

Independence a Year-Round State

ORDINARILY, we think of the signing of the Declaration of Independence as something that happened all in one day. It wasn't that way.

It was 15 months after the Revolutionary War began before Congress declared independence on July 4, 1776. It was July 19 when Congress ordered the declaration engrossed on parchment and signed by every member. It took several months to complete the signing.

Thus, the Declaration of Independence was not an instant act, although it certainly is appropriate that we observe the anniversary and its meaning by setting aside a day for the purpose.

Independence is an ongoing state of being. Liberty was not created instantaneously, and we might not lose it in one big battle.

Many believe the greatest danger to the United States today is not attack from abroad, but erosion of character, subversion of principles and decay of patriotism taking place within our nation.

James Madison said, "I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpation."

In an address delivered at the University of Colorado this spring, writer Anthony Harrigan declared, "In many ways we are our own worst enemies."

He added, "Our nation's strength is threatened because we have an anti-industrial craze or de-industrial ideology in this country, an anti-nuclear, anti-technological populism. We have a 'small is beautiful' movement that would have America return to the cottage industries of the Middle Ages, to the windmill and the waterwheel."

Well-publicized devices are in motion to lead our nation into socialism. They include making people feel they are helpless to solve their problems without government aid, elimination of local government, keeping people loaded down with high taxes and large public

debt, distrust of private business and industry, creation of many governmental bureaus to direct almost every phase of citizens' lives.

Our freedom may be undermined because it does not discriminate between those who support it and those who would destroy it.

In a published interview, Alexander Ginzburg, exiled Russian dissident, said, "It seems to me that no matter how your policy fluctuates, you tolerate and sometimes even nurture an enemy: the Soviet system. And now, if I understand correctly, you are doing the same thing for China."

Nearly half a century after the Declaration of Independence was signed, Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Adams that "the flames kindled on the Fourth of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism. On the contrary, they will consume those engines and all who work them."