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A Letter to Conservatives

William Gillis

25 June 2020

Oh dear, conservatives, you've been looking kinda confused and down recently. What a bind you've gotten yourselves into! You instinctively and viscerally oppose the popular uprising against the police state. But everything you can point to was done in the American revolution.

It's helpful if you curate your feeds to see only the worst examples of looting and opportunism, you can imagine that this is broadly characteristic of the uprising and avoid ever seeing feeds showing examples of wanton unprovoked and unchecked police brutality. But you know that America was launched by riots, attacks on store owners, looting, and property destruction. Stamp sellers were lynched. Valuable tea was destroyed. Various things were thrown at colonial lawmen. This was all just a part of a popular uprising.

You've wanted to believe that you would have sided with the founding fathers, but Thomas Paine clearly thought police brutality was *worse* than when that same brutality came from rioting rabble.

To make things even worse, the ruler of this nation tried to send the military against protests *on the anniversary of Tiananmen Square*. The same historic slaughter that he celebrated as

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a sign of strength and clearheadedness from the Chinese Communist Party.

Surely you are different from the conservatives in the thirteen colonies who thought Britain a lesser evil than revolution. Surely you are different from the conservatives in the Chinese Communist party who thought rolling back state power would lead to chaos.

You're you, they're them. You're not an occupying *Monarchist Tory*. You're not a member of the *Chinese ruling party*. They were bad, you are good. It goes without saying. And so no comparison can be made. Stop making it.

If it helps you can go read some breathless feeds compiling every single time a sickle-and-hammer symbol showed up at one of the protests. By trying to roll back police power that handful of younger folks are no doubt poised to seize power themselves and institute a brutal regime of terror. If it helps further, you can imagine that all the tame "socialists" in the DSA that are to the right of mainstream European leftist parties are each nefarious Lenins, lurking, ready to pounce. If that won't do the job, you can likewise imagine that the anarchists — who have repeatedly fought the tyranny of state communists throughout history — are themselves would-be-Stalins. A street fair protest in Seattle put up some cardboard signs? Well let's have FOX news photoshop the same dude carrying a rifle onto every picture of it. If it helps, we can take a hip hop MC who shoved back at someone tagging over a mural and pretend that he's a warlord. I'm sure that honest fellow Andy Ngo has some comment on his blog about how the protesters are extorting local businesses, nevermind that every local business laughed at that claim and the cops sheepishly admitted their only proof was Andy's blog comment. It's Red Dawn! It's here! Sprinkle around some more memes where AOC's eyes bug out and you can seriously imagine her sending people off to gulags for playing golf or whatever.

Never mind the actual concentration camps, the actual secret police, the actual mass surveillance, the actual military on our streets.

Communists!

And look, I get it. Communists and liberals are wrong about a ton of shit. They're incredibly naive about state power. They don't realize you can't just give it an unchecked monopoly on force and expect it to not seize more and more power.

I'm sure that makes this situation even harder for you. This is a popular uprising *against* state power that is — in part — willing to speak in a language the state actually understands. Burning down a precinct is about as “don't tread on me” as it gets.

It's not like just collecting guns makes the state go away. Sometimes you have to go out and stop it.

You're used to arguing with naive liberals who don't like guns and don't get that expanding the state is hard to undo. It's a little chilling to realize that well beyond “liberals” lies the actual left, and a whole lotta actual leftists own guns for the same reasons of stopping tyranny.

Ah, but you recoil at this. Not just at the notion of leftists sincerely concerned with racism, classism, sexism, etc but who don't believe the state is a fix. You recoil in horror of the notion of *them* having a revolution or even a justified revolt. *They're the enemy*. They're crazy. They believe in all sorts of stuff about gender and pronouns and goddamn if you'll investigate or read their arguments and published science very far. It's just crazy. Everyone can tell! It's new and different and counterintuitive to you.

Liberals and leftists are so damn infuriating. They're the worst enemy. You know their most infuriating bullshit. Never can you allow yourself to believe they could be right on something. Could be doing good.

Maaaaybe you could support an uprising against police power if it looked, you know, respectable. Not scary. Lots of

white people from the suburbs wearing clothes that you're used to. Maybe they'd march down the street in formation with their rifles and tight discipline.

That's how the founding fathers did it... oh, oh right, they used disorganized chaotic guerrilla methods. Kinda like when protests organically rise from the bottom up, letting regular folks spread out and fight in all manner of ways. Creating distractions, spreading the forces of tyranny thin.

Maybe if they all carried American flags rather than occasionally denouncing America. That's what the founding fathers did after all! They all draped themselves in the British flag and said nice things about the regime they saw as tyrannical...

Well okay, you know what, maybe you *are* a monarchist after all. Maybe you *are* a Tory. So what? American conservatives have always been in a bind about the American Revolution. Better to just come out and say that it was either actually bad or such a singular, magical, irreproducible, and exceptional moment that you can betray and dismiss everything the founding fathers had to say about regular violent revolt against rulers. It's not applicable because it's NEVER applicable.

Feeling better?

Look, it's not that bad of a jump. Tucker Carlson is an outright white nationalist and he's got the most successful slot on FOX. Trump threw out all the old conservative orthodoxy, why not throw out the more revolutionary founding fathers like that scruffy Thomas Paine. Bunch of anarchists that lot.

And that's the thing isn't it. ANYTHING is better than anarchy. It's anarchy or civilization. *Everyone knows*. Surely. Either we have someone in absolute power or we have people competing for power and it's just a brutal mess. Those libs, those deluded kids, they whine about privilege but you know what's really privileged? Not constantly fearing for your life because roving criminals threaten you constantly. That's totally how the rest of the world lives when police go away. The constitu-

This is what it means to be an adult, after all, to murder the inquisitive, caring, rebellious child within.

At the end of the day we *need* rulers. We need there to be one uncontested army of murderous brutal criminals supreme over all others, just as we desperately need the simplicity of violence itself to avoid tangles of ethics, sociology, and the like that start growing whenever *all* the gangs of brutes recede — only under the thumb of a gang can our poor atrophied little brains get along without all the anxiety and confusion that complexity and personal responsibility brings. Diligent investigation is not just painful! It's dangerous!

But take a sigh of relief my friend! You made it! There were so many dangerous twists and turns along the way, all threatening to send you tumbling off into actual investigation. You might've gone off and read academic literature or anarchist and leftist arguments! Thankfully you're at rest now. You survived the anarchist menace. You're finally at peace.

tion isn't a suicide pact. The most important thing is to preserve the state, whether tyrannical or not.

And the state is unrelenting force. Force that will never lapse and let someone commit a small crime. Break a window? Tag a building? Steal some chips? That justifies *whatever* level of force gets them to stop and *respect* the law. To respect police. If you have to murder them or cripple them for life, that's clearly worth it. The power system must come first. Only after no one can ever challenge or bypass our rulers can we petition them to be less mean. First things first!

That's how it's always been. That's how it'll always be. For some reason libs don't understand basic human nature.

What's this about anthropological studies of stateless peoples? They often have a significant level of peace and freedom without anything like the police? Well those are obviously just savages. Sure if you're just sitting in the mud and there's nothing to steal, maybe there's no need for cops but no civilized folk would ever... okay, what's this? There are numerous archeological examples of city dwelling cultures with relatively advanced technology who had no signs of central administration, no sign of rulers, armies, police, or violent deaths over hundreds if not thousands of years? From the social revolution centered on Cayonu 9000 years ago that lasted two thousand years to the highly advanced Harrapans contemporaneous with the empires on the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates? Okay, again, fuck that lot. Fuck some hoity-toity "expert" archeologists speculating. If the experts disagree with you that's just one more reason academia is untrustworthy! It's *never* the case that what is true on expert investigation turns out to be contrary to one's personal common sense! Keep thinking like that and you'll disbelieve your own eyes and start thinking the world is round!

Okay, so there's a few contemporary examples of societies very different from our own with things that look nothing like our police force, from the Zapatistas to the Rojavan Kurds. But look at those guys! They're marginal! They live off in the jungle

or in a desert, and sure they've held off the Mexican military and literally ISIS, but they're small and marginal, no one cares.

Don't worry, my friend, if you keep repeating these responses you can avoid thinking about how even just one of these counterexamples disproves any claim to universal human nature.

In any case there's an out! Even if people *can* behave differently in different contexts and not need cops, we don't live in those contexts! The world today is brutal and ugly, filled with bad people out to do bad things! Just watch the evening news! They would never misrepresent the world to emphasize the most salacious examples and cater to bigoted but popular narratives! FOX news are your *friends*. They had your back when your liberal nephew acted like a prick on facebook that one time. They're always there to point out the bad people massing at the gates and comfort you with the knowledge that you're part of a wider family who will protect you.

And that's what cops do! Screw those ingrates protesting! The cops have always protected you!

They must catch all those murderers and thugs lurking in the bushes because one's never showed up at your porch! You see actors dressed as cops catching bad guys all the time, that's what they must do!

See, that's a pleasant thought! Now it's very important that you never look up statistics on what cops actually do and how few are ever involved in preventing a crime.

Okay, so that one time you were robbed the cop who showed up did so three hours later and barely filled out the insurance paperwork, looking bored and annoyed. But you *know* that cops prevent crime! Never mind that when cops go on strike crime goes down. That's absurd. At the end of the day you know that cops prevent crime because you've wanted to commit some crimes at points and the thought of going to prison dissuaded you.

Without that threat where would society be??

Well, okay, so rape is notoriously impossible to really prove in a court of law, because a lack of consent isn't really something that leaves a lot of objective evidence most of the time. Cops laugh at rape survivors and consistently deprioritize testing rape kits. But that's just how it is, there's a lot of fake reports around, thank goodness the cops are there to stop people from handling things on their own by making their testimony public and building a case in their community to create meaningful social pressures against rapists that don't involve sending anyone to prison.

Quick! Better look away before the tension there becomes apparent!

We have to have cops and law because they make things simple. Instead of different people believing different things, we all have to go along with a single conclusion reached in a court of law. It wouldn't be *fair* for someone to warn her friends about someone who raped her. How dare she give testimony in a decentralized organic way rather than in court! That would make society complicated! Different people might believe different things! We would have to each evaluate evidence, priors, trust, and harm. Different situations with the same category of infraction might warrant different responses!

That sounds like taking a ton of active agency and responsibility in our personal lives, we have government so we *don't* have to diligently think about that kinda stuff. A single gang of men with guns make the world simple for us. A simple society with clean edges and corners like our perfectly manicured suburban lawn.

This is what law and order is about protecting. It doesn't matter how heinous the laws, or how clearly the ruling gang are ruthless monsters... the state cleans up a messy world. It makes things simple for us. Like an abusive parent beating us for stepping outside The Rules. All we have to do is obey, conform, submit. All those messy complex thoughts and considerations go away!