

TAKING FREE MARKET DEFENCE SERIOUSLY

BRIAN MICKLETHWAIT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This essay began life as a talk presented to the Manchester Society Convention on “Free Trade, Freedom of Contract, Personal Liberty and Peace”, which was held in July 1986. This accounts for the digressory courtesies at the beginning, which — rightly or wrongly — I have decided to leave in. I would like to thank the Manchester Society for asking me to speak to them on the topic of “Peace”, and hence provoking me into writing this.

The bibliography with which this essay ends was supplied by Chris Tame. My thanks to him.

THE MARKET IN LIBERTARIANISM

The founding of the Manchester Society is good news. The more organisations there are devoted to the cause of free trade and the free society, the better. It is only reasonable that libertarians should favour the same institutional variety in the supply of libertarianism that we recommend for other sectors of the economy.

The Manchester Society is taking the message of free trade and the free society in a northerly direction, away from the affluence of the south. I expound libertarianism to anyone who will listen, but I have reservations about anyone's chances of unleashing radical libertarianism on the south of England. The south of England is doing okay. To inflict radical libertarianism on it would be an example of what the writer Roger James has called “solutioneering”, that is, the unleashing of solutions upon circumstances which are not a problem. The people who run the south of England are, compared to most people of power in the world, doing a fairly good job. The place works. And even if you vehem-

ently disagree that they are doing a good job, they think they are. They are thus not receptive towards proposals for radical upheaval. There are all kinds of fabian libertarian steps which southerners have already been persuaded to favour, such as reducing subsidies to the north, but that's different.

In the north things are not going so well, and in these circumstances radical libertarianism might — in the next two decades say — arouse the beginnings of mass enthusiasm. Wherever there are severe problems, there is a market for severe solutions, severe philosophically as well as politically. This is why socialism still does well in the north, and the historic mission of socialists is to teach lesson number one of libertarianism. First you learn what socialism is. Then you realise that socialism is rubbish and acquaint yourself with the body of ideas which tells you why socialism is rubbish, and then you start solving your problems. Northerners need only look around them to see that mere conservatism is futile, for them. Who'd want to conserve all this devastation? No, the only question is: which sort of radicalism is best? We libertarians believe that we know the answer.

FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MEANTIME

And an especially good thing about the Manchester Society is that it will open up the libertarian debate on foreign policy. In particular it will separate the arguments for free trade from the arguments for stationing American cruise missiles in Britain.

Libertarians disagree greatly about foreign policy.

Most foreign policy arguments are about how best to make do in the world as it is, rather than about what the world should be like. And whereas it makes some sense to regard your own government as being to some extent in control, by definition, of its own local affairs, no-one controls foreign affairs. It is not much of a policy to say that the libertarian attitude towards the Soviet threat, if threat it be, is that the USSR should become libertarian. *In the meantime* the USSR is not libertarian. So *in the meantime* what should be done about it?

How *in the meantime* might we *make* the USSR more libertarian? Or is it perhaps none of our business? If it is our business, perhaps our best tactic might still be to leave it alone, and let the Russians become libertarians in their own good time without us trying to rush them.

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www.libertarian.co.uk email: admin@libertarian.co.uk

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Director: Dr Chris R. Tame
Editorial Director: Brian Micklethwait
Webmaster: Dr Sean Gabb

FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY



While the Russians continue to shun libertarianism, should we *in the meantime* urge our government to get out of the defence business? It should definitely get out of lots of other businesses, so why not this one also? Or would us saying that merely make government defence a tiny bit harder to organise, without making it any easier for anyone to provide any other kind of defence?

A common libertarian attitude to defence is that while a libertarian world would be very nice, *in the meantime* the USSR is everything Ronald Reagan says it is. For as long as the armed forces of the USA are the roughest and toughest anti-Soviet “defence agency” that reality (as opposed to our imaginations) offers, then we should back them. This, in the meantime, is my attitude.

But other libertarians see no necessary connection between a right wing foreign policy, such as I in the meantime favour, and libertarian principles generally. Ronald Reagan may make nice noises about free trade, but he is in the meantime a head of *state*, not a freely trading tradesman. Many libertarians, having emerged from an American conservative background, favour free trade in domestic matters and isolationism abroad, and believe that these two attitudes are not just coherent but positively inseparable. Personally I supported the liberation (as I would call it) of Grenada, even though this operation did strengthen the US state. But I can quite see why some American libertarians opposed it.

It so happens that the Libertarian Alliance’s Secretary, Dictator and Senior Dogsbody Chris Tame also has (in the meantime) very right wing tastes in foreign policy matters. The Libertarian Alliance upper echelons also contain a very high proportion of people who far prefer the state (yes) of Israel to the states that surround it, again unlike a number of the more vocal American libertarians.

But even as we adopt these positions, we surround ourselves with caveats to the effect that libertarianism doesn’t automatically mean supporting Israel, or the Grenadan operation, or NATO, or any of the other foreign policy tastes some of us might favour. But you can’t expect passing on-lookers to understand these distinctions as clearly as we do. Some potential supporters of libertarianism who oppose Israel, The Bomb and so forth, are now surely being put off.

Some “right wing” libertarians might say “and a good thing too” but not me. Although my foreign policy tastes are (in the meantime) right wing, I am glad that British libertarians are becoming prominent whose foreign policy tastes, although in the long run much like mine, are in the meantime different. I don’t know how many of the Manchester Society people apart from Stephen Davies have left wing tastes in foreign policy, but they have all attached their names to bits of paper praising Cobden and Bright, and these notables certainly were not Reaganites. They were what we would now call “left libertarians”.

I know hardly any more about Cobden and Bright’s views on foreign policy than what is said in the two Manchester Society publications I have so far read, namely the introductory leaflet, and the short paper by Stephen Davies. My London comrades tell me that Cobden and Bright didn’t have much to say about the connection between free trade and peace. They merely scattered remarks in among their other writings, from which the “Manchester Theory” of peace may be deduced. A crude summary of the Manches-

ter Theory of peace seems to be: that war is bad for business, so the more people do business with each other, the less inclined they will be to go to war against each other. Historians have been scathing about this theory, given that two massive world wars immediately followed the era during which it was most widely believed in.

Whatever the details of Manchester School foreign policy ideas, the Manchester Society is bound to stir up the debate about how peace and free trade fit together.

A DEBATE WORTH HAVING

I think there is more to be said in favour of the Manchester Theory than usually is now said, but that isn’t what this essay is about. I want here to fling through this window of intellectual opportunity — so to speak — a rather different proposition concerning the relationship between free trade and peace. I want to argue here that libertarians should take the idea of free market defence seriously. I want British libertarians to stop thinking of free market defence as a utopian pot of (at best) highly dubious gold at the end of a very distant rainbow, and start talking about it seriously. I don’t expect my detailed opinions on this subject to be automatically accepted. I do hope to persuade at least some readers that this is a debate worth having, and having now.

I don’t mean to suggest that I am the only libertarian thinking seriously about free market defence, but I do think that most libertarian discussion of defence issues focusses on the rightness or wrongness of what the state (especially the US state, but ours also) should or should not do about foreign policy. Much less common is any discussion about what defence *services* might be offered — and what services are already being offered — by *tradesmen* — to *customers*.

Hayek’s warning to libertarians that we should *not be too practical* is apposite here. Libertarianism isn’t now spreading as fast as it is because its adherents confine themselves only to what can be done by next friday week. What is attractive about libertarianism is the willingness of libertarians to grasp hold of certain fundamental and very attractive principles, to follow these principles wherever they seem to lead, to ponder whether these destinations are also attractive and what might be done to make them more so, and meanwhile to ignore “public opinion”. We absolutely must *not* dismiss any particular libertarian idea as silly or unworthy of discussion merely because no member of the House of Commons can be found who already agrees with it.

Free market broadcasting and free market money are both utterly impractical — as immediate political projects. But by persisting in discussing these ideas, libertarians have caused a very large number of people at least to hear of such such notions, and at least some of those thus reached are becoming sympathetic. A leading member of the supposedly “wet” Greater London Young Conservatives recently told me of his enthusiastic support for free market money and free market broadcasting. These notions are spreading, and they may — any decade now — become widely accepted and even irresistible. The same thing might apply in the future with free market defence, the difference with that being that most of *us* don’t now take this idea seriously, and are embarrassed to talk about it.

What a terrible omission this is! The whole debate about “peace” surely involves some of the greatest issues of our time, yet most libertarians merely tag along behind existing state factions, and have nothing original to say on the matter. Yet were we to discuss these issues, of peace and war, disarmament and deterrence, and to do it in a way that was both interesting and directly related to our own distinctive ideas and principles, that would — to the kind of people whom we most want to attract — make the libertarian movement even more attractive than it is now, and hence far more influential in the longer run. The fact that most people would regard such debates as daft wouldn’t matter. The people we want to interest will be interested, and will hear past the sniggering.

THE SHORT RUN IMPACT OF LONG RUN IDEAS

Besides which, the sniggering is starting to happen anyway. Free market defence is already being “discussed” by our opponents. *They* are “taking our ideas to their logical conclusion” even if most of us aren’t. For some years now, derisive letters have occasionally been appearing in the *Guardian* about how a total free market would presumably mean everyone having his own cruise missile in the garden, ho ho.

Consider a common libertarian argument against socialism, which is that socialist measures should be resisted in the short run, because of what they will lead to in the long run. We argue that even if some socialist measure (a government grant to a hospital, say) seems in itself to be rather attractive, it will later (in combination with other socialist measures) have much less desirable results. Submitting to socialist measures now will strengthen the socialist enterprise as a whole, which would be bad. This is not the only good reason to oppose socialist measures, but it is certainly one of them.

Accordingly, we libertarians must expect opposition to our smaller, more “practical” proposals (such as minor tax cuts, privatisation schemes, and so on) on the same basis. I’m sure that some socialists feel that an end to the Post Office’s letter delivering monopoly might in itself be quite nice. They too want their letters properly delivered. But they feel that this might in the end do harm, because it would strengthen us, and thus cause us in thirty years time to turn the world into an anarcho-capitalist hell.

Thus, the debate about the long term effects of “pure” libertarianism — including libertarian defence — is of short term importance to the arguments about the fabian impurities we now propose. If we can be persuasive about the viability and desirability of “pure” libertarianism, then this will make it easier not only to get “pure” libertarianism in the centuries to come, but also to demonopolise the Post Office now.

That’s one reason to be discussing free market defence, namely that free market defence is already part of the discussion. Now for some comments about the discussion itself.

FAILURE OF IMAGINATION

A common tendency among the opponents of libertarianism is to confuse their own failure to imagine a free market sol-

ution to a particular problem with the inevitable failure of anyone ever to provide such a solution.

Opponents of free market solutions are asked by us to ponder the possibility of a free market in bunberries. The opponents do so, for about twenty seconds. They then announce what a free market in bunberries would be like. It would mean constant queuing for bunberries, rich people getting bunberries while the poor had to pay far too much for their bunberries, only the rich getting any bunberries at all, whatever. We don’t want that, they say, now do we? If we libertarians nevertheless persist in favouring free market bunberries then that means that we obviously do want these problems.

It is said that free market broadcasting would mean constant interruptions from advertisements. Free market roads would mean motorists constantly being stopped, to pay tolls. Free market medicine would mean uninsured accident victims being forced to pay huge sums just to be bandaged in the road, where they would be left to die if they couldn’t afford proper treatment.

And, “free market defence” would mean the whole world being ruled by gun-toting gangsters who indulged in daily street battles, which would only be interrupted when confederations of gangs joined together to have nuclear wars against each other. The unarmed common people would be trampled under foot as in the Lebanon. Al Capone versus the Kray Brothers versus the Red Army Fraction versus the Moslem Brotherhood. We don’t want that do we, no of course we don’t, how could you think of such a thing, QED, end of argument.

Well, I’m told that machines already exist for getting money from cars that pass them without the cars having to stop. Pay-as-you-view TV is already technologically possible. Offhand, I don’t know how to offer a cheap but still profitable service which puts uninsured crash victims together again, nor do I know all the answers to the problems presented by people like Al Capone, even if I definitely do know some of them. But, my point here is that such problems are not so much the problems of *libertarianism*, as problems for *entrepreneurs in a libertarian world*. The idea that tradesmen would turn the world into the Lebanon at its most unruly, and then try to make everyone like that and pay for it voluntarily seems to me perfectly absurd. Overwhelmingly more likely is that those tradesmen who find out how to suppress gang warfare on their patches, and how to negotiate the indefinite postponement of any nuclear wars they might be suspected of starting, will swank about *that* in their advertisements. Tradesmen who sell ballet shoes or lawnmowers don’t make fortunes by offering lousy products. Why should it be any different in the “peace” trade?

FREE MARKET DEFENCE ALREADY HAPPENS

The above argument is a very modest and tentative one. It says: don’t instantly abandon the idea of free market defence; give it a chance. It doesn’t say *what* good ideas might emerge from taking the idea of free market defence seriously; it merely says, good ideas *have* emerged from taking free markets in other goods and services seriously, so why not defence? Now let me try another very preliminary and tentative type of argument.

This one consists of observing that, to a limited extent, we already have a free market in defence.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which this is true is that different *places* are defended in different ways, against different supposed or definite enemies, and that — even if only to a limited degree — you can choose which of these places you will live in and work in.

Switzerland is defended by being neutral but heavily armed. It is said to have mountain caves full of weapons and tinned food. The British state defends itself by being part of NATO, by possessing nuclear weapons, and by having very well trained and skilful volunteer soldiers. Hong Kong and Finland both “defend” themselves by not making trouble for their overwhelmingly more powerful neighbours. And so on. Take your choice. Switzerland is also said to be very expensive to move to. No doubt part of the reason for that is that it is believed to be so well defended.

There are probably some people who choose where they live within their own countries partly because of where they think fighting might later happen. Some people perhaps live in the country rather than in city centres because they feel that this way they can avoid nuclear explosions. Again, that is a choice they can and do make.

Or consider other ways of trying to survive a nuclear war. CND enthusiasts take it for granted that no-one will survive what they constantly refer to as a nuclear “holocaust”, and that those who do will wish they hadn’t. And indeed, if a nuclear bomb does land right on top of you, there will be little that you could do to alter your life chances. But unlike those who make fun of nuclear civil defence, I surmise that if there is a nuclear war there may well be large parts of the world where the way people behave after the bombs have landed will do much to determine whether they will live or die. I think it quite possible that only a few bombs will go off before the politicians hurriedly settle their differences. (They also will wish to stay alive.) If that is so, there may then be vast areas which have been severely but not necessarily fatally (depending on how smart you are) affected by nuclear devastation and fall-out. The size of such areas will be vastly greater than the size of the areas where nothing will save you no matter what you do.

I’m thinking of such dilemmas as: after a tin of food has been opened, how long will it last? How much protection does a mattress supply against radiation, or is that a waste of time and effort? Could you safely eat a cat, if you wash it correctly? How long does radiation hang around before it stops being very harmful? Is rain dangerous? And so on. Being a nuclear optimist, I have not bothered to learn the answers to such questions, but if my optimism proves to be unjustified, then these will be the sort of questions that will matter. In my opinion it is the people who *know what to do* who will be the “survivalists”, not those who happen to stumble across guns or tins of food or concrete fall-out shelters. Those who have all these things prepared for themselves will be saved not so much by the things themselves, as by their knowledge of how to use them intelligently.

So here is my personal nuclear “defence policy”. First, whenever I see a reasonably cheap looking book about “how to survive a nuclear war”, I do not sneer at it, I buy it. If the international situation gets bellicose (which it is not

now, whatever CND says) then I will stock up more with such books, and may even start reading some of them, with a view to buying several copies of what seem like the better ones. I might choose one, that seems to be both good and unbulky, for inclusion in the daily impedimenta that I carry about with me in my blue plastic laundry bags. No doubt many others will have similar literary ideas. Publishers are adaptable and greedy folk, and I am sure that we can rely on them to minister to any pre-nuclear reading crazes they detect. If and when the bombs do land, my plan will simply be to read as many of the books as I have to hand, and do what they say.

And that’s it. No shelters, no tinned food stores, no guns, no fancy clothing. Until the bombs really do go off, I will persist in regarding such explosions as extremely unlikely, and I have no intention of taking any very severe and costly precautions, such as moving house to somewhere supposedly safer but in the meantime far less convenient. No doubt there are all kinds of flaws in my plan, but half the point of it is that I haven’t wasted very much time even thinking about it, let alone spent any big money.

The point of telling you of my preparations for nuclear war is not that you too should prepare yourself for nuclear war in this same cheap, intelligent and unhysterical way. My point here is that just like the decision to save up and go to Switzerland, this is an example of a decision that any individual can make, in a moderately capitalist country. He needs nobody else’s permission and nobody else’s agreement before putting the policy into operation.

My policy for nuclear survival *is* free market defence. The same pattern is repeated here as occurs in many other sectors of the economy. Governments create a problem, in this case the threat of nuclear war. And the free market sells the answer to the problem, in this case in the form of information about how one might survive the mess. If CND sneers are anything to go by the free enterprise advice in this department is far better than the government products on offer, and I’m sure that’s true.

Free market defence is already happening, and is going on all around us. Or to put it another way, the “defence economy” is a mixed economy rather than a totally planned one. People quietly buy airline tickets for their families, and transfer their money from this bank to that, for defence reasons. People read the papers in order to decide when to emigrate and where to go. In my case they buy books on nuclear civil defence, but don’t read them. No laws get in the way. No policeman taps any of us on the shoulder and says that only the government is allowed to do things like that, because only the government may concern itself with defence.

Libertarianism is not merely a demand that the world should be different, it is a different way of looking at the world as it already is. Many libertarians make a great show of “demanding” freedoms which they already have. Many libertarian “proposals” which are now dismissed as impossible are already a reality.

FREE MARKET DEFENCE FABIANISM

The techniques used by the Adam Smith Institute to crumble away at such things as the welfare state and the BBC are also applicable to defence, even if their Omega

Report on Defence struck me as one of their less brilliant efforts.

Consider the following suggestion:

“Citizens of West Germany should from now on be permitted to own anti-tank weapons.”

I assume that West Germans are not now permitted to own anti-tank weapons, but if the truth is that they already are allowed to own such weapons, then the proposal is that they should be told that this is allowed, and encouraged to think about doing so.

Immediately, objections spring to mind. West German bolsheviks might use easier-to-obtain anti-tank weapons to blow up cars containing NATO generals, and for anti-West terrorism generally. Very well then, what about this?:

“Before you can own an anti-tank weapon you have to get the permission in writing — and have it renewed annually — of five officers in the West German army. No officer may give his permission to more than ten people at any one time.”

Terrorists might still get hold of the weapons, but this would surely make it harder.

Instead of citizens merely paying their taxes annually and, from the defence point of view, hoping for the best, they could, if they felt that more anti-tank weapons would help, share the load with the government. Pacifists could opt out, as they may not with taxes.

And so on. One can think of hundreds of Adam Smith Institute type proposals that infiltrate — so to speak — the voluntary principle into the conduct of defence, and that would do so in an intellectually stimulating and news-worthy manner.

Here’s another idea:

Select the small, despotic, troublesome state of your choice, and announce (via adverts in the world’s major newspapers, global TV spots etc.) that at a certain pre-arranged date and numbers permitting, there will be an invasion of the place by outside volunteers, unless certain listed policy changes have occurred, such as holding of reasonably free elections, unbanning the local capitalist media, abandoning the government’s agricultural “reform” proposals, and so on. Numbers might never permit the scheme to go ahead, but the resulting debate might be most salutary. The despotism in question would no doubt use the outside threat to try to unite its people in support of (e.g.) its agricultural atrocities. More likely is that, like all despotisms under threat, its policies would for the duration of the emergency become less despotic, so as to get local support. Neighbouring governments, in exchange for impeding the “mercenary gangsters”, might be able to persuade the despotism to be less threatening. In other words, the threat would do good and not harm.

(Much the same thing can be said about the alleged harm Reagan is now doing to Nicaragua by trying to topple the Sandinistas. If Reagan was *not* still breathing fire at them, the Sandinistas would by now be behaving far worse, I think.)

Another notion:

The way to keep the USSR good and quiet is to subject it to pressure from outside. (Controversial, I know, but that’s my opinion. The same principle applies to this large despotism as to other smaller ones.) The most subversive media performances now being fed into the Soviet empire are probably the shows put on by West German commercial TV. It was the sheer believability of the service-as-usual Western commercial broadcasting stations that publicised the Chernobyl disaster within the Soviet world. “Propaganda” stations on their own could not have done this nearly so persuasively. Therefore, on “defence” grounds (by which I here also mean political attack grounds) it would be smart to deregulate broadcasting all around the Soviet perimeter, especially where a single language spans the perimeter as it does in Germany and Korea. (I don’t know what the broadcasting position in South Korea is; it would be interesting to know.) Western politicians could discuss such plans very publicly, and then maybe swap their decision not to deregulate broadcasting for other Soviet favours to them, such as a more cooperative attitude at the next disarmament conference.

Airlines are major defence assets. In a perfect world, governments would not start wars by seizing all civil aircraft and calling them Transport Command, but, in the meantime, they do. So if it is true that airline deregulation would mean more airplanes, as it surely would, then on defence grounds alone, airline deregulation everywhere in the West would be a Good Thing. In America it already is.

“Intelligence”. Soviet officials in Western countries are pestilential, and it is said that our security services have a hard job keeping track of them all. FCS types (FCS = Federation of Conservative Students) could follow them about, photograph them, acquaint themselves with who they are and what they do all day long, and suggest that some of them switch to being honorary members of FCS. FCS could call this “investigative journalism”. (Quote from an African Head of State: “All journalists are spies. I know. I’ve been one.”) If the local British spooks ask such volunteer spies to desist, for vital but vague reasons, then the volunteers could desist, in exchange for other favours granted to the FCS cause.

Some friends of mine are setting up an “Institute For The Study of Terrorism”, on the grounds that in this matter as in all others, governments cannot be depended upon. Perhaps it could be financed by selling its consultancy services to Multinational Corporations.

The purpose of all these observations and ideas is not so much to get any one scheme along these lines going at once, as to alter the climate of opinion with regard to free market defence proposals. Defence ideas which only create ferocious internal dissension among the people supposedly being defended are not a wholly good idea, and I dare say my suggestion about armed German citizens might have just that effect, in which case it can be quietly dropped. But if enough schemes are suggested, then some of them are bound to strike a public chord, and those are the ones that can then be acted upon. The plan should be to throw around lots of these ideas, not merely to go ahead with one of them and get arrested or worse, ignored. (This is a constant tactical trap among free marketeers, and the refusal of the ASI to make this mistake is one of the biggest reasons for their success in recent years. The ASI shoots ideas out

in all directions, and has obtained media coverage by the square mile. The hardly known-of “Free Trade League” goes on and on and on about the Common Market and only the Common Market, and everyone, including even its own dwindling membership, has become fed up.)

It seems to me that a buzz of argument and counter-argument about free market defence initiatives, both ones that are now not allowed but perhaps might be, and ones that are already allowed and wait only to be done, would have a splendidly sobering effect on the USSR. At the ASI they claim that merely to *say* the word “privatisation” at a council meeting immediately cuts costs by five per cent, even if you do nothing at all except say it. Even to *discuss* free enterprise anti-tank weapons would surely make the Kremlin pause a little. (Does the proposal perhaps reflect the secret possession of such weapons by some West Germans civilians already?)

Behind all this lurks one of the biggest defence markets there is, namely the market in defence strategies and tactics. This piece of writing is an example of this market in action. I wrote it. You bought it. The government did nothing. The idea that we should wait for “planners” to devise the best defence strategies for ourselves, our loved ones, our friends, our homes, our workplaces, our countries, our civilisation, seems to me very bizarre. Once again, here is a free market contribution to the defence effort that is already in full swing.

Once you stop assuming that free market defence of any kind is impossible, and start trying to suggest it, you soon see that there are already lots of “free market” — that is — *voluntary* defence arrangements that already flourish, and enable the defence load to be shared unevenly, more by those who are keen on it than by those who aren't. The Territorial Army is an obvious example. The government pays for it, and pays quite good money to those it in, from what I hear. But you don't *have* to join it. Ditto the British army itself, at any rate in peace time. For all that I know, my anti-terrorist friends already are enriching themselves by advising business people. They don't tell me everything that they do.

HOW IT MAY HAPPEN

I realise that many of the above fabian stimulants to thought about free market defence may seem rather “Lebanese”, especially the German anti-tank weapons. So let me now describe how I think that the idea of free market defence is actually going to spread and catch on, if it ever does.

First of all, although it is possible that ideas like the ones above will get massive bursts of publicity, I wouldn't want to assume this. More likely is that libertarian ideas will continue to spread among libertarian enthusiasts, including ideas about libertarian defence, and that these enthusiasts will, in about twenty or thirty years time, gradually find themselves with bigger and better opportunities to try them out. The timescale I envisage is derived from the timescale that the development and application of socialist ideas in the Western democracies has already shown us.

In the twenties and thirties, thanks to a fluke breakthrough in Russia, socialism ceased being a minority cult believed in only by embittered cranks like Karl Marx, and became a mass enthusiasm. The most eager minds of a generation

flocked to its banners. But in policy terms it didn't achieve very much. Faith in capitalism declined dramatically. Faith in socialism grew, personified by Franklin Roosevelt. But until long after World War II nothing very much happened, not even during the 1945 Labour government in Britain. Not very many socialist institutions were created, so the question of whether socialism worked remained untested, in most people's eyes. (It was quite different for those who chose to face the truth about what was happening under communism, but not many of them did, and most socialists simply ignored this.) It was only in the sixties that socialist institutions really began to explode into action in the West, run by people in their fifties who were young and impressionable in the nineteen thirties, and by the post war pupils of these early socialist enthusiasts. Only then did the policy barriers that anti-socialists had successfully erected in the thirties (such as the judgements of the US Supreme Court) melt away, because those who erected these barriers were now either eighty or dead. In the nineteen sixties, despite years of unprecedented capitalist success, and more years of socialist failure in the East, socialists in the West first began to do socialism in a really big way, through a combination of passionate conviction and (at last) sheer weight of numbers.

Now the verdict is in on socialism. It doesn't work. Now another generation of ideologues has come of age, “led” by Thatcher and Reagan (in the same unsatisfactory way that Roosevelt “led” the socialists of the thirties). Like our socialist predecessors of fifty years ago we dream our dreams, but change very little. Libertarian fabians perform prodigies of analysis and lobbying, and achieve tiny results. Libertarians conquer the commanding heights of academe, but are vastly outnumbered by the brutes and dullards who still call themselves socialists. Victory seems to take for ever. Arguments are won and won and won. Policy battles mysteriously go wrong.

But by about 2020, things may be very different. A generation of libertarians will have reached positions of genuine power, passionately convinced that libertarianism will definitely work, and itching to give it a try. And they will. Suddenly the brick walls against which we now flog ourselves will melt away. Freeports, cities, even entire countries will be given over to rampant free market libertarianism. Libertarianism will all of it be tried in some places, and some of it in all places. And (in case that sounds like a mere description of the status quo) it will be tried by people publicly claiming to be the followers of Rothbard, Friedman etc., whose books will sell in millions. Powerless libertarians will accuse powerful libertarians of selling out, betraying the cause, etc.. In other words, victory!

The world will still abound with fifty-five year old “socialists”, just as it abounded with fifty-five year old “capitalists” in 1965. But not even they will believe in socialism any more, so numbers won't matter. Following an interlude of rioting and bombing (which has now — in the nineteen eighties — just begun) the hard-core of socialist true believers will have declined into a quietist remnant.

The world will also abound with “I'm no libertarian but ...” libertarians. These people will perhaps be suspicious of the more extreme implementations of libertarian ideas, but will have been so bombarded with libertarian arguments that they then approach problems in an inherently libertarian

way, which they will call “common sense” and “moderation” rather than “libertarianism”.

And, various different varieties of free market defence will be tried. The effective strategies and tactics will flourish and be copied, and the “defence” policies which only cause street fighting and mass emigration will be abandoned. In short, the market will decide.

The “market in government”, which I already see all around me, will become a universally accepted pair of intellectual spectacles through which to view the world and in terms of which to organise it. The “market in citizenship” (ditto) will come into the open, complete with prices. Today Belize, tomorrow everywhere, just like national currency markets now. Different defence policies will emerge as market leaders, which best combine effectiveness in combat, rarity of combat, and unobtrusiveness when combat is absent.

Some “states” (or “enterprises”, depending on your paradigmatic verbal tastes) will insist on monthly military training as a condition of sale (citizenship). Others will charge something very like taxes. Others will be run by people who are either “purists” or else just lazy and cowardly. They will say: do what you like folks. “Defend yourselves if you want to, we don’t care, it’s up to you. We just collect the entry money.” Or the rent from all the property they own in the place, or whatever.

I predict that “hardcore” libertarians of the Rothbard variety will not emerge as market leaders in the defence industry, because they will insist on having irreconcilable ideological disputes with one another, which will be bad for business and for life generally. One of the nice things about libertarianism is that it will protect the world from libertarians (socialism having utterly failed to protect the world from socialists).

PUBLIC GOOD

Why do most people assume that free market defence is self evidently impossible?

First there is the “Lebanon” objection, about which I have already said things.

Then there is the “public good” argument.

Defence supposedly benefits everyone in the defended area a little, but no-one enough for all to be willing each to pay their fair share.

It is said that there can be only one defence policy for each place. A place can’t be defended *both* by “making no trouble”, say, *and* with mountain caverns full to the brim with ferocious and well advertised weaponry. Therefore, since everyone is involved, and there can only be one outcome, the matter is necessarily governmental. Defence is a “natural monopoly”.

This natural monopoly argument crops up in all kinds of settings, from television to drainage.

Suppose we accept that some particular service is a “natural monopoly”, in the sense that it only works if all those who buy it agree to buy the same thing. This means, presumably, that deviants wishing to buy something different which will do the same job are simply not able to. If all TV sets in a certain area use 625 lines, then a viewer wish-

ing to enjoy the superior picture quality that might be available with 1200 lines is simply not able to. The pictures aren’t supplied over the airwaves in that format. Impossible.

Fine. That also means that people won’t attempt to deviate from the 625 line rule. So why enforce it? If a deviant product is useless, people can be relied upon not to buy it.

On the other hand, if some person is trying out 1200 line TV, at a hideous price, in a very small area, what is the objection to allowing this? It may be “irrational”, but why not let the consenting screwballs directly involved worry about that? If a monopoly is so “natural” why does it have to be enforced? (Much the same can be said of Apartheid. If people naturally want to remain separate, why have a law to enforce this?)

Another way of putting this is to say that there is no such thing as a “natural monopoly”. There are either monopolies, which *are* enforced, or there are non-monopolies, which are *not* enforced. The rest is Galbraithian guff.

An example that has emerged in recent years of something resembling a “natural monopoly” is the evolution of IBM compatibility in personal computers. I can just about remember when people used to say that information technology ought to be “controlled by the community” in order to ensure not only that it was devoted to “need not profit” but also to ensure that it was “coordinated” properly. A free market would mean anarchy.

As soon as the personal computer emerged, from someone’s garage in America rather than from any government lab, it was clear to all that here was yet another triumph for capitalism, and much less was from then on said about “community control”. The community *was* controlling it. (The garage persons had long hair and beards.)

Soon numerous manufacturers were piling into the new market, and indeed, for a time, things were very chaotic. But then it became clear that the thing to look for with computers was (a) having lots of software and add-on equipment to choose from, after you’d spent your big money on the original system, and (b) being able to communicate effectively between your computer and other computers.

This is just the kind of situation which unimaginative critics of free market solutions regard as necessarily needing a government to solve. But if it was true, as computer users seemed to think it was, that these qualities were desirable, they could quite easily negotiate the winner of the compatibility contest amongst themselves. And they did. Once a winner emerged, then all further buyers who took compatibility seriously chose that winner. Many compatibility seekers delayed buying until a winner had emerged. Thus the IBM standard in personal computers. Thus also the LP gramophone record, the audio and video cassette, and now the compact disk.

The objection to this is that defence is *not* like computers or compact disks, because — see the previous objection, above — either everyone benefits from defence or no one does. Obviously geographical variation *does* go part of the way to solving the problem of choice in defence policy, but what of people who do not wish to move? What if you are an eager customer for nuclear disarmament, but want for

other reasons to go on living in a place that is defended differently?

But life in a free society is full of such problematic trade-offs. What if you want a dramatic view of the Atlantic ocean, within walking distance of Harrods? What if you want to buy cigarettes at ten o'clock at night, but hate buying them from Asians even though Asians operate the only shop anywhere near you that stays open that late? Tough, is what. Life is full of such dilemmas, in free societies and in any other kind of society. The free society offers far more variety of compromise bundles to choose between, but they are still compromises.

Meanwhile, freedom of geographical choice should not be underestimated. The fact that people can move hither and thither between this or that service is beneficial not only to those who make such moves, but also to those who might like to but on balance decide not to. The threat of losing business is often sufficient to keep a business up to the mark, which helps regular customers as well as more mobile ones. The same would apply to defence, more so as more variety in defence policy started to happen.

(In my opinion the most inescapably damning judgement that anyone has ever made about communism is made by all the people who daily try to get away from it, and by the tiny number by comparison who want to move *to* it. Communists can lie their way past every other ghastly revelation, but how can they explain that? Even the attempt to subjugate the free market is itself subject to very heavy market pressures.)

As to the argument that each place can only have one defence policy, well, there is a sense in which there is, in all the world, only one personal computer industry. Any assemblage of outcomes can be given a name, and then be called a prison by those who would have preferred a different aggregation of outcomes. No individual can change it very much, not even the boss of IBM. Each person is surrounded by the uncontrollable decisions of others. Does that mean that the world computer industry would be better if run entirely by a single "public" authority?

Ah! But perhaps defence *would* be better if run by such a global authority?

If people really thought this, they could, now, all switch their allegiance to the one defence supplier, and there would be a global stampede in favour of Washington, Moscow, Mecca, or wherever the defence market leader was reckoned to be based. Evidently, defence "compatibility" is not the only quality people now look for when making their defence decisions. (Once again, we are talking about decisions that people are already able to make.)

Personally, I think that a global defence market leader probably *will* emerge, sometime during the next fifty years or so, at which point the benefits of global defence "compatibility" may then suddenly become available, such as an end to the nuclear arms race. But such an agency will have to offer a more enticing product to the world's defence consumers than any state based defence agency is offering now.

ALLIANCES

Existing libertarian discussions of defence agencies assume a far greater degree of local independence and autonomy

than seems to me realistic. Surely what will happen is that once business enterprises have made a success of defending (which may or may not include "governing") one particular patch of territory, they will then be asked to apply — and will wish to apply — the same formula to other territories, as happens now with successful department stores, restaurants, construction companies, holiday camp managers, and so on. Multinational corporations will arise, selling defence and/or "government" to different local groups. These enterprises will have proved themselves adept at grappling with all the complex pricing and service problems now assumed insoluble by the critics of free market defence, and they will want to cash in.

And, as Irish comedians say, there's more. Surely "defence" is like banking for business customers in that it is very advantageous for a defence contractor to be able to offer diplomatic services, and experience generally, in other parts of the world. There's more to seeing off potential enemies than merely hiding behind your own borders and waving weapons at them. Maybe it would be cheaper to buy them off. Diplomacy is thus a permanent part of one's defence effort, and a large multinational enterprise might be able to achieve impressive diplomatic economies of scale, simply by having offices dotted about the world, like Barclays Bank.

The free market will supply alliances, for much the same reason that states now ally themselves with each other for defence purposes.

Defence is traditionally an activity where economies of scale are achievable. A standard defence technique is the exemplary display of force, which demonstrates the will to use the force which one commands. Reagan's Grenada invasion, for example, was on the face of it a fantastically cumbersome exercise, a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Heaven knows what it cost per square mile of Grenadan territory liberated. Nevertheless, by demonstrating US willingness to use the same sledgehammer on nuts generally, and not just on this particular nut (which in the post-Vietnam era had been in doubt) the invasion surely paid for itself many times over.

But it would have been far more costly had the American imperium not been so large, and hence not able to absorb and justify these costs, so to speak. The fact that the British empire is now so tiny suggests to me that the Falklands escapade was excessive. The time for us to be proving that we have balls came a little later, when those Libyan "diplomats" shot a policewoman in the middle of our capital city. The SAS should have gone in and gunned them down, within the hour. The Argentinians, on the other hand, should have been told to keep their "Malvinas" and if the islanders complained they should have been given very large cheques, and told to shut up.

NATO may not be the best way of getting economies of scale for Britain's defence effort against the USSR, for it is not true that economies of scale can only be achieved with "central planning". (An assembly line may be owned at different points by different owners and yet work well - even all the better for it — as can a trade route.) Nevertheless, some kind of Western alliance would surely be desirable for Britain, and for all the other nations of Western Europe. I surmise that Switzerland cooperates far more with the NATO powers (if not with those seemingly pene-

trated NATO bureaucrats) than it does with the USSR and its Warsaw Pact possessions. France certainly does. If the USSR made trouble for West Berlin, France would have something to say, not just the NATO powers. Thus, France is a *de facto* member of the Western alliance. It shares the military clout of the other Western powers, as they all share France's. When they all apply their clout to the one crisis point, it is effective, and thus is Europe defended, not just West Germany, Turkey, Austria, etc.. And, because of all that, the Western powers now feel that they can get away with spending less on arms than would otherwise make sense.

In short, alliances are the most effective exercises in reducing arms spending now in operation. Without either NATO, or some other equally real but less formal (and perhaps therefore better) version of NATO, Western arms spending would either be higher, or less good at scaring the USSR. Neither seems to me desirable.

BETTER ALLIANCES

But if free market defence resembles state defence in supplying alliances, why make such a fuss about having free market defence? If national defence and free market defence would work the same way, why make the change?

The trouble with the governmental technique for achieving coordination is that it has no built in way of improving upon itself. The tiniest improvement requires that the *status quo* be disrupted.

Contrast this with free market "alliances" such as — to return to the personal computer example — IBM compatibility. IBM compatibility is far preferable to any globally enforced personal computer compatibility, precisely *because* people *can* easily dissent from it if they want to.

The Apple Macintosh personal computer is now the standard for cheap desktop publishing with laser printers, *not* the IBM and its clones. If the IBM fleet continues not to offer attractive desktop publishing, then Macintosh will become a major and permanent part of the personal computing scene. If the IBM world *does* respond effectively to the Macintosh threat, then the IBM standard will remain super-dominant.

Had the IBM standard been enforced by global statute, IBM would have "solved" the Macintosh problem by banning the Macintosh, not by copying it or learning how to communicate with it, as is happening now. Cheap desktop publishing (which is less convenient on IBM machines) would have remained a dream for far longer, and perhaps for ever. (Update, February 1987: Desktop publishing is now available for IBM machines. Update, June 1987: this was first published using IBM compatible software.)

Free market defence would not only supply alliances; it would supply *better* alliances, and keep them up to the mark, updating them and improving them as customer pressure for new arrangements made itself felt. Governmental organisations are very difficult to alter, but in the market producer disruption is routine. If there *are* natural monopolies, the free market is better at supplying them than governments, just as the free market supplies better carpets.

Free market defence would not be the anarchic "Lebanese" shambles that most now predict, any more than free market personal computers have been. But nor would it be the

rigid, cumbersome process that is presided over by the Pentagon, or NATO, or worst of all, the Kremlin. Like the personal computer industry, it would be rather complex, and rather imperfect and rather unsatisfactory, but would only be these things by its own much higher standards.

If governments had totally run the personal computer industry, there would have been no complaints at all about the personal computer industry, but that is because there would have been no personal computer industry to complain about. I believe that the gap in quality between free market defence and the defence we have now would be similarly huge.

A LIBERTARIAN LANDSLIDE

I have said that free market defence, when it happens, will happen rather suddenly. The libertarian "paradigm", now considered beyond the political pale for defence if not for personal computers, will suddenly catch on and seem quite normal. Why the suddenness?

For the same reason that the socialist explosion of the nineteen sixties was also sudden. Sensible people opposed socialist measures, wherever they threatened. Socialists pushed for them everywhere and failed. Finally, anti-socialist resistance collapsed. Too many socialist schemes were being pushed for in too many places, and the dam finally burst.

At which point, although socialism failed eventually, it did not cause catastrophes straight away. It worked, in the sense that the heavens did not immediately fall. At which point, many who had feared that the heavens would immediately fall were reassured, and switched sides. "Come on in boys, the water's fine."

The libertarian paradigm shift will be like that too, I think. Some schemes of local but "pure" libertarianism have already been attempted, such as that one in the South Sea Islands (New Hebrides, I think) a few years back. Had the scheme got established, it would have caused lots of trouble to lots of important people, so phone calls were made around the world and it was duly snuffed out. It was all libertarians could do at the time to find out what was happening, let alone make any phone calls to try to influence things in favour of this "libertarian revolution".

But by 2020 libertarianism will be breaking out all over the place, in too many places for anti-libertarians to stop all such experiments. Just like socialism in 1965, the world will abound with middle rankers who have by then become if not exactly favorable towards free market defence, that at least comfortable with the idea. "Let these damned libertarians have a few countries to play with, for heaven's sake. Maybe that will shut them up." So while libertarian scheme A (another Pacific island) and libertarian scheme B (downtown Manchester) and libertarian scheme C (Antarctica) are all being skillfully stalled by practiced bureaucrats, libertarian scheme D (Bognor Regis, the last place anyone was expecting, which was why they succeeded) finally breaks the will of the opposition, and away it would go.

The Bognorians deregulate everything, defend themselves by leaving the United Nations and becoming a world centre for trade between everybody and everybody. They don't have a "defence policy", or to put it another way that *is* their defence policy, and the newspapers all tell each other

that it will never last, because someone will surely invade the place. “Her Majesty’s government” is worried, very worried, but has other bigger worries.

Back in Bognor, lots of money is being made. Bognor may be a terribly risky place to be in but (in the meantime) it has become a very good bet, and everybody (in the meantime) finds it too useful to close down. If you are a Bognorian who doesn’t like Bognor any more you can always leave, but most discontented Bognorians prefer merely to grumble all the way to the bank.

After eighteen months there have been three major Bognorian stock market scandals, and several fortunes lost as well as made. But the stars are still in their courses and so now several other would-be libertarian enclaves demand to be left alone by the world’s old time bosses and bureaucrats, and the silent majority in the middle now says, why not? It seems to work okay. Why not let them? Does not “justice” and “balance” and “the spirit of fair play” demand that half the world be allowed to give libertarianism a go? Soon there will be so many libertarian enclaves that it won’t be news any more, and the state governments themselves will find that they too are in a market, selling, among other things, defence services.

Then as now, there may be the appearance of geographical fragmentation, but there will also be more or less secret alliances going on in parallel, unless somebody has by then dis-invented the telephone. The Bognorians will find that they have secret sympathisers at the UN, as well as public enemies. Eccentric civil servants in London and Brussels will surreptitiously ring them up and wish them luck, and offer their consultancy services on an informal basis. (Statists know better than anyone what statism is really like.) Quiet drinks will be consumed by Bognorian company officials and NATO generals, in Paris hotels. The Vatican, which Bognorians had feared would make all kinds of difficulties, will instead become immobilised by “theologico-capitalism”, a new doctrine being put about by young Italian priests, in open defiance of their South American superiors. And the same subterranean forces that protected the Bognorian enterprise will be revealed as ready to defend other experiments conducted along similar lines.

MOSCOW, PEKIN ETC.

And what, meanwhile, are the people in the Kremlin supposed to make of all this? How the blazes could free market defence keep them at bay?

Let me put it this way. Suppose you were offered half of what Trident will cost, to arrange a change of political scenery in Moscow, could you do it? I could.

One trick might be to pen an “alternative manifesto”, couched in the language of orthodox Leninism but demanding all kinds of incremental “improvements” to the political system of the USSR. (Such as the *Guardian* offered to its readers, on Tuesday July 23rd 1986.) I’ve already mentioned agitating for deregulated radio around the Soviet perimeter, deregulated airlines, and volunteer surveillance of their Western agents. There are plenty of other exercises of this type that could keep the Kremlinites on the defensive. But that is mere skirmishing.

The bottom line would be for us libertarians to announce, as publicly as we can, that we want to replace the present

Cold War with a *global* free market in government, and for as many of us as possible to go into business offering it. One of us at least should enter the Russian market, and offer to govern Russia, in competition with the present hopelessly unattractive firm. Once the Russian people are offered something attractive to switch to, they might.

The trouble with most attempts to spread “freedom” to the USSR is that they are so irresponsible. Few of those arguing for this “freedom” are willing to take charge of the resulting mess. Most anti-Soviet rhetoric is mere shit stirring, not a serious attempt to improve things in and around Russia. Personally, I’d love to have a go at ruling Russia.

THE MEDIA

I would do it from a TV studio. For the *media* are the answer to the free market defence purveyor’s prayer.

One, the media are global. They reach out and make friends and waves everywhere, which is what any big-time defence agency will have to do.

Two, they will make things very, very public. This will be necessary anyway. To get the kind of global clout that will be needed, in order to achieve such things as the re-arrangement of Russia and China, the global TV audience will have to be told all about such schemes. There is no way the world’s people (i.e. TV audiences) will trust anyone attempting things like this who does *not* confide in them on TV. I’m thinking of the kind of global media performance Bob Geldof has recently been giving.

Three, global media stars can get their hands on money, money, money. Enough to pay for minor but still quite formidable punitive raids, should it come to that.

Doing things in the glare of media publicity means that you have to do them nicely. When defence entrepreneurs are launching military expeditions the body count should rule supreme, as in Vietnam, but *the lower it is the better*. The plan should be to achieve the objectives, such as an uninterrupted hour of home truths over the national TV station, the freeing of prisoners, the capture of key state officials, etc., but with the minimum of casualties of the dead variety on either side, and *especially on the other side*. One’s own people should be willing to risk their lives to save their enemies, because after all they’re volunteers and they started it. One thing that defence thinkers of all ideological persuasions should give more thought to is the technology of immobilising but non-lethal weaponry. I’m thinking of such things as anaesthetic arrows, non-lethal gases, etc., as well as more traditional techniques like overwhelming numerical superiority.

Such heroics would make wonderfully effective good-guys-v-bad-guys television, perhaps even drama documentaries filmed as they happen. This would greatly enhance the capacity of the leaders of such escapades to pay for them. It is said that Clint Eastwood financed an attempt to rescue some American prisoners from Loas, on the understanding that if all went well the plum film part would be his. If this isn’t true it ought to be. Maybe he was bought off by an embarrassed Pentagon, perhaps with the loan of some US Airforce jets for use in another film.

THE MEDIA AS THE EXIT FROM THE PUBLIC GOOD TRAP

The problem with a “public good”, remember, is that everyone benefits a little, but nobody very much. The problem with “free market public goods” is to *persuade* lots of people each to part with a small sum of money. Only thus can the externalities be internalised, as the economists put it.

But this is already the way that media people are paid now. They too collect vast fortunes, in large numbers of small amounts. (Again, think of Geldof.) Free market public goods are an exercise in *mass persuasion*. In a word, the media.

The first “free market public good” of the modern era was cheap mass production itself, of such things as the Model T. The Model T could never have sold in such numbers had Henry Ford not had the modern media at his disposal, to tell the masses about the product and about what it would cost, so that enough of them would buy it quickly enough for Ford’s finances not to collapse. He could only make them cheap if he could sell them fast, and he could only sell them that fast because everyone knew about them so quickly. Ford himself was, among other things, a huge media celebrity. The first printed “newspapers” were often called the So-and-so “Advertiser”, because advertising was most important thing these publications did.

TIMING THE LIBERTARIAN ENTRY INTO THE DEFENCE MARKET

By making “defence” a global rather than merely a local exercise, the above dramatisings break past the objection that defence will simply be too expensive to finance by other than coercive means. Given that the defence “industry” is poised to go global anyway, during the timespan when libertarianism is itself likely to achieve its first major victories, we should time our entry into this market with the arrival of the *next* product range, rather than try to compete head-on with the existing products now being offered by national governments. Local defence “in the meantime” will be a case of exploiting little niches between the mighty opposites of the state system, rather than in providing any serious alternative to what happens now. Only when we manage to get our defence products advertised on global TV will we make any big commercial breakthroughs, it seems to me. I agree that no “free market defence agency” would be able to find five billion quid (or whatever ludicrous sum it is) for about four nuclear submarines. But the trick will not be to *make* such submarines; it will be to make them obsolete, by doing global, as well as merely local deals.

To put the above ideas another way, what the libertarian movement is competing with most severely is not so much the nation state system as the United Nations Organisation. Our defence agencies will make their big commercial breakthroughs when they start actually doing what the UN merely promised to do when it was founded. Who knows? Maybe the competition between our schemes and the UN will turn the UN into a decent organisation with a decent product, and a civilised method of funding it. After all, if the member governments metamorphose into business enterprises (in the face of market pressure from libertarian al-

ternatives dotted about the globe), and membership of the UN is already voluntary, what would be wrong with that?

PEACE AS OUTCOME; PEACE AS PRODUCT

But what if the free market defence agencies merely compete with each other in the same way that governments now compete with each other. Why bother with all the institutional turmoil, if all we end up with is a free market re-enactment of what we already have?

Even that would, I submit, be better than nothing. To move from statism to libertarianism and then back to statism again will at least provide a period of libertarianism to enjoy for a brief period. Even that would be something, and the resulting “statism”, although similar to what we had before, would not be the same. We would, so to speak, be miserable in greater comfort.

Meanwhile, the trouble with the theory that war is bad for business is that it is only bad for some kinds of business. It is very good for others. What will eventually settle the matter is how badly peace is wanted, and how determinedly and cleverly entrepreneurs are willing to work to provide it.

The difference between the Manchester School idea of peace and the idea of peace that I am offering is that for the Manchester School peace was (is?) seen as the mere *outcome* of free trade. It was not seen as a product that could itself be offered on the market. Peace is indeed an outcome, for lots of lucky people. But other people only get peace by making it, or by buying it from those who do make it, often at terrible cost. Once peace is defined as a desirable product, like a car or a computer or a chocolate bar, you are in a better frame of mind to get it than if you merely beg politicians not to volate it.

The best book I know about how wars start (Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*) says that they start when both sides think they will win. One reason for thinking you can win is if you have just got richer. People start wars when they can afford them. This surely explains the unique destructiveness of the wars of our century. Why did we kill so many people in our wars? Because we could. The Leninoid claim that capitalism causes war is thus not entirely silly, even if Lenin was right for entirely the wrong reason. Libertarianism will — unless we are horribly mistaken — make lots of people very, very rich, and thus, alas, far more able to afford to fight one another.

But we can all afford all kinds of things which we nevertheless choose not to buy. I hope that libertarianism will also be good at making and marketing the service of stopping people from fighting each other. This is the sense in which the success of libertarianism will most depend on the quality and intelligence of those who espouse it. If libertarians assume that “peace and liberty” just automatically go together, we could be badly disappointed. But if peace is thought of as a very tricky thing to get, but nevertheless gettable if peace entrepreneurs are clever enough, then the most glorious thing of all that libertarianism could achieve is the pacification of the world. And this without the enslavement of the world that is regarded as necessary in all other schemes I have ever heard of for the achievement of world peace.

PEACE VERSUS IDEOLOGY

This is all heady stuff, and could go badly wrong. All the more reason, then, to argue through the principles of such excitements amongst ourselves, first, decades before such schemes become at all practical, and as publicly as we can. Maybe threatening to behave like this will be enough. Maybe people will give us inner city slums to play with, just to stop us from chasing about the world in ancient airplanes, spraying people with semi-poison gas and generally spoiling everyone's day. Maybe the twenty first century will surrender to us without a fight. We'll see. Or maybe we'll quarrel so much *with each other* that the next century will be another — in the words of the Chinese curse — “interesting” time, just like this one.

People who believe that they are going to do glorious things in the future (such as provide “world peace”) are liable to consider themselves more entitled to do terrible things in the mean time (such as fight terrible wars in the cause of “world peace”) than are people who are merely trying to get by and make as good a living as they can. Ideologues are thus inherently dangerous people, and libertarians are no exception. Libertarians should at all times remember to put their own interests first, before the interests of the libertarian movement. They should always sell out to the highest bidder, rather than fight to the finish for the sake of their glorious principles. (Trade and peace again!)

That I think that libertarianism may triumph rather suddenly does *not* mean that I favour a libertarian “revolution”, if by that is meant wanting all statists to be hanged from lamp posts. American libertarian activist Samuel Edward Konkin III wants libertarians to execute the statists, come the glorious day. If the only alternative to this was instead to execute Samuel Edward Konkin III, I would favour the latter project rather than the former one, but devoutly hope that it doesn't come to that. My advice to all revolutionaries who claim also to be interested in peace — including self styled libertarian revolutionaries — is that they should betray their revolution at the earliest available opportunity.

If in doubt, do a deal. Deals are peaceful. If you can't supply peace as a product, then try to live your life in such a way that peace is the outcome.

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