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# The PEOPLE'S POTTAGE

GARET GARRETT



THE AMERICANIST LIBRARY



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The Revolution Was .  
Ex America  
Rise Of Empire



THE AMERICANIST LIBRARY

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# THE PEOPLE'S POTTAGE

# The Americanist Library

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*"Not yet, O Freedom! close thy lids in slumber, for thine enemy never sleeps."*

## CONTENTS

Essay One, <i>The Revolution Was</i>	9
Essay Two, <i>Ex America</i>	59
Essay Three, <i>Rise of Empire</i>	93

### THE PEOPLE'S POTTAGE

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## FOREWORD

A time came when the only people who had ever been free began to ask: What is freedom?

Who wrote its articles—the strong or the weak?

Was it an absolute good?

Could there be such a thing as unconditional freedom, short of anarchy?

Given the answer to be *no*, then was freedom an eternal truth or a political formula?

Since it was clear to reason that freedom must be conditioned, as by self-discipline, individual responsibility and many necessary laws of restraint; and since there was never in the world an absolute good, why should people not be free to say they would have less freedom in order to have more of some other good?

What other good?

Security.

What else?

Stability.

And beyond that?

Beyond that the sympathies of *we*, and all men as brothers, instead of the willful *I*, as if each man were a sovereign, self-regarding individual?

Well, where there is freedom doubt itself must be free. You shall not be forbidden to interrogate the faith of your fathers. Better that, indeed, than to take it entirely for granted.

So long as doubts such as these were wildish pebbles in the petulant waves that gnaw ceaselessly at any foundation, perhaps only because it is a foundation, no great damage was done. But when they began to be massed as a creed, then they became sharp cutting tools, wickedly set in the jaws of the flood. That was the work of a dis-

affected intellectual cult, mysteriously rising in the academic world; and from the same source came the violent winds of Marxian propaganda that raised the waves higher and made them angry.

Even so, the damage to the foundations might have been much slower and not beyond simple repair if it had not happened that in 1932 a bund of intellectual revolutionaries, hiding behind the conservative planks of the Democratic party, seized control of government.

After that it was the voice of government saying to the people there had been too much freedom. That was their trouble. Freedom was for the strong. The few had used it to exploit the many. Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, boom and bust, depression and unemployment, economic insecurity, want in the midst of plenty, property rights above human rights, taking it always out of the hide of labor in bad times—all of that was what came of rugged individualism, of free prices, free markets, free enterprise and freedom of contract. Let that be the price of freedom, and who would not say it was too dear?

So, instead of this willful private freedom, trust the government to administer freedom, for all the people alike, especially the weak. To begin with, the government would redistribute the national wealth in an equitable manner. Then its planners would plan production and distribution in perfect balance, and thus no more boom and bust; the government then would see to it that everybody had always enough money to buy a decent living, and beyond that it would provide for the widows and orphans, the sick and disabled, the indigent and the old.

To perform these miracles it would require more freedom for itself—that is, freedom to intervene in the lives of people for their own good, freedom from old Constitutional restraints that belonged to our horse-and-buggy days, and freedom to do as it would with the public purse. And if it should be said that this increase in the government's own sphere of freedom meant a curtailment of the individual's freedom, it came to this



—that the individual was asked to surrender only the freedom to starve and what he received in return was freedom from want. Was that not a good bargain?

What the people did in fact surrender was control of government.

They did not intend to do that. For a long time they did not realize they had done it, and when at last it came to them they were already deeply infected with a virus that devours the copy book virtues, creates habits of dependence and destroys the valiant love of self-responsibility.

The crisis was moral.

Happily for their designs, the New Deal physicians found the patient in a state of economic pain, extreme but not fatal, and proceeded to administer imported narcotics, all habit forming, such as:

(1) Repudiation of the United States Treasury's promises to pay.

(2) Confiscation of the people's gold by trickery.

(3) Debasement of the currency.

(4) Deliberate inflation.

(5) Spoilation of the savers, whose little rainy day hoards melted away.

(6) Deficit spending to create buying power by conjury.

(7) Monetization of debt.

(8) The doctrine of a planned economy.

(9) A scheme of taxation, class subsidies and Federal grants-in-aid designed ostensibly to redistribute the national wealth for social justice, but calculated in fact to reduce millions of citizens to subservience, to bring forty-eight sovereign states to the status of provinces and to create in the executive principle a supreme government with extensive new powers, including the power to make its own laws by simply publishing from its bureaus rules and regulations having the force of law, disobedience punishable by fine or imprisonment.

These physicians kept saying to the patient, "Now aren't you feeling better?" Many, very many, were feeling immediately better, and because they were feeling



better and because the government offered to provide them all with economic security forever, they were easily persuaded to exchange freedom for benefits, until at last they had surrendered, almost unawares, the most elementary freedom of all, namely, the right to receive in your pay envelope the full reward for your labor and do with it what you will.

Thus the Welfare State was built. The facade was magnificent; the cornerstone rested on quicksand; the moral cost of it may be reckoned in terms such as these:

If the great Government of the United States were a private corporation no bank would take its name on a piece of paper, because it has cynically repudiated the words engraved upon its bonds.

The dollar, which was long the most honored piece of money in the world, became an irredeemable scrap of paper, with no certain value.

The executive power of government was exalted to be the paramount power, uncontrollable, and the exquisite Constitutional mechanism of three co-equal powers—the Congress to make the laws, the President to execute the laws and the Supreme Court to interpret the laws—no longer functioned.

The symbol of Executive Government is the President. Actually, Executive Government became a vast system of bureaus and commissions writing 90 per cent of our laws, touching our everyday lives to the quick.

The purse and the sword were in one hand, which is solemnly forbidden by the constitution. In fact this was so. True, Congress still appropriated the money, but it could no longer pretend to understand the budgets that came from the White House and bitterly complained that it could not appropriate money intelligently. And as for the sword, the State Department, speaking for Executive Government, held that to be an obsolete provision of the Constitution which says only the Congress shall have the power to declare war. The President alone could make war, as he did in Korea.

In these twenty years a revolution took place in the relationship between government and people. Formerly

government was the responsibility of people; now people were the responsibility of government.

This change was silently geared to the popular idea of Social Security, for which the money was to come from a law of compulsory thrift imposed upon the individual and a pay roll tax imposed upon employers, all to be managed by a paternal Federal government. But this Social Security is delusive. In the first place, you have no surety that the money the government takes currently out of your income or your wage envelope as a social security tax will be worth as much when you get it back as it was when the government took it. Indeed, it is now worth only half as much as it was when the government began to take it a few years ago. With one hand it held out the apple; with the other hand it introduced the worm that was going to devour it. The worm was inflation. Secondly, as fast as the government receives these social security taxes it spends the money and puts in place of it a paper promise to pay you when you are entitled to receive it back, so that the only security behind all this Social Security scheme is more government debt. The right way would be to meet the cost of Social Security currently by an annual tax on the national income.

Nor is that all.

As the religious apostate seems to pass under a kind of emotional necessity to revile the symbols and images of his abandoned faith, so in the last twenty years the popular meaning of old American words has undergone enormities of semantic change and are scourged accordingly. The word *freedom* itself has come to be regarded as a reactionary word, if you use it to mean, as always before it had been taken to mean, freedom from the coercions and compulsions of government, even when they might be benign. *Individualism* is a word that will class you with the greedy few who wish to exploit the many for profit. The honorable word *capitalism* is anathema. Likewise *nationalism* and *sovereignty*. And the mere thought of *America first*, associated as that term is with *isolationism*, has become a liability so extreme that politicians feel obliged to deny ever having entertained it.

But if you use the word *freedom* to mean freedom for mankind, that is all right.

The three essays brought together in this book, entitled respectively, *The Revolution Was*, *Ex America*, and *Rise of Empire*, were first published as separate monographs by The Caxton Printers. They were written in that order, but at different times, as the eventful film unrolled itself. They are mainly descriptive. They purport to tell what it was happened and how it happened, from a point of view in which there is no sickly pretence of neutralism. Why it happened is a further study and belongs to the philosophy of history, if there is such a thing; else to some meaning of experience, dire or saving, that has not yet been revealed.

G. G.



**THE REVOLUTION WAS**



## THE REVOLUTION WAS

1944

There are those who still think they are holding the pass against a revolution that may be coming up the road. But they are gazing in the wrong direction. The revolution is behind them. It went by in the Night of Depression, singing songs to freedom.

There are those who have never ceased to say very earnestly, "Something is going to happen to the American form of government if we don't watch out." These were the innocent disarmers. Their trust was in words. They had forgotten ~~their~~ Aristotle. More than 2,000 years ago he wrote of what can happen within the form, when "one thing takes the place of another, so that the ancient laws will remain, while the power will be in the hands of those who ~~have~~ brought about revolution in the state."

Worse ~~outwitted~~ were those who kept trying to make sense of the New Deal from the point of view of all that was implicit in the American scheme, charging it therefore with contradiction, fallacy, economic ignorance, and general incompetence to govern.

But it could not be so embarrassed and all that line was wasted, because, in the first place, it never intended to make that kind of sense, and secondly, it took off from nothing that was implicit in the American scheme.

It took off from a revolutionary base. The design was European. Regarded from the point of view of revolutionary technique it made perfect sense. Its meaning was revolutionary and it had no other. For what it meant to do it was from the beginning consistent in principle, resourceful, intelligent, masterly in workmanship, and it *made not one mistake*.

The test came in the first one hundred days.

No matter how carefully a revolution may have been planned there is bound to be a crucial time. That comes



when the actual seizure of power is taking place. In this case certain steps were necessary. They were difficult and daring steps. But more than that, they had to be taken in a certain sequence, with forethought and precision of timing. One out of place might have been fatal. What happened was that one followed another in exactly the right order, not one out of time or out of place.

Having passed this crisis, the New Deal went on from one problem to another, taking them in the proper order, according to revolutionary technic; and if the handling of one was inconsistent with the handling of another, even to the point of nullity, that was blunder in reverse. The effect was to keep people excited about one thing at a time, and divided, while steadily through all the uproar of outrage and confusion a certain end, held constantly in view, was pursued by main intention.

The end held constantly in view was power.

In a revolutionary situation mistakes and failures are not what they seem. They are scaffolding. Error is not repealed. It is compounded by a longer law, by more decrees and regulations, by further extensions of the administrative hand. As deLawd said in *The Green Pastures*, that when you have passed a miracle you have to pass another one to take care of it, so it was with the New Deal. Every miracle it passed, whether it went right or wrong, had one result. Executive power over the social and economic life of the nation was increased. Draw a curve to represent the rise of executive power and look there for the mistakes. You will not find them. The curve is consistent.

At the end of the first year, in his annual message to the Congress, January 4, 1934, President Roosevelt said: "It is to the eternal credit of the American people that this tremendous readjustment of our national life is being accomplished peacefully."

Peacefully if possible—of course.

But the revolutionary historian will go much further. Writing at some distance in time he will be much less impressed by the fact that it was peacefully accomplished than by the marvelous technique of bringing it to pass not

only within the form but within the word, so that people were all the while fixed in the delusion that they were talking about the same things because they were using the same words. Opposite and violently hostile ideas were represented by the same word signs. This was the American people's first experience with dialectic according to Marx and Lenin.

Until it was too late few understood one like Julius C. Smith, of the American Bar Association, saying: "Is there any labor leader, any businessman, any lawyer or any other citizen of America so blind that he cannot see that this country is drifting at an accelerated pace into administrative absolutism similar to that which prevailed in the governments of antiquity, the governments of the Middle Ages, and in the great totalitarian governments of today? Make no mistake about it. Even as Mussolini and Hitler rose to absolute power under the forms of law . . . so may administrative absolutism be fastened upon this country within the Constitution and within the forms of law."

For a significant illustration of what has happened to words—of the double meaning that inhabits them—put in contrast what the New Deal means when it speaks of preserving the American system of free private enterprise and what American business means when it speaks of defending it. To the New Deal these words—*the American system of free private enterprise*—stand for a conquered province. To the businessman the same words stand for a world that is in danger and may have to be defended.

The New Deal is right.

Business is wrong.

You do not defend a world that is already lost. When was it lost? That you cannot say precisely. It is a point for the revolutionary historian to ponder. We know only that it was surrendered peacefully, without a struggle, almost unawares. There was no day, no hour, no celebration of the event—and yet definitely, the ultimate power of initiative did pass from the hands of private enterprise to government.

There it is and there it will remain until, if ever, it shall be reconquered. Certainly government will never surrender it without a struggle.

To the revolutionary mind the American vista must have been almost as incredible as Genghis Khan's first view of China—so rich, so soft, so unaware.

No politically adult people could ever have been so little conscious of revolution. There was here no revolutionary tradition, as in Europe, but in place of it the strongest tradition of subject government that had ever been evolved—that is, government subject to the will of the people, not *its* people but *the* people. Why should anyone fear government?

In the naïve American mind the word revolution had never grown up. The meaning of it had not changed since horse-and-buggy days, when Oliver Wendell Holmes said: "Revolutions are not made by men in spectacles." It called up scenes from Carlyle and Victor Hugo, or it meant killing the Czar with a bomb, as he may have deserved for oppressing his people. Definitely, it meant the overthrow of government by force; and nothing like that could happen here. We had passed a law against it.

Well, certainly nothing like that was going to happen here. That it probably could not happen, and that everybody was so sure it couldn't made everything easier for what did happen.

Revolution in the modern case is no longer an uncouth business. The ancient demagogic art, like every other art, has, as we say, advanced. It has become in fact a science—the science of political dynamics. And your scientific revolutionary in spectacles regards force in a cold, impartial manner. It may or may not be necessary. If not, so much the better; to employ it wantonly, or for the love of it, when it is not necessary, is vulgar, unintelligent and wasteful. Destruction is not the aim. The more you destroy the less there is to take over. Always the single end in view is a transfer of power.

Outside of the Communist party and its aura of radical intellectuals few Americans seemed to know that revolution had become a department of knowledge, with a