

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.