

# Defense and Security in a Stateless Society

By W. J. Whitman

## Part 1: *The Alternative to a State-sponsored Military*

One of the chief characteristics of a free society is the exercise of the **freedom of conscience** by the would-be warrior. No one should ever follow any arbitrary order unless it just happens to coincide with the guidance of his own reason and conscience. Despotism is predicated on blind obedience: tyranny is maintained by the obedience of the police and the soldiers to the politicians and “powers that be.” Josiah Warren, one of the early anarchists, asserted that “the freedom to differ” or “the freedom of dissent in subordinates” within military organizations is necessary in order to maintain a free society.<sup>1</sup> Warren held that an anarchist society would need to be defended by **citizen militias** in which the soldiers were totally free to leave at any time (and to disobey any order for conscience sake). The right of **conscientious objection** is essential.

Josiah Warren writes:

“The whole proper business of government is restraining offensive encroachments, or unnecessary violence to persons and property, or enforcing compensation therefor: but if, in the exercise of this power, we commit any unnecessary violence to any person whatever or to any property, we, ourselves, have become the aggressors, and should be resisted.

“But who is to decide how much violence is necessary in any given case? We here arrive at the pivot upon which all power now turns for good or evil; this pivot, under formal, exacting, aggressive institutions or constitutions, is the person who decides as to their meaning. If one decides for all, then all but that one are, perhaps, enslaved. If each one’s title to sovereignty is admitted, there will be different interpretations, and this freedom to differ will ensure emancipation, safety, repose, even in a political

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Practical Anarchist Writings of Josiah Warren*, “Ephemera and Miscellanea” (“Open Letter to Louis Kossuth,” 1864)

atmosphere. All the co-operation we ought to expect will come from the coincidence of motives according to the merits of each case as estimated by different minds. Where there is evidence of aggression palpable to all minds, all might co-operate to resist it: and where the case is not clearly made out, there will be more or less hesitation. Two great nations will not then be so very ready to jump at each other's throats when the most cunning lawyers are puzzled to decide which is wrong.

“Theorize as we may about the interpretation of the Constitution, every individual does unavoidably measure it and all other words by his own peculiar understanding or conceits, whether he understands himself or not, and should, like General Jackson, recognize the fact, ‘take the responsibility of it,’ and qualify himself to meet its consequences.

“It will be asked, what could be accomplished by a military organization, if every subordinate were allowed to judge of the propriety of an order before he obeyed it? I answer that nothing could be accomplished that did not commend itself to men educated to understand, and trained to respect, the rights of persons and property as set forth in the Declaration of Independence; and that here, and here only, will be found the long-needed check to the barbarian wantonness that lays towns in ashes and desolates homes and hearts for brutal revenge.”<sup>2</sup>

The State, as a monopoly on the “legal” use of coercion, is inherently evil. Its authority rests solely on soldiers and police. As long as the State can trick soldiers into fighting in its wars and police into enforcing its bullshit laws, the State remains strong and despotic. The moment that the police and the soldiers stop obeying the State, at that very moment a society becomes a free society.

In 1917 in Russia, there were two revolutions: the February Revolution, a popular revolt that led to the fall of the czar, and the October Revolution, when the Bolsheviks put a new

---

<sup>2</sup> Josiah Warren, *True Civilization*, Ch. 1 (in *The Practical Anarchist Writings of Josiah Warren*)

government in place. The February Revolution was characterized by the refusal of soldiers/police to do the bidding of the political powers. The October Revolution was characterized by a return to statism and tyranny—it was when the soldiers and police began to obey their “superiors” again that Russia fell back into the chaos of statism.

Alexander Berkman writes:

“It was during the war that the Russian Revolution started, because of the dissatisfaction of the people at home and the army at the front. The country was tired of fighting.... The soldiers had had enough of slaughter; they began to ask why they must kill or be killed—and when soldiers begin asking questions, no war can continue much longer.... Some regiments revolted; others refused to fight. More and more frequently the soldiers fraternized with the ‘enemy’—young men like themselves, who had the misfortune of being born in a different country; and who, like the Russians, had been ordered to war without knowing why they must shoot or be shot. Great numbers dropped their guns and returned home. There they told the folks about the fearful conditions at the front, the useless carnage, the wretchedness, and disaster.”<sup>3</sup>

A free society can only come about when the soldiers recognize their own free will, listen to their own consciences, and exercise **civil disobedience** and **conscientious objection** by refusing to fight for unjust causes, regardless of what their “superiors” tell them to do. The anarchist proposal is to put the “infantry” and the “war-fighters” in charge of the military. The “politicians,” “officers,” “generals,” and such should only facilitate organization and tactics. At the end of the day, it must be up to each individual to decide for himself whether or not the suggestions of the leaders are worthy of being followed. Under such arrangements, the military could no longer be used as an instrument for pursuing the political goals and economic interests of the “powers that be.” The existing military structure is a system of slavery. The soldiers are exploited and sent off to fight and die for oil, gold, natural resources, and whatever else the “powers that be” feel like sacrificing lives for! Under an anarchistic organization of the military,

---

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Berkman, *The ABC of Anarchism*, Ch. 15

which would be the replacement of the centralized military with a decentralized federation of citizen militias, the soldiers would no longer be exploited by the political and economic elites.

## ***Part 2: The Alternative to State-sponsored Police Forces***

Security is a service that is both useful and necessary for the preservation of society. It is a basic principle of economics that all goods and services will be provided in the most efficient way and at the cheapest price under conditions of pure competition. In the early days of the anarchist movement, Gustave de Molinari raised the question as to whether or not this principle would also hold true for the production of security services. The State always holds a monopoly on the production of security and defense services. Yet, it is a natural law of economics that a monopoly will provide worse service at higher prices than the same services would be provided at under conditions of pure competition. If services are provided in a competitive market and the customers are allowed to freely choose between different service providers, competition tends to force companies to constantly improve their services and reduce their prices in order to keep up with their competitors. The end result is that free competition will naturally lead to better services at lower prices. Monopolies, on the other hand, will always provide worse service and have higher prices than they would if they were forced to operate on voluntary principles in a competitive market. Thus, it is a natural necessity—based on sound economic principles—that State-sponsored police services, within a monopolistic statist system, will provide the worst possible service at the highest possible price. This is even more so in the case of the State than in the case of any other monopoly; for all other monopolies still rely on voluntary payment for services, and customers can always choose to go without the services altogether; but the State is funded through extortion (taxation/theft), so that the State-sponsored police forces will be funded involuntarily, regardless of whether or not the citizens even want the “services” provided by the police. The State is the worst of all monopolies. Thus was the conclusion of Gustave de Molinari.

Gustave de Molinari writes:

“If there is one well-established truth in political economy,  
it is this:

“That in all cases, for all commodities that serve to provide for the tangible or intangible needs of the consumer, it is in the consumer’s best interest that labor and trade remain free, because the freedom

of labor and of trade have as their necessary and permanent result the maximum reduction of price.

“And this:

“That the interests of the consumer of any commodity whatsoever should always prevail over the interests of the producer.

“Now in pursuing these principles, one arrives at this rigorous conclusion:

“That the production of security should, in the interests of the consumers of this intangible commodity, remain subject to the law of free competition.

Whence it follows:

That no government should have the right to prevent another government from going into competition with it, or to require consumers of security to come exclusively to it for this commodity....

“But why should there be an exception relative to security? What special reason is there that the production of security cannot be relegated to free competition? Why should it be subjected to a different principle and organized according to a different system?”<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin Tucker, an early libertarian socialist (a.k.a. *anarchist*) theorist, writes:

“Anarchism, in dealing with this subject, has found it necessary, first of all, to define its terms. Popular conceptions of the terminology of politics are incompatible with the rigorous exactness required in scientific investigation. To be sure, a departure from popular use of language is accompanied by the risk of misconception by the multitude, who persistently ignore the new definitions; but, on the other hand, conformity thereto is attended by the still more deplorable alternative of confusion in the eyes of the competent, who would be justified in attributing inexactness of thought where there is inexactness of expression. Take the term ‘State,’ for instance, with which we are especially concerned to-

---

<sup>4</sup> Gustave de Molinari, *The Production of Security* (“Competition in Security?”)

day.... Seeking, then, the elements common to all the institutions to which the name 'State' has been applied, [the anarchists] have found them two in number: first, aggression; second, the assumption of sole authority over a given area and all within it.... That this second element is common to all States, I think, will not be denied,—at least, I am not aware that any State has ever tolerated a rival State within its borders; and it seems plain that any State which should do so would thereby cease to be a State and to be considered as such by any. The exercise of authority over the same area by two States is a contradiction.”<sup>5</sup>

Benjamin Tucker held that the funding of security services should be done entirely voluntarily and that competition must be allowed between the various organizations that provide security services within a free society. He draws a parallel between security services and insurance services, suggesting that security services could be established within a free market as *defensive associations in which people might freely insure their person and property against aggression and theft*.

Tucker writes:

“It is perfectly true that voluntary taxation would not necessarily ‘prevent the existence of five or six “States” in England,’ and that ‘members of all these ‘States’ might be living in the same house.’ But I see no reason for Mr. Read’s exclamation point after this remark. What of it? There are many more than five or six Churches in England, and it frequently happens that members of several of them live in the same house. There are many more than five or six insurance companies in England, and it is by no means uncommon for members of the same family to insure their lives and goods against accident or fire in different companies. Does any harm come of it? Why, then, should there not be a considerable number of defensive associations in England, in

---

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin R. Tucker, *Individual Liberty*, Part 1 (“Sociology”), Chapter 2 (“The Individual, Society, and the State”), Section 1 (“The Relation of the State to the Individual”)

which people, even members of the same family, might insure their lives and goods against murderers or thieves? Though Mr. Read has grasped one idea of the voluntary taxationists, I fear that he sees another much less clearly,—namely, the idea that defense is a service, like any other service; that it is a labor both useful and desired; and therefore an economic commodity subject to the law of supply and demand; that in a free market this commodity would be furnished at the cost of production; that, competition prevailing, patronage would go to those who furnished the best article at the lowest price; that the production and sale of this commodity are now monopolized by the State; that the State, like almost all monopolists, charges exorbitant prices; that, like almost all monopolists, it supplies a worthless, or nearly worthless, article; that, just as the monopolist of a food product often furnishes poison instead of nutriment, so the State takes advantage of its monopoly of defense to furnish invasion instead of protection; that, just as the patrons of the one pay to be poisoned, so the patrons of the other pay to be enslaved; and, finally, that the State exceeds all its fellow-monopolists in the extent of its villainy because it enjoys the unique privilege of compelling all people to buy its product whether they want it or not. If, then, five or six ‘States’ were to hang out their shingles, the people, I fancy, would be able to buy the very best kind of security at a reasonable price.”<sup>6</sup>

An anarchist society would have a free market. People would be allowed to associate, trade, and interact freely. Within this free-market system, there would be competition between different security companies. The model proposed by Molinari and Tucker would have security companies that doubled as insurance agencies. When the customer goes to an anarchist security agency, he voluntarily takes out insurance on his person and property. The protection-insurance agency would be responsible for protecting his person and property from aggression and theft;

---

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin R. Tucker, *Individual Liberty*, Part 1 (“Sociology”), Chapter 2 (“The Individual, Society, and the State”), Section 6 (“Liberty and Taxation”)

and if they failed to prevent aggression and theft, the customer would file an insurance claim and the company would have to give him a just compensation for damages. The security/insurance company would, therefore, have an incentive to go after the criminal in order to get remuneration for the victim. If the security company failed to find the aggressor or thief and, consequently, could not get remuneration from the criminal, the company would have to pay the insurance claim to the customer entirely out of its own store of money.

As a general rule, I am not too fond of “anarcho-capitalism,” but I will give credit where credit is due. The anarcho-capitalist writers, specifically Hans-Hermann Hoppe and David Friedman, have done considerable work on the development of anarchist theory in the realm of market alternatives to State-sponsored police forces. They have built upon the framework laid by Molinari and Tucker and further developed and elaborated upon these ideas.<sup>7</sup>

An alternative model might be a system of anarchist communes combined within a larger anarchist federation, with each commune having its own citizen militia (functioning like a national guard), wherein the citizen militia might serve the police function within the local commune. The militias within the federation would be associated and co-operate together in order to deal with criminal activities and defense needs that affected more than just the local commune or required the militia to take action outside of the boundaries of its local territory. However, this anarcho-communist alternative is predicated on the existence of an anarcho-communist federation. I do not think that any such federation of anarchist communes is likely to come about in the near future, yet I think that the Ricardian socialist model described above would create a stable anarchist society and allow anarcho-communists to freely associate and organize in order to build up such a federation. Whether or not the abolition of money and markets is even possible (or desirable) is still debatable, but the anarcho-communist must realize that the abolition of money and markets will not take place in our lifetime. Therefore, I believe that anarcho-communists should support left-libertarian market-oriented solutions to the problems of crime, theft, aggression, and tyranny.

The essential characteristics of the State are such that the State must necessarily tend towards corruption. The institution of government itself has inherent qualities that create incentives for the State to do things that it ought not to do. Rampant corruption among the police in a society organized on statist principles is not a temporary flaw of the current system that can

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Hans-Hermann Hoppe’s *The Private Production of Defense* and David Friedman’s *The Machinery of Freedom*

be overcome: rather, it is a necessary consequence of the essential characteristics of the system itself. Despotism, tyranny, and aggressive foreign policy are not problems that can be overcome without abolishing the existing system. The State itself necessitates corruption, tyranny, and aggression. The State cannot exist without such things; and its existence necessarily leads to more of the same things. Every generation of conservatives looks to the past as an example of how their society used to be great and wonderful, but this is only because “the past,” as they conceive it, is merely a myth that was put together by the historians of the status quo. The writers of every generation since the beginning of written history have looked to “the past” as an example of “the good society” and the present as a corrupt society that is headed in the wrong direction. The truth is that “the past” was the same as the present; we were merely not present to witness the past as it really was, so we buy into the conservative mythology of the historians. The reality is that every “State” and every “government” in the history of the world has been despotic and evil. Some of them were worse than others, but none of them were good. It is a natural necessity for them to be evil—by definition, they cannot be anything else! A system with government-police forces will necessarily have more crime than a stateless society and a government-military necessarily creates less security for the nation as a whole than they would have under a stateless organization of society.

Alexander Berkman writes:

“It is a profitable business, this law-making. Have you ever stopped to consider whether our courts, police, and the whole machinery of so-called justice really want to abolish crime? Is it to the interest of the policeman, the detective, the sheriff, the judge, the lawyer, the prison contractors, wardens, deputies, keepers, and the thousands of others who live by the ‘administration of justice’ to do away with crime? Supposing there were no criminals, could those ‘administrators’ hold their jobs? Could you be taxed for their support? Would they not have to do some honest work?

“Think it over and see if crime is not a more lucrative source of income to the ‘dispensers of justice’ than to the criminals themselves. Can you reasonably believe that they really want to abolish crime?

“Their ‘business’ is to apprehend and punish the criminal; but it is not to their interest to do away with crime, for that’s their bread and butter. That is the reason why they will not look into the *causes* of crime. They are quite satisfied with things as they are. They are the staunchest defenders of the existing system, of ‘justice’ and punishment, the champions of ‘law and order.’ They catch and punish ‘criminals,’ but they leave crime and its causes severely alone.”<sup>8</sup>

The very existence of the State creates an incentive, as well as a means, to *legislate* crime into existence by outlawing voluntary interactions and behaviors. Thus, the State has created “victimless crimes.” Rather than protecting persons and property from aggressors and thieves, the existing system is designed so that the police will catch, in order for the judicial/penal system to prosecute and punish, people who do things that the legislators arbitrarily prohibit. Thus, we have a system in which most of the people that are called “criminals” are people who have done absolutely nothing to harm anyone. In my opinion, the police are more often the real criminals within such a system than are the people that they arrest and issue “citations” to.

There is a drug problem in America. There is also a rape problem in America. The police cannot possibly furnish a solution to either problem because the police are the primary cause of both!

The “War on Drugs” created the drug problem in America and perpetuates the problem. People can do drugs all day long and it is **not** a problem unless they harm someone else in the process; and even then, it is not a “*drug* problem” but a problem of one individual harming another. The “War on Drugs” created the conditions that lead to drug-related violence. We have never had a case of drug-related violence involving producers and/or sellers of legal drugs (pharmaceuticals). The reason that there is drug-related violence is because we have “criminalized” drugs. As a consequence of this, the only people who enter the drug market are people who are already on the “wrong side of the law.” Moreover, a producer or seller of illegal drugs can swindle his customers or even commit aggression against them without any fear of punishment. The customer will get in trouble if he calls the police on the dealer. The police State creates conditions that incentivize the use of fraud and violence by people in the drug industry.

---

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Berkman, *The ABC of Anarchism*, Ch. 10

The best way to solve the “drug problem” is to end the “War on Drugs.” The less that the police do, the less of a problem there will be. It is the police who are really to blame for this problem in the first place. Moreover, drugs would be safer if they were legal because legitimate dealers could establish drug stores in a competitive market. These businesses would only want to sell drugs that were safe, as they would want to build up a good reputation in order to keep customers coming back, as well as to ensure that they stay ahead of the competition. Harder drugs that happen to be popular simply because they are easier to produce and last longer than more mild drugs would become less popular as the free market would allow for easier and more efficient production of drugs like marijuana and magic mushrooms. Such drugs are much safer and are generally preferred to the alternatives anyways. Both marijuana and psilocybin mushrooms are relatively safe, non-addictive, and even beneficial in many cases. Additionally, the sellers of the drugs could be held accountable for their actions if they sold dangerous drugs (drugs laced with poison, for instance) to their customers. For example, a customer that got sick as a result of consuming an unsafe drug might file a “civil suit” against the business, and a protection-insurance agency might come after the business-owner, looking for remuneration or monetary compensation. In such a stateless society, the drug dealer would have every incentive to provide the safest product.

The rape problem is similarly caused largely by the police and their policy of enforcing whatever arbitrary laws the politicians happen to put in place. In a free society, prostitution would be legal. The only thing that you have a natural and inviolable right to ownership of is your own body. As Daniel Suelo observed, “The oldest profession [prostitution] is the most honest.” You have the right to use and abuse your own body. I’m not saying that you ought to prostitute yourself, but that you have a natural right to do so. If prostitution were legal, it would be as easy to get laid as it is to get a hamburger! This would take away much of the incentive for a would-be rapist. It would be easier for him to just go to a brothel! Moreover, prostitution would be much safer for all parties involved. The prostitute and the client would both be afforded equal protection under the law, women would be less likely to get pimped out against their will, prostitutes would be less likely to get raped, etc. Legitimate brothels would arise and competition would encourage such institutions to practice regular STD testing of their employees and clients. The better job the brothel did of preventing the spread of STDs, the better its reputation would be and the more business it would get. Sex-trafficking, rape, and sex-slavery would be greatly

reduced in light of the creation of legal alternatives that meet the same demands. The problem of sexually-based crime would largely be reduced if the police would just stay out of the way and stop being thugs.

In a society with free access to sex, marijuana, and psilocybin mushrooms, all sorts of mental health problems would become less common. It has been scientifically proven that the chemicals produced by sexual intercourse and by these drugs can serve as the most effective treatment for many forms of psychosis: OCD, PTSD, Bipolar Disorder, agoraphobia, depression, and virtually every known anxiety disorder. A society comprised predominantly of mentally healthy and psychologically stable people is bound to have less crime than a nation like ours where the majority of the individuals within the populace are suffering from some sort of psychological defect.

The police should be replaced by anarchistic alternatives, such as competing protection-insurance services, neighborhood watches, and other voluntary non-monopolistic security forces. These organizations would be providing services in exchange for voluntary payment (either in the form of voluntary membership dues or else in the form of payment upon receipt of services). As a consequence of these security forces operating as an ordinary business or association, there would be no incentive for the enforcement of arbitrary law. The only function of such security forces would be the protection of persons and property and restorative/reparative justice—i.e. an anarchist “police” force would try to prevent harm from coming to a person and/or his property, and they would seek to get reparations to compensate the victim of the crime. Under such a system, there would be no incentive for the “police” (if we may even call them that!) to go after “victimless crimes.” It is only within such an anarchistic framework that a libertarian society can possibly be realized.

I do not have the time to go into all of the details about the legal framework of such a society, but suffice it to say that many anarchist writers have written extensively on the topic of “law and order” in a stateless society.<sup>9</sup> Anarchism is a well thought-out and developed political theory, and a completely rational and ethical idea. It is not a naïve ideology, but a comprehensive political philosophy. The leading anarchist writers happen to be professors of law, political philosophy, history, and economics. Some of the big names in anarchism were even outstanding

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Lysander Spooner’s *Free Political Institutions or Trial By Jury and Legal Treatises*; Gary Chartier’s *Anarchy and Legal Order*; Edward P. Stringham’s *Anarchy and the Law*, etc.

military leaders (there were dozens of them from the Spanish Civil War era, i.e. 1930s, and several from the Russian Civil War era, c.a. 1920).