THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC OF SPIRO T. AGNEW

by

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ABSTRACT

The Vice Presidential rhetoric of Spiro Agnew has been a subject of controversy since 1969: accusers have charged that his rhetoric is demagogic. Because the controversy involved the charges of demagoguery, the Agnew rhetoric was analyzed. A study was made of the major practitioners of demagoguery and the universal patterns they employed. The rhetoric of Spiro Agnew was then evaluated in terms of the characteristics of demagoguery which, historically, have most often been employed. A distinction was made between the demagogue whose actions are self-serving, and the practitioner of demagoguery.

It was discovered that Agnew had employed the tools of the demagogue: he has employed gross oversimplification; the illusion of proof, emotionalism, and loaded language. These techniques were employed to more closely identify himself with his constituency, the silent majority, and to obtain the national attention necessary to promote his views. Agnew's interests, however, were not found to be totally self-serving: hence, the charge that Agnew is a demagogue was rejected. Agnew was, however, discovered to employ frequently the techniques of demagoguery.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

"I'll agree with you," he said, "that the name of Spiro Agnew is not a household word."[1] Since August 9, 1968, when Richard Nixon decided to make Agnew his running mate, whether in an attempt to appease the South and curb a Wallace backlash, in search of a scapegoat for the press, or in an attempt to fulfill the need for a law and order emphasis at home and abroad, Spiro Agnew has become a household word. In the two and one-half years since his first press conference as a Vice Presidential candidate, Spiro Agnew has alternately been praised and attacked for the role he has assumed in national and international politics.

Robert Curran has suggested that not since Thomas R. Marshall said, "What this country needs is a good five-cent cigar," have the lines of a Vice President's speech had such an impact or received so much attention.[2] Spiro Agnew has become the symbol of Richard Nixon's hazy constituency, the "Silent Majority." His Greek heritage and rise from rags to riches, his low-key come-on and creation of an enemy

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[1]Robert Curran, Spiro Agnew: Spokesman for America (New York: Lancer, 1970), 16.

[2]Ibid., 18.

that the silent majority can turn against tend to wrap him in an aura of "Americanism."

Held in esteem by many of the silent majority, Agnew is nonetheless held in disrepute by many critics. The New York Times accused the Vice President of "Sweeping and ignorant generalizations" contradicting what is "clear to all perceptive observers," and of employing "bearbaiting tactics."[3] Thomas P. V. Hoving, head of the National Citizen's Committee for Broadcasting, found in Agnew's "Des Moines" speech "The beginning of the end of democracy."[4] CBS's Frank Stanton claimed of that same speech that it "created a critical period in the life of a free society and of the free communications without which it cannot exist."[5] South Dakota Senator George McGovern accused the Vice President of "speaking out like Joe McCarthy in the 1950's."[6]

This study, then, has been initiated for the purpose of analyzing the Vice Presidential rhetoric of Spiro Agnew. Specifically, it will seek to determine if the Vice President's rhetoric displays the characteristic techniques of demagoguery.

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[3]Martin Mayer, "The Brilliance of Spiro Agnew," Esquire (May 1970), 207-208

[4]Ibid., 208

[5]Ibid., 208

[6]"Agnew Finds A Role," Newsweek (November 17, 1969), 38.

Justification

Charles W. Lomas, the distinguished rhetorical scholar, has made extensive studies of the historic relationship between rhetoric and demagoguery. In his article, "The Rhetoric of Demagoguery," he concluded, "It is clear, then, that demagoguery is an art practiced not only by recognized demagogues, but by other speakers as well. Its mark is a departure from fact and logic by the twisting of acceptable rhetorical devices so that truth is obscured."[7]

Whenever elected officials are able to wield enormous power, the critic must be especially alert to misuse of persuasive techniques. With the effect of the McCarthy demagoguery fresh in the nation's mind, there seems little question as to the justification for clearing or advancing the charges of demagoguery leveled against Spiro Agnew.

Critical Method

The purpose of this study will be to evaluate the charge of demagoguery leveled against Agnew. It will involve a thorough examination of Agnew's major Vice Presidential speeches: October 19, 1969, New Orleans; October 20, 1969, Jackson; October 30, 1969, Harrisburg; November 13, 1969, Des Moines; and November 20, 1969, Montgomery. The rhetorical analysis itself will regard Agnew's speeches in their

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[7]Charles W. Lomas, "The Rhetoric of Demagoguery," Western Speech (Summer 1961), 162.

historical context, as acts, that is, as parts of a larger strategy.

In this examination of Agnew's rhetoric the critic has elected to be guided by the general definition of demagoguery offered by Charles W. Lomas: "Demagoguery may be defined as the process by which skillful speakers and writers seek to influence public opinion by employing the traditional tools of rhetoric with complete indifference to truth. In addition, although demagoguery does not necessarily seek ends contrary to the public interest, its primary motivation is personal gain."[8]

In determining whether or not Agnew exercises demagogic leadership, this study will follow Theodore Abel's critical pattern for political movements. Abel, a professor at Columbia University, developed his tool after completing extensive research on the Hitler movement in Germany. He suggests that the student of political movements examine the factors which allow for the creation of the movement (the existance of a primary group relationship, the experience of threats to the group's values, the focus upon a common source of dissonance, and the purportment of the movement by a charismatic leader); and an examination of the factors which promote the movement (maintenance of attention,

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[8]Charles W. Lomas, The Agitator in American Society (Trenton: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968), 18.

justification of the claim for leadership and maneuvers to gain a position of ascendency).

In seeking to evaluate the accuracy of the charges which have been leveled against the Vice President, the critic will employ the distinction which Charles Lomas has made between the practitioner of demagoguery and the true demagogue. Four general methods of distortion will serve as the basis for comparing Agnew's rhetorical technique with demagogic technique: (1) oversimplification, substituting prejudice and half-truth for facts, (2) the use of bogus documentation, (3) the misuse of pathetic proof, and (4) the substitution of evocative words for logical structure.[9] A single criterion separates the demagogue from the practitioner of demagoguery; the demagogue's actions are self-serving.

Outline of Chapters

The examination and conclusion concerning Agnew as a practitioner of demagoguery will be advanced in four chapters. Chapter I will serve as an introduction to the background, purpose and procedure to be followed. Chapter II will encompass a full exploration of demagoguery in rhetoric, the major practitioners and universal patterns that have been established. Chapter III will compare Agnew's techniques with those of the demagogue. Chapter IV will

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[9] Ibid., 19.

suggest motives behind the rhetorical techniques Agnew employs and the possible strategic rationale for employing the techniques of demagoguery. Finally, a determination of the validity of the charges against the Vice President will be made.

Previous Research and Major Sources of Information

Much of the research that has been done on the theory and practitioners of demagoguery was completed in the Nineteen Thirties and in the late Nineteen Fifties. Information concerning the demagogues of the twenties and thirties is most extensively presented in David Bennett's book, Demagogues in the Depression. Articles on demagoguery of this period may be found in the popular periodicals; but few of these articles are objective and seldom is analysis of the techniques of the demagogue offered. The most complete analysis of the techniques of the demagogue is offered by Charles W. Lomas in his book, The Agitator in American Society, and in his article, "The Rhetoric of Demagoguery."

Little extensive research has been done concerning the rhetoric of Spiro Agnew. Characteristics of his rhetoric may be gleaned from current periodicals citing Mr. Agnew, and from an examination of his speeches as recorded in several collections. Original copies, however, appear to be difficult to obtain. Although the Office of the Vice President will release 1970 speeches, even upon repeated request,

it is unwilling to send copies of Agnew's earlier rhetoric. Several of Mr. Agnew's major speeches may be found in transcript form in the New York Times. Information concerning Nixon's choice of Agnew as a running mate, and possible strategies behind the Agnew rhetoric come from political analysts who have often relied upon conjecture. Popular magazines, political analysts, and the New York Times have served as this critic's major sources of information.

CHAPTER II

TECHNIQUES AND PRACTITIONERS OF DEMAGOGUERY

Modern democracies have characteristically emphasized the importance of leadership, and the men history exalts are those who have demonstrated a propensity of going before others, of sensing the next step to be taken, of demonstrating the "power to comprehend exactly the forces that affect the mind of the people."[1] What is the demagogue? The early Greeks used the term "demos agogos" to denote a leader of the people. He is a leader: "a politician skilled in oratory, flattery, and invective; evasive in discussing vital issues; promising everything to everybody; appealing to the passions rather than the reason of the public; and arousing racial, religious, and class prejudices."[2] In essence, the demagogue-leader is a "professional man of the people."[3] He deviates from the ideal leader James Bryce discusses in Modern Democracies only in that his programs and promises are self-serving: personal advantage

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[1]James Bryce, Modern Democracies (New York: Macmillan Co., 1921) 553.

[2]Reinhard H. Luthin, American Demagogues Twentieth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954), 3.

[3]Reinhard H. Luthin, "Some Demagogues in American History," American Historical Review (October 1951) 22.

leads him to mislead his public; achieving his end is accomplished through personal invective and catch phrases; issues are supported and dropped with his interest, and "he plays upon the 'mass mind' substituting heat for light, emotion for thought."[4] In his own satiric manner Fredrick Venn posits, "It is the a, b, c, of demagogery to learn to consider all projects, proposals, and suggested measures in the light of personal benefit."[5] It shall be the purpose, then, of this chapter to examine the characteristics of the demagogue; and to analyze those practitioners of demagoguery which American history must claim.

The classic examples of the demagogue are Ghengis Kahn, Attila, Napoleon, and Hitler: men whose self-interests were best served by playing on the fears of the people. Yet, for all our appeals to freedom and democracy, America too has been the arena for the demagogue. The critic need only reflect upon the actions of James R. Cox, leader of the Jobless Party in 1932; or the organizer of the Liberty Party that same year, William H. "Coin" Harvey: study the Nazi-like Silver Shirt Legion of America (1933) triumphed by

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[4]Barnet Baskerville, "Joe McCarthy: Brief-Case Demagogue," Today's Speech (September 1934), 64.

[5]Frederick E. Venn, "The Demagogue A Textbook for Politicians," The Independent (April 26, 1924), 219.

William Dudley Pelley and "General" Art Smith's Khaki Shirts.[6] Fortunately, "most of these would be saviors were ignominious failures. Their 'movements' amounted to little more than a fanatic and a letterhead."[7] The Depression years, however, also saw the rise of major demagogues: Father Coughlin, Huey Long, Gerald L. K. Smith, and William Lemke.

In 1927 Charles Coughlin was an obscure Catholic priest in Detroit: within six years he had made a meteoric rise to prominence. Unlike his fellow priests, Coughlin was not satisfied to be merely a spiritual leader, he needed the political power of the masses. Father Coughlin was a demagogue. "He fitted the classic dictionary definition of 'one who acquires influence with the populace by pandering to their prejudices or playing on their ignorance.'"[8]

Coughlin, certain that he had discovered a sure solution to the nation's ills, was willing to use any means to achieve his end. In formulating his panacea, he appealed to special interest groups through the use of scapegoats. "Bankers, big businessmen, the European intriguers were, of

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[6]David H. Bennett, Demagogues in the Depression (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 4.

[7]Ibid., 4-5.

[8]Ibid., 56.

course, his favorite devils."[9] Though the scapegoats he used in later years expanded greatly, his attacks were primarily leveled against bankers and communists who never wore out as targets. As a consequence, naming was an important part of his technique. "It was more dramatic and persuasive to assail J. P. Morgan or Kuhn and Loeb than simply 'bankers,' and better to point at Hoover and Mellon than 'politicians.'"[10]

The Commonweal of 1933 reports one of Coughlins' characteristic baseless charges: an insinuation of A. E. Smith's questionable character which stemmed from Coughlin's linking Smith with J. P. Morgan. In evaluating his charges the Commonweal suggested, he had "chosen the perilous method of attacking individuals as well as abstract evils. In doing so he is under a stringent responsibility to speak truths, rather than wild inferences; to give facts which can be proven, rather than vague or hasty insinuations. He has badly failed in this respect, so far as A. E. Smith is concerned."[11] The critic might think that with attacks of this nature Coughlin would have lost his powerful control; yet this was not the case. Perhaps Lomas provides the explanation when he suggests that the techniques of the effective rhetorician and demagogue are the same; Coughlin

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[9] Ibid., 52.

[10] Ibid., 35.

[11] "Week by Week" The Commonweal (December 8, 1933) 144.

used familiar rhetorical techniques to speak for the "little man."[12] His plans to take the money out of the hands of the private bankers and put it into a central bank could only benefit the masses.

Though the specifics of his plan, like his speeches, were vague, the priest had tapped the underlying prejudices of his listeners, played on the widespread animosity toward the bankers, and crystalized their yearning for social justice.[13]

Cox, Harvey, Pelley, Smith, and the other potentially powerful demagogues of the post-depression years also played to the prejudices and ignorance of the masses; they too had established scapegoats. What, then, gave Coughlin the extra boost to national prominence? Wallace Stegner, "Patterns For Demagogues," suggests that Father Coughlin's success in large part can be attributed to the fact that he was the first to discover how to do the whole job of demagoguery by remote control.[14] Crucial to Coughlin's success was his mastery of the radio as an instrument of personal propaganda. From his original half-hour sermons to lengthy political

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[12]Bennett, 57.

[13]Raymond Gram Swing, Forerunners of American Fascism (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1935), 49.

[14]Wallace Stegner, "Patterns for Demagogues," Pacific Spectator (August 1948), 400.

broadcasts, Coughlin mastered the tricks of the propagandists. By 1933, in the height of his career, "he had found the permanent form of his 'discourse,' a rhetorical tirade of political, social, and economic themes."[15]

In 1933, when the country was responding to the multitude of successful and unsuccessful demagogues, the Atlantic Monthly ran an article, "Our Political Monstrosities." Frank R. Kent, the author, cites William Allen White, a Kansas philosopher who purported a then popular theme: "In every civilization there is a moronic underworld which cannot be civilized. It can be taught to read and write, but not to think, and it lives upon the level of its emotions and prejudices."[16] The "cheap charlatan" elected by this "moronic underworld" was Huey P. Long.

"A brilliant campaigner,"[17] "an adroit manipulator of crowds,"[18] Huey Long made his presence felt in the United States while still running the legislature of Louisiana and controlling all the activities of that state. Referred to by

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[15]Swing, 39.

[16]Frank R. Kent, "Our Political Monstrosities," Atlantic Monthly (April 1933), 408.

[17]Bennett, 119.

[18]Luthin, American Demagogues Twentieth Century 256.

some as the best stump speaker in America, a rabble-rousing cross-roads orator, "Long made himself the personification of the aspirations and prejudices of the underdog Southern farmer and villager."[19] His simple, direct style was in the vernacular of the uneducated man. Through cajolery, promises of patronage, and threats, Long established his undisputed control over the masses, not just in his own state, but in communities across the nation. ". . . a curious hodgepodge of buffoonery and demagogic strutting, cleaverly bundled with a lot of shrewd commonsense and evangelical fervor," Long discussed the plight of the underprivileged.[20]

His plan to save the nation called for Federal confiscation of large fortunes and redistribution of the wealth. To institute his proposal, Long and Gerald L. K. Smith organized a national Share Our Wealth movement. Smith once wrote that "in order to succeed, a mass movement must be superficial for quick appeal, fundamental for permanence, and dogmatic for certainty."[21] The Share Our Wealth clubs fulfilled these criteria.

The Share Our Wealth clubs, the power Long exuded, his style of oratory all established him as a man of the

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[19]Bennett, 119.

[20]Luthin, American Demagogues Twentieth Century, 256, citing the National Democratic chairman, James Farley.

[21]Bennett, 118.

people, a man of daring, simplicity, and belief.[22] Yet, in wielding his control, in his appeals to the "little man's" prejudices, Huey Long never considered himself a demagogue. "I would describe a demagogue as a politician who don't keep his promises. On that basis, I'm the first man to have power in Louisiana who ain't a demagogue because I kept every promise I ever made."[23]

An honest savior of the people? That may have been the image Long wanted to represent, but expediency and personal interest rather than national concern ruled his every action.

Winston Churchill referred to the perils of the power Long wielded. "The career of this demagogue-dictator, the rasp-tongued champion of the 'forgotten-men,' shows how easily in modern America an unscrupulous politician with the gift of oratory and organizing ability may attain dangerous and disasterous power."[24]

Gerald L. K. Smith and Huey Long were two of America's most colorful demagogues. With the gift of oratory and an insatiable lust for power, the two organizers of the Share Our Wealth movement wanted to control America.

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[22]Swing, 95.

[23]Bennett, 122.

[24]Winston Churchill, "Soapbox Messiahs," Colliers (June 20, 1936), 44.

[25]Kent, 411.

Their combination of cunning, political skill, and mass appeal enabled them to stay a long time and go a long way.[25]

William Lemke was not an impressive figure, nor was he an inspiring orator. A small stocky man, his appearance and his speech indicated anything but sophistication. But he knew the law and he knew farming. Not the born demagogue like a Long or a Coughlin, Lemke turned to demagoguery in an attempt to change the conditions plaguing the farmer. He built on the impetus of the Non-Partisan League, a movement of agrarian protest against the abuses of the railroads, the financial interests, and the marketing system. The League "emerged in a drive to build a radical and class conscious agrarian movement."[26]

Lemke's plan sought to save the nation's farmers through government coverage of farm mortgages; this would be accomplished through the issuance of "printing press" money. After entering Congress, Lemke did see the passage of the Frazier-Lemke Bills granting rights to farmers. But, through his manipulation of the symbols of populism, he never really achieved the desired changes in the agrarian plight. United with Long and Coughlin in an attempt to achieve his goals, he was an unsuccessful third party candidate for the Presidency.

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[25]Kent, 411

[26]Bennett, 89.

The great economic crisis of the 1930's provided the setting for the growth of a variety of extremist movements. The stock market crash of 1929 sent the national income plumeting, unemployment was exceptionally high, and "huge pockets of social discontent and economic distress remained as festering sores across the nation"[27] The conditions were auspicious for mass movements and the demagogue was ready to solve the pressing problems of poverty in the midst of affluence. "Stirring up the prejudices and passions of the populace by tricks of rhetoric and sensational charges, by specious arguments, catchwords and cajolery, the demagogue tried to play on discontents and to intensify the irrational elements within them."[28]

As demagogues cannot be confined to any one political party, neither can they be confined to one period in American history. It would be ludicrous to ignore the demagoguery of the fifties, McCarthyism. "McCarthyism signifies a new style of demagoguery, new in its use of television and other twentieth century technological devices, but old in its psychology and intent."[29]

Part of McCarthy's strength lay in his ability to combine mass appeals with specific class appeals. Through

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[27]Ibid., 4.

[28]Ibid., 4.

[29]Luthin, American Demagogues Twentieth Century, 272.

evasiveness, exaggeration, and distortion of evidence, McCarthy played on the public's fears. Like Coughlin, scapegoating became a crucial tool of persuasion. David H. Bennett suggests, "the Junior Senator from Wisconsin was vilifying many of the same devils and may have been playing upon many of the same social and psychological (if not economic) frustrations as had his predecessors."[30] A 1951 symposium, Civil Liberties Under Attack, concluded that building on the conditions of the times, McCarthy combined internal discontent with a fear of an external enemy Russia.[31]

Each demagogue has his own characteristic tool: for Coughlin it was the radio sermon; Long employed the vernacular of his lower class audience, and Lemke manipulated the symbols of populism. McCarthy took advantage of the American desire for quantification and verification and filled his charges and allegations with bogus evidence and inneuendo. Materials were fabricated, distorted, and taken out of context.

For nearly five years, from the Wheeling speech in 1950 with its reference to a list of 205 known communists in government, to his censure by the Senate in 1954, McCarthy's scare techniques kept many Americans in a state of panic.

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[30]Bennett, 303.

[31]Clair Wilcox, Civil Liberties Under Attack (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1957), 47.

The effect of the McCarthy demagoguery and the demagoguery of the Depression years is still fresh in the nation's mind. It seems pertinent, therefore, to explore qualities which might be common to successful demagogues. Why have Americans accepted the false self-centeredness of the demagogue?

Several theories ranging from anomie to interest politics have been formulated to explain the acceptance of the demagogue by the masses. Franz Neumann has suggested that when groups within a society feel threatened or are unsure of their position, under great pressure to resolve this tension they convert real anxieties into "neurotic anxiety" which can then be focused on a devil figure. The anxiety is overcome through identification with a leader, the most extreme form being caesaristic identification.[32] "Caesaristic identification may play a role in history (the conspiracy theory) when the situation of the masses is objectively endangered, when the masses are incapable of understanding

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[32]Neumann's theory is fundamentally Freudian. There are two types of identification: libido-charged (affective) and libido-free (affectless). It is the former type, affective, which is involved in the demagogic situation. Affective identification need not be negative as it may involve cooperative rather than caesaristic characteristics. Ceasaristic affective identification is the most repressive for it is built on nearly total ego shrinkage. The dependence upon the leader is virtually complete. Franz Neumann, "Anxiety in Politics," Dissent (Spring 1955), 133-135.

the historical process, and when the anxiety activated by the danger becomes neurotic persecutory anxiety through manipulation."[33] As the masses absolutely identify with the leader, they also identify their anxieties with certain persons who conspire to create their tensions. "Hatred, resentment, dread, created by great upheavals, are concentrated on certain persons who are denounced as devilish conspirators . . . .they appear as genuine enemies whom one must extricate."[34]

In viewing the Depression years we are able to see the application of Neumann's theory. Social disorder, rapid change, the economic crisis, and a new mobility for the affluent and converse immobility for the economically deprived made "reintegration" for the have-nots imperative.[35] The demagogic leader seized upon this anxiety. "They all appealed to their followers' feelings of frustration and powerlessness in industrialized and urbanized America, and they all promised the 'little man' another chance to master his environment and find a unique place in the sun."[36] Placing the blame on a nebulous "changing American society" would not have relieved the need for concrete enemies. Hence,

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[33] Ibid., 135.

[34] Ibid., 135.

[35] Bennett, 167.

[36] Ibid., 294.

the depression demagogue attacked the bankers, railroads, financial interests, foreigners: the affluent.

The danger of the conspiracy theory lies in the fact that "this view of history is never completely false, but always contains a kernel of truth, and, indeed, must contain it, if it is to have a convincing effect."[37] A fundamental model for this theory explaining the success of demagogic movements would include: intensification of anxieties through manipulation of identification; false concreteness; and the isolation of the specific devilish conspirators.

Richard Hofstadter suggests a second theory to explain the masses turning to a leader. This theory is based on interest politics and status anxieties passed on from parents to their children. The Depression, again, serves to explain status anxieties. The have-not, craving status and position denied him by the economic and political situation, turned his anger against the objects of authority and social position for which he had aspired. Status politics, then, involved the "clash of various projective rationalizations arising from status aspirations with other personal motives."[38] The Depression years were also interest

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[37] Neuman, 135.

[38] Richard Hofstadter, "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt," 33-35, Daniel Bell (ed.), The New American Right (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), 52.

oriented in that politics of the era catered to "the clash of material aims and needs among various groups and blocks."[39]

Hofstadter's theory, more sociological in nature, presupposes several special conditions necessary for a social movement. The first such condition is that large masses of individuals must experience a similar threat to their values. "No movement can occur unless personal values are involved, such as social status, income, and so forth."[40] A second condition, similar to Neumann's devil conspirators, is that the dissatisfaction and opposition to threatened values "must be capable of being focused upon some object that can be regarded as the 'common source' of the disrupting force."[41] And finally, in order to sustain the demagogic movement, a strong emotional reaction of dissatisfaction and opposition is required.

During the late forties and early fifties, Americans felt that their democratic freedoms were being undermined by subversive elements. Francis Biddle expressed the sentiment of the times: "everywhere there is anxiety that our

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[39] Ibid., 52.

[40] Theodore Abel, "The Pattern of a Successful Political Movement," American Sociological Review (June 1937), 352.

[41] Ibid., 349.

institutions will crumble under the influence of radical and revolutionary ideas."[42] The clash was not just between Russia and America; but between Americans who purported to support common liberties and those they accused of "red" sentiments. The pseudo-conservative, that fraction susceptible to interest and status anxieties, was involved in a scramble and a peculiar search for a secure identity which the threat of communism precluded.

De Grazia and Robert Merton contend that mass movements can be explained through the study of anomie, the disruption in belief systems due to economic or other conflicts resulting in apprehension and confusion. "The person fears an indefinite but impending danger situation."[43] In our country prior to 1950, there had been examples of espionage, and due to a laxity in security measures, some spies had been found in high places. With the nebulous threats of communism planted in the American mind, individuals came to "distrust their own institutions of freedom, and to abandon some of the principles on which they were founded."[44] It was the conflict between belief in the principles of freedom, and the seeming need to destroy some

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[42]Francis Biddle, The Fear of Free Men (New York: Doubleday, 1952), 10.

[43]Sebastian De Grazia, The Political Community: A Study of Anomie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 71.

[44]Biddle, 6.

of these institutions which created the acute anomie so conducive to the demagogue. Americans once again saw in society the conditions William Butler Yeats expressed in the first four lines of his poem, "The Second Coming."

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

Likewise, Yeats poem, written in 1921, served as a harbinger for the social conditions of the era of the Father Coughlins and the Huey Longs. "It is the conflict between cultural goals and the availability of using institutional means - whatever the character of the goals - which produces a stain toward anomie."[45]

Nelson W. Polsby would contend that the theories presented by Neumann, Hofstadter, and De Grazia are all somewhat questionable. His explanation is rooted in political factors and the political atmosphere of the times. Especially illustrative of this theory was the McCarthy era. Polsby enumerates four political reasons for McCarthy's support:

1. McCarthyism was a weapon of the Republicans against the Democratic Administration. To emphasize his contention that the Republicans were attempting to embarrass the Democrates, Polsby cites Taft as

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[45]Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York: The Free Press, 1957), 166.

remarking, "If one case doesn't work then bring up another."

2. McCarthy was in a protected position as a United States Senator and hence was free from any libel suits for statements made in the Senate. This protective position encouraged him to go to his characteristic extremes in an attempt to discredit the Democratic Administration.

3. America democratically will tolerate irregularities in an attempt to gain facts. Consequently, Polsby contends that McCarthy "exploited the mass media by accommodating his 'exposés' to the exigencies of deadlines, and employed the bulging briefcase, the non-existent 'document', the garbled figures, and so on, with stunning effect."

4. The final factor contributing to McCarthy's success was a strong grass roots support in Wisconsin that allowed him to express Republican strategy in his excesses.[46]

Regardless of the philosophy one adopts to explain the great successes of demagogues, several factors are common to all. There must be a primary group relationship; the ideal or goal must be stated in terms of current "glow words;" the ideal must be purported by a charismatic leader who

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[46]Nelson W. Polsby, "Towards an Explanation of McCarthyism," Political Studies (October 1960), 254-263.

induces identification; and there must be a fundamental challenge to values, status, political, or economic conditions.[47]

Fundamental to these conditions for success is fear. Biddle suggests that freedom and fear cannot live together in the same community on equal terms; for while freedom encourages tolerance and maturity, fear advances hatred, persecution, and violence.[48]

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the wave of immigration, the fear was of new ideas, and the distrust of different races and religions developed. It was from this fear, a century later, that Father Coughlin molded his unique mixture of religion and resentment. Out of the economic disaster of the depression came a "frantic search for simple and magic remedies. A sick society listened to political medicine men. . . . It listened to Huey Long with his glittering proposals for sharing the wealth and making every man a King."[49] It listened to Coughlin, Lemke, Smith, and Townsend. For it is in such periods of tension that the demagogues, using "extremist arguments, have been able to play upon the fears and frustrations of millions of Americans."[50]

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[47]Bennett, 350.

[48]Biddle, 1.

[49]Alan Barth, The Loyalty of Free Men (New York: Viking Press, 1951), 27.

[50]Bennett, 298.

In 1950 the fear of communism enveloped the nation: "The struggle for freedom is no longer against an oppressive tyrant of the people. The tyrant is public opinion, the people themselves, who in fear of an imagined peril to their institutions of freedom, demand that they be secured by repressions which may ultimately stifle them."[51] Joseph McCarthy did not manufacture fear; fear was already widespread. By 1949 thirty-three states had adopted "red flag" statutes, in 1948 the American Bar Association had passed a resolution forbidding communists from holding government positions. It wasn't until 1950 that McCarthy made his charges of communists in the state department. The condition that must exist before a demagogue can be successful seems to be a widespread fear among people without an effective, organized channel of expression.

"In recent usage the demagogue is one who tries to lure the people by captivating speech, playing upon their passions, or promising to secure for them some benefit."[52] He is the charismatic leader, using the traditional tools of the rhetorician, who provides a channel for expressing the anxieties and fears of the masses. "Charles Evans Hughes once said that the peril of this nation was not in any foreign foe, but in the people: 'we, the people, are its

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[51]Biddle, 7.

[52]Bryce, 554.

power, its peril, and its hope.'"[53] Recognizing that power and peril are in the hands of the masses who may be molded through identification with a leader and realizing that the demagogue need not use unfamiliar rhetorical techniques; it would seem profitable to pose Charles Lomas' question: "How may we identify and combat demagoguery when it arises in respectable quarters? Indeed, how can we recognize it at all when it is practiced by supposedly responsible leaders with whose basic tenets we agree?"[54]

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[53]Biddle, 254-255.

[54]Charles W. Lomas, "The Rhetoric of Demagoguery," Western Speech (Summer 1961), 161.

CHAPTER III

AGNEW'S RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES

In analyzing the possibility of demagoguery in Vice President Agnew's rhetoric, it appears most appropriate to do so from the framework of Theodore Abel's pattern for political movements: factors which allow for the creation of the movement, and the factors which advance the promotion of the movement. In this regard, this chapter shall first analyze the constituents of the movement: the existence of a primary group relationship, the experience of threats to the group's values, the focus on a common source of dissonance, and the purportment of the movement by a charismatic leader. Once the movement has been initiated the secondary factors of promotion come into play: maintenance of attention, justification of the claim for leadership, and maneuvers to gain a position of ascendency. The analysis, then, must begin with a consideration of Spiro Agnew's attempt to create a primary group relationship.

During the 1968 Presidential campaign, Republican candidates Richard M. Nixon and Spiro T. Agnew found themselves without an identifiable constituency. During the early phases of the campaign, Nixon referred to the "broad

and vital center of America,"[1] and in his Acceptance Speech to the "great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans, the non-shouters, and non-demonstrators."[2] By November of 1969 Nixon had finally called forth his constituency, the great "Silent Majority." "By providing the needed symbolic images, Nixon called the 'Silent Majority' into being. His use of the phrase generated the illusory consciousness of a common identity among many traditionally hostile groups. Previous to this designation there was no 'Silent Majority.'"[3] It is the "great undifferentiated middle"[4] which Spiro Agnew and Richard Nixon have molded into the primary group relationship of Republican constituency. By emphasizing the commonalities of the constituents, Agnew and Nixon provided a sense of "group belongingness, however illusory and shallow."[5]

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[1]Jules Witcover, "Is There Really A New Nixon?" Progressive (March 1968), 17.

[2]"Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech," in Richard M. Nixon, Six Crises (New York: Pyramid Books, 1968), vi.

[3]F.D. Anderson and A. King, "Nixon and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Creating a Constituency," unpublished paper at The University of Arizona, n.d., 18.

[4]Gregory Stone, "Social Stratification in Urban America," American Journal of Sociology (June 1962), 335.

[5]Anderson and King, 18.

Who are the "Silent Majority?" The silent majority is potentially any American who feels he has a traditional institutional anchorage which is threatened: the hardhat, the banker, the teacher, the suburban housewife; the "non-shouters and non-demonstrators." It is a group of Americans nostalgic for the simpler values and life styles. The "forgotten American" views the sixties as a "disastrous montage of pornography, crime, assaults on patriotism, flaming ghettos, marijuana and occupied colleges."[6] Before Nixon and Agnew crystalized their fears, the silent majority felt powerless to remove the threats they received from the young they couldn't understand and the changing society they couldn't control. Into the silent majority's isolation in the Northeast, in the South, in the Heartland and the West stepped what Time has referred to as the "improbable 'mahdi' of Middle America,"[7] Spiro Agnew.

One of the most controversial Americans, Spiro Agnew is despised by large segments of our society: youth, blacks, the "intellectual" and even some of Nixon's advisors who have reportedly accused him of being "the single most divisive and inflamatory individual in government."[8] He is the man who in his first eighteen months of office denounced

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[6]"Spiro Agnew: The King's Taster," Time (November 14, 1969), 17.

[7]Ibid., 17.

[8]Lloyd Shearer, "Judy Agnew," Parade (August 9, 1970), 4.

the New York Times, the Washington Post, Averell Harriman, Edward Kennedy, John Lindsay, Clark Clifford, Senator William Fulbright and the mass media. Yet, in spite of, or perhaps because of these denunciations, Spiro Agnew has become the spokesman for the angry and frightened members of the silent majority.

Kevin Phillips, a former Nixon aide, had compiled a mass of observations and statistics analyzing the American voting patterns. In his book, The Emerging Republican Majority, Phillips presents his profile of the Republican constituency. He concludes that the Republican Party 1968, and the great middle America that supported it, is no longer rooted in the city. Demographic changes have created a nation increasingly represented in suburbia. In the Northeast, Republican support in 1968 came from the urban Catholics and rural non-Yankees (historical allies of the West and South). Twenty-one of the twenty-five Heartland states supported Nixon and Agnew in 1968: the most unified regional support they obtained. It is the Heartland, more than any other region, which is closely bound by a number of attitudinal and sociocultural ties that exemplify the simpler values and life styles to which Nixon and Agnew direct their appeals. Phillips concludes, "Sociologically the Republican Party is becoming much more middle class and much less

establishmentarian than it was during the Nineteen Fifties."[9] The primary group, then, is the silent majority, the great middle America. Spiro Agnew claims to be their spokesman. In a Life interview he stated, "I think I've succeeded in bringing together a silent majority of American people who are drifting aimlessly, wondering about their beliefs in the country."[10]

A. James Richley, in analyzing the role of national leaders, suggests that both practical problems of governance and the maintenance of intellectual and emotional bases for social harmony necessitate a duel leadership role: tribal chief and medicine man. Nixon, aware of the forces operating against him, is trying to fulfill both roles. He perceives a widespread loss of confidence in national values. "This deeper problem rises out of causes that preceded the war on the present inflation. . .Peace and economic stability would probably reduce tensions. . .but they will not by themselves restore a sense of purpose to our floundering body politic."[11] To restore a sense of purpose, to allow the continuance of the silent majority as a primary group relationship, Nixon, or in this case Agnew, must invoke the

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[9]Kevin P. Phillips, The Emerging Republican Majority (New York: Arlington House, 1969), 464.

[10]Brock Bower, "Agnew On The Warpath," Life (October 16, 1970), 30.

[11]A. James Richley, "Elm Street's New White House Power," Fortune (December 1969), 71.

traditional values of the middle American: "hardwork, individual enterprise, orderly behavior, love of country, moral piety, and material progress."[12] The factor, then, which unites the silent majority is the perceived threat to these personal values.

Abel expands this notion of threatened values. "The experience of events as a threat to values must be common to many individuals. This presupposes that events will be operative over a wide area, and the values affected will be prevalent in that area. . . .No movement can occur unless personal values are involved, such as social status, income, and so forth."[13] In this regard, the economic issues now facing the country, inflation and higher taxes, tend to cement the new conservatism of the silent majority. Angry and frightened by what they see happening to their culture, the silent majority is more deeply disturbed by challenges to their value systems:

> Hippies, black power militants, drug addicts, Mafiosi, 'welfare mothers', - and to some extent expense-account executives - are perceived as transgressors against the moral verities that have always been accepted by most Americans. . . .coupled with resentment against blacks and disapproval of unruly dissent are such concerns as the power of organized crime, widespread use of narcotics among the young, nudity and obscenity in the theater and films, an impression of widespread ethical

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[12] Ibid., 82.

[13] Theodore Abel, "The Pattern of a Successful Political Movement," American Sociological Review (June 1937), 349.

> misconduct in high places in government and business, and the air of near anarchy that seems to be creeping over many large cities. [14]

As a consequence of the perceived threat to these values, Phillips indicated that the 1968 voting patterns were determined to a large extent by a range of blue-collar to upper middle-class voters who had grown nostalgic for a slower more easy going America. Nixon clearly appealed to the silent majority's nostalgia when, in his Acceptance Speech, he referred to "a day when life in rural America attracts people to the country rather than driving them away."[15] In this reference Nixon exploited an aesthetic rather than an actual return to the land. This desired aesthetic return to the land involves a slowdown of government spending and social welfare schemes with more attention paid to maintaining peace against outbreaks of violence.

In order to maintain a dynamic political movement, the leader must continually remind the group of the threats to their values. Spiro Agnew faithfully fulfills this requirement. "Armored in the certitudes of middle-class values,"[16] he speaks with the authentic voice of Americans whose values are threatened. In a typical strategy to

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[14] Richley, 73.

[15] Nixon, xiv.

[16] "Spiro Agnew: The King's Taster," 17.

identify himself with the silent majority, Agnew appeals to the Puritan ethic: "The disease of our times is an artificial and masochistic sophistication - the vague uneasiness that our values are false, that there is something wrong with being patriotic, honest, moral and hard working."[17] But a general strategy of association which merely alludes to questioned values is not sufficient to maintain the arousal of the group. The demagogue must directly advance a conspiracy theory which is in play against his followers. In his address at a Republican gathering in Montpelier on October 11, 1969, Agnew initiated this theme. "The man who believes in God and country, hard work and honest opportunity, is denounced for his archaic views. . .The time has come to call a halt to this spiritual Theater of the Absurd, to examine the motivation of the authors of the absurdity and challenge the star players in the cast."[18] Agnew uses a robust rhetoric, and as Lucas contends, though his living-room language may be deplored as simplistic nonsense by many, it is regarded as common sense by the middle American.[19]

The beginning of Agnew's truly controversial rhetoric was a speech delivered October 19, 1969, at a citizens

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[17]"Agnew Finds A Role," Newsweek (November 17, 1969), 41.

[18]Ibid., 40.

[19]Jim G. Lucas, Agnew: Profile in Conflict (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 109.

testimonial dinner in New Orleans. Agnew, like many of the silent majority, appeared to have been upset by the October 15, 1969 war moratorium. His explanation of the causes of the moratorium and his description of its participants, adequately reflected a group view tired of demonstrations and resentful of youth's disruptions. Agnew characterized the student demonstrators as elements who go to college "to proclaim rather than learn,"[20] and consequently the moratorium was "an emotional purgative for those who feel the need to cleanse themselves of their lack of ability to offer a constructive solution to the problem."[21]

The speech brought a flood of criticism from the press and major political figures. It was expected that Agnew would retract his denunciations of youth and "try to make peace with the beautiful people."[22] But Agnew continued his attack against all who challenged the "American" values. The unruly demonstrators on college campuses, and the immediate participation of college students in a protest against government policy tended to undermine the results and hence the prestige of education. The moratorium became a clear threat to the value of education. Agnew continued to speak,

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[20]Marjorie Hunter, "Agnew Says 'Effete Snobs' Incited War Moratorium," New York Times (October 20, 1969), 12.

[21]Ibid., 12.

[22]Lucas, 117.

"words and phrases the silent majority. . . .took as their own because he said what they believed. 'Will citizens refuse to be led by a series of Judas goats down the tortuous paths of illusion and self destruction?'"[23]

College students and anti-war protestors constantly came under attack. They were alternately described as something "sick and rancid,"[24] "a minority of pushy youngsters and middle-aged malcontents" who think they know how "to run the country,"[25] and as "ideological eunuchs,"[26] The silent majority could not sit back and ignore the threat posed by these "self-appointed vigilantes."[27] "It is time to stop dignifying the immature actions of arrogant, reckless, inexperienced elements within our society."[28]

But the challenge to the prestige of education is not the only value challenged by the protestors. Agnew extends

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[23] Ibid., 117.

[24] "President Is Proud of Agnew's Role," New York Times October 31, 1969), 1.

[25] John Osborne, "Spiro Agnew's Mission," New Republic (November 15, 1969), 20.

[26] "President is Proud of Agnew's Role," 1.

[27] "Campus Reaction Feared by Agnew," New York Times (May 3, 1969), 22.

[28] President is Proud of Agnew's Role," 1.

his disdain to the whole concept of protest: protest destroys the peace and security, the freedom from violence sought by his followers:

> Protest is generally negative in content. . . .It does not offer constructive alternatives and it is not conducive to creating the thoughtful atmosphere where positive answers may be formulated.
>
> Over the past few years we have seen protest become a way of life. This is negativism in its quintessence.
>
> Still, the greatest problem with protest is its open invitation to exploitation. . . .We are foolish not to recognize that it can be used by far more malevolent men to foster far more nefarious goals. I need only rest my case upon the short and turbulent life of the Weimar Republic to prove this point. 29

Coughlin, Long and McCarthy were all accused of demagoguery because they pandered to the prejudices of their audience and played upon their fears and ignorance. It would seem plausible that Agnew's proclamations of middle America's threatened values, similarly, are dependent upon demagogic techniques.

As Senator McCarthy was able to combine mass appeals with specific class and regional appeals in his 1950 crusades so too is Spiro Agnew able to use both the general appeals (preservation of peace and order), and specific regional appeals. While the federal government, and Spiro Agnew as its representative, supports a policy of racial integration,

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[29]Spiro Agnew, "I Did It On My Own," Life (November 28, 1969), 33.

Agnew has been able to modify his stance to appeal to the Southern vote. In a speech to the Southern Governors' Conference in Williamsburg, Agnew remarked: "Now this Administration favors integration, but not mandatory and forced, artificially contrived social acceptance. . .I mean that I'm against busing those children to other neighborhoods simply to achieve an integrated status of a larger geographical entity."[30] Agnew appears to have no qualms about playing to the peculiar values and prejudices of his audience.

In emphasizing the challenge to middle America's values, Agnew employs what Abel refers to as focus upon a common source. "When different events are experienced as affecting personal and social values the dissatisfaction and opposition resulting therefrom must be capable of being focused upon some object that can be regarded as the 'common source' of the disturbing events."[31] In other words, Agnew employs scapegoats and devil figures in attributing the cause of our social ills. The student protestors are not just sick and pushy youngsters, they are "an effete corp of impudent snobs who characterize themselves as intellectuals,"[32] and they are "taking the law into their own

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[30]"Agnew Finds A Role," 41.

[31]Abel, 349.

[32]Hunter, 1.

hands."[33] ". . .their tantrums are insidiously destroying the fabric of American life."[34] This constitutional republic "cannot forever withstand continual carnival on the streets of its cities and the campuses of the Nation."[35] The changing values of the sixties, then, are not nebulous intangible forces; the change the silent majority fears can be attributed to the young. The implicit suggestion is that if Agnew can control these "hardcore dissidents and professional anarchists,"[36] the silent majority's values will no longer be threatened. The major devil figure, however, has come to be not the young militant, but the press: that "tiny fraternity of privileged men elected by no one and enjoying a monopoly sanctioned and licensed by Government,". . ."a small group of men, numbering perhaps no more than a dozen" who "decide what 40 to 50 million Americans will learn of the day's events in the nation and in the world."[37] The press is a "little group of men who not only enjoy the right of instant rebuttal to every Presidential address, but more importantly, wield a free hand in selecting, presenting and

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[33]"Campus Reaction Feared by Agnew," 22.

[34]"President Is Proud of Agnew's Role," 1.

[35]"Campus reaction Feared by Agnew," 22.

[36]"President Is Proud of Agnew's Role," 1.

[37]"Transcript of Address by Agnew Extending Criticism of the News Coverage to the Press," New York Times (November 21, 1969), 22.

interpreting the great issues of our Nation."[38] Agnew admonishes the press for their "instant analysis and querulous criticism."[39] Rather than playing fair, the press colors the President's remarks to the nation to such a degree that the President of the United States is no longer able to communicate with his people. "The views of the majority of this fraternity do not - and I repeat, not - represent the views of Americans."[40] Commentators are accused of slander, of creating false political pictures and of elevating the "minority who specialize in attacking the United States, its institutions and its citizens."[41]

The press, naturally, responded to the harsh criticism Agnew had leveled in his Des Moines speech to the Midwest Regional Republican Meeting. Julian Goodman of NBC commented: "Vice President Agnew's attack on television news is an appeal to prejudice."[42] Thomas P. V. Hoving, chairman of the National Citizen's Committee for Broadcasting, had these remarks, "Agnew's disgraceful attack tonight against

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[38] Ibid., 22.

[39] Ibid., 22.

[40] Ibid., 22.

[41] Spiro Agnew, Statewide Republican dinner, Columbia, South Carolina, April 24, 1970 in Collected Speeches of Spiro Agnew (New York: Audubon Films, 1971), 128.

[42] "TV Networks' Response to Agnew," New York Times (November 14, 1969), 24.

network television news officials leads us an a nation into an ugly era of the most fearsome suppression and intimidation. Agnew's terrible and fraudulent evaluation is the most shocking use ever of political power against all of the people whom he and his running mates were ostensibly elected to serve last November."[43]

A week later, November 20, 1969, in Montgomery, Agnew disclaimed any attempt at government censorship. "I'm opposed to censorship of television, of the press in any form . . .I'm raising these questions so that the American people will become aware of - and think of the implications of - the growing monopoly that involves the voices of public opinion, on which we all depend for our knowledge and for the basis of our views."[44] It is questionable whether Agnew even needed to qualify his Des Moines rhetoric, for in giving the public a sacrificial lamb, the silent majority was able to focus their anxiety on the press. As Neumann's theory suggests, the masses were able to identify their anxieties with certain persons (the press) who conspired to create their tensions. If the modern world of change is confusing to the silent majority, it is because the press intentionally makes

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[43]Paul L. Montgomery, "3 Networks Reply to Agnew Attack," New York Times (November 14, 1969), 24.

[44]"Transcript of Address by Agnew Extending Criticism of News Coverage to the Press," 22.

it so.

Neumann's suggestion that the group transfers some of its anxieties through its identification with a leader is similar to Abel's notion of the role of the charismatic leader. Abel posits that the movement's ideology must be "purported by a 'charismatic' leader - to use Max Weber's terminology -[45] one who can induce in his followers an identification with the ideology as a cause worth fighting and dying for."[46]

Robert Curran contends that Spiro Agnew is viewed by his constituents as a charismatic spokesman. Middle America looks through its suburban windows and sees in the meticulous Agnew, with his custom tailored clothes, a reflection of themselves.[47] Yet the qualities that define the charismatic leader are illusory. Boorstin, rather cynically, would hold that in our twentieth century pursuit of illusion we've created a new marketable modern hero whose mass production is characterized by a new category of human emptiness.[48] McLuhan similarly suggests that what is crucial is

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[45] Abel, 350.

[46] Robert Curran, Spiro Agnew: Spokesman for America (New York: Lancer, 1970), 103.

[47] Joe McGinniss, The Selling of the President 1968 (New York: Trident Press, 1968), 22.

[48] Ibid., 21.

not really the issue under question, but the image presented.[49] Regardless of what it takes to concoct a successful image, one Time analyst suggests that Spiro Agnew seems to exude this successful image as far as the silent majority is concerned.[50] At a White House staff meeting October 27, 1969, James Keough reported on Omaha's reaction to Agnew. "It astonishes me, the strength of this pro-Agnew thing. I sensed the feeling of the people who felt that the Vice President was saying what they would like to say."[51] Harry Dent presented similar findings from Agnew's California audiences. He concluded that Agnew was saying the kind of things that the silent majority felt they hadn't been hearing often enough.[52]

Agnew constantly tries to identify himself as a mediator between his constituency and the earthy utopia they long for. "The reason I spoke out was because, like the great silent majority, I had had enough. I had endured the didactic inadequacies of the garrulous in silence, hoping for the best but witnessing the worst for many months. And because I am an elected official, I felt I owed it to those

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[49] Ibid., 21.

[50] "Spiro Agnew: The King's Taster," 17.

[51] Osborne, 17.

[52] Ibid., 17

I serve to speak the truth."[53] For the middle American, Agnew is his spokesman. When Agnew came under attack for his remarks he replied, "Lately you have been exposed to a great deal of public comment about Vice Presidential rhetoric and how I should cool it. The President is getting this advice from many quarters. . .some of them inside the government. But mostly it has come from persons who have been in the target area of some of my speeches.:[54] The possibility that the undesirable elements in society might silence their hero only further entrenched the silent majority behind Agnew. The Vice President is adamant in his desire to remain their leader:

> I have an obligation to all people of the United States to call things as I see them, and I have an obligation to the President to support his actions in the best manner that I can. I choose my words, and I set the tone of my speeches. As he said at his recent press conference, I am responsible for what I say. And I intend to be heard above the din even if it means raising my voice. [55]

What is Mr. Agnew's goal? Columnist William S. White wrote that he has cut out for himself a role as the pre-eminent defender of the country's traditional values of patriotism and respect for the carefully constituted authority."[56] Spiro Agnew has firmly entrenched himself as the spokesman for the world the silent majority seeks.

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[53] Curran, 34.

[54] Ibid., 8.

[55] Ibid., 14.

[56] "Agnew Finds A Role," 39.

One can easily see how Spiro Agnew employed traditional factors to initiate his political movement, a broader Republican constituency. Agnew gave the great middle America a sense of group belonging; he reinforced the silent majority's fear that their values were being challenged; he focused the tensions of the group upon scapegoats and devil figures and he allowed the forgotten American to transfer some of his anxiety to his self-sacrificing leader.

Although some of the characteristics of demagoguery can be seen in the initiation of Agnew's political movement, it is in the propagation of this movement that Agnew has most notably come under attack as a practitioner of demagoguery. Abel's pattern identifies three facets of the promotion of a movement: the maintenance of attention, the justification of the claim for leadership, and the maneuvers to gain a position of ascendency. In analyzing these secondary techniques of promotion (i.e., the strategies of identification) it is important to recall the techniques Lomas contends are hallmarks of the practitioner of demagoguery: oversimplification; pseudo-reasoning; emotionalism; and loaded language. In describing the demagogue Lomas contends, "He does not need to invent new techniques; he merely distorts rhetorical devices taught by rhetoricians . . .He substitutes oversimplification for simplicity and directness, bogus evidence for genuine facts, pseudo-reasoning for honest argument, emotionalism for factually based

emotional appeal, and loaded language for colorful language."[57] Abel maintains that the promotion of an ideology first requires the continual promotion of community attention via constant dramatic exposure. Agnew has maintained attention through his controversial rhetoric. What Spiro Agnew once described at a press conference as his "punchy language" has made him one of America's most controversial rhetors, and gained him ardent friends along with fierce enemies. The hallmark of his rhetoric is the robust, outspoken, unqualified tirade characterized by his attack on the press. His speeches stylistically include metaphor, alliteration, unusual vocabulary, and "blunt, short, punchy, quotable phrases."[58] Newsweek asserts that Agnew is more notable for his style than substance, ". . . it is his manner that has made his mark in Washington and kindled the bonfires of controversy around him. By nature and by choice, Spiro Agnew is blunt, provocative, assertive and proud."[59]

The controversy over his rhetoric began with Agnew's early bloopers: "fat Jap," "Polacks," calling Humphrey "soft on Communism" and asserting "if you've seen one slum you've seen them all."[60] But the development of his heady invective

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[57]Charles W. Lomas, The Agitator in the American Society (Trenton: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968), 19.

[58]Kathleen Edgerton Kendall, "New Books In Review," Quarterly Journal of Speech (February 1971), 116.

[59]"Agnew Finds A Role," 40.

[60]Ibid., 39.

from the time he took office to late 1969 with his attacks on the press and major political figures led South Dakota Senator George McGovern to accuse the Vice President of "speaking like Senator Joe McCarthy in the 1950's."[61]

Why has Agnew continued his invective after these reactions? "For one thing he admits outspokenness is the only way a Vice President can hope to get attention. 'The Vice Presidency,' he remarked in his office last week, 'is sort of an ancillary job. You're not in the mainstream. . . You have to use strong language to get attention of the sort that lands you on page one.'"[62] But Spiro Agnew seems to be using more than just heady invective leavened with wit. His colorful language has tended to take on the characteristics of loaded language. Lomas contends that one distinction between the rhetorician and the demagogue lies in the distinction between colorful language and loaded language. "The rhetorician praises vivid and colorful language to hold the attention of the audiences. The demagogue overloads his speeches with evocative words. Rhetoricians have long accepted humor, satire and irony as legitimate devices to sharpen ideas developed logically. Demagogues substitute these devices for

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[61] Ibid., 38.

[62] Ibid., 40.

logical structure."[63] An excerpt from Agnew's October 30, 1969 speech in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, illustrating the use of loaded language, clearly demonstrates his shorthand arguments. "Arrogant, reckless, inexperienced. . .self-righteous, guilty of history's worst atrocities. . .glib, activist element. . .avowed anarchists and communists. . . sick and rancid. . .vultures. . .merchants of hate. . . parasites of passion. . .Judas goats. . .home grown menace."[64]

The opposite interpretation of Agnew's rhetoric is offered by Frank S. Meyer who supports his use of invective and adamantly disclaims its accused demagogic tendencies:

> His language has been sharp and aggressive, a quality I welcome; but it has not been insidious and demagogic. 'Snob,' 'effete,' 'impudent' are descriptive epithets - arguable and subject to confirmation or confutation. They are different from that truly demagogic language with which Mr. Agnew's rhetoric has been compared . . .epithets like 'pointy heads' and sneers at briefcases. These are neither arguable or confutable.
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> There is the widest difference between language which is demagogic and language which, though it ignores the rules of the liberal game, speaks, however strongly, directly to reality. [65]

Although Meyer attempts to defend Agnew's rhetoric with an explanation of the difference between his invective and demagogic illusion of proof, it is difficult to apply this

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[63] Lomas, 166.

[64] Osborne, 20.

[65] Frank S. Meyer, "Storm Over Agnew," National Review (December 2, 1969), 1220.

distinction to the Vice President. The critic wonders how an individual can confute attacks such as "parasites of passion" or "Judas goat." For that matter, how specifically can one refute the label "an effete corp of impudent snobs?"

Lomas further suggests that loaded language may similarly give rise to name calling as a substitute to negative ethical persuasion. Figurative analogies may become substitutes for argument, and meaningless quotations may become substitutes for legitimate argument from authority.[66] What besides name calling can one term Agnew's assertion that Senator Fulbright lies in his teeth or that Senator Goodell was "the Christine Jorgenson of the Republican Party?"[67]

Closely alligned with the demagogue's use of loaded language is his reliance on emotionalism rather than factually based emotional appeals. The demagogue tends to emphasize emotional reactions at the expense of thought. "He plays upon the traditional fears and utilizes words which evoke conditioned emotional responses. At best he engages in a pseudo-reasoning process designed to stir up fear and hate and prevent rational discussion at all costs."[68] This characteristic emotionalism is evident in Agnew's adjectives for student demonstrators, in his association of "anarchists

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[66] Lomas, 166.

[67] Allan L. Otten, "Same Old Spiro," Wall Street Journal (February 18, 1971), 17.

[68] Lomas, 165.

and communists" with the moratorium protestors, and in the results he predicts if the protestors aren't silenced. "Will we stop the wilderness now, before the witch-hunting and repression that are all too inevitable begin?"[69] Agnew, in this instance, is clearly playing upon the fears of his audience. The Rev. Richard Fernandez, director of one active anti-war group, Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, called Mr. Agnew's statements "violence-baiting and Red-baiting."[70] Likewise, one questions the scare tactics of Agnew's statement of his Des Moines audience, "The United States swapped some of the greatest military concessions in the history of warfare for an enemy agreement on the shape of a bargaining table."[71] Herbert Thompson, the Vice President's Press Secretary wasn't sure what concessions Agnew had in mind; neither was E. W. Kenworthy the New York Times analyst.[72] But the inclusion of the phrase in his remarks must surely have affected his audience. Regardless of his motives, Agnew's strategy aligns with the demagogue in his use of emotionalism. In reference to the Vice President's October 30, 1969 address, the Washington Star, "which often backs the Administration, said Mr. Agnew's 'strategem of

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[69]"President Is Proud of Agnew's Role," 1.

[70]Ibid., 25.

[71]"Transcript of Address by Agnew Extending Criticism of News Coverage to the Press," 22.

[72]E.W. Kenworthy, "Agnew Says TV Networks are Distorting the News," New York Times (November 14, 1969), 1.

personal hysteria is, to put it as charitably as possible, not what anybody needs right now.'"[73]

The characteristics of simplicity and directness have traditionally been the rhetoricians requirement for effective style. Oversimplification rather than simplicity and directness is the third characteristic Lomas sees in the demagogue. "The demagogue also believes in simplicity, but he carries it to absurdity; he oversimplifies and, as a result, his audience understand him well. He seems to be stating merely the obvious, but in reality he is substituting prejudice and half-truths for fact."[74] In his 1969 speech to Southern Governors' Conference Agnew contended, "I mean if people live in a neighborhood, they're entitled to be associated together."[75] No one would disagree with the Vice President's statement, but clearly this does not refute the real argument in the busing proposals. In using this oversimplified retort to normally valid arguments for school integration, Agnew uses the prejudices of his audience to make his generalizations meaningfully clear. Agnew oversimplifies the rejection of Haynsworth as a Chief Justice when he addresses a statewide Republican dinner at Columbia, South Carolina. "Justice Clement Haynsworth would have made

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[73]"Agnew's Language and the Storm it Causes," US News and World Report (November 17, 1969), 19.

[74]Lomas, 163.

[75]"Agnew Finds A Role," 41.

it in a breeze and South Carolina would have contributed an outstanding Justice tc the Supreme Court. Instead he went down to defeat on the most nebulous set of trumped-up charges ever contrived by the labor and civil rights lobbies and their allies in the new profession."[76] "It is an unfortunate fact that one of the greatest weapons of the demagogue is that of finding a simple, plausible half-truth, of phrasing it in plain language, and of offering it as the perfect answer to perplexing problems which honest men are unable to solve."[77] Time asserts, "A strong tendency to verbal excess reflects the essential Agnew. He sees things in black and white, and has an absolute passion for oversimplification."[78] In a speech in Baltimore, June 8, 1969, he clearly illustrates his oversimplification of substantial complaints against our present values. "There are those who charge that our society is corrupt because it is prosperous; guilty because it protects the majority; hypocritical because it specifies minimum moral standards. This is the politics of despair. . .Its focus is masochistic introspection tainted by unwarranted guilt."[79] This appraisal leaves the critic uncertain as to the real evil, the

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[76]Sprio Agnew, Statewide Republican dinner Columbia, 128.

[77]Lomas, 163.

[78]"Spiro Agnew: The King's Taster," 19.

[79]"Agnew Finds A Role," 41.

introspection made by some individuals, the conclusions arrived at, or the identification of some severe national double standards.

Agnew's oversimplification is carefully camouflaged to appear proper. Kathleen Kendall of State University of New York, Albany advances this notion. "When Agnew does make a questionable statement, the listener needs some sophistication to detect the error, for the errors are ones of definition and logic rather than fact."[80] William F. Buckley, Jr. extends this argument when he analyzes Agnew's use of the phrase "ideological eunuchs." "Now that kind of growling sounds awfully good grunt-wise. But it is spectacularly maladroit. The people Agnew is talking about are anything but eunuchs on the ideological scale. An ideological eunuch was, say Eisenhower, or the Vicar of Bray. Never the protestors, who are eunuchs only if Joan of Arc was an ideological eunuch."[81]

Another Agnew fallacy is a kind of "guilt by proximity."[82] In discussing the moratorium he refers to those who demonstrate in the streets. Several sentences later he makes reference to "anarchists and communists who detest everything about this country and want to destroy it."[83] Though Agnew

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[80]Kendall, 116.

[81]William F. Buckley, Jr., "The Role of Agnew," National Review (December 16, 1969), 1286.

[82]Kendall, 116.

[83]Hunter, 1.

never specifically says the protestors and communists are one in the same, the connection is clearly implied for the audience.

A third fallacy is a kind of illusion of proof, a bogus documentation. Barnet Baskerville suggests that this technique is a distinct refinement in demagoguery. The American audience, unwilling to accept the glittering generalities of the propagandist, will accept the illusion of proof.[84] "The demagogue makes facts an end in themselves and seeks to impress or even overwhelm his audience with a mass of data without bothering to show its accuracy, its relevance, or the validity of the inference drawn from it."[85] Pseudo-reasoning replaces honest argument, bogus evidence replaces genuine facts.

But the demagogue's methods are not wholly false, they resemble legitimate rhetorical modes and are interspersed with acceptable argument. The problem arises when the listener agrees with the speaker's views: when this occurs, "the distortion is almost certain to escape unnoticed."[86] Mr. Agnew's use of this technique again seems evident. In condemning the moratorium demonstrations he said that the

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[84]Barnet Baskerville, "Joe McCarthy, Brief-Case Demagogue," Today's Speech (September 1934), 72.

[85]Lomas, 164.

[86]Ibid., 164.

purpose of the demonstration was "fundamentally unsound," and did not "merit my approval or even my silence."[87] In a New York Times editorial, Tom Wicker analyzes the subtleties of this position. "This is to say that unless he agrees with the purpose of the dissent he could not approve the dissent itself, a view that negates the very idea of dissent."[88]

Likewise, in his attack on the press, Agnew demonstrates non-sequitor falacies. Mr. Wicker again provides an initial analysis. "He couched his argument in direct political attack on those who differed with Mr. Nixon's November 3 speech on Vietnam, advancing a puerile conspiracy theory on how news analysis is presented on T.V., and then came close to claiming immunity from criticism for Presidential utterances."[89] Hahn and Gonchar, "Media Controversy, Democracy and Spiro T. Agnew: The Silent Majority Finds Its Voice," expands Wicker's analysis.[90] Agnew critizes the press for its "instant analysis." Yet, Hahn and Gonchar pose

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[87]Hunter, 1.

[88]Tom Wicker, "In the Nation: Dr. Agnew's Patent Medicines," New York Times (November 16, 1969), E-13.

[89]Ibid., E-13.

[90]Dan F. Hahn and Ruth M. Gonchar, "Media Controversy, Democracy and Spiro T. Agnew: The Silent Majority Finds Its Voice," paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention in New Orleans, 1970, 6.

several questions: since the address was released to the press an hour before it was given and there was a special White House briefing, was the analysis instant? The phrase itself conjures up an image of unprepared analysts: in the ABC analysis team, which Agnew singled out for special condemnation, William Lawrence has been a White House correspondent for nearly twenty years; John Scali, around almost as long, is a specialist in State Department affairs, and Averell Harriman was chief negotiator for the Paris Peace Conference.[91]

Hahn and Gonchar enumerate several other inconsistencies in the Vice President's attack on the media. Agnew contends that the media controls public opinion through the selective analysis in which the press engages. Later in the same speech he emphasizes that the views of the press fraternity did not represent the views of Americans and this is why "such a gulf existed between how the nation received the President's address and how the networks reviewed it."[92] Mr. Agnew cannot have it both ways. "The media cannot both control public opinion and be out of step with it."[93] Hugh Sidney concludes that Spiro Agnew's rhetoric has "turned into a soulless howling very near to that of the New Left,

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[91] Ibid., 6.

[92] "Transcript of Address by Agnew Criticizing Television on its Coverage," 24.

[93] Hahn and Gonchar, 3.

the very villain Agnew was denouncing."[94]

Lomas suggested that legitimate argument can be interspersed with fallacious reasoning. One such instance is Agnew's concern that ". . .the American people should be made aware of the trend toward the monopolization of the great public information vehicles. . ."[95] Agnew distorts this into a partisan political attack. "He criticized the liberal New York Times, which is outsold by 2-1 margin in the New York market by the conservative Daily News, a Hearst paper. . .He did not mention the Hearst empire, a Nixon stronghold."[96]

Selective gleaning of facts and near-facts allows Agnew's argument to exude the illusion of proof. In maintaining attention, then, Agnew clearly appears to have substituted heat for light and emotion for thought. Characteristically, Agnew has neither made his appeals totally false, nor are they totally true. Each, however, contains a kernel of truth, however distorted that kernel may be.

Having maintained his audience's attention through a colorful rhetoric, having achieved a position of ascendancy

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[94]Hugh Sidey, "A Cold Shadow on the Capital," Life (December 11, 1970), 4.

[95]"Transcript of Address by Agnew Criticizing Television on its Coverage," 24.

[96]Hahn and Gonchar, 5.

through a careful justification of his role as spokesman, and having won the confidence and trust of his audience through outspoken defenses of their values, Agnew achieves the promotion of his ideology. He is the protector of the silent majority's values and rights to a simpler life style; he is the spokesman who will not be silenced; he is the demagogic savior of the forgotten Americans.

CHAPTER IV

AN EVALUATION OF THE CHARGES

The universal patterns of demagoguery were discussed in Chapter II: the demagogue was seen as a self-serving leader who distorts acceptable rhetorical techniques. Agnew's rhetoric was analyzed in Chapter III in terms of Abel's critical pattern for evaluating political movements. The primary and secondary factors of creation and promotion of a movement were compared with Agnew's attempts to create and promote a constituency. Finally, it was determined that the rhetoric of Spiro Agnew, with its constant use of pseudo-reasoning, emotionalism, oversimplification, illusion of proof loades language and plays upon the fears and prejudices of its listeners, marks the Vice President as a practitioner of demagoguery. But the man who employs demagogic techniques in the promotion of a cause and an Adolph Hitler are not necessarily one and the same. That quality which distinguishes the demagogue from the practitioner of demagoguery is intention. If the leader's intention is merely to serve his self-interest, he is a demagogue. Therefore, if the tactics Agnew has ployed are designed merely to serve his self-interest regardless of the consequences to the silent majority, then the charges that Agnew is a demagogue must hold. The

crucial distinction which must yet be made calls for the determination of whether or not Agnew's actions are self-serving and hence the actions of a demagogue.

This chapter shall seek to examine the motives behind the Vice President's controversial rhetoric. In this regard, two lines of analysis shall be pursued. The first is that advanced by Joe McGinniss: the Agnew rhetoric was a strategic ploy simply to gain, and maintain in 1972, the Republican control of the Presidency. The second means of viewing Agnew's actions has been purported by Frank S. Meyer and others, including the Vice President himself. This rationale suggests that Agnew has always been an outspoken champion for individual rights and thus has the silent majority's interests at heart in his rhetorical escapades. The critic must begin by viewing the Agnew rhetoric as a series of carefully designed self-serving strategies.

Only after gaining a perspective on the situation facing Richard M. Nixon in 1968 can the critic discover the motives which influenced middle America's spokesman. It would not be unfair to suggest that the American electorate still saw Nixon as the man who in 1960 truly did become a looser. If Nixon were to become a candidate in 1968 he had to change the image he conveyed. "It would have to be something new; not this scarred, discarded figure from their

past."[1] In order to change his image, Nixon had to come across as having matured into a man capable of Presidential leadership.

Buffon contends that style is the man.[2] David Halberstram sees it as unfortunate for Richard Milhouse Nixon that style is not an asset. Never known for his rhetoric, Nixon combines the worst of the Whittier Debating Society exposition with "banal, spongy, interlocking cliches," not even quite commonplace.[3] In a carefully staged and rehearsed television broadcast Nixon's blandness might be disquised. But much more than cosmetics and carefully selected interview panels was needed if Nixon hoped to retain Republican control through the 1972 elections. Even if Nixon could overcome his style, he could not succeed while saying the things Agnew does:

> If Nixon were to say the things Agnew does, he would disaffect tremendously powerful elements in America-organized labor, the communications media, the blacks. He would create a great confrontation.

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[1]Joe McGinniss, The Selling of the President 1968 (New York: Trident Press, 1968), 27.

[2]Discours sur le Style, trans. Lane Cooper, in The Art of the Writer, arr. and adapted by Lane Cooper (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press), 153-154.

[3]David Halberstram, "American Notes: Mr. Nixon Meets the Language," Harpers (July 1970), p.30.

> Heartland America feels that Nixon is really saying the same thing as Agnew though he cannot as President be saying these things. So Nixon has it both ways. Through Spiro Agnew the word gets out to this segment of America that it has not been betrayed. [4]

Agnew's rhetoric works for Nixon in two ways: it tells middle America that the Republican Party supports her (whether it does or not); and it takes the light off the essentially non-descript Nixon.[5] If the Agnew rhetoric creates too much controversy Nixon can correct Agnew or the media can pass the blame off on Agnew's lack of political expertise. Nixon, throughout any criticism, theoretically, remains unscratched. "Nixon's rhetorical strategy in this regard is increasingly clear: a division of labor in which Nixon can keep mass attention rivited upon himself as the only authentic voice, while Agnew keeps their attention so fastened upon the enemy that they will hardly notice the lack of a positive program of constructive labor."[6] If the Agnew rhetoric is a diversionary tactic to keep the silent majority unaware of a lack of action on their behalf, the Vice President's ploys can be deemed self-serving.

But, covering the "Old Nixon" image is not the only motive that can be seen in Nixon's choice of Agnew as his

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[4]"Agnew Finds A Role," Newsweek (November 17, 1969), 42.

[5]Richard M. Nixon, "Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech," in Six Crises (New York: Pyramid Books, 1968), xiv

[6]F.D. Anderson and A. King, "Nixon and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Creating a Constituency," unpublished paper at the University of Arizona, n.d., 30.

running mate. Nixon was keenly aware of the need to avoid a party split like that which had nearly destroyed the Republican Party in 1964. This concern is partially demonstrated in Nixon's stance on the issues. Nixon could have co-opted more of the Wallace vote had he chosen to "rally aberrant multitudes of 1964 Goldwater backers by sounding the anti-Great Society clarion which had so successfully served as a fulcrum of re-allignment in the 1966 off-year elections."[7] But, in a desire to avoid divisiveness and maintain the unity of his silent majority, Nixon maintained a mild campaign stance. Nixon was aware that it was the arm twisting and sectional appeals which had split the party in sixty-four. During the early part of the campaign he commented, "there was, shall we say, some persuasive arm twisting by all sides in order to get people to commit. Now I'm telling my campaign operators. . .we will persuade by our example, not by our force."[8] Nixon followed this policy throughout the campaign, "avoiding anything which might re-open the ideological wounds of 1964."[9]

There was, however, one natural split within the party

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[7]Kevin P. Phillips, The Emerging Republican Majority (New York: Arlington House, 1969), 35.

[8]Relman Morin, The Associated Press Story of Election 1968 (New York: Pocket Books, 1969), 52

[9]Ibid., 52

which the Nixon image could not hope to combat: the South was splitting away from the mainstream of both major parties in favor of George Wallace. In what appeared to have been an obvious attempt to woo the South, Spiro Agnew was selected to serve as Nixon's running mate. Len Garment, one of the key figures on the Nixon campaign staff, put forth the rationale for choosing Agnew. "Look, we can't shape events. All we can do is react. If it had not been for Wallace looking so strong, for instance, the choice of a Vice President probably would have been different. All that was on our part was a reaction, not some burning desire to make Agnew a national figure."[10] Nixon is a consummate politician, and it was not hard for him to realize that unless the South was placated, the Republicans would be faced with another Wallace movement in seventy-two. The logical way to prevent this potentially devastating force in seventy-two was to pick a candidate who would please the South. Pleasing the South means pleasing Strom Thurmond, a former Democrat turned Republican who represents the desired swing of Southern support for the Republican Party. Thurmond's choice of John Tower of Texas might have split the Northeastern vote. It was hoped that Agnew's governorship of a border state, and his strong stance on law and order would serve as a

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[10]McGinniss, 149.

compromise. A closer look at the Southern constituency makes this tactic clear. Wallace's support came mostly from poor whites who had broken from the Democratic Party and lined up against the newly enfranchised Negroes. Throughout the South, many whites feared that the Democratic Party was becoming the Negro Party. As long as this white alienation persists, the Wallace movement will persist. Agnew had to first co-opt Wallace's position and then persuade the South that a third party would split their position and advance the status of the "Negro" Democratic Party. If it is assumed that Nixon was pursuing a Southern strategy, Agnew was a distinct asset. A Gallup Poll released after Agnew accepted the secondary position on the Republican ticket revealed that Agnew's popularity in the South closely rivaled that of Wallace: 25% to 28%.

Condemning Nixon's probable intent does not of itself prove Agnew's cooperation. If one has any doubts, however, Agnew's record of speaking engagements after the Inauguration verified the speculation. Of the first twenty-five speeches he made, nine were delivered in the South; and significantly, it was in New Orleans and Jackson that "Agnew detonated his biggest rhetorical bangalores to date."[11] The

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[11]"Spiro Agnew: The King's Taster," Time November 14, 1969), 18.

National Review suggested that these Agnew forays against the militants and the New Left were designated to take the wind of out Wallace's sails and to assure the South that its political concerns were adequately expressed by Nixon-Agnew Republicanism.[12] In his Jackson speech Agnew denies any Southern strategy and then proceeds to advance this theory:

> Much has been made of the Nixon Administration's attitude toward the Southern states - mostly by the Northeastern liberal community. They've accused us of something they call "The Southern Strategy." We have no Southern Strategy. We do have a conviction that the people of the United States, irrespective of their point of geographical residence, have an inherent right to be treated evenhandedly. For too long the South has been the punching bag for those who characterize themselves as liberal intellectuals. They are visceral not intellectual. . .they are constantly demonstrating the antithesis of intelligence.[13]

Wallace warned against "bearded anarchists" and "left-wing theoreticians;"[14] but he could not compete with the verbal totalism of Spiro Agnew: "bearded anarchists" became "vultures who sit in trees and watch lions battle, knowing that win, loose, or draw, they will be fed."[15] Agnew much

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[12]"Operation Spiro," National Review (December 16, 1969), 1255.

[13]Robert Curran, Spiro Agnew: Spokesman for America (New York: Lancer, 1970), 108-109.

[14]Morin, 81.

[15]President is Proud of Agnew's Role," New York Times (October 31, 1969), 22.

more dramatically characterized the "left-wing theoretician" as "an effete corp of impudent snobs." Agnew's demagogic techniques in Jackson, New Orleans and elsewhere seem clearly to have been designated to woo the South into thinking Nixon would solve their maladies.

A final motive behind the Agnew rhetoric might have been the result of Nixon's difficulties with the press. Nixon realized that he was never going to be popular with the press; so rather than try to make friends with his enemies, he decided to go after them. If he were to maintain his new image someone would have to do the footwork for him. Agnew typified Nixon's silent majority: devoted to the old ideals of patriotism and democracy, and slightly suspicious of the liberal press. Agnew made it clear that quite a few people didn't like the press, and in Agnew's mind justifiably so. The Vice President's tirades against the press and his insinuations that something dishonest characterized the news analysts simply confirmed the silent majority's suspicions. Nixon and Agnew were not the cartoon characters the media made them out to be: they were typical patriotic Americans who had fallen prey to the vicious attacks on the tiny fraternity of self-appointed analysts.

What were the motives behind the Vice President's rhetoric? Party unity, a "New Nixon" image, Southern appeasement, and a scapegoat for the press are just a few that have

been suggested. Lou Harris places Agnew as a tactic in the Nixon strategy: "Agnew was not meant for all seasons or climes; he was a guided missle, swung into place, armed, activated, launched with all the minute calibration that makes Nixon, the great calculator."[16]

Regardless of the motives involved, a US News and World Report analyst suggests that Agnew's role is similar to that Mr. Nixon held under Eisenhower: "carrying the main burden of political campaigning and party building for the President."[17] In fulfilling his role, some, like Frank S. Meyer have contended that Mr. Agnew simply called things as he saw them, with no predetermined strategy in mind. "The Vice President's sin is that, again and again. . .he has clearly and simply called things what they are. He has refused to enter the jungle of liberal semantics that obscure and distort straightforward issues; and he has stated these issues in terms of the traditional constitutional doctrine essential to the survival of a free society."[18] Mr. Meyer's seemingly naive faith in Mr. Agnew's use of non-distorted semantics tends to negate his contention.

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[16]Garry Wills, "For God So Loved Spiro Agnew That He Made Him Vice President," Esquire (February 1969), 57.

[17]"A New Kind of Vice President," US News and World Report (March 17, 1969), 32.

[18]Frank S. Meyer, "Storm Over Agnew," National Review (December 2, 1969), 1220.

Other Agnew supporters have attempted to deny any motive behind the Vice President's rhetoric by emphatically proclaiming that the Vice President speaks on his own accord without Presidential censorship or intervention. William E. Miller, Goldwater's running mate, commented:

> I don't believe that he is being led by the White House. He's a very direct man. And he's the sort of man who couldn't play the role the way some other vice presidents have. He obviously wanted to make a contribution and he is making one. Sure, the White House would stop him if they didn't like what he was doing. But I don't believe they are writing his speeches for him. 19

Robert Curran similarly contends, "The charges that Agnew was the ventriloquist's dummy didn't hold water with anyone who read his speeches closely."[20] Though the critic may concede that Agnew (or at least Agnew's speech writers) produce the flaming rhetoric, this concession does not deny the possibility that the motives previously eneumerated might still hold true.

Perhaps one final area of analysis needs to be explored before a conclusion can be drawn: What does Agnew's past record illustrate in terms of his current positions? Agnew did not become a Republican until 1946: he provides the rationale, "It was a matter of hero worship."[21] The hero

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[19] Curran, 143.

[20] Ibid., 135.

[21] Ibid., 24.

was Judge Barrett, the senior law partner in the firm of Smith and Barrett.[22] Some analysts have entertained the possibility that this conversion, too, was a strategic move.

In his biography of Agnew, Jim Lucas discusses Agnew's first political position as a minority member on the Baltimore County zoning board in 1958. It had been customary to appoint one Republican who would dutifully remain quiet in the position. Agnew did not. At the first meeting he asked that one of the party stalwarts be censored for failing to carry out a board decision. He later challenged a board policy requiring cash deposits for appealing the board's decisions to the courts. Agnew felt this policy was discriminatory. He remained outspoken throughout his term and was promptly replaced by a quieter Republican when it was time for reappointment. Later, as County Executive, his tenure was characterized by his outspoken dedication to action: public kindergartens, reorganization of the police bureau. It was not, however, until Agnew became governor of Maryland and took a firm stand on racial interests that his commitment on basic issues became clear.

At the end of his first term in office as Governor his relations with the press were crystallized. "When at the end of his first year as Governor, reporters wrote that he had underestimated the state income, Agnew struck back with an angry accusation that the press had not even covered the

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[22] Ibid., 24.

assembly's committee hearings on state revenue, a charge that later proved false."[23] Agnew's animosities against the press, and the quickness with which he makes accusations are not unique to his role as the Vice President. Likewise, the popular stances he took as a zoning board member, as County Executive, and Governor all reflected committment on his part. Though Agnew's past stances do not preclude the possibility that his Vice Presidential rhetoric is motive bound, they do illustrate quite clearly, that much of Agnew's outspoken firey reputation comes from his responses to situations as he perceives them.

Conclusions

The charge that Mr. Agnew has employed the tools of demagoguery and is in fact a demagogue is indeed grave. Consequently, a careful review of the results drawn from the analysis in Chapters II and III seems warranted.

In examining the concept of demagoguery and America's practitioners, several overriding criteria were discovered:

1. The practitioner of demagoguery employs many of the same tools as the rhetorician, only these tools are distorted. Charles Lomas provided the explanation: simplicity and directness are replaced by oversimplification; bogus evidence replaces

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[23]Jim G. Lucas, Agnew: Profile in Conflict (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 46.

genuine facts and pseudo-reasoning takes the place of honest argument, combined they create an illusion of proof; factually based emotional appeal gives way to emotionalism; and colorful language is replaced by loaded language.

2. The demagogue gains his influence through a process of pandering to the prejudices of his group and playing upon their fears. This necessitates an emphasis on the group's perceived threatened values, and the concomitant focus of these fears upon scapegoats and devil figures.

3. The demagogue's rhetoric will be self-serving and the resultant consequences of his actions upon the group are disregarded. As a result, the demagogue is willing to use any means to achieve his end.

In this investigation it was discovered that the Vice President repeatedly accentuated his speeches with inflamatory remarks that stirred up the fears of the silent majority. Continual reference to their threatened values was evident, and in most cases a devil figure was provided for. The fears and prejudices of the audience were brought out through Agnew's use of loaded language, emphasis on

emotionalism, and dependence upon illusion of proof.

Finally, in determining the motives behind his actions, several self-serving strategies were advanced: creation of a better Nixon image; promotion of the press as a devil figure; fulfillment of a "Southern Strategy;" and maintenance of party unity in order to win the Presidential election in 1968 as well as 1972. Agnew and others have denied that the Vice Presidential rhetoric is predetermined. His previous political career suggests that Agnew has always been outspoken in his beliefs.

These remarks clearly seem to allow for two conclusions. Unlike the pure demagogue that Lomas discussed, Agnew's actions are not totally self-serving; they do not completely disregard the effect they might have on the silent majority and the nation as a whole. The Vice President's rhetoric does, however, leave him open to the serious charges of being a practitioner of demagoguery.

Lomas posited the question: "How may we identify and combat demagoguery when it arises in respectable quarters? Indeed, how can we recognize it at all when it is practiced by supposedly responsible leaders with whose basic tenets we agree?"[24] The only possible answer it seems is for the critic, as well as the great silent majority Agnew addresses,

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[24]Charles W. Lomas, "The Rhetoric of Demagoguery," Western Speech (Summer 1961), 161.

to become more aware of the techniques of demagoguery. Then, hopefully, political audiences will become less susceptible to fear producing illusions of proof; and other demagogic techniques will be understood for what they are, distortions of acceptable rhetorical devices.

Recommendations for Further Study

At present, thorough examinations of Spiro Agnew's rhetoric are limited. Rhetorically, this study has isolated and emphasized the Vice Presidential rhetoric in terms of dependence upon the tools of demagoguery. Several areas, merely touched upon in this study, seem to warrent further research. Numerous studies might be made into the identification strategies Agnew has employed in individual speeches or in speeches on specific issues. An evaluation of the differences and similarities in enthymemic construction of speeches addressed to different regional audiences might provide valuable insights into varying value orientations. An analysis might justifiably be made solely of the stylistic techniques the Vice President employs.

Some analysts presently contend that Agnew has changed rhetorically. They no longer see in Agnew the outspoken controversy of late 1968 and 1969. If such a rhetorical change is evident, an evaluation of the motives behind the change would provide an interesting study.

Further research of course might be made into the political strategies behind the Nixon-Agnew rhetoric. A difinitive conclusion would be difficult, but the study might provide insights into the techniques involved in contemporary political persuasion. Similarly, following the upcoming Republican convention, the critic might explore the strategies behind the retention or replacement of Agnew on the 1972 ticket.

A significant amount of research, then, is needed if a thorough understanding of the Vice Presidential rhetoric of Spiro Agnew is to be achieved.

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