

CPYRGHT

Castro Takes Away The Guns

By Robert Taber

The subject is guns.

Fidel Castro is currently disarming the Cuban populace, including militia members not on active duty. Senator Dodd seeks to disarm citizens of the United States, and damn the Constitution.

There is a distinct relationship of ideas there, and although I am not unduly concerned by the hysteria implicit in the Dodd Bill, currently before Congress, I am concerned—let us say that I have been close enough to the Cuban Revolution to have reason—about what is happening in Cuba.

Time was when Fidel Castro boasted that the common people of his revolutionary country were armed. Their rifles were the guarantee of their freedom, the token of his overwhelming popularity. He walked freely among them. If the people chose to depose a regime grown despotic or for whatever reason unpopular—banged off with his head.

In the most literal way, Fidel staked his life on his popularity. He bet his life that he was right.

Now the bet is reneged. Why? What has gone wrong? Something, surely, for Castro was correct in the first instance: a country whose citizens are armed is a free country. Bullets back up ballots—it is not a question of one or the other. If the ballot box fails, and the courts fail, and the parliament and the popular assembly fail, the rifle is—as Che Guevara has noted—the court of last resort.

The founding fathers of these United States understood the principle very well—they had just finished testing it on the British—and they wrote it into the U.S. Constitution.

Connecticut's Senator Thomas Dodd—sometimes registered agent of the Ydigorrea tyranny in Guatemala, grand inquisitor of the Eastland Committee—is busily trying to write it out.

"The right of the people to bear arms

shall not be infringed."

The Constitution says nothing of arms above a certain caliber, or arms that may be concealed on the person, or arms obtained by mail order. It says "arms," period.

It stands as a matter of common sense that honest men ought to be able to arm themselves in order to protect themselves and their families against lawbreakers—who will obtain weapons whether legally obtainable or no.

But that is not the primary purpose of the Constitutional amendment which guarantees the right of the people to bear arms. Its primary purpose was to back up an idea that Thomas Jefferson propounded: the right of the people to resist tyranny by force of arms. It was summed up in a sentence on the Jefferson seal: "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."

Senator Dodd, like most reactionaries, fears weapons in the hands of ordinary citizens—and if I were in his shoes I might be terrified, too.

To Outlaw Mail Order Weapons

The assassination of President Kennedy has given impetus to Dodd's legislative effort to outlaw mail-order weapons, and most other firearms. Kennedy was murdered with a mail-order rifle. Ergo, mail-order rifles are things of evil. Happily, he

was not murdered with a bread knife or a bow and arrow. The hysteria about weapons could easily extend that far.

But no. The truth is that the tragic and unmotivated murder of Jack Kennedy is only a pretext for outlawing rifles. The truth is that what Senator Dodd really fears, and what many who support him really fear, is not presidential assassination, not crimes of passion or insanity or common venality, but armed rebellion—the violent assertion of natural rights by those to whom the ballot box has always been a mockery.

I am thinking of the recent Watts insurrection in Los Angeles. I am thinking of the black rebellion still to come—and I suspect that Dodd is thinking similar thoughts.

In the so-called Watts district, a vast slum area in south-central Los Angeles in which the unemployment rate stands at 30 percent and misery is daily company, a small corps of Negro snipers, armed with weapons looted from pawnshops, the very symbol of poverty, held an army at bay for six days.

Property damage from fires set by bursting Molotov cocktails rose to \$200,000,000. (But how to outlaw gasoline?) Insurance companies all over the country felt the impact. Shudders were felt in every great city with a sizeable Negro ghetto, and ran up and down Dixieland. Armed Negroes, on the rampage. Horrors!

Personally, I am not inclined, despite the tragic toll of human life in Los Angeles, to count the Watts uprising an unmitigated evil. It was, in fact, long overdue.

The evil lies in the social system that has kept 20 million black people—and not a few million white poor—under the grinding heel of poverty in the world's richest nation.

The staccato rattle of rifle fire in Los Angeles delivered a message. The ballot box had failed, the Congress had failed, the courts had failed, and it was time for a change.

I suggest that that is what rifles are for. And at the risk of seeming to incite to riot (which is not my purpose), I would like to see the Dodd Bill killed.

I would like to see it killed because I believe that an armed citizenry inspires a certain respect in its civil servants which does not obtain where the people are disarmed (e.g., the Soviet Union, China).

If the authorities fear an armed citizenry, then they, the authorities, need to examine their consciences.

Memo to Senator Dodd.

Cuban press please copy.

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