

Violence, Guns

...Political Assassination, and Concentration Camps

Hank Malone

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I

A few days ago a friend of mine asked me to amortize my obligations to RFK's assassination by rendering a stirring Stars and Stripes article titled something like—Ban the Guns (it occurs to me that we haven't even Banned the Bomb yet). His idea was that I should create a piece of literary magic that would induce *Fifth Estate* readers (against their better judgment) to go out and contact their congressmen with personal letters, informing these panderers of democracy that some of their constituents are outraged by the inadequacies of existing gun laws.

This friend of mine (an old-timer now, well over forty) exhorted me for a long time, insisting that to avoid writing such an article in these pages would be a political cop-out. The focus of his argument came to this: if I, by writing this article, and the readers of *Fifth Estate*, by writing their congressmen, and the congressmen, by enacting relevant legislation, can save a single human life, then our mission has not been in vain. Well, O.K., I said. I'd think about it.

II

The absurdity of our daily situation with respect to American politics and law becomes more profound and pitiful every day. The Politics of the Absurd are clearly upon us. Beneath all our "seriousness" about Vietnam and the crises of the Underprivileged there is a painful grimace composed of hysteria, impotence, privilege, outrage, and a grandstand perception of the vast existential comedy that life has become for us; a concentration-camp comedy in which we are all nervously chuckling, standing naked in the great line that leads seemingly-irreversibly to the Showers.

To demand, in other words, "stronger and more effective gun legislation" strikes me as a clear-cut forage into Black Humor of the most monstrous variety. Such a demand, given our current American dilemmas (these cancerous dilemmas!) would no doubt have the political impact of a rose falling into Grand Canyon. Given our utter lack of will as a people to end this bloody miserable Horror Story that we maintain with our assent and our tax money throughout the world, the idea of "stronger gun legislation" seems void of any political pragmatism whatsoever, void of anything but the comedy of hopelessness.

III

Perhaps I should argue the point, concede to the crazy for the time being, participate in this dirty American game where sophists play while Detroit burns.

My first argument: As a revolutionary, or even as an arch all-American boy, I would continue to want to possess guns on my own terms, without governmental restrictions. Without guns the population is clearly at the mercy of the government. With guns, the government is potentially at the mercy of the population. I am for the people. In the realm of the real world I discover that you cannot trust the sanity of any government. The population must always have in its trunk the means to overthrow the government, just in case it goes sour. And you can't do that with pitch-forks any more.

My second argument: Stronger gun legislation appears to run totally against the American grain, which, with the exception of certain small enclaves, is wallowing in a gigantic John Wayne cultural myth involving Cowboys, Hunters, and the God-given rights of Big Brawny Men to shoot deer and to protect the wife and kids from invading hordes of multicolored demons and devils. Like it or not, realistic or not, this is what Americans believe, along with Howard Johnsonism and McDonald's Hamburgerism. You just won't take their guns away, just like you couldn't take away their liquor. Remember the Volstead Act?

My third argument: the idea of rigid gun laws finally ending political assassinations (as is everywhere overtly and covertly suggested) is totally wrong. Those who want "strong gun legislation" appear to presume that political assassinations, like marital homicides (half the gun murders in the U.S. each year are marital homicides committed in fits of rage) is the solitary act of a crazy person. However, political assassination, by definition, is not insane. It is premeditated, it involves planning. Any premeditated political assassination, given even the most repressive gun legislation, would intrinsically presume a will to gain access to an appropriate instrument of death as part of the assassination plan. And where there is such a Will, the assassin will find a Way. To end political assassination (which is merely a new organ of the American life-style) one would have to eliminate the very existence of all weapons, which is a great and lovely idea, but lotsa luck.

My friend, who encouraged me to write this article, will no doubt be angry as Hell that I have taken these positions. He will call me a hot-headed kid (for I'm still under 30) and will probably regard me from now on as a monster who goes to bed at night drooling over hand-guns. He will ask me over and over: but how can you be against strong gun legislation, how can you be against something that would save so many human lives? The answer is: dear friend, I think you're asking the wrong kinds of questions about America, and seeking as a result, silly and trivial legislation when you should be doing something important & real about the fate of America. And I regard the moral silliness and guilt-ridden over-reactive hysteria about guns and gun laws as more of a clear and present danger to the world than the collective cop-out of a million stoned kids who just won't have anything to do with this Political Absurdity-piled-upon-Absurdity, ad nauseum.

In short, please do this favor for my friend, for he may be right and I may be wrong. Please write your congressmen (what harm can it do?) and urge him to ban the sale of guns, and whatever else you think needs outlawing. My friend thinks that you're too lazy to really do something like this. He feels that you could change the world for the better and save countless human lives, just by writing your congressman a personal letter, telling him you support massive legislation restricting guns. I don't think you'll change a damn thing, and frankly, considering some of the incomplete arguments I've just made, I hope you don't. But the rest is up to you. Please write your congressman soon. There, I've done my friend a personal favor, and still maintained my integrity.

fifth Estate

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