park 3—Travis

Morales, Tom Hirschi and Mara Youngdahl—are being blamed with responsibility for the rebellion, charged with "felony riot"—a law aimed against any mass protests or demonstrations. Anyone present in a "riot" situation can be picked out and charged with any crimes committed whether they participated in them or not!

Arraignments Protested

But despite the heavy charges they face (and a possible 20 years in prison), the Moody Park 3 and People United have continued to lead the fight against police violence, helping to build support for others arrested in the rebellion. On June 12, seven defendants arrested in the rebellion were arraigned on charges of assault on a police officer to felony riot. People United was there, holding a militant picket line in front of the County Courthouse to demand that charges be dropped against all those arrested during the rebellion. The picket line pointed sharply to the nature of

capitalist "justice"—where the pigs who murdered Joe Torres, a Chicano vet, were tried twice (once in state court and again in federal court) and still remain free while those who fought back against the invading police in Moody Park during Cinco de Mayo face years in prison. (See June issue of *Revolution*)

A small group calling itself the "Coalition to Defend the Barrio" has recently entered the scene. Composed largely of various movement groups, it has behaved in a very sectarian fashion. They have tried to spin the obvious fairy tale that People United is not interested in defending any others arrested. In the meantime, spokespeople for this group have made statements to the press saying they will have nothing to do with the Moody Park 3—only the other people arrested. This, of course, is much to the ruling class' liking.

On June 19, the Moody Park 3 were arraigned as another picket line march-

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Speaking for the NUWO, a member of the Miners Right to Strike Committee said: "We must not be caught off guard by the lure of some smiling peanut vendor from Plains, Georgia, when he talks about unity between working people—Black, brown, yellow and white—with the leeches of the capitalist class... We must not lift one finger to help them salvage even one piece of the fortunes they've stolen. No. We raise our fists as the African people raise their guns."

In a powerful statement the speaker from the Revolutionary Communist Party pointed out the African peoples are not fighting to replace one oppressor with another; but in kicking the imperialists out of their countries, they are taking the first step toward the final goal of eliminating the exploitation of man by man—communism. He said, "Why do we bring up socialism and communism on African Liberation Day? Because we're talking about freedom... Because there is only one way scientifically to eliminate all exploitation and oppression... All our lives the ruling class has constantly told us that

socialism and communism are bad. But the reason they hate it so much is because it's the one system, the one ideology—Marxism-Leninism—the world over, that is standing up and stomping out capitalism thoroughly and wholly, and wiping it off the face of the earth."

As the rally ended, the shouts of "U.S. Out of Africa, Superpowers Hands Off!" and "Africa is Rising Up!" echoed throughout downtown Detroit. People left for home to continue the struggle with a renewed sense of confidence that even though the imperialist system seems strong and the road ahead is a difficult one, in reality it is a system in decay which can only bring more misery down on the people and which cannot withstand the rising storm of struggle of the working class and oppressed people all over the world.

Building for ALD

The march and rally were a powerful climax to months of work nationwide building support for the revolutionary struggle of the African peoples against our common enemy. From Chicago's West Side Black community, to housing projects in North Carolina, street corner agitation brought the message of African Liberation Day '78 directly out

to thousands of people. In the course of taking ALD into several predominantly Black communities in the West Virginia coalfields, the people in one disco joint stopped the music and put on Prairie Fire's new record, "Got to Fight It" and "The Krugerrand."

At Brookpark Ford outside Cleveland, as members of Auto Workers United To Fight (AWUF) were passing out a national ALD leaflet for auto-workers, a pack of reactionary union officials tried to run them down with their new Lincoln Continental, and then started to provoke a fight in front of the plant gates. All of this kicked off tremendous discussion inside about Ford's assembly plants in South Africa, about the new "solution" of the UAW to build "stronger unions" in racist South Africa, and about the ALD march itself.

Since Detroit was the site of the main national demonstration, as well as the home of some of the biggest exploiters of the U.S. and African people (GM, Chrysler, Ford), the struggle to build for African Liberation Day was particularly sharp there.

The Detroit ALSC chapter began taking ALD out to the masses in the Black community and the major plants consistently in mid-April. The chapter aimed its work at a number of community colleges, neighborhoods and factories. At the Dodge Main Plant, with a long history of militant struggle, ALSC set up a banner, parked a sound car and began rapping. When the police tried to harass the car, second shift workers going in began to boo and the police backed down.

The National United Workers Organization put out a national leaflet about ALD for the plants. At the Ford Rouge plant and others in Detroit the AWUF chapter was joined by ALSC members agitating over bullhorns.

African Liberation Day began to become a significant social question in Detroit when ALSC and the Coalition began to wage some sharp struggle right up against the imperialists and their flunkies.

On April 29, Vice President Mondale was speaking at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) graduation. ALSC and the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade (RCYB) led demonstrators past the security guards into the arena where Mondale was talking about how the U.S. stands for equality, majority rule and human rights. He got stopped short with "Hey Mondale, you can't hide; we know you're on Vorster's side." While opposed by many in the hall, the action created tremendous controversy across the campus, with literally thousands of people arguing about the action—whether the demonstrators should have gone so far in their opposition to the U.S. role in Africa, whether Mondale was an appropriate target, etc.

Increasingly, as the word of ALD began to get out to the masses, the May

27 march on the Renaissance Center was becoming a topic of discussion. The city officials, along with their imperialist masters, began to see that ALD was a force to be dealt with.

ALSC and the ALD Coalition had to wage sharp struggle with the city to even get a permit for the march. The city tried to cut the strength out of the demonstration by insisting people march on the sidewalk and stay away from residential areas. Finally ALSC and the Coalition walked into a city council meeting to put the issue right on the agenda, insisting on the permit for the street. Amidst screams and curses from angry council members, ALSC and the Coalition held its ground, and went tit for tat with them and won the permit.

In the course of the battle so-called radical and liberal council members showed their true nature. The so-called "Marxist" council member Ken Cockral, a former leading figure in the Detroit revolutionary movement, led the council in a "be cool, follow the rules" routine and then let it all hang-out when he said "F--- you" to ALSC/ALDC.

GM Stockholders Action

The struggle to build ALD took a big leap after 50 demonstrators busted into the GM annual stockholders meeting in Detroit on May 19. As a leaflet put it, ALSC mobilized to confront "the top dog exploiters who will be taking stock of the profits they have squeezed from the labor of working people worldwide, from Black South African auto-workers to U.S. autoworkers."

The demonstrators stormed into the gilded halls of Detroit's Fisher Building chanting "GM get the hell out of Africa." The cops were caught thoroughly off guard. The demonstrators battled at the doors of the meeting and broke through for a moment. The look on the faces of these coupon clipping parasites was pure terror. It was like their worst nightmare had come true—the slaves marching on them in their sacred halls. With the cops running to catch up, the demonstrators moved back outside, marched across the street and set up a picketline at GM world headquarters.

After the GM action the battle between ALSC/ALDC and the bourgeoisie sharpened. Three RCYB members and four ALSC members were arrested for leafletting at a high school. An emergency picket line was called at the police precinct to turn this attack around.

The next day five squad cars pulled up to the ALSC office. They delivered a special letter from the Detroit city council threatening to revoke the permit. ALSC continued to go on the offensive politically, exposing the city at every step for protecting GM, Ford, and the rest of the rich rulers of Detroit. This was the setting for the May 27th demonstration.



ALD demonstration passes the "Renaissance Center," recently built by the Detroit bourgeoisie expressing their vain hopes of a rebirth and their contempt for the masses. The plan to march on this symbolic structure generated sharp controversy and conflict with the local rulers.

The effect of the different actions contained an important lesson. The basis for advancing ALD was fleshing out and deepening the line of "Fight Imperialism and National Oppression from the U.S.A. to the U.S.A.," and boldly propagating this stand through extensive agitation in Detroit's Black community and major plants. The demonstrations in Ann Arbor, at the City Council, and at the GM meeting were important in making ALD a big social question.

By going straight up against the imperialists, each action served to further expose the role of the U.S. imperialists in Africa, and sharpened up the connection between the revolutionary struggle of the African people and the struggle in the U.S. for tens of thousands of people. At the same time these demonstrations helped to bring forward activists to join the ranks of ALSC.

Sharp Questions

In the course of building for African Liberation Day nationwide, many sharp questions came up from among the masses. For instance, in certain departments of the Ford Rouge plant in Detroit, ALD leaflets became almost big character posters, with workers writing all kinds of comments back and forth on them. Many asked, "What about the Russians?" There is a wide awareness, of course, that the Soviet Union is not a friend of the world's people, and often the question on people's minds is, if the U.S. pulls out, won't the Soviets and the Cubans come pouring in?

Besides stressing the correct slogan—"Superpowers Hands Off!"—it must be pointed out that the American people have the main task and opportunity of opposing "our own" imperialist ruling class. The African people, for their part, are fighting for total liberation from imperialism and of course have no interest in having the social-imperialists step in and take over. At the same time, superpower contention on the African continent is part of their jockeying for position in preparation for a world war, and it is important to arm the masses with this understanding.

The other commonly heard question was often expressed as follows: Why worry about what's happening on another continent when there's so much that's wrong here at home? The key to resolving this contradiction is a scientific analysis of imperialism, which

reveals its character as a "worldwide system," keeping down the masses of people both at home and around the world. Down to earth and lively agitation around many particulars both here and in Africa is essential to bringing this alive.

There is a particular link between the national oppression faced by Black people in this country and the oppression by imperialism of the nations of Africa, the continent from which the forefathers of American Blacks were forcibly removed. This link is not the same as the wrong view put forward by Pan Africanists like Stokely Carmichael who say all Blacks are an African people with one goal—freeing Africa. The forms of national oppression are very different and the immediate tasks—in the U.S. socialist revolution led by the working class, and in Africa national liberation—are also different. But there are real links. There is a common enemy. And these connections are certainly felt on a perceptual level by Black people in this country. This, of course, helps make it possible for ALSC—and the Party—to mobilize the masses against imperialism on both fronts.

In doing this, one of the tasks of ALSC is to raise this perceptual understanding to a higher level, showing how the underlying link between the oppression of Blacks in the U.S. and the oppression of nations in Africa is the system of imperialism, the common enemy which faces people both here and there. This deeper understanding is concentrated in the slogan, "Fight Imperialism and National Oppression From U.S.A. to U.S.A."

Following this line has enabled ALSC to make progress in developing a clear revolutionary thrust to its work and in uniting masses of people around itself—progress illustrated by this year's ALD.

This year's African Liberation Day and the work leading up to it did much to advance the task of building a united front against imperialism under the leadership of the working class—the strategy for revolution in this country. In particular, ALD took further steps in forging the solid core of the united front, the revolutionary alliance between the struggle of the multi-national working class and the struggle of the oppressed nationalities. New fighters came forward, and the question of imperialism as the common enemy of the people in this country and in Africa was raised among many thousands of people. ■



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