

# A World led by Scoundrels

As you dutifully paid your taxes last month did you wonder about the role of taxation in shaping important historical events across the years? How is it that one of the most powerful forces structuring society has been largely ignored?

“The prosperity as well as the declining of nations has always had a tax factor. Human rights have suffered even more than nations – whatever the tax man wants, the tax man gets, including our liberty, should he so desire.”<sup>1</sup>

Historically taxes, more than ideology or armies, have been a powerful mover of people. The concept of an independent United States of America was born in the hearts of ordinary men who were frustrated by the harsh realities of “taxation without representation.” Their frustration led to the Boston Tea Party.

“Angry taxpayers can be a lethal threat to a government that institutes oppressive taxation.”<sup>2</sup>

History records that as taxes increase taxpayers rebel. There are identifiable phases which lead to destructive cycles. The initial phase is rampant tax evasion followed in some cases by flight to avoid tax. The second phase involves riots and the third is violence.

The first casualty of excessive taxation has always been liberty, followed closely by the nation’s wealth and strength. Good taxes are supposed to provide for the common defense of a nation. It is generally acceptable

for taxes to build an efficient infrastructure of roads and bridges for the good of all citizens. Beyond that legitimacy is questionable. Extreme taxation, which transfers honestly accumulated wealth from the productive sector of society to a non-productive sector in order to buy votes and perpetuate power for the politicians authorizing the transfer, is evil (because it will destroy us) and should be identified as such. Evil because it entraps, enslaves and enlarges the number of non-producers.

In the prosperity and poverty of nations, in revolts, revolutions and most of all in wars, taxes have played a pivotal (although virtually invisible) role in the great events of history. From Biblical days through the Middle Ages and on into the modern era, historians have focused on some *façade* as a ‘cause’ for war (i.e., slavery in the Deep South) when the real reason was taxes.

Over the entrance to the Internal Revenue Service building in Washington, D.C. are the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes: “Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society.” The question is, at what point do taxes become uncivilized? Without a doubt, “how we tax and spend determines whether Americans are prosperous or poor, free or enslaved, and most important, good or evil.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “*For Good and Evil*” Charles Adams, 2 & 3 *ibid.*  
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