

IN PRAISE OF JACKALS: ASSASSINATION AND MORAL DEFENCE POLICY

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How can free men and women defend themselves cheaply and effectively against the depredations of tyrants? How can this result be achieved morally? These questions are very important, I believe, to the cause of liberty. This is because they are among the “toughies” - those problems which seem insoluble when arguing for anarcho-capitalism.

Take the scenario that anarcho-capitalism comes about in a specific territorial area. Say that certain parts of Home Counties England, and some areas of Highland Britain declare UDI. Let's call them the “Free Shires”, where no government exists between Kent and the Fens, or from Lancaster to Berwick. How will the people in these places keep out the armies of pre-existing dictatorships?

The reasons for a government to invade the Free Shires are obvious. They will contain new, profitable, highly advanced factories. Their labour force will be excellently educated thanks to competitive schooling. The Free Shires will provide havens of liberty and achievement for the most enterprising, the most productive and determined professionals and businessmen. The people and property of a free society are attractive prizes for any latterday Alexander to seize. Part-time militia and imported mercenaries may prove too few or too expensive to resist determined statist assaults. Besides, who wants a war on their home territory?

Yet the rump of the United Kingdom, (or the People's Republic of Britain), the Soviet Union and even an expansionist France may threaten the newly liberated free British. What is to be done? The libertarians cannot rely upon conscription or tax-funded armies. Is defence possible?

MORALITY AND DEFENCE

The answer is yes. Firstly, however, the moral values which underpin liberty must be applied to any question of policy - including defence. Morality and effectiveness, I believe, must be the justifications and the attractions of anarchism. Morality in this case means that the libertarians' defence

programme must harm only the Bad Guys: those who choose to attack. Effectiveness means that the policy actually keeps the invaders out.

THE NATURE OF STATIST DEFENCE

Look how states “defend” their “citizens” today. They extort huge sums of money (taxes), from their victims. They maintain huge, professional, full-time armies which create a vested interest in armament and warfare. Often, these armies are supplemented by, or even comprised mainly of, military slaves known as conscripts. This is an immoral state of affairs. It gets worse. When the government in question goes to war, the effects are obscene. There is a massive loss of life, health, happiness and property on “both sides” - regardless of which individuals want, and which reject, the war. Cities are razed to the ground and farmlands laid waste. Industries are confiscated - nationalised or renationalised - to support the slaughter. Refugees, caught in the crossfire, are forced to leave a lifetime's production to seek an uncertain future elsewhere, abandoning their homes and workplaces to looting, shellfire, or neglect. Now, most libertarians accept that anything a state does is immoral, expensive, and incompetent. To preach successfully to the unconverted, however, libertarians must come up with a persuasive (practicable) and attractive (moral) alternative.

The problem which libertarian defence must solve is the deaths and other sufferings of millions of innocents: those who do not choose to take part in the war. The answer, I believe, lies in Public Choice Theory. Let us look at warfare economically.

AN ECONOMIC/PUBLIC CHOICE ANALYSIS OF WAR

Why do wars happen? Because somebody wants them to. Who wants wars? Those who profit from them. Who profits from wars? The leaders of governments.

Leaders enjoy ruling. Foreign “involvements” can keep domestic dissatisfaction quiet. The promise of colonial loot can appease the material wants of the governed. Wars give rulers an excuse to tighten “discipline” - control - over their subjects. The same logic applies to governing itself. Its rewards are high: power, prestige, official residences, cars, yachts and aircraft. The personal cost of all this, to the rulers themselves, is relatively low. The oppression of subjects or future subjects, the constant need to lie and distort facts, the struggle to remain top dog: all these are prices which leaders are willing to pay.

The task of the libertarian defence forces is twofold: to make the price of tyranny or war too high to bear, and to

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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY



leave the governed unharmed and therefore neutral with regard to the Free Shires.

The price must be personal, immediate, and harsh. It must be borne by the leaders themselves.

THE RATIONALE OF ASSASSINATION

This is why I propose, as the mainstay and front-line of the defence of a free society, a policy of *selective assassination* of government leaders.

Morally, this proposal is sound. Top-level assassination hurts only volunteers - the willing tyrants. It leaves the innocent alive. If rulers choose to rule and to go to war, their lives become forfeit because they are acting coercively towards their subjects and intended conquests. As a "natural rights" libertarian, I do not consider that the Hitlers, the Kennedys, the Gadaffis or the Attilas have any right to mercy. Those who plan and order the deaths of millions deserve to die. After all, who else is there to blame?

The practical side looks more complicated, but it isn't. Professional assassins are cheap. Compared to the billions required to finance NATO-style armies; the few million pounds needed to recruit a tiny Assassination Corps is peanuts. Free societies have a great deal of wealth. Voluntary public subscriptions to a Fighting Fund could do most of the work. What's a fiver a month compared to invasion or income tax? The businessmen, millionaires and humble retailers, have much to lose by being invaded. They would gladly cover the cost of recruitment and training of a tiny band of tyrannicides. Flag days, poppy days ("Never Again" ...), Peace Aid concerts, T.V. Advertising, jumble sales, sponsored walks, insurance premiums - there are thousands of sources of money in a free society, and such sources would be willing to pay well. I'll bet that the militia and mercenaries would happily chip in, just to keep in barracks in dull, peaceful old Blighty.

THE MECHANICS OF ASSASSINATION

How would assassination work? Take the USSR, ready and able to parachute Spetnaz into the Free Shires. Radio Moscow makes threatening noises about "capitalist imperialism" endangering the peace of Europe. All Aeroflot flights are cancelled, their aircraft return to Russia for a new paint job and very different passengers ...

The head of the Assassination Corps - call him Colonel X - informs President Gorbachev that henceforward, every Soviet spy, diplomat, "trade official" and military attaché on Earth is fair game for the Corps' marksmen, grenadiers and engineers. Remember, the Free Shires have no diplomatic, military, administrative or defence bureaucracies to infiltrate. Assassins work independently, unknown to each other. The KGB and GRU would have little chance of catching any of them in time, let alone all. How long could Gorbachev remain in power as Western newspapers and T.V. stations report daily that "Another Soviet official has been shot ..."? No Soviet boss could stay alive long for "permitting" such international humiliation. The other Politbureaucrats would replace him, sharpish. Bombing the Free Shires would do him no good. The assassins are known to have funds and orders to continue the bloodshed indefinitely. The Assassination Corps has no central HQ, and Colonel X is unknown and probably lives abroad. Would the remaining democracies allow the irradiation of the North Sea coast to catch a few hit-men? It is doubtful. Besides,

where are the privatised Cruise missiles and Trident submarines? Nobody has heard of them since Liberation Day ... The Soviet Premier will be forced to purge his hawks, perhaps blaming the killings on their incompetence or treason. He might even benefit from the propaganda coup of "negotiating" a peaceful settlement with Free Shires diplomats. At least he's still alive and in power. He comes to terms because he has two other choices: his "retirement" due to "sudden illness", or, if he goes to war, the prospect of a short, dull life counting tinned rations three miles beneath the Ural Mountains. If all this is explained to him in advance, he may not even *try* to threaten the Free Shires.

A New Napoleon would face a similar problem. Versailles and the Elysée Palace are dull places to hide in, closely guarded, for life. Or until after the next election. There are always Frenchmen willing to earn hard currency or self-respect by killing their Head of State. It's a Gallic custom at least as old as the French Revolution.

Idealist, "selfless" fanatics are mortal, and know it. More importantly, these paranoid individuals rarely believe that their successors will rule in the proper ideological fashion. What use is martyrdom if the Army, or the Moderates, or the Extremists take over once you're dead? Does Khomeini trust his subordinates to administer Islam properly? I doubt it. Better to desist from death-squadding the English, stay alive and keep the Revolution pure ...

CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVE . . .

Now, you may recoil, sickened by my brutality in suggesting such a scheme. Consider this: a governmental soldier is one among millions. He is expensively trained, using stolen money, to operate on a continental, or even global, battlefield. His weapons are so deadly and have such a great range that he cannot fail to kill many non-violent, non-volunteer civilians. In statist war, millions of innocents die. Not so with the assassin. He is one among a hundred or so colleagues. His weapons are small, and capable of a minimum of bloodshed and destruction. He is trained to kill the guilty - despots and their murderous hirelings. He is indoctrinated to leave innocent foreigners unharmed. This is because his employers do not want foreign outrage to force the democracies to invade the Free Shires and confiscate their businesses. Only the guilty die.

I have left a lot out of this essay. Will there only be one Assassination Corps, or a number? Damocles Corporation competing with Tyrannicides International to protect Britons in the Middle Eastern Oilfields, Oswald Associates vying with Avengers Ltd., to keep Britain free of Soviet Parachutists? How will intelligence be gathered? Answer, possibly: dictators' subjects are discontented, and capitalists have hard cash to pay for fresh information. How will the Free Shires spread propaganda to assuage "World Opinion" - Global TV? These are details for peace entrepreneurs to solve. Perhaps they could be solved *now*, before Liberation Day.

A word of comfort to those who say that there do not exist on Earth the men who could get profit and succeed in such a business. Freddie Laker, as an RAF bomber in a statist war, destroyed many lives and much property, for a pittance. Later, he made his first fortune *protecting* the lives and liberty of many Germans by helping to break the Berlin Blockade. Today's world has no dearth of entrepreneurs. An anarcho-capitalist Britain would have them in abundance.

Will the real Colonel X please stand up?