

# Big Apple: a Fine Target for All Our Hates

BY JEFF GREENFIELD

*"Purple-robed and pauper-clad,  
"Raving, rotting, money-mad,  
"A squirming herd in Mammon's mesh,  
"A wilderness of human flesh,  
"Crazed with avarice, lust and rum,  
"New York, thy name's delirium."*

This 70-year-old poem might have been written any time in the 350-year history of New York City. It captures precisely the real barrier preventing the national rescue of our beleaguered metropolis, a hazard President Ford may sense as he drags his heels on throwing a lifeline to Manhattan.

For the real obstacle to federal assistance is not financial or political, but intensely emotional: America despises New York City. And as a life-long resident, I am here to urge you to save New York City, not because you care about us, or believe our cause to be just, but because you owe it to yourselves to save the city you love to hate.

Forget for a moment the vigorous exercises in blame-casting. It is a stand-off.

Yes, we have more than a million people on welfare; and yes, hundreds of thousands of poor people came to New York because we had a bleeding heart notion that the dispossessed ought not to starve in the lovely hills of Mississippi.

Yes, we spent too much on our municipal employees, but our fiscally responsible President pays a man 40,000 taxpayer dollars a year to write jokes for him.

Yes, we ran up bills we could not pay; and

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yes, Washington has accumulated \$200 billion in deficits since the beginning of hard-nosed Republican Presidents.

Yes, we spend more than any other city; and yes, we pay for services that everywhere else are the responsibilities of counties and states.

None of this really matters, any more than does the fact that millions of us live just like real Americans, with lawns, barbecues, bowling league trophies, American Legion hats, and finished basements.

No, the truth is that New York City serves a vitally necessary role in our national life: It is the capital of your frustrations, resentments, and rage. Whatever your political or social outlook, you can find the worm of exis-

tence in the core of the Big Apple.

Are you a red-blooded American, proud of your Anglo-Saxon blood and Mayflower past? New York is perennially the home of upstart newcomers born of alien lands, dragging their cultures with them. From Irish to Italian to Pole to Jew to black and Puerto Rican, New York is the home of Those Who Are Not Our Kind.

Are you a Jeffersonian, seeing in America a nation of land-owning, self-sufficient agrarians fleeing the plague and poverty-ridden cities of Europe? Then New York is a sink-hole on the Hudson, teeming, dangerous, overcrowded, ugly. Jefferson's good friend Dr. Benjamin Rush called cities "pestilential to the morals the health and the liberties of man," and New York is almost pestilential.

Are you a staunch conservative, outraged at radical dogmas? Why, you can scarcely walk the streets of Manhattan without tripping over a dozen dogmatists of the Left, battling each other in their zeal to spread the gospel according to Marx, Lenin, Mao, Che, and Kim Il Sung.

Are you a populist, struggling to free America from the yoke of the bankers, the speculators, the money men? Friend, you know what city Wall Street is in, don't you? So are the headquarters of dozens of our wealthiest corporations and our biggest banks. You can even change your political allegiance and never waver in your hatred for New York. When Father Coughlin began his radio ministry in the 1930s, he railed against the monopolists and speculators of New York. He ended his career as a foe of the international Jewish conspiracy, which he found headquartered in precisely the same city.

It is the same story culturally. Everyone

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# New York a Target

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despises the power of the media: the national news magazines, the TV networks, the chains of insidious media conglomerates. You can stand in Rockefeller Center and hit a dozen key communications villains with the throw of a stone.

And if you are a sexual moralist, is there any flesh pot of old, any Sodom and Gomorrah comparable to the bookstores, movie theaters, and massage parlors of New York? (Oh, I know *Playboy* is published in Chicago, but *Penthouse*, its infinitely more lubricious competitor, leers at us from midtown Manhattan.)

We are, therefore, one of America's most efficient institutions—the town you love to hate. In one small unit of land, we hold all of your resentments, your anger, your outright hatred. We hold your mortgages and corrupt your children. We dictate fads and fashions, from bisexuality to the Bump and the Hustle, from mini to midi, from leisure suits to high-price sneakers. Whatever you are against, the odds are overwhelming that it is produced and distributed by New York City.

Now ask yourselves: Do you really want to destroy such a precious natural resource? If New York col-

lapses, where will this collection of flotsam and jetsam go? Shall we ship our welfare mothers to Louisiana, our muggers to the San Fernando Valley, our pornographers to Tulsa, our permissive judges to Chicago, our deviates to Vermont, our monopolists to Berkeley? At least now New York is a self-contained "delirium," separable by bridges from the mainland. But send us into default and you will find yourselves overrun by our demons.

Worse, you will find yourself without a comfortable source of hate. With the end of the Vietnam war, the exile of Richard Nixon, the continued floundering of the Yankees, America enters its bicentennial year with a critical hate shortage. Conservation of our sources of anger is a major national responsibility, if we are to avoid bottling up our endless need for an enemy.

Even President Ford, with the veteran politician's unerring instinct for capitalizing on the easy stereotype, must quail at the prospect of so lightly giving up a ready whipping boy.

We in New York have served you faithfully for centuries. Do not desert it in your hour of need. Remember: The enemy you save may be your own.