

# **THE MASSES IN THE MIRROR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649398812

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Cover @ 2017

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**LEIGH H. IRVINE**

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IN THE MIRROR**



# THE MASSES IN THE MIRROR

*Being an Analysis of the Fundamentals of  
Government and the Limitations of Democracy*

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

BY

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**THE BAKER & TAYLOR CO.**  
WHOLESALE DEALERS IN THE BOOKS OF ALL PUBLISHERS  
354 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY  
NEW YORK, 1919

## WHAT IS THE IDEA?

*The Masses in the Mirror* is not controversial, not theoretical, not speculative. Its aim is to present facts of vital importance, without bias or dogmatism.

It is written and published in popular form to teach the fundamental principles of Americanism, and to make plain the following facts:

I. That the Revolutionary Fathers established a government which has always been known as the Great Republic, the world's largest object-lesson in self-government under the republican form—and that a republic is not a democracy, though democracy is one of its elements.

II. That this Republic was founded on the immortal Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, article IV, section 4 of which guarantees to every state in this Union a republican form of government.

III. That a republican form of government is one of delegated and limited authority, in which the legislative, the executive, and the judicial de-

partments are segregated and their work is coordinated so that there is neither mystery nor doubt regarding the functions of each.

IV. That the qualified electors in National elections, as the Constitution is now amended, vote on three questions only—for Presidential electors, for members of the House of Representatives, and for United States senators.

V. That neither the will of the majority nor that of their representatives may be exercised absolutely and without limitation, as in the case of a despot exercising absolute powers; for while the voice of the people is sovereign in some matters, and that of their delegated agents or representatives in other matters, this voice or will must be exercised within the restrained or "reined in" limitations of the organic law, as interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States.

VI. That there is no absolute and unrestrained sovereignty in the United States, except the sovereignty of just judgments under equal laws. The decisions of the Supreme Court are the final authority, unless the people appeal to the arbitrament of the sword. The Supreme Court, created to render impartial interpretations of the law, has often and properly declared the acts of legislatures and voters null and void, even restraining the government itself, because restraints were necessary to preserve the inalien-

able rights of man to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

VII. That so-called "pure and unadulterated democracy" has always been a failure except in primitive communities or in village life.

VIII. That there is not a purely democratic government among civilized races anywhere on the globe. Even the soviets of Russia and the most democratic labor organizations, Socialist parties, and devotees of Anarchism have abandoned democracy because of its inherent unwieldiness and other weaknesses. They have had to establish oligarchic circles of qualified leaders to carry on their work. The soviets have even adopted the plan of American trusts—the delegation of full authority to expert managers, who are held responsible for results.

IX. That the complex problems arising in civilized governments can not be solved by popular vote, as when the Hezekiahs and Elijahs of Big Tree Center and Pumpkinville vote (*viva voce*) to build a village watering trough, all being assembled under the old elm tree when the vote is acclaimed.

X. That the unlimited will of the majority is not a safe or practicable source from which to obtain just decisions, and that any doctrine that the minority has no rights which the majority is obliged to respect is un-American, mythical, and



untrue. There is not any law in ethics or in the Statutes of the United States which gives to the majority any power inconsistent with the tenets of reason.

XI. That the *hoi polloi* (herd), mob, mass, multitude, or whatever the "people" may be termed, have always been as cruel, narrow, tyrannical, and even wicked as the most brutal monarchs of history. The rabble crucified Christ, poisoned Socrates, <sup>tor-tured</sup> burned Galileo, and has always persecuted the thinkers and pioneers in every useful field of human endeavor. In Canada and the United States recently the followers of Prohibition denounced and criticized (and may yet boycott) newspapers which had accepted paid advertisements from brewers who bought space for the purpose of presenting their arguments in favor of light wines and beers. Wholly aside from the validity of Prohibition, which is not now under discussion, this attempt to suppress free speech and fair play is only an example of the inevitable overbearance of the domineering majority, regardless of the soundness or even morality of the cause—for it has been the same in the tragical history of religious persecutions. There is no tyranny equal to that of the "holier than thou" bigot who is ready to fine and imprison those who dissent from his views.

XII. That "the madness of the mob" has been

a famous phrase from deep antiquity until the time (1917-1919) when the crimes of the stampeded multitudes of Russia shocked the world.

XIII. That the mob has never written a Declaration of Independence, invented a telescope, discovered a star, built a power-loom, invented a telephone, a railway, a steamship, or even a Maxim gun. The sovereignty of the mobs of the French Revolution was more cruel than that of the despot whose power they seized.

XIV. That in the United States, for the first time in all human history, great libertarians, led by Thomas Jefferson, established a safe bulwark against mobs and monarchs alike, and that the "Back to the Republic!" cry of Atwood is our refuge and our hope to-day.

XV. That there has been no time in the history of the United States when there was greater need to heed the ancient maxim, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," than now; for all kinds of dangerous legislation, far-reaching and revolutionary, directed by radicals who have no respect for the rights of individuals or the doctrines of individualism, now threaten to make the United States a democracy subject to the will of the multitude, in order that rules of conduct may be prescribed, fortunes may be confiscated, and mischievous notions may become the law of the land.

The most serious forms of paternalism ever known, like death's invisible approach, as Robert Louis Stevenson wrote of famine, now seek to crib, cabin, and confine the individual by the decrees of the tyrannical majority, led by wicked, active, and meddling agitators.

XVI. That democracy must be made safe for the world, rather than the world safe for democracy. This can be done by confining democracy within the limits provided by the checks and balances of the organic law. The Revolutionary Fathers, men of vast experience and learning, provided the safeguards for posterity. "Back to the Republic!" is the only road for patriots.

XVII. That democracy is a saving and vital principle in all just governments, because the multitude has an inalienable right to give expression to its views and work against injustice and class domination. In combination with selective leadership, trained to serve it intelligently, democracy is the best check on autocracy that the world has yet discovered. On the other hand selective leadership—control by sympathetic and trained men of broad vision—is the best check yet devised on the ignorance and passions of the majority.