

Cottrol-RKBA-Last Line of Defense-11-7-99.txt

From: j3131 [j3131@enter.net]

Sent: Friday, November 12, 1999 8:49 PM

To: steve l christopoulos; steve abbey-h; SAL SALAMONE; rook jones; ray masters; pat toomey; neal nevitt; nancy; Mike Mish; Mike Iannantuono; MIKE ERVIN; michael j slavonic, jr.; lee machemer; Kim Stolfer; Ken Sturzenacker; jose arencibia; john sherm; john brinson; joe milutis; jim saunders; jim lett; jim cindy bachner; jim adams; jerry burian; jason paul; jason iannantuono; henry brizolara; harry lande; greg dimmich; george arangio; gary tarola; frank mccabe; francis /sam m borso; eric kane; dave serfass; dave krisovitch; dave bergstein; dan iannantuono; clyde shuman; clair miller; chuck werkheiser; cedrick; bill bolman; B & B Van Metter; anthony j salvaggio; andy barniskis; abbigail; carol
Subject: Fw: The Last Line of Defense

-----Original Message-----

From: stevechr@ptd.net <stevechr@ptd.net>

To: J3131@enter.net <J3131@enter.net>; JohnFWBrinson@compuserve.com <JohnFWBrinson@compuserve.com>

Date: Thursday, November 11, 1999 3:07 PM

Subject: The Last Line of Defense

>Sunday, November 7, 1999

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>The Last Line of Defense

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>The right to bear arms is a matter of individual safety and, ultimately, >freedom. The issue goes far beyond gun nuts.

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>By ROBERT J. COTTROL

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> The central premise of the gun control movement is that society becomes >more civilized when the citizen surrenders the means of self-defense, >leaving the state a monopoly of force.

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> That this premise goes largely unchallenged is the most remarkable >feature of our gun control debate. We are ending a century that has >repeatedly witnessed the consequences of unchecked state monopolies of >force. University of Hawaii political scientist Rudolph J. Rummel, one of >the leading students of democide (mass murder of civilian populations by >governments), has estimated that nearly 170 million people have been >murdered by their own governments in our century. The familiar list of mass >murderers--Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot--only scratches the surface. The >mass slaughter of helpless, unarmed civilian populations continues in >Sudan, Rwanda, parts of the former Yugoslavia and East Timor.

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> The reluctance of outside forces to intervene is well documented. And >yet the obvious question is strangely absent: would arms in the hands of >average citizens have made a difference? Could the overstretched Nazi war >machine have murdered 11 million armed and resisting Europeans while also >taking on the Soviet and Anglo-American armies? Could 50,000 to 70,000 >Khmer Rouge have butchered 2 million to 3 million armed Cambodians? The >answers are by no means clear, but it is unconscionable that they are not >being asked.

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> Need Americans have such concerns? We have been spared rule by >dictators, but state tyranny can come in other forms. It can come when >government refuses to protect unpopular groups--people who are disfavored >because of their political or religious beliefs, their ancestry or the >color of their skin. Our past has certainly not been free of this brand of >state tyranny. In the Jim Crow South, for example, government failed to >protect blacks from extra-legal violence. Given our history, it's stunning >that we fail to question those who would force us to rely totally on the >state for defense.

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> Nor should our discussion be limited to foreign or historical examples.
>The lives and freedoms of decent, law-abiding citizens throughout our
>nation, especially in our dangerous inner cities, are constantly threatened
>by criminal predators. This has devastated minority communities. And yet
>the effort to limit the right to armed self-defense has been most intense
>in such communities. Bans on firearm ownership in public housing, the
>constant effort to ban pistols poor people can afford--scornfully labeled
>"Saturday night specials" and "junk guns"--are denying the means of
>self-defense to entire communities in a failed attempt to disarm criminal
>predators. In many under-protected minority communities, citizens have been
>disarmed and left to the mercy of well-armed criminals.

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> This has led to further curtailment of freedom. Consider initiatives in
>recent years to require tenants in public housing to allow their apartments
>to be searched. First, police failed for decades to protect citizens in
>many of our most dangerous public housing projects. Next, as the situation
>became sufficiently desperate, tenants were prohibited from owning firearms
>for their own defense. Finally the demand came, "Surrender your right to
>privacy in your home." The message could not be clearer: A people incapable
>of protecting themselves will lose their rights as a free people, becoming
>either servile dependents of the state or of the criminal predators who are
>their de facto masters.

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> All of this should force us to reconsider our debate over arms and
>rights. For too long, it has been framed as a question of the rights of
>sportsmen. It is far more serious: The 2nd Amendment has something critical
>to say about the relationship between the citizen and the state. For most
>of human history, in most of the nations in the world, the individual has
>all too often been a helpless dependent of the state, beholden to the
>state's benevolence and indeed competence for his physical survival.

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> The notion of a right to arms bespeaks a very different relationship. It
>says the individual is not simply a helpless bystander in the difficult and
>dangerous task of ensuring his or her safety. Instead, the citizen is an
>active participant, an equal partner with the state in ensuring not only
>his own safety but also that of his community.

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> This is a serious right that takes the individual from servile
>dependency on the state to the status of participating citizen, capable of
>making intelligent choices in defense of life and ultimately of freedom.
>This conception of citizenship recognizes that the ultimate civil right is
>the right to defend one's own life, that without that right all other
>rights are meaningless and that without the means, the right to
>self-defense is but an empty promise.

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> Our serious thinkers have been absent from this debate for too long. The
>2nd Amendment is too important to leave to the gun nuts.

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> Robert J. Cottrol is a professor of law and history at George Washington
>University. His most recent book is "From African to Yankee: Narratives of
>Slavery and Freedom in Antebellum New England" (M.E. Sharpe, 1998). E-mail:
>bcottrol@main.nlc.gwu.edu. This article is adapted from the
>September-October issue of American Enterprise magazine.

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