

D R. T O M O R R O W

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LESSONS FROM THE FUTURE

PRIVATIZE -- THE WHOLE COUNTRY?

An increasingly common word in our lexicon lately has been "privatization". Britain has accomplished the most so far, selling off thousands of socialized housing quarters, British Airways and other government corporations and now their waterworks systems. Government-owned electrical companies are next to go on the block. This will be the biggest sale of all, worth billions of dollars. Almost everything sold so far has turned from a government loser (that paid no taxes) to a private sector winner (that did). Many have moved from being on the dole, to owning homes, holding shares in private corporations and, as values go up and down, learning more about the age of the risk-taker.

In many other countries, both in the west and increasingly in Eastern Europe, ownership and management is changing from faceless, non-responsible, non-wealth-creating government bureaucrats to risk-takers and taxpayers who win or lose depending on ability and the will of the gods.

If we have moved this far, why not go all the way? Privatize the whole government!

I can already hear the cries. "Surely, you must be kidding". I'm not.

In the distant past, when we were individual hunters, we didn't know we would gather into tribes with tribal leaders -- the "government" at that time. As millennia and events changed, feudal chiefs developed, then with the help of a bit of the advanced technology of the day -- the stirrup -- feudal kings. Apparently the emergence of these "advanced governments" was never anticipated. It was an evolution.

Centuries later, as almost identical bureaucracies developed in both democratic and totalitarian regimes, a new type of government with few kings or shahs, but plenty of presidents and prime ministers emerged. Job want-ad columns today are not exactly bursting with listings for tribal or feudal chiefs, kings or shahs. What makes you think present forms of government are going to live forever? Man as a species has survived massive change over the centuries. His societies haven't.

What I consider the best "government" in the world may already exist. It has no army. Everybody either is working or otherwise enjoying themselves. Violence is unknown, military forces with their debilitating costs do not exist and laughter and happiness is everywhere. This "country" is incredibly clean, well and profitably-managed and the denizens are always learning, experiencing, being entertained, relaxing or working.

Their products sell all over the world. In no country are their products rejected. They are in unbelievable demand. During a recent visit, I suggested a game for my companions: try to find a brown leaf. No one succeeded.

This country is: EPCOT, the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, right next to Disney World in Florida.

How can they accomplish so successfully what many governments are failing to do: protect their citizens, provide jobs, defend their currency, entertain and educate, enhance rather than destroy their environment and provide a "country" where everyone wants to get "in" -- and can.

Three months ago no one would have dared suggest that the recent changes in eastern Europe could have happened so quickly. One country's leader was released from jail to fill the job. When a country finds suitable politicians in jail, times are changing. Such events make people think differently. When that occurs anything can happen -- and fast.

Ask your favorite government leader how secure he feels today. If he answers truthfully -- an oxymoron -- he has to say "not very". In times of panic, chaos or rapid change, the bizarre rapidly becomes acceptable.