PLP Leads Charge vs. Fascists

BOSTON, May 3—A gigantic blow was struck against fascism in the U.S. when over 2,500 workers and students, evenly divided between black, Latin and white, celebrated the historic international workers' holiday of May Day in a militant march through working-class Boston.

Led by communists in the Progressive Labor Party, members of PLP, Workers Action Movement (WAM)—who also endorsed the march—and a score of caucuses and unions, all sent the cry of "DEATH TO THE FASCISTS!" ringing through the skies over Boston which has become the cradle of a mass-based fascist movement centered around Louise Day Hicks' Nazi organization, R.O.A.R. (Restore Our Alienated Rights).

The marchers had picked Boston for the annual East Coast May Day march this year because it symbolizes in name and in fact the rise of a fascist movement around the busing issue directed against black working-class families but intent on destroying the unity of all workers, diverting us from fighting on the real issues of jobs, for 30 for 40, and against racism itself.

The leadership given by communists in PLP was signaled by the call to "Fight for Socialism" which was pointed out as the real and ultimate answer for workers oppressed by capitalism and threatened by fascism. Many workers and students either joined or expressed the desire to join, PLP or PLP study/action groups. The marchers, the majority of whom were not PLPers, graphically understood in life the leadership provided by communists and communist ideas in the fight against fascism. And they understood how communists carry on the militant tradition of May Day by directing the organized strength of the working class against the most virulent section of the class enemy. For on this May Day, 1975, the fascists were routed in their own back-yard.

Part of a simultaneous May Day effort that saw marches take place around the continent, in Detroit, Houston, Toronto and Los Angeles, the Boston marchers began arriving in the assembly area at Columbus Point, adjacent to South Boston (the home of R.O.A.R.) at about 10:00 A.M. from Boston itself and as far away as Durham, N.C., Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, as well as later on from New Jersey, Buffalo, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Long Island and New York City. (According to the Boston Globe, May 4, "Police estimated that 2,500 persons eventually marched."

BOSSES DENT PERMIT FOR SOUTH BOSTON

The Boston PLP had applied for a permit to march through South Boston, where the Hicks-Kerrigan fascists have made their home base (originating a national R.O.A.R. organization in 11 states from there). However, Boston's rulers feared the working-class unity-against-fascism message that might get across to the workers of South Boston, many of whom had greeted PLP and WAM members in March and April leafletting for May Day. So they denied the permit, "offering," instead a route through downtown Boston where absolutely no one would see or hear the marchers.

The March organizers refused to accept this dead-end, appealed the ruling, and thereby forced the city to issue a permit for a march through the area adjoining South Boston, along Columbia Road through Dorchester, a combined white, integrated, and black working-class area, all of which was plastered with May Day posters.

However, scores of workers and students DID break the ban on anti-fascist demonstrating in South Boston by picketing Hicks' home in the rich section of that area earlier in the morning. Then they proceeded to the rally assembly at Columbia Point. It was then that the biggest battle of the day took place, in which the fascists were routed, despite the presence of hundreds of cops, armed to the teeth.

The organizers were setting up the sound system and making preparations to receive the thousands soon to arrive. Scouts on a hill nearby sighted about 75 fascists—out of a group of maybe 200—moving towards the assembly area with clube, baseball bats and sawed-off hockey sticks. They raced to alert those in the assembly area.

March leaders immediately recognized the fascists' plan, obviously coordinated with the cops (who were applauding the fascists as they made their move) to attack the early marchers and give the cops the pretext to move in with swinging clubs, smash the sound system, and use the melee as an excuse to cancel the march as an "incitement to riot." (This was mentioned as a warning shortly afterwards by the police chief in the area to a March leader.) Then the rest of the fascists' supporters could take over the entire Mall assembly area and "great" the main-body of buses soon to

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arrive with rocks and prevent the marchers from even assembling, much less marching. But this May Day the fascists’ plan was not to be thwarted.

The March leaders, especially the communists in P.L.P., had organized to meet the fascist threat, having recruited many members during the preceding weeks into a Fighters Group which they hoped would defend the march in a militant, organized way. As the marchers arrived with the message of the impending fascist attack, Derek Pearse, a leader of P.L.P. and WAM, took the mike on the sound truck and alerted the gathering Fighters Group: “Attack! Attack!” (See “Battle of Columbia Point”, FIGHTERS).

The berserk action of these Fighters had maintained the security of the assembly area. However, the cops attempted one more foray. About 75 on motorcycles began recirculating the still small group of 100 or so early arrivals near the sound truck. At that point Pearse-led the workers and students in the singing of the international communist anthem, the Internationale, and the union song “Solidarity forever,” as well as militant chants of “Death to the Fascists!” This united the people in a tightly-knit manner, in defiance of the cops’ attempt to terrorize them. After 15 or 20 minutes, these uniformed fascists gave up and left the immediate assembly area.

Soon afterwards the main body of buses began arriving, hundreds streaming off to hear the results of this early battle and inspired to make this May Day one to remember. The Fighters Group grew, the workers and students formed into ranks six abreast, with cross-linked, and, with contingents of Fighters at both the front and rear.

With a sea of red flags flying smartly in the breeze on a warm, sunny spring day, the marchers stepped off in spirited fashion chanting: “Death to the Fascists!” “30 Hours Work for 40 Hours Pay!” “Men and Women, Black and White, Workers of the World Unite!” and “Fight for Socialism!”

The six abreast formation never broke ranks. The Fighters Group and marshals alongside the March continued giving leadership according to plan, emboldening the marchers who were facing a constant stream of harassment from cops on motorcycles constantly running back and forth along the route of the march with sirens screaming.

The Battle of Columbia Point

BOSTON, May 3—“Bring a bat. Hit them so hard they will never come back.”—From a leaflet distributed by R.O.A.R. in South Boston on May 2d.

Seventy-five to 100 heavily armed punks organized by R.O.A.R. were routed by a charge of less than 30 black, Latin, white men and women defending the Boston May Day March. Advance contingents of the P.L.P. arrived at Bay St. and Mill in Columbia Point adjacent to South Boston at 9:15 A.M. One hundred fifty cops took up a position at the same time in the course of the march fastfret from South Boston. Periodically cars scouting for the racist mob gathering at nearby Colombian Park (in South Boston) drove through the Mill. Several times the racists learned the lesson and screamed, “today you’re going to get it, motherfuckers.”

At 10 A.M. two buses from Durham and Waltham arrived.

At 10:30 the totally white mob of racist fist waving baseball bats, hockey sticks and metal pipes marched rocks and bottles and money across to the top of the hill overlooking the mill. The PLP fighters in uniform, in red watch caps and Challenge Badges shirts, armed with Garrote bolts, charged up the hill. The marchers defending southbound truck boomed out “DEATH TO THE FASCISTS, DEATH TO THE FASCISTS.” On hearing the chants and seeing the charge arrange the racists broke and ran.

Those that remained were quickly put out of action. The R.O.A.R. fascists were facing the uniformed fascists of the Boston Police Force. Attacked the PLP fighters from behind. beat some of them and arrested four, Larry Hambrecht, Rick Rhoads, Bob Reno and Gary Higgenson. The defeated punks that had fled across the road cheered the cops and then departed for South Boston where armed by frustration they smashed cars, buses and store windows at random. The cops threw the four arrested into wagons screaming that will teach "you to come to South Boston, you Jew bastards.”

The marchers a round the sound trucks continued to exhibit "Death to the Fascists" and "Fight Racism" as the cops lined up facing them, sirens screaming and motorcycle engines revving. A P.L.P. member announced from the southbound truck, "We are still here, we are going to have our march. We have fought the battle of Columbia Point and we have won." A fighter said later, "We ran up the hill because I knew that we couldn’t let this racist scam beat up the march before most of the people even knew about it. We were willing to back up our revolutionary communist ideas with physical force because we know that if we don’t fight back we will be swamped by racism and fascism.

The R.O.A.R. people are ready to throw rocks at black children in school buses, but when faced with a counterattack most of them were not sufficiently committed to racism to overcome their fear. Communist ideas proved stronger than baseball bats.