

War No More

by Jeff Smith

Take a three-year old by the hand, lead her over to the ubiquitous TV screen when the news is on, point to another child of whatever side suffering the unspeakable horrors of helpless parents, of brutal grown-ups, of inexplicable destruction and violence, and say, 'I paid for that.' If you pay taxes to the United States, the world's biggest, by far, exporter of weaponry, then you paid for that.

Cops and soldiers are not volunteers. They are paid by the state. Of the acts a state can take, even more important than war, which is hard to wage as a hobby, is taxation. The CIA is a figment of your taxation. So is NATO. The IMF is a figment of your subsidization. So is the whole military-industrial complex.

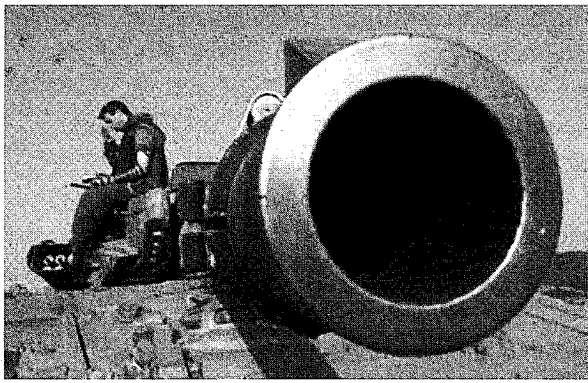
Just as a spanked child learns violence is okay, so do citizens of states that execute criminals, wage war on enemies, and arrest citizens who don't pay up, learn the same lesson. Taxes and subsidies — the confiscation and reallocation of private earnings — are wrong, even for a good cause; coercion creates them and they create coercion. Yielding to it, one becomes party to the insane investments of the state.

Peace from Plenty While it's true that one group often does attack another out of long-standing ethnic and religious differences, they often justify such belligerence on the grounds that they feel victimized economically by The Other. The sacker mentality of have-nots and the siege mentality of the haves would run out of steam were both sides accustomed to prosperity. Society can make their economy fruitful via geo-nomics — a system that would require government to operate without force:

(1) Pay citizens a dividend, helping people consume sufficiently.

Nazi propagandist Goebbels noted that although states may be bent on conquest, citizens have to be manipulated onto the battlefield. To keep the status quo when on top or disturb it when not, rulers send followers to kill. Between wars, the state enriches investors with weapons contracts and rewards "patriotic" voters with a military base.

Yet if military, police, and courts were the only expenses of government, if citizens paid for roads, schools, and clinics directly, then the cost of war would increase citizens' payments to the state and decrease their benefits. Then more people would vote against militarists and for representatives no longer beholden to rich old he-males, breaking this chain of command. And once basic choices are no longer made for them, citizens have no choice but



to step up to the plate and express their social responsibility.

(2) Quit seductive subsidizing, restricting government to protecting our rights gently,

Bismarck noted, "When goods cannot cross borders, armies will." To serve the cur-

rent owners of surplus, states levy tariffs on imports to lock up domestic markets and supply subsidies beneath exports to capture foreign markets (and reinforce such strategy with war). Yet producers may not need foreigners as consumers if at home their fellow citizens are not poor.

After funding basic law-and-order, government could divide public revenue among citizens. Paying dividends in lieu of subsidizing services, government could keep out of debt, thereby halting inflation. A lower cost of living plus this dividend enables the citizenry to swallow up domestic output of necessities.

It also contracts overflow of frivolities. Getting an extra income liberates people from a workweek that's now longer than in pre-automation days; people won't be cranking out so much. Not only would workers be in a better mood, there'd be less surplus output that makes its owners feel compelled to export.

(3) Quit coercive taxing, freeing the market to distribute fairly,

Men wage wars for slaves or, in today's parlance, a cheap supply of labor. Yet society makes labor more expensive by taxing wages. Were we to de-tax payrolls, it would be cheaper to hire workers. Affordable labor at home means less reason to enslave labor abroad. Similarly, were we to de-tax labor's substitute — capital — it would be more profitable to invest in machinery. As automation advances, the demand for unskilled workers recedes and with it the motive to oppress them. Plus, as technology advances, the demand for skilled technicians rises; such specialists are not as easily exploited.

(4) Charge fees for use of sites and infrastructure, spurring people to produce efficiently.

Territory is what is being ethnically cleansed. Last century, the revolutions in Russia, China, and Vietnam called "communist uprisings" by capitalists —

were, to the peasants who fought them, for land. Their slogan was "land and liberty." Had First World capitalists not sided with Third World gentry, peasants probably would have won without red help, and the world would never have suffered the totalitarianism that masqueraded as communism.

Having land in many hands quells wars both foreign and civil. While other Latin American countries wage ceaseless civil war for land, Costa Rica, with the widest distribution of land in the region, was the world's first to disband its army. When more people can own a farm or a place for business, then there's less competition for employment. When citizens own land and hold jobs, few want to revolt or trespass on foreign soil. To share land, a nation could collect and share land Rent. That makes land speculation unprofitable, so land-owners keep the supply of land high, and thus its price low. Every jurisdiction that has levied a hefty land tax — Denmark in the 1840s, California in the 1890s, Australia in the 1900s, and Taiwan in the 1940s — has broken up huge fiefdoms into many family farms without shedding one drop of blood. Also, being entitled to a share of Rent helps keep peace. One's Rent dividend would increase as the population grows, driving up land values. When newcomers, perhaps of a different background, move in, they would swell one's Rent share. Then the original occupants might even invite outsiders to become their new neighbors.

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Hegemony, foreign customers, cheap help, and turf can lose their lure after a reform of the flow of public revenue. Geonomics gives people what they want in harmony with what others want. Warriors would have to find their own motives beyond the economic realm, with no land, labor, market, or domination at stake.

What you can do: Look at a news photo of someone throwing a rock at a cop or soldier. Note that the thrower is male, young, and dressed in jeans, T-shirt, and tennis shoes, whether the thrower is in the US, Palestine, or South Korea. If you visit Latin America, watch a national movie; you will have the theatre to yourself. Then try to watch a hyped American flick; you will have to stand in a block-long line to buy a ticket. Note the downtown architecture; it's copied from a totally different climate. America is not a country in the conventional sense; it's where the forces of techno-change are launched. Like it or not, Americans lead. With leadership goes responsibility. People who watch and copy Americans would have one hell of an easier time demanding a fair share of Earth's worth if *(continued on page 37)*

Bad Guys and Good Guys...

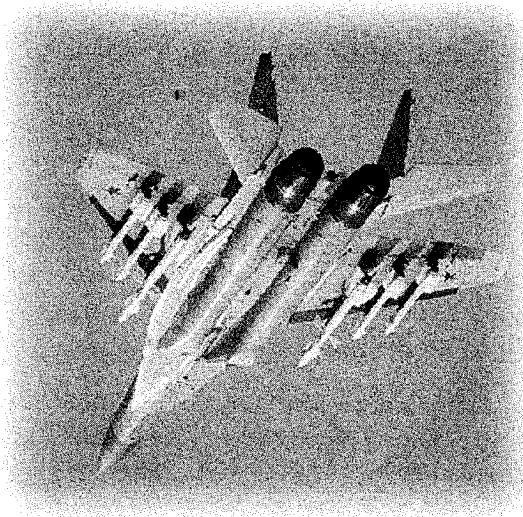
(continued from page 25) of all, no sooner do we get rid of all the bad people when new ones seem to arise.

As this theory groans under insupportable burdens, we may have to look for another theory about our troubles.

A useful clue may be found in the field theory of physics. We learn that the particles of physics are all pretty much alike, but behave very differently according to conditions in the field wherein they are operating. Electrons lazily ambling along will, depending on how you energize the field, act like destructive lunatics, or like a disciplined army, or like creative architects.

And so, in this world's wide fallow, we might do better searching out good conditions than searching out bad people. Do we not indeed find that where people are oppressed, exploited, despised, they are at their worst? And where they have the greatest freedom, the most of economic opportunities, and are accorded a human dignity, they are at their best?

The most effective way of getting rid of bad people is to convert them into good people by changing the field in which they operate. **GGJ**



War No More...

(continued from page 22)

Americans were to demand the same first.

It is not enough to protest the actions of corporations and dictators, especially while funding them. To rinse that blood off your hands, take a stand against taxation and subsidization. Take a stand for sharing the commonwealth of natural values. Einstein said, "monomaniacs get results." Make this monomaniac happy. Then may we all rest in peace. **GGJ**

Jeffery J. Smith, president of the Geonomy Society, publishes The Geonomist and organizes events in and tours to places considering reform of taxes and subsidies.