

Practical Aspects of Gun Control, Part 1

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20 Jan 2013

In my previous essay on this topic [1], I was clear in my opinion that the way to reduce mass shootings is to lock up the dangerous people in appropriate mental institutions, not to impose regulations on the 150 million citizens who exercise their rights. I also mentioned then that I would address the practical aspects of "gun control"; this is the first installment, which addresses the importance of national culture.

1 The Cultural Aspect

The advocates for disarmament of the American people are constantly misinforming us with claims that other advanced nations have adopted "sensible" laws regarding gun ownership, and that we Americans should "get modern", join up with "civilized society", and either abolish the Second Amendment or neuter it with regulations. But these same disarmament advocates fail to point out (knowingly or not) that the real issue regarding the Second Amendment is not what kind of guns should be available; it is ultimately about the degree of individual freedom that the citizen possesses and how it is to be preserved; to what extent the people should passively trust any government (with its enormous powers); and whether in fact, any government is willing or capable of fulfilling its promises in times of emergency. The debate is not about guns per se, just as the First Amendment is not about the color of ink or the scheduling of talk shows.

The so-called American "gun culture" is nothing more than a by-product of the American "freedom culture". The advocates for disarmament claim that other nations and societies have "progressed" to the point that privately-owned arms are now unnecessary, and that the Second Amendment is an interesting but useless anachronism. It is in fact the other way around: many other nations and societies have "regressed" to the point that the individual freedom is being abolished in the face of bureaucratic tyranny. The nations of Europe were the first to develop the concept of individual liberty, but now most of them have abandoned it; a few illustrations should suffice to show that these so-called "progressive" nations are not worthy of emulation when it comes to firearm restrictions, since these same restrictions are symptoms of a larger problem, namely, the degradation of the importance of the individual.

The once free and vigorous Germans have fallen furthest. It was the Germanic peoples that infused the subjects of the Roman Empire with the notion of individual freedom, so foreign to Roman understanding. And so it was for many centuries, until the gradual encroachment of the state under the influence of the Prussians. The Germans were prepared for the scientific prescription of tyranny outlined by their fellow countryman Karl Marx in the 1870's. Only the scientific German mind could conceive of Marxism, the foundation of the modern systematic totalitarian systems of Fascism and Communism. For some reason, the Germans have gradually combined traditional duty with modern blind obedience. It was no surprise that the German people embraced Hitler when he said in 1933 [2]:

"Our aim is to draw from the midst of the people a class of leaders which shall be as hard as steel. When in this way the people have been rightly trained through its political leadership, then the social spirit will come to its own, for he who thinks only in terms of economics will never be able to think and act truly socially."

Or again in 1935 [3]:

"The question of fallibility or infallibility [of the government] is not under discussion; the individual has as little right to question the action of the political leaders as the soldier to question the orders of his military superiors."

The past few centuries of history shows that the average German will do anything that anyone with a government ID tells them to do -- "Tote that barge" -- "Lift that bale" -- "Round up those Protestants" -- "March those Jewish children into that gas chamber." Never a hint of protest, or questioning of authority; they have become so suppressed in their thinking that they no longer believe there is any legitimate need for self-defense; they implicitly trust all government employees. They are willing to have all means of resistance licensed and registered. They will not object to the universal weapon confiscation that Hitler implemented, simply because the government says they must. It is true that the people of Germany collectively own about 5 million firearms, subject to some of the strictest control in existence; each firearm must be licensed, and a justification for the license must be stated. Self-defense is not a valid reason.

The German mindset is nothing new. The German Confederation (1815 - 1866) was a full police state, complete with censorship, arbitrary searches, internal passports, no right to trial by jury, and no right to bear arms [4]. The German Empire (1866 - 1918) continued in much the same manner, complete with persecution of Catholics and protection of the anti-Semite National Socialists [5]. Even after the First World War, a civil service bureaucracy with a strong tradition of exercising absolute authority, and which retained all its traditional privileges, continued to dominate the German people [6].

The Germans have had their Frederick William, their Bismarck, and their Hitler; another one will arise sooner or later, and there will be no domestic resistance to him. Tyrants do not tolerate competition. When that new German tyrant emerges, he will find it a simple matter to seize absolute control by seizing all the guns; it will be easy because the registration and licensing requirements will point him to all the potential sources of resistance.

The British once had a long tradition of individual freedom, but has eroded since the Second World War. Apparently the British have fallen prey to the notion that guns are only for evil. They have lost their original notion of human dignity and the right to self defense; they are no longer a model useful to America. For some reason, the British no longer read Blackstone [7]:

"Both the life and limbs of a man are of such high value, in the estimation of the law of England, that it pardons even homicide if committed *se defendendo*, or in order to preserve them. For whatever is done by a man, to save either life or members, is looked upon as done upon the highest necessity and compulsion."

They no longer read even Hobbes. Here was a man who advocated the absolute divine right of kings, believed one was guilty until proven innocent, and endorsed the punishment of groups for the crimes of individuals; and yet recognized the immutable right of self-defense, both for oneself and for others [8]:

"Whensoever a man transferreth his right, or renounceth it, it is either in consideration of some right reciprocally transferred to himself, or for some other good he hopeth for thereby. For it is a voluntary act: and of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some good to himself. And therefore there be some rights which no man can be understood by any words, or other signs, to have abandoned or transferred. As first a man cannot lay down the right of resisting them that assault him by force to take away his life, because he cannot be understood to aim thereby at any good to himself. The same may be said of wounds, and chains, and imprisonment, both because there is no benefit consequent to such patience, as there is to the patience of suffering another to be wounded or im-

prisoned, as also because a man cannot tell when he seeth men proceed against him by violence whether they intend his death or not."

The modern British have even forgotten John Locke, who extends defense to liberty and property [9]:

The state of war is a state of enmity and destruction; and therefore declaring by word or action, not a passionate and hasty, but a sedate settled design, upon another man's life, puts him in a state of war with him against whom he has declared such an intention, and so has exposed his life to the other's power to be taken away from him, or anyone that joins with him in his defense, and espouses his quarrel: it being reasonable and just I should have a right to destroy that which threatens me with destruction. ... For I have reason to conclude, that he who would get me into his power without my consent, would use me as he pleased, when he got me there, and destroy me too when he had a fancy to it: for nobody can desire to have me in his absolute power, unless it be to compel me by force to that, which is against the right of my freedom, i.e., to make me a slave. To be free from such force is the only security of my preservation: and reason bids me look on him, as an enemy to my preservation, who would take away that freedom, which is the fence to it: so that he who makes an attempt to enslave me, thereby puts himself into a state of war with me. ... This makes it lawful for a man to kill a thief, who has not in the least hurt him, nor declared any design upon his life, any further than by the use of force, so as to get him into his power, as to take away his money, or what he pleases from him: because in using force, where he has no right, to get me into his power, let his pretense be what it will, I have no reason to suppose, that he, who would take away my liberty, would not when he had me in his power, take away everything else. And therefore it is lawful for me to treat him, as one who has put himself into a state of war with me, i.e., kill him if I can, for to that hazard does he justly expose himself, whoever introduces a state of war, and is aggressor in it.

And yet, the modern British subject cannot legally practice self-defense for themselves or their family, nor to defend their property, nor to preserve any liberty. While it is possible to obtain a Firearms or Shotgun Certificate, allowing one to own a gun, self-defense cannot be legally cited as the reason for wanting one.

Perhaps the Parliament decided that they should have a clean, tidy kingdom, and should not have to tolerate the Queen's innocent subjects going about defending themselves from her criminal subjects. Having adopted this notion that self-defense being obsolete -- regarded now as too messy, too violent -- Parliament decided it is better to disarm the innocent than to have this kind of inconvenience. Better the peaceful subject tolerate any indignity or violence than to resist. Parliament accordingly passed a series of laws disarming the people in response to a school shooting there, knowing full well that no law prohibiting self-defense will affect them personally any more than laws affect the Queen or the criminals. So the modern law-abiding British gave up all their guns (except for an occasional two-shot hunting shotgun) for Queen, country, and public safety; the only problem being that it has not made the subjects safe, since the criminal subjects do not care about the innocent or the law.

The French and most other European governments (except for the Czech Republic and Switzerland) have imposed similar restrictions on the people's ability to keep arms: requiring licenses and "justifications", and imposing limits on the number of cartridges that can be purchased annually.

The Chinese are certainly no model for America. Their entire history is one of enslavement by one warlord or another. There is neither a history of, nor a desire for, freedom as understood in the West. The Communists, simply the largest and most successful warlords, are now permitting a little economic freedom, but will never tolerate true political freedom, or any notion of the importance of the individual. They

will certainly never permit the notion of self-defense to catch on, nor permit the tools thereof to be possessed freely by the people; it would be the end of their reign.

The Japanese have a similar tradition of allowing themselves to be suppressed by arbitrary government power; it was only in 1945 they accepted the concept that the emperor was not a god. All guns are prohibited to the people, although the Yakuza (Japanese mafia) is not inconvenienced at all. That makes perfect sense to the powerful: sometimes the Yakuza works for the government, sometimes the government works for the Yakuza; but the taxpaying Japanese people are always at the mercy of both.

The people of India have a history similar to the Chinese, except they have been pushed around by tribal leaders and colonial masters rather than warlords.

Nothing need be said about the people of Africa: it is the only continent where slavery is still practiced, by blacks enslaving blacks, and sometimes Arabs enslaving blacks. This is the place where the notion of individual life and liberty is so suppressed that they are willing to watch two million of their children die of malaria every year because some bureaucrat at the UN outlawed DDT. It is the place where the genocides are most recent (Rwanda, Sudan, Zimbabwe) and in which children are fighters in the numerous tribal and civil wars.

The "rights of persons" is talked about in many places, but America is one of the few places left where those rights are taken seriously enough that the people retain the power to enforce them if necessary. America inherited these concepts from the British, who have now largely abandoned them. Only a small fraction of the American people believe that self-defense is evil, or that government can always be trusted so long as the people have the power to vote. Granted, the American politicians have made some progress in weakening these sentiments by increasing dependence on government programs. But for now, the American culture, generally speaking, still embraces not only the notion of liberty, but recognizes the need for arms in the hands of the people to protect it.

The historical aspect of gun control is considered next.

[1] Edward D. Duvall, "Retard Control, Not Gun Control", 26 Dec 2012

[2] Norman H. Baynes, *Hitler's Speeches*, London: Oxford University Press, 1942, Vol. 1, p. 482. The occasion was a speech at the *Fuhrertagung*, 19-20 Jun 1933

[3] *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 447. The occasion was a speech at the *Nuremberg Parteitag*, 18 Sep 1935.

[4] Ernest F. Henderson, *A Short History of Germany*, New York: Macmillan Co., 1906, Vol. II, pp. 335-339, 344, 345

[5] Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Contemporary Europe Since 1870*, New York, Macmillan Co., 1953, pp. 139-141

[6] Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany, 1840-1945*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 555

[7] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Book 1, Chapter 1, Section 2 (1765)

[8] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 14 (1651)

[9] John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, (1689), sections 16 - 18