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A New Year: Time for Hope and Determination **by Jacob G. Hornberger**

Happy New Year from FFF!

As we enter this New Year, it is easy to surrender to thoughts of despair and despondency, given the prospect of perpetual war, perpetual terrorism against Americans, and perpetual governmental infringements on the civil liberties of the people.

We need to resist that temptation.

Regardless of what happens in the near future, the course on which our nation has embarked is not a fixed and immutable one. As long as there are ideas and ideals, things can change for the better, and sometimes quite unexpectedly. There is a very good reason that totalitarian governments hate the free flow of ideas: government officials know that ideas move people, that they have consequences.

Think about how life was in the Soviet Union, where government control over people's lives was omnipotent. Think about how dark and hopeless it must have seemed for the people living under that regime. The government had all the guns and all the troops. It had the power to spy on people and monitor their activities. Since it owned people's income, it could spend to any extent it desired. It could conduct wars on aggression against independent countries. Resistance to the state was handled by consigning the dissident to the Gulag. Fear was ingrained within everyone. Talk about the temptation to succumb to despondency and despair!

And yet, ideas brought the whole perverse system down, peacefully. How many people would have ever dreamed that that could happen?

Consider the following words of Andrei Sakharov and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, two of the Russian dissidents whose writings helped to inspire the Russian people to resist their own government and to move in a new direction:

“The simple step of a courageous individual is not to take part in the lie. One word of truth outweighs the world.” -- Alexander Solzhenitsyn

“Were there no ideals, there would be no hope whatsoever. Then everything would be hopelessness, darkness -- a blind alley.” -- Andrei Sakharov

“Justice is conscience, not a personal conscience but the conscience of the whole of humanity. Those who clearly recognize the voice of their own conscience usually recognize also the voice of justice.” -- Alexander Solzhenitsyn

“Intellectual freedom is essential to human society -- freedom to obtain and distribute information, freedom for open-minded and unfearing debate, and freedom from pressure by officialdom and prejudices. Such a trinity of freedom of thought is the only guarantee against an infection of people by mass myths, which, in the hands of treacherous hypocrites and demagogues, can be transformed into bloody dictatorship.” -- Andrei Sakharov

Today, no one can deny that our nation is moving in the direction of more and more government control and intervention in our lives -- in the direction of omnipotent government. Those who favor such a direction suggest that there is no choice, given the perpetual threat of terrorism. To defeat terrorism requires us, they say, to surrender our rights and freedoms. Don't worry, they assure us, it will only be temporary -- just until terrorism is finally wiped out for good.

The temptation, especially for those who have been taught that it is their civic duty to support their government in time of war, is to support whatever the federal government calls for or does during a time of crisis. Perhaps this is the ultimate tragedy of public (i.e., government) schooling -- ingraining in every student from the first grade on up that the “good citizen” comes to the support of his government in time of crisis, without even asking whether his own government's wrongdoing has contributed to the crisis or whether the government's response to the crisis is in the best interests of the citizenry. And when the war is perpetual and metaphorical, that means perpetual support for whatever the government does.

We must resist that temptation. History has shown that people who surrender their liberties under the false pretense of security always rue their decision. We must remember our heritage -- a heritage of liberty and resistance to tyranny, which produced constitutional restrictions on the power of our own government. Keep in mind: the first ten amendments to our Constitution do not give us rights; they protect our rights from being taken away, not by terrorists, but by our own government officials. Our rights, as the Declaration of Independence correctly states, pre-exist government.

We must continue resisting the trend toward omnipotent government. We must continue fighting to reverse the tide and move our nation in the direction of freedom and limited government.

That's where the power of ideas come in. As long as there is a free flow of ideas, there is more hope than ever that we can reverse the socialist, statist, interventionist tide and get our nation back on track. As everyone knows, the Internet has magnified that power exponentially.

There have been conflicts of vision in American history with respect to both our economic system and our nation's foreign policy. Our Founders chose a free-enterprise, capitalist system. Their 20th-century successors rejected that system in favor of a socialist one. Our Founders chose a noninterventionist foreign policy. Their 20th-century successors rejected that policy in favor of an interventionist one.

Analyzing societal problems is much like what a physician does when he examines a patient. The doctor comes up with a diagnosis and gives a prescription. If his diagnosis is wrong, then the prescription will probably be wrong as well.

For example, government officials (including public-school teachers) have long argued that the stock-market crash in 1929 was due to the failure of America's free-enterprise system. Thus their prescription -- a prescription they have sold to every public-school student since 1929 -- was socialism and regulated society, in the name of "saving free enterprise."

There was one big problem, however, with their diagnosis: It was wrong. If they had correctly diagnosed the problem, they would have pointed to the Federal Reserve Bank, a socialist enterprise that had been established in 1913, and the prescription would have been to end the socialism and restore free enterprise and a sound monetary system.

It's the same with respect to foreign policy. Federal officials argue that terrorism is caused by foreign hatred for America's "freedom and values." So their prescription has been to declare a perpetual war on terrorism, which involves perpetual and ever-increasing infringements on the rights and freedoms of the American people. Under this diagnosis, there is no hope for the advocate of liberty because there is no hope that terrorism will ever end. Perpetual despondency and despair are very logical responses to a perpetual war on terrorism, including a perpetual infringement on the rights and liberties of the people.

But what if the roots of terrorism against Americans instead lie with the U.S. government's interventionist foreign policy, including its bombs, embargoes, blockades, bribes, torture, support of brutal regimes, training of foreign death squads, intimidation of weak regimes, sales of weaponry to brutal dictators, taking sides in disputes, and serving as international policeman and interloper?

Then there is tremendous room for hope because at least there's a way out of the crisis. Yes, it involves the difficult task of rejecting one paradigm and embracing another, but at least there's a way to restore normalcy to our lives and, more important, to achieve a free society -- and that possibility, no matter how difficult to achieve, provides hope.

For many years, you have financially supported the libertarian think tanks and foundations because you have considered us your "point men" in the fight to restore freedom, free markets, and limited government to our land. We are able to write and publish and speak, spreading ideas on liberty on your behalf, but we have been able to accomplish this only because you have supplied us with the financial means to do it.

Your donations are the reason that such organizations as The Foundation for Economic Education, the Ludwig von Mises Institute, LewRockwell.com, the Cato Institute, The Future of Freedom Foundation, the Reason Foundation, the International Society for Individual Liberty, and many, many more are out there fighting for the principles of the free society. (Check out the links page on FFF's website for a more complete list: <http://www.fff.org/aboutUs/links.asp>.)

These are your think tanks and foundations because you have kept them going over the years. The people who work in them are your Sakharovs. They are your Solzhenitsyns. While there might be intellectual differences between the various think tanks and foundations from time to time, make no mistake about it: Every one of us is fighting to resist the sovietization of American society. We are fighting to restore the principles of individual freedom and free markets that made our nation great. We are more determined than ever to take our nation back from the socialists,

the collectivists, and the statist. And we're going to do it. We just need your continued help to pull it off.

Again, happy New Year to you and your family from FFF, and may the New Year bring us closer to the free, prosperous, and peaceful society that our Founders and our ancestors envisioned for us.

Mr. Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.