

# THE COMMENTATOR

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A Marxist Analysis of Issues and Events

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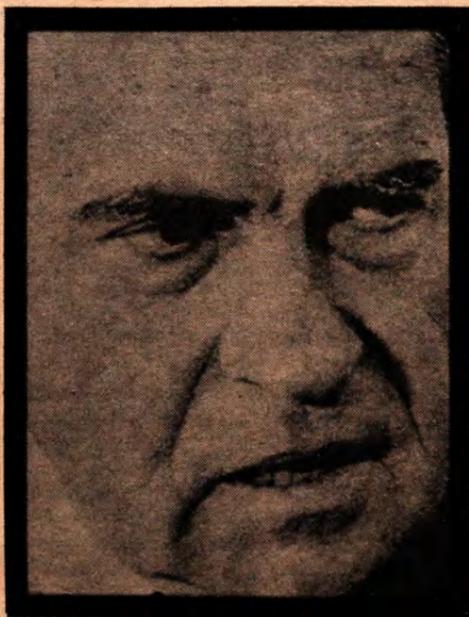
## S-1: DANGER OF A POLICE STATE

Long ago and far away in the fall of 1974, it seemed to the vast majority of people that they had, perhaps, seen the last of Richard M. Nixon - Would-Be Dictator. Watergate had been exposed for what it was, the American Democratic System had Triumphed!

Meanwhile, back in the Senate Judiciary Committee, S-1, The Criminal Justice Reform Act of 1975, was being revised, amended, and generally made more and more repressive as those who wished to continue Nixon's policies (with or without him) prepared for a new attack. The bill began its long history in 1966 as a liberal attempt to reform the U.S. Criminal Code. However, when the Brown Commission finished its report in 1971, Richard Nixon was in office and the bill was much too "liberal" to meet his standards. So he had the Justice Department under John Mitchell and Richard Kleindeinst (both of Watergate fame) draft a new and more "acceptable" version of the bill. This draft combined with some of the more reactionary recommendations of a minority of the Brown Commission became what is today S-1.

### ANTI-CRIME FACADE...

The one aspect of the bill that has some chance of winning popular approval is contained in the sections dealing with crime in the narrow sense of the word-street crime. The bill does provide much stiffer sentences for most street crimes and severely limits the rights of those accused of crimes. Confessions would be admissible in court if the judge deemed it "voluntary". The defense's right to select a jury would be limited. A person convicted of



a felony twice could be termed a "special dangerous offender" and the state could move to resentence him or her on completion of the term. Appeals would be made more difficult, a person could get a higher sentence as well as a lower one. Many who are concerned about crime will say: Right On! After all we are constantly told by the police that they are powerless to do more about crime because their hands are tied by laws protecting the criminal. S-1 would certainly make it easier for the police to lock someone up and keep them there.

This is a direct legal reflection of the "law and order" philosophy of crime causation and prevention. Crime, we are told, is caused by leniency and cured by cracking the whip. Unfortunately, many working people, who are victims of an increasing amount of street crime, very often fall for this explanation. But the actual truth is that crime is growing because poverty, unemployment, despair and drug addiction are all growing. And these things are going to grow even more rapidly from now on. A good section of the youth, increasingly more white as well as minority youth, will not know what it is to have a steady or decent paying job. What are they going to do? Increasing the powers of the police will do little or nothing to stem the tide of street crime, because it has nothing to do with the causes. Increasing police powers will only allow the police to become more criminal and corrupt themselves (more so than they already are), wielding even more

unrestrained power than they already do.

### ANTI-DEMOCRATIC SUBSTANCE

There is another side to S-1, however, which taken together with the above makes this one of the most repressive pieces of legislation in our history. S-1 creates a broad category of what may be termed political crimes. Some of the more glaring are disclosure of information about our government, "Impairing Military Effectiveness", obstructing military recruitment, obstructing a government function, demonstrating within 200 feet of a Federal Courthouse to influence the outcome of a trial. The first three are felonies punishable with anywhere from 15 years to life imprisonment plus \$100,00 fine. Disclosure of information could be deemed espionage, impairing military effectiveness could be judged sabotage.

The bill for the first time defines not only what treason is but what armed insurrection means. Armed insurrection against the execution of any federal law would be termed treason. It revives the Smith Act making advocacy of revolutionary change of government, no matter how far off, a felony and reinstates the death penalty for crime related to Treason, Espionage, Sabotage, Hijacking, and Kidnapping. In addition S-1

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I, RICHARD M. NIXON  
HEREBY BEQUEATH TO THE  
AMERICAN PEOPLE:  
1) JERRY FORD,  
2) MY TAPE-RECORDER,  
3) THE S-1 BILL

SIGNED

*Richard M. Nixon*

THE NIXON LEGACY

## S-1 CONT...

would grant to agents of the FBI, the Treasury Dept., the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and even to Postal Inspectors the right to make an arrest has committed a felony".

The bill redefines the 1968 Riot Act reducing the number of people which could constitute a riot from 10 to 5. It grants the right of government agencies to wiretap in the name of national security and makes it felony for any landlord, superintendent, or telephone company employee to refuse to cooperate in bugging. In fact the "National Security Exception Clause" permits the use of bugging and interception of mail by the President in the name of national security.

How would this bill affect working people's right to organize? While the bill specifically excludes from the charge of sabotage "lawful labor strike activity" - wild-cat strikes at defense, or defense related, or national security related industries (very broad indeed!), any strike against which there is an injunction, all of these could be termed sabotage. Also the section on riots could be used against picket lines, labor rallies, demonstrations against unemployment, etc. With more and more people on the streets, on unemployment lines, high school students with just plain no where to go as recreational facilities are cut all over - working people are going to need those rights in court, which S-1 would take away.

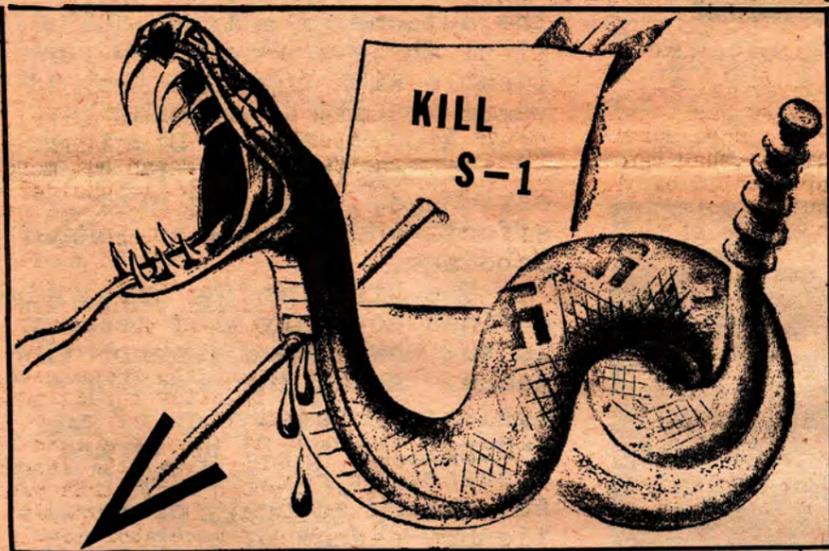
court. S-1 would make the entire U.S. Criminal Code into one long series of interrelated laws thereby making it much more difficult to discredit only part.

S-1 is part of a many sided assault on democracy being waged by the ruling powers in this country. After Nixon over-reached himself in the Watergate episode, the reactionaries were obliged to retreat and pursue milder, more indirect tactics. But S-1 shows more than any other single thing that this campaign is still very alive and advancing, in spite of the Watergate fiasco. If anything the Watergate exposures taught the ruling powers, once again, the lesson that a little democracy goes a long way in thwarting their efforts to conduct policies in their favor behind the backs of the people.

U.S. imperialism has drawn several lessons from the 60's. One is that democracy at home, even the limited democracy we have here, is a big obstacle to waging war and pursuing imperial interests overseas. Two is that the Soviet Union seems to have a definite edge in the contest for world hegemony by being able to dispense with democratic formalities. Lastly, with a developing economic storm brewing in the capitalist countries, it is best to prepare for the storm by strengthening the state machine and laying the axe to the rights and liberties which can be tolerated in peaceful times but can hardly be afforded in times of approaching crisis.

### SNEAKING IT THROUGH

One would think that many



### BEHIND S-1

Of course S-1 is not the first piece of repressive legislation this country has seen, nor will it be the last. As early as 1798 we saw the Alien & Sedition Acts restricting freedom of speech and press on penalty of deportation as an enemy agent. Our legislative history also includes such gems as The Black Codes, the Taft-Hartley Law, the McCarren & Smith Acts, the 1968 Riot Act, and the current repressive NY State drug laws. So how is this bill different from what we already have? S-1 attempts to standardize, to generalize many of the repressive laws that already do exist but only on a statewide level at present. It would make those laws that apply in some states into Federal Law applying in all states (for example the NY State Drug Laws). It also reverses progressive Supreme Court decisions on the Death Penalty, the Smith Act, involuntary confessions etc. by trying to get around certain technicalities on which the decisions were based. Right now we do not have any one single law which grants the federal government and in particular the President (one person) so much power. The U.S. Criminal Code is but a conglomeration of various laws enacted over a long period and separately applied and tested in

of the "law and order" politicians would be openly campaigning for the S-1 bill. But so far they have been practically mum. They apparently fear publicizing the bill and making it an open issue; rather, they count on getting it passed with a minimum amount of publicity. One reason for this is that they are counting on a certain amount of moderate and even liberal support. Once the moderates and liberals are compelled to face their constituencies, it is feared that they will back away from supporting the bill. This has already happened with Birch Bayh, one of the original sponsors of the bill. The promoters of S-1 undoubtedly fear an open confrontation. If the bill becomes a public issue, many "law and order" minded working people will also back away from supporting it once they realize how broad the attack is on their rights.

There is some vocal liberal opposition to the bill: some congresspeople, a few labor unions, the A.C.L.U., plus some other liberal and civil libertarian groups. Some parts of the Left have also started opposing the bill. Several newspapers have come out in opposition to the bill, but they have not given it more than the most minimal coverage. As a result, the vast public is almost com-

pletely unaware of the bill. The liberal newspapers and congresspeople can by no means be relied upon to bring the issue of S-1 to the public. They are overconfident of their ability to handle things among themselves, forgetting that it was the publicity around Watergate and mass public sentiment, angrily aroused by that publicity, that stymied Nixon and his cohorts. It is definitely going to require a grass roots campaign to just force the issue out in the open. This has already begun, but in far too limited a way.

### WE MUST FIGHT

Because of the broad nature of the attacks on our rights contained in S-1, a wide range of people, both working class and middle class, could be mobilized to fight against S-1. All of us who ever worked for social and political change in this country, whether by reform or by revolution, must try to build coalitions and committees, where we live and where we work, to expose the nature of this bill. Public opposition to the entire bill (not just some sections) must become so vocal that the reactionaries have to answer and the moderates and liberals are afraid to vote for it. The working class was never in the leadership of the anti-war movement and joined it rather late. If this occurs with S-1 it may be too late.

It remains true that the democracy we have is only "bourgeois" democracy - a limited democracy in the case of working people. Still it is to the advantage of working people to keep those rights we do have at the same time fighting to expand them. By using those rights -- Joann Little was acquitted, Watergate was exposed, the United Farmworkers union was organized, and the people of the U.S. learned of and came to oppose the U.S. role in Vietnam.

By using those rights, unions can organize legal demonstrations to protest unemployment and high prices. Those of us aware of S-1's dangers can petition and campaign against it publicly.

Fascism did not come to Germany overnight, on the day of Hitler's coup. It began with a gradual erosion of democratic rights, by legislative means, over a period of years -- rights many people took for granted until they needed them -- and they were gone.

### SONS-CONT.

significantly to the democratizing of all phases of life--economic, political and social. They forced the domestic aristocracy to extend democratic rights to all free male citizens and even raised the issue of slavery, causing some northern colonies to adopt legislation prohibiting slavery.

More importantly, the Sons marked the first effective inter-colonial union and even helped to forge a working class solidarity. There is much evidence that workers from one colony sought and usually gained the support of workers in other colonies in their struggle for independence and freedom. In fact, there even existed some international solidarity with the formation of Sons of Liberty in Dublin, Ireland and the Constitutional Society of London. Both these organizations sent money, supplies and support to the colonial Sons. These groups overseas even encouraged the non-importation agreements which caused unemployment for some of their own members.

What the Sons of Liberty clearly shows is that the American Revolution was importantly affected by the role of common working people who banded together and fought in their own interests. In the process of

struggle they won important concessions in democratic rights from the rising domestic aristocracy. It is an early and powerful example of collective militancy on the part of workers. The early labor movements of the 1800's learned from the experiences and methods of the Sons. The narrow trade unions of today could take a lesson from the Sons of Liberty who involved themselves with political and social problems as well as economic issues. □

### BDGT CRISIS CONT.

Thirdly, labor must fight for the interests of the non-working poor, people on welfare, young people, the unemployed, the retired, and elderly--people who are in an even weaker position than those organized in the unions. If labor does not protect the interests of these people, we'll all be weaker.

### PIECARDS CAVE IN...

Up til now the union leaders have backed down at every main juncture. All the union leaders have been collapsing in face of the "there's no money" argument. Hardly one has the guts to keep pointing to where the money really is--and how it can be had. And how could they? They themselves are financiers, presiding over vast funds, wheeling and dealing with their members money.

They have all been a fairly disgusting and despicable lot--but Albert Shanker takes the prize. He allowed himself to be pressured into doubly betraying the struggle. First he refused anything more than a token strike, a token fight. But worse still, he came to the rescue of the big banks and investors. With what? The pension money of his members! What effect will this have on the teachers, especially the older ones? Perhaps we better be careful about default, my pension money is in there, some will think. Since that time, the financiers have made an all out grab for the pension funds of the city workers. It's a brilliant gambit from the point of view of the rich. It splits the older workers off from the rest. It allows the big investors and banks to back out of their positions in city debt as the pension funds move in. And who do you suppose is buying up the blue chip securities the pension funds are unloading at bargain rates to make room for the shaky city paper? You guessed it, the banks and big investors! And when and if the whole thing does go smash, who'll be the big losers? The retired and about to retire city workers. Charming, isn't it? You'd better believe investment and financial wizards like Felix Rohaytn earn their pay--however high it is.

### GENERAL STRIKE

That the union leaders even brought up this interesting subject shows the extent of the discontent among the rank-and-file city workers. But it was raised only in bluff, and they quickly backed off in fear.

Well might they fear it. A general strike has the potential of giving enormous impetus to the class struggle and consciousness in the city and in the country as well. This is even more important than any immediate gains that might be won. Without shaking off the lethargy, cynicism, disunity, and backwardness accumulated in the course of two or three relatively prosperous decades, the working class will remain but a plaything in the hands of the politicians and the wealthy.

The left and progressive forces must work towards making this possibility a reality--must catch hold of this phrase dropped inadvertently from the lips of the piecards and agitate for its eventual transformation into reality. □

# ABORTION: WHAT ARE THE CHOICES ?

In 1973 the Supreme Court legalized women's right to have an abortion through the sixth month of pregnancy. Women could no longer be prosecuted for the "murder" of their unborn. However, doctors could be prosecuted and on Feb. 15, 1975, Dr. Kenneth Edelin, a Boston physician was convicted of "manslaughter" of the "baby boy" of a 17 year old woman during a legal abortion. The Catholic Church, the Right to Lifers, The Friends of the Fetus and others took heart, sought and won an indictment against another physician. In response, those few hospitals which had made their services available to women seeking safe abortions began to close their doors or limit the scope of their services by denying abortions to those women beyond their twelfth week of pregnancy. Without relent, the anti-abortion forces convinced state legislature after state legislature to prohibit the use of public funds for abortion. They are pressing to prohibit the use of federal funds for abortions as one step in their campaign to repeal the Supreme Court decision. Potent arguments have been made pro and con abortion. The question of abortion is certainly not simple, nor is it absolute. Today, there are some nations, such as Japan, which frequently use abortion, legal on demand, as a means of birth control. On the other hand there are the socialist nations of Albania and China, where abortion, also legal on demand, is seldom resorted to and is utilized less with each passing year. Women and men concerned about this issue and especially those concerned with seeing abortion become a thing of the past must understand the necessity of fighting to maintain the legal and extend the practical right of all women to abortion on demand.

## MOTHERS AGAINST CHILDREN

In the space of time it took to write the above passage, a child somewhere in the U.S. was beaten within an inch of its life by a mother or father driven crazy by conditions beyond her (his) control. Several more "unwanted" children were born to dazed mothers in harried, indifferent delivery rooms. One or more of these children will be abandoned soon... to die or be found, made much of by the media: "The search is on for the mother who committed this heinous crime", and shunted between foster parents and various institutions. A year does not pass in which we do not read of the parents who drowned, shot, stabbed or threw their children out of windows. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of "would be" children will not become such because women won the legal right to abortion in 1973. Still, it was 1974 when this "30 YEAR OLD, WHITE, MARRIED, MOTHER OF 6" was rushed onto a ward at Kings County Hospital. She had collapsed en route to x-ray. Staff worked, blindly but hard to save her. They watched the cold, grey color literally crawl from her legs up to her flushed, hot face which could not hold out: she gave up and "expired" early noon... a suspected septic\* abortion. In 1974, this woman was an exception. Prior to 1973, the gynecology wards were bulging \*unsterile and therefore capable of causing possibly fatal infection.

with such women. When the legislative battle to make abortion legal and thereby safe was being fought, those opposed to abortion dragged out photos of "babies" in uterus whose tiny bodies were ripped apart during suction curettage or "stillborn" (unable to take their first breath) after being "salted out".

Those in favor of legalizing abortions dragged out the case histories of women who died in the effort to get rid of their unborn. They pointed out the plight and often brutal abuse of the "unwanted" child. And they pointed out the plight of the overburdened family. Potent, emotionally weighted arguments were presented on both sides. Something was missed by all sides. That "something" is woven into the fabric of a society that, under certain conditions, sets mothers and fathers against their children; a society that establishes an antagonistic conflict between the mother's life and that of the child's.

## WOMEN...

The burden of "biologic destiny" ranges in weight from heavy to not so heavy depending on the woman's class status. That the primary responsibility for child rearing lies with the woman is a fact that crosses class lines. If a kid goes "bad" the mother gets the lion's share of the blame. If you listen to the words behind the words of Ford or Wallace or Reagan as increasingly large numbers of middle and white working class people are doing, "some kids (inferring black kids) go bad and burden the rest of society because that society encourages their mothers to lie back and have kids."

In one sense, capitalist societies do, indeed, encourage--not only third world women--but all women to engage in more or less heavy sexual activity. Men, of course, have always been encouraged to do so. Heavy pressures are exerted on younger and younger teens to live up to sexual ideals prepared, packaged and sold by filmmakers, chic sophisticates and pornographers. Mr. Ford may preach all manner of "responsibility" but, Mrs. Ford, at least, acknowledges that she wouldn't be surprised if her daughter told her that she was engaging in premarital sex.

Of course, the moral judgments and social penalties for engaging in the very sexual activity she is encouraged in are heavy and all the more heavy if the woman is Black, Latin and/or poor.

## ...AND THEIR FAMILIES

The man or woman who cannot feed, clothe or house his/her children is a failure in a society where "anyone who really wants to can make it". Capitalist society makes that claim while in reality its economy and structure is highly destructive of the family unit.

President Ford claims that restoring a healthy economy requires that about 8% of our people remain unemployed. Ideally, a "healthy" capitalist economy has an unemployment rate of about 4%. In other words, a "healthy" U.S. economy requires that 8,000,000 people be without work. In good times, 8,000,000 people are made to feel that somehow they have failed personally. How many

more people must now be feeling the weight of personal failure--a failure that is not theirs but that of a society which cannot provide jobs in spite of all the work that needs to be done. Mothers, in particular have been deprived of the support necessary in order for them to work. Government never provided even a fraction of the support needed in day care to help the working woman succeed in caring for her family.

Once you have "failed" and are completely impoverished you can seek charitable help or state aid. The amount of aid varies from state to state but whatever the amount of aid, it only serves to further degrade parents in their own and their children's eyes. Some fathers (who feel the failure most because they are supposed to be the providers) "run out" on their families. Most women stay and suffer all manner of humiliation so that their children may survive.

While capitalist society does not have full employment, day-care, good schooling and decent, freely available health care to preserve the family unit with dignity it does have courts, prisons and juvenile detention centers for family "failures".

## ABORTION/INFANTICIDE

However you regard the fetus--human life has begun in utero. It can no more survive outside the uterus than can an infant of one or a child of three survive without support.

Those who oppose legal abortion know that making it illegal does not stop it. It gives "safe" abortions back to the rich who alone can afford to go where it's legal. It sends the rest of lower income women back to the "dirty" abortioners. Forces opposed to abortion highlight all manner of abortion abuses since legalization. Without question, these abuses concern all of us and must be stopped.

In many areas, large numbers of abortion clinics have opened up to take advantage of the expanding market for abortions. Some of these have no competent staff or hospital back-up services in case of complications. Reporters have uncovered clinics ready to do abortions (for high fees) on women who weren't pregnant. The root of abuses such as these--which exist in all areas of medicine in the U.S.--lies in the profit system. Take the profit out of medical services and watch the abuses disappear.

Slowly, slowly and with no help from most of the anti-abortion forces--women, mostly in the middle and upper classes--are learning about the process of reproduction and the alternate methods of birth control. Pitiful, often non-existent, efforts have been made to educate poor women and third world women in particular. Many poor women are fearful of or find the available means of birth control distasteful. There is good reason for this. Many gynecologists (this writer has worked with many) hold poor, badly educated and especially third world women in contempt. As a consequence--they do not practice responsible medicine... nor has pressure been exerted on pharmaceutical or surgical

supply houses to devise truly safe and agreeable means of contraception.

Some people, like the comedian Dick Gregory, have claimed that abortion raises the spectre of genocide for black communities. The history of the U.S. has shown genocide of black people to be a very real fact of life. Forms of genocide have ranged from lynching and razing of black neighborhoods by fire to the recently exposed sterilization policies in force in some areas of the country. Abortion can be and is utilized as a means of birth control. This is not, however, simply an abuse of abortion but is a reflection of the totally inadequate efforts made to popularize birth control and to make it freely available in safe and agreeable forms. In fact, Dick Gregory

and other black spokespersons are opposed to black women utilizing birth control. Whether or not black women use birth control as a means of limiting or expanding the black population is a political decision to be made by them. Their right to make that decision must be guaranteed by law as must the right of all women to have or not have a child be guaranteed by law.

## GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

Those actively engaged in the fight to make abortion illegal again, and they include many good and sincere people, expend a great deal of energy, time and money in the effort.

Abortion is not a happy choice for any woman but more and more women will consider it a necessary one to make given the worsening conditions in the U.S. today. They will decide for abortion whether legal or illegal. This needn't happen if greater numbers of people (anti-abortionists included) expend their energies in the fight to alter conditions in the U.S.

How is it that in a land where, at one time, the drowning of newborn baby girls was common-place, child abuse is unheard of, where abortion is legal on demand but rarely used? Visitors to the People's Republic of China are constantly bringing back insights into how that country is solving its problems.

For example, in China today, women are an indispensable and increasingly more equal participant in the country's production. The family has a great deal of support in the raising of its children--through paid maternity leaves, nurseries at the workplace where nursing mothers can go to nurse their babies. (However, mothers may choose to stay home with their children if they wish though fewer and fewer women do.) They have very cheap or free health care, good schooling and full employment. Family planning is encouraged through widespread public educational campaigns. Interestingly, family planning is encouraged only among the Han chinese (the majority nationality in China). Birth control, while available, is not encouraged among the national minorities which, under the oppressive conditions of the past, were almost wiped out.

Those interested in finding out how abortion can, most quickly, become a thing of the past have only to look to the society of the future. □

# BEHIND

"The pain is just beginning ..." according to Felix Rohaytn, chairman of Big Mac. The pain so far has consisted of 35,000 lost jobs, drastically increased fares and tolls, and considerable cuts in city services. In spite of Ford's supposed rescue, the budget crisis is far from over. Even more drastic attacks on the poor and working people of NYC will be made in the coming months and years. The crisis has spread from NYC to NY State and indeed city and state governments all over the country, and may yet result in a complete crackup of NYC's financial structure.

## BASIC CAUSES OF BUDGET CRISIS

The most obvious and superficial explanation of the budget crisis is that there has been a mounting gap between the revenues collected by the city and its expenditures. This year's budget is supposed to be on the order of \$12.1 billion. The city's debt exceeds one year's budget, and exceeds by even more one year's collection of revenues. The accumulated deficit becomes city debt as the city borrows to make up the difference. This money is borrowed from the big banks, other financial institutions, wealthy investors, plus a number of middle class investors. \$13 billion means something like \$1 billion a year interest--tax free--to those holding city bonds and notes. Quite a bonanza! Moreover, \$1 billion is no small part of a \$12 billion budget, which goes not for schools, services, or the needs of the public--but directly into the pockets of the wealthy. If there is an attempt to pay any part of the principal, as well as the interest, which there is these days under pressure from the banks and investors, then the part of the budget going to debt service becomes much larger.

The real question, of course, is how and why this debt came into existence, why the gap between revenues and expenditures led to the accumulation of such a debt. The main factor is the general economic crisis that has gripped the U.S. and other capitalist countries in recent years. It has been manifested in a big jump in unemployment--up to 9.7% at one point. There has been a mounting wave of bankruptcies and near bankruptcies of big banks and corporations. All these plus many other facts signify a severe and worsening crisis despite any momentary upturns.

This general crisis affects NYC through the erosion of its tax base--increased unemployment in private industry, many businesses suffering a decline in profits and volume, some leaving the city altogether. Inflation, on the other hand, has pushed up all of NYC's costs--construction, office furniture, legal services, etc. Wages of city workers have gone up too, until recently, but not as fast as everything else. Simultaneously, the big businesses have been waging a successful campaign to reduce their share of the tax load, threatening to leave the city otherwise. With large numbers of longterm unemployed swelling the welfare rolls, costs have gone up in spite of the city's merciless attacks on welfare spending.

## THE DEBACLE OF KEYNESIAN ECONOMICS

What is remarkable about the period since WW1 is not that a crisis is developing now, but rather that the crises up til now have been so mild and short-lived. One of the main factors enabling the ruling powers to avoid a major crisis for so long has been the accumulation of massive debt. Corporations, individuals, and government at all levels are in debt to the tune of \$3 trillion, or more than twice the GNP for one year. For

a long time now, bourgeois economists have thought, following Keynes that the crises of capitalism could be fundamentally smoothed out by a policy of government spending beyond its collection of revenues--deficit spending. But now the pitfalls of this solution are becoming obvious as the mountain of debt has reached the sky. Payment of principal and interest--debt service--has become so large as to make further expansion of credit dangerous to the creditors. Either the government finances further deficit thru, in effect, printing more money, risking runaway inflation, or by taxing heavily enough to reduce the deficit. The first is totally unacceptable to the big banks and holders of the \$3 trillion debt; it also threatens to create havoc in the economy. The second would also surely send the economy into a nosedive by drying up the consumer market. Either means big trouble.

Ford, in spite of all his rhetoric about balanced budgets, has run up a deficit of \$70 to \$80 billion in the Federal budget in a single year. Ford, however, had to admit "We have a different power than NYC has, that we can print money in effect..." By printing money, the Federal Gov't can escape the kind of predicament facing NYC.



wealthy and middle classes from the city and beyond its taxing power, leaving an ever greater concentration of poor people within the city.

Furthermore NYC has traditionally acted as a magnet for immigrants from Europe, and of late, Latin America. From NYC, these immigrants would gradually be drawn further to the interior for the convenience and profit of various manufacturers and employers of cheap labor. But the economic crisis prevents the pool of labor from draining out of NYC. And the business community could hardly care less about the fate of this reserve they no longer need.

The crisis here has been greatly accentuated, oddly enough, by NYC's character as a center of finance, commerce, and so-called service industry--a character reinforced by the flight of much of the city's light industry. In times of prosperity when profits are abundant, these sectors of the economy expand at a greater rate than most others. But in a downturn - just the opposite is the case. Now NYC's "topheaviness" has become a grave liability.

## GOVERNMENT AS PART OF PROFIT MACHINE

The big banks and big private investors are without doubt the biggest profiteers milking the city. But it should not be

somehow different. Many have been attracted to city and government employment by this illusion - thinking such employment to be secure - above and beyond the vicissitudes of private industry. It is supposed to be run for the public good. This is a gross illusion. NYC government is but a huge pot - a pot continually filled out of the public pocket - public here meaning the working person's pocket. But also in this pot are many hands of the rich grabbing after huge profits.

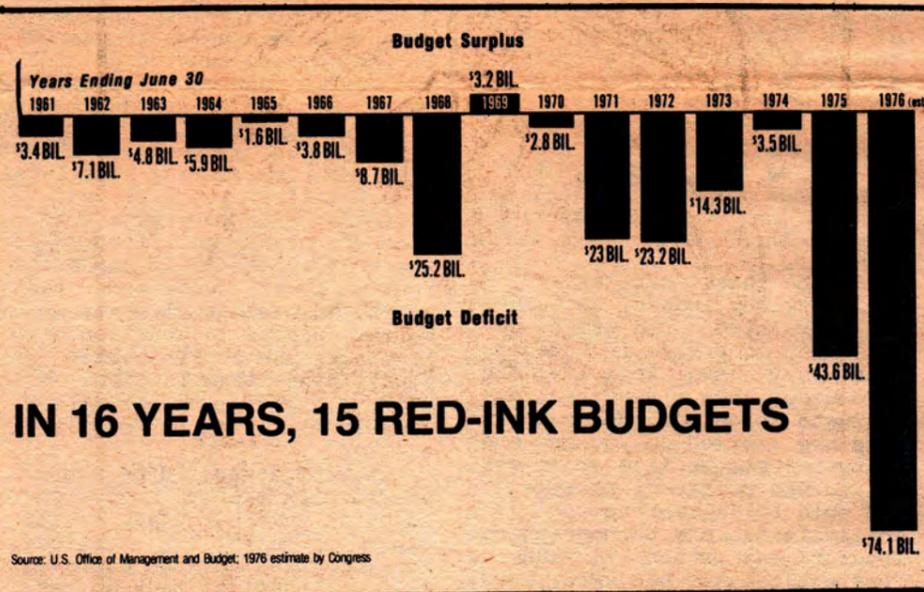
In the final analysis, city government, just like government at all levels, is a huge money machine for the rich and wealthy. And this is shown, more than anything else, by the fact that NYC is being shaken to its foundations by the economic crisis in the "private sector".

## BUT THERE'S NO MONEY

This is the single biggest argument used by the big banks (and also the union leaders) in paralyzing the struggle of working people to defend themselves against the assault on their well being.

It is the federal government, through the Federal Reserve, which regulates the quantity of money. In our present economy money is, in the final analysis, nothing but government debt (non-interest bearing). The government is faced with certain problems in regulating the supply. In times of mounting crisis, there is great pressure to increase the supply to ease the problems of those enterprises in difficulty. Giving in to those pressures altogether leads to runaway inflation. The big banks vehemently oppose this since it would completely devalue their holdings, and moreover, threatens to plunge the entire economy into chaos. But this has not prevented the government from coming to the aid of Lockheed or Penn Central. Why then was it so reluctant and so harsh in the case of NYC? Because, in the case of NYC there are some 8 million people, the bulk of whom are working people and their families - who can be made to pay for this crisis. In essence what Ford said to the NY financial community was: You're worried about your money? You've got 8 million people to squeeze it out of...SQUEEZE. Then we'll see. In the case of bankrupt corporations like Lockheed, there are "poor" stockholders, bless them, to worry about. It was only after Carey and Beame agreed to squeeze harder and faster that Ford agreed to extend short term Government loans to the city.

But, even aside from the Federal Government's ability to "print" money, and contrary to ordinary notions, the shortage of money is no more absolute than the oil shortage was. When prices rose, oil became abundant again. (This is not to deny a real component to the oil shortage). Likewise, too, money is available, at a certain price, or rate of interest. Most of it is in the hands of the rich - who only let go of it for the right price - as high as 11% interest on the big MAC bonds for example. All this talk of a "capital" shortage only means that profits, the rate of return on money, is not high enough to entice it from the hands of the rich. Or, if the "risk" becomes too great, high interest rates are not enough -



Yet another factor behind NYC's present crisis is that the bankers, the financial powers, and their political henchmen actively fought for the creation of this huge debt. Both Lindsay and Rockefeller approvingly presided over massive debt accumulation, both have brothers at the pinnacle of the banking business--one at Morgan Guaranty and the other at Chase Manhattan. It was in the interest of the big investors and big banks to have this huge debt because it was a very profitable investment --tax free. Up til the recent crisis, it seemed relatively secure.

Among other factors contributing to this crisis is the exodus of business out of NY to NJ, to the suburbs, even out of the country. This has been a long term tendency--but has accelerated in the face of the economic crisis. This has left NYC with a huge, expensive infrastructure built "for" the business community which has chosen to leave for greener pastures. Together with this has been the flight of the

thought that they are the only ones. The city lets out contracts to many private corporations - contracts for goods and services - from legal services to tunnel construction. These city contracts are immensely profitable - at least in normal times. Quite aside from the salaries of the big politicians themselves, plus their expense accounts, there are many "plums" passed out by victorious politicians to those businessmen who financed their election. Recent estimates run to 5,000 such jobs. In addition to these more direct channels - the city is in many ways able to either impede or favor the profitability of a variety of industries in the city - thereby enriching various speculators. If the city decides on improving a waterfront or building a convention center - this is an immense boon to certain business and real estate interests.

People are accustomed to distinguishing government from private enterprise - thinking that private enterprise is run for profit - but government is

# THE BUDGET CRISIS

and must be accompanied by "guarantees" of repayment backed by "public funds" i.e. taxpayer money. A drop in the rate of profit is one of the principal signs of a crisis as far as the financiers and capitalists are concerned. Hence there is a frantic effort to raise the rate of return as the antidote to the crisis.

There is, however, a long recognized method for retrieving some of this money from the rich. It is called taxation. The tax structure in this country has become very lop-sided in favor of the rich. The rich, through a maze of loopholes in the tax laws, are able, in some cases, to escape taxes altogether on incomes as high as \$1 million a year. Between 1970 and 1974, the tax rate on the biggest accounts dropped from 21% to 11%. According to Fortune magazine (Dec., 1975): "But many banks have now reached the point where they consider it politically dangerous to reduce their tax liability any further..."

Between these two methods of raising more money (printing or taxation), it is preferable to place primary emphasis on taxation of the rich, because resorting to the printing presses extensively will lead to inflationary pressures. But, even then, price controls are a proven weapon. If the rich complain it is not because these methods are impractical, but because they cut into profits.

## THE BOGEY OF DEFAULT

This is the other part of the argument used to terrorize working people into accepting huge cutbacks. Default simply means the failure to pay one's debts as they come due. It does not mean the failure to pay at all. Actually default has already taken place. NYC has declared a debt moratorium of three years on its short term notes as well as reducing interest somewhat. It also renegotiated its debt with the banks. This was part of the price the local powers had to pay for Ford's rescue. But this "default" has so far been a "defeat" one, and more or less done with the connivance of the big banks and investors. It is quite true that a massive default might well serve to trigger a more rapid downturn in the economy, since failure to pay on time breaks the chain of payments which stitches together the entire top-heavy credit structure. This was the principal weapon being wielded by NYC note and bond holders in their battle with Ford and the Federal Government to get bailed out. But the chief weapon being used to avoid default is the tremendous cutbacks in everything that affects working people in the city - jobs, services, everything. All in the name of avoiding default - avoiding late payment to the city's creditors.

Even though default of NYC might well serve as a trigger to a sharpening of the economic crisis - it would by no means be the underlying cause of such a downturn. The \$3 trillion of debt sitting atop the economy has already begun cracking in various areas. The NYC "crack" - while an especially big one - is only one more crack in a process well begun.

The developing crisis means sharpening attacks on working people, default or no default. Massive attacks in the name of averting the default are no different than the supposed conse-

quences of default itself - namely a more massive attack on working people. The question of default, one way or another, is a false issue for working people.

What would, however, offer a more interesting approach is a REPUDIATION of the debts - non-payment altogether. Such a demand is quite definitely a just demand since the debt was incurred, not by the politicians, bankers and wealthy investors in their own interests, and since it is they who have avoided their fair share of taxes for a long time. REPUDIATION of the debt and TAX THE RICH to avoid further deficits. There you have the solution to the "budget crisis" as far as simple economics is concerned. There's nothing wrong with it - except that the rich oppose it because it is a solution at their expense.

## HIDING BEHIND THE SMALL INVESTOR

This is yet another ploy used by the wealthy to conceal their stake in this crisis. The TV and media have consistently pushed, not Rockefeller or Chase Manhattan as the typical investor, but granny in sneakers who's

## NYC AS A POLITICAL FOOTBALL

Ford and his cronies were trying to make political hay out of the city's crisis. NYC was compared to a drug addict whose only solution was to go cold turkey. In addition, it has been portrayed as full of free-loaders, welfare cheats, etc. This is but a warmed over version of the old Nixon "law and order" rhetoric. It is also a very thinly veiled attack on Black and other Third World people, who are pictured as the majority of NYC inhabitants to outsiders. It is also an attempt to incite suburbia against the "sinful" cities, and runs parallel to the attempt to pit White against Black and Third World.

But of course NYC is far from being alone. City and state governments all over the country are in the same boat. Municipal workers are striking all over the place in the face of these attacks. And, of course, NYC is 3/4 White!. The vast majority of people live in cities either smaller or larger. And the vast majority are White. Anyone who thinks that inner-city, Third

bankers and wealthy as a whole as against the particular interests of Rockefeller and other big investors in NYC. And bankers as a whole are more concerned about erosion of their assets through overly great inflation than they are about a few of their fellow sharks taking a drubbing.

The chief weapon the big capitalists with a stake in NYC had was the threat of NYC default triggering a general downturn - even a panic. The big fellows are playing increasingly rough, even with each other, these days. Carey and Beame even called on the citizens of NYC to demonstrate against default and for Federal bailout. They did this in order to rescue the investments of their wealthy bankers, for no other reason. These two had no hesitation in laying the axe to every vital need of working people, but they feared they could not chop fast enough to avert default and so they wanted a bailout. Ford said - chop faster and we'll see about a bailout. There was nothing here for working people on either side!

## THE ESSENCE OF THE ISSUE - A CLASS STRUGGLE

It is quite simple underneath it all: a struggle between capital and labor, the rich and the poor, as to who is going to pay for the crisis. So far, it has been the working people who are paying. The rich have been fairly successful in disguising the issue, in disguising their stake, their interests, under camouflages. We've tried to strip off some of the main ones here. The rich are waging a class struggle - in their interests. Labor, working people, the poor must wage a struggle in their own interests. To wage a class struggle you need unity. First - all workers must support city workers. If conditions for city workers get worse, it means the job market for all workers is worse.

Recently, a big TV crusade caught sanitation men stopping in for a few beers on working time. How horrible! But sanitationmen, even if they stop off for a couple of beers, do work for a living. Why doesn't TV do a big expose on the Jet setters who never work, but live like royalty by clipping coupons - and the tax free 11% interest (in some cases) they get on NYC bonds? Because the media are owned by and otherwise beholden to these self-same jet setters.

Secondly, labor must fight for special protection for third world workers and not let a disproportionate share of the crisis fall on their shoulders. They are on the bottom of most seniority lists. If white working people do not support special protection for these workers, recognize the already far higher rate of unemployment among third world workers, then class unity will go out the window and all are going to be defenseless in the face of continuing attacks. Also, the various programs to give some assistance to third world communities are the first ones to come under the axe. Even though all are going down, third world people are going down much faster, and inequality is growing. Inequality is the worst enemy of unity. Without unity there can be no struggle.

CONT. ON P. 2



counting on her \$30,000 in NYC bonds to pay for her old age. This is the same ploy the big capitalists have used in regard to ownership of corporations. Middle class families with a few stocks each are presented as the "owners" of the big corporations. Thus the controlling and dominant role of the wealthy is concealed. There is a very simple way of exposing this tactic. If the small investor is the real victim of any default or repudiation, then, let us repay all bonds held by each investor up to a value of, say \$50,000. What a howl would then go up! As a matter of fact, it is only the small investor who is really taking a big risk. The Federal Government stands ready to bail out the big banks if the waters get too rough, according to Chairman Arthur Burns.

World, urban dwellers are going to be the only victims of this crisis are tragically deluding themselves.

## A FEUD BETWEEN MAGNATES

The rift that developed between Ford and Rockefeller is very instructive. Rockefeller and his family have, either directly, or through the banks and other holdings, a huge stake in NYC's debt. He no doubt got a NYP in his precious belly every time his "Boss" prattled on about the investors in NYC bonds making a fast buck and how default would not be such a "big catastrophe". Ford represents the wealthy and powerful of the Middle West, and in addition is more and more obliged to heed the interests of Western and Southern capital. You might say that Ford represents the

## SHIFT CONT...

provides the Soviets opportunities to unload this surplus and turn a neat profit to boot.

In South East Asia, where the U.S. has been kicked out to a large extent, the Soviet Union is moving in. Moreover, it is doing everything it can to turn some of these countries against China.

### DIRTY WORK IN ANGOLA

Currently, the Soviet Union's work is being done in Africa. The Soviets have succeeded in splitting up the liberation forces in Angola and are now very pleased with themselves for having split up the OAU and the unity of the entire continent. The South African regime and the U.S. are well recognized enemies of the African people. The Soviets have taken advantage of this fact to pose as liberators and maneuver various forces there into a position of dependence on them.

The military victories of one faction over another are very much the result of Soviet aid and foreign troops. Each of the factions had a certain base of popular support. This kind of victory places the victor in dependence on his benefactor. As a result of the splits and hostility, many forces are more likely to turn to one superpower or another - resulting in a setback for the liberation movement all around.



It is interesting to note that the great "liberator" fears to expose itself by sending its own troops. It sends those of a dependent Latin American country half a world away. Those troops most definitely could not be there without Soviet say so. The U.S., on the other hand, much as it would like to stick its snout in Angola more massively, is having many difficulties. Angola itself is one of the clearest examples of how the balance of power is shifting from one superpower to the other.

However, the biggest plum on which the Soviet leaders have their eyes is Europe. They have large numbers of troops and tanks in Eastern Europe, far exceeding the NATO forces. They periodically flex their growing muscle with vast military maneuvers and exercises. The Soviet Union utilizes any conflict - as for example between Greece and Turkey - or any unrest - as in Portugal - to make a grab for power and influence - and, if possible, military bases. There is nothing new in the methods the Soviet Union uses to exploit its new empire. We have already mentioned the sales of outmoded weapons. It also uses the "price scissors" paying low prices for the raw

materials and goods it imports and charging high prices for its industrial goods and munitions. It extends loans at high interest which are tied to purchases of overpriced Soviet goods. It sets up jointly

owned state industries as in India. It keeps its various dependencies enslaved by chaining them to the "international socialist division of labor". This keeps third world countries backward and dependent on world markets for their raw materials or basic commodities. It prevents more advanced Eastern European countries from achieving economic independence and all-sided development. The Soviet Union is trying to shift its crisis to Eastern Europe through raising prices for oil and raw materials.

It is enough to make a review like this to realize that the Soviet Union is no mean imperial and, in many respects, is already a greater imperial power than the U.S. This is something that has snuck up on us almost imperceptibly, so to speak, but is fact nonetheless.

### A LEAN AND HUNGRY LOOK

It is sometimes argued that since the U.S. economy is twice as big as the Soviet's, how could the Soviets be more dangerous than U.S. imperialism? But this was also the case with Hitler's Germany. The much lower standard of living allows

a big military expenditure. The lack of any democracy gives the leaders much greater room to maneuver. The fact that the S.U. has an anti-imperialist and revolutionary past and continues sailing under the socialist flag, plus the fact that the people of the world are much less awakened to the imperialist nature of the S.U. gives the Soviets a big advantage over its adversary. The greater centralization and concentration of the Soviet economy gives the Soviet leaders the possibility of accomplishing specific objectives with much greater ease than the U.S.

Then too, it is not often realized how desperate the Soviet leaders are. The Soviet Union is afflicted with a severe economic crisis as a result of its retrogression to a State monopoly capitalism. The Soviet Union's socialist pretensions aggravate this contradiction, not lessen it. If in the U.S. there is, for a time, a cynical and despairing attitude toward such phenomena as mass unemployment, inflation and poverty; this is partly because people take these things for granted in a capitalist society. In the Soviet Union, unemployment, poverty and inflation are rearing their head but these capitalist features are more dangerous in a country that still

has constitutional guarantees of a job for every person. It is only through the Soviet's frantic militarization that such open capitalist manifestations are momentarily retarded. This is much the same as was the case in Hitler Germany. Then too, the S.U. is entering its imperial career at a very disadvantageous time. The Third World and people generally are much more awake and active than at any time in the past. Carving out an empire is a much more difficult job these days. China grows stronger with every passing year. Time is not on the side of the Soviet leaders for these and other reasons.

### THE ROAD TO WAR

The U.S., on the other hand, will not forever lie back and watch a redivision of the world against its own interests. At some point the U.S. will join the issue in defense of its own interests and position in the world. In short, war is inevitable sooner or later.

Some of these facts are recognized by people in high places in the U.S. Nixon actively sought out improved relations with China. Today James R. Schlesinger and William Safire, among others, are openly advocating closer relations with People's China as a counterweight to the growing ambitions and threat of Soviet expansionism. All of these figures are above any suspicion of sympathy with communism.

That such figures actively seek some sort of rapprochement with People's China is ample testimony to the seriousness with which even they take the Soviet threat. The Chinese point out that, of the two superpowers, it is the S.U. that has become the more dangerous and aggressive. China has begun making use of the contradictions between the two. As far as the S.U., it regards People's China as its arch-enemy in the world. And yet, it is unlikely that China is its objective in any immediate sense. Of all the various adventures the S.U. might embark upon, war with China is one of the least promising. It might not be hard to get in, but it would be impossible to get out. Rather, to a certain extent the Soviet sabre-rattling in China's direction is more in the nature of a ruse to deflect attention from its true objective; namely Europe. At present, the Soviet Union is busily engaged at snipping the lifelines--in the Middle East, in Africa. And all the while, as it constantly nibbles away at the timbers and raves at the Chinese menace, it preaches peace and detente.

When anyone complains; if you're so interested in detente - why do you keep nibbling so furiously? Ah, they answer, detente does not mean we will give up aiding wars of national liberation. And what, to the Soviet Union, are wars of national liberation? Cambodia? Certainly not. India's war against Pakistan--that was a war of national liberation. The war of one Angolan faction against two others--that was a war of national liberation. The sale of surplus arms to the Egyptians, the pressing for repayment of debts, this is "aid" in a war of national liberation. The end result of which is to place this or that force in dependence on the Soviet Union. Again, the situation is reminiscent of Hitler's tactics: which was to proclaim peace, denounce the Soviet menace, and take another bite out of Europe--then promise never to do it again--only to repeat the whole process all over again.

There are those in the West who hope to get out of this pickle cheaply, and for this they would prefer to see a "war

between the two communist giants" as they put it. But some of these people have apparently taken up the study of history. China released some Soviet fliers recently, two or so years after their helicopter was first downed. They said that they now found the pilots' explanation of accidental overflight credible. What is interesting is not so much the Chinese action as the reaction in the West where it was taken as a sign of Chinese unwillingness to pull U.S. and Western chestnuts out of the fire.

### NO BASIC CHANGE

It is important to understand that the basic character of U.S. imperialism has not changed in all this. Permit us one more historical analogy. Winston Churchill through his whole life was a Tory and arch-reactionary. He organized the 14 nation intervention to strangle the then young and socialist Soviet Union. Yet, by the 30's he recognized the anti-communist rhetoric of Hitler for what it was, and became one of the principal advocates of an alliance with the Soviet Union to defeat Hitler Germany. And then again, before the ashes of WWII had begun to cool, he visited Missouri and called for the beginning of the Cold War against the Soviet Union, or rather a resumption of the old war so to speak. In all three phases of his career he remained a faithful spokesman of British imperial interests.

This shift in world politics by no means signifies that we should relent in our struggle against the domestic oppression of the U.S. rulers. But to only oppose and expose U.S. aggression, and neglect the activities and danger of the other superpower is but to aid the other superpower in its bid for world hegemony. It would also mislead people in regard to the danger and source of another world war. A footnote. This question is still under discussion in our group. The ideas in this article, while the majority view, do not reflect a unanimous opinion. □

### Bicentennial Dinner

From the time we are born  
Until the day we die

We are fed on corn  
And Mom's Apple pie

The waiters who serve  
Just laugh up their sleeve

For the menu -- observe,  
Was made to deceive.

by D. T.

CHOU EN LAI 1898--1976

We deeply mourn the death  
of a great revolutionary, a  
beloved comrade and a friend  
of the American people.



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# HISTORY SHOULD SERVE THE PEOPLE

As the nation begins to celebrate its bicentennial, there is developing a renewed interest in U.S. history. Schools and communities are re-enacting events and entire battles from the revolution. During this same year of celebration, millions of working people are losing their jobs and suffering the cutbacks and anxieties of the general economic crisis. This latest economic attack on working people comes right at the heels of the repressive political attacks of the Nixon years, the most sensational being Watergate. With economic prosperity and faith in democratic government rapidly fading away, working people are growing angry and confused. It is no surprise that the quaint bicentennial festivities hold, for the masses of people, little joy and even less peace of mind.

History ought to help people to understand their past and their present so that they may indeed control their future. But U.S. history as we were taught it is both useless and misleading for any of these purposes. Our history, we were told, was the story of continuing progress toward ever greater freedom, well-being and perfection. And throughout that history, ordinary Americans wanted nothing else but to go along for the ride. It is a history of great men and great events where the millions of workers and farmers are cast as mere spectators. This view of history makes the problems we face today incomprehensible. For, if U.S. history is such a success story, why are we now in such a mess? This view allows us no alternatives to our present predicament--alternatives rooted in our own past. For, if working people throughout our history merely went along with the course set by the powerful and were incapable of acting on their own, where can we turn for answers?

But the reality of the U.S. past is quite different. Setting

aside the standard high school history text and turning to newspapers, pamphlets, and newer historical research, we see some of the roots of current problems developing through the years. Even more important, we see that the masses of American people have not played the role of idle bystanders. Rather, united working men and women have organized to fight their common oppression and to build a better life. They have struggled on all fronts--political, economic and social using many methods--unions, strikes, armed battles, seizure of factories and schools, violent and peaceful demonstrations, boycotts and third parties including labor, socialist and communist.

This heritage of struggle, holding both defeat and victory, is of tremendous value to us in understanding and reacting to the crisis of the 1970's. Because knowledge of our history of struggle holds such potential, it is to the benefit of the rich and powerful to keep it from us.

The struggles of the working people stretch back to the beginnings of this country. Struggles grew and sharpened with the industrialization of the 1800's, when workers found themselves laboring in larger groups under worsening conditions. Capitalism was on the rise in these years and the "robber barons" were riding roughshod over the working class. The end of the 19th century and the beginnings of the 20th century saw the even higher development of capitalism in the form of imperialism. Before the end of the second decade the world had been thrown into a vast imperialist upheaval--World War I. Of course this side of the story is familiar to us, but how much do we know of the resistance in those years? The formation of the Industrial Workers of the World in the 1800's and their membership of 100,000 in 1913?

The first anti-war movements of 1898 and 1913--16? And in the years to follow--the formation and growth of the first U.S. communist party, the massive struggle to build the C.I.O., interspersed with periods of repression--the 1920's "RED SCARE" and the McCarthy era?

The time has come for us to reclaim our past, to learn from these struggles of the working class, to learn of our government's real history of repression, to understand how a handful of families in this nation hold their power and attempt to manipulate our very lives. Grasping our real past will help clear away the confusion over the source and meaning of today's Watergate's and economic crisis. Our current hardships have roots a century ago and we will see how our ancestors fought back, learning from their successes and failures. In this way we can better prepare ourselves for the bitter struggle ahead of us if we are to really gain control of our country and our lives. For now, in the 1970's, it has become clear, the alternative is increasing repression, that has occasionally surfaced in the past but is now creeping more and more upon us. This bureaucratic repression could, if unchecked, lead ultimately to fascism.

To aid in arming the working people with a clear understanding of the questions and alternatives facing us, the COMMENTATOR will regularly explain an historical movement, issue or event and, in some cases, comment on its relevance for today. Through this and other efforts we hope to gain a better understanding of our own history as a class and to better equip ourselves to organize to combat the fascist trend and to build for a socialist society--aspirations held by some of our ancestors a century ago.

## WHO WE ARE

The Commentator is put out by a Marxist-Leninist collective in the New York area.

In the Commentator we try to analyze current events in the country and the world from a Marxist point of view. We attach especial importance to tackling political and social issues on people's minds, as well as economic issues.

In particular, we feel that under Nixon the danger of fascism became very real in this country. We also feel that the danger has not lessened. Fascism will not come to this country in the same form it did in Germany or Italy. It decks itself out in the red, white and blue, goes under the slogan of "law and order" and uses Black people as its chief scapegoat.

We attach especial importance to exposing and educating people to this danger, in order to help build a united struggle against it. However, we believe that of all the forces that can be united to oppose the fascist danger, it is the working class which must lead.

While we believe that the main struggle of the American people right now is against encroaching fascism, the fundamental problems of our society, such as inflation, unemployment, war, racism and poverty can only be solved by the establishment of a socialist government, one which gives the ownership and control of the means of production to the majority of the people, protecting their interests rather than those of a small group of exploiters.

To achieve the above goals, we believe the working class needs a genuine Communist party, based on Marxism-Leninism and the teachings of Mao tse-Tung.

We want to make contact with progressive minded people, working people especially (but not only), who find the ideas in our paper interesting and useful. Also we want to make contact with other revolutionary groups and individuals. We want to make the Commentator as useful and interesting as possible and would appreciate your criticisms and comments.

## \* THE SONS OF LIBERTY \*

(First of a series)

The struggle of workers against oppression stretches back to the era of the American Revolution. During these years workers combined and acted as a class in opposing British policy and in advancing their own economic and political interests in America. The American Revolution was the culmination of two great movements operating simultaneously: one, to free the colonies from the imperial control of Britain; the other to democratize American political, economic, and social institutions. The war for independence was successful because of the unity of the workers, the majority of small farmers, and sections of the planter-merchant aristocracy who collaborated for the liberation of the colonies.

The most revolutionary and militant of those on the side of independence were not, in fact, those most familiar faces from the revolution--Washington, John Adams, Franklin. Of the leaders portrayed in the typical history text, only Samuel Adams and Paul Revere demonstrated genuine militancy and revolutionary consciousness. They were the leading representatives of groups of workers

frequently known as the Sons of Liberty. Printers, carpenters, seamen, masons, day laborers and other members of the urban centers formed these militant organizations which pushed aside hesitant conservatives and prodded those who moved more cautiously toward independence. Though the leadership of the Sons of Liberty was generally from the most liberal of the merchant or professional class, the membership was usually exclusively working class.

### THE NATURE OF THEIR WORK

The militancy of the Sons of Liberty was unsurpassed in colonial America and it is to their credit that the Stamp Act was repealed, that the non-importation of British goods was enforced, and that the boycott of British tea was successful. Through leaflets, demonstrations, and even tarring and feathering, they forced British officials to resign, merchants to abide by non-importation, and generally prevented acts harmful to the revolutionary cause.

Their fierce pursuit of democracy for all was feared by the more conservative merchants and planters who viewed indepen-

dence more in terms of economic freedom unhampered by British domination. To them the Sons of Liberty were "the mixed rabble of Scotch, Irish and foreign vagabonds", and "foul-mouthed and inflaming sons of discord and faction". These attacks are understandable since, for the Sons of Liberty, the revolution meant social and political democracy as well as economic freedom for all citizens...something the big planters and merchants did not plan on. Thus, they were quite taken aback when the Sons of Liberty marched to public meetings in military formation with the liberty tree medals around their necks and held weekly educational meetings in taverns where pamphlets, newspapers and handbills were read aloud for the benefit of the illiterate. Even in song, they warned that they would not tolerate British or domestic tyranny. Moreover, they had the first women's auxiliary in America--the Daughters of Liberty.

These women were instrumental in the boycott of British goods and their militancy was evidenced by one woman at a festival covering a man who opposed the revolution with molasses and flo-

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wer petals (since tar and feathers were not at hand)! Of course the conservatives accused these women of acting against the will of God who had decreed that their place was in the home. The Sons defended them saying, "With the Ladies on our side we can make every Tory tremble."

### LESSONS FOR TODAY

While the Sons of Liberty were the most radical of a larger number of patriots for independence and while they did not alone shape the revolution, their role and participation contributed

CONT. ON P.2

# A SHIFT IN WORLD POLITICS

Those of us on the left have long since grown accustomed to thinking of U.S. imperialism as the most aggressive, most imperialist and most dangerous force in the world today.

However, events and developments of the past several years raise the question of whether this notion is still fully valid.

## ON THE DECLINE...

Few would deny that U.S. imperialism has been growing steadily weaker for a long time. Since WW11 at the end of which the U.S. stood astride a good portion of the globe, the U.S. has met with one defeat after another in its neo-colonial empire. First China and Eastern Europe, then Korea, Cuba, and now Vietnam and Indo-china. Practically the entire third world is in one stage or another of throwing off U.S. control and domination. Western Europe and Japan are far from being the pliant clients of U.S. imperialism they once were. Internally the U.S. has been suffering from both political and economic crisis for several years now. The Tiger is getting old and losing some of his teeth.

## AND IN THE OTHER CORNER...

There is but one power in the world which has the strength and resources to contend with the U.S. for its imperial mantle and scepter. This is the Soviet Union.

After the death of Stalin, and with the rise of Khrushchev, the Soviet Union abandoned the road of socialism, and began restoring capitalism. Nominally, control and ownership of the means of production remain in the hands of the people. But in actual fact, they are controlled and owned by a Soviet elite, a new capitalist class, in the pursuit of profit and not at all in accordance with the needs of the people. The profit motive is very openly extolled in the Soviet press. The elite is able to appropriate a portion of these profits of the state enterprises by various means - whether it be by large bonuses, salaries, perquisites of office, or just plain skulduggery.

It is a big mistake to think that state ownership alone is socialism. Are the Pentagon and the Post Office socialist institutions?

In the Soviet Union petty capitalism permeates everyday life as doctors, plumbers, repairmen, tutors, and others go into business for themselves to take advantage of the break-

down of state supplied services. The black market in commodities and currency abounds.

Working people are increasingly subject to the same evils we know so well here - unemployment, inflation, poverty and insecurity. They have once again become wage slaves with nothing but their labor-power to sell. What is more, the working people there do not even have rights that working people here have, including the right to strike, or speak out freely. Numerous visitors have remarked on the fear of the Soviet citizens in "talking politics". Many people balk at using the term "fascist" in regard to what was the first socialist state - but what do you call a country in which people are afraid to speak their minds for fear of going to prison, losing their job, or other forms of persecution? Neither fascist Germany nor fascist Italy began by putting masses of people in ovens. They first abolished elementary bourgeois democratic liberties and herded dissidents into prisons. Breznev, as Nixon



jealously observed, is not threatened with any Watergate exposures. Gromyko does not suffer the constant embarrassments and annoyances our "poor" Kissinger has to suffer.

## GUNS INSTEAD OF BUTTER

The Soviet economy is about half the size of the U.S. economy in terms of total production. But the Soviets have exceeded U.S. expenditures on defense for a number of years. The Soviets have achieved rough equality with the U.S. in nuclear capabilities, but have pulled out ahead in terms of conventional capabilities. Whereas the U.S. is being forced to withdraw from many of its military bases and strongholds around the world, the Soviets are expanding their military bases around the world. The Soviet navy now plies the seas of the entire world. This buildup of the Soviet military, so far beyond the needs of its own defense, has been done

directly at the expense of the Soviet people. Agriculture and consumer goods production are openly admitted to be in a state of crisis - and yet the Soviet "planners" continue to put forth militarization as the top priority.

This development is very similar to the case of Hitler Germany. Hitler put great emphasis on building his military machine while neglecting consumer goods production. We all know how he eventually resolved this growing contradiction. He used this military machine for conquest and the plunder of Europe and other parts of the world. How does one suppose the Soviets will resolve this contradiction? Having embarked on the path of imperialism and state monopoly capitalism, what grounds are there for supposing they will act differently?

State monopoly capitalism has certain laws of development which do not in any way depend on the labels the Soviets use to describe their system. Nor do words such as "detente" or "policy of peace" have any affect on these laws.

Soviet imperialist involvement around the world has grown steadily for many years and one might be surprised to review its actual extent.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 revealed clearly the Soviet Union's imperialist relationship with Eastern Europe. (Only Albania, Yugoslavia, and Rumania can be considered outside this empire, but all three are increasingly menaced by Soviet imperialism and are taking measures to prepare against attack.)

India has become a client state of the Soviet Union and Indira Ghandi's fascist regime is in turn fully supported by the Soviets. Moreover, the Soviets fully supported Indira's dismemberment of Pakistan, not to mention her occasional but sobering forays against China. In the Middle East, the Soviets have put several of the Arab countries deeply into their debt through munitions sales. The whole gambit there burst out into the open when the Egyptians rebelled against the onerous schedule of debt and interest repayment. Nor did the Egyptians take kindly to a Soviet backed coup attempt against Sadat.

A byproduct of the huge military economy of the Soviet Union is a huge surplus of outmoded weapons. The struggles of various countries against U.S. imperialism or even each other