

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY
AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

by Barry Litt

Prefatory Note. The ideas expressed in this article are my own, and are not intended to be an expression of policy for the National Lawyers Guild. It is impossible for me to separate myself out from numerous discussions within the Bar Sinister, and with many other friends inside and outside the Guild, all of which contributed to the ideas expressed here. Particular thanks is due to Dan Lund, who went through earlier drafts of this article word by word and made countless stylistic and substantive suggestions which are reflected in the article; also Peter Young, Carlin Meyer, and Jay Roth made many helpful suggestions.

Introduction. Watergate has pushed to the fore a host of questions which are of great importance to the developing socialist movement in the United States. There are tactical questions: Does the Left support efforts to get rid of Nixon? What kinds of efforts? Why? What do we want to accomplish? But the more basic questions which need to be answered in the context of Watergate and are of general importance for the development and direction of a movement for socialism are strategic ones: How does a movement for socialism, a revolutionary movement to bring about a qualitative change in the social and economic relationships in our society from the private ownership of wealth to its social ownership, view democratic demands and movements? What are democratic demands? What is the potential for fascism in the United States? What is the relationship between the struggle against fascism and the struggle for socialism? What are revolutionary demands and what are reformist demands? What effect does the tradition of bourgeois democracy in the United States have on how the revolutionary movement views these questions?

These are difficult questions which require study, discussion, and practice. A deep understanding of them will come only from actually engaging in the process of building a revolutionary movement. However, to do that building we must also engage in analysis. This article is an effort to contribute to that process.

The argument presented here is, in brief: that we are in a particular period in the history of capitalism -- the period of the decay of monopoly capitalism and the defeat of imperialism; that in this period the tendency of monopoly capitalism, or more particularly, of the capitalist ruling class, is towards a fascist form of rule, which is antithetical to the most basic democratic rights of the people; that the revolutionary movement must lead the struggle for democratic rights; that the defense and achievement of even the most basic democratic rights can be accomplished only through the institution of socialism; and that movements for democratic rights can only be victorious as and when they become conscious movements for socialism.

In the final section of this article, I will try to relate the general analysis developed here to Watergate, and attempt to show how we should be responding. Also taken up is the problem of what Watergate signifies with regard to the questions which begin this analysis.

I. Some Comments on the Prospects for Monopoly Capitalism in the Coming Period. Monopoly capitalism, which in its international aspects is imperialism, is that stage of capitalist society in which large economic concentrations (multi-national corporations and financial institutions) are so dominant that they control their own markets. Further, a relative handful of these corporations and institutions have a stranglehold on nearly the whole economic, political, and social life of society.

This process of the centralization of capital has been going on at a rapid pace throughout the century. It has never been more rapid than in the last twenty five years. For example, in 1941, two-thirds of the manufacturing assets within the United States were held by the largest one thousand corporations; today, these assets are held by the largest two hundred. And within this group of two hundred, the largest fifty clearly predominate.¹

Monopoly capitalism expands with particular rapidity on an international level. Through this process the advanced capitalist countries, and particularly the United States, control or try to control the markets, resources, labor and governments of the underdeveloped countries. This control is manipulated and maintained through the use of economic, social, political, cultural, and military means.

This drive for control is inherent in capitalism. Capital itself is, in effect, the social relationship through which the capitalist expands capital by drawing a part of what the workers have produced and appropriating it (extracting surplus value). Marx, in a brilliant flight of imagery, described capital as "dead labour, that, vampire like, only lives by sucking living labour..."² Capitalism's lifeblood is increasing the amount of capital, which it can do only by driving for ever greater markets and resources. The function of capital is to expand.

This drive has been manifested in the more and more intense imperialist penetration into the Third World. Since World War II, United States corporations have extracted huge superprofits from the Third World. In turn, this has made the United States economy heavily dependent on those superprofits, as the following set of figures indicate:

1. In 1950, domestic non-financial earnings totaled 21.7 billion dollars (after taxes), while earnings on foreign investment totaled 2.1 billion dollars. In 1965, domestic non-financial earnings totaled 36.1 billion dollars, while foreign non-financial earnings totaled 7.8 billion dollars.
2. This means that in 1950 foreign non-financial earnings were just under 10% of domestic non-financial earnings, and by 1965 they had increased to 22%.
3. Or, to say it another way, from 1950 to 1965 domestic non-financial earnings increased 66%, and foreign non-financial earnings increased 271%, or four times as fast.³

I do not have more recent figures available. It may be that the last few years have seen a lessening of this trend, in the wake of the United States' worsening balance of trade and balance of payments position (caused in part by the expenditures for the war in Vietnam).

There is, however, no reason to believe that the expansionist trend will not continue. The international elements of the United States ruling class have been very restive under controls instituted in the Johnson administration regarding the export of capital. A recent report of the International Economic Policy Association, which represents the views of international capital, calls for the increase of United States investment abroad as the only way to solve the balance of payments problem. This report projects more than 15 billion dollars in foreign non-financial earnings by 1980.⁴

Yet monopoly capitalism has suffered many defeats throughout this century, despite its most brutal and systematic efforts. Prior to 1917, there were no socialist countries. Today, more than a dozen countries proudly proclaim themselves socialist, or in the process of socialist construction. Since 1948, there have been successful revolutions in China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Guineau-Bisseau, Congo-Brazzaville, and Southern Yemen. There are presently active and strong revolutionary struggles in Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Uruguay, Brazil, Namibia, throughout Indochina, Dhofar, and the Phillipines.

The situation in other countries is unclear, but there are clearly determined revolutionary forces in Chile, Bolivia, Northern Ireland, and portions of the Middle East traditionally known as Palestine. Anti-imperialist governments of varying degrees of commitment are in Tanzania, Algeria, Argentina, Peru, Guineau, Libya, and Panama. (The above list, while put together thoughtfully, does not pretend to be authoritative.)

Imperialism is clearly not going to be defeated over night. It is a long, slow process which entails great suffering and hardship. The history of this century, however, is largely the history of anti-imperialist revolution. The determination and dedication of the Vietnamese, in the face of an unbelievable campaign of mass terror, is an inspiration and a reminder of the strength and tenacity of the revolutionary forces.

There have been sobering setbacks in this century as well. These setbacks have usually taken the form of massive military reaction to progressive popular governments. This was the case with Spain in the late '30s, Guatamala in the mid '50s, Brazil, Indonesia and the Dominican Republic in the '60s. The recent example of Chile is in many ways the most painful.

We must learn to think in patient historical terms. The transition from fuedalism to capitalism took centuries before it was fully completed. The transition from capitalism to socialism will hopefully not take as long, but it will take time, and there will be both victories and setbacks along the way. Certainly, the struggle is visibly at a much higher level now than it was a mere ten years ago.

Mao Tse-Tung, speaking in 1946 when the Chinese revolutionary forces were still far from winning control of the country, summed up this historical perspective:

All reactionaries are paper tigers. In appearance they are frightening, but in reality their strength is not so great. From the long-term point of view, the really powerful strength lies not with the reactionaries, but with the people.⁵

The struggle between imperialism and the people of the world has had and will continue to have deep implications for conditions in the United States. The United States economy has emphasized the development of armaments and war capability sectors. One of the consequences of this has been that there has been little technological advance by United States industry in many areas. For example, electronics is an industry in which the United States once claimed dominance, and now Japan has taken a clear lead. Such a loss of dominance in an industry affects the United States' competitive position, which in turn affects the international monetary situation and the position of the dollar.⁶

The flow of capital to cheap labor markets abroad (or within the United States to the Southern region) is another consequence of the international penetration of capital. Such a flow has had a material effect on the level of employment within the United States. Similarly, the export of capital has meant that the United States now has the oldest industrial plant in the advanced capitalist world. In turn, productivity is not increasing, and may even begin to decline.

The need for a massive military apparatus, the use of anti-communism as a propaganda tool to support counter-revolutionary wars, the lack of state funds to expend on social services -- all are related to the need for military defense of the empire.

On the world stage, the increased competition among all of the advanced capitalist countries indicates the political and economic challenges to the United States. The Japanese are directly investing in the United States. Europe is rejecting many American policies and is in the process of building an independent economic bloc. (We should recall that historically strife between capitalist countries is the rule, not the exception.)

Domestically the economy seems to be facing hard times. In the fifties normal unemployment was 3%; in the sixties, it was 4%; now, the Nixon administration says that "normal" unemployment is 5%.⁷ Inflation continues to operate at a high level.

The particular problems of unemployment and inflation will not be going away. The productivity of the manufacturing sector of the American economy is stagnant at best. The existence of monopoly (or oligopoly) allows inflation to operate as a mechanism to increase profits. The classic contradiction between the need to expand capital (which entails severe economic pressure on the working class) and the need for a sector (primarily the working class) to purchase the goods that capitalism produces is in the process of becoming sharper and sharper.

The discussion of the international and domestic economic situation is a very lengthy one, and one for which I am not very well qualified. Numerous books and articles are available which provide both a general explanation of the dynamics of capitalism⁸ and a specific description of the situation confronting the United States today.⁹

My purpose here has been to indicate that the United States capitalist class is facing serious economic difficulties in the coming years. This is true because of the successful revolutionary and anti-imperialist movements working to cut off markets and resources, as well as expropriating United States' holdings. It

is true, also, because the internal operations of the United States economy are under serious strains and difficulties, which are related to the defeats suffered abroad and the continued need to defend imperialist holdings. The political consequences and inter-relationships of this process will be discussed in the later sections of this article.

II. The Development of a Socialist Movement Within the United States. In the wake of the mass movements of the sixties - primarily, the civil rights movement, the student movement, the anti-war movement, and the women's movement - there is developing within the United States a clear, though still small, movement for socialism, a revolutionary movement. The weaknesses of this movement are reflected in our inability to lead and educate large numbers of people in this time of significant political and social crisis, which Watergate symbolizes. The revolutionary movement has little mass support, is highly fragmented, and has not yet developed a deep and thorough analysis of the conditions here and abroad.

However, this is not cause for despair. There are many positive signs. There is, in fact, a revolutionary movement. This movement is beginning to build roots in the work place, and in the community. The study of revolutionary history, theory and practice, of Marxism-Leninism, is attracting the serious attention of ever greater numbers of people. The movement is conscious of building and organizing a real base with a high level of political consciousness. The movement has learned the necessity of an organization based in the working class.

I do not want here to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the present revolutionary movement, nor to discuss the general strategy of such a movement. Rather, I want to indicate why I think this movement will grow.

The conditions discussed in the first section of this paper are already having and will continue to have severe domestic consequences. The clamping of controls on the working class, such as wage controls and compulsory arbitration of contracts, can already be seen. The need for an army remains and will grow as national liberation movements grow stronger. Already there are strong hints at the need to re-institute a limited draft. There is currently a strong cut back on state social services.

Meantime, more and more people are reacting. There is unrest among workers, particularly Third World workers. Important labor struggles such as the California farm workers, the Farah workers in Texas, the Mead strike in Georgia, the Gulf Coast Pulpwood Association in the South, the auto plants throughout the Midwest are becoming more visible. Massive disillusionment has been engendered by Watergate. The effects of inflation, and particularly food and fuel prices, has brought both spontaneous and organized reaction.

These are just a few examples. They are the tip of an iceberg. In general terms, the capitalist class will find itself attacked by national liberation struggles abroad, and by growing militancy at home. But, this does not diminish the drive for profits. As successful revolutions and anti-imperialist movements abroad cut off sources of superprofits, as the internal difficulties of the

United States economy eat into profits, steps will be taken to maintain and then to increase profits. Some of the different steps used are:

- demanding greater worker productivity in terms of speed ups, (note for example, the Lordstown, Ohio, Vega Plant situation and series of strikes),
- demanding wage reductions, or no wage increases or low wage increases, which given inflation are reductions, (note for example, the terms of Nixon's New Economic Policy),
- perpetuating and increasing unsafe and inhuman working conditions, (note for example, the situation leading to the recent Shell strike),
- demanding tax relief for corporations, (note for example, the recent re-institution of the investment tax credit),
- demanding removal of newly established environmental protection controls, (note for example, the situation now with new drilling programs for the oil companies),
- demanding reduction in public spending on socially related services, (note for example, the welfare reforms in New York, California and elsewhere, and the impoundments of social service money in the national budget),
- demanding new forms of state controls on the rights of workers to organize and strike, etc., (note for example, the steel workers contract, and the justification of more unemployment based on the energy crisis).

None of this is exhaustive. None of this is new. All of these techniques are inter-related. The point is that we are presently in a social process in which the masses of the people are being attacked in a variety of ways. As the emerging revolutionary movement does its job, it will learn from the situation and develop a good and accurate understanding of what is happening. Then, the movement will be able to persuade more and more people to its perspective, and it will grow. As this dialectical process (greatly simplified here) unfolds, we will see a truly strong socialist movement develop, one which will be a real force.

I have mentioned what some of the direct attacks on the working class are likely to be. Let me add some other attacks of a more general nature which have emerged:

- vicious racist attacks on Third World people, including loss of jobs, increased police violence, and corrupt tolerance/support of the plague-proportion drug addiction;
- attacks on women, including the sustained veto of a new minimum wage;
- attacks on free speech and assembly, as a means of inhibiting organizing among the people, including the violent breaking up of marches and rallies;
- attacks on the jury system, which is the only place that the people enter into decision-making in the legal system, including approval of non-unanimous juries, APODACA V. OREGON (1971);

- attacks on radical lawyers and the right to counsel of one's choice, including the development of criminal law specialization programs in states like California which may lead to a restrictive licensing procedure for trial counsel;
- attacks on a variety of protections developed under bourgeois litigational procedures, including further erosion of Fourth Amendment protections as seen in the recent Supreme Court decisions in U.S. V. ROBINSON and GUSTAFSON V. FLORIDA;
- increased use and expansion of the domestic military apparatus, including breaking into homes and varieties of mass arrest procedures;
- increased use of spies and undercover agents, including more and more covert exploitation of wiretap and a more sophisticated use of falsified evidence;
- use of para-military groups, including various kinds of intimidation up to and including physical attacks;
- attacks on the right to bail with extension of efforts to establish procedures for lengthy pre-trial detention;
- attacks on communist ideas and organizations.¹⁰

All of these pressures and attacks push working people and Third World people toward the wall. What is the relationship of the middle (petit-bourgeois) class people to these dynamics? Historically, the tendency toward monopoly has squeezed small independents. This is vividly demonstrated in the current "energy crisis". The oil companies are using the crisis both to raise their profits and to drive out independent gas station operators and truckers. This has the effect of depriving some sections of the petit-bourgeois of their small savings or even their means of livelihood, and pushing them into the working class. The people affected resist this process and manifest real discontent.

It is not any rigid rule that the affected people will end up in the camp of the revolutionaries. The petit-bourgeois, as a crucial middle force, will tend to go in both directions. In Chile, they focused their frustration on the government in power, i.e. the Allende government (even though it was the imperialist forces and their supporters in Chile who consciously created the havoc), and they became a consolidated social base for the fascist offensive there.

Students (generally, a particular segment of the petit-bourgeoisie) exhibit real dissatisfaction as the job prospects become poor and alienating. Students are often particularly affected by the contradiction between the ideology of democracy and the reality of repression.

What I am trying to indicate is that there is a dialectical relationship among the following forces: national liberation struggles abroad; the difficulties of the domestic United States economy; the drive for the expansion of capital; ruling class attacks on a variety of aspects of the lives of all sorts of people in the United States; and, the developing revolutionary movement.

For example, the growth of the revolutionary movement spurs ruling class efforts to restrict free speech and assembly. Working class demands for a living wage spur the use of wage controls, and vice versa. The constriction of markets and resources as well as expropriations abroad push the ruling class to try and extract more surplus value from the American working class.

In this process, the revolutionary movement can be expected to undergo dramatic growth. Such growth under similar circumstances has been experienced in the recent period in France and Italy. Such growth has occurred in this country in earlier times. It is sufficient for our purposes, here, to say that if the presently small revolutionary movement does its job of learning and organizing well it will experience great growth. (I am not trying to project any immediate time table in this; I don't have one.)

III. The Tendency Towards Fascism. An important and timely definition of fascism was first given by the Thirteenth Plenum of the Executive of the Communist International in 1933:

Fascism is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital.

What is particularly helpful about this definition is that it identifies clearly the true class nature of fascism.

Fascism emerges under certain conditions. Primarily the conditions are (1) the presence of great instability and dislocation in the economic situation, and (2) the presence of a strong revolutionary movement of the working class, capable or potentially capable of seizing state power. Fascism's social base of support is historically very strong within the petit-bourgeoisie, in certain elements of the working class, and sections of the lumpen-proletariat. Its direction and financing comes from the capitalist class. Its ideology is always national chauvinist. In some situations, fascism has had a strong anti-capitalist component.

A comment on the relationship between bourgeois democracy and fascism is important here. It is essential to understand that capitalism is an organizing of society so that the real decisions are made by the capitalist class in its own interest. The form of decision-making may include either co-opting reforms and amelioratives or outright suppression. The form of rule may be either bourgeois democracy or fascism. In either event the control of the class is intact, and capitalism is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.¹¹

Thus, bourgeois democracy contains within itself the seeds of fascism. The capitalist class prefers to rule through bourgeois democracy. This is so because the best form of control and allegiance is ideological, not physical. The use of armed physical control and terror have historically generated armed opposition from the people, forcing the state to use even more physical control and terror. Classic examples of this would include Italy and Germany between the wars, as well as contemporary South Vietnam. Recent developments in Greece also reflect this.

In addition, bourgeois rule in the western countries, especially the United States, arose on the ideology of bourgeois democracy. This tradition has historically within this century created

mass support for bourgeois democracy as a neutral political ideology opposed to both fascism and communism. The consolidation of the support of the people around notions of bourgeois democracy is highly evident in the ruling class attack as a violation of the tradition of bourgeois democracy. Nixon broke some fundamental rules, or at least had the poor historical judgement to break them long before it appears necessary to break them.

Watergate also points out another element. Sections of the ruling class are divided from each other on the questions of the change from bourgeois democracy to fascism. Some sections of the ruling class (although not the most powerful big bourgeoisie) may decisively lose power in the change. They may oppose the move to fascism for this very reason. (The degree of opposition of sections of the ruling class will change with conditions. For example, the Christian Democratic Party in Chile was generally initially opposed to fascism when Allende was elected, but in time most sections of the party decided that it was necessary.)

It then makes perfectly good sense that we see reflected in bourgeois democracy all the tools and techniques which when employed in a mass and systematic way, constitute a system of fascism. The ruling class employs the techniques necessary to maintain its rule. If the arguments presented earlier in this paper are correct, these techniques will become more and more necessary as the historical process of economic crisis unfolds. The techniques will gain the support of increasing numbers of the ruling class as their necessity becomes more evident. The support of the petit-bourgeoisie and other forms of potential mass support will be sought.

In the United States potential slogans to build mass support for fascism include "law and order", "communist conspiracy", "the American way of life", "national security". There are others, and there will be still others.

The process of fascisization, then, is the process of expanding and systematizing techniques (many of which were listed in Section II) which are an integral part of bourgeois democracy. These techniques are expanded and systematized until they become a total social system of mass terror against the people. Sometimes this process appears to have taken place over a number of years, such as the case in Nazi Germany.¹² In such situations as Indonesia or the Phillipines or Chile it appears much more rapid, usually through the employment of a military coup. But essentially the two types are the same -- there is some type of fascisization process and then the effort by the fascist forces to seize decisive control.

It is impossible to provide a definite time table for this development. There are many variables. But if the discussion up to now has been accurate, then we can predict that the difficulties facing the United States ruling class will continue to rise, particularly as the props of imperialist superprofits are chipped away by successful national liberation struggles and determined anti-imperialist movements. As the ruling class is faced with growing domestic militancy, more difficulty in finding growing sources of profit, more and more segments of the class will be willing to employ fascism to prop up the decaying capitalist system. The tendency of the ruling class will be more and

more clearly toward fascism. Similarly, ever great numbers of the masses of the people will look toward socialism as the solution to the ills of the society. The two tendencies will come more and more to dominate the historical process -- the tendency toward fascism by the ruling class, and the tendency toward socialist revolution by the people.

This is one of the fundamental historical lessons of the Twentieth Century. This was the situation in the Russian Civil War, the Chinese Revolution, the Korean Revolution, the Vietnamese Revolution. The same is true more recently in Indonesia, Uruguay, and Chile (which is a veritable textbook on this question. See articles from the last three months in MONTHLY REVIEW, SOCIALIST REVOLUTION, RAMPARTS, THE GUARDIAN, REVOLUTION, and the special NACLA NEWSLETTER on the coup in Chile.) Similarly, the Eastern European revolutions were struggles between fascism and socialism.

No doubt there will be many elements, perhaps some ruling class elements, many petit-bourgeois elements, and some working class elements, who will search for a middle ground. Historically, this middle ground has not proven viable once the situation of great economic instability and a strong left have developed. The middle forces tend to be weak and unsure, not capable of leading a decisive movement even in non-crisis times. For example, the Progressive Movement in late Nineteenth Century United States, whose base was the petit-bourgeoisie, had no real effect on the tendency toward monopoly with all of its anti-monopoly attacks. In fact, the anti-trust legislation was later used primarily against the labor movement.

A part of the strategy for revolution must be to win many of these middle forces over, to make them realize that the forces of capital will do what is necessary to maintain and increase their wealth and power. Unless the forces of capital are stripped of that power, they will use it. They can only be stripped of their power through the removal of the private ownership of the means of production.

For those who feel that this projection is schematic and over-emphasizes the tendency toward fascism, United States foreign policy is instructive. It has been the systematic policy of the whole of the United States ruling class -- liberal, moderate, and conservative alike -- to operate as the main fascist force in the world. The United States has consciously put into power fascist regimes in the following countries, among others: Greece, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, the Phillipines, Indonesia, the Dominican Republic, Chile. There are other examples, but this is sufficient to make the point. This most wealthy and powerful of ruling classes does not shrink from supporting fascist governments and employing fascist techniques where necessary to its own interests.

The Watergate events reflect this same tendency. The economic difficulties facing the United States, the international resistance to imperialism, the mass anti-imperialist movement at home -- these were the events which laid the backdrop for Watergate. It is true that the ruling class as a whole has rejected these tactics for the present time, for Nixon and his allies appear to have misread the extent of the actual conditions and the consequent need for expanding the fascistization process. Further, Nixon misread the feelings of the American people.

Watergate represents a pre-mature fascist tendency. But in assessing Watergate, we should remember that it was only when these tactics were used against a ruling class institution, viz. the Democratic Party, that there was serious ruling class reaction. The same techniques have been used periodically against various elements of the Left by both parties with basically no opposition, (note for example, the campaign of police terror against the Black Panther Party from 1968 to 1970).

The next section discusses the role of the demand for democratic rights in this process, and indicates what the perspective of the revolutionary movement should be on organizing around democratic rights.

IV. The Struggle for Democracy and the Struggle for Socialism. Before going further, let me briefly summarize the argument which has been developed so far: The ruling class will find its basic economic interests in greater peril both abroad and at home; it will also find a domestic revolutionary movement which is both growing and based in the working class; inherent in the dialectics of this process is the increased willingness to use fascist techniques ever more systematically, and ultimately to openly embrace a fascist system of rule.

Given that development and tendency on the part of the ruling class, it is clear that the political struggle for socialism must involve a fierce struggle against fascism. The growth of fascism is an unfolding of assaults on a whole range of democratic rights. Questions about democracy and democratic rights permeate everything we have discussed so far.

What are democratic rights? They are the rights of the masses of people to have control over their own lives; to participate actively and creatively in the life of society; to share fairly in the fruits of their labor; to be treated with dignity, equality, and respect by the different elements of society; to be able to think and speak freely and to grow and learn through a process of social persuasion (struggle).

Some democratic rights are general rights and relate to people in the society generally. Other democratic rights are particularized for certain sectors and groups. Mass movements and struggles in our country have fought for both kinds -- democratic demands of Black people for equal access to the ballot box in the South; people's calls for clean air; democratic demands of women to receive equal pay for equal work; popular concern for mass rapid transit; democratic demands of Chicano students for ethnic studies programs; workers' demands for better wages and working conditions; communities fighting for the right to assemble and organize themselves; poor people insisting on the right to have lawyers when they are brought into court. We could go on for pages.

Historically, democratic demands and gains have not been some sort of neutral values arising out of abstract ideals. They have arisen out of specific conditions and from struggles by large numbers of people searching for ways to change their conditions. The few democratic rights won by Black people in the United States have not been the result of the benevolence of the ruling class; they have come from the struggles of tens of thousands of Black people against their oppression. The very system of bourgeois democracy arose in the course of the struggle of the emerging merchant class to liberate itself from the fetters of feudal social and property relations; one specific example of this is that the traditional bourgeois concern for the separation of church and state and freedom of religion can be traced back to the efforts of Renaissance

merchants to free themselves from the anti-usury edicts of the Roman Catholic Church.

Thus we must view democratic rights and struggles in the context of the conditions we face, from the perspective of whether a historical process of change is being advanced or not. In the United States people have been taught to believe in the idea of democracy, have been taught that they live in a democratic country. These ideas, although they arose in the service of the needs of an emerging capitalist class, have come to have an existence independent from their origins. They can be powerful weapons in the hands of a revolutionary movement, powerful as ideas which represent the germs of the true interests of the masses of the people, powerful in pointing to the possibility of a society which meets their needs and aspirations.

For example, freedom of speech and assembly was once a cutting edge of the new merchant class conflict with the monarchy and the church; but now freedom of speech and assembly are tools for a revolutionary movement facing the tactical necessity of mobilizing masses of people for militant expressions of opposition to imperialist war or economic inequality. Or, to come at the question of freedom of speech from another angle, in this society the capitalist class has overwhelming control over publishing and medial outlets; but in a society with different class interests, communities or work places would have access to publishing resources as a way of educating and discussing around questions of immediate concern to the people (e.g., how to implement workers' control in a factory; or new and better ways for educating children in school).

The question of how deeply committed people are to notions of democracy is an important one, and not one that is easy to answer. The rallying cry of the Vietnamese Revolution has been Ho Chi Minh's famous democratic slogan -- "Nothing is more precious than freedom and independence." Fundamentally, the commitment to democratic rights cannot be separated from how deeply those rights affect the daily conditions of peoples' lives. At the same time, the commitment to ideas can be very powerful. (Marx said that, "Theory becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses.") The examples of the many anti-imperialist, national democratic revolutionary victories (e.g., the Vietnamese, the Chinese) show how the two strains of material conditions and ideas can interact on each other in a revolutionary struggle. Ideas of democracy have penetrated deeply into both the working class and the petit-bourgeoisie, and we must rally people around those ideas and around their conditions. [here in the U.S.]

To return to the two tendencies -- toward fascism and toward socialism. The unfolding of this process will create great confusion for many, particularly among the petit-bourgeoisie, traditionally the social base of fascism.¹³ There may be elements which step forward and claim that, with certain changes, bourgeois democracy can continue. (For example, a call to on the one hand break up the trusts and monopolies, and on the other to clamp down on working class "violence" or "lawlessness.") But as we have discussed earlier, this kind of an approach is courting disaster. In addition, there may be conscious agents of the fascist forces which will try and capitalize on the confusion and disarray. (In Germany, fascism proclaimed itself as a form of socialism -- National Socialism.)

Throughout this process the revolutionary movement must put itself forward as the true representative of democracy; it must do this in both in both its theory and practice. It must initiate and participate in the different struggles for democratic rights, and must come to be identified by the people as the staunchest

fighters for their real interests and for democracy. In the course of doing this, the revolutionary movement must be able to explain the class nature of fascism, who is attacking the democratic rights of the people, and why. It must show how bourgeois democracy works, who is served by it, and why the capitalist class is now attacking its own mechanism.

Socialism reorganizes economic life by basing it on the public ownership of the means of production and distribution, and reorganizes political life by placing the state in the hands of the working class and its allies. What this means is democracy for the great masses of people, instead of democracy for the few capitalists. Thus, when revolutionaries use the term the dictatorship of the proletariat, they mean democracy for the working class and its allies; that is opposed to the kind of democracy that we have in this country, which is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. In a socialist society fights for the attainment and realization of democratic rights continue, but on a different basis. Workers will continue to struggle for better, healthier working conditions, but in a context where the state and the company are no longer controlled by those who live by exploiting the labor of workers. In such a society Henry Ford would not have the right to have tens of thousands of workers work to make him rich, or to be one of a relative handful to decide who the state leaders would be. And if he tried to do those things, or if anyone else did, they would be prevented.

If the great majority of people do not yet realize that socialism represents democracy for them, Henry Ford and the other members of his class realize that it means expropriation for them. As they reject bourgeois democracy and decide that it no longer provides sufficient control over the people, those who wish to share in the process of democracy will only be able to do so by opposing the capitalist class. Democracy will only be possible by stripping the capitalist class of its power and rule. And that can only be achieved by stripping them of their wealth and putting it in the hands of the people -- i.e., through socialism. All of those who are truly committed to democratic ideas will only be able to effectuate their beliefs by joining the struggle for socialism.

Thus, the woman who really wants to have a job that provides decent material support for her family must look to those who are fighting for a society which isn't run by a small group of people promoting economic development for their own gain; the Black scholar who really wants to break down the walls of confusion about American history must look to those who are fighting for a society which is not controlled by people who have a vested interest in hiding the story of how Black people organized themselves after the Civil War; the defendant who really wants a fair trial must look to those who are fighting for a society where juries really come from their communities and where fact finding in the courtroom is not a game.

In short, the true democrat must become a socialist.

Georgi Dimitroff¹⁴, in his report to the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern (Communist International) in 1935, discussed the fear in some communist ranks of launching positive democratic slogans and to the fear that the struggle for democratic rights might divert the fundamental revolutionary struggle. In doing so he quoted Lenin:

"It would be a fundamental mistake to suppose that the struggle for democracy can divert the proletariat from the socialist revolution, or obscure or overshadow it, etc. On the contrary, just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy, so the proletariat will be

unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many-sided, consistent, and revolutionary struggle for democracy."¹⁵

That position was consistent throughout Lenin's life. Thirteen years before the statement quoted above was written, he wrote:

"We must also find ways and means of calling meetings of representatives of all social classes that desire to listen to a democrat; for he is no Social-Democrat [not an opprobrious term at the time] who forgets in practice that 'the Communists support every revolutionary movement,' that we are obliged to expound and emphasize general democratic tasks before the whole people without for a moment concealing our socialist convictions. He is no Social-Democrat who forgets in practice his obligation to be ahead of all in raising, accentuating, and solving every general democratic question."¹⁶
(emphasis in original)

It is the inter-relationship between democracy and socialism which is crucial. Lenin's words that the revolutionary must engage in democratic struggles "without for a moment concealing his socialist convictions" are particularly important. We should engage in struggles and fight hard for them, all the while explaining their limitations, explaining the nature of the ruling class, explaining socialism. While fighting for reforms, we should explain that reforms are given to us by the capitalist class because they on the one hand fear the consequences of not (in terms of losing the political allegiance of large numbers) and on the other hand they want to co-opt the demands so that they will not get out of hand (that is, become an organized movement for socialism). We should encourage democratic struggles so that people come to realize through their own experiences, and not through mere abstract words, the nature of capitalist rule and the need for socialism.

In this process we must be careful not to lose sight of our goals and the nature of the struggle; we must look out for right errors. For example, free speech as the right of the working class to organize and defend itself is not the same as free speech to promote racism and racist ideology. Promoting racism is an attack on the democratic rights of Third World people, and we should not fall into the trap of defending that on some neutral theory of democratic rights.

Correctly understood and applied, the involvement of the revolutionary movement in the struggle for democracy --on the political, social, and economic levels-- is a critical part of the development of a united front strategy for revolution in the United States. Ultimately the struggle for democracy embraces the right to revolt. The right to make revolution --including armed revolution if the ruling class will not relinquish its power in any other way (and history reaches us that that is highly unlikely, and certainly cannot be an assumption that we work on)-- is a fundamental democratic right. It was a classic bourgeois democratic document, The French Declaration of the Rights of Man, which said:

"When the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for them the most sacred of rights and the most imperative of duties."

In the conditions of the United States in this period in history, the right to revolt is expressed in the right to make a socialist revolution. The struggle for democracy becomes the struggle for socialism; the struggle for socialism is the struggle for true democracy.

V. A Note On Watergate. With this discussion as background, let us return to the questions raised at the beginning of the article concerning Watergate. Watergate represents and raises a number of important issues -- the fascist tendency which can be seen in the expansion of the use of fascist techniques in the traditional civil liberties area (wiretaps; informers; the Houston Plan); basic attacks on the bourgeois electoral process (which in the mind of many is a process in which there is a right of choice); engagement in secret imperialist war (the bombing of Cambodia; the retention of "civilian" advisors in Veitnam); racism (impoundments; welfare cuts; "law and order" cries); overt and corrupt collusion between the government and corporate monopolies; attacks on the economic condition of the great majority of people, and in particular attacks on the labor movement (Nixon's New Economic Program).

These events have had a tremendous impact on the public; the sentiment against Nixon is very strong. There will undoubtedly be swings in the intensity of people's feelings, but there is clearly a strong base of opposition and questioning; a recent poll showed 53% of the people feel that there is something deeply wrong with America.

The possibility of the revolutionary movement injecting itself into struggle around Watergate is there. This involvement should focus around calls for Nixon's removal -- Dump Nixon! Oust Nixon! or some similar phrase. In the course of organizing around this call, we have the opportunity to put information together systematically, to explain why these events occur, to explain what this indicates about the potential for fascism, to explain the relationship between imperialism and domestic conditions, to explain how racism is employed to divide the people, to present the prospect of an alternative system which can serve the needs of the people -- socialism. We can involve people in struggling around issues which are meaningful to them and from which much can be learned.

But the important connections will only be systematically made, and militantly expressed, if the revolutionary movement is actively involved in the struggle and tries to exercise leadership within it. Otherwise it will be elements of the bourgeoisie leading and co-opting the struggle. (For example, in California George Moscone is trying to vault himself into the govern^{or}ship through his activity around the impeachment of Nixon.) Thus, Watergate presents a specific example of what I meant earlier when I talked the revolutionary movement taking the lead in democratic struggles. [about]

Obviously not everyone will agree with the view of the revolutionary movement about what Watergate teaches. We should be willing to unite with people around a slogan to get rid of Nixon. We should, at the same time, insist on being able to put forward our ideas. In that context the Guild suit to set aside the elections is useful; so are impeachment moves; and most important are different forms of mass activity (rallies; marches; teach-ins; mass meetings; sit-ins; sit downs; occupations).

The attack on Nixon is important because he has become the symbol. Ousting him is a real defeat for the fascist tendency and a victory for us. That does not mean that it will bring about fundamental change -- it, of course, will not. But it can move us forward, raise the level of mass struggle, provide a basis for the development of certain kinds of mass organizations, create more space for organizing.

On the other hand, we should not find ourselves in the position of supporting the bourgeois electoral process, or the Demo-

-page sixteen-

cratic Party, by rallying around a call for new elections or support for Democratic candidates. Those are not remedies for the ills of this society, and we should not put them forward.

There is a basis for us to grow in strength from the Watergate events. We should join the struggle around Watergate; lead it when we can; and agitate for our ideas always.

--December 1973.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Mintz and Cohen, *AMERICA, INC.*, p. 61 (Dell Paperback)
- ²Marx, *CAPITAL*, Vol. I, p. 216; quoted in Leontiev, *POLITICAL ECONOMY*, p. 94 (International Publishers)
- ³Magdoff, *THE AGE OF IMPERIALISM*, p. 183 (Monthly Review Paper back) (Table XLI)
- ⁴International Economic Policy Association, *THE UNITED STATES BALANCE OF PAYMENTS: FROM CRISIS TO CONTROVERSY*, quoted in *MONTHLY REVIEW*, "Balance of Payments and Empire", December, 1972
- ⁵Mao Tse-Tung, "Interview with Anna Louise Strong" (1946). This may be found either in the *SELECTED WORKS*, or in Mao Tse-Tung and Lin Piao, *POST-REVOLUTIONARY WRITINGS*, p. 233 (Anchor Paperback)
- ⁶Black and Hirshborn, "The International Monetary Crisis," *SOCIALIST REVOLUTION*, No. 11 (Sept.-Oct., 1972)
- ⁷It should be noted that these figures refer only to those still actively and formally seeking work through government agencies.
- ⁸In addition to the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, there are a number of recent words which are very helpful.

Standard reference words on Marxist economics include Eaton, *POLITICAL ECONOMY*; Leontiev, *POLITICAL ECONOMY*; Ernest Mandel, *MARXIST ECONOMIC THEORY*; Sweezy, *THE THEORY OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT*; Baran and Sweezy, *MONOPOLY CAPITALISM*. Also interesting is the collection *MARX AND MODERN ECONOMICS*, edited by David Horowitz.

On the question of imperialism, there is Magdoff, *AGE OF IMPERIALISM*, which is the most systematic treatment I know of that addresses the question of the contemporary dependence of the United States on imperialism. A popular account of imperialism, well suited for introductory study, is Felix Greene's *THE ENEMY*. Also very good are two collections: *READINGS IN US IMPERIALISM*, K.T. Fann and Donald C. Hodges, editors; and *IMPERIALISM AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT*, edited by Robert Rhodes.

Another set of essential introductory materials with a focus on the Third World itself are Franz Fanon's *WRETCHED OF THE EARTH*, Amilcar Cabral's *REVOLUTION IN GUINEA: Selected Texts* translated and edited by Richard Handyside, and Pierre Jalée's *THE PILLAGE OF THE THIRD WORLD* and *THE THIRD WORLD IN WORLD ECONOMY*.

I realize that I have been able to do little more than hint at issues which are discussed at great length in these works. For those who are not persuaded by my cursory treatment, or who want to follow up with detailed treatments, I would suggest the above materials for serious consideration, and also those materials mentioned in footnote 9. Many of them are excellent aids to collective study and discussion.

- ⁹A particularly helpful set of articles is *THE REVIEW OF RADICAL POLITICAL ECONOMICS*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (August, 1972). In addition to *RRPE*, *SOCIALIST REVOLUTION*, *RADICAL AMERICA*, and *MONTHLY REVIEW* carry articles regularly on these questions. Occasional articles also appear in *RAMPARTS*, *SCIENCE AND SOCIETY*, *NEW LEFT REVIEW*; also, *THE GUARDIAN*. There are, of course, many others.

FOOTNOTES (cont.)

¹⁰This catalogue of ruling class techniques have all been seen before in American society. The significance of this will be discussed in the next section.

At this point it is appropriate to refer to a couple of works which permeate the ideas expressed in this article. One is Dimitrov's speech to the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935 (see footnote 13, *infra*, for citation); the other is R. Palme Dutt, *FASCISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION*, International Publishers, 1935. I would recommend both of these to those who want to do more reading on questions relating to the dynamics of fascism, struggles for democracy, and socialism.

¹¹I do not have the space to really make the argument. Lenin describes the bourgeois state in the following terms:

[A]s long as there is private property, [the] state, even if it is a bourgeois democratic republic, is nothing but a machine used by the capitalists to suppress the workers, and the freer the state, the more clearly is this expressed.

Lenin, "The State", July, 1919;
COLLECTED WORKS, Vol. 29

Lenin discusses this question at length in *THE STATE AND REVOLUTION*. An excellent description of the bourgeois state, and of repression and co-optation in all of its various contemporary manifestations in the United States, is Wolfe, *REPRESSION IN AMERICA: THE SEAMY SIDE OF DEMOCRACY* (1972). Also, Peter Young, "The Class Rule of Law" (Unpublished).

¹²See Dutt, *FASCISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION*, Ch. 6; Franz Neumann, *BEHEMOTH*, ch. 1; Alan Bullock, *HITLER*.

¹³Just who is this petit-bourgeoisie? Traditionally, they have been defined as that class between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between the owners and the workers. Examples in America would include small storekeepers, small contractors and landlords, cab drivers who own their own cab, truck drivers who own their own trucks, family farmers. More contemporary examples would include corporation and government managers, supervisors, school administrators, foreman who hire and fire but do not work, marketing sales personnel, buyers, doctors, lawyers and accountants.

¹⁴Dimitrov, *SELECTED WORKS*, Vol. 2, p. 8 (Sofia Press). Dimitrov is the communist leader who is generally known as the architect of the United Front program developed as a communist strategy in the mid-1930s. He was the Secretary General of the Executive Committee of the Comintern from 1935 to 1943, and the head of the Bulgarian Communist Party. He is known, among other things, for his spirited defense to the Nazi effort to frame him for the Reichstag Fire in 1933.

¹⁵Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," April, 1916, *COLLECTED WORKS*, Vol. 22.

¹⁶Lenin, *WHAT IS TO BE DONE*, April, 1902, *COLLECTED WORKS*, Vol. 5.