

CHAPTER I

THE THEMES OF AGITATION

THE AGITATOR SPEAKS

When will the plain, ordinary, sincere, sheeplike people of America awaken to the fact that their common affairs are being arranged and run for them by aliens, Communists, crackpots, refugees, renegades, Socialists, termites, and traitors? These alien enemies of America are like the parasitic insect which lays his egg inside the cocoon of a butterfly, devours the larvae and, when the cocoon opens, instead of a butterfly we find a pest, a parasite.

Oh, this is a clever scheme and if the American people don't get busy and fight it the whole vicious thing will be slipped over on you without your knowing what hit you. A comprehensive and carefully planned conspiracy, directed by a powerfully organized clique, and operating through official and semiofficial channels, has been in continuous existence since the days of Nimrod of Babylon, and is the ever lurking enemy of the people's liberty. Remember at all times that the tactics employed by these usurpers of Christian liberties will be to create horror and panic by exhibitions of maximum brutalities. (How would you like to have the bloodstream of your baby, or your son, or daughter, or wife polluted by dried blood collected from Jews, Negroes, and criminals?) It will be only ordinary sense at the first announcements of trouble for all householders to have several large receptacles for storing drinking water on their premises so that ravages of thirst may not add to the general ordeal.

Hitler and Hitlerism are the creatures of Jewry and Judaism. The merciless programs of abuse which certain Jews and their satellites work upon people who are not in full agreement with them create terrible reactions. I am not justifying the reactions and I am not condoning the reactions; I am merely explaining

them. Have the Jews forgotten that the more they organize materially against their opponents, the more assaults will increase and the closer they are to persecution?

Remember, these Jews expect to show no mercy to Christians. What is to prevent Jewish gangsters from doing damage to synagogues on purpose so as to create apparent justification for retaliation—in which Christian Americans, who know too much and have displayed too much courage, would be picked up dead in or near synagogues?

We know what the stuffed shirts and reactionaries will say. They will say we are crackpots. They will say that this program will appeal only to the lunatic fringe. But surely it is not anti-Semitism to seek the truth. Or is it?

What's wrong? I'll tell you what is wrong. We have robbed man of his liberty. We have imprisoned him behind the iron bars of bureaucratic persecution. We have taunted the American businessman until he is afraid to sign his name to a pay check for fear he is violating some bureaucratic rule that will call for the surrender of a bond, the appearance before a committee, the persecution before some Washington board, or even imprisonment itself.

While we have dissipated and persecuted management, we have stood idly by and watched a gang of racketeers, radicals, and conspirators regiment our workers in the name of organized labor into a dues-paying conspiracy designed in Moscow to recruit workers for what they hope would become the American Red Revolution.

We are going to take this government out of the hands of these city-slickers and give it back to the people that still believe that 2 and 2 is 4, that God is in his heaven and the Bible is the Word. Down must come those who live in luxury, the laws that have protected the favored few, and those politicians who are disloyal to the voters!

Whenever a legislative body meets, liberties of the people are endangered by subtle and active interests. Lust for power, financial and political, is the ever-lurking enemy of the people's liberty. There is a deserved odium resting upon the word "liberal." Whether applied to Religion, Morals, or Politics, "Liberalism" is destructive of all fundamental values. In matters

pertaining to Religion, Liberalism leads to Atheism. In Morals, it leads to Nudism. In Politics, it leads to Anarchy. In the framework of a democracy the great mass of decent people do not realize what is going on when their interests are betrayed. This is a day to return to the high road, to the main road that leads to the preservation of our democracy and to the traditions of our republic.

Alien-minded plutocrats roll in wealth, bathe in liquor, surround themselves with the seduced daughters of America, and cooperate in all schemes to build up pro-Communist and anti-Christian sentiment. America, the vain—America, the proud—America, the nation of gluttons and spenders and drinkers. When Harry Hopkins got married, Mr. Baruch arranged the party. There were seven kinds of meat served—twenty-two kinds of food, and it had cost Barney Baruch \$122 a plate; and they drank of the vintage of '26. You talk about the drunken orgies of history—we expect Capone to live like that, but as long as I am a Christian soul, I will not be governed by a man like that. That's what they do not want me to say. That's why I am such a bad man. Because I say what you all want to say and haven't got the guts to say.

We leaders are risking our lives to write a new page in American history. We propose without further ado, without equivocation, without any silly sentimentality sometimes known as Tolerance, to emasculate the debauchers within the social body and reestablish America on a basis where this spoliation can never again be repeated. I am attempting to speak one hundred times between the sixth of August and the fifteenth of September. This would be physically impossible for most men but thanks to the temperate and Christian life of my mother and father, I have been given a strong body and strong constitution. Even so, there will be nights that I will drop to the bed almost like a dead man, I will be so fatigued and exhausted. But I'll never throw mud at my opponent . . . I am led by the ethics and morals of Christ.

We are coming to the crossroads where we must decide whether we are going to preserve law and order and decency or whether we are going to be sold down the river to these Red traitors who are undermining America.

This meeting is not a lecture course, it is not an open forum . . . we are making history here today. This is a crusade. I don't know how we can carry on without money. All we want is money from enthusiastic friends.

BACKGROUND FOR SEDUCTION

The agitator's harangue* may appear simply as the raving of a maniac—and may be ignored as such. Yet speeches and articles that voice essentially the same ideas and are couched in similar language do attract steady audiences in this country, if, for the time being, only small ones. What are the social and psychological implications of such materials?

American agitation is in a fluid stage. Some agitators have occasionally come fairly close to the national political scene. Acting on the assumption that America was nearing a grave crisis, they have tried to build a mass movement—with most notable success during the years of the New Deal and shortly before America's entry into the war. But by and large this has been the exception.

Far more numerous are those less conspicuous agitators who are active locally and who, far from evoking the image of a leader worshipped by masses of followers, rather suggest a quack medicine salesman. Their activity has many characteristics of a psychological racket: they play on vague fears or expectations of a radical change. Some of these agitators hardly seem to take their own ideas seriously, and it is likely that their aim is merely to make a living by publishing a paper or holding meetings.† What they give their admission-paying audience is a kind of act—something between a tragic recital and a clownish pantomime—rather than a political speech. Discussion of political topics invariably serves them as an occasion for vague and violent vituperation and often seemingly irrelevant personal abuse. The line between ambitious politician and small-time peddler of discontent is hard to draw, for there are many intermediary types. What is important, however, is that American agitation finds itself in a preliminary stage in which movement and racket may blend.

Whatever the differences among American agitators, they all belong

* The italicized speech is a composite of actual statements made by American agitators. Except for the punctuation, everything—words, thoughts, appeals—is all theirs.

† Compare the excellent study by J. V. Martin, "A Gentleman from Indiana," in *Harper's Magazine*, January, 1947, p. 66.

to the same species. Even the unforeshadowed listener or reader is immediately struck by the unmistakable similarity of their content and tone. A careful examination of agitational speeches and writings shows that this similarity is not accidental but that it is based on a unifying pattern—on certain recurrent motifs, *the constants of agitation*. Since these are not explicitly stated as such, the agitation analyst's first task is to isolate them. This then is the basic task of the present study: to discover the social and psychological strains of agitation by means of isolating and describing its fundamental themes.

As differentiated from propagandistic slogans, agitational themes directly reflect the audience's predispositions. The agitator does not confront his audience from the outside; he seems rather like someone arising from its midst to express its innermost thoughts. He works, so to speak, from inside the audience, stirring up what lies dormant there.

The themes are presented with a frivolous air. The agitator's statements are often ambiguous and unserious. It is difficult to pin him down to anything and he gives the impression that he is deliberately playacting. He seems to be trying to leave himself a margin of uncertainty, a possibility of retreat in case any of his improvisations fall flat. He does not commit himself for he is willing, temporarily at least, to juggle his notions and test his powers. Moving in a twilight zone between the respectable and the forbidden, he is ready to use any device, from jokes to doubletalk to wild extravagances.

This apparent unseriousness is, however, concerned with very serious matters. In his relationship to the audience the agitator tries to establish a tentative understanding which will lead to nothing less than seduction. There is a sort of unconscious complicity or collaboration between him and the listeners; as in cases of individual seduction neither partner is entirely passive, and it is not always clear who initiates the seduction. In seduction there operates not only mistaken notions or errors of judgment which are the result of ruses but also, and predominantly, psychological factors that reflect the deep conscious and unconscious involvement of both parties. This relationship is present in all the themes of agitation.

When the serpent suggests to Eve that she eat the forbidden fruit, Eve knows that she would thereby be violating God's commandment. The serpent does not present an idea completely alien to her; he plays rather upon her latent desire to do the forbidden, which is, in turn, based on her inner rebellion against the commandment.

WORKING ON THE AUDIENCE

Agitation may be viewed as a specific type of public activity and the agitator as a specific type of "advocate of social change"—a concept that will serve us as a convenient frame of reference.

The immediate cause of the activity of an "advocate of social change" is a social condition that a section of the population feels to be iniquitous or frustrating. This discontent he articulates by pointing out its presumed causes. He proposes to defeat the social groups held responsible for perpetuating the social condition that gives rise to discontent. Finally, he promotes a movement capable of achieving this objective, and he proposes himself as its leader.

Here then are the four general categories under which the output of any "advocate of social change" can be classified: Discontent, The Opponent, The Movement, and The Leader. Significant variations in the categories can be used to isolate subclasses; an especially useful division is to break down "advocate of social change" into "reformer" or "revolutionary," depending on whether the discontent is seen as circumscribed in area or as involving the whole social structure.

Unlike the usual advocate of social change, the agitator, while exploiting a state of discontent, does not try to define the nature of that discontent by means of rational concepts. Rather does he increase his audience's disorientation by destroying all rational guideposts and by proposing that they instead adopt seemingly spontaneous modes of behavior. The opponent he singles out has no discernibly rational features. His movement is diffuse and vague, and he does not appeal to any well-defined social group. He lays claim to leadership not because he understands the situation better than others but because he has suffered more than they have. The general purpose of his activity, be it conscious or not, is to modify the spontaneous attitudes of his listeners so that they become passively receptive to his personal influence.

It is quite obvious that the agitator does not fit into the reformer type; his grievances are not circumscribed, but on the contrary take in every area of social life. Nor does he address himself to any distinct social group, as does the reformer; except for the small minority he brands as enemies, every American is his potential follower.

Yet he does not fit into the revolutionary group, either. While the discontent he articulates takes in all spheres of social life, he never suggests that in his view the causes of this discontent are inherent in and inseparable from the social structure.

arable from the basic social set-up. He refers vaguely to the inadequacies and iniquities of the existing social structure, but he does not hold it ultimately responsible for social ills, as does the revolutionary.

He always suggests that what is necessary is the elimination of people rather than a change in political structure. Whatever political changes may be involved in the process of getting rid of the enemy he sees as a means rather than an end. The enemy is represented as acting, so to speak, directly on his victims without the intermediary of a social form, such as capitalism is defined to be in socialist theory. For instance, although agitational literature contains frequent references to unemployment, one cannot find in it a discussion of the economic causes of unemployment. The agitator lays responsibility on an unvarying set of enemies, whose evil character or sheer malice is at the bottom of social maladjustment.

Sometimes, these internationalists [a few international financiers] are not even interested in price or profit. They use their monopoly control to determine the living standards of peoples. They would rather see unemployment, closed factories and mines, and widespread poverty, if they might see the fulfillment of their own secret plans.¹

Unlike the reformer or revolutionary the agitator makes no effort to trace social dissatisfaction to a clearly definable cause. The whole idea of objective cause tends to recede into the background, leaving only on one end the subjective feeling of dissatisfaction and on the other the personal enemy held responsible for it. As a result, his reference to an objective situation seems less the basis of a complaint than a vehicle for a complaint rooted in other, less visible causes.

This impression is confirmed when we observe with what facility the agitator picks up issues from current political discussions and uses them for his own purposes. Throughout the past sixteen years, despite the extraordinary changes witnessed in American life, the agitator kept grumbling and vituperating in the same basic tone. Unlike political parties, he never had to change his "general line." When unemployment was of general concern, he grumbled about that; when the government instituted public works to relieve unemployment, he joined those who inveighed against boondoggling.

Sensational news items supply him with occasions for branding the evil character of the enemy:

The death of General George S. Patton, Jr., remains a mystery. He was a careful driver. He admonished all who drove for him to drive carefully. He

was known to be wise and cautious in traffic. He was killed by a truck that charged into him from a side road.

He opposed the Morgenthau Plan. He was against the liquidation of the German race merely because they were Germans. He refused to be dominated and bulldozed by revengeful Jews. He had promised to blow off the lid if he ever returned to the United States. Some people doubt if his death was an accident.²

His imagination does not shy away from obvious incongruities:

Suppose—that the Third International had issued secret formulae and technical instructions to a handpicked personnel of the Communist Party in all countries. . . .

Do you remember a couple of years ago that a mysterious gas cloud of drifting death fell upon northern France and Belgium and floated across the channel and up the Thames even to London itself? . . .

Do you know that even in Free America at the present moment, stark and violent Death waits upon the footsteps of men who know such facts and give them effectively to the public?³

It should by now be clear that the agitator is neither a reformer nor a revolutionary. His complaints do refer to social reality but not in terms of rational concepts. When the reformer and revolutionary articulate the original complaint, they supplant predominating emotional by intellectual elements. The relationship between complaint and experience in agitation is rather indirect and nonexplicit.

The reformer and revolutionary generalize the audience's rudimentary attitudes into a heightened awareness of its predicament. The original complaints become sublimated and socialized. The direction and psychological effects of the agitator's activity are radically different. The energy spent by the reformer and revolutionary to lift the audience's ideas and emotions to a higher plane of awareness is used by the agitator to exaggerate and intensify the irrational elements in the original complaint.

The following incident illustrates the difference between the two approaches. In a crowded New York bus a woman complained loudly that she was choking, that she was pushed and squeezed by other passengers, and added that "something should be done about it." (*A typical inarticulate complaint.*) A second passenger observed: "Yes, it's terrible. The bus company should assign more busses to this route. If we did something about it, we might get results." (*The solution of a reformer or revolutionary. The inarticulate expression of the complainant is translated into an objective issue—in this case "the faulty organization of the transpor-*

tation services that can be remedied by appropriate collective action.”) But then a third passenger angrily declared: “This has nothing to do with the bus company. It’s all those foreigners who don’t even speak good English. They should be sent back where they came from.” (*The solution of the agitator who translates the original complaint not into an issue for action against an established authority, but into the theme of the vicious foreigners.*)

In contradistinction to all other programs of social change, the explicit content of agitational material is in the last analysis incidental—it is like the manifest content of dreams. The primary function of the agitator’s words is to release reactions of gratification or frustration whose total effect is to make the audience subservient to his personal leadership.

It is true that the agitator sometimes appears to introduce concepts that were not originally present in the audience’s complaints. But these are not the result of an objective analysis. When the agitator denounces government bureaucrats for the privations of wartime rationing, he does so not because he has discovered any causal relationship between the two but rather because he knows that there is a potential resentment against bureaucrats for reasons that have nothing to do with rationing. The appearance of an intellectual distance between the agitator and the audience is deceptive: instead of opposing the “natural” current, the agitator lets himself be carried by it. He neglects to distinguish between the insignificant and the significant; no complaint, no resentment is too small for the agitator’s attention. What he generalizes is not an intellectual perception; what he produces is not the intellectual awareness of the predicament, but an aggravation of the emotion itself.

Instead of building an objective correlate of his audience’s dissatisfaction, the agitator tends to present it through a fantastic and extraordinary image, which is an enlargement of the audience’s own projections. The agitator’s solutions may seem incongruous and morally shocking, but they are always facile, simple, and final, like daydreams. Instead of the specific effort the reformer and revolutionary demand, the agitator seems to require only the willingness to relinquish inhibitions. And instead of helping his followers to sublimate the original emotion, the agitator gives them permission to indulge in anticipatory fantasies in which they violently discharge those emotions against alleged enemies.

Sometimes this hostility takes on paranoiac overtones. The change of the shape of traffic lights in New York City, for instance, may inspire the following remarks:

What a shock it must be to the descendants of the STAR OF DAVID to see *all* traffic signal lights in the Five Boroughs of Greater New York being changed, for the duration, from the full red and green circular light, about 6 inches in diameter, now to show a RED OR GREEN CROSS, for or against traffic. This change is made in the DIMOUT idea, but the use of the CROSS is the work of our Engineering Department of the N. Y. Police, so the Jews can be reminded that this is a Christian Nation.⁴

The reformer or revolutionary concentrates on an analysis of the situation and tends to ignore irrational or subconscious elements. But the agitator appeals primarily to irrational or subconscious elements at the expense of the rational and analytical.

CHAPTER I I

SOCIAL MALAISE

The first and most natural task that confronts a student of any movement of social change is to locate the cause of the movement in a specific condition of discontent. In most instances the solution of this problem presents no difficulties at all—in fact, the advocate of social change himself devotes a great part of his energy to articulating this cause. When we examine agitation, however, we face an entirely different situation. That the agitator wants to exploit existing discontent is obvious enough: he seems always to be addressing people who are smarting under the harshest injustice and whose patience has been strained to the breaking point. But whenever the investigator scans the texts of agitation and, on the basis of his experience in studying other kinds of social movements, tries to discover what is the discontent it articulates, he is consistently disappointed.

The difficulty is not that agitation fails to provide him with answers, but rather that it answers a question he did not ask: whenever he asks *what* he is answered as if he had asked *who*. He finds numerous vituperative and indignant references to enemies, but nowhere can he find a clearly defined objective condition from which the agitator's audience presumably suffers. At best, agitation provides the investigator with contradictory or inconsistent references to such alleged conditions. Unless we decide that the agitator is simply a lunatic we must assume that, although a sense of discontent exists, he, unlike other advocates of social change, is either unable or unwilling to state it explicitly. Hence, the agitation analyst faces the task of himself explicating the state of discontent to which the agitator refers.

A CATALOGUE OF GRIEVANCES

Even a cursory glance at agitational material shows that any attempt to analyze it by methods that help discover the purposes of the revolu-

tionary or the reformer could lead only to an impasse. If we try to classify the agitator's complaints in terms of the simplest categories, we obtain approximately the following picture:

1. **ECONOMIC GRIEVANCES.** The agitator roams freely over every area of economic life. He may begin anywhere at all. Too much help is being extended to foreign nations. "If we have any money to offer for nothing, or to loan, or to give away, we had better give it to our own first. Of course, that is old fashioned."¹

Not only are foreigners taking our money, they also threaten our jobs. "People born in America have to commit suicide because they have nothing to eat while refugees get their jobs."²

Behind such injustices stand "The International Bankers, who devised and control our money system, [and] are guilty of giving us unsound money."³

Such situations constitute a danger to the American way of life, for "what is more likely to follow many years of Nudeal communistic confiscatory taxation, wool-less, metal-less, auto-less regimentation and planned scarcities than our finally becoming stripped by necessity to Nudism?"⁴

2. **POLITICAL GRIEVANCES.** International commitments by the United States government jeopardize political liberties. "Like Russia, the United States is suffering from the scourge of internationalism."⁵ The American people are warned: "Be not duped by the internationalists who dwell amongst us."⁶

Of course it is only reasonable that "treaties and agreements . . . shall be reached with other nations, but . . . we want no world court and no world congress made up of a few Orientals and a few Russians and a few Europeans and a few British . . . to make laws for us to obey. . . ."⁷

From within, this country is threatened by radicalism, which prepares strikes that are "dress rehearsals for a forthcoming general strike that is meant to paralyze the Nation. . . ."⁸

We face both the danger of a "Soviet America . . . where . . . an Austrian-born Felix Frankfurter presides over an unending 'Moscow trial.' . . ."⁹ and the rule of "tyrannical bureaucrats" who if they "could have their way completely" would institute a "dictatorship in America as merciless as anything on earth."¹⁰

3. **CULTURAL GRIEVANCES.** The agitator is greatly disturbed because the media of public information are in the hands of enemies of the nation.

“... the Hollywood motion picture industry is being exploited by Russian Jewish Communists determined to inject their materialistic propaganda into the fresh young minds of our children . . .”¹¹ Hollywood is “largely dominated by aliens who have appropriated to their own use the inventions and discoveries of native citizens and who now specialize in speculation, indecency and foreign propaganda.”¹²

“The American press will never be free” until control “is removed from racial, religious and economic pressure groups.”¹³

4. MORAL GRIEVANCES. The enemies of the agitator are notoriously lax in morals: they engage in luxury consumption, they are a “crowd of Marxists, refugees, left-wing internationalists who enjoy the cream of the country and want the rest of us to go on milkless, butterless, cheeseless days while they guzzle champagne.”¹⁴

And what is most galling of all is that “we gentiles are suckers.” For “while we were praying they had their hands in our pockets.”¹⁵

EMOTIONAL SUBSTRATUM

This list of diffuse complaints could be lengthened indefinitely; it should be sufficient to indicate that the grievances the agitator voices do not refer to any clearly delineated material or moral condition. The only constant elements discernible in this mass of grievances are references to certain emotions or emotional complexes. These may be roughly divided as follows:

Distrust: The agitator plays on his audience’s suspicions of all social phenomena impinging on its life in ways it does not understand. Foreign refugees cash in on the “gullibility” of Americans, whom he warns not to be “duped” by internationalists. Strewn through the output of the agitator are such words as *hoax*, *corrupt*, *insincere*, *duped*, *manipulate*.

Dependence: The agitator seems to assume that he is addressing people who suffer from a sense of helplessness and passivity. He plays on the ambivalent nature of this complex which on the one hand reflects a protest against manipulation and on the other hand a wish to be protected, to belong to a strong organization or be led by a strong leader.

Exclusion: The agitator suggests that there is an abundance of material and spiritual goods, but that the people do not get what they are entitled to. The American taxpayer’s money is used to help everyone but himself — “we feed foreigners,”¹⁶ the agitator complains, while we neglect our own millions of unemployed.

Anxiety: This complex manifests itself in a general premonition of disasters to come, a prominent part of which seems to be the middle-class fear of a dislocation of its life by revolutionary action, and its suspicion that the moral mainstays of social life are being undermined. The agitator speaks of "the darkest hour in American history"¹⁷ and graphically describes a pervasive sense of fear and insecurity:

This afternoon America is caught in the throes of fear, apprehension and concern. Men are afraid . . . to vote, afraid not to vote . . . Our population has been caught by the ague and chills of uncertainty. Unless these uncertainties can be removed, unless these fears can be destroyed, we shall never have prosperity again.¹⁸

Disillusionment: This complex is seen in such remarks as the agitator's characterization of politics as "make-believe, pretense, pretext, sham, fraud, deception, dishonesty, falsehood, hypocrisy. . . ."¹⁹ In fact, "whenever a legislative body meets, liberties of the people are endangered by subtle and active interests."²⁰ Ideological slogans inspire resentment: "Democracy A Misnomer, A Trick Word Used by Jew and Communist Internationalists to Confuse and Befuddle American Citizens. . . ."²¹ Values and ideals are enemy weapons, covering up the machinations of sinister powers which, "taking advantage of the mass ignorance of our people, accomplish their purposes under the cloak of humanitarianism and justice."²²

THE INDIVIDUAL IN CRISIS

The analyst of agitation now faces the problem: are these merely fleeting, insubstantial, purely accidental and personal emotions blown up by the agitator into genuine complaints or are they themselves a constant rooted in the social structure? The answer seems unavoidable: these feelings cannot be dismissed as either accidental or imposed, they are basic to modern society. Distrust, dependence, exclusion, anxiety, and disillusionment blend together to form a fundamental condition of modern life: malaise.

When we define the discontent utilized by agitation as malaise, we are, so to speak, on our own for we cannot justify this definition by explicit references to agitational statements. It is an hypothesis, but it is a highly plausible one, because its only alternative would be to see the maze of agitational statements as a lunatic product beyond analysis. Moreover, it helps to account for certain recurrent characteristics of agitation: its

diffuseness, its pseudo-spontaneity, its flexibility in utilizing a variety of grievances, and its substitution of a personal enemy for an objective condition.

The agitator does not spin his grumblings out of thin air. The modern individual's sense of isolation, his so-called spiritual homelessness, his bewilderment in the face of the seemingly impersonal forces of which he feels himself a helpless victim, his weakening sense of values—all these motifs often recur in modern sociological writings. This malaise reflects the stresses imposed on the individual by the profound transformations taking place in our economic and social structure—the replacement of the class of small independent producers by gigantic industrial bureaucracies, the decay of the patriarchal family, the breakdown of primary personal ties between individuals in an increasingly mechanized world, the compartmentalization and atomization of group life, and the substitution of mass culture for traditional patterns.

These objective causes have been operating for a long time with steadily increasing intensity. They are ubiquitous and apparently permanent, yet they are difficult to grasp because they are only indirectly related to specific hardships or frustrations. Their accumulated psychological effect is something akin to a chronic disturbance, an habitual and not clearly defined malaise which seems to acquire a life of its own and which the victim cannot trace to any known source.

On the plane of immediate awareness, the malaise seems to originate in the individual's own depths and is experienced by him as an apparently isolated and purely psychic or spiritual crisis. It enhances his sense of antagonism to the rest of the world. Those groups in our society that are at present most susceptible to agitation seem to experience this malaise with particular acuteness—perhaps precisely because they do not confront social coercion in its more direct forms.

Although malaise actually reflects social reality, it also veils and distorts it. Malaise is neither an illusion of the audience nor a mere imposition by the agitator; it is a psychological symptom of an oppressive situation. The agitator does not try to diagnose the relationship of this symptom to the underlying social situation. Instead he tricks his audience into accepting the very situation that produced its malaise. Under the guise of a protest against the oppressive situation, the agitator binds his audience to it. Since this pseudo-protest never produces a genuine solution, it merely leads the audience to seek permanent relief from a permanent predicament by means of irrational outbursts. The agitator does not

create the malaise, but he aggravates and fixates it because he bars the path to overcoming it.

Those afflicted by the malaise ascribe social evil not to an unjust or obsolete form of society or to a poor organization of an adequate society, but rather to activities of individuals or groups motivated by innate impulses. For the agitator these impulses are biological in nature, they function beyond and above history: Jews, for instance, are evil—a "fact" which the agitator simply takes for granted as an inherent condition that requires no explanation or development. Abstract intellectual theories do not seem to the masses as immediately "real" as their own emotional reactions. It is for this reason that the emotions expressed in agitation appear to function as an independent force, which exists prior to the articulation of any particular issue, is expressed by this articulation, and continues to exist after it.

Malaise can be compared to a skin disease. The patient who suffers from such a disease has an instinctive urge to scratch his skin. If he follows the orders of a competent doctor, he will refrain from scratching and seek a cure for the cause of his itch. But if he succumbs to his unreflective reaction, he will scratch all the more vigorously. This irrational exercise of self-violence will give him a certain kind of relief, but it will at the same time increase his need to scratch and will in no way cure his disease. The agitator says: keep scratching.

The agitator exploits not primarily the feelings generated by specific hardships or frustrations, but more fundamentally those diffuse feelings of malaise which pervade all modern life. The malaise which is experienced as an internal psychic condition, can, however, be explained only by the social process in its totality. Such an explanation—following the classical method of articulating causes of discontent in universal and verifiable terms and then proposing definite methods to remove them—is beyond the resources of the agitator.

Here the agitator turns to account what might appear his greatest disadvantage—his inability to relate the discontent to an obvious causal base. While most other political movements promise a cure for a specific, and therefore limited, social ailment, the modern agitator, because he himself indirectly voices the malaise, can give the impression that he aims to cure some chronic, ultimate condition. And so, he insinuates, while others fumble with the symptoms, he attacks the very roots of the disease in that he voices the totality of modern feeling.

Because the malaise originates in the deepest layers of the individual psyche, it can appear to be an expression of frustrated spontaneity and

essential spiritual needs. The agitator, implicitly working on this assumption, thus claims in effect that he represents the most general interests of society, while his opponents, who concern themselves with such limited, specific matters as housing or unemployment or wages, represent only selfish class interests. He can excoriate the others for their seemingly materialistic attitude, since he, on the contrary, has at heart only the nation and the race.

He can thus identify himself with any symbol suggesting spiritual spontaneity and, by extension, with any symbol suggesting that he strives to gratify suppressed instinctual impulses. He can appear as the enemy of those unjust constraints of civilization that operate on a deeper, more intimate level than those imposed by social institutions, and he can represent himself as a romantic defender of ancient traditions today trampled down by modern industrialism.

This alleged spirituality is vague enough to include or exclude anything at all, to be dissociated from history and to be associated with the most primitive biological instincts. In its name the agitator can appeal to the Promethean energies of sacrifice and promise to satisfy the essential needs for participation in communal life, for spiritual security, spontaneity, sincerity, and independence. He can easily switch from money and unemployment to spiritual matters.

. . . there is something deeper, more substantial which has been removed from the foundation of our national life than the mere loss of money and loss of jobs . . . Charity means seeking first the kingdom of God and His justice rather than seeking banks filled with gold.²³

Malaise is a consequence of the depersonalization and permanent insecurity of modern life. Yet it has never been felt among people so strongly as in the past few decades. The inchoate protest, the sense of disenchantment, and the vague complaints and forebodings that are already perceptible in late nineteenth century art and literature have been diffused into general consciousness. There they function as a kind of vulgarized romanticism, a *Weltschmerz in perpetuum*, a sickly sense of disturbance that is subterranean but explosive. The intermittent and unexpected acts of violence on the part of the individual and the similar acts of violence to which whole nations can be brought are indices of this underground torment. Vaguely sensing that something has gone astray in modern life but also strongly convinced that he lacks the power to right whatever is wrong (even if it were possible to discover what is wrong), the individual lives in a sort of eternal adolescent uneasiness.

The agitator gravitates toward malaise like a fly to dung. He does not

blink its existence as so many liberals do; he finds no comfort in the illusion that this is the best of all possible worlds. On the contrary, he grovels in it, he relishes it, he distorts and deepens and exaggerates the malaise to the point where it becomes almost a paranoiac relationship to the external world. For once the agitator's audience has been driven to this paranoiac point, it is ripe for his ministrations.

The prevalence of malaise in recent decades is reflected in growing doubt with relation to those universal beliefs that bound western society together.* Religion, the central chord of western society, is today often justified even by its most zealous defenders on grounds of expediency. Religion is proposed not as a transcendent revelation of the nature of man and the world, but as a means of weathering the storms of life, or of deepening one's spiritual experience, or of preserving social order, or of warding off anxiety. Its claim to acceptance is that it offers spiritual comfort. A similar development may be found in morality. There are today no commonly accepted—commonly accepted as a matter of course and beyond the need for discussion—moral values. Such a pragmatic maxim as "honesty is the best policy" is itself striking evidence of the disintegration of moral axioms. And much the same is also true for economic concepts: the businessman still believes in fair competition, but in his "dream life . . . the sure fix is replacing the open market."†

As a result, the old beliefs, even when preserved as ritualistic fetishes, have become so hollow that they cannot serve as spurs to conscience or internalized sources of authority. Now authority stands openly as a coercive force and against it is arrayed a phalanx of repressed impulses that storm the gates of the psyche seeking outlets of gratification.

When, for whatever reasons, direct expression of feelings is inhibited, they are projected through some apparently unrelated materials. We may accordingly assume that if the audience is not aware of the causes of the malaise, this is due not only to the inherent complexity of these causes, but chiefly to unconscious inhibitions, which probably originate in a reluctance to struggle against seemingly superior forces. So the agitator sanctions immediate resentments and seemingly paves the way for the relief of the malaise through discharge of the audience's aggressive impulses; but simultaneously he perpetuates the malaise by blocking the way toward real understanding of its cause.

* Cf. Horkheimer, Max: *Eclipse of Reason*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1947.

† Mills, C. Wright: "The competitive personality," *Partisan Review*, p. 436 vol. XIII, 4, 1946.

All such utilizations of malaise are possible only on condition that the audience does not become aware of its roots in modern society. The malaise remains in the background of agitation, the raw material of which is supplied by the audience's stereotyped projections of the malaise. Instead of trying to go back to their sources, to treat them as symptoms of a bad condition, the agitator treats them as needs that he promises to satisfy. He is therefore not burdened with the task of correcting the audience's inadequate ideas; on the contrary, he can let himself be carried along by its "natural" current.

CHAPTER IX

SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE AGITATOR

The democratic leader usually tries to present himself as both similar to and different from his followers—similar in that he has common interests with them, different in that he has special talents for representing those interests. The agitator tries to maintain the same sort of relationship to his audiences, but instead of emphasizing the identity of his interests with those of his followers, he depicts himself as one of the plain folk, who thinks, lives and feels like them. In agitation this suggestion of proximity and intimacy takes the place of identification of interests.

The nature of the difference between leader and follower is similarly changed. Although the agitator intimates that he is intellectually and morally superior to his audience, he rests his claim to leadership primarily on the suggestion of his innate predestination. He does resort to such traditional American symbols of leadership as the indefatigable businessman and the rugged frontiersman, but these are overshadowed by the image he constructs of himself as a suffering martyr who, as a reward for his sacrifices, deserves special privileges and unlimited ascendancy over his followers. The agitator is not chosen by his followers but presents himself as their pre-chosen leader—pre-chosen by himself on the basis of a mysterious inner call, and pre-chosen as well by the enemy as a favorite target of persecution. One of the plain folk, he is yet far above them; reassuringly close, he is yet infinitely aloof.

While spokesmen for liberal and radical causes refrain, for a variety of reasons, from thrusting their own personalities into the foreground of their public appeals, the agitator does not hesitate to advertise himself. He does not depend on a "build-up" manufactured by subordinates and press agents, but does the job himself. He could hardly trust anyone else to paint his self-image in such glowing colors. As the good fellow who has nothing to hide, whose effusiveness and garrulousness know no limit, he does not seem to be inhibited by considerations of good taste from openly displaying his private life and his opinions about himself.

This directness of self-expression is particularly suitable for one who aspires to be the spokesman for those suffering from social malaise. The agitator seems to realize almost intuitively that objective argumentation and impersonal discourse would only intensify the feelings of despair, isolation, and distrust from which his listeners suffer and from which they long to escape. Such a gleeful display of his personality serves as an *ersatz* assertion of individuality. Part of the secret of his charisma as a leader is that he presents the image of a self-sufficient personality to his followers. If they are deprived of such a blessing, then at least they can enjoy it at second remove in their leader.

Those who suffer from malaise always want to pour their hearts out, but because of their inhibitions and lack of opportunities they seldom succeed. Conceiving of their troubles as individual and inner maladjustments, they want only a chance to be "understood," to clear up the "misunderstandings" which others have about them. On this need the agitator bases his own outpouring of personal troubles. When he talks about himself the agitator vicariously gratifies his followers' wish to tell the world of their troubles. He lends an aura of sanction and validity to the desire of his followers endlessly to complain, and thus his seemingly sincere loquacity strengthens his rapport with them. His trials are theirs, his successes also theirs. Through him they live.

By seemingly taking his listeners into his confidence and talking "man to man" to them, the agitator achieves still another purpose: he dispels any fear they may have that he is talking above their heads or against their institutionalized ways of life. He is the elder brother straightening things out for them, not a subversive who would destroy the basic patterns of their lives. The enemy of all established values, the spokesman of the apocalypse, and the carrier of disaffection creates the atmosphere of a family party in order to spread his doctrine the more effectively. Blending protestations of his weakness with intimations of his strength, he whines and boasts at the same time. Cannot one who is so frank about his humility also afford to be equally frank about his superiority?

The agitator's references to himself thus fall into two groups or themes: one covering his familiarity and the other his aloofness, one in a minor key establishing him as a "great little man," and the other in a major key as a bullet-proof martyr who despite his extraordinary sufferings always emerges victorious over his enemies.

THEME 20: GREAT LITTLE MAN

Unlike those idealists who, sacrificing comfort in behalf of a lofty social goal, "go to the people," the agitator comes from the people; in fact, he is always eager to show that socially he is almost indistinguishable from the great mass of American citizens. "I am an underdog who has suffered through the depression like most of the people."¹ Like millions of other Americans, he is "one of [those] plain old time, stump grubbing, liberty loving, apple cider men and women."² Yet he is always careful to make it clear that he is one of the endogamic *élite*, "an American-born citizen whose parents were American born and whose parents' parents were American born. I think that's far enough back."³ There is no danger that anyone will discover he had an impure grandmother.

Not only is he one of the people, but his most ardent wish is always to remain one and enjoy the pleasures of private existence. He hates to be in the limelight, for he is "an old-fashioned American" who, he cheerfully admits, does not even know his "way around in the circles of high society at Washington."⁴ If it were really up to him and if his conscience didn't tell him otherwise, he'd spend all his time on his favorite hobby: "If we had a *free* press in America I doubt if Gerald Smith would publish *The Cross and the Flag*. I am sure I wouldn't publish AMERICA PREFERRED. In my spare time I'd play golf."⁵ Even when he finally does seek office, it is only after a heart-rending conflict and after he has received the permission of his parents: ". . . first, I would have to get the consent of my Christian mother and father, because years ago I had promised them that I would not seek office."⁶ And on those rare occasions when he can escape from his duties for a few minutes of relaxation, he proudly tells his listeners about it: "Well, friends, Lulu and I managed to get time out to attend the annual carnival and bazaar of the Huntington Park Chapter of the Indoor Sports Club."⁷

Even at this rather uncomplicated level of identification the agitator is ambiguous. By his very protestations that he is quite the same as the mass of Americans he smuggles in hints of his exceptional status. Public life, he intimates, is a bother, and whoever deserts his private pleasures in its behalf must have some good reason for doing so. By constantly apologizing for his abandonment of private life and his absorption in public life, the agitator suggests that there are special provinces and unusual responsibilities that are limited to the uniquely endowed. If one of the plain people, such as he, gains access to such privileges and burdens, then it must surely be because of his unusual talents. He has

embarked on a difficult task for which he is specially qualified, and therefore his followers owe him gratitude, admiration, and obedience.

A GENTLE SOUL. Although he is, by virtue of his special talents, a man who has risen out of the common people, the agitator remains a kindly, gentle soul—folksy, good-natured, golden-hearted. Far be it from him to hold any malice against any fellow human being, for “if we must hate, let us hate hate.”⁸ Nor is he “the kind of person who carries hatred or bitterness for any length of time . . . In spite of all I have gone through . . . I have never lost my sense of humor, my ability to laugh, even right into the face of seeming disaster.”⁹

Like all other Americans, he is a good and solicitous father to his children, and in a moment of difficulty appeals touchingly to his friends for help: “My son, 9½ years old, is pestering me, wanting a bicycle. Get in touch with me, please, if anyone knows where I could obtain a second-hand bicycle very cheap.”¹⁰ But his virtues come out most clearly in his role as model husband. He regales his audience with bits of intimate family dialogue: “I said one day to my sweet wife.”¹¹ And even he, the would-be dictator, does not hesitate to admit that the little, or not so little, wife is the boss at home: “If I don’t look out I’ll be looking for a boss’ lap on which to sit and chew gum. Well, Lulu’s the boss and, having gained about 25 pounds during the past six months, she has plenty of lap on which to sit.”¹²

As he makes the rounds of his meetings, his faithful wife accompanies him: “A few weeks ago found Mrs. Winrod and me spending Sunday at Sioux City, Iowa, holding meetings in the Billy Sunday Memorial Tabernacle.”¹³ And when he wishes to express his gratitude to his followers, it is again as the gentle soul, the faithful family man: “The wife and I are very grateful for the prayerful letters, kind words, and sums remitted so far . . .”¹⁴ So sweet and lovable are both his personality and his family life that he offers family pictures for sale: “How many have received 1. Calendar of Mrs. Smith, me and Jerry? 2. A copy of my ‘undelivered speech?’”¹⁵

TROUBLES SHARED. One of the agitator’s favorite themes is his economic troubles, about which he speaks to complete strangers with perfect ease:

I must confide to you without reservation . . . I have spent everything I have; I have surrendered every possession I had in this world in order to carry on this fight. I will not be able to borrow any more money; I have nothing left to sell.¹⁶

Another agitator complains that by engaging in political activity he has embarked on "a gamble with the security of my wife and children at stake."¹⁷ And still another offers the audience a detailed financial statement:

The taxes on my Kenilworth home are unpaid and there are some \$1800 in outstanding bills accrued since I stopped depleting my few remaining securities, although I have paid light, phone and groceries . . . his [her husband's] refusal to give us any of the milk check income from my farm, his continuing to spend this income while associating with the woman he brought to sleep in my own bed at my farm, finally made it necessary to take some legal steps to protect the family.¹⁸

The agitator is just as frank about the condition of his health as about his financial or marital contretemps. We find him making great sacrifices that cause him to commiserate with himself: "I come home and say to Mrs. Smith, 'How does this old heart of mine keep up?' . . . But I know how men like that go—they go all of a sudden."¹⁹ And even when his heart doesn't bother him, his teeth do: "The last time I saw Charlie Hudson, he still had been unable to afford to get needed dental work done. His wife takes roomers."²⁰ His afflictions threatened to handicap his political work:

My dentist informed me I must have four teeth removed at once. I don't mind that so much as I do the fact that I may come on the air tomorrow, after the teeth have been extracted, and sound like a dear old gentleman who has been drawing old-age pension for forty years or more.²¹

By multiplying such references to his family, his health, and his finances, the agitator tries to create an atmosphere of homey intimacy. This device has immediate, gratifying implications. The personal touch, the similarity between agitator and audience, and the intimate revelations of "human interest" provide emotional compensation for those whose life is cold and dreary, especially for those who must live a routinized and atomized existence.

Equally gratifying to listeners may be the fact that such revelations help satisfy their curiosity—a universal feature of contemporary mass culture. It may be due to the prevalent feeling that one has to have "inside information" that comes "from the horse's mouth" in order to get along in modern society. Perhaps, too, this curiosity is derived from an unconscious infantile desire to glimpse the forbidden life of the grown-ups—a desire closely related to that of revealing and enjoying scandals. When the listener is treated as an insider his libido is gratified, and it matters

little to him whether he hears revelations about crimes and orgies supposedly indulged in by the enemy or about the increase in weight of the agitator's wife. He has been allowed to become one of those "in the know."

PUBLIC PRIVACY. When the agitator indulges in his uninhibited displays of domesticity and intimacy, he does so not as a private person but as a public figure. This fact endows his behavior with considerable ambivalence. His lyrical paeans in praise of the pleasures of private existence imply *ipso facto* a degrading of this privacy when he exposes it to public inspection. This gesture has the double meaning of an invasion of the agitator's private life by his public life and of his public life by his private life. In this way the traditional liberal differentiation between the two is made to seem obsolete and in any case untenable. Privacy is no longer possible in this harsh social world—except as a topic of public discussion.

Finally, these revelations of private life serve to enhance the agitator's stature as a public figure, who, it has already been suggested, vicariously symbolizes the repressed individualities of his adherents. He establishes his identity with the audience by telling it of his financial troubles and other kinds of failures, but he also underlines the fact of his success. He has risen from the depths in which the followers still find themselves; in contrast to them, he has managed to integrate his public and private personalities. The proof of this is simple enough—is he not talking to the followers and are they not listening to him? As a symbol of his followers' longings, the agitator centers all attention on himself, and soon his listeners may forget that he is discussing, not public issues, but his qualifications for leadership.

That the agitator simultaneously stresses his own weakness, that he pictures himself as all too human, does not impair the effectiveness of his attempt at self-exaltation. By the very fact that he admits his weaknesses while stressing his powers, he implies that the followers too can, if to a lesser extent, become strong once they surrender their private existence to the public movement. They need but follow the path of the great little man.

THEME 21: BULLET-PROOF MARTYR

Aside from his remarkable readiness to share his troubles with his fellow men, what are the qualities that distinguish the great little man from

the rest of the plain folk and make him fit to be one of "those . . . who lead"?²² Here again the agitator is ready to answer the question. Although the agitator calls himself an old-fashioned Christian American, Christian humility is hardly one of his outstanding virtues. For all his insistence that he is one of the common folk, he does not hesitate to declare that he is an exceptionally gifted man who knows and even admires his own talent.

That he has no difficulty in overcoming conventional reticence about such matters is due not merely to his quite human readiness to talk about himself but also to the fact that his prominence is not merely his own doing. As he has emphasized, his natural inclination is not to lead humanity: he would rather play golf. But he cannot help it—forces stronger and more imperious than his own will push him to leadership. Both because of his innate dynamism and because he has been singled out by the enemy, the mantle of leadership, like it or not, falls on his shoulders.

THE INNER CALL. Suggesting that his activity is prompted by sacred command, the agitator speaks of himself as the "voice of the great unorganized and helpless masses."²³ He is "giving vocal expression to the thoughts that you have been talking about around your family tables."²⁴ But it also comes from holier regions: "Like John the Baptist," the agitator is "living just for the sweet privilege of being a voice in the wilderness."²⁵ As such, the agitator does not hesitate to compare himself to Christ: "Put down the Crown of Thorns on me."²⁶ He sees himself continuing the work of the "Divine Savior."²⁷

But for all his suggestions that he has a divine responsibility the agitator does not pretend to bring any startlingly new revelation. He does not claim to make his audience aware of a reality that they see only partially; he does not claim to raise the level of their consciousness. All he does is to "say what you all want to say and haven't got the guts to say it."²⁸ What "others think . . . privately," the agitator says "publicly."²⁹ And for this purpose he is specially talented: as one agitator says of another, he delivered what was "perhaps the greatest address we have ever had on Christian statesmanship."³⁰

Like a new Luther, he bellows defiance of established powers without regard to consequences: "I am going to say some things this afternoon that some people won't like, but I cannot help it, I must speak the truth."³¹ Nothing can "halt and undo the innermost convictions of stalwart

sons of Aryan blood,"³² not even the ingratitude of those who spurn him: "Nevertheless, there I will stand demanding social justice for all even though some of the ill-advised whom I am endeavoring to defend will take a pot-shot at me from the rear."³³

Nor is the agitator's courage purely spiritual:

If the Gentiles of the nation back up Pelley now in his challenge to the usurpers of American liberties, they are going to get a "break" that they have never dreamed possible till Pelley showed the spunk to defy the nepotists.³⁴

The agitator, aware of both his qualifications and his courage, knows that

When the history of America is written . . . concerning the preservation of the American way of life, I am going to be thankful that in the day when men were cowardly and overcautious and crawled under the bed and allowed themselves to be bulldozed by a bunch of wire-whiskered Communists and atheists and anti-God politicians, that there was one man by the name of Gerald L. K. Smith that had the courage to be an old-fashioned, honest to God, Christian American!³⁵

And the agitator knows too that his courage extends to somewhat smaller matters as well:

When I went to the Auditorium, although it was very cold, probably five degrees below zero—twenty degrees the first time, five degrees the second time—the place was packed and every inch of standing room was taken. I had to pass through a picket line, one of those vicious picket lines organized by Reds and enemies of our meeting there.³⁶

It is this blending of seriousness and unseriousness, of the sublime Crown of Thorns and the toothache that characterizes the agitator's approach to composing his self-portrait as well as to the other themes of his speeches and writings. He is both the little man suffering the usual hardships and the prophet of truth: Walter Mitty and Jeremiah rolled up into one.

Such an indiscriminate mixture of trivial and sublime symbols might appear blasphemous or simply disgusting, but the agitator seems to count on a different kind of reaction. Instead of imposing on his listeners the difficult task of following a saint, a task which might after all cause them to feel that they too must assume some of the traits of sainthood, he gratifies them by dragging the lofty notions of sainthood down to a humdrum, *kleinbürgerlich* level. The followers thereby are offered an object

of admiration, the image of the desanctified saint, that is closer to their own level of feeling and perception. The agitator imposes no strain on them.

There is still another gratification for the audience in the agitator's narcissistic outbursts of self-praise. A courageous and self-reliant man might be disgusted with the spectacle of someone celebrating himself as the repository of all the manly virtues, but people who are acclimated to self-denial and self-hatred are paradoxically attracted by the selfish narcissist. As a leading psychoanalyst puts it: "This narcissistic behavior which gives the dependent persons no hope for any real love arouses their readiness for identification."^{*} Accordingly, the agitator does not count on the support of people capable of self-criticism or self-reliance; he turns to those who constantly yearn for magical aids to buttress their personalities.

PERSECUTED INNOCENCE. Like any advocate of social change the agitator appeals to social frustration and suffering, but in his output there is a striking contrast between the vagueness with which he refers to the sufferings of his listeners as a social group and the vividness with which he documents his personal trials. He speaks as though the malaise resulted in tangible hardship in him and him alone. His trials and ordeals are truly extraordinary, almost superhuman, and by comparison the complaints of his followers seem merely to refer to minor nuisances, insignificant reflections of his glorious misfortunes. He is the chosen martyr of a great cause—himself. As they compare their lot to his, the followers cannot but feel that they are almost like safe spectators watching a battle between the forces of evil and their own champion of virtue.

In building up this image of persecuted innocence, the agitator uses religious symbols. He "has come through the most heart-rending Gethsemane, I believe, of any living man in America today,"³⁷ and he does not hesitate to compare himself to the early Christian martyrs: "Many leaders . . . sneered at Father Coughlin and turned thumbs down on the Christian Fronters, as did the Patrician population of Rome turn their thumbs down on the Christian slave martyrs . . ."³⁸

But these religious associations are only decorations for ordeals that are strictly secular; the agitator's sufferings are of this world. Here he runs into a difficulty. In actual fact, he has met with little interference

^{*} Fenichel, O.: *The Psychoanalytical Theory of Neurosis*, New York, Norton, 1945, p. 510.

from the public authorities.* Yet he realizes that as a man with a mission, he must be persecuted. If the past will yield no evidence, perhaps the future will, for who is to deny him the right to premonitions:

I don't know what is going to happen to me. All I ask you to do is, don't be surprised at anything. If I am thrown in jail, if I am indicted, if I am smeared, if I am hurt physically, no matter what it might be, don't be surprised at anything, because everything in the calendar is now being attempted. . . . I am glad to make that sacrifice.³⁹

One reason why the agitator has difficulty in specifying the persecutions to which he is subjected is that his enemies work in secret. They force him to the most surreptitious behavior: "I, an American, must sneak in darkness to the printer to have him print my booklet and to get it out to the people like a bootlegger."⁴⁰ He is beset by vague dangers that are difficult to pin down: "One of these newspapermen, according to another newspaperman, is said to have predicted somewhat as follows: 'Two Jews from England were over here to see that Hudson does not get home alive.'⁴¹

But when the agitator gets down to bedrock, it becomes clear that what he most resents is public criticism, which he describes as "smeared" and "intimidation." He complains that "Jewish New-Dealers in the Congress . . . started a mighty ball rolling to smear Pelley from the scene."⁴² And "because I dare to raise my voice foreigners are intimidating me and trying to get me off the air."⁴³ Nor does he feel happy that "frequently we have heard it prophesied over the radio by such noble patriots as Walter Winchell and others, that we were about to be incarcerated in concentration camps."⁴⁴

A SLIGHT CASE OF MURDER. However insubstantial the evidence he can summon for his martyrdom, the agitator, it must be admitted, works it for all it is worth. He continually suggests that he has embarked on a dangerous career and that he is actually risking his life. The threat never abates, as we shall see in tracing it during the course of one agitator's statements over a period of twelve years.

As early as October, 1936, he realized that his death warrant had been signed. Like his political boss, who was assassinated, ". . . it may cost my life."⁴⁵ And not without reason: "Ten threats came to me within twenty-four hours here in New York City."⁴⁶

* Except for those involved in the wartime sedition trial and one agitator convicted as an enemy agent, the American agitators have suffered only from exposures and criticism.

Three years later these threats of murder were still harassing him: "I continued to receive all sorts of threats against my life . . ." ⁴⁷

By 1942 the rather slow-working murderers had a definite objective: to keep him out of the Senate. "I am convinced that there are men in America who would rather commit murder than see me in the United States Senate."⁴⁸ Other murderers, or perhaps the same ones, found his literary output more objectionable than the possibility of his becoming a Senator: "I have been warned that I will not live to complete this series of articles."⁴⁹

Half a year passes, and the enemy is still intent on murder. "A certain set of ruthless men in this nation have actually called for my assassination."⁵⁰ The murderers seem finally to have worked up enough energy or courage to come within striking distance:

I held a meeting down in Akron, Ohio, one time and my Committee resigned the afternoon of the meeting . . . I had to walk into that armory alone . . . I walked from the hotel over to this place which seated about 6,000 people alone, and when I got over there, the place was packed . . . I walked down the center aisle, walked right up to the microphone and the first thing I said was this, "There are men in this room who would like to see me killed tonight" . . .⁵¹

Yet even then there is no record of the murderers doing anything. Two more years went by and by the spring of 1945 the still healthy agitator noted that the threat to his life had become so real that it was even confirmed by police authorities: "Shortly before the end of the meeting I received a message from the police detectives to the effect that they were convinced that there was a definite plot to do me great injury, perhaps kill me."⁵² Nothing seems to have come of that danger, but by the summer of the same year the agitator reported that "people who know what is going on are convinced that a plan is on foot to actually get me killed at the earliest possible moment."⁵³ As of the moment of writing, the agitator remains alive and unharmed, never having once been the victim of assault or assassination. As late as April 29, 1948, he still maintained that he was the object of an attempt on his life, this time by means of "arsenic poisoning."⁵⁴

That he has no genuine factual data to support his charges does not seem to disturb the agitator: he persists in believing that an evil force is out to get him. His recital of fears, smearing, premonitions, anonymous letters—all this adds up to the familiar picture of paranoia. The paranoiac's conviction that he is persecuted cannot be logically refuted since it is itself extralogical. In agitation the leader acts out, as it were, a

complete case history of persecution mania before his listeners, whose own inclinations to regard themselves as the target of persecution by mysterious forces is thus sanctioned and encouraged. Nevertheless it is the agitator who remains at the center of the stage; it is on him that all the imaginary enemy blows fall. By symbolically taking upon himself all the burdens of social suffering, he creates unconscious guilt feelings among his followers, which he can later exploit by demanding their absolute devotion as recompense for his self-sacrifice. And since the enemy exacts the heaviest penalty from him, he has the implicit right to claim the highest benefits once the enemy is defeated. Similarly, since the enemy singles him out for persecution, he has the right to engage in terroristic reprisals. All of these consequences follow from the agitator's self-portrait as martyr.

But simultaneously the agitator, for all the dangers to which he is exposed, does manage to survive and continue his work. He is not merely the martyr but also the remarkably efficient leader, and on both counts he deserves special obedience. Since he is both more exposed and better equipped than his followers, his claims to leadership are doubly vindicated.

THE MONEY-MINDED MARTYR. There are many indications that, at its present stage at least, American agitation is a racket as well as a political movement. To what extent the agitator actually depends on his followers' financial contributions it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty. In any event he does not account for the use of the money he collects. It seems probable that at least some agitators have been heavily subsidized by anonymous wealthy donors, while it is known that some of the smaller fry make a living by selling their literature.

When the agitator appeals to his followers for money, he strengthens their devotion to the cause by leading them to make financial sacrifices. In agitation such psychological factors are probably of greater importance than in other movements. For it must be remembered that in agitation the follower has no precise idea what his cause is, that the whole background of the agitator's appeal is one of destruction and violence, with a meager minimum of positive stimuli. What remains then is the agitator himself—his inflated personality and his pressing needs. The agitator does not hesitate to act the insistent beggar. He begs meekly: "Oh, I'm just a common American citizen, friends, poor in the world's gifts, depending on the quarters and dollars of friends and radio listeners."⁵⁵ But he also

begs for himself as the agent of history: "It is a long grind to get the thousands of dollars absolutely necessary as a minimum in this way. But it must be done if the fight is to go on."⁵⁶ "Why hold back your financial aid NOW—when revolution itself is being shouted from our public rostrums?"⁵⁷

He begs for aid, but he also warns that those who do not come through now may live to regret it: "If any of you don't agree with the principles of America First and don't care to contribute to our cause, this is the time for you to get up and walk out."⁵⁸ Those who do not comply face the dreaded penalty of exclusion—they have to walk out and be alone with themselves.

MAGIC OF SURVIVAL. That he has managed to survive under terrible financial handicaps and political persecution arouses the agitator's self-admiration. ". . . How could he emerge unscathed with such colossal forces arrayed to smash him?"⁵⁹ His invulnerability is remarkable and is only slightly short of miraculous. His safety is, in fact, adduced as proof that he has gone through dangers, and as he concludes his report of the plot hatched against him by English Jews, he remarks with a note of defiance in his voice: "I arrived safely Sunday night."⁶⁰ His life seems to him protected by an anonymous providence: ". . . *Pelley is an absolute fatalist . . . he believes that nothing can harm him until he has done the work which he came into life at this particular period to do!*"⁶¹ And he always returns to the fight: "I intend to . . . toss off the shackles that have been thrown around me . . . to spread my wings again . . . and to soar to new heights to carry on the battle."⁶² For his powers of exertion are tremendous: "I speak two hours here and two hours there, and write all night and talk all day to people and write letters and work and . . . and everything else, and still I always seem to have the strength to do what lies before me."⁶³

Seen from one perspective, all this bragging is rather harmless. A narcissist naturally believes himself invulnerable and omnipotent, and his slightly ridiculous posturings only endear him to his audience. He is reduced to a level that is within their vision. Like the extraordinary exploits of the hero of a movie or a cheap novel, the agitator's adventure ends on an ultimately happy note—the hero is saved. From this harmless relapse into an adolescent atmosphere, the followers, together with the agitator himself, draw a certain simple gratification. They have been in the company of a hero who is not too heroic to be akin to them.

And yet somewhere in the interstices of this harmless braggadocio there

lurk the grimmer notes of violence and destruction. The agitator's self-portrait of miraculous survival has a solid reality basis; he really does enjoy a high degree of impunity. He is safe and sound, magically immune, secretly protected—and this despite his verbal violence and scurrilous denunciations of the powers that be or of some of the powers that be. If his enemies do not carry out their threats of murder, it is not because they would not want to but because they do not dare. Their power, the agitator thereby suggests, is rather less impressive than it appears; they have only the façade of power. Real power is on his side.

Behind this defiance of the enemy's threats lurks another suggestion: when the hour strikes and the seemingly strong enemy is revealed in his true weakness, the agitator will take revenge for the torments of fear that have been imposed on him. Perhaps it is not too bold to conjecture that as the agitator continually stresses his own bodily vigor, he is implicitly developing a complementary image to his leading metaphor of the enemy as a Low Animal. His own body is indestructible, but the helpless bodies of the enemy—those parasitical and disease-breeding low animals—are doomed to destruction. Behind the whining complaints and the triumphant self-admiration of this indestructible martyr looms the vision of the eugenic storm troops. The agitator is a good little guy, to be sure; he is a martyr who suffers endlessly; he survives by virtue of superior destinies; but in the long run he makes sure to protect himself.

TOUGH GUY. The agitator knows that sometimes he must bare his teeth. Often he does it with the air of a youthful gang leader testing his hoodlums:

I am going to test my people. I am going to see if the fathers that left their bones on the desert had real sons. I am going to find out if the children of the men that rebuilt San Francisco after the earthquake are real men.⁶⁴

Such vague anticipations of the agitator's future role are supplemented with more direct hints about his present strength. He means business, even if he is a great little man. "I am a tough guy. I am tough because I have got the goods on them."⁶⁵ The easy-going braggart is also a brutal swashbuckler. "They can threaten me all they want to. I am not a damned bit afraid to walk the streets of New York all by myself. I don't have to. I have the toughest men in New York with me."⁶⁶ Nor does he always have to sneak in the dark to his printer: "Huskies of my 'American Group' protect me when I take my printed booklets from the printer's plant."⁶⁷

The bodyguard, however, is used not merely against the enemy. The

same bodyguard that protects the leader from the enemy also protects him from any interference from his listeners: their role is to listen, not to participate. When he speaks, you had better listen—or else. In this way the agitator already establishes himself as a constituted authority. The agitator brags about this:

So as we moved down through the middle of the meeting I said, “Now, we are not going to have any disturbance, we are not going to be heckled and the first man who attempts that, we will throw him out through the nearest window.” So one fellow like this boy, way up in the balcony said something and somebody didn’t understand what he said and he was almost pitched out of the window.⁶⁸

It is in this atmosphere, in which even the followers are threatened with manhandling if they step out of line, that the agitator tests out a future device: the totalitarian plebiscite. “Do you authorize me to send a telegram to Senator Reynolds . . . put up your hands . . . All right, that is number one.”⁶⁹ He feeds them cues: “I bid for the American vote under that flag. Give that a hand.”⁷⁰ Such presentiments of the plebiscite are in themselves trivial enough, but they serve to emphasize the agitator’s role as the sole legitimate voice to which everyone must listen in silence except when told to speak up in unison.

INSIDE KNOWLEDGE. Not only is the agitator physically powerful and something of a terrorist to boot, but he also has access to secret and highly important information, the source of which he is most careful not to reveal. He quotes mysterious “sources” that enabled him “to correctly diagnose 3 years ago that the 1940 presidential election would not be bonafide . . .”⁷¹ He claims that “there has fallen into my hands a copy of these confidential instructions which came out from New York City concerning the underground science.”⁷² By miraculous but unspecified means he manages to penetrate into the heart of the enemy fortress where his sharp ears hear the confidences that “Zionists in America whispered within secret circles . . .”⁷³

On other occasions the agitator can offer only promises of revelations to come: “I shall try to keep you posted concerning the diabolical conspiracy.”⁷⁴ Or his information is too horrible to disclose: “I personally have had some experiences in the last year that would make your blood run cold, if I could tell you what they were.”⁷⁵ Or he is bound by professional secrecy:

Two contacts, best unnamed on account of nature of information divulged, inform: “. . . believes that he has discovered the hdqtrs. of what seems to be

Grand Orient Masonry . . . uptown in New York City. A building in the middle of a large block, surrounded by apartment houses; in a sort of courtyard, with a high barbed wire fence around it. No one is ever seen to enter this place, altho access could be had underground from one or more of the surrounding houses. A large telephone cable, sufficient for over 100 lines, goes to the place which is guarded night and day by armed guards . . .”⁷⁶

The agitator uses the language of an adolescent gang leader. He seeks to ingratiate himself with his listeners by promising them some highly important information. Some day the listeners will be “let in.” But the agitator uses this technique of innuendo in ways other than the relatively harmless promise to divulge secrets. He withholds information in the very gesture by which he seems to give it out. He reveals not secrets but the existence of secrets; the secrets themselves are another variety of “forbidden fruit.” Those affected by the promise to be “let in” are even more affected by the fact that the agitator has access to information inaccessible to them. To listen to innuendo and to rely on deliberately vague statements requires a certain readiness to believe, which the agitator directs towards his own person. So long as he does not reveal the “sources” of his knowledge, the agitator can continue to command the dependence of his followers. Unlike the educator, he never makes himself superfluous by revealing his methods of gaining knowledge. He remains the magical master.

This secret knowledge, like his toughness, is a two-edged weapon. It implies an ever present threat from which no one is quite safe: “Some day that thing is really going to come out, and when it comes out it is going to smell so high that any man that is connected with them, with that outfit, will be ashamed to say that he ever knew them.”⁷⁷ or: “I have written a letter containing some mighty important information which I have placed in the hands of attorneys in this city. . . . The letter will not be printed . . . if we arrive home safely at the end of our campaign.”⁷⁸

Behind such statements there is the suggestion that he knows more than he says, and that nothing can ultimately remain hidden from him. If his self-portrait as a tough guy anticipates the storm trooper, then his insistence on his “inside knowledge” anticipates the secret files of the totalitarian police, which are used less against the political enemy, known in any case, than as a means to keep the followers in line. Sternly the agitator indicates this to his followers: get used to the idea now, if you want a share in this racket, you have to obey its rules—and I make the rules.

THE CHARISMATIC LEADER. The self-portrait of the agitator may seem a little ridiculous. Such an absurd creature—at once one of the plain folk and the sanctified leader; the head of a bedraggled family and a man above all material considerations; a helpless victim of persecution and a dreaded avenger with fists of iron! Yet contemporary history teaches us that this apparently ridiculous braggart cannot be merely laughed away.

In establishing this ambivalent image of himself the agitator achieves an extremely effective psychological result. In him, the martyr ultimately triumphant over his detractors and persecutors, the adherents see all their own frustrations magically metamorphosed into grandiose gratifications. They who are marginal suddenly have a prospect of sharing in the exceptional; their suffering now can appear to them as a glorious trial, their anonymity and servitude as stations on the road to fame and mastery. The agitator finds the promise of all these glories in that humdrum existence of his followers which had driven them to listen sympathetically to his appeals; he shows them how all the accumulated stuff of repression and frustration can be lit up into a magnificent fireworks, how the refuse of daily drudgery can be converted into a high explosive of pervasive destruction.

The self-portrait of the agitator is thus a culmination of all his other themes, which prepare the audience for the spectacle of the great little man acting as leader. Taking advantage of all the weaknesses of the present social order, the agitator intensifies his listeners' sense of bewilderment and helplessness, terrifies them with the specter of innumerable dangerous enemies and reduces their already crumbling individualities to bundles of reactive responses. He drives them into a moral void in which their inner voice of conscience is replaced by an externalized conscience: the agitator himself. He becomes the indispensable guide in a confused world, the center around which the faithful can gather and find safety. He comforts the sufferers of malaise, takes over the responsibility of history and becomes the exterior replacement of their disintegrated individuality. They live through him.

CHAPTER X

WHAT THE LISTENER HEARD

In Europe, Hitler and Mussolini openly advocated a radical break with contemporary society. They explicitly repudiated capitalism and liberalism, and negated the democratic way of life in favor of a system based on charismatic leadership. To make their ideas attractive they resorted both to a glorified evocation of the preliberalistic past and to a distorted version of contemporary revolutionary ideologies. The very name National Socialist shows how the Hitler movement tried to incorporate elements of ideologies that appealed both to the past and the future.

These preliberalistic and revolutionary elements of the fascist appeal in Europe served to mask the actual meaning of the movement. In practice. Nazi totalitarianism was no more feudal than it was socialist. Its break with contemporary society took place only on the cultural and ideological level; the old liberalistic values were ruthlessly pushed aside for the needs of an industrial war machine. Old forms of economic and social coercion were perpetuated and strengthened.

The American agitator, however, has no preliberalistic tradition on which to fall back, he does not find it expedient to pose as a socialist, and he dares not explicitly repudiate established morality and democratic values. He only indirectly and implicitly assumes the mantle of charismatic leadership. He works, by necessity rather than choice, within the framework of liberalism.

Study of our themes shows that this limitation does not prevent him from conveying the principal social tenets of totalitarianism to his audience. The themes point to the disintegration of existing institutions, the perversion and destruction of democracy, the rejection of Western values, the exaltation of the leader, the reduction of the people to regimented robots, and the solution of social problems by terroristic violence. The American agitator shows that manipulation of people with a view to obtaining their conscious or unconscious adherence to his movement

need not take the detour of preliberalism or perverted socialism; that the psychological attitudes and social concerns that flow from the crisis of liberal society provide a sufficiently fertile soil for the growth of anti-democratic tendencies. It is as though the American agitator had evolved a method of directly converting the poisons generated by contemporary society into the quack remedies of totalitarianism—he does not need to resort to pseudo-feudal or pseudo-socialist labels. His themes could be transplanted to another country—much more easily than corresponding Nazi slogans could be transplanted to America. The mythical notion of the pure-blooded Nordic Aryan German superman would have to undergo many profound changes before becoming an effective appeal in this country; but the agitator's Simple Americans could be used in other countries as Simple Germans, or Simple French, or Simple Britishers etc. One is tempted to say that the American agitation is a standardized and simplified version of the original Nazi or fascist appeals.

Because the American agitator dispenses with such secondary labels, his methods of appeal are also more universal in scope, and are not bound to any specific national tradition or political situation. Despite his professions of Americanism, not a single one of his appeals refers to concerns or situations specific to America. The feelings that he stirs are in no sense limited to this country: for the social abscesses on which his invectives thrive can be found in any modern industrialized society.

The agitator seems aware of this when he declares that "I stand before you tonight, as I have stood before similar groups all over America, as a symbol of a state of mind that exists in America . . ." ¹ He does not tell us what this state of mind is, but on the basis of a study of his themes we can construct a portrait of the state of mind of his most susceptible kind of listener. This listener does not directly participate in the major fields of social production and is therefore always fearful that, given the slightest social maladjustment, his insignificant little job will vanish and with it will vanish his social status. He senses that in some way he cannot quite fathom life has cheated him. And yet he wonders why his fate should have been so unhappy. He abided by the rules, he never rebelled, he did what was expected of him. Bound and circumscribed by a series of uncontrollable circumstances, he becomes increasingly aware of how futile and desperately aimless his life is. And worst of all, he can no longer believe in any miraculous salvations, for no matter how much he hopes for them he is far too much the modern man really to place his faith in miracles. He is on the bottom, on the outside, and he fears that there is nothing he can do about it.

Yet there are others. . . . The intellectuals who talk about ideals and values and morals, who make a living—and a clean, comfortable living—by manipulating words. Smart alecks who paint pictures of wonderful societies in the future and who live so comfortably in this one. They—most of them Jews, of course—seem to have beaten the racket.

And even more so, there is that secret and inaccessible gang which lives in air-conditioned penthouses, enjoys the favors of movie stars and luxuriates on yachts, the lucky few, who tempt him with the possibility of success and the dream of escape from his own grimy and dreary life.

Sometimes openly, more often in the veiled areas of his daydreams, our listener admits to himself that in this world—and who can imagine any other?—all that counts is success. Only the successful are to be admired. It is a deadly struggle, and those who fall must be discarded. These standards are inculcated in him by every medium of mass amusement. The very places for which he goes for relaxation—the movies, the comics, the radio—provide him not with spiritual refreshment but with an exacerbated feeling that success is the all essential fact of modern life . . . and that he is not successful.

And so the listener grumbles. He grumbles against bureaucrats, Jews, congressmen, plutocrats, communists—whatever political stereotype he can find to suggest to him concentrations of power. He grumbles against the foreigners who come to this country and get good jobs. He grumbles against the party in power, votes for the one out of power and then grumbles against it. But he knows no other means of venting his social dissatisfaction and at one point or another he begins to become suspicious of the efficacy of his grumbling. And what is more, even grumbling has its dangers. One must be careful where one grumbles. A lot of it has to be kept inside one, repressed, barely touching the rims of consciousness.

The listener would like to do something about it, something drastic and decisive that will do away with the whole mess. Imagine—strike one blow on the table and everything is changed.

REHEARSAL OF VIOLENCE

How prevalent is the type that has been briefly sketched above? There is reason to believe that at least strands or aspects of this “ideal” personality type are widespread in modern life. The voluminous literature on psychic discontent, ranging from advice on how to keep friends and influence people to prescriptions for peace of mind, testifies to this fact.

For a variety of historical circumstances, social and economic, the American agitator has not succeeded in gaining any large masses of adherents. Except for the early years of the New Deal and those preceding Pearl Harbor, the agitator's audience has been limited to a hard core of followers: disgruntled old men and frustrated spinsters, cranks, toughies, unemployables, and certain undefined groups. Such audiences are often unkindly identified as the lunatic fringe.

The agitator must know that he can hardly expect to achieve significant results without reaching a wider audience; his ambitions are certainly not confined to his present groups. But he seems to sense that such initial audiences reflect on a small scale what might under certain social conditions characterize large masses of people. The beginnings of European fascism were equally modest, its original followers recruited from similar strata of the population. The American agitator tends to behave as if his present performance were merely a rehearsal and his audience merely paradigmatic. He can afford to be "unserious."

In an economic crisis the distinction between unemployables and unemployed merges, the middle class loses its security, and the youth its confidence in the future. The possibility that a situation will arise in which large numbers of people would be susceptible to his psychological manipulation, seems to provide the agitator with the impetus to continue his present small-scale operations at the head of his legion of misfits and malcontents.

THE SOCIAL BASIS OF AGITATION

It is the deep and pervasive presence of the social malaise which we sketched in an earlier chapter that is both the origin of agitation and the field in which agitation flourishes. Malaise gives rise to agitation, and agitation batters on malaise. In some dim nook of his consciousness, the agitator seems aware of this; he has a keener sense of history than those of his critics who think he can be banished from history by showing that he is inconsistent. He claims to be issuing the "most important challenge that could be made to a bankrupt, blood-drenched, war-torn, hate-filled, Satan-run world,"² and he predicts that "unreasonable force will hold sway"³ if the present intolerable situation persists. This prediction, it must be granted, is not entirely fantastic and it is precisely because the agitator does refer to pressing realities, because he does

touch on the most exposed and painful sores of our social body that he is able to meet with a response.

The agitator's themes are distorted versions of genuine social problems. When he encourages disaffection from all current loyalties, he takes advantage of a contemporary tendency to doubt either the sufficiency or efficacy of western values. When he takes advantage of the anxiety and fears of his listeners, he is playing on very real anxieties and fears—there is something to be anxious and fearful about. When he offers them a sense of belonging, no matter how counterfeit it is, and a sense of participation in a worthy cause, his words find response only because men today feel homeless and need a new belief in the possibility of social harmony and well-being. And when he calls upon them to depend on him, he capitalizes on both their revolt against the restraints of civilization and their longing for some new symbol of authority. That which they utter under their breaths, the *sub rosa* thoughts which they are hardly ready to acknowledge to themselves become the themes flaunted in agitation.

What the agitator does, then, is to activate the most primitive and immediate, the most inchoate and dispersed reactions of his followers to the general trends of contemporary society.

After he has subtly awakened his adherents to a realization that in some inexplicable way they are being crushed, the agitator diverts them from a true consciousness of their troubles and from any possible solution to their problems by the following "reasoning": The forces that threaten to crush them are irresistible, inexorable, and uncontrollable by rational means. To oppose them with the "bare bodkin" of ideals would be sheer folly—a kind of utopian quixotism. Therefore the best thing to do is to join them, to become one of the policemen, one of the destroyers in the service of destruction. This proposal is essentially tantamount to a suggestion that the adherents destroy themselves. Since the forces against you are so overwhelming, join with them . . . and be overwhelmed. Like a cheater in solitaire, the adherent is to become a conqueror by defeating himself.

To recognize and play upon those disturbing sicknesses of modern life that the run-of-the-mill politicians ignore, and then to divert his followers from any rational attempt to regain health—this is the essential objective role of the agitator in society. The basic implication of his appeals is that submission to social coercion is to be more ready and unquestioning. Hence the basic implications of the themes—the charis-

matic glorification of the leader, the extinction of civil liberties, the police state, the unleashing of terror against helpless minority groups. For all his emphasis on and expression of discontent, the agitator functions objectively to perpetuate the conditions which give rise to that discontent.

A DICTIONARY OF AGITATION

The themes cannot be understood in terms of their manifest content. They rather constitute a kind of secret psychological language. The unimpressed listener may wave it aside as a kind of mania or a mere tissue of lies and nonsense. Yet some people succumbed to it: in America a few, but in Europe millions. Were there no other evidence at hand, this one fact would be sufficient to establish the conclusion that there are powerful psychological magnets within agitation that draw groups of people to the leader's orbit. But we now also have at our disposal the classification of agitational themes that has appeared in these pages—our attempt to translate the secret code of agitation into language accessible to all. As we analyze this material, we find that its essential meaning—that which attracts the followers—cannot be reached by means of the usual methods of logical inquiry, but that it is a psychological Morse Code tapped out by the agitator and picked up by the followers. How conscious the agitator is of the genuine meaning of his message is a moot question that we have not attempted to answer here; it is a job for another investigation. But for the purpose of finding the inner meaning and the recurrent patterns of agitation, the presence or absence of consciousness on the part of the agitator is ultimately of secondary importance.

In any case, the distinction between the manifest and latent meaning of an agitational text must be seen as crucial. Taken at their face value, agitational texts seem merely as indulgence in futile furies about vague disturbances. Translated into their psychological equivalents, agitational texts are seen as consistent, meaningful, and significantly related to the social world.

In all his output, the agitator engages in an essentially ambiguous activity. He never merely says; he always hints. His suggestions manage to slip through the nets of rational meaning—those nets that seem unable to contain so many contemporary utterances. To know what he is and what he says, we have to follow him into the underground of

meaning—the unexpressed or half-expressed content of his hints, allusions, doubletalk.

Always, then, the agitator appeals to those elements of the contemporary malaise that involve a rejection of traditional western values. As we have seen in the previous chapter, he directs all of his themes to one ultimate aim: his followers are to place all their faith in his person—a new, externalized, and brutal superego. Except through translation into their psychological referents, it is impossible to understand modern agitational themes.

If we strip the agitator's message of its mystical grandiloquence and rhetoric, and present it in a rationally formulated version, we are in a position to understand the role and the basis of appeal of agitation. Such a translation lays bare the objective social consequences of agitation and the potential relationship between leader and follower. It does not in itself destroy the appeal of agitation for the followers or give a blueprint for opposing the agitator politically. But it does at the very least expose the true social and psychological content of agitation—the essential prerequisite for its prophylaxis.

THE AGITATOR MEANS

My friends, we live in a world of inequity and injustice. But whoever believes that this state of affairs will ever be or can ever be changed is a fool or a liar. Oppression and injustice, as war and famine, are eternal accompaniments of human life. The idealists who claim otherwise are merely fooling themselves—and worse still, are merely fooling you. To indulge in gestures of human brotherhood is merely bait for suckers, the kind of thing that will prevent you from getting the share of loot available to you today. Doesn't your own experience tell you that whenever you were idealistic you had to pay for it? Be practical. The world is an arena of a grim struggle for survival. You might as well get your share of the gravy.

Instead of joining with the oppressed and suffering with them, come with me. I offer you no promise of peace or security or happiness. I hold before you no chimera of individuality—whatever that word may mean. I scorn even the catchwords that I use when convenient.

If you follow me, you will ally yourself with force, with might

and power—the weapons that ultimately decide all disagreements. We will offer you scapegoats—Jews, radicals, plutocrats, and other creatures conjured up by our imagination. These you will be able to berate and eventually persecute. What difference will it make whether they are your real enemies so long as you can plunder them and vent your spleen on them?

Not utopia but a realistic struggle to grab the bone from the other dog—that is our program. Not peace but incessant struggle for survival; not abundance but the lion's share of scarcity. Can you realistically expect more?

To win this much you will have to follow me. We will form an iron-bound movement of terror. We will ally ourselves with the powerful in order to gain part of their privilege. We will be the policemen rather than the prisoners. And I will be the leader. I will think for you, I will tell you what to do and when to do it. I will act out your lives for you in my public role as leader. But I will also protect you. In the shadow of my venom you will find a home.