

We are living in exciting times. From Europe to Africa to South America totalitarian socialism is crumbling and human liberty is advancing in many parts of the world. With little more than their bare hands and raw courage, ordinary people on every continent are rejecting tyranny and demanding their freedom.

We are eyewitnesses to the realization of Victor Hugo's famous maxim, "An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come."

Without Liberty, No Other Human Values are Possible

Liberty is the freedom to act as you please so long as you don't coerce others. Liberty means you can associate with others voluntarily, you can speak and publish freely, you can practice the religion of your choice (or none at all), keep what you earn, run your own business, and love and live as you please (so long as you don't violate the rights of others).

We need liberty to think, to create, and to fulfill our individual and unique potential. Liberty is as much a requirement of our *psychological* nature as food and air are requirements of our *biological* nature.

When liberty is denied, economies stagnate, cultures deteriorate, science declines, living standards fall, and the human spirit languishes. Liberty is essential for any decent and humane society.

Liberty is such a compelling and important value that even brutal dictatorships claim to support it. Tyrants say they are promoting "higher" freedoms – such as "national security", "economic equality", or "the common good." The graveyards of history are filled with the corpses of those deceived by such claims.

The Soviet Union, Communist China, Nazi Germany and other 20th-Century totalitarian nations murdered and tortured hundreds of millions in the name of "economic equality," "socialism," and "the common good". Even the United States imprisoned over 115,000 Americans of Japanese descent during World War II in the name of "national security."

As Benjamin Franklin observed in 1759, those who give up their liberty in exchange for government promises of security, end up with neither.

Countries which deny liberty to their citizens are the most brutal, poor, and miserable places on earth. In the end, tyrannies fail because they are based upon coercion, and coercion is fundamentally incompatible with human nature and achievement.

Coercion vs. Voluntary Association

We need others for most of what we want out of life: companionship, friendship, family, recreation, and wealth. A hermit living alone on a desert island may be able to survive, but his living standard and lifestyle will be little better than that of an animal.

There are only two basic ways of getting what you want from others: voluntarily or coercively. When you

deal with others voluntarily, others deal with you because they want to, because they receive some benefit – material or psychological. The tools of voluntarism are friendship, trade, community, compassion, and enlightened self-interest.

In *coercive association*, you get what you want from others by deception or fear. The tools of coercion are intimidation, threats, fraud, and physical violence.

Voluntary association promotes trust and respect, and provides benefits for everyone.

Coercive association creates fear and distrust, and victimizes some at the expense of others. A guiding principle of any free society is voluntary association.

Individual Rights: Essential for a Free Society

Individual rights are the recognition by others that voluntary association is fundamental and you should be free to live your life in peace. Your rights include:

- Freedom of speech, press, religion and assembly;
- Freedom of association;
- The right to defend yourself, including the right to own the means of self-defense, such as guns;
- The right to keep what you create and earn; and
- Freedom of enterprise and the right to own property.

The right to property – the freedom to acquire, control, use and dispose of material possessions – is essential. Without property rights, no other rights are possible. Without the right to publish and read you have no freedom of press and little freedom of speech.

Without the right to own religious books and support houses of worship of your choice, you have no freedom of religion. Without the right to earn a living and keep what you earn, there is no right to life. Without the right to own and use weapons, you can't defend your life, home or family.

Freedom is Practical as Well as Moral

Socialists often argue that liberty won't feed a starving man – implying that liberty is less important than government-guaranteed security. But it is the *absence* of liberty that produces starvation and poverty. The freer a country, the more prosperous it is.

The poorest, most miserable countries in the world – North Korea, Iran, Syria, Zimbabwe, and former Soviet satellites like Turkmenistan – only have an abundance of government promises, fear, and suffering.

Coercion is a Principal Impediment to Human Happiness and Prosperity

The basic way you lose your liberty is when others coerce you; when others use force or the threat of force to compel you to surrender your property or labor, or prevent you from living as you please.

Not only does an aggressor harm you, he or she also frays the fabric of peaceful society by causing others to live in fear. When coercion becomes common, entire cities can become terrorized or destroyed. Just walk through downtown Chicago or Detroit after dark – if you dare.

Most of us reject and denounce coercion when it is committed by individuals. Thieves, swindlers, murderers, rapists, and thugs are generally scorned. Unfortunately there is a form of group coercion which is not always recognized as bad:

Coercive Government

A **government** is an association of men and women authorized by society to use force to compel obedience. The proper role of government is to protect your freedom and safety, from both domestic and foreign aggressors.

But as George Washington observed over 200 years ago, "Government is like fire. A dangerous servant and a fearful master." When government agents cross the line from defenders of your rights to violators, they become just another criminal gang.

Morally and legally, government agents are bound to protect our rights. When they don't – when police or federal agents rob, assault or kill innocent people, even if it's "by mistake" or for "good reasons" – they **MUST** be arrested and tried, like any other criminals to preserve justice and the rule of law.

How Coercive is Your Government?

One index of how coercive a government is, is how much of your income it takes in taxes. If the government takes half your income, you are working half your time for the state. If government takes 75%, you are 75% enslaved.

As recently as 1956, the average US citizen paid less than 10% of their income in taxes. In 1956, a single working parent could support a spouse and earn enough in 10 years to buy a new house. Today the government takes some 70% of the average person's income through taxes and regulations. Many people are working 2 or even 3 jobs, and even with both spouses working, fewer and fewer families can afford to own a house.

Your Liberty is Under Siege

Increasingly, police and federal agents in many western countries are acting like storm troopers. In the United States, anything you own can now be seized without trial under asset forfeiture laws. Over 5,000 people a week now lose their property, and according to the *Pittsburgh Press*, in 80% of the cases they are not even charged with a crime.

In Britain under the Official Secrets Act, police can

break into private homes without search warrants and detain alleged dissidents for years without trial. In Saudi Arabia, mere possession of a Christian bible is punishable by death. In Israel, the army bulldozes the homes of the *relatives* of alleged Palestinian sympathizers.

The Evil Empire is gone. But Big Brother is here. However, his days may be numbered.

Global Liberty or Global Oppression?

We are at a crucial turning point in human history. Rapid advances in science and technology have given us instant global communications . . . inexpensive international travel . . . solar energy . . . huge progress in preventing and curing diseases . . . individualized medical care . . . automated manufacturing . . . nano-technology . . . self-driving cars and drone delivery.

These breakthrough technologies could mark the beginning of a new age of universal wealth, freedom, and peace. But, unfortunately these same technologies also facilitate global tyranny and mass oppression: including . . . universal government surveillance . . . crushing dissent . . . the rapid spread of terrorist ideologies and violence . . . killer drones and push-button war . . . and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a tiny global elite.

For the first time in human history we have the means to either abolish poverty, disease, oppression and mass violence . . . or to spread those evils to the entire earth. Either future is possible, and the fate of the human race hangs in the balance.

If we understand and embrace liberty, compassion and justice, our future will be very bright indeed. But if we close our eyes and meekly submit to oppression, we could witness a new dark age.

Universal wealth or universal poverty? Global freedom and peace or a global police state? Utopia or hell on earth? The choice will be made by us.

A Global Free Society

From the concentration camps of Nazi Germany and the Soviet gulags, to Cambodia's killing fields, the 20th Century witnessed hideous despotisms. But coercive government of every variety – socialism, fascism, and the democratic welfare state – simply doesn't work and eventually collapses.

Liberty can be the wave of the future. The Internet, computer encryption, digital cash and other exciting new technologies can free people throughout the world.

With courage and dedication, the 21st Century will be the century of global liberty, peace and prosperity. Liberty is our best destiny – an idea whose time has come.

Jarret B. Wollstein is a co-founder of the original Society for Individual Liberty, one of the predecessors of Liberty International.

HELP BUILD A BETTER WORLD

Our Mission: Liberty International is building a worldwide movement of individuals and organizations that are working to bring about the benefits of a free, prosperous and peaceful world . . . respect for individual rights and liberties . . . and an open economic system based on voluntary exchange and free trade.

Since 1982, LI has organized 33 **World Conferences** that inspired many new networks, organizations and publishing projects...**Conference Scholarships** for hundreds of students and young activists from the ex-Soviet bloc – who are spreading liberty ideas to millions...**Economics Seminars in China** – annual high-level seminars reaching 100+ top students each year...**Liberty English Camps** that have reached 5,000 students in 30 countries and created many new activists...**Book Translations** that are spreading the liberty message in over 50 languages around the world... **Website Resources** like this paper and many other articles and videos to inform and inspire people everywhere.

Help Liberty International bring about a freer, better world for all of us by joining LI today!

A \$35 Basic annual membership brings you: **LI News** weekly electronic bulletins with news from our world network...**Print LI Updates** ...**On-Line Resources** - access to articles, videos and an international directory of liberty organizations...**LI Membership Card** in the “world freedom family”...**tax deductions** in the USA for LI contributions.

NOTE: Distribution of this pamphlet via other organizations shall not construe endorsement or opposition by Liberty International regarding any particular legislation or political campaign.



Liberty International

237 Kearny St. #120,
San Francisco, CA 94108-4502, USA
+415-859-5174 • info@liberty-intl.org
<https://liberty-intl.org>

Why We Need LIBERTY



How Liberty Benefits Everyone

by Jarret B. Wollstein

– LI EDUCATIONAL PAMPHLET SERIES –
