

NO SUPPORT FOR MCGOVERN:
RELY ON THE MASSES!

The national secretariat has held discussions and investigated the question of the elections. In particular, we have gone into the arguments raised in the anti-imperialist movement, and in our organization, for the idea that revolutionaries should give "critical," or "limited," support to George McGovern. Based on our discussion and investigation, the national secretariat is thoroughly convinced that any support of McGovern would be a fundamental error and would mean a serious setback for the revolutionary movement.

Many different arguments have been raised in defense of the "critical support" for McGovern line, and we will try here to answer the major ones. But, to get to the heart of the matter, we are going to start out by formulating, and then answering, what we believe is the strongest argument that could be made for the idea of "critical support."

This argument runs something as follows: There is a significant split within the ruling class over the question of the Vietnam war. McGovern is a spokesman for the ruling class of monopoly capitalists, but he represents the section that has decided that the Vietnam adventure cannot be won, that it is too costly economically and politically to continue this adventure any longer, and therefore the best thing to do is to junk this particular war, dig in to hold other key places in Asia and protect other crucial areas of investment and strategic importance. Nixon, on the other hand, represents the section of the ruling class that is not yet willing to accept defeat in Vietnam and Indochina, but instead is bent on continuing its drive to punish the Indochinese people and win a military--or at least a political--victory, before pulling U.S. military forces out. It is the revolutionary struggle of the masses--and first of all the Vietnamese and Indochinese people, supported by the people of the world and the anti-war struggle of the American people--who have dealt heavy blows to U.S. imperialism and in fact created and intensified the split within the ruling class on the war. And we cannot rely on any section of the ruling class to end the war. We must continue to rely on the struggle of the masses. But given the continued struggle of the masses, McGovern is more likely than Nixon to end the war quickly. Therefore, we should put our main energy into building and expanding the anti-war movement. But, if through this struggle McGovern is forced to maintain his present position on the war--that he will immediately withdraw military aid from the Thieu regime, immediately stop the bombing in all of Indochina and withdraw all U.S. forces from Indochina within 90 days--we should vote for McGovern and urge others to do so. At the same time, we must systematically expose McGovern as a spokesman for imperialism and explain that he will pull back from Indochina only to strengthen aggression and plunder in other parts of the world--for example, the Middle East. Further, we must explain that U.S. imperialism is in growing crisis and that no matter who is President, there will be increasing attacks on the livelihood and rights of the American people--especially the working class and oppressed national minorities--and the only answer is to build the people's struggle to fight the day-to-day battles and prepare for the eventual overthrow of U.S. imperialism. If we carry out this line, we will take advantage of a split within the ruling class to aid the Vietnamese people, and, at the same time, we will maintain our independent line, build the mass movement, and raise the consciousness of the working class and oppressed people.

Such, the national secretariat believes, is the strongest case that could be made for the "critical support" for McGovern line. Let's examine this argument.

First of all, there is no getting around the fact that this line comes down to forming a tactical united front, for a particular purpose, with a section of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Some people say this is not so. They point to the fact that in the past, in countries where Communists have held seats in parliament, they have voted the same way on particular issues as the fascists, but this didn't constitute a tactical united front with the fascists. Clearly, this is not the same as "critical support" for McGovern. If, for example, we had someone in Congress, and a bill came up to cut off all aid to the Vietnam war, and both our representative and McGovern voted for it, this in itself would not mean a tactical united front with McGovern. It would only mean that, for different reasons, we happened to vote the same way in this particular case.

But when we go further that that and actually urge people to support--however "critically"--a candidate of the monopoly capitalists, this is in fact forming a united front with a section of the monopoly capitalists. The fact that we expose McGovern as an imperialist spokesman, even while supporting him, does not change the matter. In any united front, there is both unity and struggle. So "critical support" for McGovern comes down to uniting--for a particular purpose--while struggling ideologically to expose him and the class he represents. And, let's face it, to support McGovern means to work for his election and urge others to do so. For a handful of

revolutionaries to sneak into the polling booth to pull down the lever for McGovern would make no difference at all. If it is really true that we want McGovern elected, even if it isn't the main activity, we have to build active support for him.

This line of a tactical united front with a section of the monopoly capitalists runs counter to the entire general line of the communist movement on the struggle in imperialist countries. Stalin, for example, in answering Trotsky's attack on the Chinese Communists for forming a united front with the national bourgeoisie in China (in this case, through the Kuomintang in 1924-1927), points out that Trotsky is confusing the struggle in an imperialist country--where there can be no united front with a section of the bourgeoisie--with the struggle in a colonial, or semi-colonial country, where a united front with the anti-imperialist section of the national bourgeoisie--as opposed to the comprador, imperialist-flunky bourgeoisie--is necessary and correct.

"It is clear" (writes Stalin), "that Trotsky has got himself hopelessly caught in the labyrinth of his own contradictions. He has confused a bourgeois-democratic revolution with a proletarian revolution. He has 'forgotten' that, far from being completed, far from being victorious as yet, the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China is only in its initial stage of development...

"...whereas in the case of a bourgeois-democratic revolution it is a matter of establishing a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and the policy of a bloc within the Kuomintang fully conforms to this, in the case of the formation of the Soviets and the transition to the proletarian revolution it will be a matter of setting up the power of the Soviets, and such a power can be prepared for and set up only under the leadership of one party, the Communist Party." (Stalin, "The Revolution in China and the Tasks of the Comintern," Vol. 9, pp. 308, 311, emphasis in original.)

And even during the period of the broad united front against Japan, including not only the anti-imperialist national bourgeoisie, but sections of the landlords and big bourgeoisie who opposed Japanese aggression, Mao made it clear that the policy of uniting with sections of the bourgeoisie was a correct general line only in semi-colonial countries. Mao stressed that this policy distinguishes the struggle in a semi-colonial or colonial country from the struggle in an imperialist country:

This is a special historical feature, a feature peculiar to the revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries and not to be found in the revolutionary history of any capitalist country. Moreover, since China is a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, since her political, economic and cultural development is uneven, since her economy is predominantly semi-feudal and since her territory is vast, it follows that the character of the Chinese revolution in its present stage is bourgeois-democratic, that its principal targets are imperialism and feudalism and that its basic motive forces are the proletariat, the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, with the national bourgeoisie taking part at certain times and to a certain extent; it also follows that the principal form of struggle in the Chinese revolution is armed struggle... Thus there are two basic specific features in the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution: (1.) the proletariat either establishes a revolutionary national united front with the bourgeoisie, or is forced to break it up; and (2.) armed struggle is the principal form of the revolution... The Party's failures or successes, its retreats or advances, its contraction or expansion, its development and consolidation are inevitably linked up with its relations with the bourgeoisie and with armed struggle. (Mao, "Introducing the Communist," SELECTED WORKS, Vol. II, p. 287, Oct. 1939.)

In RED PAPERS 4, basing ourselves on the general line of the communist movement on the struggle in imperialist countries, we say straight out: "So long as the working class and the Black and brown people vote in large numbers for the candidates of the ruling class; so long as they have very few independent mass organizations within the factories, and the communities, they will not be able to develop revolutionary consciousness, no matter how militant and heroic they are." (R.P. 4, "Marxism Vs. Opportunism," p. 58, emphasis in original.)

Still, in spite of this general line, it might be argued, aren't there exceptions to the rule, aren't there particular cases in a capitalist or imperialist country, where it may be correct to unite with the bourgeoisie, or sections of it?

Yes, there are such cases. Let's take a look at a few positive, and negative, examples of uniting with the bourgeoisie in capitalist and imperialist USA. First,

during the Civil War in the U.S., the communists, under the guidance of Marx and Engels, followed the correct policy of uniting with and supporting the Lincoln government, while struggling to force it to pursue the war more vigorously, to go all-out to eliminate the slave system. This was successful, and it was a great advance not only for the slaves but for all the laboring people of the U.S.--and the world. But, of course, the Civil War was exactly a bourgeois-democratic struggle, to carry through the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the U.S. At this time, the U.S. bourgeoisie, and in particular the industrial bourgeoisie, was a rising, and overall a progressive, class, despite its brutal exploitation of the working people. The industrial bourgeoisie was just at the point of surpassing and subordinating the commercial bourgeoisie, and the slavocracy tied in with the commercial bourgeoisie: the commercial bourgeoisie generally supported the slavocracy, because its profits were largely tied in with the slave system. The industrial bourgeoisie finally had to destroy the slave system, because the expansion of its markets and the furthering of its profits were held back and threatened by the existence of the slave system. At this time, the two bourgeois parties, Democratic and Republican, represented sections of the bourgeoisie with fundamentally conflicting interests, and it was absolutely correct and necessary for communists and progressives to support Lincoln and the Republican party (generally representing the interests of the rising industrial bourgeoisie).

But what about the situation in the U.S. since the full development of the U.S. bourgeoisie into an imperialist ruling class? Wasn't it correct, for example, for communists and progressives to unite with the Roosevelt government in the struggle against fascism?

The answer is, there were both positive and negative examples of uniting with the Roosevelt government.

First, the positive case. During World War II, and especially after Pearl Harbor and other events forced U.S. imperialism to enter the war in alliance with the Soviet Union and the world-wide struggle against the fascist-Axis, it was correct for communists to join the U.S. army and to fight for an all-out struggle and the building of the broadest possible united front, to defend the Soviet Union and defeat the fascist aggressors. The communists in the U.S. failed, however, to carry out this policy correctly. They tailed completely behind Roosevelt and the monopoly capitalist class he represented. This was the period of "Browderism," when, under the thoroughly opportunist leadership of Earl Browder, the C.P. failed to expose Roosevelt as a representative of U.S. imperialism, and instead labelled him a "progressive." Or worse yet, "Browderism" went so far as to say that Roosevelt was a "progressive" imperialist, that, for a long period, even following WW II, the interests of the U.S. working class, and the oppressed colonial peoples, could be reconciled with the interests of the U.S. imperialist ruling class.

Obviously, the C.P., under Browder, had fallen into thorough-going revisionism. But the basis for this was laid, in part, by the C.P.'s earlier stand (also under Browder) on Roosevelt and his relation with the mass movement on the one hand, and the imperialists on the other.

This brings us to the negative example of uniting with--"critically supporting"--Roosevelt. The focus of this was the 1936 election. In this election, the C.P. "critically supported" Roosevelt, against Landon, the Republican candidate, on the basis that Roosevelt represented anti-fascist sections of the bourgeoisie, while Landon represented the "most reactionary sections of Wall Street finance capital," that is, the fascist bourgeoisie. (See William Z. Foster, HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, USA, Chapter 23, "Roosevelt and Wall Street," p. 330.) According to Foster, the C.P. policy on Roosevelt was a "policy of support with active criticism." (IBID.) This policy was correct, according to Foster, because, although supporting Roosevelt in 1932, the most powerful sections of finance capital had turned against Roosevelt and his "New Deal" by 1936, and, in return, according to Foster, Roosevelt "demanded the defeat of the Wall Street economic royalists." (IBID.) It seems that the C.P. fell for the oldest trick in the book. Harry Truman, whose government led the U.S. into the Korean War and initiated the "McCarthy period," ran against Thomas Dewey in 1948 with exactly the same rhetoric: Dewey, said Truman, represented Wall Street, while Truman and the Democratic Party spoke for the working man and the people. No doubt the ideological collapse of the C.P. and the left, in relation to Roosevelt, gave the Democrats further inspiration to run this line!

Foster even went so far as to say that the fact that many Black people voted for Roosevelt was a great advance for the revolutionary mass movement. "This break of the Negro masses from Republican tutelage," wrote Foster, "was of historic importance. Never since then have they gone back to their old-time allegiance." No, instead, they have been shackled, in so far as they have voted at all, with dependency on the Democratic Party, and, through it, the imperialist bourgeoisie. This, of

course, is dramatically changing, because of the heroic struggles of the Black masses themselves, but certainly not because of the policies like urging "critical support" for--that is, dependence on--Roosevelt, as an "anti-fascist" in 1936.

Foster himself was forced to admit that, in the period of 1932-36 Roosevelt made many moves toward fascism--especially the National Industrial Recovery Act (this is mentioned in R.P. 4, "Proletarian Ideology, Proletarian Revolution," where it is pointed out that any section of finance capital is capable of consolidating its fascist rule and that Roosevelt only turned away from this path when preparation for the war and then the war opened a way out short of fascism). Foster acknowledges that during the first four years of FDR's administration, Roosevelt cooperated with State and local forces in attempts to violently suppress the mass strike movement of the industrial workers. But, somehow, by 1936 Roosevelt had changed his spots and was being pushed to the left, against the will of the "economic royalists," by the "democratic coalition that was backing Roosevelt," (Foster, p. 335)

In other words, there was a split in the ruling class; Landon and the Republicans represented the fascist bourgeoisie, which favored the use of terror and suppression against the mass movement, while FDR and the Democratic Party represented a section of the bourgeoisie "more amenable" to the pressure of the mass movement. This was a serious enough split in the ruling class, the C.P. said, to justify support of Roosevelt. Could anyone argue that whether concessions were made to the mass movement on the one hand, or no concessions were made and every mass struggle of the workers, Black people and others was met with terroristic suppression, was not a question of vital concern to the people of the U.S.? Could anyone argue that whether the U.S. Government took a stand of sympathy and perhaps even support for the fascist aggression, or on the other hand leaned against it, was not a crucial question for the people of the world? Such was the logic of the C.P. in "critically supporting: Roosevelt in 1936.

In fact, the C.P.'s analysis was wrong. Under Roosevelt the government continued to back suppression, as well as deception, to try to defeat the mass upsurge. Until Pearl Harbor, in Spain and in the Far East, Roosevelt indirectly supported fascist aggression, approved the policy of selling war materials to the fascist axis (as well as the other side) and egged the Nazi's on to attack the Soviet Union.

And, in fact, Roosevelt had the support of large sections of the most powerful finance capitalists, the "economic royalists." Even a petty bourgeois radical, William Domhoff, has done a better job of analyzing the bourgeois forces behind Roosevelt in 1936 than the C.P. did. In his book, WHO RULES AMERICA?, Domhoff points out that in 1936, as in 1932, such unquestionably powerful finance capitalists as the Astors, Baruchs, Biddles, Busches, Chryslers, Goelets, Harknesses, Hearsts (!), McCormicks, Palmers, Strauses, Vanderbilts, Whitneys, Harrimans, and on and on, including others like Joseph Kennedy, backed Roosevelt. In addition, Domhoff shows that from beginning to end, FDR's cabinet was stocked with representatives of powerful finance capital empires. (See Domhoff, WHO RULES AMERICA, Chapter 4, "The Control of the Federal Government," esp. pp. 90-91, where he also points out that the Morgans and people like A.P. Giannini of Bank of America supported Roosevelt in '36; and pp. 97-109.) What Domhoff understands, the C.P. failed to understand: while certain, individual capitalists backed away from Roosevelt's "New Deal," many of the most powerful finance capitalists, including some of the more openly reactionary, continued to support and control Roosevelt. The main point is: the C.P. failed to thoroughly rely on the masses, and instead pushed reliance, "critical support," on the imperialist bourgeoisie. This laid a good part of the ideological basis for the complete revisionist degeneration of the C.P. during the war, when a tactical united front with the U.S. government became necessary. **

But why was this tactical united front necessary during the war? Why was it correct whereas support for Roosevelt in 1936 was an error? Because, after the Nazi's attacked the Soviet Union, the main character of the war became the anti-fascist struggle, led by the Soviet Union. Each imperialist power entered and fought the war for its own imperialist reasons, but for the "Allied" imperialist powers, including the U.S., this was the second aspect of their objective role in the war. Like it or not, they were forced, for their own imperialist reasons, to unite with the Soviet Union and the revolutionary democratic struggle against fascism. Under these circumstances, a policy of uniting with them while carrying out an independent line to expose their imperialist nature and to force them to fight harder against the fascist Axis would be correct. The main point is: U.S., British, and French imperialism were not the main enemy of the people of the world at that time. The fascist Axis was the main enemy, and even U.S., British and French imperialism could be united with for the purpose of defeating this main enemy.

** The fact that Foster--who, for most of his life was a strong fighter for the proletariat, a genuine Communist and anti-revisionist--fell into this error shows the dangerous and insidious nature of revisionism. We should take warning from this.

What about the present situation, and the direct question of "critical support" for McGovern? Clearly, it cannot be a question of uniting with the U.S. ruling class to defeat a greater enemy. The greatest enemy of the Indochinese people, and the people of the world today is U.S. imperialism (followed by Soviet Social-imperialism).

And there is no question that McGovern represents anyone other than the "economic royalists" who backed FDR and have always backed the candidates of the Democratic Party (and, of course, the Republicans are also the party of monopoly capital). While only partial information is as yet available, it is clear that especially in the last months of the primary campaign McGovern got more and more large contributions, while funds for Humphery significantly fell off. Already, we know that not only the chief of Xerox has backed McGovern (even if he has pulled back from an active role in the campaign now), but also people like Stewart Mott, a bigshot in General Motors, and John Kerr of AVCO corp., and Republic Steel are apparently throwing big money into his campaign. And, undoubtedly, just as with Roosevelt in 1936 (and all his campaigns), there are many, many more big finance capitalists behind, controlling McGovern.

The question, once again, can only come down to: is there a significant enough split in the ruling class over Vietnam to justify support for McGovern, despite the general line of the communist movement and negative experience in the U.S. communist movement?

The national secretariat is thoroughly convinced the answer is NO!

Let's look at these differences in the ruling class on Vietnam. The foundation for our understanding of this is the fact that the Vietnamese and Indochinese people are waging a successful people's war and administering a serious defeat to U.S. imperialism. And, with the support of the people of the world, including the people of the U.S., they will certainly continue their protracted struggle until complete victory. As Mao Tse-tung said in 1970, "It is not the Vietnamese people, the Laotian people, the Cambodian people, the Arab people or the people of other countries who fear U.S. Imperialism; it is U.S. Imperialism which fears the people of the world. It becomes panic-stricken at the merest rustle of leaves in the wind. Innumerable facts prove that a just cause enjoys abundant support while an unjust cause finds little support. A weak nation can defeat a strong, a small nation can defeat a big. The people of a small country can certainly defeat aggression by a big country, if only they dare to rise in struggle, dare to take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destiny of their country. This is a law of history. People of the world, unite and defeat the U.S. aggressors and all their running dogs!" (Mao Tse-tung, Statement of May 20, 1970)

Given this fact, what is the split in the U.S. ruling class? First of all, let's take Nixon and the section of the ruling class he represents. Every step he has taken--including "Vietnamization," and the extension of the ground war, with U.S. and puppet troops, into Laos and Cambodia--has only brought about greater defeat. Nixon hoped to cut off the "sanctuaries" of the liberation forces in Cambodia and Laos. Combined with attempts to beef-up defenses at the DMZ and the heavy bombing of the north and the countryside in the south, this was supposed to "dry up the sea," to force the peasants out of the countryside and eliminate the base areas and support for the guerrilla warfare of the liberation forces. Instead, the DMZ no longer stands as an effective barrier to the liberation forces, and the theater of war, the base area for people's war has been spread throughout all of Indochina. Today the three Indochinese peoples are coordinating their efforts in dealing even greater defeats to U.S. Imperialism.

At the same time, along with "Vietnamization," Nixon has been steadily withdrawing U.S. ground forces. He has offered to stop the bombing and other acts of war, if the Vietnamese people will accept a political solution that allows the U.S. to maintain a foothold in Vietnam and Indochina. The bombing has been the club, the offer of negotiations the "olive branch." This is the same old imperialist policy of "dual tactics."

But the fact is that Nixon does want to move away from heavy military action in Indochina, because this continues to bring nothing but defeat and intensifies the political and economic crisis in the U.S. The whole ruling class agrees on this. The question among them--the split--is over how to go about salvaging what can be salvaged in Vietnam, and how to maintain a foothold. On this--maintaining a foothold--the entire ruling class is also united.

It is in this light that we can understand Nixon's latest escalation--it was a desperate move to try one more club--one which has been held in reserve for many years, mining of the harbors, plus stepped-up bombing of NVN's line of communications and even bombing of the dikes--to try to create more pressure to force the Vietnamese to accept U.S. Imperialism's political "solution."

At the same time, Nixon has gone to China and the Soviet Union looking for help in getting a political solution acceptable to U.S. Imperialism. The mining was aimed as much at the Soviets as at the Vietnamese. And Nixon followed it directly with the olive branch to the Soviets: the offers of increased trade, arms deals and deals on the Middle East and Europe. As I.F. Stone revealed in an article shortly after the mining and the Soviet trip, this "dual tactic" approach to the Soviet Union was in fact the "secret plan" that Nixon claimed he had in the 1968 elections, and which he held in reserve until very recently. (Stone's article was based on "internal documents" of the Nixon camp.)

At the same time, Nixon went to China to try and make a deal with the Chinese over Vietnam. The deal was simple: you help us get an acceptable settlement in Indochina and we'll let you have Taiwan. This is the meaning of the statement of the U.S. side in the joint communique following Nixon's China trip, where the U.S. said it would gradually withdraw troops from Taiwan, as the "tension in the area" is reduced. Clearly, the "tension" referred to is the Vietnam war.

But what has been the result of Nixon's wheeling and dealing? Certainly the Soviets would like to go along. But the fact is that they have not been successful in bullying or pressuring the Vietnamese into giving in. Podgorny's latest trip to north Vietnam (at the same time as Kissinger's latest trip to China) was universally reported as less harmonious than ever before in Soviet-north Vietnamese relations.

And recent events prove once again that the Chinese are determined to support the Vietnamese until complete victory. It seems obvious that Chinese forces are once again repairing rail and other communication lines bombed in north Vietnam; the Chinese recently signed a new special agreement, extending more aid to the Vietnamese (shortly after the mining), and the Chinese are using small sea freighters to move supplies to North Vietnam, to counter-act the mining.

Through all of this, with the aid and support of the Chinese people, and the people of the world, the Vietnamese people are continuing to wage people's war. They have not been beaten into submission and they cannot be. Nixon's latest, desperate act, is a failure. (If it were not a failure, if the Vietnamese could be pressured into surrender, then electing McGovern would make absolutely no difference, in any case.)

Given this failure, at this point there are very few, if any, practical military steps left for U.S. Imperialism to take, which have not already been tried and defeated. Nixon may try a few more maneuvers--military and diplomatic. But he, too, and the entire ruling class, will be forced before long to pull back, temporarily, from open military aggression to attempts at political maneuvering, to try other ways to keep a foothold and find the opportunity to re-group forces, carry on subversion and prepare for future attempts at suppressing and exploiting the people of Vietnam and Indochina.

Under these circumstances, while there are certain tactical differences within the ruling class on Vietnam, these differences are only a small aspect of their generally unified strategy on Vietnam, as part of their overall drive for world domination. Or, to put it another way, these tactical differences are only the threshold of the overall picture; and, as Mao says, we must cross the threshold and get down to the essence of the thing.

The essence of the matter is that from a strategic standpoint imperialism is a paper tiger, while tactically it has real teeth. What does this mean in concrete application to the present situation, in relation to Indochina?

First, it means that although U.S. Imperialism is inflicting great suffering on the people of Vietnam and Indochina, U.S. Imperialism is going down to defeat. All of its high-powered technology, all of its computer-directed, laser-beam guided bombs, etc., etc. cannot save it from its ultimate defeat. In the last analysis, wars are not won in the air, they must be won on the ground. Or, as Malcolm X once said, if you want to deal with those people--the liberation forces in the third world--you've got to come down to earth, and once you're down on the earth, the imperialists are no match for the liberation forces. Why? Because the liberation forces stand for progress and are fighting a just cause, so they have the support of the people, while the imperialists and their reactionary puppets are fighting an unjust cause

and are completely isolated. This is why U.S. Imperialism and its puppet "allies" are now holed up in a few cities, and even those are under heavy attack.

And, despite the impression created by the imperialists and the reactionaries--including the revisionists--the U.S. forces cannot endlessly continue to pound the Vietnamese people with bombs. Already the failure of U.S. Imperialism to suppress the Vietnamese people has intensified the basic contradictions of capitalism, in its final stage--imperialism. The tremendous amounts of war expenditures have greatly heated up the inflationary crisis and worsened the balance of payments problem of U.S. Imperialism. This, along with the permanent and growing problem of overproduction and the increased competition from rival imperialists--including Soviet social-imperialism--is producing a deep-going economic crisis. All this is why Nixon's latest acts of escalated aggression are acts of desperation; he is trying frantically to beat the Vietnamese into submission before the bottom falls out of the economy. This shows the great strategic weakness of U.S. Imperialism: it is not at all a sign of limitless power. U.S. Imperialism is caught in the contradictions of monopoly capitalism. To continue and step up the war in its present form will intensify the crisis; but to pull out of Vietnam will weaken U.S. Imperialism and also worsen the crisis. For this reason, whoever is President, the crisis of U.S. Imperialism will deepen, and it will be set further on the course toward fascism and world war.

In order to pave the way for fascism and world war, U.S. Imperialism not only needs open fascist demagogues and Great-Power chauvinists like Wallace. As the dialectical opposite of this, it needs "economic reformers" and "peace-makers" like Mc Govern. The Wallace's create public opinion for fascism and war; the Mc Govern's try to paralyze the masses with illusions. For example, Mc Govern's whole "economic program" is a farce. Any attempt to implement it would greatly accelerate the problems of inflation and balance of payments deficit. It would require huge sums of federal spending. Federal funds do not fall from the sky. And they cannot come from the profits of the monopoly capitalists, especially when their drive for maximum profits--which is the basic law of monopoly capitalism--is being thwarted and their profits are under attack and actually falling; Additional federal funds would have to be wrung out of the working class, and the petty-bourgeoisie--directly through increased taxation, or indirectly and over a little longer period, through more deficit spending and inflation. But the working class, and the petty-bourgeoisie, are already being forced into ever-sharper struggle to survive the growing crisis. Mc Govern's whole "economic program" is just a mirage, an attempt to throw sand in the people's eyes.

And so is his "peace posture." As we said before, the U.S. monopoly capitalists are being forced into a retreat in Vietnam; but they have not given up their attempts to dominate and exploit Vietnam and Indochina. Especially in a period of growing crisis, they will not--because they cannot afford to--simply give up an area of such strategic importance, or just abandon their investments in oil, rubber and other areas. Eventually U.S. Imperialism will be completely driven from all of Indochina, but they have to be beaten back step-by-step. And, at each step, they will try to maneuver and set the stage for reversing their losses.

The split in the ruling class comes down to a difference about how to carry out this maneuvering. Mc Govern and his imperialist backers apparently don't believe the present military course will bear any more fruit, and they want to alter it immediately, whereas Nixon and his backers may think that, before changing tactics, a few more military moves along the same line should be tried. But, as we said before, in a short time Nixon & Co. will also be forced to move onto the same course Mc Govern is now pushing.

What is this course? On the surface, Mc Govern promises to: (1.) withdraw military aid from Thieu; and (2.) stop the bombing and withdraw all U.S. military forces from Indochinese soil within 90 days. From the point of view of Mc Govern and U.S. Imperialism, what does this actually mean?

First off, it does not mean that all aid will cease to forces friendly--or "acceptable"--to U.S. Imperialism in Vietnam and Indochina. Mc Govern has been careful to say that he will cut off military aid to Thieu. But "economic aid"--such as petroleum, rice, etc.--to friendly forces other than Thieu is another matter. There is no Great Wall between economic and military aid--oil is a perfect example of this. And, from the point of view of U.S. Imperialism, dropping the Thieu regime does not mean stopping support for all reactionary puppets, or even so-called "neutral" elements in Vietnam "friendly" or "acceptable" to U.S. Imperialism.

The U.S. government has dropped one flunkey to support another innumerable times,

in Vietnam and elsewhere. In 1954, for example, the Eisenhower government, only one year after signing an agreement to end the Korean War, promised not to use "force or the threat of force" to disrupt the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam. But at the same time, the U.S. government was already moving to disrupt these agreements. The U.S. dropped Bao Dai, the puppet Emperor under the French, and began building up Ngo Dinh Diem. The U.S. did this after it was unsuccessful in getting the French or the British to go along with continued overt military aggression, after the French defeat at Dienbienphu. We all know where the backing of Diem has led. And we should keep in mind that the backing of Diem was started by the same Eisenhower who was elected in 1952 largely on the basis of his promise to "go to Korea" to end what was the most unpopular war in U.S. history up to that time. (The U.S. government, under Eisenhower--who did "go to Korea"--then proceeded to violate its agreements on Korea, keeping over 50,000 U.S. troops in south Korea. They are still there today, propping up--along with economic and military aid--the fascist puppet regime.) In Vietnam, once Diem became a liability to U.S. Imperialism, he was dropped by Kennedy (1963). Since then there has been a string of puppets in Saigon, Thieu being but the latest.

Whether Mc Govern or Nixon is president, the course U.S. Imperialism will be forced to follow is once again to change tactics, to pull its remaining ground forces out in their present form, to stop the bombing, and to accept the tripartite "government of national accord" the Vietnamese liberation forces are proposing. But does this mean that U.S. Imperialism, with either Nixon or Mc Govern, will really just give up, and forget about its many investments, etc. in Vietnam and Indochina? This is extremely unlikely, and not a single imperialist spokesman, including Mc Govern, has said that the U.S. will just turn its back and have nothing more to do with this crucial area. Given that it is being forced to change tactics, U.S. Imperialism will most likely attempt yet another tried and true imperialist maneuver: to make a show of pulling out its forces, break down its large units, and have them operate as CIA, undercover special forces, and in other covert ways. It will not abandon permanent facilities such as Cam Ranh Bay, but will make use of them through "friendly" or "neutral" forces which it will put in or "find" (buy over) in the government of national accord. In other words, it will adopt the "enclave" strategy, relying on subversion and covert action, to try to maneuver, re-group its forces, and break up the coalition government, in an attempt to hang on in Vietnam and Indochina and continue to suppress and exploit the Indochinese peoples. And U.S. Imperialism will keep its overt military presence in the area, on reserve. This is the meaning of Mc Govern's deliberate and calculated statement that he will keep U.S. forces (and, of course, the large air bases) in Thailand, and he will also keep naval forces off the Vietnamese coast (assuming he is elected). Mc Govern has offered the feeble excuse that these forces will be kept there just for pressure, to make sure the U.S. gets its POW's back. But we all know that the U.S. Imperialists don't care anything about the POW's, that talk about getting them back is always a cover for aggression, or preparation for aggression. This line on the POW's already represents a change from Mc Govern's earlier stated position that he would rely on "world public opinion" alone to get the POW's back. Mc Govern is really trying to prepare public opinion for keeping overt military presence in the area.

The tactic of operating in the context of a coalition government and switching, temporarily to subversion and covert action has already been applied by U.S. Imperialism in Laos. In 1961 an agreement on Laos was signed by several parties, including the U.S. govt. The U.S. agreed not to have military forces operating in Laos, and to go along with the three-part coalition government, which included the Pathet Lao, some right-wing generals and a "neutralist element" represented by Souvanna Phouma, who was made Prime Minister. But from the very beginning, as has become clear now, U.S. Imperialism violated this agreement. U.S. forces--CIA, Special Forces, etc., but not large overt military presence--continued to operate in Laos. And the U.S. used both the reactionary generals and the "Neutral" Souvanna Phouma to break up this coalition. Of course, the U.S. govt. did not admit this. Instead, the U.S. insisted that the communists had disrupted the agreement, and therefore Souvanna Phouma, to whom the U.S. had given "economic aid," had no choice but to deal with them militarily. During the period when U.S. military forces were not operating openly in Laos, the large units were pulled back to both Vietnam and Thailand. This is the most likely tactic U.S. Imperialism will attempt in Indochina--making use of Thailand and the surrounding seas--whether Nix on or Mc Govern is president.

Are we saying, then, that the Indochinese people cannot really defeat U.S. Imperialism completely? Does this mean that the 7 points are not an advance at all, but are, in fact, a "sell-out?" No, of course, neither of these statements is true. Acceptance of the substance of the 7 points will mean a tactical retreat for U.S. Imperialism and an advance for the liberation forces. The point is: this tactical retreat will be necessary whoever is president. It is being

forced on U.S. Imperialism by the victorious struggle of the Vietnamese and Indo-chinese people, supported by the people of the world, including the U.S. From the point of view of the Vietnamese people, the 7 points is a transitional step. The Vietnamese people will consolidate a certain level of advance and prepare to carry forward the struggle for complete liberation and eventually socialism, throughout the country.

But U.S. Imperialism, with either Nixon or Mc Govern, will also try to turn this agreement to its advantage, to turn a defeat into a victory, as it always does. ("Make trouble...fail...make trouble again...till their doom. That is the logic of the imperialists...")

In some ways--though not entirely--the situation in Vietnam and Indochina today is similar to the situation in China after the defeat of the Japanese. At that time, under the leadership of Mao Tse-Tung, the Chinese C.P. formulated the policy of a coalition government, including the KMT. Mao and the Communist Party fully recognized that this coalition could not last indefinitely, could not even last long, because of the reactionary nature of U.S. Imperialism and its agent, Chiang Kai-Shek. The Communists knew that Chiang, with U.S. backing would soon disrupt the coalition and attack them, and that it would become a fight to the finish. In other words, the coalition was a consolidation of a certain level of advance; but it was fundamentally unstable, and the contradictions within it would be resolved one way or the other--either with the complete defeat of U.S. Imperialism and Chiang Kai-Shek, or with a setback for the revolutionary forces. And it was, of course, resolved with the complete victory of the people's forces and the complete liberation of China (except Taiwan Province).

The same principle applies to a coalition government--a "government of national accord"--in south Vietnam, even if it excludes Thieu. Given the very nature of imperialism--the fact that it must constantly expand and bring new areas under its domination and exploitation--when it cannot achieve its goals through open military aggression, U.S. Imperialism will try to maneuver, to re-group and prepare for aggression, to try to reverse its losses, in the future. As Mao wrote in 1946:

The principle of the reactionary forces in dealing with democratic forces of the people is definitely to destroy all they can and to prepare to destroy later whatever they cannot destroy now. Face to face with this situation, the democratic forces of the people should likewise apply the same principle to the reactionary forces. (Mao, "Some Points in Appraisal of the Present International Situation," SELECTED WORKS, Vol. Iv, pp. 87-88)

The Indochinese people will certainly win complete victory, as Mao says, as long as they continue to rely on their own efforts and dare to grasp their destiny in their own hands. And the people of the U.S. will continue to support the Indochinese people until complete victory, so long as we continue to rely on our own mass struggle, and refuse to be taken in by the maneuvers of the imperialists.

More than a division within the ruling class, Mc Govern's candidacy represents a cover for a tactical retreat by U.S. Imperialism in Indochina. If this retreat is carried out under Nixon, Mc Govern will have served his function by making it "legitimate." And more--if Mc Govern succeeds in co-opting much of the mass struggle against the war, and directing it right back into the same old bourgeois arena--U.S. Imperialism will have more "breathing space" to maneuver and to try to turn a defeat into a victory. If Mc Govern is president and carries out the tactical retreat himself, and if the left has caved in and urged "critical support" for him, he will be in a strong position to maneuver. Once he makes the tactical retreat and gives the appearance of ending U.S. aggression in Vietnam by ending, temporarily, the overt military action, the spontaneous tendency of the American people will be to think that, indeed, U.S. adventures in Indochina are over. We have already seen this happen with Nixon, once he started withdrawing ground troops, even after the Cambodia invasion. But Nixon has also exposed himself to a large extent.

Mc Govern, on the other hand; could be in a position to have a "clean record" on Indochina. He has made a big deal out of the fact that he supposedly opposed the war since 1963--even though he made a strong statement in support of it in 1965 and he continued to vote for appropriations for the war as late as 1971. If a "clean" Mc Govern operates through a "clean" front-man in a coalition govt. in south Vietnam--a south Vietnamese Souvanna Phouma (and let's face it there may be elements in that government of national accord who will be susceptible to pressure and bribery from U.S. Imperialism--and with all that, if the left in the U.S. has been sucked in to support for Mc Govern--however "critical"--he may well be in a better position than Nixon to maneuver and later to start up overt military aggression again. He could say: "Well, I'm the man who went in to end that war, and I did. I accepted the proposal for a coalition government. But the

out that supporting McGovern will create illusions--not in the abstract, or just in general--but specifically about U.S. imperialism's maneuvers in Indochina, and will, in fact, set back the struggle against U.S. aggression and domination in Indochina.

This is also the answer to those who quote another part of the same chapter from Left-Wing Communism. Lenin tells the British communists that it is "doctrinairism" to argue that tactics like supporting the Labor Party--"like a rope supports a hanging man"--are too sophisticated for the masses. The masses are capable of understanding the truth, in all its complexity, Lenin says. And Lenin is right. In our present situation, the masses will understand correctly that "critical support" for McGovern means reliance on him, and on the system, to "end the war."

And, at this time, large sections of the masses still believe that you have to rely on--or settle for--one section of the ruling powers, because the masses do not yet fully understand their own role as the motive force in history. That is why we say, in RP I:

"It is not possible, however, for U.S. workers, in their great majority, to join the fight against American imperialism unless their class consciousness is heightened through the political work of revolutionaries--consciousness not only of their own exploitation which, in large measure, they already possess, but also an understanding of the inseparable inter-relationship between monopoly's exploitation of U.S. workers and its super-exploitation of the peoples of the colonial and semi-colonial world. Beyond this working people must have a consciousness of their own power to be the decisive force in the defeat of their class enemy, the monopoly capitalist ruling class." (RP I, "Statement of Principles," p.4, emphasis added)

We must help the masses to understand that it is the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people, which has won wide support because it is a just struggle, and the struggle of the American people against the war, that is forcing a tactical retreat by the U.S. ruling class in Indochina. And we must help them to understand that, by continuing this struggle, and not falling prey to the deceptive maneuvers of the enemy, they can force the complete defeat of U.S. imperialism in Indochina and its complete and total withdrawal. If we tell the people to "critically support" McGovern, we will not be "taking advantage of a real split in the ruling class." We will be taken advantage of by ruling class maneuver and the appearance of a paralyzing split, where, in fact, no paralyzing split exists at all, but only a small tactical disagreement.

This is not to say that no splits or tactical differences exist within the ruling class. They do exist, and they do intensify with the growing crisis and decline of U.S. imperialism. And we should make use of them.

But making use of these contradictions in the ruling class means turning them to the advantage of the people's struggle. For example, in the present election, over Vietnam and other questions, the contending candidates will dig up dirt--both political and personal--to hurl at each other. We should make use of this information to expose the entire ruling class and the imperialist system. We should strip this information of its bourgeois wrapping and concentrate it from the scientific viewpoint of the proletariat to help the people raise their understanding of the nature of the beast we are up against. In this way we can help build the mass movement, the independent struggle of the working class and other oppressed people against the imperialist enemy, in its policies of aggression and war, and on other fronts.

Before concluding, let's deal with one last argument for giving McGovern "critical support." Some people have claimed that the Vietnamese liberation forces are asking the American people to support McGovern and therefore we must do it. First off, we are not aware of any such request. For some time, the Vietnamese have made statements about defeating Nixon. But this does not necessarily mean voting for McGovern, or defeating Nixon in the election. It can certainly mean, defeat Nixon's aggression, which means defeat U.S. imperialist aggression, since Nixon is the present chieftain--or chief administrator--for U.S. imperialism.

But even if the Vietnamese came straight out and said, "Vote for McGovern," would we automatically be bound to do it? Certainly we should give it serious consideration. The national secretariat has already given this idea serious consideration, and we are convinced that it must be rejected, because it will not give real support to the Vietnamese people. In the final analysis, it is up to the communists of each country to decide how to carry out their revolutionary duties in that country, how to uphold proletarian internationalism and support the overall struggle against imperialism.

For some time, the Vietnamese have, in effect, asked the Chinese to "unite" with the Soviets to oppose U.S. aggression in Indochina. While the Chinese have transported Soviet material to Vietnam, they have not formed a "united front" with the Soviets to oppose U.S. aggression in Vietnam. And they have publicly explained why they have not done so. The reason is simple: they cannot do so, because, far from opposing U.S. imperialism, Soviet social-imperialism is colluding and contending with U.S. imperialism for domination, all over the world. The Chinese continue to carry out their internationalist duty to support the Indochinese people until complete victory; but they have to decide, in the final analysis, what the best means of that support is. As communists in the U.S., we must do the same. And, once again, supporting McGovern--however "critically"--is no real support to the people of Vietnam and Indochina.

What, then, does the national secretariat propose to do around the elections? Are we proposing a boycott? Many people strongly oppose a boycott because it would "isolate us from the masses." There is a correct and an incorrect aspect to this, the way we have heard it raised.

First the incorrect aspect. Some people use the argument that a boycott will isolate us as a way of bringing "critical support" for McGovern in the back door. Many people will vote for McGovern, they point out, so if we oppose McGovern, we will isolate ourselves and have nothing to say to them. This is simply tailing behind the masses. We cannot abandon principle, or lower our level of understanding as communists to the level of the spontaneous understanding of the masses, in order to "merge" with them. Eight years ago, when the active antiwar movement began, only a tiny percentage of the people were against the war. In those days antiwar demonstrations were a lonely affair, often meeting with hostile response. But opposition to the war was in the interests of the people of the world and the great majority of the American people, especially the working class. By continuing to build the antiwar struggle and winning the people to an understanding of the true nature of the war and why it was opposed to their interests, the majority of people have been won to opposition to the war. To sum this up: as Lenin said, "A party is the vanguard of a class and its duty is to lead the masses and not merely to reflect the average political level of the masses." (PR #29, 1972, p.11)

This is the same approach we must take to the question of supporting McGovern. Many people, including many workers, will vote for McGovern, mostly because they feel he might not be as bad as Nixon. But few working people have any real enthusiasm for McGovern--the enthusiastic supporters who make up the McGovern "phenomenon" are overwhelmingly from the petty-bourgeoisie. And many workers, especially advanced workers, have at least the perceptual knowledge that "you can't trust politicians, they talk nice to get in, but then they do what the rich folks tell them, they try to line their own pockets and to hell with you." We should build on this perceptual knowledge, and raise it to rational knowledge, about why McGovern cannot be relied on to end the war, or to end the evils of the capitalist system--unemployment, exploitation, national oppression, oppression of women, etc.

As for the correct aspect of the statement that a boycott will isolate us, a boycott makes sense only if we actively organize it, so that it makes a strong political statement and is not "anonymous." And the history of the communist movement indicates that active boycotts are successful only in an extremely revolutionary period, when the boycott itself can serve as part of the preparation for all-out revolutionary struggle.

In our present situation, a boycott would be a mistake. In our propaganda and agitation we should run down, in a popular style, the points in this paper, explaining why voting for either candidate is not the solution to the war, or to the other problems facing the masses of people. We should expose McGovern's phony stand, his deception on the war, and while building support for the 7 points, we should also raise the demand for complete withdrawal now not only from Indochina but also Thailand. We should also expose the fact that McGovern has stood against the rights of working people and oppressed people, that he has voted for anti-labor, anti-strike legislation, for "anti-riot" bills aimed at intensifying the suppression of the Black people and other national minorities, etc. And we should expose his "economic program" as a hoax, and explain why it cannot eliminate unemployment and poverty, etc. We should take advantage of the fact that the election will raise many important political questions, to explain these questions from the scientific outlook of the proletariat, to further expose the nature of the imperialist system, show why it always ends up in crisis, heading toward fascism and war, and expose the real role of the imperialist state. And we should point the way toward the long-term solution to the problem: the overthrow of the imperialist ruling class, proletarian revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat. We should not call on people not to vote, but if comrades are asked who they are voting for they should explain why they are not voting for either candidate.

Those are the tasks we should carry out in our propaganda and agitation. But, beyond that, we should work to build the mass struggle, especially against the war. We should actively struggle within the antiwar movement, and the anti-imperialist movement generally, to win people away from working in the McGovern campaign, and into building mass struggle against the war, and around other spearheads. In particular, we should work to rebuild and consolidate anti-imperialist organization in the student and youth movement. And we should put great effort into organizing working class struggle, not only on day-to-day economic issues, but on a broader political basis, where possible, especially in opposition to the war.

There are many indications that there is a growing sentiment in the working class for taking action against the war. Just one indication was the sentiment of the people at the "Labor for Peace" conference in June, where over 2/3 of the 1000 delegates initially voted support for a proposal for a one-day work stoppage against the war and the wage-freeze. Many of these people were lower-level trade union officials who were obviously reacting to the growing sentiment for action against the war among the rank-and-file. Comrades should seriously investigate the sentiments of the workers in their plants and unions around the question of organized working class struggle against the war.

We should build serious, disciplined, mass demonstrations throughout the country, around a program based on the five spearheads, but emphasizing the war. The demonstrations should culminate in nationwide demonstrations on, or near, election day, and could be followed with another day of nationwide demonstrations on inauguration day, whoever is elected. These demonstrations must be approached seriously, in a disciplined manner, so it will be possible to actually involve working people, in organized contingents at larger demonstrations, or perhaps initially in separate demonstrations, promoted and actually built as working class demonstrations (and contingents). We must combat the defeatist line that "the antiwar demonstrations haven't done any good, they haven't stopped the war." True, they haven't yet stopped the war. But they have created real difficulties for U.S. imperialism, and helped build widespread opposition to the war. And the antiwar struggle is at the threshold of a new and decisive stage--the stage of active, organized working class participation.

These are the kinds of actions we should promote and build in relation to the election campaigns. We should unite the greatest number of people in these actions, whether they vote or not (and whomever they vote for). But, at the same time, we must put forward our own independent line, exposing both bourgeois candidates and the imperialist system they represent, and putting clearly before the people the immediate and long-range tasks. This, and not "critical support for McGovern," is the way we must fulfill our tasks as communists: to support the Indochinese people and the people of the world in struggle against imperialism, and to lead the American working class and the broad ranks of the people on the correct road of struggle, toward the goal of proletarian revolution, socialism, and communism.

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This is our organization's policy on McGovern and the elections. The national secretariat is printing up and sending out enough copies of this paper for all comrades. We call on all leadership bodies and all sections of the organization, including every collective, to discuss and struggle out this policy. This is a burning question before the masses, and we must raise our understanding, and our level of unity, around it. In the near future, on the basis of discussion, struggle and criticism, and in consultation with broader representation of leadership, the national secretariat plans to condense and popularize the material in this paper and include it, along with other material, in a pamphlet for mass distribution on the elections. For all these reasons, the discussion, struggle and criticism around this paper should be taken up by all leadership bodies and collectives as an immediate task. Criticisms and suggestions should be forwarded through local and regional leadership.

As background for the discussion of this paper, the national secretariat recommends study not only of the sources cited in the paper, but also: (1) Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, sections 9 and 10, "The Critique of Imperialism," and "The Place of Imperialism in History;" (2) Mao, On Coalition Government, section 2, "The International and Domestic Situation," Vol. LLI, pp. 206-208; "Talk with American Correspondent Anna Louise Strong," Vol. IV, pp. 97-101; (3) Peking Review, #10, March 10, 1972, "How Engels Criticized Duhring," #29, July 21, 1972, "The Masses are the Makers of History," #29, July 21, 1972, "U.S. Dollar Hit Hard Again;" (4) Communist Party of China's "Comment on the Statement of the CPUSA," March 8, 1963.