

The Tyrant's Dilemma

or

How the Game Ends

19 Feb 08

There are two things that all Tyrants must do: 1) Collect Tribute (taxes), and 2) Suppress the People. If he does not collect Tribute, the Tyrant will go broke and be out of business; if he does not suppress the People, they will not give him their money – and he will go broke and be out of business.

Unfortunately for the Tyrant, profitably suppressing a People involves a huge overhead – soldiers, bread, and circuses are expensive! And if the Tyrant is too energetic in suppressing the People, he will find that he has a population of unproductive slaves with no zest for life. There is a joke from the old Soviet Union coming out of a worker's mouth, "We pretend to work for them, and they pretend to pay us." If there is no Production in excess of bare survival, there is no wealth to steal!

History is quite silent about a slave mentality creating pioneers in advancements of science and the arts. However History is replete with the success stories of ex-slaves and free men who carved empires out of nothing. So the problem is that for there to be anything for the Tyrant to steal, the People must enjoy enough Liberty to be relatively prosperous. But history has also shown that a People given too much Liberty, will struggle against their chains until they break free. So it turns out that the best Slave is the one who believes he is Free. The "free" man will put up with quite a lot of Suppression and still act Free and be productive.

But the level of Suppression is never constant. Because the Free Spirit of Man never gives up, a People must be continually suppressed more and more to keep them under control. And with that increased Suppression, men start to recognize their true status – and they start to resent it.

And yet another problem for a Tyrant is in his or her innate humanity. Even Tyrants, tend to favor their families, especially their children. So Tyrants will tend to foolishly allow power to flow from their strong hands into their untested children's weaker hands. If Junior is not skilled in balancing Liberty and Suppression, oops, Game over!

A Tyrant, like a parasite, is detrimental to the People. It may be nice to have a Tyrant to protect you from other Tyrants, but if the price is death anyway, why bother with the middleman? When folks get really desperate, they generally try to take it out on the Tyrant who is suppressing them. So, just as the best Slave is one who doesn't know he is a Slave, a successful Tyrant (parasite) can be one whom the People (the hosts) don't recognize. The People can then be sucked dry and never know who is doing it to them.

More human nature – folks like to be recognized for their accomplishments. What fun is it being better than everybody else, if nobody knows it? Tyrants, even ones whose best interests lie in keeping a low profile, can tend towards being braggarts. But once the People discover the secret, the Tyrant is liable to be ripped to shreds.

And when a Tyrant is in stealth mode for an extended period, the Game can devolve from Hidden Tyrant vs. Unaware Slave, to Unaware Slave vs. Unaware Slave. In this one, the Tyrants are so well hidden that they themselves fall victim to their own suppressions. They have to pretend that they are like everyone else, that they too are subject to the suppressive laws-of-the-land, even to the extent of allowing themselves and their families to go to jail. The Game then goes on automatic, and a Tyrant Government of the People, by the People, and for the People, grinds the People into a homogeneous pâté of self-parasitic dementia.

The ancients had a dramatic symbol of a dragon eating its own tail symbolizing regeneration from self. In this case, the dragon doesn't eat its tail, it suckles at its own anus until it dies of self-induced toxicity.