

## 12.

# The Demagogic Process

### I.

In his morning-after speech Dick Nixon's first pledge was to unify the country. This sounds nice but if he could bring it off peaceably it would certainly be the greatest trick of his career. We are actually faced with the same kind of irreconcilable division that existed at the elections of Lincoln and Wilson. They unified the country all right, or most of it, with the only measure that does unify a nation breaking down in hopeless antagonisms—war. It is war that is going to be a major threat for the next four years. Nixon as president certainly cannot be blamed for this. The Eisenhower administration left the country in about as peaceable a condition as could have been hoped, in spite of the atom rattling of Brinkman Dulles.

By and large the last Republican administration was the best proof of the practicality of anarchism in modern history. Ike gave the country something close to no government at all. Nothing went seriously wrong. True, we had a depression, mild



enough by 1929 standards, but really just the deflationary program of the Eastern financial establishment. Ike exercised his executive only where it mattered. He always squashed Secretary Dulles as that gentleman drew near one of his many brinks. Certainly never in his administration was the country as close to war as it was twice over Jack Kennedy's Cuba.

Ike inherited a situation different from the present one. The second Truman administration was essentially a Labor Party administration characterized by the rabid Russophobia and Red-hunting of organized labor. Truman's policies were indistinguishable from those of the fatheaded old trade-union warhorse Ernie Bevin, Britain's Labor Foreign Minister, who was restrained from advocating a preventive war while Our Side had the atoms only by Nye Bevan's threat to throw the decision into the streets. However, when Ike took office the United States had an unchallengeable superiority over all the world. The country could afford peace. Where the Americans could not dictate they could at least "contain." Then too, compared with today, the domestic peace was profound, practically slumberous. Recession or no, America was reaping the first fruits of the new technology, the affluent society. After all, don't forget—the infamous McCarthy era was the Truman administration.

Everything today has changed. The American System of client states and interlocking alliances has broken down. SEATO has ceased to exist. In fact, certain former members might be called more active enemies of the United States within the limits of their weakness than are Russia and China in the security of their strength. Israel, America's bastion in the Middle East, is beleaguered, and, were Nasser crazy enough, could vanish in atomic smoke in a matter of minutes.

From Portugal to Taiwan the Americans hold power only by frightfully expensive subsidy of dictatorships, most of whom would be overthrown on the first morning of a general war. In addition, most of these juntas are made up of foolish criminal types who haven't got sense enough not to flaunt their thievery and even to sell "guns and butter" from America to their enemies. NATO has been outflanked by de Gaulle and consists in fact of West Germany and a large number of lo-

quacious white-haired gentlemen in uniforms and morning coats at a large number of mahogany tables scattered here and there.

Yet in the past year as any West Point senior could tell you, Lyndon Johnson and Breshnev-Kosygin have moved their respective countries into attack positions. Heavy concentrations of Soviet troops within a short ramble of Munich and the immense American forces nearby are not postures of defense. Neither is the CIA stickup of Greece. The whole weight of the American strategy is shifting from Spain to Greece. Somebody woke up after almost thirty years to Churchill's advice about "the soft underbelly of Europe." As in so many wars before, the Balkan peoples are caught in this nutcracker. Don't think for a moment they don't know it. Even the most loyal Stalinists in the Balkans are running scared.

We had dinner recently with a Bulgarian Apparatchik, a typical representative of the Iron Curtain government most servile to Moscow. It took only a little wining and dining to reveal that he was scared and wished his country could be moved to some nice safe place like Saskatchewan. The only people whose lands are going to be fought over after the cities are gone who are thoroughly in favor of the belligerency of their masters are the East Germans. Even the West Germans at least talk "good neighbor policy." Still for the past two years the White House and the Kremlin have advanced their pawns into ever more threatening positions. So far the gambits have been declined by both sides.

This is the chessboard that Dick Nixon takes over. Both sides have played a variety of risky threatening openings and now the pieces are all deadlocked. This is a situation in chess where even the most conservative players are tempted to do something rash. The President of the United States for the next four years is going to have to be a man of intelligence, patience, skill, and cool nerve. Breshnev-Kosygin is, I mean are, bad actors, maybe, but they are not Helen Gahagan Douglas and they can't be tricked. There'd *better* be a "new Nixon." He can't end his career as he began it or we'll all end with him.

The French fascists liked to scrawl on the walls "OCCIDENT!" They're right. It's still The West that's going to make



the difference. The Vietnam War may have destroyed the morale of America and corroded the American conscience perhaps past repair just as the Boer War did the English. It is a horrible and shameful thing and the worst thing about it is that it is unnecessary and foolish. If the powers behind Nixon are now, as I think they are, the Eastern financial establishment and the old basic industrial wealth, it should be fairly easy to get out of Southeast Asia. We'll see when we know the personality of the Cabinet. Cooling the new Watch on the Rhine and the Danube is going to take some doing. Of course, there is one thing even a lame duck can do and that's push the red button and go out in a blaze of glory. Whatever his many faults, Nixon is not a loquacious fool, so we could have done worse.

## II.

I have said elsewhere that all over the world nations with assorted antagonisms, but most especially Russia and the United States, were moving into attack position; that Russia and the United States were already heavily invested in a condominium of the planet—and incidentally the solar system—and that this was shown by the total collapse of all the Moscow-line Communist Parties all over the world as even mildly radical much less “anti-imperialist” organizations. In America, people who believed J. Edgar Hoover are still running around talking about the Menace of Moscow, but this is just due to the invincible ignorance of provincialism. Amid all the uproar on the campuses, much of it revolving around demands by Black students, where is the late lamented DuBois Club once the *bête noir* in every sense of the academic establishment?

These two political tendencies, the dominant ones in the world today, are reciprocal. It's not a condominium unless both partners are equally invested and have equal power. There is shutting down over the world a dictatorship of the nineteenth century. It is a commonplace of economic theory that Russia is very far from being “a soviet union.” It is a system of state capitalism designed to force a reluctant population through the period of economic development described as capitalism by

Karl Marx. Today in England, France, and the United States the state is assuming an ever-increasing control of the economy, not for the purpose of moving society on into the age of transistors, cybernetics, and a relevant financial system but for driving society back into the mechanical-industrial-banking system that broke down in August 1914. Those countries which have resisted this forced archaization are the healthiest socially, economically, and, with one exception, culturally in the world: Sweden, Switzerland, and, to a much less degree, Benelux and, suddenly awakening and coming up behind, Canada—but most of all East and West Germany. In 1946 Germany was in ruins and about half of the technical and professional cadres who should have been running the country in twenty years were dead. The Americans pumped millions into West Germany while the Russians did everything possible to keep the East crippled and humiliated. Today the second most economically powerful nation in the West is West Germany. The second most powerful economically in the East is East Germany. The reason is very simple. Of the old time Great Powers the two Germanies are the only nations who have tried even approximately to realize the technological potential and the administrative and financial concomitance of the second half of the twentieth century. At least for socially wholesome goals. The cybernetic revolution in Russia and the United States is used mostly for tricks like photographing the moon's backside or for computerizing the dossiers of dissidents. De Gaulle wants to go back to *Louis d'Or*. Dicky's tricky attorney general and his assistants have managed to advocate, of course in the Aesopian language of ultra-democratic demogogy, the suspension or abolition of each paragraph of the Bill of Rights.

What about Ulbricht? The disgusting vulgarity of the Ulbricht dictatorship is so easy to explain. The economic revolution in East Germany, by which I don't mean anything one hundred years old like Marxism, has proceeded so far that there is nothing left for the Russians' quislings to do but kick around artists and writers. Here lies the secret of what's happening everywhere. As even Hugh Hefner knows and tirelessly says, the technological universe which is open before late twentieth-century man has made apparent to all who can really



think and feel the promises of the new and greater meaning to life. The anal-retentive, work-and-slave, pray-and-save, you'll-get-pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by society of the mechanical industrial age has become morally intolerable besides, of course, becoming self-evidently lethal. It has become apparent to those who think and feel. Who thinks? Who feels? Damn few people who have survived and made it in the industrial, mechanical world with its business ethics. But the unthinking and the unfeeling are terrified of those who think and feel and who know that the present world is deadly and morally rotten. So they, not the young, have passed over to the attack. There are no pictures of fat cops lying on the ground on campuses and being kicked in the face by coeds.

A wire-editor friend of mine once told me that he estimated that on any given day there were approximately 700 student riots around the world. They riot at Brandeis, they riot at Kabul. Have the Afghan students been corrupted by John Dewey and Herbert Marcuse? The initiative is *not* coming from youth. The initiative is the moral attack on youth of an outworn century. Mr. Kissinger's heroes are Metternich, who held Europe under a reign of White Terror for a generation after the defeat of the French Revolution, and Bismarck who embarked Germany on the course of national suicide that led to the Nibelungen death of the Third Reich in flame and horror, whether in Hamburg and Dresden or in Auschwitz and Dachau. They have a plan, the plan of the Holy Alliance that put back together again with paper pins the Europe of the *ancien régime*. The trouble with youth, even the neo-Marxists of the SDS or the Negritude nationalists of the BSU, is they have no plan, they have only the future; but the future may never be.

The old technology could operate in a society whose golden rule was the sum total of individual evils will produce the greatest social good. This is the philosophy of Adam Smith and Ricardo, the business economists, but it is also the philosophy of Marx and Lenin, a *laissez-faire*, dog-eat-dog and devil-take-the-hindmost technology which operated by the mass accumulation of accidents with no idea of where it was going. Marx's or Lenin's greatest term of contempt was "Utopian Socialism." A cybernetic economy must so plan that every time

you punch the computer you must have a clear idea of what you want out of the future. The transistor demands Utopia. For the next four years all progressive forces in America are going to be subject to relentless attack which they will not be able to meet by throwing rocks at cops. Most of the leaders will probably be in jail serving long sentences within a year. What has happened to the Black Panthers will happen next to the BSU and next to SDS and next Mark Rudd and the Yippie leaders and next to Allen Ginsberg and then Herbert Marcuse and Paul Goodman and then I would be quite insulted if not me as the twentieth century is forced to go underground or is confined behind barbed wire. We can spend our time as the nineteenth-century Russians who were sent to Siberia for struggling against the dark ages spent theirs in deciding what kind of society we want. Cybernetics won't work unless you begin by extrapolating. Revolution for the hell of it ends in the gas chamber or the gas oven. Everybody's running around yelling but it's all purely defensive. The offensive consists in having objectives so clear they are overpowering. Utopia belongs to us. We can't leave it to Timothy Leary or even estimable and diligent Hugh Hefner.

### III.

Perhaps the apologists for violence in the Roman arena, television, the funny papers, the movies, and limited wars have something. Perhaps if the human race cannot discharge its hostilities periodically hostility festers within the body politic and eventually poisons all its organs and tissues. I don't think there is much doubt but that we would have had a major war long since if it had not been "impossible." Eventually of course we will have it with its "unthinkable" consequences but so far it has been averted by sheer fear with all the resulting frustrations that come from the lack of quick, easy, lethal solutions. Frustration and hostility have spread throughout the human race and have become the accepted way of life. Organizations and movements that started out internationalist, socialist, non-violent, pacifist, are today violent, competitive, and nationalist externally, and internally they are ridden by unprincipled power



struggles and interpersonal hostility. The guardians of law and order have lost all objectivity and are ruled by personal hatred. International politics more and more becomes not an ordinary old-fashioned power struggle but a deadly chess game of vindictive reprisals. CORE was an offshoot of the FOR, The Fellowship of Reconciliation, a religious pacifist organization, and its principal founder, Bayard Rustin, is ceaselessly attacked as an Uncle Tom—but what would happen if the founders of the Communist International or the Zionist movement came back to life in a meeting of their descendants?

Beside the chronic hostility of international, intergroup, and interpersonal relations there has developed out of the destructive waste of natural resources in the Second War (when, typically, virgin forests in California were cut down to make logs for corduroy roads in the New Guinea jungle which were then passed over by air transport and finally the airplanes were burned up rather than flown home) a new kind of exploitation of the environment. Just as all arts were supposed to approach the condition of music, so now all business enterprise tends to approach extractive industry. Pinchot's slogan, "The forests are a crop, not a mine" has been reversed. Businesses are treated as mines, not crops. "Get it and get out" and "It will last my time," once the business ideology of Latin America and the colonial world, has now instinctively been adopted by the business community of the metropolises. Where once only Guatemalan buccaneers and Persian generals had Swiss accounts, now in America they are changing from a status symbol like a Mercedes 700 to a commonplace like a Diners Club card. Travelling about the world today the most conspicuous single thing is the universal destruction of the environment. Lake Erie is an open sewer. Deep in the Alps the Italian lakes are polluted. Over a mile in the air Lake Arrowhead lies under a thousand feet of smog. The earth is being exploited with no regard for future generations. Is this because nobody believes there are going to be future generations?

Within any of the contexts now operating none of the major problems of the world is solvable. It's not just that the overpopulation of Latin America is at the mercy of the Pope and that the director of birth control in India does not believe in

birth control; we forget that the Kennedy administration, one of the few relatively honest ones in American history, had broken down in complete frustration and pessimism months before the President was assassinated and similarly Khrushchev, who seems really to have tried to straighten things out in Russia, failed. The Johnson administration thrashed around like a longhorn steer caught in a mudhole and only made matters worse.

There is no sign anywhere that anyone in power wants to do something about this state of affairs. The commentators of the kept press tell us that the Nixon cabinet is made up of enlightened middle-of-the-road businessmen and they should be given a chance. They are nothing of the sort. Each one of them is on record as a representative of the politics of defiance, from the Secretary of the Interior who is fully as anti-conservationist as Eisenhower's man who seriously suggested leasing the national parks to private enterprise, to the Secretaries of State and War (Defense) who are advocates of "all necessary measures." Like Ronald Reagan and his minion Hayakawa the Nixon administration has already lined itself up into positions for a politics of showdown, of final confrontation. But it's the same everywhere. Straus is moving into position to take over the German chancellorship. Representatives of the *force du frappe* of the House of Rothschild already dominate the French cabinet. And did you ever notice as he has grown older that Richard Nixon no longer looks like the rather handsome Rudolph Hess. What he looks like now is a print taken from the combined negatives of Breshnev and Kosygin. What is going to happen in a world where every nation, every pressure group, and millions and millions of individuals move consciously and inexorably towards deadlock?

All hell is going to break loose.

It's apparently what people want. Certainly the Left, the students, the Negroes, all welcome confrontation. More and more people subscribe to the doctrine of "the worse, the better." "Once Dirty Dick starts his fascist repression then the movement will really mean business." On the other side Hayakawa tam o'shanter sprout like Mercedeses in San Marino, Montecito, Hillsborough, and Piedmont. The only trouble with all this is



its mindlessness. None of the battalions on either side has any kind of program. Honky is always saying to the Black militants, "What is it you want?" and getting nothing but obscene abuse in return. Mark Rudd, the leader of the students at Columbia, has said in so many words, again and again, that their program is completely summed up in the words, "Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker!" This is not sarcasm, it's true. Herbert Read, Paul Goodman, A. S. Neill are dismissed as ideologues of the Old Left and there is not the slightest vestige of demands for a truly enlightened and progressive education. The amazing thing is that the student Left actually accepts monstrosities like the University of California, Columbia, or San Francisco State. They just want chittlins and maws in the cafeteria or classes in Swahili, the artificial *lingua franca* of the slave trade. The whites don't even want anything. But the same thing is true on an international scale. Go to some big library and get out the old publications of the Communist International and compare them with the stuff emanating from or inspired by Moscow or Peking today. The total lack of principle and Marxist theory in the contemporary literature is astonishing. As for American principles, they will be provided by a large staff of whiz kids on loan from a business that has made billions telling the public that black is white, cigarettes don't cause cancer, and whisky is good for young girls. Of course if you want principles you can always go to Czechoslovakia but you better get one of those rings with a couple of grains of cyanide of potassium in it. (1968!) You're going to need it. Casey Jones has become every man's ideal.

#### IV.

It was surprising to me at least how many people got all wrought up about the election when it finally came around. We didn't stay up to listen to the radio or watch television. I can't imagine an intelligent person being in the least concerned which utterly amoral vulgar demagogue got into the White House. It is some consolation that a silly and loquacious man who betrayed every principle he ever had was kept out. I hope his refusal so much as to come to the telephone when his oppo-

nent phoned him from the fifteenth floor that his staff were being mayhemed by the criminal pigs of the Hog Butcher of the World haunts him to his dying day. I hope he hears his own flatulent voice calling Pedernales from where the attack had been ordered, "Shall I or shall I not interfere, Massa?" every night as he falls asleep. One thing you can say for Dick Nixon, he's never had any principles to betray. He was the first of the robot politicians manufactured from used Rice Crispies coupons in the PR offices. We can look forward to four years of struggle between J. Walter Thompson, Chase, and Citibank and the hoodlum millionaires of Southern California over the control of the country. It would be interesting if they would all insist on a purely robot government with Reagan, Murphy, Shirley Temple in the cabinet, Rin Tin Tin in HEW, and King Kong as Secretary of Defense. It remains to be seen. One of the peculiarities of the modern demagogic process with its McLuhan destruction of reality is that last time it permitted the election of perhaps the only man in the history of the American presidency who could be called positively evil. We have had fools and rascals, Van Burens, Chester A. Arthurs, and Hardings, but Johnson was unique. There is something about the electoral process and the public mind that until his day kept a man like him out of the presidency. Is Nixon evil? Metaphysicians have said that evil is privative, that it is the intrusion of not-being into being. I suppose in this case Nixon is evil because like all the not-people he doesn't exist. However, the first "government by manufactured celebrity" was that of Jack Kennedy. He was just manufactured by a nicer advertising agency. Perhaps the day will soon come, what with all this talk of reforming the method of presidential elections and getting rid of the Electoral College, that the American people won't have to vote for the package, they'll just vote for an advertising agency as now they vote for electors.

The most important news of the election in San Francisco was the extremely low vote for Kathleen Cleaver, lower than that polled by Anita Whitney or Oleta O'Conner ever on the old-time Communist ticket in the Red Thirties. The fact that her vote almost exactly matched Paul Jacobs would indicate that she got no votes from the indomitable suffragettes who



always vote for a woman regardless and that she got no race votes as such. Oleta could always rely on a big hunk of both the women and the Irish. Not only that, but Kathleen Cleaver is certainly the best-looking woman ever to run for public office in San Francisco and at least as highly cultured as the notoriously cultured Missus Onassis. She got six votes in the four polls in my Black neighborhood.

What went wrong? It is very simple. The Panthers and the Peace and Freedom Party simply made no connection at all with what they used to call the masses, least of all the Black masses. Their appeal was confined almost exclusively to displaced persons—unemployed Black youth, hippies, and rich bohemians in Pacific Heights. I saw it coming. All the past year the high-school boys in the Black neighborhood where I live were going about in black berets and black-leather jackets. Then the Panthers opened a headquarters around the corner. Within a week they had scared off all these young fellows who would have been invaluable to them. This was not just due to their wild talk about shooting every honky on the Day of Motherfucker. It was due to their closed-tight cliqueishness, like a gang invading somebody else's turf. For a half mile in every direction the neighborhood is from 75 to 95 per cent Black, but it is a neighborhood of Black working men and working wives and their reaction to the Panthers shocked even me with the violence of its wrath.

I'm not blaming anybody. I'm just saying this isn't the way to run a revolution or even start one. Who believes Willie Brown is a Tom? Certainly not the working people in his Assembly district. Most people who know him consider him the most enlightened, well-educated, and dedicated politician in the city. He is almost as cultured as Kathleen herself. By choosing to run her, the product of one of the most fashionable schools in the country, and of course a person who would be considered white in any other country on earth, as a representative of the Black dispossessed against "Uncle Tom Willie," the Peace and Freedom Party and the Panthers simply defied themselves into isolation. It is so easy to believe that the people who turn out for a demonstration and make a lot of noise are going to vote—or even stay around if push comes to shove in

the most literal sense in the demonstration. Most of the following of the Peace and Freedom Party simply doesn't play any kind of determinative role in the society. They are redundant. Students and young Blacks are the unneeded people in the technological society and they are dumped into universities and government projects just like the older industrial capitalism dumped unwanted commodities into the colonies and finally into the sea or burned them up in war as now they burn up youth, Black and white. The French May Days proved, as contrasted to their German sympathetic reflection, that you can't exert power if you can't form alliances with people the society can't get along without. Until the longshoreman, the teamster, and the housepainter and their wives, two practical nurses, and a factory worker who live in the flat next to me can be convinced that the largely estimable program of the Panthers and the Peace and Freedom Party has some connection with them and that the persecution of Eldridge Cleaver or Huey Newton or Bobby Seale is a persecution of them, nothing is going to happen. There just aren't enough people outside the system. Black unemployment in California may be twice that of white but for the last couple of years that has been only 6 per cent, and 3 per cent is the necessary functional labor turnover of full production totalling all categories. In unskilled employment it is considerably higher. In other words, 94 per cent of the Black working-class population of California is working at any given time. They may want Black power, but only in that context can they be convinced of it. If they think Black power will destroy the context itself, they aren't going to buy it. Black power, Black culture, Black art, Black theater, Black poetry are all fine but what's important is not what blonde college girls think about it but what ordinary Black people do. Whether Eldridge Cleaver or LeRoi Jones, the question is, "What has Ray Charles or Muddy Waters got that I haven't?" Who's afraid of Muddy Waters?

1967-1968-1969