

C H A P T E R . I I I

A HOSTILE WORLD

The agitator articulates the themes of his writings and speeches as if they referred to specific and genuine issues arising from current social problems. He tries to appear as a bona fide advocate of social change. But in effect he merely manipulates and modifies those of the audience's feelings that reflect the malaise. He crystallizes and hardens these feelings and distorts the objective situation. In the themes related to discontent the audience's vague, inarticulate distrust becomes fixated as the stereotype of perpetual dupery; its sense of dependence serves to foster the belief that it is the object of a permanent conspiracy; its sense of exclusion is externalized into the image of forbidden fruits; its disillusionment is transformed into the complete renunciation of values and ideals; and its anxiety is both repressed and magnified into the perpetual expectation of apocalyptic doom.

THEME 1: THE ETERNAL DUPES

Every form of persuasion implies an effort to convert or seduce and presupposes an initial intellectual or emotional distance between the speaker and the listener. The leader of a movement must first convince his audience that its ideas are inadequate for coping with the situation that produces its discontent. He cannot win adherents without in a sense humiliating them, that is, suggesting that they are inferior in knowledge, strength, or courage and that they need him more than he needs them.

In intellectual communication—for example, the activity of a teacher in relation to his students—the aim is to nullify the distance altogether. In the activity of a reformer or revolutionary, there is a similar tendency to decrease initial distances. The adherent's humiliation is at least in theory only temporary, for the leader always suggests that in the end the ignorant will become enlightened, the moderately informed citizen will acquire a higher social consciousness, and the timid follower will share in the leader's courage.

In agitation, this humiliation is permanent. In establishing the inferiority of his prospective followers, the agitator claims superior knowledge, which, he implies, he has obtained by virtue of his special position and abilities. The audience is inferior not because it is temporarily "unenlightened" but because it is composed of "dupes" and "suckers." Throughout his utterances there can be found many unflattering references to potential followers. The agitator speaks of striking workers as "just plain ordinary sincere sheeplike Americans."¹ When he refers to the "bemused" people taken in by the New Dealer's "hoax"² or of the "deluded innocents,"³ his tone is relatively mild. It changes to worry when he speaks about the "gullibility of Americans"⁴ and the "mass ignorance of our people" of which the "powers of anti-Christianity" take advantage.⁵ When he deplures the fact that the "blind populace" is being led into the "horrible ditch of war" by blind leaders⁶ the agitator adopts a tone of regret. And when he calls his potential followers "sappy Gentiles"⁷ or "dumb Americans"⁸ the agitator becomes stingingly indignant.

He intimates that the unenlightened condition of his audience is hopeless and permanent, is something the audience itself cannot remedy. He warns his audience that it needs his guidance in the bewildering situation in which it finds itself; but he offers it no way to escape its bewilderment by its own intellectual efforts. He enhances his listeners' sense of distrust by reminding them that they are ruled by "remote control" and that they are exposed to constant sinister manipulations. They are cheated all along the line, in rationing, in war, through the press and the movies.

He not only denounces Communist slogans as "catch-phrases to obtain power over . . . dupes,"⁹ but he also brands preparedness against the Axis as a pretext for inflicting a hoax "on a long-suffering people in the name of and behind the cruel mask of 'defense.'"¹⁰ Against such unscrupulous tactics, the "plain ordinary sincere sheeplike" people are helpless; they are always the victims—the eternal dupes.

The effectiveness of such frank and unflattering talk should not be underestimated. It must not be forgotten that the agitator banks on an audience composed of "dupes"—people who bear the world a grudge because they feel it has cheated them, and who are therefore insecure, dependent, and bewildered. The agitator is referring to a common life experience. From childhood on, man is burdened by a repression of instinctual drives imposed on him by civilization in the name of its values. To live up to these values, man must constantly deny himself and make sacrifices, for which the only solace is the promise that ultimately he will be rewarded. But in the lives of most people there occurs

a moment, usually near middle age, when they realize that their dreams have remained and will remain unfulfilled. This realization gives way to a painful inner conflict, which may be resolved in several ways. The shock of disillusionment may be absorbed internally—the individual attributes responsibility to himself, to his real or imaginary inadequacies, lack of industriousness or thriftiness, inferior natural endowment, or even to his insufficiently sincere adherence to the unfulfilled ideals. Or he seeks consolation in the promises of religion, transferring the realization of the ideals to the beyond. Or again he may draw some satisfaction from the fact of disillusionment itself, by becoming, as so many aging persons do, a “cynic,” and flaunting that attitude with a kind of malicious pleasure. One way or another, the conflict or at least the acute awareness of it can be repressed. But the smooth operation of such repressions depend upon the hold ideals or values have on the individual. In the past the values were unassailable, and if they were not realized, the fault was due to one’s inadequacy. Today, the hold of values is weakened, while the pressure of reality has grown greater. And precisely because values are now questioned can the fury of disillusionment be turned against them.

The individual’s growing belief that the values are fictitious adds the motive of humiliation to that of disillusionment. He has sacrificed his life, his “real” life, which comes to be defined precisely as the life denied by the ideal, for the sake of mere nothings. He is confirmed in such feelings by the everyday experience that ruthlessness and unscrupulous pursuit of material advantage are more profitable than rigid adherence to moral principles. All his life he has been a sucker—cheated by the values he accepted and those who preached them.

By calling his followers suckers and telling them they must follow him if they are no longer to be cheated, the agitator promises that he will take care of them and “think” for them. Those who chafe under an authority they distrust and whose motives they cannot understand, are now to be subjected to the promptings of an agitator who will sanction their spontaneous resentments and seem to gratify their deepest wishes.

The agitator thereby tends to destroy the common social rule which imposes optimistic stereotypes (“I feel fine”; “Everything is OK”) on human intercourse. In a society of independent producers this rule helped to smooth the mechanism of free competition by eliminating any possible intrusion of pity or self-pity. It also helped to preserve the sanctity of the individual by keeping his inner life concealed from his neighbor’s curiosity. To pour out one’s troubles in public was considered a mark of bad

taste and vulgarity. Social life, of which the dominant image was the impersonal marketplace, was a neutral arena in which everyone was supposed to feel equally at ease. Unless he wanted to become an object of charity, the individual's intimate problems were not exposed to the group.

But the agitator breaks down these folkways; he seems to say, "let us be honest, let us admit we are disillusioned, ignorant and cheated." Such an invitation can only be welcomed by people who feel that they have always been "misunderstood." Hence, by reversing the optimistic stereotypes of liberal society, the agitator makes the feeling of acknowledged failure seem respectable.

Because in the eyes of the audience the whole world has become suspicious and estranged, it yearns for facile certainties and is ready to put its fate in the hands of someone who confirms it in its helplessness. "It is high time for Americans to get wise," says the agitator.¹¹ Yet those who have got wise to all the tricks are just the ones who are deceived by the most primitive ruse. The investment swindler knows that his easiest victims are to be found among those who have learned to distrust respectable banking establishments. Even while he tells his listeners that they are a group of fools, the agitator lays claim to their confidence—for how could someone who warns and insults them possibly want to cheat them? His bad manners become a guaranty of his sincerity. They can trust him, for he does not flatter them, and since they are unable by themselves to "pierce the sham of propaganda"¹² their only possible course of action is to join his movement. "Better find out whom you can trust—now."¹³

On the one hand the agitator brands his followers as suckers, harping on the suffering they have endured in their unsuccessful lives and thereby satisfying their latent masochism. On the other hand, he transforms this very humiliation into something to be proud of, a mark of the new *élite* he will eventually elevate. By projecting the responsibility for it on an unscrupulous and immoral enemy, he offers his followers a means of warding off in advance all future humiliations. The humiliation is simultaneously deepened and surrounded by a halo.

While the agitator thus frees the audience from its burdensome obligation of understanding its plight, he gives it a feeling that it is at last facing the true facts of existence. Yes, they are suckers; but now they know it. And what is more, they do not have to be inhibited about their intellectual inferiority; they can admit it openly; their leader encourages them to. Ordinarily intellectual inferiority results in exclusion from the company of the successful; but in the relationship between agitator and

audience, this is reversed: the agitator seems to be especially interested in the little man who has not made the grade. Though he does not give his listeners the feeling of having attained intellectual insight or of being accepted as demarcated individuals, he does make it possible for them to feel at ease in their common inferiority.

THEME 2: CONSPIRACY

The dupe is pictured not merely as cheated, but as cheated systematically, consistently, and perpetually. Nor is his inability to overcome his bewilderment and helplessness surprising, for he is the victim of a "*comprehensive and carefully-planned political conspiracy.*"¹⁴

In nurturing the idea of a permanent conspiracy directed against the eternal dupes, the agitator plays upon and enlarges the tendency among people who suffer from a sense of failure to ascribe their misfortunes to secret enemy machinations. The dismissed employee, the jilted lover, the disgruntled soldier deprived of a promotion, the student who fails an examination, the small grocer driven out of business by a chain competitor—any of these may be inclined to blame mysterious persecutors motivated by obscure grudges. However, the tendency of frustrated people to imagine themselves the targets of powerful enemies need not necessarily lead to paranoia. Often enough such suspicions are not devoid of objective justification in a world where the individual's sphere of action is increasingly restricted by anonymous social forces. Our daily existence actually is influenced by tremendous developments whose causes are difficult to grasp. Hence many people are anxious to learn what is happening behind the scenes.

When the agitator tells his listeners that they are "pushed" or "kicked" around and are victimized by bankers and bureaucrats, he exploits feelings that they already have. Such stereotypes as "Wall Street machinations," "monopolist conspiracies," or "international spies" are present, however, not as well-defined ideas, but as tentative suspicions about the meaning of complex phenomena. As inadequate reflections of reality, they might serve as starting points for analysis of the economic and political situations.

The agitator proceeds in exactly the opposite way. He refers to popular stereotypes only to encourage the vague resentments they reflect. He uses them not as springboards for analysis but rather as "analyses" themselves—the world is complicated because there are groups whose

purpose it is to make it complicated. On a social scale he stirs his audience to reactions similiar to those of paranoia on an individual scale, and his primary means of doing this is by indefinitely extending the concept of conspiracy.

Where others might speak of the ultimate implications of a political program, he sees a deliberate plot: the New Deal is nothing but "good Marxian sabotage to break down the existing order . . ." ¹⁵ British War Relief is "sponsored by same internationalists who got us into World War I." ¹⁶ The B'nai Brith is "a worldwide spy and pressure system" ¹⁷ which has "unlimited funds" and "maintains its own Gestapo." ¹⁸ Economic crises are contrived by "a small but powerful, well-organized and well-financed minority. . ." ¹⁹ Even such a trivial occurrence as a polemical attack on a senator is sufficient for the agitator to evoke a "secret society" for "smearing of individual members of the senate." ²⁰ Phrases like the "Hidden Hand" ²¹ or "International Invisible Government" ²² appear in his writings and speeches again and again.

Any organization the agitator conceives as hostile to his aims, he includes in the conspiracy. He speaks of it as seeking "to destroy . . . the American way of life," ²³ and calls on "all Christians to stand together" because a conspiracy is afoot "to ruin the Church." ²⁴ Similarly, "class hatred is created by lies and *conflicting explanations*, all helping to create *confusion* and to conceal *the real authors* of the devilish plans for the destruction of Christian or Western civilization." ²⁵

Not only does this inflation of the notion of conspiracy serve as a diversion from attempts to investigate social processes, but it also blurs the identity of the groups designated as conspirators. The very stereotypes that once referred more or less definitely to social oligarchies, now refer to gigantic but undefined secret international plots. The term "octopus," once used by Frank Norris in a novel about railroad magnates, now becomes diffused into the "international invisible government." ²⁶

In this transformation of a circumscribed group of magnates into mysterious invisible rulers, the process of blurring reality by encouraging paranoiac tendencies, is clearly evident. As compensation, the idea of conspiracy acquires a sensational and thrilling connotation, and all the problems of modern life are centered in a comfortingly simple, if vague and mysterious, cause. This systematization of conspiracies into one grandiose plot is declared by the agitator to be "obvious even to a dullard" for

. . . all this step-by-step bungling—this amazing unity of deception, internal sabotage, and gross incompetence in the leaders of Britain, France and even of the United States—is not an accident. It is, rather, indicative of a central directing influence—a World Government group . . .”²⁷

There is no telling how far this conspiracy may extend. In fact, it has been going on since time immemorial.

The doctrine of ruling by force from hidden sources, and this secret group, ruled over Babylon of Nimrod, Egypt, Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar, Medio-Persia, Greece and Rome. And this same secret society became the Jacobins of the French Revolution and placed Napoleon in power in Europe and when Russia and then England overthrew him (see Dumas’ works), they moved into Germany where they became known as Communists, from whence they overthrew Russia, and produced the bastard children, Fascism and Nazism.²⁸

These fantastic images seem, first of all, to satisfy the audience’s craving for an explanation of its sufferings. In that sense the agitator seems to continue the work of the muckrakers by courageously revealing why the powers that rule the world wish to remain hidden. But by dealing, as it were, with the audience’s notions at their face value, by exaggerating to the point of the fantastic its suspicions that it is the toy of anonymous forces, and by pointing to mysterious individuals rather than analyzing social forces, the agitator in effect cheats his audience of its curiosity. Instead of diagnosing an illness, he explains it as the result of an evil spirit’s viciousness. For the conspirators are not pictured as motivated by any rational purpose, but rather by a gratuitous will to destruction:

My informant tells me that the bloodless revolution is being brought about through a planned policy of destructionism—a destructionism which pretends to alleviate suffering, poverty, unemployment and hunger . . . a destructionism which eventually aims at bankrupting the nation and thereby bringing about repudiation of debts and the overthrow of government.²⁹

And this conspiracy is directed at the very vitals of the people—in fact, if the people are to survive, they must act immediately to destroy this conspiracy, for “the intriguers have taken us so far down their alley that we have lost our time honored powers of resistance. More than a palliative is needed at this critical juncture. . . .”³⁰

Here we see how the paranoiac brooding and the projection of conspiracies end with suggestions for acts of violence. Since the very term “conspiracy” has connotations of illegality and treason, the conspirators are pictured as acting in lawless fashion and with complete impunity.

This implies that existing laws and institutions cannot cope with them and that extraordinary measures are needed.

THEME 3: FORBIDDEN FRUIT

If the agitator's audience is composed of eternal dupes who have always been the prey of an ubiquitous conspiracy, the agitator will presumably emphasize all the good things of life that the "others" enjoy but the audience does not. Here, as in almost all other themes, it might appear that the agitator is following the beaten track of revolutionaries, by advocating redistribution of social wealth.

Actually, he manages to steer clear of such explosive implication. True, he refers to the alleged good life led by those he calls the enemies. But he associates enjoyment of private pleasure with vice and luxurious excess. He is eloquent in describing the carefree existence of "alien-minded plutocrats" who "roll in wealth, bathe in liquor, surround themselves with the seduced daughters of America . . ." ³¹ But he is equally eloquent in denouncing indulgence in materialistic pleasures: "America, the vain—America, the proud—America, the nation of gluttons and spenders and drinkers. A nation whose population has deserted the church and in many instances, debauched the home." ³²

The debauch of "alien-minded plutocrats" is condemned in the following moral reflections: "Drunkness became just a humorous, though effective way of getting relaxation. Adultery became just a method of showing sincerity of affection and a usual part of comradeship between good friends of opposite sex." ³³

The agitator evokes a bizarre vision of oversized, luxurious homes, where alcohol flows and swimming pools abound. Children play in nurseries while adults revel in game rooms, night clubs, race tracks, and bedrooms. "The sweet and simple things of life" are "discarded, absent, forgotten." ³⁴ This perverse and adulterous life is branded as un-American, characteristic of foreigners and refugees who squander fabulous fortunes when they are not busy stealing jobs from Americans. "With hundreds of thousands of Jews running away from war bringing wealth here and making themselves obnoxious in 'hot spots' and vice resorts with their lavish spending. . . ." ³⁵

Such a way of life is also un-Christian, enjoyed by "Oriental erotics" of whom American Christians are the "unwary hosts." ³⁶ These "erotics" debauch "youth for the purpose of wrecking Gentile morale. . . ." ³⁷

Uncannily and scarily, "all this is being done by an invisible power. Rape and the evasion of income taxes plays a big part in all this."³⁸

The very presence of material comfort is viewed with suspicion and implicitly condemned by the agitator. Among the accusations leveled against President Roosevelt is the fact that he was "born in the lap of luxury" and "never made a payroll in his life."³⁹ Often the agitator whets the appetite of his followers with detailed descriptions of the luxuries of the enemy, while arousing their moral disgust at such corrupt practices.

When Harry Hopkins got married, Baruch gave a party for the "Palace Guard" at the Carlton Hotel, where you need \$100.00 before you can rent a room; and pay \$2 before you can order a cup of coffee. But Mr. Baruch arranged the party, and they were all there: Harry Hopkins, the bride, Mr. Nelson, Mr. Henderson. 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. Now, I am no connoisseur of champagne. McCullough of the Post-Dispatch says it is \$20.00 a quart—and if I had a quart of that I might get a good story in the Post-Dispatch tomorrow. [Laughter.] But there isn't any more of that, I understand, now because of the war with France. There was \$2000 served of that drink. There was precious perfume at \$40 a tiny vial to each woman there. 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.⁴⁰

Even while the agitator seems to be furiously voicing the claims of his audience for a greater share of social wealth, he is actually suppressing their claims. Even while he offers, he actually denies enjoyment of the good things of life. Enjoyment of wealth means debauch and vice—hence wealth is a forbidden fruit. Moreover, the agitator portrays it in such fantastic terms that the common man cannot even dream of acquiring it, but must content himself with the "sweet and simple things of life."

Rather than offering suggestions for a greater utilization of productive facilities or a more just distribution of the social product, the agitator encourages resentment against the excesses of luxury. Appealing to puritanical attitudes the agitator condemns indulgence not in order to propose the elimination of poverty, but rather to exasperate his followers' feelings of envy while simultaneously arousing their sense of guilt at being envious. He activates revolutionary sentiment, but directs it against the caricature he has himself drawn of human aspirations for pleasure. The violent language in which he castigates those who enjoy the "cream" of this country while the rest go "milkless" is thus ultimately

directed against the audience's own desires. Even when the agitator denounces the "society world of snobbery and fraud" and shouts "Down must come those who live in luxury!"⁴¹ he is not proposing to the audience a way for it to increase its share of wealth and pleasure. When the golden calf is destroyed and its worshippers dispersed, his followers may still expect nothing for themselves—they have been taught by the agitator to distrust their own aspirations to comfort. The image of abundance is dangled before them, but it is never accessible. All that can result for the follower is an inner exacerbation of his resentments. If the agitator cannot promise his adherents a greater share of the good things of life, he can suggest that the good life consists in something else: the gratification of repressed impulses; and that if they are obedient to him they will be offered the luxurious sinners as sacrificial prey.

THEME 4: DISAFFECTION

An important aspect of the malaise is a growing sense of disillusionment with ideals, values, and institutions. The agitator skilfully works on this disillusionment by simultaneously damning and praising the accepted ideologies. On the one hand, he likes to give the impression that, like most other advocates of social change, he is against certain social conditions because they violate universally accepted values. On the other hand, he often concurs in and reinforces his audience's suspicion about those values.

He speaks as a champion of democracy and Christianity and protests that he is "merely defending the Bill of Rights."⁴² He invokes the "Christian doctrine of human liberty"⁴³ and extols "American individualism" and "free enterprise."⁴⁴ He is the guardian of "the Bible, the Christian Faith, American institutions and the Constitution. . . ."⁴⁵

Yet, when confronted with his audience's moral confusion, he implies that he shares neither the conservative's total acceptance of existing values and institutions, nor the "naive idealism of the liberals."⁴⁶ He knows that the "two-party system is a sham"⁴⁷ and "democracy" a "trick word."⁴⁸ "In fact, justice matters more than democracy."⁴⁹ And "Liberalism—in politics—leads to Anarchy."⁵⁰

It can of course be maintained that the first group of statements is merely camouflage for the second. To some extent this is probably true; but it is hardly likely that the audience is fooled into taking the agitator for a sincere champion of democracy. It is much more likely that the agi-

tator who utilizes democratic stereotypes is quite aware that his words ring hollow: he does not intend to be taken literally. In view of his known sympathy for European fascism, the agitator's use of democratic phrases serves to create the impression that the difference between fascism and democracy is not as important as it is made out to be—or, more accurately, that it is not at all what really matters. The agitator constantly seeks to blur this difference. In reality, he declares, he is “no more a fascist than Abraham Lincoln and Teddie Roosevelt”;⁵¹ he is called one merely because he is one of the “individualists who still believe in Constitutional government. . . .”⁵² To further muddy the waters, he hurls the accusation of fascism against those who have come to symbolize opposition to fascism. He consistently denounces the New Deal as an effort to introduce totalitarianism in America, and declares that “Roosevelt got his technique from Hitler and the Jews.”⁵³

In bandying the two antithetical concepts of democracy and fascism in such a way that the clear distinction between them is obliterated, the agitator seems to act on the premise that his audience's loyalties are uncertain. He therefore seems bent not on concealing but on flaunting his cynicism, the effect of which is to sanction and fixate his audience's disillusionment. It is characteristic of the agitator's whole approach that he confirms his adherents' disillusionment by both his affirmations and negations, for in the way they are expressed by him both bar any possible surmounting of the disillusionment. In the way he points to the traditional as the great ideal, the agitator discourages a serious critique of existing values; in the way he debunks existing values, he makes impossible any sincere attempt to realize them more effectively in practice.

This dual assault on the value system, which runs like a thread through agitational material, is, so to speak, the one occasion when the agitator comes to grips with opposing arguments. It is part of his general desecration of the idea of truth as such. Underlying the agitator's rejection of those values by which it is possible to distinguish democracy from its opposite is the implication that in the present world, where the masses are eternal dupes and the victims of a perennial conspiracy, everything must give way to the urge for self-survival. The distinction between truth and lies is accordingly inconsequential; both are neutral means to be used according to their helpfulness to his cause.

That the agitator's preachments profoundly contradict ideals, such as democracy, equality, and justice, that are commonly held to be universal, does not seem to bother him. For he capitalizes on the general sense of

disillusionment among his adherents by articulating their suspicion that the enemy's ideals are mere camouflage for social coercion. Instead of sifting the valuable aspects of the ideal from the way it may be misused, he junks both. All that is left then for him—and this is what he takes great pains to imply to his audience—is an ideal-less use of force against the troublemaking enemy. His doctrine thus consists in drawing the ultimate consequences of a totally amoral opportunism.

This doctrine is manifested in several ways:

1. *Unseriousness*: The agitator's ambiguous approach to values is often revealed in an undercurrent of unseriousness in his statements, the effect of which is to dismiss ideals as mere bunk, hogwash, lies. Take his attitude towards the law, for example. There are too many laws and regulations behind which are hidden "the gossamers of un-Americanism."⁵⁴ What is more, "any 'law' is alien fodder to Anglo-Saxons. . . ."⁵⁵ As against "inspired" laws he champions "individualism."⁵⁶ Yet the agitator simultaneously poses as a champion of legality, denouncing the "rulings" of the New Deal as "illegal."⁵⁷

These apparently conflicting views are synthesized in statements that express more fundamentally the agitator's genuine attitude towards law:

Will the United States be required to remunerate Jews for their losses in a war with Hitler's Germany, a war that the Jews, themselves, promoted? Would it not be nearer to equity, nearer to measure for measure if the Jews were required to compensate non-interventionists and political "isolationists" for their loss of life and treasure?⁵⁸

What is serious in these statements is their very lack of seriousness. Going beyond the revelation that law can be a cloak for brute force, the agitator shows here that brute force need hardly be clothed at all, for instead of being discarded as a sham, legality is now exploited as a blatant gesture of defiance. Behind such statements is the outlook which led the Nazi regime to "fine" the German Jews \$400,000,000 when a Polish Jew killed a German embassy clerk in Paris. That a legal justification was given to such a step was not primarily, as it might seem, a concession to hypocrisy or prejudice; on the contrary, it was simply a means of emphasizing the complete arbitrariness of the operation.

2. *Transformation of meaning*: The agitator twists the meaning of basic ideals in such a way that he infuses them with his own content. He celebrates "the instrument of the American ballot, which instrument makes all men equal in the affairs of their government . . ."⁵⁹ while

simultaneously calling for extralegal measures: "I am talking about cleaning America. Let me tell you how to do it. General Franco found one way."⁶⁰

The agitator transforms democracy from a system that guarantees minority rights into one that merely affirms the privileged status of the majority. Persecution of minorities is thus within the rights of the majority and any attempt to limit the exercise of this "right" is interpreted as persecution of the majority by the minority. Such an interpretation of democracy results in its negation: "Do the Jews clamor for democracy only because a democracy is too weak to resist their encroachments? . . . If it is, then a lot of us will want to be done with democracy."⁶¹

The agitator submits religion to the same kind of treatment. He stresses the particularistic connotations of religion by suggesting that Christianity is an exclusive creed, a kind of tribal fetish, endowed with primitive attributes of clannishness and violence. He denounces "the false premise that all, and particularly Jews, are 'brothers'—to the Christian. . . . The Jew, religious or otherwise, is today as always against Christ, therefore *not* a 'brother.' ABC stuff!"⁶²

In the presence of demonic powers, the foremost feature of Christianity is "a militant routing of evil in high places by humble followers of Christ."⁶³ The church thus becomes a tabloid version of *ecclesia militans*. The agitator suggests that "for America to pray" and "for America to fight" are the same thing⁶⁴ and he does not hesitate to recommend putting "prayers across . . . at the point of a gun"⁶⁵ or building "barricades to protect the principles of the Prince of Peace."⁶⁶ The agitator thus appears as a policeman of virtue, a sergeant defending the ideal, a corporal fighting for truth. "Unite in dropping prayer-bombs upon the camp of the enemy"⁶⁷ and exercise justice as a member of "a Social Justice platoon."⁶⁸

This transformation of values into their opposites receives its final twist when the agitator declares: "If Smith is America's No. 1 Fascist (anti-Semite) as Judeo-Reds proclaim, then, according to New Testament, Christ must be World's greatest Anti-Semite!"⁶⁹

3. *Anti-Universality*: The agitator explicitly rejects the ideal of universality. This rejection is evidenced, for instance, in his attitude toward tolerance, which he brands as "silly sentimentality"⁷⁰ and "non-Christian,"⁷¹ as contrary to self-interest and a weakness that must be eradicated for the sake of survival.

TOLERANCE—A numerous group of alien and native rascals shout “tolerance” but with their own foul tongues, they would lap up the blood of their own critics.⁷²

As though realizing that tolerance is a cultural luxury for those in power who may preach and violate it with equal impunity and reflects the social weakness of those out of power, the agitator uses the caption “None but the Strong Can be Magnanimous.”⁷³ He implies that tolerance is opposed to truth, and when invoking the concept of truth, he almost always associates it with violence. He claims that he is persecuted and threatened with death if he dares speak the truth and then directly identifies it with the application of force: “‘The Cross and The Flag’ speaks the truth. We have arrived at the hour when we must have more two-fisted talking and real action.”⁷⁴

Truth is further equated with intolerance in anti-Semitism: “When telling the truth about Jewish organizations or leaders is punished as a crime by our courts—what becomes of the four freedoms of the Gentile majority in the USA?”⁷⁵

The agitator applies a similar technique to the concepts of brotherhood, humanitarianism, universal justice: all are shown to be contrary to the crudest requirements of self-interest. “‘Racial equality,’ ‘social equality’ and ‘natural equality’ are absurd concepts, either in biology or common sense, and nobody knows this better than Jews who are ballyhooing such concepts . . .”⁷⁶

Through these three devices—unseriousness, transformation of values, and negation of universalism—the agitator tries to convince his audience that ideals and values are merely misleading advertising slogans, used to defraud the dupes.

THEME 5: CHARADE OF DOOM

The possibility of total disaster is invoked by many advocates of social change as a contrast to their solutions. The reformer or revolutionary helps his audience visualize this possibility as a definite obstacle to be removed (capitalist society or anti-union employers, or nationalism); although he evokes visions of catastrophe and, to some extent, exploits existing fears, he summons the audience to work towards an achievable utopia rather than to flee from imminent danger.

In agitation, however, the positive alternative to the threat of disaster is either totally lacking or suggested only in the vaguest form as a return

to "the good old days." The agitator presents the threatening chaos as unavoidable and inexorable. By elaborating present dangers—and in our time he has abundant material to draw upon—he may seem bent on making his audience realize the urgency of the situation. In fact he achieves the opposite by associating these dangers with trivial ideas or grotesque fantasies. Just as through the theme of disaffection he cheats his audience out of intellectual curiosity, so does he cheat it out of fear as a possible stimulus to organized social thought and action.

Through the exploitation of the fear of impending chaos the agitator succeeds in appearing as a radical who will have no truck with mere fragmentary reforms, while he simultaneously steers his adherents wide of any suggestion of a basic social reorganization. He equates the threat to profits with the impending chaos:

If we lose this fight, if the American worker bends his knee to Lewis, Browder, and Stalin, in the Middlewest tonight, this will be just the beginning. Then comes the destruction of profits. When profits go, wages go; when wages go, jobs go. Then comes chaos, revolution, confiscation, and the breakdown of our beautiful, free, American system.⁷⁷

The postwar strikes are interpreted as "a pretext for ushering in a new political and social order in the image of Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, Prof. Harold J. Laski and the House of Rothschild."⁷⁸

In the above passages the agitator embroiders on the usual conservative stereotypes. He goes further in playing on the middle class fear of revolution, as associated with material discomfort and confiscation of private property:

CIO and radical *AF of L* unions . . . can, and will, when "Der Tag" (sometime prior to 1941) is decided upon by the Hidden Hand, plunge cities into darkness, shut off water, gas, phone, telegraph, radio, food, and transportation generally, so that in terror imposed by fear, thirst, and starvation, the weak-kneed *NEW DEAL* politicians, businessmen, and labor leaders in most large cities are expected to surrender to Anti-Christ dictatorship.⁷⁹

Where the agitator diverges from the conservative politician, however, is in tying up the threat of chaos not only with such relatively serious matters as strikes, but also with circumstantial minor causes of discontent, such as food or tire shortages, which he represents as the deliberate work of liberals and radicals. The revolution is imminent whether or not there are strikes. War taxation is not merely a burden, but a conspiracy "to strip us down to the point of hunger and starvation and bankruptcy where our taxes will cost us our homes."⁸⁰

In thrusting before his audience the terrors of the impending doom, the agitator often paints it in terms of sexual connotations:

After all, 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.⁸¹

The world is moving rapidly toward chaos, which will mean revolution, waves of sadism, murder, rape, incest, conflagration, atom bomb conflicts, annihilation of whole populations.⁸²

It may be conjectured that by his references to rape, incest, and plunder, the agitator evokes sadistic fantasies that add a connotation of promise to the warning—his followers may vaguely hope that when the deluge comes they, too, may be allowed to perform the acts that are attributed to the enemy.

The fear of specific dangers, such as the threat of inflation or war, is drowned in gloating visions of universal chaos: “. . . We approach our day of doom under the guidance of the most incompetent and Satanic array of rascals ever assembled by any government in the history of the world.”⁸³

Fear is no longer used as a psychological signal pointing to the existence of specific dangers; like the Conspiracy it becomes ubiquitous and eternal.

History follows same pattern for Satan uses same tactics, and same kind of people. . . . Under Satanic guidance all activities of man are being forced into roads leading to chaos and destruction.⁸⁴

Whatever associations the audience may have had with concretely experienced causes of apprehension are dissolved by the blaring alarm of threatening catastrophe. Confronted with such an inexorable fate, the audience can feel only complete impotence.

No matter to what extent the Roosevelt dynasty betrays the common man in America, or what atrocious crimes it commits, or how low it sinks in ethics, morals and common decency, nothing will be done about it now and probably nothing can be done. The disease must run its course, the cycle must complete itself.⁸⁵

The audience's unpleasurable reactions are here offset by the fact that its subordinate social role is vindicated by being placed in an historical perspective: individual and personal failures are subsumed under the national, international, or even cosmic failure. Though the agitator's adherent has lost the dignity of a man participating in constructive activ-

ities on his own initiative, he is compensated by a kind of tragic dignity that raises his insignificant personal defeat to the status of an historical event.

By being spread over a larger surface, the original fear becomes thinner, less urgent and compelling. But it acquires an enhanced imaginative reality—fear is transformed into a morbid nihilistic expectation, perhaps even hope, of total destruction.

The actual reasons for despair are utilized to indulge in a charade of despair, and as though to emphasize this, the agitator does not hesitate to introduce motifs of outright grotesqueness in his prophecies. He spices real threats with the vision of a deadly onslaught on the human race planned by celestial and earthly powers:

Already restricted crop production due to Internationalists' schemes plus storms, floods, attacks by insects, etc., this year points to what may be expected in years 1943, 1944, and 1945, in which scientists say we will be plagued with the coldest summers and winters in history.⁸⁶

As a consequence of this piling of mock horrors onto real ones, the audience is encouraged to follow the path of least resistance intellectually. To understand the causes of their frustrations they need no longer cope with such complicated problems as tax laws, unions, governmental policies, the organization of the credit system, etc. All these bewildering matters have been reduced to a common denominator—they are nothing but various aspects of the essentially ruthless set-up of the world, symptoms of one big, horrid, overwhelming, superhuman or subhuman elemental phenomenon. Inability to meet resourcefully a bread-and-butter situation may produce a feeling of inferiority, but such a feeling is out of place when one is faced with a dilemma arising from cosmic causes. What else can one do but leave the understanding of such a confrontation to the available spiritual *élite*?

This conscious reliance on the wisdom of the great is probably furthered by unconscious regressive tendencies. The explanation of everyday mischances in terms of uncanny world catastrophes revitalizes and reinforces the heritage of infantile anxieties. The unconscious finds in the agitator's interpretations a replica of its own primitive reactions to the outside world; the listener plays the role of the little child responding to the warning that bogeys may come for him.

Something that is feared on one level of personality is often desired on another. This seems especially true for the peculiarly fascinating experi-

ence of catastrophe. The gospel of doom relieves the individual of responsibility for struggling with his problems; one cannot resist an erupting volcano. The agitator's listeners are told in effect that between their limited capacities and the tremendous forces that threaten them there is an ineradicable disproportion. As a result, everything goes. A man involved in catastrophe feels justified in departing from established moral codes, if it means saving his life. The idea of catastrophe contains a welcome stimulus to the listeners' destructive instinctual urges.

It is not difficult for the agitator's adherents to take the further step of projecting disaster on the imaginary enemy. This is a process akin to that unconscious transference which permits the average man to assume that accidents or sudden fatalities are more likely to strike some unknown man rather than himself. Thus the agitator offers his followers, who either are or believe themselves persecuted, a method of relieving their feeling of social inferiority by indulging in fantasies in which other people—those they envy or dislike—suffer annihilation.

The agitator expresses the unconscious wish of the dissatisfied to drag all other persons down to their own level of insignificance. Since "we" are down and out and have no chance to escape catastrophe, "we" do not want anyone else to be spared this fate. Freed from the inhibitions of conscience by the agitator's evocation of inevitable doom, his listeners can give gratifying play to fantasies arising from repressed destructive impulses. Since the agitator has used actual threats of catastrophe to construct a fantasy-threat which bars positive satisfactions to his adherents, they seem driven to seek the compensation of gratifying the death instinct: "the whole world will go down with us." For the unconscious, the threatened apocalypse, which might have been the stimulus to action to ward off social dangers, here becomes the "solution" itself.