

Born to Win

Politics and Power

by Ronald L. Dart

There's a story that's making the rounds on the internet. This one is a true story. The version I have comes from the *Times* of London, and that's an impeccable source. What happened is well documented. You know, probably, that China has a policy of only one baby per family. Their problem is population—1.1 billion people in that country. They can't afford to allow their population to continue to explode because they can't produce the food to feed them. So, the government decided what we need to do is to put a limit of one baby per family.

Now, in this case the baby's mother (identified by Chinese newspapers as Mrs. Liu) was expecting her *fourth* child. Out in the countryside of China—where 70% of China's people live—they often have more than one child without punishment in spite of the policy. But in Mrs. Liu's case, she was forcibly injected with a saline solution to induce labor and to kill the child. This is an involuntary abortion going on. However, to everybody's surprise—including the family planning officials who had ordered the injection—the baby was *born healthy*. Normally, this injection destroys the infant's nervous system. Well, immediately after the birth (You know, "We've got to protect our policies.") they ordered the father to *kill* the child outside the hospital. The poor man refused to obey, but he was so scared of further punishment he left the crying baby behind in an office building where a doctor found it shortly after that. The doctor took it back to the hospital, reunited with his mother, he removed the umbilical cord (which apparently hadn't been done yet) administered vaccinations, and he sent the family home. When they got home, five officials were waiting for them in their living room. And during the ensuing argument, the officials grabbed the baby, dragged it out of the house, and drowned it in a paddy field right in front of the parents.

There was a big outcry in that province. The people contacted newspapers in the nearby metropolis on the Yangtze River, and it led to national media attention and forced the government to pledge it would punish the guilty officials. Right. They're carrying out *our* policy and we're going to punish them. Since the implementation in the early 70s, the one-child policy has been dogged by allegations that family planning officials forced people who break the rules into having abortions. The policy was introduced to ensure that China, a land historically beset by flood and famine, could feed all of its people—now 1.1 billion people—and they have to feed them from a mere 7% of the world's arable land. Last month, the family planning minister said he would not tolerate officials abusing women in order to achieve birth control targets. He said, "We have a strict policy. We deal with every violation by officials seriously."

Every violation by officials? The officials are carrying out policy. He was responding to media reports that, in one province, family planning officials held pregnant women in detention centers for violating the one-child policy. The government has recently restated its full commitment to the policy despite the abuses. The official news agency commented, "Without taking effective measures to slow down the rapid growth of its population, China would have 300 million people more than the current figure." A foreign demography expert said, "there are reports of people who have had more than one child being beaten up, ostracized by the community, their houses demolished—but it's not condoned by the central government." No, that's not condoned. But the central government makes the rules, and the people are just carrying out the rules. The doctor who tended this poor baby said, "How could they be so cruel? The child could have been looked after in a children's welfare home. How could they do it?"

How, indeed. This is a true classic of the abuse of power and in the old dictum: power corrupts. And there is a continuous line that runs through this instance. Near one end of the line is Nazi Germany. Most people forget that Hitler and the Nazis came into power in a free election. Germany was in near chaos at the time, and Hitler promised to solve their problems. He solved them all right. The trains ran on time, unemployment dropped, they came out of economic depression. He did the job, but it what a cost. And I don't mean economic cost; I don't mean money. It eventually cost the lives of millions of people—no one knows exactly how many—and that included a lot of German people. But the greatest cost of all was to the *soul* of the German people. No one knows what this policy will ultimately do to the soul of the *Chinese* people—when you have a whole generation who've grown up as only children. And because of the way in which this policy is carried out, with female children often being killed to make room for more males. There's going to be a whole generation of Chinese men with no women to marry.

The line that starts in Germany runs through the old Soviet Union on its way to China. God only knows how many people Communism killed in the Soviet Union, all in the belief that an elite group of knowledgeable people knew what was best for the masses, and they could make the decisions—they could decide what was good and what was bad. They could make all the policies and enforce all the policies and all the masses could do was go along with it. Never mind the cost to individuals inside those masses. The same line runs through religious cults and even some Western governments where the elite believe that they know what is best for the rest of us and they want to establish policies to *protect us from ourselves*. In the English-speaking world, we're lucky to have systems that protect the rights of individuals, but you'd be surprised how many of our leaders feel that those individual rights are really a *nuisance* and we would be better off without them.

It's in the nature of people to think that they know best. I mean, you think *you* know best. Your mom thought *she* knew best. Your friends think *they* know best. And when power settles in on an elite group of people, they start wanting to *impose* their "best" on everyone else. The problem is, no one can foresee the unintended consequences of any government policy. The people sitting up in their ivory tower who decided that it was best that Chinese couples only have one child per family didn't see that someday there would be men rounding up women and putting them into detention centers because they'd gotten pregnant one time too often. They didn't foresee that the local officials would actually grab a baby in an argument from Dad and take him outside and drown him in a rice paddy. They didn't see the *consequences* of their policy. And now that they do, they still hold to it and punish the people who carry out their policy.

In the Soviet Union, the world had seen a crystal clear example of the failure of central planning, and yet there are people in government to this day, in the Western world, who feel *they* can manage the economy better than the markets can manage the economy. Harkening back to Nazi Germany, you know, it's easy to see why people would be willing to give up a little freedom to solve their problems. They couldn't get food; their currency was worthless; their economy was a shambles. Nothing in their nation was working and they were willing to give up a little freedom to solve their problems. In the end, they gave up *all* their freedom. Now what is odd is the willingness of people *right now* to give up freedoms in a time of *unparalleled* prosperity, and one wonders if, in the end, we also will give it all up. Now, in this program we use the Bible as a platform to view the world, and there is a biblical illustration for this.

When Israel entered the Promised Land, they settled it according to the lots that God gave them. Every man and his family had a plot of land and maximum freedom to farm it, raise his children, love his wife, and grow old with dignity. But there was a downside: if he was lazy and he didn't work, he could go hungry. But, since everyone *knew* that, there wasn't a lot of hunger. You know, in a Soviet system, fear of the government might keep people at work. In Israel, well, it was fear of hunger. You know, there's been a time in our own country when it was *fear* that kept people at work—fear of losing their home, fear of hunger, fear of not having clothes to wear.

You know, fear is a downside in a way—but on another side, it keeps us moving. You see, freedom has its risks and responsibilities and people who live up to those responsibilities and take those risks become *stronger* in the process. But when those risks and responsibilities are taken away from us by government,

in the guise of giving us relief and making life better for us and improving our lives, they make us *weaker* in the process. In Israel at that time, there was no central government and no taxes. Everyone was expected to pay a tenth of their increase to God, but this was a *religious* obligation, not a civil one. And as far as we can tell, there was no IRS; there was no enforcement of the tithe. It was an act of worship, not civil obedience. Their *religion* was their welfare system. Hungry people had to be fed by their neighbors, who had a vested interest in keeping the *whole community* at work. So, when a man got into trouble, someone would help him—but along with the help came instruction, admonition, ideas, better ways of doing things. In other words, they *lifted up* their neighbor in the process. There's a short passage that describes what life was like back there. It says in Judges 17:6:

Judges 17

KJ2000

⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Now, the central planners and the elite people will see that as a bad thing. Israel needed a central government. They didn't have any business doing what was "right" in *their own eyes*. But, no, as we're going to see God never intended for Israel to have a central government. Israel's problem was that when they allowed their religious life to *decay*, the whole system decayed and became vulnerable to the nations around them. The result: small wars, loss of life, loss of crops, loss of livelihood. This led to repentance. You know, whenever things really go bad around us—when the whole world is coming apart—we have a way of going to our knees and praying and asking God to help us out, repenting of the things we've done wrong. And when Israel did that, God sent a judge—a leader—to bring them out of it.

This is the story of the Book of Judges in the Bible—a series of regional lapses, regional conflicts, and deliverance over quite a long period of time by many men and women. But it was a time of *maximum freedom*. But the problem is that freedom becomes *tiring* after a while because freedom requires work; it's a strain; it's a stress. Overcoming the problems we face oftentimes wears us down, and people start wanting to *lay down* the burden of freedom. This happened to Israel. It all came to a head during the days of Samuel. And that brings me, in my story, to 1 Samuel, the eighth chapter:

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

¹ And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

² Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba.

³ And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

And, finally, all the elders of Israel became tired of the whole thing.

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel to Ramah,

⁵ And said to him, Behold, you are old, and your sons walk not in your ways: [...]

This system isn't working.

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

⁵ [...] now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

What they are asking for, in the simplest of terms, is centralized government—the centralization of power.

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed to the LORD.

⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

This is what's really at stake, because in all the days up until this point God had been their king, but their *government* was decentralized. There was no central authority to fight their wars for them, collect their taxes for them, and to do all those wonderful things. And he says, "The rejection is not so much of you, Samuel; it's a rejection of carrying the *strain* of the freedom I've given them. They've rejected *me*." He says:

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

⁸ According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, with which they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also to you.

Now, take special note of this. It was God's intent from the beginning that Israel have *no king but God*. And, as their king, God had given them maximum freedom with all its headaches, with all of its frustrations, with all of its burdens, because it made them stronger. And he gave them *no* centralized governmental structure. Now he's going to give them what they want. This is the way God works: if you want it badly enough he will let you have it—along with all the consequences that go with it. You can't expect to have your own way all the time and expect God to make it work when you don't *listen* to him. So what would this centralized government they asked for be like? God speaking to Samuel says:

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

⁹ Now therefore listen to their voice: however, yet protest solemnly to them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

¹⁰ And Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people that asked of him a king.

¹¹ And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

You're going to have a military draft.

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

¹² And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

¹³ And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

Would to God our present king had only taken our daughters to be cooks. Verse 14:

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

¹⁴ And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive groves, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

¹⁵ And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

Here comes the IRS. It's no longer a freely-given tithe. Now they're going to show up and *take it*. And they're going to take your lands, and your houses, and your vineyards, and the things that produce your crops, and so forth. When you die, they're going to tax what it is that you had, so that your son has to sell the property in order to pay the taxes. That's the way it worked all those long years ago, and that's the way it works today. It's what you get for your government.

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

¹⁶ And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your best young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

¹⁷ He will take the tenth of your sheep: and you shall be his servants.

“You shall be his servants.” You’ll serve your own government. How long is it that we have to work every year to pay our taxes? Isn’t it sometime in May? It seems to me, I read somewhere that all the way from January through some date in May, we work to pay our taxes. And *after* that all the money we earn we get to keep. They became the *servants* of their government. God said:

1 Samuel 8

AKJV

¹⁸ And you shall cry out in that day because of your king which you shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. ¹⁹ Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, No; but we will have a king over us;

²⁰ That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

It’s incredible when you think back on it, isn’t it? That they would have the nerve to stand there and say, “We want a king who will go out and fight our battles.” Didn’t they know that the king is only *one man*, and he was going to have to take their sons and their daughters and go out and fight those battles? Don’t people know, even today, when they say, “Let the government do it.” that they’re talking about us? The government is nothing; the government doesn’t have anything of its own. For it to do things, it has to take *our* people, *our* money, *our* resources. And only then can the government actually *do* anything. And the big problem is that—whenever we begin more and more to turn these things over to our king, to our government, to the people that are in charge of us in this way—we keep turning over, one after another, *our freedoms*. We make our life *easier*. We get rid of our challenges. We no longer have to struggle and fight and learn and overcome our fears and take chances and risks, because the government will pay for this, and the government will pay for that, and the government will buy all of our prescription medications, and the government will pay our doctor when we’re sick. So we don’t have to worry about anything in our declining years. So we can become soft and complacent and willing to give up our freedoms.

Let me make one thing clear: I am not a Republican. I’m not a Democrat. I’m not a member of the Reform Party. I’m not a member of the Green Party and I’m not a Libertarian. I have no axe to grind in this election beyond a warning to *think carefully* about how much of your freedom you have already given away, and how much more you are *about* to give away. When I sit and I listen to these politicians give their speeches—and I hear them start out with their litany of promises—I get a cold feeling in the

pit of my stomach. They're going to solve all of our problems for us. They're going to take away our pain. They're going to give us all kinds of programs to make our life better. We don't have to worry about these things anymore, just vote for this politician, vote for that politician, and we will just not have to worry about much of anything. They will *take care of us*.

You know, in real life, when someone starts making all kinds of promises to you, don't you start wondering somewhere along the line, "Okay, how much is this going to cost?" When someone starts laying out lists of promises—"I'll do this. I'll do that. I'll do the other thing."—do you ever find yourself reaching back to put your hand on your wallet to be sure it's still there? But, you know, when I say, "Don't you start wondering what this is going to cost you?", I don't really mean money. As you turn over more and more of your responsibilities to the government—as you become more and more *dependent* on the government—don't you realize that you are serially giving up the freedoms that countless men have fought and died to gain? Don't you realize that you and I are slowly being made weaker and less able to fend for ourselves with every promise these politicians make?

You know, I can't help thinking—when I watch all of the political commentary and the ads I see on television, the speeches at political conventions—I wonder if the time hasn't come that we should stop rewarding these politicians for making *promises*. Don't we all know? Isn't it a joke? Aren't political promises the stuff of the late-night comedians? Doesn't everybody know that a politician's promises are worthless? Well, then, *why on earth* are we influenced by them as elections come along? Maybe we should stop start *punishing* them for their promises, and start rewarding politicians that tell the truth. Right now it's the other way around, isn't it? We actually *punish* politicians for being honest, for being themselves, for telling the truth, and reward them for their promises, for their smooth words. We will sit there and *know* that this man has lied to us before, and he'll make a promise and we'll *believe him again*. What on earth is going on in our minds?

When you see campaign ads that make promises, never forget that people like this think nothing at all of lying in their teeth. They are the elite, you see. These are people who know what's best for us, and they know that telling us the truth is not good for us. You think I'm exaggerating? The fact of the matter is, in their private councils, these people believe that it's not good for us to hear the truth—that if we hear the truth we'll make wrong decisions. If we'll hear the truth we'll vote them out of office, and that's bad for us if they're not in office to help us. They believe that they are our hope. They believe that they are our salvation. And therefore any lie they have to tell to get elected is justified because, in the end, they are our hope; they are our salvation. You know, there is a point in all this where a religious person ought to recognize *idolatry*—that there are people who are placing themselves almost like gods before us. Because they are our hope when *God* is our hope. They are our salvation when *God* is our salvation. But the worst part about it is they believe that whatever they have to do to get elected is justified because *they* are the people and wisdom will die with *them*.

You know, we ought to look more closely at our candidates when they speak to us—we should watch their eyes—and we should always realize that what we are getting may be a carefully-blended set of lies and promises that have *no relationship* to what these people really intend to do. Right now, they're in campaign mode and, I'm sorry, in the world you and I live in right now—with our media, our television, our newspapers, our radio—those people will be punished for being honest. They'll be punished by the press and they'll be punished by the people at the polls. And, in the end, we may get just the government we deserve.

Thanks for listening. 'Til next time, I'm Ronald L. Dart, reminding you that you were *born to win*.

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