

October 9, 1945

To: Dr. Max Horkheimer

From: Leo Lowenthal

Re: Christian Front Meeting in Queens Village,
Oct. 6, 1945

1. General Impressions: The meeting as a whole was probably a flop. It was poorly attended, the public consisted in its majority of adversaries, Jewish and otherwise, of heckling adolescents who tried to make fun of the orators, and of police. The more the evening dragged along the poorer the speakers became and the more it became apparent that the meeting was ill prepared. The chairman, Kurf, committed the mistake of reading too much from a pamphlet on Pearl Harbor which was boring and repetitious and he was not able to bring home clearly the points he wanted to make.

The few friends of the movement consisted of middle-aged to elderly women and of about a dozen or twenty men, who, to judge by appearance, were mostly of the white-collar class and looked like people lacking in professional success. There was apparently almost no preparation for organizing applause and most statements petered out completely flat due to lacking symbols of response from the audience.

2. Contents of Speeches: It was obvious that almost no new topics were introduced.^x The speeches sounded like a re-hash of everything that was said previous to Pearl Harbor. The only difference, of course, was that while prior to December 7, 1941 the leitmotiv was: "we will be dragged into the war by this and that sinister force", all pertaining statements are now put in the past: "we were dragged into the war by this and that sinister force." Other topics: the refugees, the red-blooded Americans, Communism, England, foreign wars. An attempt is made to play up the international bankers topic by introducing the money theme in the form of criticism of the Federal Reserve system. The agitators have apparently the greatest difficulties in handling this topic because of its technical complications and the complete lack of understanding on the side of the listeners.

One familiar topic was missing: the attempt to make the cause respectable by quoting well-known figures of American political life as close associates and allies. The names of Nye, Wheeler, Reynolds, Rankin, Dies were not mentioned -- perhaps a direct outcome of the 1944 elections. However, Coughlin was advertised conspicuously and the name of Lindbergh also occurred. The only novelty was the playing up of Franco and perhaps the occasional insertion of Argentine.

x) just received PM's report which erroneously speaks of the "general design of the new Christian Front propaganda line". What follows in the report is nothing else but the old story of "Roosevelt's plot" to drag America into the war.

The significance of the resumption of the old topics is obvious: the agitators try to stimulate the memories of the listeners and to establish the lost continuity between the pre-war agitation and the post-war attempts to revitalize it. It was a mistake in technique that the agitators did not permeate their speeches by "I told you so" references.

5. Devices: All speeches proved clearly our previously offered theory that fascist agitation rests on the handling of a relatively small number of stimuli devices which recur ever so often. I enumerate a few of them:

- (a) the persecuted agitator (finds no printer; encounters travelling difficulties)
- (b) the agitator as a little guy (wants to go to the movies, have his glass of beer)
- (c) the agitator as messenger. "I have to speak because nobody else does it"
- (d) the necessity of "awakening" America
- (e) the enemies as wolves in sheep's clothes ("they cry persecution and are the persecutors; they ask for tolerance and are the most intolerant")
- (f) indirect antisemitic devices (agitator and his people are "crucified"; the phrase of the Asiatic ~~crisis~~; the phrase of "anti-something" and so on) *hordes*
- (g) the simple-mindedness of the agitator (difficulty in pronouncing high-sounding and foreign words)
- (h) the secret machinations ("a lot of things are going on in this country" etc.)
- (i) the veiled threat of violence ("I am strong, I can take it up with everybody", etc.)
- (j) direct antisemitic references (Jewishness of the New Deal, Jewish monopoly of mass media: newspapers, radio, movies.)

4. Literature: I have collected six pieces which were partly given away and partly sold. Of them, the September issue of Reynolds' "National Record" and the petition of the Mother of Tyler Kent are irrelevant. The other four documents consist of:

- (a) a pamphlet "The Jew Refugee. Invasion of America through Immigration and what to do about it", sold for 25 cents and printed probably in 1942
- (b) a pamphlet by Leese "On Jewish Ritual Murder", sold at 50 cents, published in England in 1938 and reprinted in this country in 1945
- (c) a reprint of a speech of Louis McFadden in the House of Representatives in 1933
- (d) a handbill against kosher slaughter.

All four documents (the pamphlet (b) led to the arrest of Homer Mertz during the meeting) are extremely important. They show the real fascist totalitarian and pogromistic tendency of the movement. All

four of them suggest in a rather more than less direct way the theme of killing and murder:

- (a) on p. 84 refers to a speech of Dies in which he "said: "threats have been made against members of his family recently and he considered Washington unsafe for them". On the previous page and on p. 88 references to satanism are made: on p. 85 "when satan gets rebuked he shouts persecution"; on p. 88 a quote of Nesta H. Webster which darkly speaks about "the diabolic nature of the conspiracy", "the powers of hell" which threaten "the people of our country",
- (b) plays up the murder theme so obviously that no particular quotations are necessary,
- (c) contains an editorial rider to the speech which reads as follows: "If these men mentioned above are guilty of the New Deal plot to overthrow our constitutional form of government" (the speech mentions the Jews explicitly, LL.) "it is the duty of Congress to seek them out and try them for treason". This sentence is followed up by another one which uses a device of hinting at possible underhanded methods against Christian patriots: "this patriot, Congressman Louis McFadden went to an untimely death shortly after the speech was made. He died when his country needed his fearless leadership",
- (d) is outspokenly sadistic in the drawing of a Jewish bloodstained butcher and a slaughtered animal as well as in the bylines which read in part: "thousands of defenseless animals are being daily tortured to death by Jewish ritualistic kosher butchers. Hoisted by a hindleg its throat slashed, the kicking, gasping and sobbing creature is subjected to cruel agony of being slowly bled to death". The whole ritual slaughter is characterized as "Jewish barbarism" and "Jewish atrocities". The latter words are printed in red letters. This handbill represents a good example for our psychological theory that antisemites project into the Jews the very deeds they want to perform.

More than everything else the distributed literature demonstrates clearly today's potential of antisemitic propaganda. The problem arises whether the agitators and their backers are not so much interested any longer predominantly in the aspects of respectability but in sowing the psychological seeds of extermination in a very direct way.

While in the meeting itself the hysterical antics met no success and while there was no traceable symbol of fear and apprehension in the reactions of the listeners, while also, very characteristically, short-lived discussions in the crowd between adherents and enemies of the agitators were more on a good-natured level than that of fury, there is no doubt that fear, hysteria, fury are the conditions to which the indirect pogrom devices are directed. As stated before, there was no way of speculating how successful those could be which were tried out during the meeting.

5. Physiognomy of Speakers: Almost every speaker represented an outspoken or nearly outspoken example of those psychopathic types which can be found in the American as well as the European camp of fascist agitators.

There was Kurtz, the stocky, brutal, pycnic, maniac depressive type switching from grinning, clowning, to somber threats and outbursts of yelling. His grin which is always in readiness has an almost psychotic note as can be observed in the facial expression of violent insane maniacs. His whole bodily appearance has a faint resemblance to Goering's body type.

There was Maertz who with his little mustache and the studied fierce looks imitates the Hitler pose. He was by far the most effectful speaker equipped with the intensive and fanatic voice of the schizoid demagogue. Of all the speakers he was the only one who probably would have the power to create an atmosphere of hate and fury.

There was Kister, a boyish-looking man, the type of thin-lipped fanatical followers of a fanatical leader, a watered-down miniature edition of people like Rudolf Hess.

There was Mrs. Brown and her secretary, homely women of the middle fifties' with nothing to boast but real or imaginary sons, symbols of frustration for corresponding female listeners.

Finally one general observation on the outward appearance of the speakers and their henchmen: almost everyone of them was so-to-say a biological stepchild. Kurtz and his chief aide obese; Kister somehow crippled; the women speakers and their female audience were ugly, most of them wearing glasses; among the male followers a one-armed old man, several short-sighted younger people. It was a "racial elite" in reverse.