

on some point, in order to force a test case and to rally opposition and change the law. It is another thing to disobey authorities who are the Whore of Babylon and the Devil's thrones and dominions. In such a case the conscientious attitude may be not respect but disregard and disgust, and it may be more moral for God's creatures to go underground rather than to confront, especially if their theology does not include an article on paradise for martyrs. As a citizen of the uncorrupted polity in exile, it might be one's civic duty to be apparently lawless. There is a fairly clear-cut distinction between civil disobedience in a legitimate order and revolution that may or may not prove its own legitimacy; but the politics and morality of apocalypse fall in between and are ambiguous.

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Quite different, finally, is the psychology of those who unconsciously or consciously wish for catastrophe and work to bring it about. (Of course, for the best youth to desert the sinking ship also brings about disaster, by default.) The wish for a blow-up occurs in people who are so enmeshed in a frustrating system that they have no vitality apart from it; and their vitality in it is explosive rage.

Very poor people, who have "the culture of poverty," as Oscar Lewis calls it, are rarely so psychologically committed to a dominant social system that they need its total destruction. They have dreams of heaven but not of hellfire. A few exemplary burnings and beheadings mollify their vengeance. Their intellectual leaders, however, who are verbal and willy-nilly psychologically enmeshed in the hated system, might be more apocalyptic. For instance, Mal-

colm X once told me—it was before his last period which was more rational and political — that he would welcome the atom bombing of New York to vindicate Allah, even though it would destroy his own community. James Baldwin is full of hellfire, but I have never heard much of it in popular religion.

On the whole, at present in the United States the psychology of explosive apocalypse is not to be found among rioting Negroes crying "Burn, baby, burn," nor among utopian Beatniks on hallucinogens; it is to be found among people who believe in the system but cannot tolerate the anxiety of its not working out for them. Unfortunately, it is a pretty empty system and anxiety is widespread.

Most obviously there is the large group of people who have been demoted or are threatened with demotion: businessmen and small-property owners who feel they have been pushed around; victims of inflation; displaced farmers; dissatisfied ex-soldiers; proletarians who have become petty bourgeois but are now threatened by automation or by Negroes invading their neighborhoods. Consciously these people do not want a blowup but power to restore the good old days; but when they keep losing out, they manifest an astounding violence and vigilantism and could become the usual mass base for fascism. In foreign policy, where imagination has freer rein, they are for preemptive first strikes, bombing China, and so forth. I do not think this group is dangerous in itself—I do not think there is an important Radical Right in the United States—but it is a sounding board to propagate catastrophic ideas to more important groups.

My guess is that, under our bad urban conditions, a more dangerous group is the uncountable number of the mentally ill and psychopathic hoodlums from all kinds of backgrounds. Given the rate of mental disease and