

## Does Civilian Ownership of Firearms Actually Do Any Good?

Dear JPFO:

I have read – carefully – a number of sites about *Innocents Betrayed*. I plan to rent or buy the DVD. I need to find a rational connection between gun ownership and protection against the overwhelming force of barbarians, renegade states, totalitarian regimes and capricious governments.

The horrific human rights abuses taking place in Burma (Myanmar) have lingered for the past 50 years. There has been talk of a civil war – a popular uprising against the brutal military junta – ever since the colonels and generals took over. The odds of overturning the current regime are astronomical: 44 million unarmed civilians against a few thousand thugs armed to the teeth.

"We can overwhelm them," said a member of the resistance, "even without weapons. We have strength in numbers. They can kill many of us but they can't kill all of us."

I wonder what kind of bloodbath would ensue if both sides were evenly matched?

There is something logically askew about the artificial connection between the Second Amendment and self-protection against often insurmountable odds. Can you picture 300 million Americans headed for gun shops and acquiring formidable arsenals?

I don't think that the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto would have survived had they been better armed against the Nazi juggernaut. Or the Armenians against the Turks. Or the Maya of Guatemala – 400,000 souls – massacred by graduates of the CIA-funded U.S. Army School of the Americas. Or the thousands of Chileans who were "disappeared" by U.S.-backed Pinochet's goons. You get the point.

There is a substantive difference between a "militia" and nationwide ownership of guns. I need to find the ethos in the argument that we should all bear arms. I may or may not find it in *Innocents Betrayed* but I promise to give it an unbiased look-see.

Signed,

W. (A Child Survivor of the Holocaust)

## A Response from JPFO

Dear Sir:

Thank you for having an open mind and watching *Innocents Betrayed*. Truly we appreciate a person who gives the facts a fair hearing. It is quite possible that you will at least see our point even if you have a few lingering questions.

Your question is essentially this: "Can widespread private ownership of firearms really empower the citizens to deter or stop a tyrannical or totalitarian government?"

### The Statistics of Tyranny

First, let's note what Professor R. J. Rummel discussed in his book, *Death by Government*. In the history of the 20th Century, there were zero wars between what we would term "democratic" countries. The wars that killed so many millions involved either (1) non-democratic vs. democratic countries, or (2) non-democratic vs. non-democratic countries.

Second is another Rummel observation: governments mass murdered their own citizens, or civilians under their control (as with occupation), in numbers exceeding 170,000,000 in the 20th Century alone. Over 95% of those killed were murdered by non-democratic governments.

Third is JPFO's observation: the mass murder of at least 70,000,000 (perhaps many millions more) civilians (men, women and children) by governments in the 20th Century occurred in nations where "gun control" ideas and laws had taken a strong hold.

### Three Elements For Human Suffering

Hold the above facts in mind, and consider this three-element formula for horrific human suffering:

**(1) Evil exists in the world.** This concept sounds obvious, but actually there are legions of people, many of them highly-educated and highly-placed, who believe that "bad things happen because there is too much inequality of wealth and not enough education." Many of these people cannot accept the idea that Evil exists and that people are capable of doing Evil. They prefer the "poverty, disease, and ignorance" explanation for bad behavior.

If the concept of Evil needs proof, then consider just a few examples of terrible things done by people who are not poor and not ignorant: (a) when government leaders develop written plans to persecute and exterminate a disfavored group, and then carry

them out; (b) when a parent methodically goes from room to room strangling or drowning or stabbing several children; (c) when a young adult straps on a bomb and boards a city bus carrying people to work or school, detonates the bomb, and kills dozens of the people and seriously maims dozens more.

**(2) Imbalance of Power Creates Opportunities for Evil.** This point should be obvious, too. On the micro level, consider the Carlie Bruscia case. Remember how a security video camera caught the act of the predator contacting Carlie, then grabbing her by the wrist and taking her away. This is just one example, but it makes the point. Carlie was 12. The predator was 35 or so and a strong male. The predator was probably three times as strong as Carlie, plus he had a plan and a motivation. Carlie had much less strength and no plan for defense. It was nearly a sure thing that the predator would win. Carlie was brutally raped and murdered.

Consider the recent case where Iraqi terrorists shot down in cold blood a whole bus load of women and children. The victims were powerless compared to the terrorists. All it took then was an Evil idea, and the victims being selected. The power advantage of the aggressors made the rest easy.

Now on the macro level. The Framers of the U.S. Constitution worked to ensure that there was no great imbalance of power among the branches of government. In each branch of our Constitutional government there are checks and balances. Where government systems have checks and balances, and where these operate with open discussion and competition for votes, you have the sort of “democratic” society that rarely makes war on another “democratic” society. As Professor Rummel pointed out, unbalanced political power *within* nations is a major factor in the outbreak of wars *between* nations.

**(3) Betrayal of Trust Multiplies the Results of Evil.** This point is much more subtle because most of us do not want to think about it. It’s too painful.

On the micro level, consider the doctor or nurse or medic who starts killing the patients. One doctor in Britain was believed to have murdered some 35 patients (he killed himself in jail). A male nurse in the Pacific Northwest also terminated dozens of patients. How could this happen?

Notice: in addition to the Evil idea and the imbalance of power, these victims had put themselves into a position of dependence. The patients submitted themselves willingly to the potential killer. They trusted the doctor or nurse – they willingly gave up their self defense – they created the imbalance of power – and placed their lives at the mercy of the supposed caregiver and protector. When an Evil idea formed in the minds of the caregivers and protectors, then the killing was next.

This terrible result is worse than just murder because it involves the evil of taking advantage of someone who has placed his or her trust in the killer. Many of the Jews who boarded trains bound for death camps in Nazi Germany could not allow themselves to believe that their own countrymen, their own police and army, would betray them so fatally. Children and teens often fail to even try to resist a child molester or kidnapper, because the children cannot grasp that a trusted adult could turn against them.

### **The Effects of Civilian Disarmament Ideas**

Now you have the basic groundwork. Next, consider "gun control" ideas and laws. To the extent that "gun control" causes any results, those results are:

(1) The non-evil, peaceful, law-abiding people will be discouraged from owning, carrying, using, and even learning more about or practicing with firearms. "Gun control" laws act to discourage firearms ownership and use by making it more expensive, embarrassing, difficult, or legally risky to have and use guns.

(2) "Gun control" laws do not decrease the incidence of Evil – not one bit. Gun control laws discourage people, or impose costs on people – but they do not affect evil minds and evil intentions.

(3) "Gun control" laws encourage people to render themselves less powerful. Turn in guns, not own guns, avoid guns, learn little or nothing about guns. "Gun control" laws work only in the direction of causing law-abiding people to reduce their personal defense power.

(4) "Gun control" laws thus make it necessary for people to rely upon their government or private defense providers. For most people, hiring a private body guard or other security service that would come anywhere close to the effectiveness of being personally armed, is too expensive. So most people depend upon their government police and upon dialing Emergency 911.

(5) The more Draconian the "gun control" laws and policies, the more it is likely the civilians are unarmed.

(6) When a government takes power with evil intentions, and extensive "gun control" laws are in place, then you have the set-up for destruction. Most of the people have obeyed the laws and placed their self-defense trust in their governments. The people are relatively weak. Meanwhile, the aggressors are mostly undeterred by gun control laws. The aggressors would include street criminals, organized crime, and government agencies (e.g. the Nazi SS, the Soviet KGB, various death squads). In fact, the government agencies are usually specifically exempted from the "gun control" laws.

So, there are deliberate programs of persecution by government, as in Nazi Germany or in Soviet Russia / Ukraine or in Cambodia. There are cultures of civilian powerlessness as in China during the Japanese invasion and rape of Nanking in 1937. There is the malign neglect that allows armed parties to raid and attack defenseless people, as in El Salvador and Uganda. In all cases, the imbalance of power, coupled with the people's helpless dependence upon the same entity that doesn't mind if they get killed or enslaved, produces the worst human suffering imaginable.

### **How Can An Armed Society Help?**

Now, you may ask: "Yes, but what difference would it make if the people were armed?"

The answer is pretty simple: *even evil people calculate the costs*. Bad guys rob convenience stores and pizza delivery guys whom they know are unarmed. Bad guys do not rob gun stores nor do they burgle police stations, because the criminal's personal risk of getting caught and killed is too high.<sup>1</sup>

It is known that Nazi Germany did not invade Switzerland largely because the Nazis did not want to invest a lot of machinery and manpower to subjugate a nation that was civilian-armed to the teeth.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, historians tell us that the Imperial Japanese military leaders did not want to invade the United States during World War II because they knew they would encounter fierce resistance from armed citizens.<sup>3</sup>

Remember that human beings are the ones who carry out orders. People calculate risks. Even though there is a lot of crime and lots of criminals infesting certain parts of Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C. (for example), the police will not go to those parts of town without backup. And in some areas, they will not go at all –certainly not at night.

We learn from all of these examples that armed civilians can deter even armed government functionaries.

Likewise, in the Iraq War, the American military chooses to deploy its forces in a manner less likely to result in American casualties. Thus, the American military does not blindly attempt to move into some towns and regions where they know the civilian resisters ("insurgents") are armed and dangerous.

We therefore learn from modern military history that even powerful armies steer clear of armed and motivated civilian populations.

All of these facts and observations suggest the following conclusion:

**When a civilian population widely possesses firearms such as rifles, shotguns and handguns, along with ammunition for them, and the population has the training with the weapons along with the ethic of self defense, then the population is very unlikely to be conquered and persecuted either by their own government or by an invading force.**

This conclusion means that lives are saved and human suffering is avoided when the population generally undertakes to prepare for its own armed defense. Stated simply: **an armed population saves lives.**

The data from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century suggest that millions of non-combatant lives were lost to genocide and persecution, because (a) the afflicted populations were tremendously underpowered compared to the killers, (b) the population relied solely upon their government to protect them, and (c) the government protectors either failed or actively turned against the populations.

### **Can All Evil Be Prevented?**

Is an armed population absolutely safe from all invasion and persecution? No. But we have to consider the incentives of the aggressors. The better question is: will an invader or persecutor be more likely or less likely to attack an armed civilian population? Or, given a choice, would an invader or persecutor more often choose to afflict an armed population or an unarmed population?

It is possible to imagine scenarios where an armed population cannot do anything to protect itself against nuclear attack, for example. Such scenarios suggest only that no defense strategy is perfect, and that Evil can find a way to hurt and kill people. Overall, however, an armed population stands a much better chance of freedom from attack, persecution and slaughter than does an unarmed population.

History shows that Evil forces look for populations to enslave and annihilate. Evil selects those populations where it can operate with the least cost to itself. It is thus both a moral and practical imperative for populations to possess and learn to effectively use firearms for defense of self, family, community, and nation.

We hope this answers your question about the need and effectiveness of widespread private ownership of firearms.

## Resources

(1) *Innocents Betrayed* – the video documentary – makes a strong case because it presents the pictures and the flesh and blood reality of how the powerful can so easily destroy the powerless. It shows also how “gun control” laws are instrumental in paving the way for destruction.

(2) *Death by Gun Control: The Human Cost of Victim Disarmament* is our book upon which *Innocents Betrayed* is based. The book does not talk about the Second Amendment – it talks about the problem of disarmed citizens vs. powerful forces, and it develops further how the rhetoric of "gun control" leads to a deadly physical and moral paralysis.

(3) *Death by Government*, by Professor R.J. Rummel, takes a different tack from our book. While our book focuses on the civilian disarmament issues, Prof. Rummel looks at the political systems that create the situations that make genocides and mass persecutions possible ... even inevitable.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Geoff Metcalf, in “The United Nations vs. Our Gun Rights,” discusses the importance of an armed citizenry in deterring aggressors of every stripe.  
(<http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2006/7/2/165159.shtml>)

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Stephen Halbrook wrote *The Swiss and the Nazis: How the Alpine Republic Survived in the Shadow of the Third Reich*, which shows how the armed and prepared Swiss citizenry were a major deterrent to an invasion by the Nazis during WW II. ([www.stephenhalbrook.com](http://www.stephenhalbrook.com))

<sup>3</sup> It is widely quoted that Admiral Yamamoto, the naval commander for Imperial Japan during WW II, said: "You cannot invade the mainland United States. There would be a rifle behind each blade of grass." We cannot confirm or deny this quote's authenticity. Mr. Massad Ayoob, however, has quoted eyewitnesses to conversations by retired Japanese Navy officers who confirm that invading the U.S. mainland was an unlikely prospect, with a major factor being the armed citizenry. (“Armed Citizens: The Deterrent Factor,” By Massad Ayoob, (<http://www.backwoodshome.com/articles2/ayoob0109.html>))