

Presentation:
Libertarianism. Various Aspects of History,
Theory and Strategy

*Libertarismo. Varios aspectos de historia,
teoría y estrategia*

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In spite of the appearances the term “libertarianism” can mean things radically opposed (especially from historic perspective), sometimes so much that there exist ideas which even include socialism or capitalism *per se* among libertarian concepts. The name itself however connotes only some relation to liberty, but one can still wonder: to how understood liberty? Nevertheless it seems that what is truly shared by the concepts known as “libertarian” is the pursuit of voluntary relations among people in society excluding any coercion whatsoever. It should be noted that the pursuit is at least declarative, as it is still possible to argue over the accepted ontological assumptions about the world (including anthropological assumptions regarding humans and assumptions regarding origins, structure and functions of interpersonal relations) underlying the notion, as well as strategies adopted to the selection of means for the reach of goals.

Contemporary libertarianism is explicitly associated with the adherents of such moral and social-philosophy-ground ideas as individual freedom and freedom to voluntary association which seem, at least *prima facie*, to presuppose some negative sense of the notion “freedom”. There are political ideas being developed on that basis which defend the need for limitation of the role of politics in the society, which then leads to, as much as possible, decentralization of state (towards federation, region autonomy, localism). Therefore libertarian ideas set in opposition to the concept of state itself as the latter claims right to use violence in society (by making and executing law), as well as to the part of business and social organizations which owe their position at any rate to politics (so-called “crony capitalism” e. g. in the sphere of licensing business activity, taxation of the opponents, subsidies). Thus libertarian-

ism as a kind of political philosophy should be seen as an interpretation and systematic elaboration of “the law of equal freedom” as worked out by Herbert Spencer that can be paraphrased by saying that “one has freedom to do all that he wills provided that he infringes not the equal freedom of any other” or that “we should be allowed to do whatever we want, so long as we don’t hurt others”. This rule is interesting insofar as it expresses where individual freedom ends. It can also be understood as a rule maintaining equilibrium between freedom and equality of people in society; when it is violated then the person who violates it “gains more freedom” than the victim but the latter’s sovereignty and dignity is breached. Each case of not following this rule will lead to the asymmetry between freedom and equality. For instance Franklin D. Roosevelt in *The Second Bill of Rights* (1944) proposed the “economic bill of rights” which was supposed to guarantee e. g. specific rights to employment. But what about people who don’t want to work (or want to work only occasionally)? Roosevelt’s way of thinking leads us straightforward to Alexander Lukashenko’s Belarus where we have the “Act on Parasites” (taxation of people who do not work through the fixed number of days in a year) or to the citizens of North Korea who work as slaves abroad (e. g. in Poland they work 12 hours per day for \$75) under the threat of their families’ lives (as ONZ estimates, North Korea has already sent over 50 thousand of its citizens to compulsory work; thanks to that operation North Korean regime gains \$1,2 to 2,3 billion per year).

To conclude, libertarianism today may be in short introduced as a set of ideas combining on the one hand of values stereotypically connected to “the left” i. e. toleration, social acceptance to various minorities and fractions and military non-interventionism (in case of understanding foreign policy of politicians like Barack Obama the word “stereotypically” is crucial) and on the other hand attributed to “the right” fiscal conservatism, that is the statement that one should not spend more than one has and if one wants more one should work and make savings and not enrich oneself by means of political decisions, as wealth cannot be printed or politically guaranteed e. g. by minimum wage (also here the word “attributed” is crucial; under Ronald Reagan USA budget deficit mounted to \$200 billion compared with \$74 billion under Jimmy Carter). As Gary Johnson (Libertarian Party candidate in USA presidential run 2016) put well: libertarians are more culturally liberal than “the left” and more fiscally conservative than “the right”.